

Ukraine-Turkey: Turkish secret services kidnappings in Odessa?

Human Rights Without Frontiers urges the Ukrainian authorities to confirm or deny this human rights violation perpetrated on their territory

HRWF (18.07.2018) – The well-known and reliable Odessablog has just released an article about two kidnapping cases allegedly perpetrated by the Turkish secret services under the title “Not such a Turkish Delight in Odessa” (17 July, <https://odessablog.wordpress.com>):

“It is no secret that foreign agencies work in Odessa Oblast.

The most obvious that would come to mind is that of the Russian Federation, but as a reader moves closer to Europe then the Romanian SIE is active, as is Mossad, and of course Turkey across the Black Sea also has a great interest in Odessa too.

To be fair there are numerous agencies active in Odessa as a reader would expect from a city that is a transport hub on internationally recognised trading routes (as well as internationally recognised smuggling routes – be it people, guns, drugs and counterfeit).

Odessa is a destination, it is a hub and it is a source of legitimate and criminal trade. It is cosmopolitan and it is mercantile.

What self-respecting foreign agency with particular regional interests wouldn't be active in Odessa?

Most go about their work quietly – albeit perhaps not as invisibly as they might think.

However, it appears that Turkey recently made some rather obvious and perhaps illicit renditions of two of its citizens.

If true this would not be the first time Turkey (or other agencies – Mossad allegedly spirited away a Turk with Islamic links from Odessa train station some years ago) has tried and/or succeeded in renditioning their citizens from Odessa back to Turkey.

In 2008 several Kurds were either successfully renditioned or attempts were made by Turkey to “reclaim them” against their will.

The latest incidents allegedly occurred on 12th and 15th July 2018 – the first in Odessa and the second in Mykolaiv.

It is claimed that both individuals were FETO supporters (Güllist). That may or may not be the case, for rumours are rumours and who starts them and for what reason requires some thought.

Either way extrajudicial renditions are just that regardless.

On 12th July it is claimed that the Turkish Milli Istihbarat Teskilatı (MIT) abducted Turkish businessman Salikh Zeki Yigit from his restaurant in Odessa city centre, held him at the Turkish Consulate in Odessa overnight, and the following day spirited him back to Turkey (by plane to Istanbul and then on to Mersin).

The second individual was a Turkish blogger (married to, and father of Ukrainians) Yusuf Inan in Mykolaiv. Mr Inan was apparently subject to extradition proceedings, but it appears that the MIT could not wait.

Both men had residency status in Ukraine. Both were renditioned to Turkey during the last week if some very solid rumour be believed.

Whether a tacit blind eye was turned or whether the matter

will be raised privately having drawn Ukrainian ire is speculative – particularly in light of recent Turkish statements thanking Ukraine for its “cooperation” regarding the return of “refugees”.

What is not speculative at the time of writing is that there has thus far been no public statement from any Ukrainian institution or ministry – either to confirm or deny either incident.

Would a reader therefore draw inference that if these illegal renditions took place (and it appears that they have), in the absence of any official comment whatsoever, that Kyiv was aware?

The answer has to be – probably.

If so, and of course there is plausible deniability, it will be something of a human rights image problem at the very least in numerous private diplomatic conversations – albeit insufficient to cause any significant policy changes toward Ukraine (or Turkey). No doubt the Human Rights NGOs that read the blog (and there are certainly some in Brussels that do) will take note.

Whether there are any more Turks in Ukraine on the MIT rendition list – time will perhaps tell, and perhaps fairly soon.”

Local and national Ukrainian authorities cannot keep silent about the allegation of such an egregious human rights violation perpetrated on their territory. If the accusation is confirmed, they should take a public position about this act committed by a foreign power on the Ukrainian soil.