

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Opening Ceremony
Keynote Speeches:
Envisioning Peace
and Security in a
Fragmented World**



Moderator
Ghida Fakhry
TRT World Presenter

Speakers
Binali Yıldırım
President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

İbrahim Eren
Director General and Chairman of TRT

© TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PUBLISHER

TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE
DECEMBER 2018

PREPARED BY

Abdullah Keşveliođlu

TRT WORLD İSTANBUL

AHMET ADNAN SAYGUN STREET NO:83 34347
ULUS, BEŞİKTAŞ
İSTANBUL / TURKEY

TRT WORLD LONDON

PORTLAND HOUSE
4 GREAT PORTLAND STREET NO:4
LONDON / UNITED KINGDOM

TRT WORLD WASHINGTON D.C.

1819 L STREET NW SUITE 700 20036
WASHINGTON DC / USA

www.trtworld.com

CONFERENCE REPORT

Opening Ceremony Keynote Speeches: Envisioning Peace and Security in a Fragmented World

This is a report on a public session titled “**Opening Ceremony**”, held as part of the TRT World Forum 2018. The views, themes and discussion points expressed in this conference report are those of participants and speakers present at the TRT World Forum 2018, and do not reflect the official view of TRT World Research Centre.



- 1** *How does the refugee crisis effect the world's future?*
- 2** *Is there a double standard in the fight against terrorism?*
- 3** *How does the latest trend of isolationism affect global issues?*
- 4** *Does current structure of the United Nations Security Council serve stability or does it increase fragmentation?*

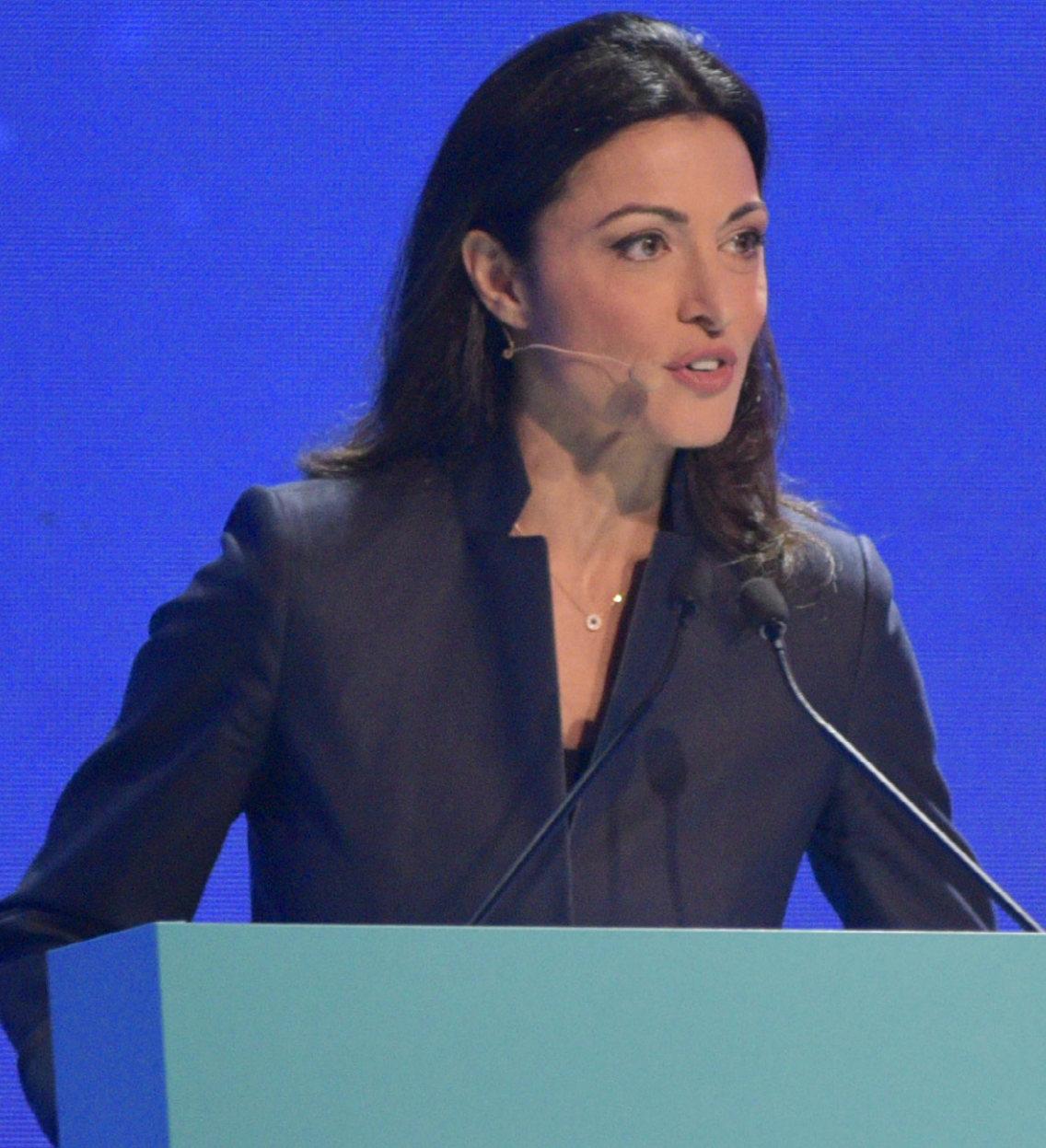
Summary

President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Binali Yıldırım and Director General and Chairman of TRT İbrahim Eren delivered keynote speeches at the opening ceremony of the TRT World Forum and highlighted a wide range of issues that are of primary interest to peace and security in today's increasingly fragmented world.

İbrahim Eren, Director General of TRT, began his speech by welcoming over 600 distinguished guests to the TRT World Forum. Eren stated that TRT's aim is to bring what is not shown and provide a platform for the voice of those who are unheard. The TRT World Forum was established to provide a platform to debate and propose new ideas from perspectives that have not yet been considered. Eren drew attention to conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and Palestine and questioned the international community's commitment in finding viable solutions to these and other humanitarian disasters.

Binali Yıldırım began his speech by emphasising Turkey's contribution to ending the Syrian Civil War, refugee crisis and the fight against terrorism. Nonetheless, according to Yıldırım Turkey is being left to deal with these issues alone. Europe's hard stance against refugees and the United States' support to the PKK's Syria offshoot PYD/YPG have put a stress on Turkey's shoulders.

Yıldırım called for the reformation of international institutions, such as the United Nations Security Council, in order to make these bodies more effective in addressing the common problems of the world. He added that the only way to establish a better future for the world is through cooperation.



Ghida Fakhry, presenter for TRT World, launches TRT World Forum 2018.

Introduction

The world is entering a new age where the unipolarity of the United States is giving way to a multipolar system. The liberal international order is being challenged from all corners, including the Western World. On the one hand, the world is witnessing the growth of isolationist and nationalist trends in the United States and Europe. On the other hand, it is witnessing the rise of illiberal powers. In an era where safety and security is collapsing at a global level, it is important to be able to come together and debate issues and propose solutions. Little has changed since last year's inaugural TRT World Forum and efforts to establish peace and security in our fragmented world have largely failed. Nonetheless, efforts to build a more stable and inclusive international order should continue. One way to successfully achieve this objective is by coming together, debating issues and proposing new ideas and solutions. In this light, the TRT World Forum brings together diplomats, policy makers, academics, analysts and NGO leaders of diverse backgrounds in order to propose solutions to the most pressing issues of our times.

Unfortunately, international community is failing to take a common stance against the most fundamental issues, such as terrorism. Major world powers, while vigorously fighting against some terrorist organisations, support others when it serves their interests. Additionally, instead of seeking to find viable solutions to the civil wars in Yemen and Syria, international and regional powers are increasingly turning to proxies to secure their interests on the ground, adding fuel to the fire. While some countries welcome refugees, others seek to build both literal and metaphorical walls, neglecting their share of the burden. Inequality continues to rise and the United Nations, which is ostensibly supposed to serve as backstop for the most vulnerable, is failing to address the root causes of the issue largely because of its flawed and ultimately outdated institutional structure.

Terrorism

“As long as there is a distinction of my terrorist and your terrorist we can neither be successful in the fight against terrorism nor achieve regional and global fraternity” said Binali Yıldırım in his opening speech. Turkey has been one of the countries that has suffered the most from terrorism. The PKK and DHKP-C, considered as terrorist organisation by the United States and the European Union, have been a source of terror for the Turkish people for decades. In recent years, the emergence of Daesh and FETO have added to Turkey’s burden. Although Turkey has been on the front line against regional and global terrorism, the international community has largely failed to show solidarity with Ankara.

According to Yıldırım “the aim of living in a world of peace, tranquillity and security is only possible as long as powerful states act in a just manner and hold good intentions in cooperation. Terror and terrorism should be unconditionally rejected with no regard to the country, ethnic identity and religion.” İbrahim Eren also drew attention to terrorism as a threat to stability, peace and security.

Turkey shares nearly 1300 km of its border with Iraq and Syria, both of which have been strongholds of Daesh in the last half decade. Turkey’s strategic geopolitical position put it at the centre of the fight against the terrorist organisation. As part of this fight, Turkey hosted forces from the international coalition against Daesh at its military bases. Turkish bases have been effective in the international coalition’s military operations against the terrorist group. Moreover, Turkey itself also participated in these efforts, launching Operation Euphrates Shield, which cleared more than two thousand square kilometres of land in North Syria from Daesh.

The PKK represents a long term security threat to Turkey. The terrorist organisation has had deep roots in northern parts of Iraq and Syria since its establishment. With the Syrian Civil War and the rise of Daesh, the PYD/YPG, the PKK’s Syrian wing, has gained international attention.

The US and other Western powers provided the YPG with arms, training and intelligence in their fight against Daesh. This support has been ostensibly meant solely to support the YPG against Daesh; however, both arms and manpower from the YPG have been used by the terrorist organisation against Turkey as well. PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's portraits have been hung in PYD/YPG offices across Syria, calling into question the American perspective of seeing PYD/YPG as a separate organisation from the PKK. Yıldırım condemned the US' support for the group and asked how a NATO ally can support an organisation that has killed thirty-five thousand citizens of a fellow NATO member.

FETO represents perhaps the most recent terrorist iteration that Turkey has had to struggle against. The attempted coup of 15th July 2016 perpetrated by FETO, which resulted in the deaths of 251 people, was thwarted by the Turkish people who descended onto the streets of Turkey's major cities in order to protect Turkey's democratic order. Regarding the events of that night, Binali Yıldırım said:

In Turkish political history, maybe even in world history, we achieved the unseen. The cowards who seized the state's weapons, airplanes, helicopters, tanks and turned those weapons on civilians, wanted to destroy Turkey, attempted to overthrow the elected government, and wanted to drive the country to chaos. But that day, the power of the people triumphed over the power of the tanks, and the Turkish people did not give way to this cowardice, this dishonour.

However, the United States and the European Union have been reluctant to label FETO as a terrorist organisation and hand over its members to Turkey, including the group's leader, Fethullah Gülen, who lives in the US. Yıldırım criticised this double standard by saying "the states that do not support us against terrorism, shout at the top of their voice only when they are hit; when al-Qaeda and Daesh are in question."

Civil Wars and the Refugee Crisis

The tragic evolution of what began as popular uprisings against oppressive regimes and socio-economic inequality to brutal civil wars in Syria and Yemen, has had profound consequences within the entire region and beyond. The intervention of regional and international powers only made things worse. Instead of seeking to find viable political solutions to these conflicts, through their support of various militias, foreign powers transformed these conflicts into theatres for proxy wars.

The Syrian Civil War has been ongoing since 2011 and nearly 6 million people have fled the country. Neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan are hosting the majority of these refugees. Binali Yıldırım highlighted Turkey's efforts to provide shelter to these people while reminding others that Turkey and other neighbouring countries are paying the highest price of the conflict. Yıldırım said "these issues directly affect us, naturally. We have taken in more than 3.5 million of our brothers and sisters with open arms. We have been a means for them to cling to life and preserve their hopes." Yıldırım also criticised countries that refuse to take refugees by stating that "some countries don't understand this. They say you have spent 30 billion dollars on them [refugees]. Our belief is that to save one person's life is to save the world. When the concern is to keep someone alive, money has no value." Yıldırım also asserted the incompetence of international institutions and countries that have sanctioning power in bringing peace and security to Syria. Yıldırım referred to the latest situation in Syria's Idlib, the last opposition stronghold, and Turkey's initiative to bring Russia to the table to prevent further bloodshed in the conflict which has cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

İbrahim Eren drew attention to the extreme conditions faced by millions of refugees who have been fleeing their countries in search of the right to life. It is important to note that this is not a voluntary choice for them, because endless conflicts at home have deprived them of the essential needs of safety, health, nutrition and education. These people are having to use dangerous routes controlled by human traffickers to find a safer life in other countries. Isolationist discourse of politicians towards refugee crisis is also serving rise of xenophobia.

The situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar was also highlighted by both speakers. İbrahim Eren restated the fact that oppression and discrimination against the people in Rohingya has clearly been identified by the United Nations as ethnic cleansing. However, this decision of the UN has not yet been translated into action. The humanitarian catastrophe that the Rohingya people are suffering is growing day by day. Binali Yıldırım said:

While, on the one hand, themes of love and peace are discussed, on the other hand, seeds of hate are planted, and aggressive provocations are activated. Rohingya people are facing ethnic cleansing simply because of their Muslim identity. Unfortunately, no one in the world hears their voice. And again, Turkey is bringing their voice to the global agenda.



Director General and Chairman of TRT, İbrahim Eren, states that TRT's aim is to bring what is not shown and provide a platform for the voice of those who are unheard.

Inequality in the World

The current structure of the United Nations is unable to deliver solutions to the contemporary challenges the world is facing. International institutions are still working in Cold War era conditions. Yet, the Cold War ended nearly three decades ago and reform is needed to find solutions to the current issues the world is facing. However, fragmentation in the international arena is growing day by day and politicians are leading the way to a new conservative world order where nations are isolating themselves from global issues until the problems arrive at their doorstep. Binali Yıldırım portrayed this situation saying “they notice the burglar once there is a knock at their door.” It is quite obvious that most of the time it is much harder to solve a problem after it has spread. İbrahim Eren also pointed in the same direction by saying that most of the problems we are facing today as a global society result from fragmentation, noting that this was the reason for the theme of this year’s TRT World Forum, “Envisioning Peace and Security in a Fragmented World”.

With regards to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the speakers pointed out that it is currently failing to fulfil its duties primarily because of its outdated structure. The five permanent members United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France hold veto power and this gives them the right to prevent any resolutions they feel does not represent their interests. As Yıldırım stated, the structure of the UNSC and the veto power held by the five permanent members propagates conflicts rather than preventing them. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has consistently been critical of the structure of the United Nations

Binali Yıldırım

President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey



Binali Yıldırım, President of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, emphasises the importance of international cooperation in solving regional and global issues.

Security Council, arguing that the “World is bigger than five.” Yildirim illustrated the unbalanced structure of the UNSC by re-iterating the fact that although a quarter of the world’s population and 57 of the 194 UN member countries are Muslim, there is no permanent Muslim presence at the UNSC. Although many nations are on the same page with Turkey on the necessity of a reform in the UN, the permanent members have so far shunned any initiatives.

Binali Yildirim also criticised the European Union for not being active enough in solving international issues. He emphasised that “as an international community we must be the ones who find solutions to these man-made issues and establish an environment of peace, brotherhood and trust. Each issue that we put off and cannot solve will continue to burn us like a fireball.”

The persistent issue of poverty was also raised by both speakers. Poverty was identified as a significant contributing factor to many of today’s most pressing issues including mass migration and terrorism.

Conclusion

During the opening ceremony speakers underlined the issues that threaten regional and global peace, and security. Binali Yildirim pointed out Turkey’s contributions to regional stability through its intervention in the Syrian Civil War, its approach to the refugee crisis and the fight against terrorism. Yildirim argued that while Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have bared most of the burden with regards to the refugee crisis, they have largely done so on their own without significant international support. Moreover, he highlighted Turkey’s fight against regional and global terrorist organisations, voiced his critique of the double standards displayed by countries that support one terrorist group while fighting against another. The need for reform of international institutions, particularly the UNSC was re-iterated by Yildirim, who also touched upon the growing inequity in the world as factors contributing to increased fragmentation.

Both speakers emphasised the importance of international cooperation in solving regional and global issues.

