

Grey Wolves

Name: Grey Wolves

Type of Organization:

- Cultural
- political party
- violent extremist group
- nationalist movement

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Far-right
- nationalist
- fascist

Place of Origin:

Turkey

Year of Origin:

1981

Founder(s):

Alparslan Türke?

Places of Operation:

Turkey, Germany, Azerbaijan, Cyprus

Overview

Executive Summary:

The Grey Wolves is an international fascist, Turkish nationalist, and pan-Turkic organization and movement which rose to prominence in the late 1970s in Turkey.¹ While the group, which is usually called the *Ülkü Ocaklar?* (Idealist Hearths) in Turkish, formally operates as a political and cultural organization, their extremist ideology has also inspired non-members to violent acts.² Breakaway groups, including the *Osmanlı Ocaklar?* and the *Alperen Hearths*, have also carried out attacks on groups demonized by the Grey Wolves.³ In recent years the group's members and sympathizers have attacked Kurds and Armenians and members of the opposition Democratic Peoples' Party in Turkey.⁴

Attacks perpetuated by pan-Turkic nationalist extremists are commonly attributed to the Grey Wolves based on their ideological similarity, regardless of whether the individual culprits are affiliated with the organization.⁵ While the movement is often referred to as Grey Wolves in western media, in Turkey this name is only used in reference to the 1970s death squads. The name "Grey Wolves" comes from a Turkish Bozkurt legend in which a mother wolf protects the original Turkish settlers who arrived in Anatolia from Central Asia.⁶

Turkish politician Alparslan Türke? formed the Wolves in 1966, just three years after he founded the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), a participant in Turkey's current (as of July 2021) governing coalition.⁷ The Wolves functioned as the MHP's armed branch in the 1970s, carrying out attacks and assassinations on leftists, journalists, and dissidents.⁸ The group is still tied to the MHP, and Grey Wolves members view the political party's current chairman, Devlet Bahçeli, as the leader of the organization. In 2019, a former president of the Wolves for seven years, Olcay Kilavuz, described Bahçeli as "Leader Devlet Bahçeli, who sees and embraces Idealists as his own children and enlightens our way with his ideas," adding, "We will not hesitate to be under the command of Devlet Bahçeli, the Leader of the Nationalist-Idealist Movement, as it has been until today." Kilavuz also claimed that Bahçeli directly appointed him.⁹

From 1976 to 1980 more than 5,000 people died in the Turkish conflict between leftists and nationalists, including the Wolves.¹⁰ In 1981, the

Grey Wolves

Wolves made international headlines when member Mehmet Ali A?ca attempted to assassinate Pope John Paul II.¹¹

The Wolves were at times linked to the Turkish intelligence agency MIT, and their crimes often went unpunished by the Turkish police.¹² The group has organizations, affiliates, and ideologically aligned movements in Germany, Azerbaijan, and Cyprus.¹³

Doctrine:

Anti-Leftist/Communist

Throughout the 1970s, the group battled with Turkish communist organizations, and was sometimes referred to by its allies as the Anti-Communist Street Forces.¹⁴ A member of the Adana branch, who was “found guilty of establishing a group to commit crimes, including murder, attempted murder, shooting a house, and throwing explosives,” described his indoctrination as an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality.¹⁵ The organization ingrained in him that “since [communists] wanted to divide the homeland, all of them had to be killed.”¹⁶ According to a 2014 study by Turkish academic Meral Cinar, Wolves viewed the leftists as an existential threat, and consequently, moderates also represented a danger since they “were ‘accomplices’ of the enemies but they were hiding this fact.”¹⁷ Wolves also believed that many Turkish leftists were a fifth column, working for foreign organizations and governments.¹⁸

Racism

The Wolves’ support is highest in cities with large Azeri and Turkmen populations, a phenomenon that is explained by their pan-Turkic ethnic nationalism.¹⁹ The founder of the Grey Wolves, Alparslan Türke?, included “Turkmen, China’s Uighurs, Russia’s Tatars, Azeris, Kazakhs and others” in his definition of the Turkic nation.²⁰ The Wolves idealize their conception of a “pure Turk” and adopt the folkloric ideology known as Turanism as evidence of Turkic superiority. Turanism involves the belief in superior Turkic peoples with a shared language and culture.²¹ Many Turanists support the formation of a Turkic Empire that would encompass former Soviet countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.²² As such, the party rejects the existence of a Kurdish identity within Turkey. The name “Grey Wolves” comes from the Turkish Bozkurt legend in which a mother wolf protects the original Turkish settlers who arrived in Anatolia from Central Asia.²³

Türke?’s Doctrine

The Turanist nationalist movement and Alparslan Türke? himself were greatly influenced by the Turkish nationalist writer Nihat Atsız, a self-identified racist and “intellectual father of non-Kemalist nationalism.”²⁴ Kemalism is a political ideology introduced by modern Turkey’s founder, Kemal Atatürk, that sought to modernize the new Turkish Republic through rejection of Islam—viewed as a retrograde and subversive influence—and assimilation of all non-Turk citizens under one homogenous Turkish identity.²⁵ Atsız went further, viewing nearly every non-Turkic ethnic group as an inherent enemy of the Turkic people.²⁶ Atsız was an important ideologue of the pan-Turkic movement and defined Turkishness based on ethnic terms, rather than the Kemalist version by which assimilation was an acceptable form of Turkishness and ethnic differentiation is considered taboo. Later, Nihat Atsız split from the Republican Villagers Nation Party when it became the MHP and changed its emblem from the Grey Wolf to the three crescents (which symbolize the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic faith).²⁷

Türke? published a doctrine known as the “Nine Lights Movement,” detailing the ideals of “Technology and Industrialism,” “Nationalism,” “Idealism,” “Moralism,” “Societism,” “Scientism,” “Peasantry,” “Advancement and Technology,” and “Libertarianism and Personalism.”²⁸ Absent from his doctrine was the principle of Islam, a value system Türke? would later adopt in 1967 as an essential component of Turkish identity after his first political party, the precursor to MHP, suffered widespread electoral defeat.²⁹ Türke?’s shift toward an Islamic, pan-Turkic identity departed from Nihat Atsız’s insistence that Islam made “Turkishness as an identity...irrelevant.”³⁰

Devlet Bahçeli’s Ülkücü

Grey Wolves

At its inception the Grey Wolves movement was anti-communist, in response to a perceived threat from the Soviet Union against Turkey. However, the 1981 coup led to a crack-down on violent anti-communist groups and the imprisonment of Türke?.³¹ The Grey Wolves doctrine subsequently evolved and, according to Turkey analyst Soner Cagaptay, by the 1990s, the Wolves changed from a group that idealized Turks to idealizing “Turkish Muslims.”³² Following Türke?’ death in 1997, Devlet Bahçeli briefly pushed for a more centrist political agenda.³³ However the MHP’s electoral alliance with the AKP has emboldened Bahçeli to make greater demands for nationalist, anti-minority policies from the ruling party.³⁴ For the past 20 years, Bahçeli has pushed the movement to be more conservative, traditional, and religious.³⁵

Organizational Structure:

The Grey Wolves organization is decentralized, with chapters and sympathetic movements spread across cities and universities in Turkey and abroad, as well as provincial branches in Turkey. The group has chapters in universities and cities as well as provincial unions, such as the Istanbul Union.³⁶ The group constantly reformed under new names in the 1970s and exists alongside several breakaway movements, such as the Alperen Hearths and the Ottoman Hearths.³⁷

The Grey Wolves are also active in Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and Germany.³⁸ In Europe, related organizations go by different names.³⁹ Ties between Azerbaijan’s Wolves and those in Turkey are reportedly largely based on ideological links rather than organizational cooperation.⁴⁰ The Cyprus branch, however, is more directly linked. The Cyprus Idealist Hearths (KKTC) organization was led by Fatih Ar?c? as of July 2020.⁴¹ In 2016, the president of Turkey’s Grey Wolves visited the Cyprus branch.⁴²

The Wolves also operate across Europe. In France, sympathizers and members of the group are not believed to be part of any organized movement.⁴³ In Germany, the organization had two affiliated branches as of 2019, the Federation of Associations of Turkish Democratic Idealists—also known as the Germany Turkish Federation (ADÜTDF)—and the Turkish-Islamic Union in Europe (AT?B).⁴⁴ These groups have hundreds of local associations and umbrella organizations.⁴⁵ In 2017, the German public-service television broadcaster ZDF estimated that the groups had 18,000 members.⁴⁶ The Turkish Federation was connected to the attempted assassination of the Pope through the relationship between the failed assassin, Mehmet Ali A?ca, and Musa Cedar Celebi, the leader of the Federation in 1979 in West Germany.⁴⁷ Celebi also had ties to illegal smuggling activities and was previously a customs inspector.⁴⁸ He was extradited to Italy in 1983 for allegedly paying A?ca 3 million German marks to kill the Pope.⁴⁹ After Hewas’s extradition to Italy in 1983, Ali Batman filled his position.⁵⁰

The Wolves are also closely linked to the MHP, a member of Turkey’s ruling coalition, and acts at times as the street movement or paramilitary organization of the party.⁵¹ Both groups were formed by Alparslan Türke?.⁵² After Türke?’s arrest in 1980, the Wolves reportedly kept a lower profile, especially abroad.⁵³ Nevertheless, Wolves refer to current MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli as their own leader, despite having a separate president of the organization.⁵⁴ In 2019, Ülkü Ocaklar?’s former president of seven years, Olcay Kilavuz, described Bahçeli as “Leader Devlet Bahçeli, who sees and embraces Ülkü Ocakl? as his own children and enlightens our way with his ideas. We will not hesitate to be under the command of Devlet Bahçeli, the Leader of the Nationalist-Idealist Movement, as it has been until today.” He also claimed that he was appointed to lead the Grey Wolves indirectly by Bahçeli in 2012.⁵⁵ While Kilavuz acted as the President of Ülkü Ocaklar? he was also an MHP representative.⁵⁶

The Wolves have also been linked to Turkey’s mafia, illicit drug trade, and state security and intelligence forces (MIT). The group was most directly linked to state security forces at the height of its violent acts in the late 1970s, when the organization received weapons from the Counter-Guerrilla Organization.⁵⁷ Allegations that the Wolves function as a paramilitary organization are bolstered by Grey Wolf, mafia ringleader, and assassin Alaattin Çak?c?’s employment with Turkish intelligence and connections to state officials.⁵⁸ A former Turkish intelligence officer claimed that he “served in Paris for 4 years, and ... acted against Armenian terrorism with Çak?c? at that time.”⁵⁹ He said that the MIT used Çak?c? for operations in Europe and Lebanon.⁶⁰ MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli’s insistence on releasing individuals such as Çak?c? from prison reflects the seeming impunity of these persons.⁶¹ On May 12, 2018, Bahçeli tweeted that the Grey Wolf assassins Çak?c? and Kür?at Y?lmaz were “brothers who love their nation and country,” and suggested that they should be released from prison.⁶² Çak?c? threatened six journalists from prison, claiming, “They will be punished by the people who love me in Turkey or abroad.”⁶³ Journalists report that Çak?c? is a member of the Turkish mafia and continues to wield power from inside his jail cell.⁶⁴

Grey Wolves

A 1998 report from the Turkish parliament explicitly revealed the Wolves' connections to the Turkish security forces. The report cited a senior member of the organization's connection to "organized crime, heroin smuggling, and political assassinations carried out in collaboration with the Turkish security forces."⁶⁵

The Abdullah Çatl? scandal offered further evidence of collusion between the Grey Wolves and Turkish security forces. Çatl? served as the organization's deputy leader in Turkey in 1978 but later went undercover when he was linked to the murder of seven trade unionists.⁶⁶ Çatl? also helped A?ca escape from prison in Turkey.⁶⁷ In November 1996 Çatl? was killed in a car accident while wanted for heroin trafficking and murder.⁶⁸ A 1998 report from the Turkish parliament revealed Çatl?'s connection to "organized crime, heroin smuggling, and political assassinations carried out in collaboration with the Turkish security forces."⁶⁹ Çatl? was employed by the Turkish secret police on multiple occasions and became involved in anti-Kurdish operations.⁷⁰

The following list details some of the known ties Grey Wolves leaders and members have had with mainstream political parties, security services, and criminal organizations:

- **Devlet Bahçeli:** Leader of the Grey Wolves and the MHP.⁷¹
- **Ahmet Yi?it Y?id?r?m:** President of the Grey Wolves.⁷²
- **Mehmet Ali A?ca:** Attempted assassin of Pope John Paul II. A?ca denied his involvement with the Grey Wolves but was known to have been a member.⁷³
- **Musa Cedar Celebi:** Leader of the Grey Wolves / Turkish Federation in 1979 in West Germany. He allegedly had ties to smuggling activities and was previously a customs inspector. Celebi was extradited to Italy for allegedly paying A?ca 3 million German marks to assassinate the Pope.⁷⁴
- **Ali Batman:** Replaced Celebi as the leader of the Turkish Federation in West Germany in 1983.⁷⁵
- **Alaattin Çak?c?:** Çak?c? was arrested after the Turkish military coup in 1980 for the murder of 41 leftists. A former Turkish intelligence officer claimed that he "served in Paris for 4 years, and that they acted against Armenian terrorism with Çak?c? at that time." He said that the MIT used Çak?c? for operations in Europe and Lebanon.⁷⁶ On May 12, 2018, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli tweeted that Çak?c? and Kür?at Y?lmaz were "brothers who love their nation and country" and suggested that they should be released from prison.⁷⁷ Çak?c? threatened six journalists from prison, claiming, "They will be punished by the people who love me in Turkey or abroad."⁷⁸ Journalists report that Çak?c? is a member of the Turkish mafia and continues to wield power from his prison cell.⁷⁹
- **Olcay Kilavuz:** President of the Grey Wolves from 2012 to 2019.⁸⁰ In January 2019, he stepped down from the position after seven years as the president. He is also a member of MHP.⁸¹
- **Abdullah Çatl?:** Çatl? served the deputy leader of the organization in Turkey in 1978 but later went undercover when he was linked to the murder of seven trade unionists.⁸² Çatl? had also aided Mehmet Ali A?ca, who went on to shoot the Pope, in his escape from Turkish prison. In November 1996 Çatl? was killed in a car accident. Items found in his car revealed that he was a hired hitman involved in a national conspiracy. Çatl? was wanted at the time for heroin trafficking and murder.⁸³ A 1998 report from Turkish parliament revealed Çatl?'s connection to "organized crime, heroin smuggling, and political assassinations carried out in collaboration with the Turkish security forces." Çatl? was employed by the Turkish secret police on multiple occasions and became involved in "anti-Kurdish" operations.⁸⁴

Financing:

There is little open-source information about the Wolves' financing networks. The organization has been funded in the past in part by member dues, which were \$4 a month in 1983.⁸⁵ The Wolves have also been linked to illicit activities and organizations in the 1980s and 1990s such as heroin smuggling, weapons smuggling, and the Turkish mafia, with smuggling primarily focused in Bulgaria and West Germany.⁸⁶ In the 1970s, the organization was given weapons by the Turkish Counter-Guerrilla Organization.⁸⁷

Recruitment:

As of 1983, the group was "said to number about 18,000 in Europe, serve as the enforcement arm of the so-called Turkish Federation, [as part of] an amalgam of about 100 Turkish right-wing groups with 50,000 members."⁸⁸ In 2017, the German Federal Agency for Civic Education stated that the Wolves had "outgrown the neo-Nazis as the largest far-right group" in Germany.⁸⁹ While exact numbers of membership in Turkey are unknown, the organization has chapters in most cities in Turkey, including predominantly Kurdish areas.⁹⁰ Increasing nationalist fervor across Turkey may indicate a greater potential for recruitment in the coming years.⁹¹ In the 1970s, the group created commando camps and recruited retired soldiers and others for them.⁹²

Grey Wolves

Wolves have also engaged in recruitment for armed militias in Cyprus, Iraq, and Syria.⁹³ In 1974, the Ülkü Ocakları Headquarters recruited volunteers for the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.⁹⁴ In 2017, Devlet Bahçeli said that there were “5,000 idealist volunteers” prepared to fight in “Turkish cities where Turkmen live, especially [the Iraqi city of] Kirkuk.”⁹⁵

Training:

In 1968, the Wolves began founding paramilitary “commando” camps in several provinces across Turkey and in Cyprus to train members in combat.⁹⁶ In 1983, the *Washington Post* claimed the Grey Wolves received “rigorous training in civil warfare.”⁹⁷ Former West Germany Grey Wolves leader Ali Batman reportedly received training from a guerilla camp “where he learned shooting and bomb making.”⁹⁸ The group began founding “commando camps” in 1968. A report prepared by the Turkish Interior Ministry’s Security Department, found that there were 28 “commando camps” in total.⁹⁹

Former MHP Mardin Deputy Rifat Baykal allegedly opened a commando camp in Gumuldur Akrepkaya region in İzmir.¹⁰⁰ A 100-member camp run by retired soldiers was created along the Ankara-Eskisehir highway by MHP board member Dundar Taser.¹⁰¹ The Silivri province camp in Istanbul was founded by Mustafa Ok and was later visited by Ülkü Ocakları founder Alparslan Türkeş.¹⁰² In 1969, Ruhi Unal founded a 350 member camp in Yumurtalık, Adana province.¹⁰³ In 1970 a secondary camp was created in Adana province, under the name “the Southern Region Commando Camp.”¹⁰⁴ The camp attracted 80 participants at first, armed with at least 17 rifles.¹⁰⁵ In 1970 Alparslan Türkeş ordered the establishment of a training camp in Bursa’s Mudanya province and the camp was constructed by MHP board member Kamil Koc and the MHP Bursa City Organization.¹⁰⁶

Also Known As:

- Bozkurtlar (Grey Wolves)¹⁰⁷
- Ülkü Ocakları (Idealist Hearths)¹⁰⁸
- Idealist Youth¹⁰⁹
- Anti-Communist Street Forces¹¹⁰
- Ülkücüler¹¹¹
- Ülkü Ocakları Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı¹¹²
- Büyük Ülkü Derneği (BÜD)¹¹³
- Boz Gourde¹¹⁴

¹ “Grey Wolves,” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/grey-wolves>.

² “Grey Wolves,” Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/grey-wolves>; Yildirim Türker, “Asker Sevag’a ne oldu?,” *Radikal*, May 9, 2011, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/yildirim-turker/asker-sevaga-ne-oldu-1048713/>.

³ Gareth H. Jenkins, “Taking It to the Streets: Turkey’s Rising Social Tensions,” *Turkey Analyst*, September 18, 2015, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/444-taking-it-to-the-streets-turkeys-rising-social-tensions.html>.

⁴ Fahim Tastekin, “Who Is Behind Violence against the Kurds?,” *Al-Monitor*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/10/turkey-mob-violence-against-kurds-who-is-behind.html>; <https://twitter.com/Conflicts/status/641325003439501312>.

⁵ “Video Shows Turkish and Azeri Nationals ‘Looking for Armenians’ in France,” *Independent* (London), October 29, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turks-azeris-lyon-france-armenians-vienne-video-b1422175.html>.

⁶ William Drozdiak, “The ‘Gray Wolves,’” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1983, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/07/03/the-gray-wolves/54877a34-5e2f-4604-a40f-394285a5d756/>.

⁷ “Turkish Politicians Commemorate MHP Founder Alparslan Türkeş,” *Daily Sabah*, April 4, 2021, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/turkish-politicians-commemorate-mhp-founder-arparslan-turkes/news>.

⁸ Meral Ugur Cinar, “When Defense Becomes Offense: The Role of Threat Narratives in the Turkish Civil War of the 1970s,” *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1 (March 2014): 3, http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11693/49456/When_defense_becomes_offense_the_role_of_threat_narratives_in_the_Turkish_Civil_War_of_the_1970s.pdf;jsessionid=1832A

⁹ “MHP’li K?lavuz, Ülkü Ocakları Genel Ba?kanı???n?n sona erdi?ini aç?kladı,” *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), January 2, 2019, [https://www.Hurriyet\(Istanbul\).com.tr/gundem/mhpli-kilavuz-ulkü-ocaklari-genel-baskanliginin-sona-erdigini-acikladi-41070109](https://www.Hurriyet(Istanbul).com.tr/gundem/mhpli-kilavuz-ulkü-ocaklari-genel-baskanliginin-sona-erdigini-acikladi-41070109).

¹⁰ Sabri Sayari, “Political Violence and Terrorism in Turkey, 1976–80: A Retrospective Analysis,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (March 2010): abstract, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546550903574438>.

¹¹ R.W. Apple Jr., “Trail of Mehmet Ali Ağca: 6 Years of Neofascist Ties,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/25/world/trail-of-mehmet-ali-agca-6-years-of-neofascist-ties.html>.

Grey Wolves

- ¹² Martin A. Lee, “Turkish Dirty War Revealed, but Papal Shooting Still Obscured,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1998, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-apr-12-op-38664-story.html>; “‘ASALA’ya kar?? birlikte çal??t’k’,” NTV, July 16, 2004, archived in the Internet Archive, archived in the Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200628204152/http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/278685.asp>.
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Key Leaders



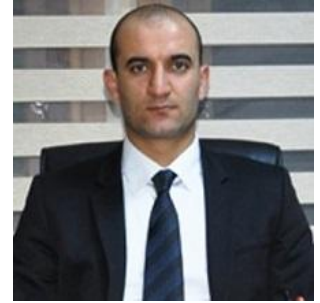
Alparslan Türkeş
Founder, deceased



Devlet Bahçeli
Chairman of Nationalist
Movement Party (MHP)



Ahmet Yiğit Yıldırım
President of the Ülkü Ocakları
(since July 2020)



Olcay Kilavuz
President of Ülkü Ocakları (2012-
2019), member of MHP



Alaattin Aldemir
President of the Ülkü Ocakları
(1992-1996)



Ali Batman
Leader of the Turkish Federation
in West Germany (1983)



Musa Cedar Celebi
Leader of the Turkish Federation
in West Germany (1979-1983)



Abdullah Çatlak
Deputy leader of Ülkü Ocakları
in the 1970s, hitman, Turkish Secret
Police officer, deceased



Alaattin Çakır?

Turkish mafia leader and Ülkü
Ocakları assassin

History:

- **July 7, 2020:** Ahmet Yi?it Y?ld?r?m is named president of the Ülkü Ocaklar?.
Source: Onder Yılmaz, "Ülkü Ocaklar?'na yeni ba?kan atandı?," *Milliyet*, July 7, 2020, archived in the Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200728203139/https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/ulku-ocaklarina-yeni-baskan-atandi-6253215>.
- **April 16, 2020:** Mafia boss and former Grey Wolves member Alaattin Çak?c? is released from prison due to an amnesty connected to COVID-19.
Alaattin Çak?c? has met frequently with Bahçeli since his release. Source: Sebnem Arsu, Maximilian Popp, and Anna-Sophie Schneider, "Erdogan's Pact with the Ultra-Nationalists," *Spiegel* (international), April 12, 2021, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/joining-the-wolves-erdogan-s-pact-with-the-ultra-nationalists-a-52bf30cd-4431-4af7-b9af-3aa83c141b0e>.
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Source: Gareth H. Jenkins, "Turkey's 'Kurdish Opening' Faces New Challenges," *Turkey Analyst*, October 26, 2009, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/185-turkeys-kurdish-opening-faces-new-challenges.html>.
- CHP Deputy Chairman Sinan Yerlikaya, writes a letter to Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz requesting the closure of the Ülkü Ocaklar?.
Source: "Ultranationalist Attacks Viewed with concern," *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), May 15, 1998, archived in the Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/2014112013141/http://www.Hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=ultranationalist-attacks-viewed-with-concern-1998-05-15>.
- **April 4, 1997:** Alparslan Türke? dies of a heart attack. Devlet Bahçeli assumes Türke?'s position as president of the MHP and takes a more moderate stance.
Sources: "Turkish Nationalist Leader Commemorated 23 Years On," Anadolu Agency, April 4, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/infographics/profile-turkish-nationalist-leader-commemorated-23-years-on/1791993>; Amberin Zaman, "Turkey's Gray Wolves Nip at Heels of Power," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1999, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-apr-20-mn-29194-story.html>.
- **November 3, 1996:** A car crash involving a prominent member of the Istanbul police force, an infamous criminal with allegiance to the Grey Wolves, and Kurdish lawmaker Sedat Bucak sparks what is known as the Susurluk Scandal.
Abdullah Çatl?, the Grey Wolves member, known drug trafficker, and assassin, had escaped a Swiss prison in 1990. The car contained a diplomatic passport for Çatl? as well as several weapons. An investigation confirmed that Çatl? was a "contract killer assigned to target both Kurdish and Armenian militants in Europe and Turkey."
Source: Ryan Gingeras, "Looking Back at the Susurluk Scandal 21 Years On," *Ahval*, last modified November 29, 2017, <https://ahvalnews.com/deep-state/looking-back-susurluk-scandal-21-years>.
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Source: William Drozdiak, "The 'Gray Wolves,'" *Washington Post*, July 3, 1983, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/07/03/the-gray-wolves/54877a34-5e2f-4604-a40f-394285a5d756/>.
- Several branches of the Büyük Ülkü Association (BÜD) are closed by the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs after the Mara? massacre.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- **December 23, 1973:** The Turkish Nationalists Organization merges with the newly re-founded Ülkü Ocaklar? Association.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- The Büyük Ülkü Association (BÜD) replaces the Young Ülkücüler Organization.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- **February 15, 1972:** After the closure of the Idealist Hearths Union and the Young Nationalists Organization in the wake of the 1971 Turkish military coup, members found the Turkish Nationalists Organization in Çank?r?.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- The organization moves its headquarters to Yozgat and suspends its activities after the 1971 Turkish military coup.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- The organization forms regional unions, such as the Ankara Ülkü Ocak Union and the Istanbul Ülkü Ocak Union.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- **June 1, 1968:** The Grey Wolves organize the National Movement March in Ankara.
Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- **February 29, 1968:** The group founds the Organization of Young Nationalists under the name of the Ülkü Ocaklar?.
Throughout the year the organization founds new branches in prominent universities, including the University of Ankara; University of Hacettepe; University of Gazi; Middle East Technical; and universities across Istanbul. Source: "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.
- **March 18, 1966:** Türke? forms the first Ülkü Ocaklar? organization in Ankara.
Sources: Evangelos Areteos, ""Our Bodies are Turkish, Our Soul Islamic,"" Diplomatic Academy, Turkish Desk, University of Nicosia, November 2021, 8, <https://www.unic.ac.cy/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2021/02/Our-Bodies-are-Turkish-Our-Soul-Islamic-Evangelos-Areteos.pdf>; "Hakk?m?zda," Ülkü Ocaklar? website, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.ulkuocaklari.org.tr/pages/i/hakkimizda>.

Grey Wolves

- **May 16, 1963:** Alparslan Türke? returns to Turkey, where he is briefly detained and then released.
Source: “Turkish Nationalist Leader Commemorated 23 Years On,” Anadolu Agency, April 4, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/infographics/profile-turkish-nationalist-leader-commemorated-23-years-on/1791993>.
- **May 27, 1960:** As part of the “National Unity Committee,” Alparslan Türke? carries out a coup d’état in Turkey but is later kicked out of the committee and sent to India as an undersecretary in the Turkish embassy.
Source: Esin Isik, “Turkey Remembers Turkes on His 22nd Death Anniversary” Anadolu Agency, April 4, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-remembers-turkes-on-his-22nd-death-anniversary/1442516>.

Grey Wolves

Violent history:

Throughout the late 1970s, Wolves “launched a wave of bomb attacks and shootings that killed hundreds of people, including public officials, journalists, students, lawyers, labor organizers, left-wing activists and ethnic Kurds.”¹¹⁵ The violence against dissenters devolved into a civil-war environment, with attacks and counterattacks occurring daily.¹¹⁶ The group was supported by the Counter-Guerrilla Organization of the Turkish Army’s Special Warfare Department.¹¹⁷ This department then received U.S. funding to combat alleged Soviet threats.¹¹⁸ In the late 1970s, the group carried out assassinations and multiple massacres. In one, the Mara? Massacre, the Wolves killed more than 100 people in the Alevi majority city.¹¹⁹ The group has also been connected to the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in 1981.¹²⁰

According to a study by ?efika Kumral, “While violent events associated with the Ülkücü movement were very low during the military junta regime in the early 1980s, these violent events rose dramatically in the course of 1990s, temporarily declined between 1999 and 2002, and accelerated rapidly after 2002.”¹²¹

- **January 5, 2021:** The head of the Ankara Ülkü Hearths Secondary Education Unit, Abdurrahman Gülseren, attacks Gelecek Party representative Selçuk Özda?. Gülseren also released a video threatening Erdoğan, comparing him to the last Ottoman sultan, Abdulhamit II, and stating that the October 2014 massacre in Ankara “could have been better.”¹²²
- **October 28, 2020:** Turkish extremists parade down streets near Lyon, France, “looking for” Armenians, shouting, “We are going to kill the Armenians.” During the protests, the Armenian Genocide memorial near Lyon was vandalized. A French anti-racism organization claims the Grey Wolves organized the gatherings. The International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA) and the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF) call for the Grey Wolves to be banned in France.¹²³
- **June 2020:** Grey Wolves members, alongside other Turkish extremists, repeatedly attack Kurdish protestors in Vienna, Austria, during a week of protests and marches.¹²⁴
- **March 14, 2020:** Members of the Ülkü Ocaklar? threaten to mutilate deceased leftist folk musician Ibrahim Gokcek’s body and behead his family anticipating his burial in Kayseri. Members of the Ülkü Ocaklar? attempted to block the funeral procession. The head of the Kayseri Grey Wolves threatens on Twitter to behead Gokcek’s family members if they return his body to Kayseri.¹²⁵
- **December 17, 2016:** Nationalists attack HDP offices after a PKK suicide attack. In Kayseri, rioters “broke into the building where the HDP office is located, scattering papers and furniture on the street and removing the HDP sign...” The rioters also set fire to the building and hung the MHP flag. Attacks against HDP offices occurred in seven other districts across Turkey.¹²⁶
- **September 8, 2015:** A violent nationalist mob, which included members of MHP and others allegedly aligned with the Ottomanist Hearths organization, set fire to an HDP office in Kirsehir and a bookstore owned by an HDP representative. Four other Kurdish-owned businesses were targeted and 32 other structures were vandalized. The four individuals trapped inside the second story of the bookstore reportedly jumped out of the building to flee the fire before the police arrived. A CHP investigation found that organizers of the mob had lists of Kurdish-owned businesses and targets. The mob followed a ceremony hosted by Ottomanist Hearth and Idealist Hearth members commemorating soldiers who had died as a result of PKK attacks. Participants in the mob were filmed shouting “We don’t want operations, we want a massacre.”¹²⁷
- **August 18, 2015:** A Uighur and a Turk bomb a Hindu shrine in Thailand, killing 20. Some newspapers speculate that the suspects were members of the loosely affiliated Grey Wolves movement in Thailand. The suspect was later apprehended with forged Turkish passports.¹²⁸
- **December 17, 2016:** Members of the Grey Wolves break into and vandalize a pro-Kurdish political party office in Kayseri.¹²⁹
- **September 2015:** Grey Wolves members attack pro-Kurdish political party offices in multiple cities. Violent protesters set fire to buildings and vandalize the properties. Some protesters shout, “We want a massacre!”¹³⁰
- **June 2015:** The Kars provincial head of the Ülkü Ocaklar?, Tolga Adiguzel, threatens Armenians after an Armenian pianist held a concert in Kars. Adiguzel was sentenced to seven years in prison for hate speech by the Kars Criminal Court.¹³¹
- **July 9, 2015:** MHP supporters attack the Thai embassy after the Thai government detained 173 Uighurs who had entered Thailand illegally to flee the Chinese authorities.¹³²
- **July 9, 2015:** Members of the Ülkü Ocaklar? march through Istanbul and allegedly attack Chinese tourists with knives. The head of Ülkü Ocaklar? in Istanbul denies that any tourists were harmed.¹³³
- **December 25, 2014:** Members of Ülkü Ocaklar? attack university students commemorating the Robaski Massacre in Kahraman, Mara?, Adana, Anakara, Antalya, Izmir, and Istanbul. A Dicle News Agency journalist was also injured while covering the protests. Police allegedly support

Grey Wolves

the nationalist attackers and teargas the students taking part in the commemoration.¹³⁴

- **April 24, 2011:** On the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, a sympathizer of Abdullah Çatl? and the Great Unity Party shoots an Armenian completing his compulsory military service.¹³⁵
- **May 25, 2010:** Two men who had described themselves as “Ülkücü” and who were allegedly involved with the Ülkü Ocaklar? organization attack a D?HA journalist. The journalist had recently produced a report covering attacks on Kurdish protesters. Prior to the attack, two other DIHA journalists has also sustained injuries from nationalist attackers.¹³⁶
- **January 5, 2006:** A violent skirmish breaks out after the General Directorate of Ülkü Ocaklar? dismisses the head of Erzurum Ülkü Hearths. One person is killed and several injured.¹³⁷
- **October 17, 2003:** Members of Ülkü Ocaklar?, including Erhan Arikli, attack journalist Murat Kanatli during “a protest in Nicosia to ‘protest the intervention of EU and USA in TRNC elections.’”¹³⁸
- **May 5, 1998:** A member of HADEP is murdered by ultranationalists in Istanbul. Members of Ülkü Ocaklar? allegedly kidnapped him and attempted to force him to join the organization several times prior to his murder.¹³⁹
- **May 3, 1998:** Ultranationalists allegedly affiliated with the Grey Wolves beat two students—one of them to death—passing in front of the Bolu Ülkü Ocaklar? Association building.¹⁴⁰
- **1994:** The Grey Wolves published a list of names of Armenians who had changed their names to avoid persecution in Nagorno Karabakh.¹⁴¹
- **1992:** On May 28, 1993, the remains are discovered of Armenians allegedly murdered by the Grey Wolves while attempting to flee to Armenia from Nagorno Karabakh.¹⁴²
- **1981:** Grey Wolves member Mehmet Ali A?ca shoots Pope John Paul II in St. Peter’s Square, seriously injuring him. The Grey Wolves organization denies involvement, claiming that A?ca was “demented.”¹⁴³
- **February 1, 1979:** Grey Wolves member Mehmet Ali A?ca murders prominent Milliyet journalist Abdi ?pekçi.¹⁴⁴ Police searching A?ca’s family’s home found pictures of A?ca with the leaders of the Ülkü Ocaklar? organization.¹⁴⁵
- **December 19–26, 1978:** Members of the Grey Wolves carry out a massacre in Mara?, Turkey, against local Alevis. Alevi organizations estimate that “111 people died, over 1,000 people were wounded and that 552 houses and 289 offices” were destroyed.¹⁴⁶
- **October 9, 1978:** Members of the Ülkü Ocaklar?, including leaders Abdullah Çatl? and Haluk K?rc?, murder seven leftist university students.¹⁴⁷
- **1974–1980:** Turkish sources claim that the organization committed 694 murders during this period.¹⁴⁸
- **December 1978:** Members of the Grey Wolves kill more than 100 minority Alevis in a week-long massacre in Mara?.¹⁴⁹
- **March 1978:** Grey Wolves member ?brahim Çiftçi assassinates the Chief Republican Prosecutor Do?an Öz, who was investigating a network of assassins.¹⁵⁰

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Grey Wolves

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Designations:

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

- **Kazakhstan**
On October 15, 2004, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan banned the group, referring to it as a terrorist association.¹⁵¹
- **Austria**
In 2019, the Austrian government banned the Grey Wolves symbol and hand gesture (i.e. a raised pinky and index finger and pinched thumb and middle and ring finger).¹⁵²
- **France**
On November 4, 2020, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced a ban on the Grey Wolves organization, citing recent violent protests in Armenian neighborhoods.¹⁵³

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Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

The Ülkü Ocakları espouse an ultranationalist, racist ideology that has reached beyond its members. Many attacks and extremist individuals have been inspired by the movement without being directly involved. The group was also tied to the Turkish intelligence agency and ideologically to the Alperen Hearths.

- **Alperen Hearths:**

The Alperen Hearths are a similar organization that is connected to a breakaway MHP party called the Great Unity Party.¹⁵⁴ The Party harbors many of the same beliefs and extremist tendencies.¹⁵⁵ Members of the Alperen Hearth have been involved in attacks against LGBT persons, leftists, Kurds, and synagogues.¹⁵⁶

- **Syrian Turkmen Brigades:**

[Alparslan Celik](#), who formerly held many senior positions in the Grey Wolves organization, commanded the Second Coastal Division of the Syrian Turkmen Brigades and, famously, killed a Russian pilot in 2016.¹⁵⁷ [Burak Misinci](#), another member of the Ülkü Ocakları was killed in Syria while fighting with the Turkmen Brigade.¹⁵⁸ Several high-level MHP politicians attended his funeral.¹⁵⁹ Some sources allege that the Grey Wolves organized recruitment for the Turkmen Coastal Brigades as well as procuring funds.¹⁶⁰ MHP Esenler District President [Suat Yılmaz](#), Bağcılar District President [Onur Yeşil](#), and Ülkü Ocakları 2nd Regional President [Oğuzhan Bağcıoğlu](#) traveled to Turkmen Mountain in Syria and posted pictures of themselves armed and in militant uniforms.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ Ece Toksabay and Dasha Afanasieva, "Istanbul Bans Gay Pride March after Threats from Hardline Group," Reuters, June 17, 2016,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-lgbt-pride/istanbul-bans-gay-pride-march-after-threats-from-hardline-group-idUSKCN0Z3116>; William Drozdiak, "The 'Gray Wolves,'" *Washington Post*, July 3, 1983, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/07/03/the-gray-wolves/54877a34-5e2f-4604-a40f-394285a5d756/>.

¹⁵⁵ "Erdoğan Condemns Attack on Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul," *Turkish Minute*, July 23, 2017, <https://turkishminute.com/2017/07/23/erdogan-condemns-attack-on-neve-shalom-synagogue-in-istanbul/>.

¹⁵⁶ Erhan Üstündağ, "Far Right Storms a Kurdish Solidarity Night," *Bianet*, April 29, 2008, <https://bianet.org/english/minorities/106600-far-right-storms-a-kurdish-solidarity-night>.

¹⁵⁷ Fehim Tastekin, "Turkey's Nationalist 'Gray Wolves' Enter Syrian Fray," *Al-Monitor*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/02/turkey-syria-grey-wolves-emerge-as-jihadists.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Fehim Tastekin, "Turkey's Nationalist 'Gray Wolves' Enter Syrian Fray," *Al-Monitor*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/02/turkey-syria-grey-wolves-emerge-as-jihadists.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Fehim Tastekin, "Turkey's Nationalist 'Gray Wolves' Enter Syrian Fray," *Al-Monitor*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/02/turkey-syria-grey-wolves-emerge-as-jihadists.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Fehim Tastekin, "Turkey's Nationalist 'Gray Wolves' Enter Syrian Fray," *Al-Monitor*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/02/turkey-syria-grey-wolves-emerge-as-jihadists.html>.

¹⁶¹ "MHP's Two District Leaders Joined the War on Turkmen Mountain," *Radikal* (Istanbul), November 30, 2015, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/mhpnin-iki-ilce-baskani-turkmen-daginda-savasa-katildi-1483138/>.

Rhetoric:

Olcay Kilavuz, September 22, 2015

“It is the main duty of the security forces to combat terrorism. We would only take on responsibility for this if the duty cannot be fulfilled.”¹⁶²

Olcay Kilavuz, March 18, 2017

“If this nation is in trouble, if our country needs us, we will take our weapons, and if necessary fight.”¹⁶³

Devlet Bahçeli, April 5, 2016

Urged the government to “level Nusaybin to ground and leave no one alive” during anti-PKK fighting in the city.¹⁶⁴

Tolga Adiguzel, local Ülkü Ocakları branch leader, June 2, 2015

“Everybody should know their place and watch their step. Do they want to try our patience with the minds of traitors from inside and out? Should we go on the hunt for Armenians on the streets of Kars?”¹⁶⁵

Banner hung outside of multiple Ülkü Ocakları buildings in 2015

“We crave Chinese blood.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Alex MacDonald, “Increasing Tensions See Resurgence of Turkey’s Far-Right Street Movements,” Middle East Eye, September 22, 2015, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/increasing-tensions-see-resurgence-turkeys-far-right-street-movements>.

¹⁶³ “Ülkü Ocakları Genel Başkanı Olcay Kilavuz: Elimize silahımız alırsanız, gerekirse de savaşırız,” CNN Turk, March 18, 2017, <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/ulku-ocaklari-genel-baskani-olcay-kilavuz-elimize-silahimizi-aliriz-gerekirse-de-savasiriz?page=2>.

¹⁶⁴ Tom Stevenson, “Analysis: The Growing Strength of Turkey’s Ultra-Nationalists,” Middle East Eye, June 2, 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-growing-strength-turkeys-ultra-nationalists>.

¹⁶⁵ Tom Stevenson, “Analysis: The Growing Strength of Turkey’s Ultra-Nationalists,” Middle East Eye, June 2, 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-growing-strength-turkeys-ultra-nationalists>.

¹⁶⁶ Pinar Tremblay, “Attacks on Chinese escalate in Turkey,” Al-Monitor, July 20, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/07/turkey-china-random-violence-become-norm-in-lgbt.html>.