

SAFEY Emergency System

Travel during a media shutdown

Summary

The impact from the failed coup d'état in Turkey 2016, was felt in Turkey and beyond. Many travelers were left stranded without viable information, a terrifying prospect for those left in an unfamiliar area. This white paper focuses on why there was a media shutdown, and how travel security apps can help travelers

Media Shutdown

The advice provided by different government authorities around the world is to monitor local media while traveling in Turkey. This is usually good advice for travelers; however, what should travelers do when the media environment is not considered free?

According to Freedom House, an independent media watchdog organization, Turkey's media landscape is facing a number of issues, ranging from media ownership conflicts, harassment of journalists, and journalists consistently self-censoring their own material. Travelers to Turkey often experience problems with accessing social media, as these platforms are repeatedly blocked.

During the failed coup d'état on July 15th 2016, local media was shutdown, leaving many travelers in the dark. This was also during a time when there was a high military presence, including: tanks, military patrols and gun fire. The situation was unsafe, and travelers needed to have access to viable information in that moment.

In the aftermath of the failed coup d'état, media outlets were targeted by the government. Many journalists and editors were detained for reporting on the situation. Media blackouts were ordered by the government in the wake of the crisis, with more than 100 media outlets shut down.

Staying informed while traveling abroad is vital for traveling safe. Travelers are always advised to stay up-to-date with political situations, weather changes, and civil society before going abroad.





Turkey's failed coup d'état

On July 15th, reports emerged of high military presence in the Turkish cities of Ankara and Istanbul. Tanks and ground troops patrolled the streets, jets and helicopters flew low over buildings, and gunfire echoed throughout the cities. It was quickly revealed to be an attempted military coup. The operation lasted only a few hours, and the attempt had been foiled by the following morning. However, during these hours the safety of civilians was under threat, and infrastructure was heavily disrupted.

The information required by those in Turkey:

- Where are clashes between military forces and civilian fighters occurring?
- Are airports or train stations still operating?
- Embassy contact information.
- Information about the curfew.
- How to overcome the heavily restricted communication.

During the media shutdown several alerts were sent out by the SAFEY Emergency System. The SMS alerts reached our users as soon as new information was available. Following these events, our users informed us of the difficulties in assessing the situation during the media shut down. SAFEY's services provided real-time alerts at a time when censorship prevented our users from knowing what was going on.

Feedback from one of SAFEY's service users in Turkey during the coup:

"I was very impressed by how fast I received information and professional support through the SAFEY app. To get SMS updates was very valuable, especially since local media was heavily censored and social media was obviously blocked or overloaded."

– Client on location in Turkey

Turkey in particular has a pattern of military coups, as many political groups are antagonistic to the vision of Turkey growing as a secular state. The predictable pattern of tensions rise; violence breaks out and then the military steps in.

Turkey, especially Istanbul, is often ranked as a popular travel destination. Study abroad programs that operate in Turkey or that have students or faculty that regularly travel there, should keep up to date with the latest duty-of-care management tools to keep their staff safe while abroad.

Travel to Turkey

Turkey is known as the gateway connecting east and west, and is a popular destination for student travelers. After a decade of growth within the tourism sector numbers are beginning to fall, due to increasing security threats.

However, it is still common for student travelers to visit Turkey, which means that study abroad programs need to do more to protect their students abroad.

Turkey has seen a significant decrease in foreign visitors, as they fear for their safety. Incidents like these are likely to deter visitors, and the need for personal travel safety is higher than ever. The incidents are often unexpected, and in today's world travelers have a need to stay prepared.

Study abroad programs also have a role in ensuring that their students and staff are prepared, and know who to contact in case of an emergency. What are your organization's current policies for travel risk management and duty of care?

Do we have a legal obligation for the safety of our students while abroad?

Do we have a clear travel security policy?

Do students know who to alert during an emergency?

Do our students carry a specific number to use during a crisis?

Can we provide correct and timely information to our students and their parents during an emergency?

The SAFEY Solution

The right travel management tool will ensure that your students and staff have the right information, at the right time. The SAFEY Emergency System, sends alerts for natural disasters, accidents, outbreaks of disease, political unrest, crime or economic instability, and travel delays. Travel security apps are how you can diversify your information sources during a disaster, and stay up to date.

The SAFEY system uses new technology to cover this pitfall. SAFEY was able to keep travelers informed during the failed coup d'état, because of our unique technology. SAFEY was able to keep users updated consistently about the situation through our app and SMS service. SAFEY also has a 24/7 analysis team with analysts around the world ensuring that our users receive quality, and vetted information when it's most needed.

Staying informed while traveling abroad is vital for traveling safe. Travelers are always advised to stay up-to-date with political situations, weather changes, and civil society before going abroad. The SAFEY system was able to provide information to users without relying on local media sources. Plus, it provided current and accurate updates on the political situation in Turkey. Our management tools ensure that travel security managers can keep track and in contact with their students and staff on the ground.

In the information age it can be too easy to rely on traditional forms of media, and to forget about the importance of diversifying information sources. SAFEY Emergency System's goal is to provide the right information at the right time. We aim to keep students safe and ultimately save lives.

