

Turkish embassy violence is unforgivable (opinion)

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Erdogan watches brawl outside Turkish embassy

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Editor's Note: Editor's note: [Marc J. Randazza](#) is a Las Vegas-based First Amendment attorney and managing partner of the Randazza Legal Group. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

CNN —

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is notoriously thin-skinned when it comes to criticism. His censorious nature boiled over this week when his security detail viciously attacked protesters on Tuesday outside the Turkish embassy in Washington. Video shows Erdoğan speaking to the black-suited agents before they rushed the protesters in a coordinated attack and watching the violence. It was brutal – with the agents punching protesters and kicking them while they were on the ground.

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courtesy of the author

The word outrage does not come close to describing this incident. I frequently write about my objection to political violence and censorship in America, and we have plenty of examples of both. We have our own leader with a tendency toward authoritarian responses to criticism.

We have our own censorship-minded individuals who want to shut down debate. It is worrisome when an American professor allegedly violates the Constitution by calling for “muscle” to get rid of journalists. It is even worse when Americans physically attack other Americans for their political views.



But Tuesday’s attack at the Turkish embassy is all of those things rolled into one, with a side serving foreign aggression and a revived terrorism narrative.

Speaking to a joint session of Congress after September 11, George W. Bush said that terrorists hate our freedoms: “our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.” At the time, I thought (and still do think) that his rhetoric was harmful. But, today, I nonetheless think it’s a fair description of the Turkish president and his goon squad.

Related article New footage shows Erdogan watching Washington brawl

Here in America those freedoms are increasingly under attack. Our own Left wants to do away with them when it comes to Right wing speech. Our own government encroaches on them when the Left protests in ways they don’t like. But at least those are “inside the family” so to speak. These examples are Americans behaving badly, but at least they, unlike what happened outside the Turkish embassy are not a disgusting affront to our cherished liberties and our sovereignty. To have agents of a foreign power doing violence to American citizens in the streets of our nation’s capital is unforgivable. For us not to respond would be a national disgrace.



Some have blamed this incident on President Trump and his chummy relationship with the Turkish leader. Of course, many of those voices would blame him if a distant star went supernova. But this is not a Donald Trump issue. Something similar happened under George W. Bush as well, when activist Majora Carter pulled out a Tibetan flag while running with the Olympic torch in San Francisco. For that, Chinese security forces attacked her, with the assistance of San Francisco police. Our government’s response then was silence.

This time around, we must not be silent. The Turkish ambassador was summoned to the State Department Wednesday, but that is not enough. If the guards who beat the protestors do not have diplomatic immunity, they must be prosecuted, and the Trump administration should take the strongest possible measures against the Turkish mission in DC. I understand that Turkey is an important ally, but what use are our alliances if they do not serve the cause of preserving our freedom? As The Dude wisely said in the dark comedy “The Big Lebowski,” “This aggression will not stand, man.”

Erdoğan is out of control when it comes to censorship. A man who depicted him as Gollum, a character from Lord of the Rings, was criminally prosecuted. If he wants to behave that way at home, that’s one thing – we have no need to respect him. But when he and his guards behave this way on American soil, the hammer must come down. The situation demands that we make it clear, once and for all, that we will not set aside our liberty or our sovereignty for any foreign censorious goon.