

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2011 7:00 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Erdogan's speech in Germany

FYI

From: Navratil, Thomas J
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2011 5:10 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Crocker, Bathsheba N; McAuliffe, Marisa S; Gent, Stephanie R; Sokolsky, Richard D
Subject: Erdogan's speech in Germany

Jake, re: Erdogan's controversial speech in Germany, below please find my summary of the event and context. Here is the section in Farah's memo you referred to: "Further, my recent trip coincided with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Germany. During his visit, he spoke to mass audiences of German-Turks, encouraging them to learn Turkish before German and discouraging full assimilation. Some newspapers described his public appearances as "sermons of hate."

PM Erdogan spoke to over 10,000 ethnic Turks at a campaign-style gathering in Dusseldorf on Feb. 27 to mark the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Turkish guest workers and to stump for votes ahead of Turkey's June 12 election. There are over 1 million eligible Turkish voters in Germany, making it in effect Turkey's fourth largest electoral district. Erdogan embraced the audience ("you are my fellow citizens, my people, my friends, my brothers and sisters") and praised their accomplishments in Germany. He devoted most of his remarks to extolling Turkey's economic and political advances and its important role in the world. The controversy arose from brief remarks late in the speech: "Yes, integrate yourselves into German society but don't assimilate yourselves. No one has the right to deprive us of our culture and our identity." He urged Turks in Germany to learn German, but to learn Turkish first. He asserted their right to maintain their language, culture, and religion. He warned against Islamophobia, saying it is just as much a violation of international law as anti-Semitism. More constructively, Erdogan pledged to change Turkish law to allow Turks with German citizenship to retain inheritance and other benefits in Turkey, which should remove one disincentive to taking a German passport. Integration/multiculturalism remains a raw topic in Germany, and Erdogan drew criticism from a wide range of officials and commentators, including some newspapers calling his speech a sermon of hate. While Erdogan undoubtedly connected with those who came to see him in Dusseldorf, a number of Turks in Germany offered more mixed reactions, sounding the theme that their problems need to be addressed in Germany, not in Turkey.

Tom