

Mr. Ishak Alaton is CEO of Alarko Holding, one of Turkey's largest companies. Alarko Holding has twenty subsidiary companies and more than six thousand employees. Alarko Holding has interests in a variety of sectors: manufacturing of a variety of industrial goods and heavy equipment; construction and contracting in Turkey, the Middle East, Russia and the Central Asian Republics; tourism, hotel management and salmon farming. Alarko is a household brand name in Turkey for a variety of appliances.

But Mr. Alaton also is a larger than life figure in Turkish and international politics. He travels widely around the world promoting social democracy and accountability in Turkey and encourages these same ideals in the private sector. He has also participated in international talks and meetings aimed at conciliation between Turkey, Greece and the European Union. He writes for the Turkish news media and has his own television program where he discusses current events.

He was born in 1927 in Istanbul to a prominent Jewish family. He graduated from the French-speaking Saint-Michel Lycee and, like his other countrymen, served in the Turkish army as a reserve lieutenant from 1948 to 1949. Between 1951 and 1953, he worked as an apprentice engineer in Sweden. Upon his return, he founded Alarko Company together with Dr. İzzet Garih. Sweden, however, remained a part of his life. He speaks fluent Swedish (as well as French and English, and some Spanish) and in 1958 married the Swedish Margarete von Proschek, with whom he had a daughter, Leyla, and a son, Vedat. (Recently, Mr. Alaton became a grandfather.) In 1993, he was honored by the King of Sweden with the Nordstjaernan (North Star), first degree. He also was named Honorary Consul of South Africa in Istanbul.

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