

'Only I and my paper were prosecuted' – journalist who exposed Turkey's hospitality for jihadists

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Eroglu is an investigative journalist working for the opposition BirGun (One Day) newspaper. In September last year he wrote an [expose](#) on a medical facility in Gaziantep, a town in southeastern Turkey about an hour's drive from the Syrian border. The hospital treated fighters who had been injured in the neighboring country with the tacit approval of the Turkish authorities.

*"I was told by the hospital administration that they are jihadist fighters and do not have any other profession,"* he told RT, adding that after recovering the fighters went back to Syria to fight more battles.

*"They also said that the food and sanitation services are provided by the city of Gaziantep, and without the government help it wouldn't be possible to bring all these injured fighters from Syria to Turkey,"* he said.

The Turkish journalist found evidence that fighters from the Islamic Front group were treated at the clinic. The Sunni umbrella group adheres to radical Islamist ideology and is seeking to turn Syria into a state ruled by Sharia law, not a secular constitution. The goal is shared by the notorious Islamic State group, but the two are hostile toward each other, competing for territory, resources and recruits. Some of the militant groups comprising Islamic Front are reported to ally themselves with Nusra Front, the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda, which also clashed occasionally with ISIS.

[#ISIS](#) are protected by military of entire nation[Turkey]. That is why they are acting so boldly & blatantly – Putin <http://on.rt.com/6xfi>

After the expose was published, the facility relocated and various parties involved gave conflicting denials, Eroglu told RT.

*"The immediate response from the authorities to our report was to close [the facility] down and transferring patients to other locations. The city of Gaziantep immediately denied our report and told the press that this facility doesn't exist. The medical organization responsible for running the hospital then confessed that there was such a hospital, but it didn't serve to cure the jihadists."* he said.

What the Turkish authorities didn't do is try to prosecute anyone involved in assisting jihadists. Instead, BirGun was accused of false reporting and a Turkish court ordered that the newspaper retract the report.

*"I and my newspaper were the only ones who faced prosecution,"* Eroglu said. *"Under the court decision, we were ordered to put the city's denial under the story, which made it look like the whole story was false,"* Eroglu said.

Eroglu's story is far from the only example of extremist fighters from various groups reported as being sheltered in Turkey. An Islamic State commander, Emrah Cakan, was confirmed to have received medical attention in a hospital in Denizli. The news triggered a nationwide scandal as opposition MPs demanded that the government explained how a known terrorist leader could get a hospital bed in Turkey.

[READ MORE: ISIS commander treated in Turkish hospital 'like all other citizens'](#)

Hospitals treating militants were identified all across Turkey's border Hatay Province, Mehmet Ali Ediboglu, who represents the area in the Turkish parliament, told RT.

"There are more than 50 state, university and private hospitals in border cities and jihadists have been treated in these hospitals for five years," he said. "Wounded Nusra Front and Islamic Front militants are brought there."

*"They are fighters, not civilians. Two or three months ago two militants were brought to Hatay hospitals and there were bombs on them,"* Ediboglu said, adding that ambulances taking fighters to hospitals are often escorted by armed jihadists.

Apparently, not all fighters injured in Syria are equal in Turkey. Members of the Kurdish YPG militia injured during the fight for the city of Kobani, when ISIS besieged it last year, told RT they had to be smuggled into Turkey for treatment, because traveling openly there could lead to their arrest.

[READ MORE: Injured Kurds smuggle themselves from Syria to Turkey for medical help](#)

Turkey, a NATO member, is part of a US-led coalition that is pledged to destroying Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. In practice, however, Turkish warplanes have been targeting Kurdish forces, including those fighting against ISIS, rather than the Islamists.

Russia believes that elements of the Turkish government, including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are profiting from the plundering of Syria and Iraq by terrorist groups and provide

material support to them.

Two prominent journalists were arrested in Turkey last week on espionage allegations after exposing an alleged Turkish special service operation to smuggle arms to Syrian militants.

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