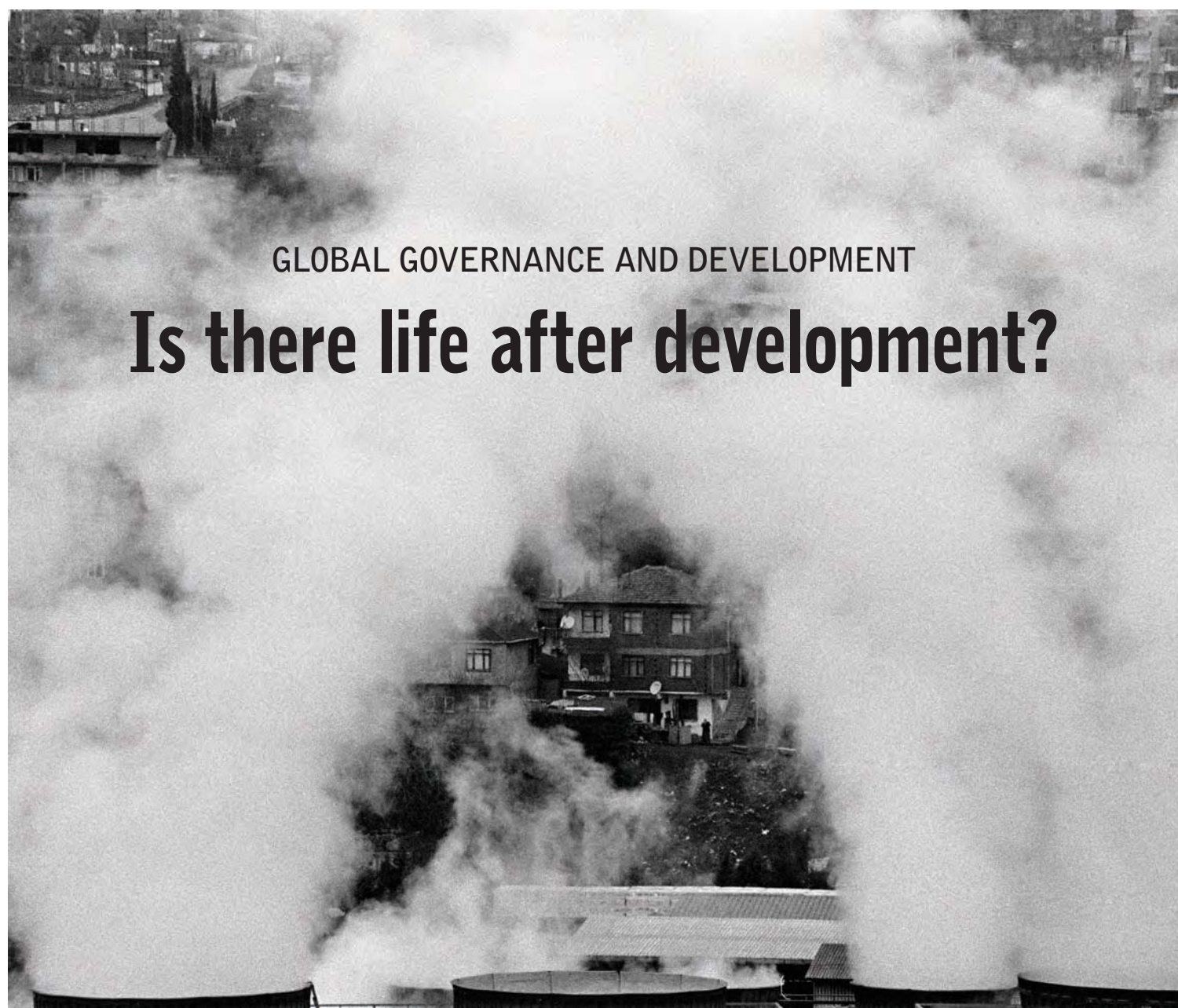


# perspectives

Issue 13  
July 2015

POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

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## Heinrich Böll Stiftung - Turkey Representation

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# Editorial

Dear readers,

The discourse over the right path to development started way before even the notion of official development assistance (ODA) was conceived in the speech of the then U.S. president Harry S. Truman in 1949. Already then his so called four-point plan was aimed at winning “the hearts and minds” of people in the developing world, but this notion mixed clearly with the idea that other than in the centuries before democratic and humanitarian ideals and not imperial ambitions should be at the heart of such development.

Ümit Akçay discusses the history of development theories from a perspective of the left and raises the question, what model of development can be sustainable. The question, if development assistance abroad is guided by imperial ambition or by the will to help the poor is still a hot topic.

ODA has been and still is a foreign policy tool that all countries, be it Turkey today or Russia and the U.S. during the Cold War use(d) to further their own interests. So the crucial question is then, what these interests are and what means are employed to achieve them. Developing interest based relations is not a problem as such, as long as this does not mean that the stronger partner is exploiting the weaker.

The topic of ODA as a tool in Turkish foreign policy and how it should be used, that Utku Güngör discusses in his article is therefore one that is timely, given the current debate over Turkey's foreign policy. The topic is also one that is relevant for the Heinrich Böll Foundation, given that our work abroad is paid for by ODA money.

That questions are being raised, such as if and how the foundation then manages to secure its independence from the German government is a natural side effect of the discourse over development. However that the German political foundations have managed

to attain this independence is a direct result of a new and multi-faceted view on development. Different concepts of development can and should exist side-by-side and different actors enrich the debate by constantly questioning the approach of the other.

Development, be it at home or abroad, is a term loaded with so many different meanings and through the last 60 years the debate over whether development can be planned at a desk or if it rather is the result of an anarchic and often random process has swung back and forth.

For Turkey, as a country on the government-declared track to catch-up with industrial development the debate how to plan such processes so that they find a balance between economic growth and sustainability is important. Bengi Akbulut's article casts a critical look at the AKP's concept of development in theory and in practice and Cengiz Aktar does the same for the government's approach to agricultural policies.

Amartya Sen, one of the great thinkers on development of our time, who coined the concept of “Development as Freedom” already in 1999 argues that development - and especially economic development - is not an end in itself, but a way to attain a greater array of possibilities the individual can choose from to realize the greatest possible freedom for him- or herself. According to Sen, development requires not only economic possibilities, but also space for democracy that allows for dissenting voices as those nurture new ideas that prevent development from stagnating.

Such a holistic approach to development that has the opportunities of the poor as its cornerstone, but does not forget that economic possibilities are ultimately dependent on a free and fair society is a concept relevant for developing and developed countries alike.

On behalf of the Perspectives team  
Kristian Brakel

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

# The Crisis of development and the alternatives

Ümit Akçay

In response to the economic and ecological crises which are becoming more and more frequent, more serious questions have emerged about hegemonic notions of development, which are based on the assumption that economic growth, namely the increase in commodity production, may continue forever.



**Ümit Akçay**

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The discontent with the hegemonic development approach and the economic policies implemented in line with that approach has become all the more apparent following the global economic crisis which began in the USA in 2008 and has continued up to this date.

On the other hand, we see that the fundamental problem of the social oppositions which emerged in many regions ranging from the Occupy Street movement in the USA to the social movements in Latin America, from the revolts in the Arab regions to the demonstrations against the austerity policies in Europe and the resistance at Gezi Park in Turkey is related to how to turn that social energy into a transformative capacity and to unite these movements around an alternative program. Within this context, it has become all the more important to leave the hegemonic development approach and to discuss alternative policies that aim at surpassing the capitalist social relations, which are the basis for this hegemonic approach.

## The "Invention" of development

The development of capitalist social relations marks the point in history in which the idea of moving economic growth beyond the limits of nature was brought to the fore. In that regard, capitalist development involves the assumption that economic growth may increase year by year in a linear fashion forever.

On the other hand, the issue of development was brought to the agenda as the theory of capitalist development came to be used for the countries categorized as "under-developed" under the international economic-political conditions of the post-World War II era. Although focusing on economic growth, this idea of development was constructed in relation to such concepts as "modernization" and "progress" within the period in which it emerged and was based on the belief that the late capitalist countries would catch up with the early capitalist countries if the traditional economies were modernized and industrialized.

Three fundamental dynamics have been influential in this process which may be called "the invention of development." The first dynamic was the development of a social system alternative to and opponent of the capitalist system in the USSR and the emergence of the Cold War conjuncture in the post-world war II era. This era witnessed the escalation of the war between the two social systems that competed with each other to have controlling influence over large geographic areas.

The second dynamic, which needs to be evaluated in relation to the first one, was the process of de-colonization which also started in the post-1945 period. In this process, the previously colonized countries established new nation-states and one of the most important agenda of the Cold War pertained to the question of whether these new nation-states would choose the capitalist or the socialist camp.<sup>1</sup> The third dynamic was the change in the hegemonic understanding of economy following the crisis in 1929. Accordingly, the neoclassical approach to economy, which argues that the freedom of markets would result in economic growth and ensure the effective distribution of resources, was replaced by the Keynesian approach, which suggests that state intervention may be utilized actively to solve





the problems which cannot be solved with the free operation of the markets. The legitimization of the state intervention by the Keynesian approach laid the necessary intellectual ground for the emergence of development economics, which argues that systematic state intervention is needed in “under-developed” countries to direct them towards development.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental aim of the concept and practices of development that emerged as a result of these three dynamics was to ensure that the late capitalist countries ally with the Western countries and that their economies integrate into the capitalist system. In this context, the concept of development is an invention of the USA to a large extent.<sup>3</sup> However, to the extent that it represented a “common good,” the concept of development was also an important tool of social legitimacy for the political elites engaged in state-making practices in late capitalist countries. The development policies which were practiced in most of the late capitalist countries between the years 1945-1980 were able to be implemented through the three-partite program that evolved in the sphere of legitimacy opened up by Keynesianism. This program was comprised of systematic state intervention, industrialization strategy based on import substitution and development planning.

### Neoliberal development

The fundamental feature of the development policies implemented between the years 1945-

1980 was the systematic state intervention and the creation of the necessary conditions for the accumulation of capital within the domestic market by means of a foreign trade policy based on import substitution. However, when the crisis of the industrialization strategy based on import substitution in late capitalist countries overlapped with the structural crisis caused by the tendency of the rate of profit to fall in the early capitalist countries in 1970s, the hegemonic approach to development underwent a change.

The dramatic increase in the interest rates aimed at controlling the inflation in the USA triggered the debt crises in the Global South in the early years of 1980s. With the subsequent conditional structural adjustment credits issued by the IMF and the World Bank, the hegemonic approach to development was turned into a market-centered approach negating state intervention. The fundamental properties of this new model that can be called “neoliberal development” may be summarized by the policies of the Washington Consensus. To the extent that it is based on a critique

*Having occupied the media due to its refusal of the decision for urban transformation in Fikirtepe for several months, this building has finally been pulled down in August 2004, following an expropriation decree by the Ministry for Environment and Urbanization.*

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The neoliberal and state-centered suggestions, despite being based on different theoretical frameworks and socio-political alliances, have not been able to develop satisfying responses to the inequalities and crisis tendencies inherent to the process since they take the capitalist development process for granted. This process points to the crisis of development itself.

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of the previous conception of development, the neoliberal development approach claimed that the interventions to the operation of the market are the fundamental reason for the stagnation of the economic growth. The neoliberal development approach continued to be centered on economic growth and argued that economic growth is to be realized through strategies based on private property and the market rather than public initiatives such as state intervention.<sup>4</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s were the years in which the neoliberal development policies were implemented in the Global South. The neoliberal approach to development was revised in 2000s when it could not provide the results it promised through the market-based de-regulation policies such as privatization, restricting public services, putting pressure on wages and the liberalization of foreign trade and capital movements. The post-

well into the 2000s, which were the years in which policies of the post-Washington consensus revised by the institutionalist approach were implemented. Therefore, very little of what was promised to the late capitalist countries was delivered through the discourse and practices of development in the post-1945 era.<sup>8</sup>

The recent developments in the market-centered approach to development have focused on micro strategies aimed at reducing poverty.<sup>9</sup> In this framework, it is argued that such practices as financial inclusion and its improvement would accelerate economic growth. It is not hard to guess that the financial inclusion policies proposed in the 2000s when personal indebtedness exploded worldwide will lead to further household indebtedness.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in line with the financialization of economies worldwide, the market-based solutions developed in response to the crisis of development propose a framework which may be defined as “more of the same.”<sup>11</sup>

The new developmentalist proposals emerged as an alternative to the limitations of the neoliberal argument for a development framework in which the state resumes a more active role by “returning to the origins”<sup>12</sup> to implement selective industrial policies.<sup>13</sup> However, the problem with this approach is that it positions the state as the guiding force of this type of development framework at a time when the relative autonomy of the state is increasingly restricted.<sup>14</sup> The reason is that the state which they call back is not the same as the state of today. Now the state is not simply an active executor of neoliberal policies but is increasingly managed like a company itself.

In short, the neoliberal and state-centered suggestions, despite being based on different theoretical frameworks and socio-political alliances, both take the capitalist development process for granted and therefore, have not been able to develop satisfying responses to the inequalities and crisis tendencies inherent to this process. This process points to the crisis of development itself. This means that there is an undeniably huge gap between what was promised to late capitalist countries with the invention of the concept of development in the post-1945 era and what has been realized up to this date.

## The Alternatives: Politics of the commons and the potentials

Actually, the “crisis of development” is not a new issue. For instance, Escobar claimed in 1990s that the development approach of 1960s came to an end and this concept needed to be re-defined in line with the demands of the newly developing social movements.<sup>15</sup> The suggestion

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The increasing frequency of economic and ecological crises requires a re-evaluation of the thought and practices relating to development through a perspective which questions capitalism, the dominant mode of social organization, and aims at moving beyond it.

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Washington Consensus inspired by the institutionalist economics represents the revisions in neoliberal development. Accordingly, the markets may not be perfect; the state has a regulatory role to play especially with respect to such matters as asymmetric levels of information and externalities.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, pro-market state intervention and regulation was brought to the agenda for the sake of such reforms as developing autonomous regulatory institutions, ensuring the independence of the central bank and strengthening and protecting property rights.<sup>6</sup>

## The Crisis of development

The implementation of the neoliberal development approach, which is based on the belief that the freedom of the market may solve such problems as economic growth, unemployment, effective distribution of resources or economic crises has led to another wave of commodification in the post-1980 era. This new wave of commodification operated in two ways. The first one operated through the privatization of public enterprises while the second one involved the commercialization of the very logic of public enterprises and their inclusion in market relations. This new wave, called “accumulation by dispossession”<sup>7</sup> by David Harvey, pursued an incremental progression





that Escobar made more than 20 years ago is still valid today. Within this framework, the increasing frequency of economic and ecological crises requires a re-evaluation of the thought and practices relating to development through a perspective which questions capitalism, the dominant mode of social organization, and aims at moving beyond it.<sup>16</sup>

In this context, it is all the more important to think about a framework of social development which aims at surpassing commodity relations to move beyond the current crisis of development. In this framework, the politics of the commons, which is discussed more frequently in the recent period, carries crucial potentials.<sup>17</sup>

The politics of the commons aims at founding a system of thought and practice which brings to the agenda models of commoning, production and management oriented towards surpassing the divisions between economics and politics or the public and the private. If we are to think within this framework, we need to elaborate on three fundamental columns on which we may build social development models aimed at surpassing commodity relations: democratization of economy, self-government and democratic planning.

Democracy is used as a concept restricted to the political sphere in the hegemonic approach to development. This construction of democracy assumes that people who are citizens of a country are free as political subjects and are equal before the law. However, when we transfer this concept

of democracy restricted to the political sphere, to the economic sphere, we see that the only freedom we have is the “freedom” of private property. That is the root of the problem. When the inequalities established in the economic sphere are not addressed, the political equalities become nothing but hollow concepts. Therefore, the alternative perspective to social development which needs to be developed has to go beyond this apparent division between the economy and politics and to see the economic sphere itself as a site which needs to be democratized.

When we approach the issue with this framework, we could see that the hegemonic development approach has always had a technocratic content. In this context, the fundamental problem with the hegemonic development perspecti-

*With Turkey's dominant technocratic understanding of development becoming based on a neoliberal path, those NGOs and occupational organizations that tried to take part in diverse public projects and lawsuits started to be seen as stumbling blocks. As the protests on the Istiklal street demonstrate, following a proposed law that would limit the Chamber of Architects' possibilities of intervention to urban transformation projects, such impositions are met with increased social reaction.*

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The concept of self-government is commonly used in relation to the political sphere. However, the institutions of self-government may also function as the fundamental mechanisms which could enable the workers to have the right to speak and participate in decision making processes both within a production process based on use-value and in the management process in general. These institutionalizations may be realized as cooperatives in the agricultural sector, communized production units in the industrial sector and common credit unions in the finance sector.

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ve is that it prioritizes increasing capital accumulation to the extent that it is based on economic growth. It is inevitable that the accumulation of capital within the capitalist mode of production will increase social inequalities and the economy will continue being a fundamental site in which social inequalities are instituted. Therefore, democratization of the economy is one of the essential components of a politics of the commons aimed at surpassing commodity relations. Accordingly, real democracy may only be instituted if political equality and freedoms are supported by economic ones.<sup>18</sup>

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The failure of the development plans does not mean that the mechanism of economic planning is to be abandoned.

Economic planning is all the more possible at the current level of technological development. Therefore, democratic planning is indispensable for the coordination and development of common initiatives feeding on the participatory mechanisms of self-government units and aiming at surpassing commodity relations.

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When we approach the process of democratization of economy more concretely, we have on our agenda the issue of supporting and developing public enterprises which would surpass private property relations, the basis of inequalities in the economic sphere. However, this does not simply mean calling back the state as is the case in new developmentalist approaches. The politics of the commons must simply argue for communization rather than nationalization. The reason is that profit-driven enterprises subjected to market relations would have limited social benefit even if they are owned by the state. Therefore, when the public enterprises are supported, they need to ensure that workers participate in the management of the enterprises in which they work and that they are inspected by the workers themselves together with the expert institutions. Therefore, the perspective favoring the democratization of economy argues for communization instead of nationalization and thus, emphasizes the need for the development of common mechanisms of production, management and inspection.<sup>19</sup>

Based on this argument, we may approach the second component of the politics of commons, which is the issue of self-government. The units of self-government, which are possibly the principal components for the democratization of economy, are also potentially the principal components of a social development project aimed at surpassing commodity relations. The concept of self-government is commonly used in relation to the political sphere. However, the institutions of

self-government may also function as the fundamental mechanisms which could enable the workers to have the right to speak and participate in decision making processes both within a production process based on use-value and in the management process in general. These institutionalizations may be possible through cooperatives in agricultural sector, communized production units in industrial sector and common credit unions in finance sector.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the mechanism of democratic planning will be the complementary component of the politics of the commons by serving both the democratization of the economy and the coordination of units of self-government. As is known, the hegemonic theory and practice of development are not unrelated to the debates on planning. Despite having been discredited by the neoliberal development approach,<sup>21</sup> development planning was a commonly used method, especially between the years 1945 and 1980. The new developmentalist approaches proposed as an alternative to the neoliberal development today bring the issue of development planning to the agenda. However, the fundamental problem with both the previous practices and the new proposals is that they argue for an economic planning by taking private property and the capitalist system for granted. In that case, various tools such as guaranteeing profit or tax reductions and subsidies were used to steer the investment of profit-driven private companies towards desired sites. However, in this structure, no sanction is applied to the capitalists if they do not act in line with the priorities of the plan. The plans prepared following these practices became shelved technocratic documents and since there was no sanction at stake, these documents were also used as a tool in canalizing social resources to the companies to support the accumulation of private capital.<sup>22</sup>

The planning initiatives which take the capitalist system for granted constitute one of the fundamental contradictions of the theory and practice of development. However, the failure of the development plans does not mean that the mechanism of economic planning is to be abandoned. There is no proof to suggest that the free operation of the market system may have any positive results in the face of the ecological and economic crises which have become more frequent. In addition, economic planning has become all the more possible at the current level of technological development. Therefore, democratic planning is indispensable for the coordination and development of common initiatives feeding on the participatory mechanisms of self-government units and aiming at surpassing commodity relations.



## The Kernel of post-capitalist social relations: The Commons

The experiences of development up to this date have led to the inclusion of the late capitalist countries in the capitalist system. The result of the grand capitalist development caused by these experiences has been the further aggravation of contradictions: unemployment and idle capacity, the homeless and residential oversupply, liquidity excess in financial markets and millions of people who are indebted more and more each day. Many needs that cannot be met and overaccumulation exist simultaneously and side by side. In this framework, to the extent that they were based on the capitalist development, the hegemonic theory and practices of development could not produce effective solutions either to "catch up with" the early capitalist countries or to reduce the existing social and economic inequalities. Therefore, it is time to move beyond the hegemonic development framework which is based on commodity relations and capitalist accumulation and to seriously think about the possible alternatives. Even though it needs to be developed further, the politics of the commons that I tried to outline above carries an important potential within this context.

Finally, I would like to conclude this essay with a warning in relation to a crucial matter. With the market-centered neoliberal development model developed after the 1980s, public initiatives and social commons such as education, health, pension, access to water or social security were dissolved to a large extent. However, we need to underline the fact that integration with market relations does not have to result in the dissolution of the commons.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the social commons which carry the potential kernels of post-capitalist social relations,<sup>24</sup> the practices of commoning aiming at the realization of these potentials and commoning as a mode of organization need to be constantly constituted and re-constituted. Within this framework, the existence of the social commons may not produce a post-capitalist alternative on its own if they are not supported by the democratization of the economy, self-government and democratic planning.

We need to underline the fact that integration with market relations does not have to result in the dissolution of the commons. The social commons that carry the potential kernels of post-capitalist social relations, the practices of commoning that aim to realize this potential and commoning as a mode of organization need to be constantly constituted and re-constituted.

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## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

## Development as in-justice: An Evaluation of Justice and Development Party's development strategies

Bengi Akbulut

The 10th development plan (2014-2018), devised and approved by the former Justice and Democracy Party (AKP) government in June 2013, states the goal of development as the creation of a social environment that enables individuals to lead a free, healthy, and safe life, and ensures the happiness, prosperity and dignity of citizens (State Planning Organization, 2013). It also posits that participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability should be the founding principles of the development process.



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Yet, judging by the one-large-construction-site look of the country's landscape after its 13-year rule, it seems that the AKP's vision of development was hardly anything other than erecting cement structures; skyscrapers, shopping malls, canals, bridges, etc. While this may not be too inaccurate a description, as construction was indeed dubbed the engine of development, it is worth looking more closely at the understanding of development that the AKP has embraced and the policies through which this understanding was articulated.

Development comes with its discontents, from communities whose living spaces are destroyed by energy projects to those bearing the detrimental health impacts of industrial pollution, from residents of entire villages submerged under water with dam constructions to miners killed by the hundreds. Discursively, development has always served as a powerful notion that has shaped the social and political sphere in Turkey. Catching up with the "West" and attaining the level of Western civilizations has not only been the long-lasting objective of

policy-making, but also dominated the social imaginary like no other (Akbulut and Adaman, 2013). Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the AKP's logic of development was in many ways a continuation of the idea of catching-up that marks the history of the Turkish state. On the other hand, the AKP's development policy was also a continuation of the neoliberal wave that became dominant after early 1980s, albeit with its particularities.

Despite the lip service paid in the national development plans, the idea of development realized during the AKP era can hardly be called a people-centered process that has prioritized human dignity, health, happiness, and democracy. The question of development was posed primarily about ensuring economic growth, which was assumed to be a rising tide that lifts all boats, i.e., the benefits accruing from growth were implicitly assumed to lead to higher living standards across the society. In this way, development was rendered an automatic ex-post of economic growth, its natural sidekick, and the distributive conflicts as well as the socio-ecological costs of growth policies were swept under the rug.

## Development as dislocation, dispossession, and disruption

This approach translated into an immediate and full-fledged liberalization move within the context of rural development. As will be recalled, the wake of the AKP rule in 2002 coincided with the rolling-out of the World Bank-backed Agricultural Reform Implementation Project (ARIP) and adaptation with the Common Agricultural Programme (CAP) as a part of the EU-accession process. While the seeds of both ARIP and CAP were planted before AKP's came to power, the privileging of market mechanisms in organizing



the socio-economic sphere and the logic of market-based developmentalism that underlie them can be said to have defined AKP's subsequent general approach to rural development. Accordingly, the main impediment to rural development was identified as the overall inefficiency of agriculture caused by state subsidies and the existence of a (largely unproductive) surplus population in agriculture. The rural development objective was thus set as rendering the agricultural sector competitive on a global scale by correcting past market distortions (i.e. over-production) and the reduction of the share of labor force in agriculture to levels on par with the sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (State Planning Organization, 2006). The implied logic was that the agricultural sector would eventually gain competitiveness in international trade through efficiency-enhancing measures and the resulting benefits would be broadly shared. The surplus population that would be released from agriculture, on the other hand, was expected to be absorbed into employment in the urban centers.

Among the many drastic changes that this vision of rural development implied, the most notable has perhaps been a radical restructuring of the state's involvement in the agricultural sector. During the AKP era, former instruments of state support in agriculture, most significantly direct output purchases and input subsidies,

were largely eliminated and replaced by a direct-income support scheme. Direct-income supports were favored as they are de-coupled from production decisions and thus have no impact on quantities produced by farmers, unlike input and output subsidies which distort market prices, give "wrong" signals to producers and thus lead to inefficiencies stemming from over-supply of subsidized crops. This strategy to eliminate overproduction inefficiencies went hand-in-hand with interventions to scale up agricultural production to realize productivity gains; that is to say, large-scale production facilities were actively supported on grounds that small-scale farming is inefficient as it fails to reap benefits of scale economies in inputs.

This policy outlook translated most visibly into the infamous laws that eradicated subsidies for crops like tobacco, sugar beet and hazelnut. The removal of subsidies were coupled with state support to encourage the cultivation of alternative crops for which the sector supposedly held

*The construction business, which proved to be one of the principal sectors of AKP period development strategy, has not only hit the rural areas but also historical and central neighborhoods of metropolitan cities. One of the gentrification attempts which paved the way for rant for the construction business, displaced people and demolished the social fabric through social engineering, is the "Tarlabası 360" project, which was accomplished by the Beyoğlu Municipality despite all opposition.*

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From communities whose living spaces are destroyed by energy projects to those bearing the detrimental health impacts of industrial pollution, from residents of entire villages submerged under water with dam constructions to miners killed by the hundreds, development creates its own victims.

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comparative advantage in international trade. Given that shifting across crops is often costly (in terms of inputs and time) and that marketing networks for the new crops were largely absent, the alternatives to which the farmers were directed have generally failed to compensate for the losses from the removal of state subsidies. The resulting decline in the viability of rural livelihoods has triggered a massive process of rural dispossession (exacerbated by rural enclosures described below) and the interlinked displacement of large sections of rural population from farming, in addition to alarming levels of rural indebtedness. Thus, the resulting rapid rural-urban migration forced the surplus rural population into urban centers as cheap available labor, often to be employed in informal jobs with precarious conditions, such as construction and mining.

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Development in the AKP era translated into deepening of commercialization, extension of markets and the erosion of small-farmers' base of reproducing their existence. Unable to compete with large producers and often lacking access to independent marketing networks, many small farmers are pushed into further dispossession and indebtedness.

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On the other hand, labor forms in agricultural production have also transformed, as demonstrated with the rise of contract-farming as the new model of agricultural production and the emerging prevalence of industry-type large scale production facilities (Ulukan, 2013). For many producers who were forced to shift away from the crops they traditionally cultivated and failed to substitute or otherwise hit by market dynamics that now govern the sector (including indebtedness), contract-farming provided a somewhat desirable option as it lowered the risks involved in production. It also meant, however, the loss of all decision-making power in the production process for the producers (leading some to call contract-farmers "rural proletariat on their own fields") and often facing lower prices at the end than agreed upon, let alone the problematic implications of contract farming for environmental sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

To recap, rural development in the AKP era translated into increasing commercialization, the extension of markets and the erosion of small-farmers' base of reproducing their existence. Unable to compete with large producers and often lacking access to independent marketing networks (thus losing most of the added value they gave to middlemen), many small farmers were and continue to be pushed into further dispossession and indebtedness. In addition,

the interlinked processes of dispossession, rural indebtedness and proletarianization, coupled with the unpredictability of markets, forced many farmers to give up subsistence farming and thus they had to rely on markets to meet livelihood needs. Given the price fluctuations and asymmetric power dynamics that they face, reliance on the markets implies increased vulnerability and loss of any buffer for small farmers.

On the side of industrial development, the AKP strategy rested on a combination of availability of cheap credit and of cheap labor (not least due to the rural-urban migration triggered with the restructuring of agricultural sector), on the one hand, and a furthering the internationalization of domestic capital, on the other. In many respects, this was a continuation and deepening of the export-oriented development path that the country was set upon since the early 1980's. Within this context, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) became the centerpiece of industrial development, with AKP's declared commitment to promote their interests (Hoşgör, 2011). Grounded in a vision of development as achieving global competitiveness primarily through their flexible production abilities, SME's were supported by the provision of credit subsidies, tax incentives and the reorganization of the labor market to allow flexible forms of employment, in addition to explicit efforts to strengthen their access to international markets. An accompanying twist was the regional emphasis introduced with the Regional Development Agencies, envisaged as governance institutions to mobilize local dynamics to increase local competitiveness, and to attract and organize investment (Gündoğdu, 2009). The regional approach to development management was advocated to be the institutional response to what the dynamicism of SME's and the particular needs and strengths found in different regions required (Ataay, 2005).

In practice, however, SME's have largely failed to realize the great hopes pinned upon them. Far from fulfilling the role of technological innovators and drivers of efficiency, they generally remain confined to labor-intensive low-technology production, gaining competitiveness primarily through low labor-costs. The regional developmental approach, on the other hand, becomes a tool of suppressing and de-legitimizing labor demands; while the discourse of regional development as attracting capital pits sub-national regions against each other, labor is repressed with the threat of capital flight to other regions.

It was perhaps the ascent of energy and construction as the country's developmental engines that became the hallmark of AKP era. Both sectors are marked with the explicit and visible role that the state assumed in their restructuring as



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venues of capital accumulation. That is to say, a series of critical changes in the legal infrastructure was completed in this period to facilitate investment in these sectors and enabled their boom. In the case of energy, the restructuring and liberalization of energy markets to open fields of energy investments previously beyond reach to the private sector—most notably coal and hydropower—were consolidated by AKP. This was buttressed by the consistent relaxation of environmental legislation that could potentially halt the development of the sector and the provision of a variety of incentives, including forms of market assurance and credit subsidies. In the case of construction, numerous legal revisions were made to allow state expropriation of land for purposes of redevelopment and marketing and to unlatch lands previously under protection into construction investments. Within this context, the Housing Development Administration emerged as the critical instrument which mediated the state-led development of the sector and private capital investments. The institution was endowed with powers to develop profit-oriented housing projects in collaboration with municipalities and private companies, and establish enterprises directly or jointly with the private sector. In addition to the housing boom, infrastructure investments took place on massive scales—such as the Northern Anatolia Highway and the Izmit Bay Bridge, as well as the planned

third bridge to span the Bosphorus and a third airport in the Northeast of Istanbul.

If the visibility of the state's role is the first common thread to the rise of construction and energy, the appropriation of space inherent to them is the second. The most evident implication of this developmental strategy had been the enclosure and/or destruction of rural-urban commons and living spaces, displacement of communities as well as the erosion of their means of livelihood, modes of living and the networks that sustain them. While this was manifested as an accelerated process of rural-urban migration already set off by the agricultural policies in the rural context (as well as spurring wide-spread social resistance), it meant the restructuring of urban space so that working class populations are relegated to outskirts while city centers are turned into commercialized spaces marketed in different ways to tourists, consumers and real-estate investors.

Put in a broader context, the developmental

*As their population gets more crowded, the housing problem in metropolitan centers becomes even worse. The Dikmen Valley in Ankara both whets the appetite of TOKI and its constituents and witnesses the resistance of those who grew up here. The monthly rent for the no-water, no-road houses of the valley, which serves as the final refuge for migrants from within Turkey and abroad, can be as high as 250 TL.*

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It was perhaps the ascent of energy and construction as the country's developmental engines that became the hallmark of AKP era. Both sectors are marked with the explicit and visible role that the state assumed in their restructuring as venues of capital accumulation.

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*Justifying it through Turkey's supposed energy need and aspiring even the smallest watercourse, AKP has given more than 2000 licenses to hydroelectric power plant projects. One of the main victims of the private sector's greed which manifests itself in the 'massacre on nature' has been the coastal city Artvin where hundreds of thousands of trees have been cut down already.*



strategy of the AKP rested on mobilizing labor, resources (e.g. minerals) and energy by a regime of enclosure and dislocation from the rural areas to urban centers. The restructuring of the agricultural sector, coupled with energy and infrastructure investments that radically changed the rural landscape, dislocated large sections of the population to urban centers, where they were mostly incorporated into the pool of cheap labor (Adaman et al, 2014). On the other hand, large-scale infrastructural investments to sustain this mobilization together with massive urban transformation and gentrification projects kept the construction sector alive.

### Development—Which way now?

All in all, the AKP has operationalized a market-based, neoliberal developmentalist agenda that has envisioned economic growth to be brought by structural change with active state involvement (much like old-school developmental models), but through the use of market dynamics: constructing, shaping and participating in markets to achieve economic growth by a particular division of labor and space within the country. This model has managed to reproduce

consent to a certain extent through the populist, albeit limited, distribution of growth benefits, primarily through social policies. Perhaps more importantly, the strength of the notion of economic development as a societal goal, whose appeal is almost never questioned, served to justify the AKP's developmental model in the face of its drastic social and ecological costs. The close association of construction with modernization in the social imagination and the discourse on the country's energy deficit as the main obstacle to development are telling in this respect.

More generally, the AKP has subscribed to and presented an understanding of development as a spillover of economic growth, with the illusion that growth implies a broad-based improvement of living standards. It has been well-documented, however, that not only the benefits of economic growth have been highly unequally shared across the society in this era (Güney, 2015), but also its costs. The detrimental socio-ecological impacts associated with the disruption, dislocation and dispossession inherent to the AKP's developmental strategy have been shouldered by the already-disadvantaged sections of the society and thus perpetuated the existing socio-economic inequalities.

The results of these policies point to the broader need to question the desirability of economic growth as an objective of relentless pursuit and to radically rethink and democratize the notion of development. Within this context, Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)'s vision of "new life" and of the democratization of the economy is especially noteworthy. This vision defines the re-constitution of the economic sphere along egalitarian, solidaristic, gender-equal and eco-

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The most evident implication of this developmental strategy had been the enclosure and/or destruction of rural-urban commons and living spaces, displacement of communities as well as the erosion of their means of livelihood, modes of living and the networks that sustain them.

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gical lines as an integral component of a healthy and secure living. In doing so, it prioritizes the re-embedding of the economy within the society and its democratization (Madra, 2015), rather than fetishizing economic growth or positing a pre-conceived notion of development. It remains to be seen how far the HDP will get in realizing this vision, but even the new imagination and understanding of the prosperity that it animates merits appreciation.

The detrimental socio-ecological impacts associated with the disruption, dislocation and dispossession inherent to AKP's developmental strategy have been shouldered by the already-disadvantaged sections of the society and thus perpetuated the existing socio-economic inequalities.

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1 Contract farming lowers the risk since the producers know what, when and how much to produce in return for a guaranteed sale at established prices. It also means, however, that the contractor dictates the terms, including the prices, and the producer has little bargaining power as s/he often has no outside option of marketing the produce once committed to the contract.

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

# TIKA: The story of an approach to “development”

Utku Güngör

“Turkey did not hold back, waiting for stability before it invested in Somalia. Where others chose to plan their investments in safer places, Turkey put its people on the ground for the development of Somalia. Somalia is achieving significant developments, such as taking control of several areas that were in the grip of Al-Shabab. If it had not been for Turkey's generous support, along with the rest of the international community, we wouldn't have achieved such progress.”

figures, there has been a considerable increase in the number of projects carried out by TIKa and the subsidies it has been granted since 2002 when the AKP came to power. The foreign aid has primarily focused on the regions of Africa, the Balkans, Eurasia and Central Asia. The AKP purports to have been offering generous foreign aid to regions in dire need of development. For that matter, the way the aid has been provided and the areas focused on will help to explain how the AKP government approaches the subjects of “aid” and “development.”

### A story of “neo-colonialism”

What this relationship of aid brings to light is actually an old story. It is the story of imperialism or, “neo-colonialism” as Kwame Nkrumah called it in the post-World War II period. Could it be true that Turkey is attempting to become a neo-colonialist/neo-imperialist power with the pretensions of lending a helping hand to the unfortunate?

First and foremost, we need to explore how and why TIKa was established. Despite the fact that it became increasingly after the AKP came to power, TIKa was founded long before that in 1992. It started its operations with the aim to clear the wreckage that befell the countries called the “Turkic Republics” and to “respond to their restructuring, adaptation and development needs” after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1992 when Süleyman Demirel was the Prime Minister and Turgut Özal was the President of Turkey. It is well-known that both politicians attached importance to the Turkic Republics when they were in power, and considered each one of them to constitute an ostensibly natural sphere of activity for Turkey.

The notion of a “natural sphere of activity”

These words were uttered by President Sheikh Mahmoud on January 2015 during the inauguration of the Mogadishu Airport terminal built by Turkish constructors. Somalia is one of the countries receiving foreign aid from Turkey. If we were to believe what Cemalettin Haşimi, Coordinator of the Prime Ministry Office of Public Diplomacy, claims in one of his articles, Turkey has helped Somalia to such an extent that it has succeeded in winning the hearts of the peoples of Africa.

Who can possibly ignore the benevolence of offering help to people in need! Who can deny the ‘magnanimity’ of Turkey and all the ‘sacrifices’ it has had to make to bring aid? But why is Turkey doing this? Is it only because of Turkey’s magnanimity and the fact that it goes to great lengths to afford aiding people, or is it because of pursuing some diplomatic, economic and hegemonic interests rather than good intentions? What is the role of development assistance activities in furthering these interests?

One of the first institutions to spring to mind when foreign aid is mentioned has been TIKa (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) in the 13-year Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule. According to the



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also helped Turkey-based construction companies conduct operations in these countries in the following years. At this point, we can claim that TİKA was actually aiming at economic and hegemonic expansion at the beginning. After being established under the domain of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it became an organization working under the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey in 1999. This change was of course motivated by a desire to increase the effectiveness of the agency. The aid and projects carried out by TİKA alternately declined and increased in connection with the economic crises Turkey. In the decade after TİKA was established, there was however a serious downturn before 2002. We see that Turkey opted to focus on its internal problems rather than spend energy on the neighbouring regions before 2002.

What happened after 2002? First of all, let us point to the fact that TİKA started to carry out its activities under a one-party government for the first time as of 2002. Despite the fact that some of the activities TİKA conducted after 2002 had started as part of the projects from the previous period, we can note considerable parallels between the AKP executives' approach to foreign policy, and TİKA's expanding scope of activity and the characteristics of the aid provided under AKP rule. Hakan Fidan certainly had an influence on the stance of TİKA concerning foreign aid activities. Fidan was to be appointed as the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Organisation later (2010). We can even claim that his "achievements" in the agency paved the way for his position as an undersecretary.

### "Foreign aid is not always given on the basis of humanitarian concerns."

Fidan served as the President of TİKA between 2003 and 2007. During this period, in 2005, the institution became the umbrella organization for all state-sponsored foreign aid. In 2013, the official amount of annual aid increased to over three billion dollars.

In the article Fidan wrote with Rahman Nurdun on the subject of TİKA and foreign aid activities, he states that foreign aid is not always given on the basis of humanitarian concerns. This assertion is an important starting point in order to understand the AKP's approach to foreign aid. In the same article, Fidan and Nurdun mention that aid activities are also related to a country's geopolitical position as well as to the cultural and historical ties between countries.

This approach to foreign policy prioritizing geopolitical position and cultural-historical ties reminds us of an all too familiar figure: Ahmet Davutoğlu. Davutoğlu published his book *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth) in 2001 before the AKP rose to power. The book underscores Turkey's geopolitical position and cultural ties to a great extent. Considering Turkey to be a "central power" which lies in the middle of many different regions and cannot be reduced to a single identity, Davutoğlu explains that Turkey can become a significant actor and agenda setter in the Balkans, Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia. Moreover, all these regions are thought to be areas of responsibility Turkey has inherited from the Ottoman Empire. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey should have a say in

*Erdoğan and other persons in rank from the AKP have frequently attained opening ceremonies of TİKA, which undertakes activities in various regions including Africa, Central Asia, Somali and Albania.*



those regions so that it can become a global power. Davutoğlu was already a politician whose views on foreign policy were respected by the government before he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs until August 2014 and as the Prime Minister afterwards. Therefore, it would not be wrong to suggest that he has been an influential actor for TIKa at least on the level of determining how and where the aid would be sent.

Davutoğlu ascertains that Turkey can exert a considerable influence with its Muslim identity on some regions, with its Turkish identity on other regions and as the heir to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire yet on some other regions. Fidan and Nurdun agree with this view and go on to claim: "Turkey can move more easily in these regions since it is a democratic and economically strong country that has ethnic and economic ties with the region." This so-called strategic perspective is inconsistent in itself but to cover this subject would be beyond the scope of this article.

Another influential figure addressing the issue is Cemalettin Haşimi, Coordinator of the Prime Ministry Office of Public Diplomacy. What he says about development and foreign aid activities can illuminate how the AKP government views its relationship with the receiving countries. Similar to Davutoğlu, Cemalettin Haşimi considers Turkey to be a country which is now eager to extend its influence with foreign aid. That said, he explains the role of Turkish foreign aid initiatives in creating a humanitarian diplomacy and altering the understanding of global diplomacy.

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In light of its objectives and the period in which it was established, it is obvious that TIKa has been tried to be used as a tool for establishing a zone of influence rather than as an aid agency.

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### TIK a as a tool for "establishing a zone of influence"

What then is this change which can be globally effective? What is implied when this question is posed, is the expansion of foreign aid activities and/or the ability to intervene in different regions on the globe at times of crisis. However, as both Fidan and Haşimi put it in their articles, foreign aid does not always only include "humanitarian" aspects.

According to the TIKa reports, foreign aid initiatives mostly cover improvement of infrastructure services, institutional structuring and the economic infrastructure; the expansion of formal education; capacity building projects; budget grants and humanitarian relief programs etc. All these merge under the name of "develop-

ment assistance." Some of the assistance is also given with regard to issues such as the opening of water wells or increasing the accessibility of health services, which can be of immense use to the local population.

In developing countries, however, some of the aid is spent on investments which urge the recipient country to implement a certain economic structure. Such investments include initiatives to develop the finance and banking sector of the recipient country, training of security forces, training of diplomats and training in investment models. The training conducted on the build-operate-transfer model in Cameroon or the support provided to Kyrgyzstan for the Turkish Products Exhibition organized by the Association of Kyrgyz and Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen can be cited as examples of this type of investment.

All these aid activities represent a certain approach to development. As a matter of fact, TIKa has become the medium through which the neoliberal understanding of development is being exported to other countries; this approach to development has been dominant in Turkey since the 1980's and is pursued by the AKP government. Once such regions are included in current economic networks, they turn into efficient markets for the countries giving aid. It seems that TIKa has not been far from this principle since it was founded. Especially considering its objectives and the period it was established, it is obvious that TIKa has been used as a tool for establishing a zone of influence rather than as an aid agency.

Then what is different about TIKa during the AKP rule? First of all, the AKP has placed a lot of importance on TIKa, much more than the attention the agency received in the first ten years of its existence. At the same time, the AKP has imagined that it can gather enough force to take the "ambitious" steps, as Cemalettin Haşimi puts it, to expand its zone of influence and implement the foreign policy it desires. However, the AKP has also opted to go beyond economic aid activities by increasing and spreading cultural "investments" across different regions. Among the projects for which TIKa allocated resources have been the restoration of mosques, social complexes and tombs dating to the Ottoman era.

Apart from the above-mentioned initiatives, the AKP has embraced the Turkology Project, which started off in 2000, raising the level of investment made in the project every year. In 2011, the project was handed over to the Yunus Emre Foundation, whose board of trustees consists mostly of politicians from the Cabinet and whose administrative board includes the President of TIKa. The aim of the project is to export not only the dominant understanding of development and economy but also the Turkish language to other countries.

If we accept that one of the important steps of establishing neo-imperialist relationships is achieving cultural and linguistic supremacy, we can claim that TİKA has become one step closer to being a tool of imperialism. This relationship of supremacy is described with the notions of “hamilik” (patronage/protectorate) or “abilik” (being the older brother) in Turkey where a male-dominated discourse is prevalent.

The relationship of patronage mentioned here is meant to ensure gratitude in return for reciprocal aid activities rather than representing a unilateral relationship. On one part of the equation, there are conditions marked by income inequality, infrastructure deficiencies and a lack of education, which constantly reproduce poverty and trample on human dignity. On the other part of the equation, there is a superior figure who, again in Haşimi’s words, “wins people’s hearts through benevolence.” A pecking order emerges out of this relationship. Tayyip Erdoğan’s speech during his visit to Albania attests the expectations the government has from the recipient country. Albania is a country which receives foreign aid from Turkey. Turkey has built kindergartens and schools in Albania. When Erdoğan visited the country to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of the mosque built as a gift from Turkey, he requested the operations of the group known as the Gülen Community be stopped there. After the visit, an Albanian MP blasted this call in a speech addressed in the Albanian parliament, stating that Turkey was trying to impose demands when it purported to give aid. Such a demand on the part of Turkey per se gives away the quality of the relationship tried to be established through foreign aid activities.

## Discontent at not taking a share of the benefits of exploitation

It can be seen that the underlying aim of the idea of a big and powerful Turkey and the concern over changing the dominant world order, which Fidan, Haşimi and Davutoğlu constantly underline for the sake of having an influence on international politics, is to fulfil Turkey’s desire to establish and profit from networks that are characterized by a superior-subordinate relationship and a lack of human dignity. Finally, it comes to light that this ostensibly “paradigm breaking” relationship consists of nothing else than merely renaming the superior party. While doing this, two things are used to disguise the objective of creating a pecking order under the pretension of humanitarianism: The democratic Muslim country identity and the narrative of being heir to the Ottoman Empire, both of them being catchphrases attributed to Turkey.

The issue discussed in this article is actually a

If we accept that one of the important steps of establishing neo-imperialist relationships is achieving cultural and linguistic supremacy, we can claim that TİKA is one step closer to being a tool of imperialism.

different story than an ordinary initiative of development assistance or humanitarian aid. What appears in the foreground is Turkey’s concern over making its neighbouring developing countries more prosperous and integrated with the rest of the world. The characteristics of the aid provided and the relationships established with these countries, however, attest the existence of a new relationship of exploitation.

In contrast to the AKP’s attempts to portray itself as a political actor that is discontent with the current international order and acts as a “saviour” of the underdog, their main concern turns out to be the unease they feel about Turkey’s being denied a share of the relationships of exploitation, i.e., remaining outside the game as a player. TİKA, on the other hand, can be seen as a tool of the policies directed to this end. The assistance and projects carried out through this tool are the proof of the expansionist hegemonic foreign policy Turkey follows across different regions. The actors such as Fidan, Haşimi and Davutoğlu, who are influential in determining Turkish foreign policy, underline the foundations of this understanding in their articles.

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## DEMOCRACY

## June 7 Elections: We need alternatives to choose from

Büşra Ersanlı

Political parties have run their course as well; their representative function works in a roundabout way, with various mediators and subcontractors. People's demands and representation are not able to be dealt with directly. People and NGOs went out on the street and cried out their demands but it stopped there. Ministries constitute the heart of the state; the bureaucracy has become so bloated that it is about to burst. The cumbersome state is collapsing. There is discontent and violence.

**Büşra Ersanlı**

Graduated from the Dept. of Western Languages and Literature at Boğaziçi University, Ersanlı received her PhD in the Dept. of Political Science and International Relations at the same university. Since 1990, she has been a faculty member in the Dept. of Political Science and International Relations at Marmara University. Being a peace and human rights activist, she was chosen for the party assembly of DTP in 2009. In 2011 she was arrested within the scope of the Anti-Terror Law while she was a member of the party assembly of BDP and the constitutional commission. She was released in July 2012. In her latest book *Bulut Falı* [Fortune-Telling with Clouds], she wrote about the political punitive style and culture in Turkey and her own experience in prison for the years 2011-2012.

Despite these problems, elections continue to be held. This competition is held under very unequal conditions in our country since the election threshold of 10% has been used as a weapon against the opposition for more than 30 years. Furthermore, some parties do not respect the existence of others and even ignore them. How can political parties compete in democracies if they ignore each other?

Let's summarize the last ten years: political parties have proved incapable of producing alternatives; television channels and the print media have been appropriated by the governing party; the institutions of literature and art and the spaces of the city and culture have been damaged, destroyed or have turned into power-wielding cliques; education has been damaged by bad pedagogy and the goals of unscrupulous conservatives; independent and scientific production at universities has been impinged upon due to cronyism; and the freedom of social media platforms has been attacked. Just before the elections in June, attacks, bombings and coordinated street fights were organized in Turkey. Most of them targeted the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) but other parti-

es were also attacked. The threshold that exists to "to banish the Kurd from seeing his mother"<sup>1</sup> was finally overcome by a political organization that appealed to a larger part of the society instead of being restricted to being a Kurdish-based political opposition. People shattered the ideas fueling prejudice and the suffocating borders that they impose. The siege that the ruling party imposed for the last ten years was broken. The HDP brought back the colors that had begun to be regained in the city with the Gezi insurrection.

### On the way to the elections: The phenomenon of AKP

The phenomenon of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has continued unabated for 13 years and but has now slowed to a crawl. Kurdish cities had languished after Özal's promises left them hanging in 1990s. After that, people thought the AKP could be a power which would better their lives, thinking that "maybe our fate will change with this party." The welfare of the people was partly enhanced with discretionary foreign and domestic funds and non-discretionary taxes. After its first governing period in 2007, dependency on the AKP increased. One of the most important reasons for that was that as a party, it had the courage to file a lawsuit against the military tutelage. People thought that murders by unknown assailants could be cleared up. However, neither the increased welfare nor the lawsuits were consistently followed up on. Welfare enhancement was palliative and the lawsuits were carried out with many mistakes and shortcomings; some people were persecuted for no reason and of those who should have been prosecuted, only a small number of people ended up going to trial—and then they were hosted in five-star boutique prisons.





The party tradition (the Democratic Society Party – DTP- and thereafter the Peace and Democracy Party –BDP-) had tried to create an alternative among the Kurds and ended up paying a huge price to that end. It had to fight against its fate that had condemned all of its workers to imprisonment and closure of the party several times. Nearly ten thousand people were arrested. At least one fourth of them are still in prison. The AKP did not recognize this party tradition representing the Kurdish opposition and insulted it several times, reaching a fever pitch before the 2015 elections.

The AKP showed no mercy in its attempt to suppress the protests for freedom that the citizens initiated in Gezi two years ago. While the police “wrote a heroic saga”<sup>2</sup> many young people died. After the Newroz celebrations in 2013, it was claimed that “we have entered a peace process; people do not die anymore,” yet many were suffocated by the tear gas used in Taksim Square a couple of months later. The “security project” of the governing party which has aimed to neutralize the Kurds in Syria for the last five years has led to larger social, political and economic deadlocks.

### CHP waited until the last moment

The Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP) has fueled nationalism and has continued to show how obsolete it is; however, before the last elections,

it at least made a move of modernization in the economic sphere and made some statements regarding human rights and law. Despite all of these moves, CHP could not figure out a balanced position regarding the peace negotiations. Some of its members behaved hatefully toward Kurds while others declared tolerance for Kurds. The CHP was not able to overcome its prejudices or turn into a strong political alternative to the AKP and therefore could not take the lead. It could have supported the work of the HDP in the parliament to weaken the AKP and shown a clear stance regarding the issues of human rights and law, jurisdiction and education in one’s native language. But they did not do it. They even protested against one of their own members in the constitutional committee who supported the right to education in one’s native language as a fundamental right. If they had supported human rights and the dynamism of diversity, they could

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People want to neutralize the AKP (the Justice and Development Part). In other words, the HDP (Peoples’ Democratic Part), the CHP (Republican Peoples’ Party) and the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) are going to take the first steps to file lawsuits and enact laws regarding 1) corruption, 2) the repressive security laws, 3) the lack of judicial independence, and 4) the problem of border security and immigrant issues. Eventually, the country might be able to go the polls in a year after the election threshold is lowered.

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have gained more votes from the real social democrats. The votes that they could have gained would not have decreased the votes for the HDP. The extra votes that they could have gained would have come from the liberal sympathizers who are fed up with the AKP. But that did not happen; their votes made no impact. Voters who preferred the HDP to the CHP did not “lend” their votes; those who voted for the HDP made their choice based on the promises of the party.

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A CHP-AKP coalition would not lead to a regression in the peace process and may strengthen the CHP in terms of social democracy. However, the issue of corruption and the crisis of the judiciary cannot be solved by that coalition.

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### Those who hate the Kurds, the Armenians and the Alevis cannot love Turks, either

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has insisted on the crudest and the most primitive kind of nationalism; however, it did take a stand against corruption and the security law. It criticized the excessive egocentric attitude of the President, talked about freedom and democracy frequently and continually brought up the corruption of the judiciary. However, their critique was not based on acknowledging and respecting diversity. The MHP thought that it would gain from abolishing the peace process and worst of all, it never even considered recognizing the HDP as a different party. It regressed completely, partially gaining votes from hate. This cannot be called a strengthening of democracy; it is only a cause of instability. The MHP was not even able to state that “the fundamental principle of democracy requires the existence of more than one party.” I think the MHP doesn’t love Turks, either. In fact, Turks need also need significant change and many Turkish people have come to understand that they will not gain anything with nationalism. The biggest obstacle of the MHP is that it cannot understand the developing values of the changing world. The MHP has proved incapable of seeing that ignoring the HDP means turning against modern values and principles. It still feeds on nationalist hate, anti-communism, anti-Kurdish and anti-Armenian hate and a lack of love for Turks. Their denial is consistent and this enabled them to gather votes from temporary enmities. Their other votes came from the nationalists who voted against unlawfulness and corruption.

If the MHP does not enter into a coalition with the other two opposition parties and resume the opposition it called for against dictatorship befo-

re the elections, it runs a high risk of falling below the election threshold. However, if Meral Akşener<sup>3</sup> becomes the co-president of the party, the hate speech may decrease to some extent. In fact, the MHP might have entered into a coalition with the opposition parties to fight against corruption and the security law in order to clean things up. Only then could the MHP have had a chance for the future. In discussions on a coalition government, the MHP claims that it cannot promise to give any ministries to the HDP. We have progressed from the saying “Do not let the Kurd see his mother” to the point of saying “Do not let the Kurd be a minister.” What progress!

### With the rise of the HDP, Turkey approximates the democratic world

The Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) is not one of the parties of the system. On the one hand, it is a continuation of the tradition dating back to the People’s Labour Party (HEP) of 1990s while on the other hand it attempts to represent each and every community and individual marginalized by inequalities and unlawfulness. The biggest force which had a great impact on the monumental resistance and development of the HEP tradition was their belief in women’s equal participation in politics. They empowered the women’s organizations in Turkey on that matter and have set a good example for other parties. In addition, the principal role attributed to the balance between labour and ecology has also contributed a lot to this party. Representative democracy worked when these contemporary principles contributed to overcoming the ten percent barrier. All those who supported and contributed to this party should not stop giving it their energy so that it doesn’t succumb to the urge for protocol/indispensable power/status, which is a highly contagious political disease in Turkey.

### Election results call for reconciliation; people want peace and freedom

People said, “We need a culture of reconciliation.” It was as if they said, “We cannot be parted from one side completely to choose the other side, pull yourselves together.” According to the post-general elections research conducted by IPSOS,<sup>4</sup> the desire for reconciliation was expressed by more than six million people who voted for HDP. 87% of the voters of HDP are for reconciliation while 76% of all citizens demand reconciliation. These figures are actually very close because the needs of these groups do not differ at all; it is the

fundamental need of all to have rights, freedom and self-confidence.

Why is a coalition that important? The reason is that people who do not know how to respect pluralism in daily political culture are to be forced somehow into reconciliation. Politics is about dialogue, negotiation, sharing and reconciliation; it is not about putting people through the mill. In political activities, there is as much and sometimes even more drive and need for cooperation as there is a potential for conflict. Deceitful discourses of “progressive democracy” which have promised democratization have exhausted Turkey. Turkey has to be democratized at a faster pace, with participatory and radical steps. Therefore, parties which have been in opposition for the last 13 years have to create a form of cooperation on the fundamental matters on which they agree. That is required by patriotism. The AKP wants to prevent this and is favor of early elections. The AKP wants to use the election threshold of 10% again and plans to increase its votes by using all the discretionary and non-discretionary funds it has, even those of the presidency and the prime ministry. The AKP plans to continue along its path with analyses that ignore the people. However, the election results gave the message that both the “analyses which do not account for the people” and the legend of the “statesman” have come to an end.

## What may happen today and how may it happen?

People who are politically active in Turkey need to adapt the culture of reconciliation. It seems the cadres which are closest to being able to do this are the cadres of the HDP, which adopted the system of co-presidency, are experienced in forging alliances and have successfully strengthened and extended their own identity. These cadres are the ones which are most likely to move away from the model of the “statesman.” People do not want to reinforce the nationalism of the AKP and the MHP. That kind of a coalition would put the peace process in danger as well. It would increase the tensions with Syria, on the borders and with respect to issues on immigrants. What the people want is to neutralize the AKP. In other words, the HDP, the CHP and the MHP should take the first steps to file lawsuits and enact laws regarding 1) corruption, 2) the repressive security laws, 3) lack of judicial independence, and 4) the problem of border security and immigrant issues. Within a year, it would be possible to go to the polls after the election threshold has been lowered. In that way, the concept of “becoming a citizen of Turkey” (Türkiyelileşmek) could be replaced with the goal

The leadership of the MHP say they “respect the choice of the citizens” but then go on to say “I do not recognize the HDP.” What a grave contradiction! The MHP insults all voters when it says that it does not recognize a party that was approved by more than six million people. People want reconciliation, not to bargain for seats. No party has the right to claim to being the “the most irreplaceable party” under the current conditions in Turkey.

of democratization on fundamental points. A coalition of the CHP and the AKP would not lead to a regression in the peace process and could strengthen the CHP in terms of social democracy. However, the issue of corruption and the crisis of the judiciary cannot be solved by that coalition.

Legislation can be quickly passed on issues where there is consensus. The higher ranks of the MHP say that they “respect the choice of the citizens” but then go on to say “I do not recognize the HDP.” What a contradiction! MHP insults all voters when it says that it does not recognize the party which has been approved by more than six million people. People want reconciliation, not a bargain for the seats. No party has the right to claim to be the “the most irreplaceable party” under the current conditions in Turkey.

However, conservative individuals who are repressed in every respect, who lack confidence and have financial difficulties have not been cured of the disease of the “leading head.” Most party supporters long for a single leading head and think that a strong leader can do everything.

A coalition based on fighting corruption and the femicide would open the way for consensus. An effective and determined struggle against gender apartheid would be the first and foremost important step towards the construction of a culture of reconciliation.

- 1 This figurative saying is based on a ‘joke.’ In the story, a Kurd and a Turk are to be executed and they are asked about their last wishes. The Kurd says that he wants to see his mother for the last time. In response to that, the Turk says that he wishes that the Kurd does not see his mother.
- 2 Short after the Gezi protests which left behind dead and wounded people due to police violence, Prime Minister Erdoğan argued during the graduation ceremony of the Police Academy that “During the Gezi Park protests, our police stayed within the confines of law. It passed the test of democracy. So to speak, it wrote a heroic saga”. See, [http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/erdogan-polis-kahramanlik-destani-yazdi,uMOX0uTI\\_EmkP4Ylu\\_2MEQ](http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/erdogan-polis-kahramanlik-destani-yazdi,uMOX0uTI_EmkP4Ylu_2MEQ)
- 3 MHP deputy, former Minister of Interior (1996-97) and vice-speaker of the parliament (2007-2011).
- 4 See <http://www.ipsos.com.tr/node/1057>



## DEMOCRACY

## Camp Armen in exile

Gökhan Tan

Fourteen men, the youngest of whom is 61 years old, have gathered around a table in a meyhane in Tatavla/ Kurtuluş. At the end of 1960s, they were playing football in Dolapdere Oktayspor, which does not exist anymore. This night, they are celebrating the birthday of their team-mate Kaya Çınar. They take a stroll down memory lane and recall the days of their youth, talk about the elections to be held two days later, joke around and hit their glasses. This table does not stand out in any way in terms of how they look, speak, eat or drink.

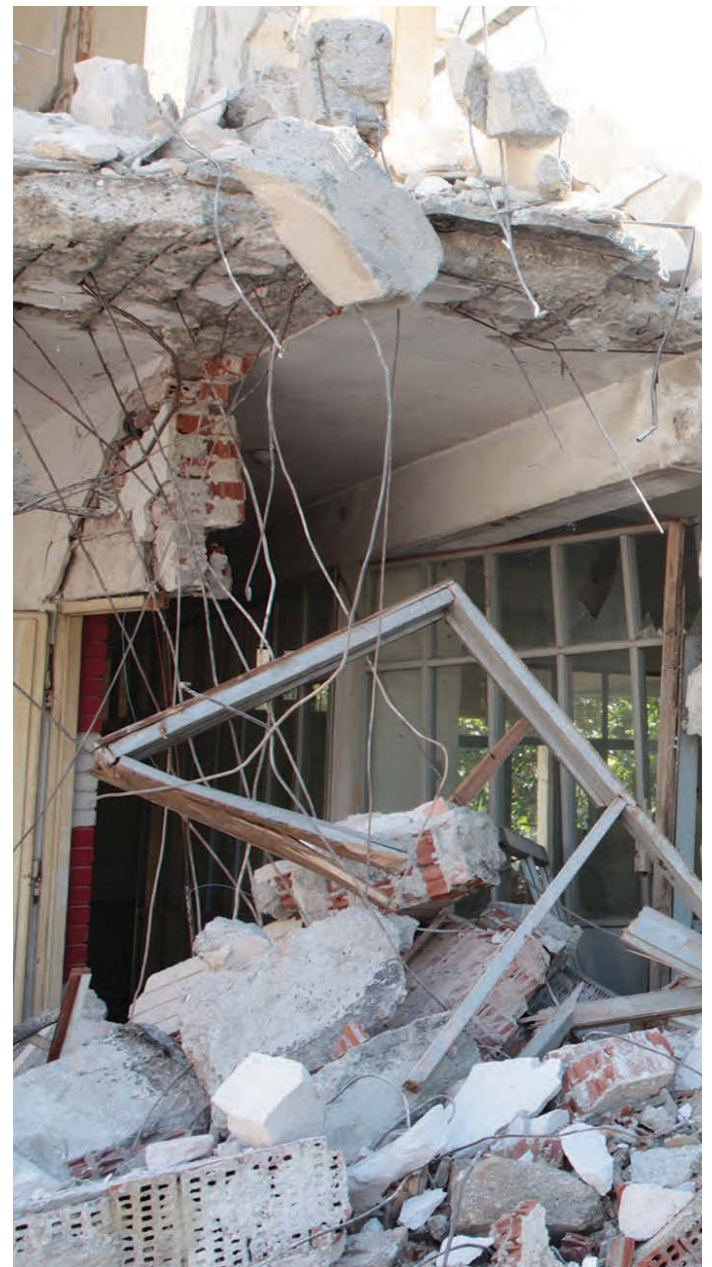
**Gökhan Tan**

was born in 1972 in Ankara. He started working as a journalist in 1993 while he was studying economics at the Middle East Technical University. He worked as a correspondent and editor for the magazines of Atlas and National Geographic. Many of his news and commentaries were published in national newspapers. He wrote for Radikal İki between the years 2010-2013. He reported news for BBC Turkey between the years 2013-2014. He mostly thinks and writes about the issues of cultural heritage, archeology, city, town planning and the media. He teaches journalism courses in the Department of Media at Bilgi University, where he began working as a lecturer in 2007.

What singles out that table from the others and is not apparent to the naked eye is the fact that they came from thousands of kilometers away to be there that night. It is not only Kaya Çınar, who has been living in the USA for 45 years, who came from abroad; nearly all of those gathered around the table live in different countries around the world. Having left Istanbul in 1970s, these people are able to see their relatives, neighbors and teammates who stayed in Turkey only once every few years.

They are guests in their own country and are in exile in their new lives, with which they do not identify. They are Armenians.

Kaya Çınar, aged 65, is one of the children of the Tuzla Children's Camp, originally named Camp Armen. Camp Armen was founded in Üç Çınar in the province of Tuzla by the Gedikpaşa Armenian Church Foundation in 1962. Its purpose was to provide summer education to Armenian children; it educated 1500 children in the 21 years during which it was in service. Most of these children were orphans and nearly 95 percent of them live abroad today. The situation of the Camp is no different from its children who were raised here but were not able to live in their own country; it was appropriated and returned to its previous owner free



of charge with a court ruling in 1983. Although the property passed into many other hands in the last 32 years, no activity was carried out on it. Deprived of children's voices in 1983, the Camp has lived in exile like the owners of these voices.

Camp Armen was a place little known outside the Armenian community until the latest owner of the land, Fatih Ulusoy, started its demolition on the 6th of May. What made the name of the Camp popular to some extent was the fact that the journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered in 2007, was raised here and had undertaken the management of the camp in his last years. However, the demolition revived the Camp that had been unused for many years. At first, the demolition was stopped. The resistance began the same night in the Camp with the demand for the Camp to be returned to the Armenian community. On May 23, Fatih Ulusoy stated that he would "grant" the Camp to the Gedikpaşa Armenian Church Foundation "upon





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the request and order of the Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.” On the 35th day of the resistance, Ulusoy still had not fulfilled his promise. I will examine first the story of Camp Armen and how it began. Then I will turn to the current state of affairs regarding the return of the Camp in the second part of this article.

### “Baron” Hrant Küçüküzelyan

The Head of the Gedikpaşa Armenian Protestant Church Foundation, Hrant Küçüküzelyan, named “Baron” by children, wandered around the cities in 1950s because no school giving education in Armenian was still operating in Anatolia. He brought Armenian children who did not have the opportunity to receive an education to Istanbul. These children, some of whom were orphans, would receive their education in the

İncirdibi Armenian Protestant School and lived on the ground floor of the Gedikpaşa Church, which was turned into an orphanage. One of the children who was found by Küçüküzelyan in Malatya was Garabet Orunöz, who was orphaned when he was four and came to Istanbul when he was seven:

Küçüküzelyan would go from door to door to find the school-aged children and would convince their families. He enabled us to have education by covering all the expenses. When the summer came, all the children would be sent to their families. The goal was to find a solution for children during the summer holiday who were in danger of forgetting the Armenian language as they did not speak it throughout the year.<sup>1</sup>

That solution was to open a summer camp for children. Küçüküzelyan proposed that idea to the managing board of the foundation in 1958 and it is accepted. They begun to look for a locati-

*After Camp Armen started to be demolished on May 6, it has turned into one of the resistance areas of Istanbul. Besides solidarity marches and visits, the camp started to host weekend activities.*





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on in Istanbul. They identified three possible locations: Kandilli, Beykoz and Tuzla. They decided on Tuzla, which was best suited to the budget of the Foundation.

The foundations of minorities may acquire property on the condition that the governor issues a relevant letter of consent and the property is registered in the foundation registry following the issuance of the official title deed. The Foundation applied to the Governorship of Istanbul and the General Directorate for Foundations to purchase the approximately 1 hectare of land in Tuzla. It took ten months to receive this permission. The land was purchased from its owner Sait Durmaz and its title deed was registered on behalf of the foundation. The ground of the camp was broken on 6 January 1962, the birthday of the Prophet Jesus. Let's hear the rest from Hrant Dink:

One morning, they took us, 13 children... We walked from Gedikpaşa to Sirkeci. We crossed over to Haydarpaşa by ferry, then we travelled from Haydarpaşa to Tuzla Station by train. Then they took us, by foot, to a wide, immense piece of flat land between the lake and the sea. Back then Tuzla wasn't a place full of villas for the rich and bureaucrats like it is today... An untouched beach with fine sand and a piece of a lake, cut off from the sea... One or two houses, a few fig and olive trees and brambly blackberry bushes spread out along the ditch...

And the Red Crescent tents we erected... 13 puny kids, our ages ranging from 8 to 12, we were no longer sentenced to the concrete garden of

the Gedikpaşa Orphanage... We only remembered our family and close ones when we watched the city lights flickering in the far distance at night. We likened the city lights to old stars that had fallen to the ground and piled up.

For three years, we got up at dawn and worked until midnight to complete the camp building. One of our shortest, "Kütük" [The Log] (That's what we used to call Zakar) could take a cement bag up in his arms all by himself and carry it to the roof. At night, we used to pee in our pants from exhaustion.<sup>2</sup>

Camp Armen and its children were raised like that. Garabet Orunöz, who is six years younger than Dink, says that when he first arrived at the Camp in 1967, the second floor of the Camp had been completed. There was no electricity and they had to pump water from the well.

Dink gives an account of the construction of the Camp in another of his articles as follows:

"And we spent all those summers like that for many years. We went to the Tuzla Camp every year. The number of children grew each year. We dug new wells; the amount of water increased and the place became greener. One day, the water pump from which we pumped water day and night with our hands had a motor. As the years went by, the trees grew to exceed our height, covered the buildings and the sky of the camp no longer allowed the burning sun in as we had shadows everywhere. Perhaps our voices as children mixed with our labor to fertilize the land. The visitors used to envy it. "Well done," they would say all, "well done."<sup>3</sup>



## “Minorities cannot own property after 1936”

Two official acts played a significant role in the development of Camp Armen, as was the case with many foundations' property in Turkey. These acts are the “1936 Declaration” and the ruling of the Supreme Court Assembly of Civil Chambers from May 8, 1974.

Let's begin with the “1936 Declaration.” The General Directorate for Foundations requested all the foundations to declare the list of their property based on the Law of Foundations enacted in 1935. It was claimed on paper that the aim of this call was to enable the newly founded Republic to keep a regular land registry (Baskın Oran argues that the real aim of this request was to “make revisions to dry up the economic resources of Islamist communities”). All foundations complied with the state regulations and submitted the list of the properties owned by them to the relevant institutions. However, the foundations were able to acquire new properties provided that they received the necessary permissions from the state.

The tension that emerged between the Turkish and Greek communities in Cyprus in the first half of the 1960s began to have an impact on the minorities, particularly on the Greek people in Turkey. The 1936 declarations that had been kept in drawers for a long time were remembered and the authorities wanted to use them against the Greek community and therewith threaten Greece.<sup>5</sup> The state began to seize the properties of the foundations acquired after 1936 through purchases, inheritances, donations, testaments and gratuities.

The foundations took legal action and filed court cases. One of those foundations is the Balıklı Greek Hospital Foundation in Istanbul, which filed

Camp Armen was founded in Üç Çınar in the province of Tuzla by the Gedikpaşa Armenian Church Foundation in 1962. Its purpose was to provide summer education to Armenian children; it educated 1500 children in the 21 years during which it was in service. Most of these children were orphans and nearly 95 percent of them live abroad today. The situation of the Camp is no different from its children who were raised here but could not live in their own country.

a court case against the Treasury for the return of its properties in 1971. Since the courts ruled in favor of the General Directorate of Foundations each time, the foundations appealed to the Supreme Court. Although there was no legal obligation in that respect written into the 1936 Declaration, the Second Civil Chamber of the Supreme Court ruled that the community foundations which had not clearly stated in their declarations that they accepted donations would not be able to acquire property directly or through testaments.

The decision was approved by the Supreme Court Assembly of Civil Chambers on May 8, 1974 and constituted a legal precedent. This opened up the way for the confiscation of many properties acquired by the minority foundations after 1936. (In the justification of the decision, the Supreme Court states that “it is seen that the legal entities founded by non-Turks are forbidden to acquire immovable properties.” In this way, the Court defines the non-Muslim citizens of the Republic of Turkey as “non-Turks,” illustrating it in a clear manner that citizenship is defined and practiced on an ethnic and religious basis in Turkey<sup>6</sup>).

The decision issued in 1974 had relevance for Camp Armen in 1979. The General Directorate



On the first days of the resistance in the Camp, Rakel Dink welcomed the supporters with the following words: “The reason why you are all here is to say ‘Count me in for this case’. You surely do not expect us to present our thanks for that, but we do thank you. The word of God says ‘the devil comes to seize, steal and kill’.

for Foundations appealed to the 3rd Civil Court of General Jurisdiction in Kartal to demand the cancellation of the title deed of the Gedikpaşa Armenian Church Foundation and the return of the camp land to its previous owner. The case continued for four years and the court ruled that the land should be taken from the foundation and returned to its previous owner. Sait Durmaz took back the land which he sold in 1962 together with the camp facilities built on it without paying any money. The Armenian Protestant Church Foundation lost the land in an illegal manner although it had legally acquired the land. The Foundation appealed to the Supreme Court but its action was rejected in 1987.

Harut Özer, a member of Türkiye Ermenileri Düşünce Platformu [Thought Platform of Turkey's Armenians] gives an account of the appropriation of Camp Armen from the Gedikpaşa Church as justified by this decision dated 1974:

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Camp Armen was a place little known outside the Armenian community until the latest owner of the land, Fatih Ulusoy, started its demolition on May 6, 2015. What made the name of the Camp popular to some extent was the fact that the journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered in 2007, was raised here and had undertaken the management of the camp in his last years.

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“Immediately following the precedent ruling in 1974 that ‘minorities cannot acquire property through donation,’ the state filed court cases for the cancellation of titles deeds of all the properties which were not in the lists of 1936 but were acquired throughout the subsequent 38 years. However, a point is being missed here. The minorities already had a very limited right to have title deeds back then. You could acquire property if the governorship consented. That was the case for Camp Armen as well.”

Harun Özer claims that the goal behind cases being filed for the cancellation of the title deeds was to cause the minorities and their foundations to have economic difficulties. “Our lawyers identified the situation. The cases would be drawn out for three or five years, especially if the person was old....When the person died, these properties would be registered as revenues of the Treasury. And the Treasury would sell them immediately.”

When Camp Armen was taken from the foundation and given to its previous owner, the authorities urged the owner to sell it: “We returned it, now you sell it to someone else.” The reason is that in common law, these third persons are inculpable. And at this point the state says “What could I do? The person who took it back sold it to someone else, I cannot take it back.”

The deep “interest” of the state in the camp does not end here. The founding director Hrant Küçüküzelyan was put on trial after the September 12 coup for “training Armenian militants” in Camp Armen and served time in prison for eight and a half months. When he got out, he left Turkey and moved to Marseilles; he did not return for 25 years. Hrant Dink managed the Camp in its last three years.

## Do Not get lost, children

Dink’s most commonly known article from among the first articles he wrote on Camp Armen may be the one titled “Do Not Get Lost, Children,” written in 1998.<sup>7</sup> Dink tells the story of Garabet Orunöz, who found his sister Flor in the Camp in 1977. They had not seen each other for 15 years since Flor had been given for adoption in Malatya when she was three and a half months old upon the death of their mother.

Camp Armen’s short story “Do Not Get Lost Children” was filmed in 2010. After the death of Hrant Dink, the children “who had eaten the bread of and drunk the water of the Camp” met in what Dink called “the Civilization of Atlantis” for the first time in years upon the initiation of Orunöz. There were 130 of them in 2008 and 30 of them had come from abroad. They met there in the last week of April each year.

I have regrets,” says Orunöz, “Brother Hrant used to say, ‘We need to write our own stories.’ He wanted me to write the story of the way in which we met with Flor after many years. I wasn’t able to write it when he was alive. Then he wrote a short summary as far as he could remember. I wish we could write it together. I wish we could make that film together. That is why we lay claim to our camp. Not to say ‘I wish I had’ again! We want this land back!

Their number increased each day. Sayat Tekir, the co-head of Nor Zartonk, the “self-organization of the Armenians” claims that the awareness of the society increased the interest in and support for the camp due to the connection with Hrant Dink:

“It is a chance that Camp Armen is noted for Hrant Dink. However, there are dozens of Camp Armens. Not all of the lands which belong to the Armenian community that are seized, coveted and whet the appetite of those seeking rent have a Hrant Dink. I speak as a person who studied with foundation scholarship. The properties of the foundations are very important for our community. There are many Armenians who do not have social security.”

Following the demolition, the demand that “they need to give us back our properties which they took from us” was expressed in a louder



Among those who started to keep watch in the camp after they heard about the demolition of Camp Armen which used to be a shelter for Armenian orphans until 1983, were not only members of young generations, but also people who have lived here for years. A former inhabitant of the camp, Ohannes Tecer, who was originally from Sivas and stayed here until 1973, also joined the protests.

manner in this community. Sayat Tekir adds that “They try to make the minority communities obey them. People like Markar Eseyan spread fabricated news claiming that ‘the camp was returned’ and support those in power by saying that ‘be on good terms with the power and take what you want.’ But maybe for the first time Armenians will win a place by resistance. The resistance of Camp Armen is a good example of the power of the people when they are united.”

The elderly are more cautious than the young. In relation to the negotiations which are held for the transfer of the title deeds and has not yet been concluded, Garabet Orunöz claims that “We are close to the title deed but we still don’t have it in our hand.”

## The Return of belonging

Camp Armen has an important symbolic meaning for the Armenian society. Harut Özer says that nearly all of the children raised in the Camp live abroad and emphasizes that especially the connection of the Armenians in diaspora with their own country needs to be preserved:

This place would not bring an economic gain. But it has a great social importance. The young people who represent Turkey abroad today, with whom the state is often in conflict and whom it calls diaspora were raised here. They work in many fields abroad. Therefore, Camp Armen connects them to this place and makes them feel that they belong here. Our only aim is that these childrens’ feelings of belonging are returned.

Özer’s statement summarizes the debt of the Republic of Turkey to the 14 Armenian people who met in a meyhane in Kurtuluş after a peri-

od of four years.

Fatih Ulusoy heard about all these things which I tried to account for in this article for the first time in his life when I contacted him on May 6, the day when the Camp was to be demolished. He thought that the place had been used as a hostel by the Armenians, being unaware of the fact that the place which he was to demolish was called a “camp” not to offend the children who spent their lives in the Gedikpaşa Orphanage. The only thing he knew was that a marina and a huge entertainment center were to be built in Tuzla and his land would gain value for that reason.

Whether the Camp will be returned to its real owners depends on the statement which Fatih Ulusoy made on May 23 to announce that he would “grant” the Camp to the Gedikpaşa Armenian Church Foundation “upon the request and order of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.” We do not know whether Ahmet Davutoğlu will be able to ensure that his order is carried out after the selections on June 7. But it seems that even if the land is transferred, this will not be a donation.

- 1 See Orunöz, Garabet; “Bu yazı Kamp Armen çocukları için yazıldı”, Evrensel, May 3, 2015.
- 2 See. Dink, Hrant; “Dear Humanity, I Would Like to Press Charges!...”, <http://www.hrantdink.org/?Detail=332&HrantDink=11&Lang=en>
- 3 See Dink, Hrant; “Aşk Olsun”, Agos, 5 July 1996
- 4 See Dilek Kurban and Keban Hatemi (2009), The Story of an Alie(nation): Real Estate Ownership Problems of Non-Muslim Foundations and Communities in Turkey, Istanbul, TESEV Publications.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Dink, Hrant; “Kaybolmayın Çocuklar”, Agos, 8 November, 1998



## ECOLOGY

# Small-scale family farming and revitalized peasant agriculture in Turkey and the world

Cengiz Aktar

First, let's address some misconceptions, a few figures and a few claims such as: "Agriculture is a backward and primitive activity. If it has to be done, it should be done intensively and without manpower." "Air, water and soil are infinite. They can be exploited unconditionally."

These are the two basic misconceptions. They are not specific to Turkey but are globally accepted! Turkey is reiterating what the developed world and the ones that try to resemble them have been doing for decades.

## Let's start with soil...



**Cengiz Aktar**

Born in 1955 in Istanbul he graduated from the Lycee de Galatasaray and completed his tertiary education at Pantheon-Sorbonne where he received his PhD degree on Economic Epistemology in 1982. He is Senior Scholar at Istanbul Policy Center. As a former director at the United Nations where he spent 22 years of his professional life, Cengiz Aktar is one of the leading advocates of Turkey's integration into the EU. Since 1999 he has taught courses on various EU policies at Galatasaray University and Bahçeşehir University. He is currently a columnist for daily Taraf and Today's Zaman, as well as regular commentator at Açık Radyo on EU related developments since 1999.

Turkey has misunderstood modernity as an excuse to eradicate its agriculture and animal husbandry. The process has been greatly accelerated under the present government. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has supported the dominant mindset in this regard, which has already been in place for years.

The figures speak for themselves. 46% of the employees in Turkey were working in the agricultural sector in 1990, which has currently dropped to 24.7%. The employment share of the agricultural sector has declined by approximately 50% in the last 20 years.

According to a research by TEPAV (The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey), the number of registered farmers dropped to under one million in 2013, declining by 12% from 2012. The figures published by the Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture demonstrate that the total cultivated area decreased by 11.3% between 1995 and 2013, withdrawing to 23.81 million hec-

tares. There is an inclination towards eliminating farming and corporatizing agriculture not only in Turkey but all over the globe. A farmer goes bankrupt every two minutes in Europe and every fifty seconds in Turkey.

The tendency is everywhere, including the academic world: agricultural engineering, veterinary medicine and agricultural economics are considered the least attractive departments in Turkey and provide a correspondingly low level of education.

As regards the name of the ministry, you cannot see any traces of the word village in it any more. First, they closed down the Rural Services, and then they erased the "rural affairs" from the name of the ministry. Remember what the Prime Minister said about villages: that they have to be urbanized. So allegedly, we are being freed of being a peasant country!

Opening its arable lands to urban development, Turkey is leasing 780 thousand hectares of farmland from Sudan for 99 years.

## Let's continue with nature...

Waterways have been seriously damaged. Doğa Derneği (The Nature Association) has obtained the plans for the hydroelectric power plant network for 2023 prepared by the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works; and a review of the plan estimates that there will be no rivers left flowing in 2023 due to environmental damage.

The ultimate result of this process is desertification, areas devoid of people, and the eradication of agricultural and animal production which is already dependant on the outside world. 60% of the area of Turkey faces the risk of erosion and desertification; two million hectares of wetlands have dried up, including the 36 lakes which have dried in the last 50 years and the 14 lakes which are currently in death throes. The water loss in the



Euphrates-Tigris basin amounted to 144 billion cubic metres between 2004 and 2010.

Before the dams were built, Turkey was one of the seven agriculturally self-sufficient countries in the world. Currently, Turkey is importing agricultural products and animals from more than a hundred countries.

### Let's take a glance at natural protected areas

It is still possible to stop the activities which harm nature in one of the 1234 natural protected areas by taking action through the courts and preservation boards. If the so-called Bill on the Preservation of Nature is passed by the Parliament, the Preservation Boards which are currently independent will have no power over natural protected areas. If the bill is enacted, the ecological characteristics of Turkey, a unique natural wealth with over 3500 endemic plant species, will be irretrievably lost.

The destruction of nature and the countryside also means the urbanization, cultural alienation of a vast population who will become non-agricultural workers.

### Urbanization of villages

From the government's point of view, the urbanization of villages is a symbol of progress and development. Administratively speaking, the municipality is the only governmental entity situated in the periphery that has some autonomy and possesses some legal authority in Turkey. There are only 1,389 municipalities in Turkey, which lies across an area of 783,000 square kilometres with a

population of approximately 75 million people.

The decline in the number of municipalities means that decisions cannot be taken on the level of local government anymore.

### Menial labor and alienation

It would suffice to remember the recent Soma mine massacre. The Lawyer Berrin Demir says: "We live on the most fertile lands of this country. My family used to grow tobacco; when I was a kid, everyone was growing wheat and olives. The harvest was carried out by people collectively on a voluntary basis. As a result of the Law on Tobacco, and the privatization of TEKEL (the General Directorate of Tobacco, Tobacco Products, Salt and Alcohol Enterprises), tobacco was no longer profitable for farmers. So they stopped cultivating it. There was also cotton farming, which was stopped. Just like sugar beet farming. It was stopped, too. Nobody could sell anything any longer. We cannot even stay on the lowlands. We migrate to cooler places. And look what has happened: they have made us work underground."

Menial labor and degradation: What does the unskilled labour force do after having been dismissed from the agricultural sector for decades? They try to work for peanuts in dead end jobs mostly in informal sectors as water carriers, car park attendants, pizza delivery men, bodyguards at bars and discotheques, etc.

Deculturation and alienation are also results of these policies. The new urbanites have new needs. In this sense, developmentalism and the eradication of agriculture, nature and rural areas are two factors feeding off each other. New urbanites get used to consumption, and they buy

While the number of registered farmers has drastically declined in the last twenty years, inner city agriculture is also under the threat of construction and rampant. What has been offered to the fifty families who are long time producers on The Yedikule Gardens, a 1500 year old agricultural spot of Istanbul, is not different from what has been deemed proper to the people of Soma, who used to earn their livelihood through tobacco planting until ten years ago.

more by running up debt.

Alienation is not only associated with migration to cities. All the accumulation of rural knowledge is being lost as well. A sustainable, self-sufficient and nature-friendly lifestyle is being lost.

### What to do then?

Peasant farming is anti-systemic—because the priority is not commercial profit. First of all, agricultural production is not a “primitive” activity as it is assumed by those whose ancestors were forced to leave the countryside to come to the city a few generations back. On the contrary, if it is done well, it can yield much more profit than a working factory.

Organic and nature-friendly forms of agriculture are among the most precious solutions for correcting the aforementioned mistakes. These forms of agricultural activity rely on measurable input including human labour. On the other hand, there is the kind of agriculture which is based on maximum production and maximum consumption; is dependent on the competitive market; carried out with the minimum number of people; exploits soil, water and air unconditionally; spends immense amounts of energy; and uses all kinds of artificial fertilizers, pesticides and GMOs carelessly. The latter is neither sustainable nor favourable for the small-scale farmer, nature and the consumer.

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The agricultural sector in Turkey had 46% of the employees in 1990, which has currently dropped to 24.7%. This corresponds to one out of every four employees. The employment share of the agricultural sector has declined by approximately 50% in the last 20 years. According to a research by TEPAV (The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey), the number of registered farmers dropped to under one million in 2013, declining by 12% in comparison with 2012.

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### Agricultural policy of the EU

It is in this framework that the Europe Union is rapidly revising its production and consumption models to become more sustainable. The building blocks of this attempt are organic farming, biodiversity and rural life. Environmental awareness can possibly become almost the only criterion for giving financial subsidies to agricultural and rural pursuits. Naturally, it will not be easy to erase the pollution accumulated over centuries, the production methods that have played havoc with agriculture in every manner, and the agriculture lobbies. Still, it is clear which course of action to take. The European Union Common Agricultural

Policy has been revised accordingly. It has been ascertained that as an essential principle, extensive farming should host and support a wide “variety of species.”

These measures have successfully encouraged farmers to assume a positive role in the preservation of nature and the rural life by aiming to reduce the risk of environmental deterioration in the framework of a common agricultural policy. In other words, the farmer or the livestock breeder does not only deal with agriculture or livestock; s/he also protects the environment and nature. The objective of the Environmentally Friendly Agricultural Programme (Agri-Environment Programmes) strategy, which has been developed under the EU Common Agricultural Policy, is the sustainability of agricultural ecosystems which protect nature.

Unfortunately, the adaptation activities expected to be carried out by the candidate countries for EU accession are totally inspired by the paradigm the EU is trying to erase at the moment as far as agriculture is concerned. On the one hand, the EU is trying to leave behind the extremely productivist “green revolution” approach, which was developed in the post-war period under the conditions of the time, and do away with its results. On the other hand, it is still imposing the principles of this approach on candidate countries, as clearly seen in the examples of Poland and Romania, by forcing them to reduce rural populations and establish an absolutely competitive market.

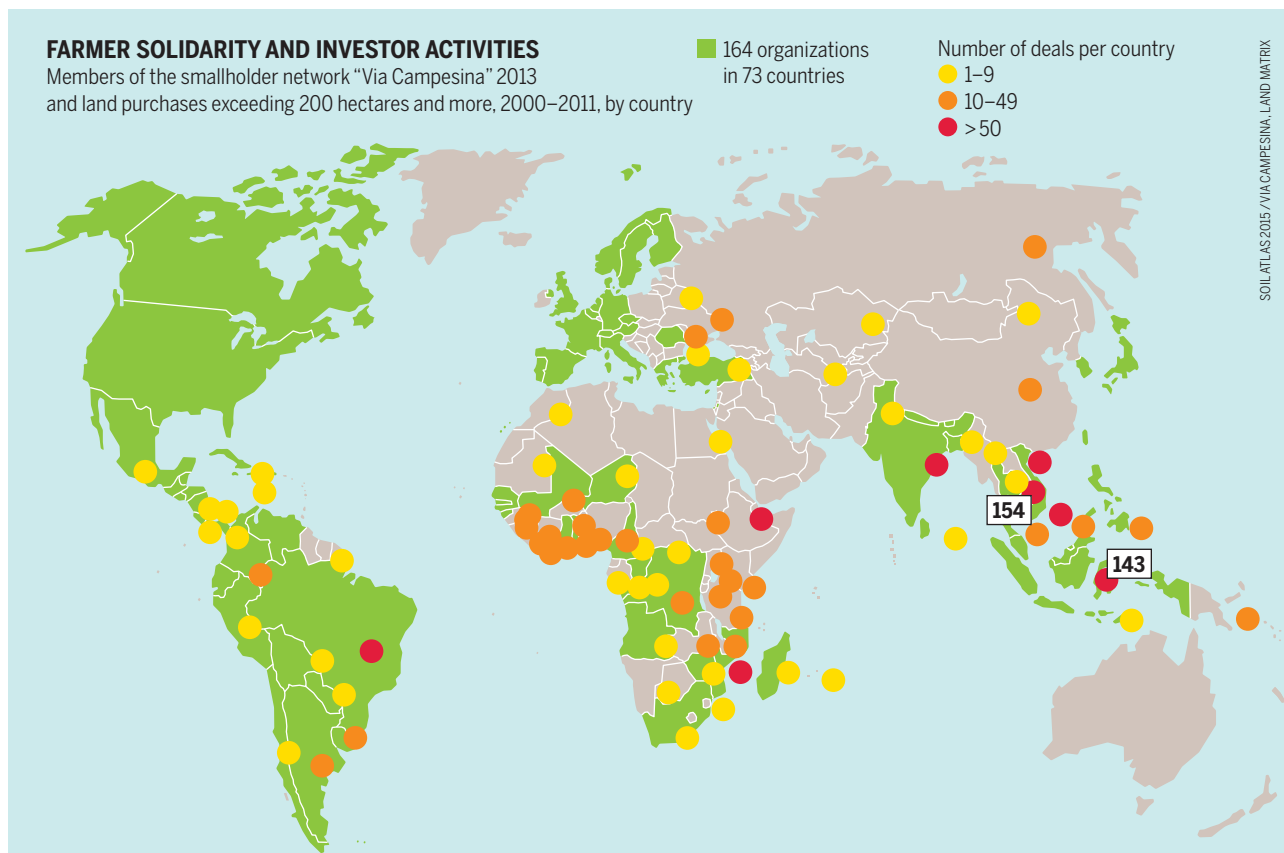
### What needs to be done is clear

Turkey is a priceless treasure in terms of biodiversity and agricultural memory. The fundamental principle, first and foremost, should be to adopt a policy to enable the rural population to live in the rural areas. The keystones of this policy consist of organic farming, nature-friendly and environmentally aware family production, and rural development. Therefore, we need to convince the EU to revise its approach to Turkish agriculture according to the aforementioned policy.

The international community is not standing idle either. May 14—the day the International Federation of Agricultural Producers was established—has been celebrated as World Farmers’ Day since 1984. 120 agricultural organizations from 80 countries are members of the Federation which represents 600 million farmer families in the world.

The UN wants family farms to be supported for both environmental preservation and the issues of healthier production, food safety and poverty in the rural areas. Accordingly, the UN has declared 2015 as the International Year of Family Farming;





70% of all the food consumed on the globe is produced by family farms. Intensive conventional agriculture, which produces the remaining 30%, however, uses minimum manpower but a high level of inputs.

The political economy of seeds is also a problem. Seeds are vitally important for sustainable agriculture and food safety. We all know that local seeds have red flags. Besides the monoculture practice and monopolization of seeds by companies, fertilizers and pesticides are added to the seeds developed in laboratories, hence, degrading water and soil. The farmers also have to buy these new seeds every year since the seeds cannot reproduce on their own.

### Is there any hope regarding the AKP?

Can the AKP abandon following the outdated model of development, and start to seriously consider Turkey's immense potential? Can the AKP stop undermining agriculture and animal husbandry, begin valuing organic agriculture, opt for clean energy, take measures against urbanization, and give importance to the Anatolian historical heritage?

These alternatives seem to be out of question since they are incompatible with the sociological characteristics of its electorate. A lifestyle reminiscent of the rural countryside is not considered

respectable by the AKP voters who generally come from a rural background. Despite the fact that the AKP is conservative about several family values, traditions and the Internet, it is totally anti-conservative about preserving natural, cultural and urban values, which they consider to be obstacles for development.

It is not a coincidence that the weakest and most backward point about the AKP is the preservation of environmental and cultural values. As is the case with the vast majority of the developing countries, society's level of awareness about "preservation" is the same as that of the politicians in Turkey. What Turkey wants is to develop, become wealthier, consume, consume, and consume further. To prevent this mindset is difficult since the opportunities, economic rent and power which capitalism brings with it are very attractive and endless, but we must continue the struggle.

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Turkey is a priceless treasure in terms of biodiversity and agricultural memory. However, Turkey should not allow its rural population to diminish. The fundamental principle should be to adopt a policy to enable the rural population to live in rural areas. The keystones of this policy should consist of organic farming, environmentally aware family production, and rural development.

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## FOREIGN POLICY

# A New era with Mustafa Akıncı in Northern Cyprus

Ahmet Sözen

The election of Mustafa Akıncı as the new president of Northern Cyprus clearly marks the beginning a new era for Turkey-Northern Cyprus relations, as well as a new era for reconciliation in Cyprus.



**Prof. Dr. Ahmet Sözen**

is Vice Rector and International Relations Department Faculty Member of Eastern Mediterranean University. He attained his PhD degree at the Missouri-Columbia University with his thesis on Cyprus negotiations. His area of expertise is dispute resolution and techniques of negotiation. Prof. Dr. Sözen was a member of Turkish Cypriot negotiation committee during the Cyprus negotiations which started in 2008. Throughout the last 20 years he wrote numerous scientific articles on the Cyprus dispute and negotiations. Some of his relevant publications are *The Cyprus Conflict: Looking Ahead* (Eastern Mediterranean University Publishing, 2008). *Reflections on the Cyprus Problem: A Compilation of Recent Academic Contributions* (Eastern Mediterranean University Publishing, 2007).

The presidential election in Northern Cyprus on 19 April 2015 produced a result where no candidate managed to get more than 50%, which is the minimum to be elected president. In this first round of voting, 28% of the northern Cypriots supported incumbent President Derviş Eroğlu, who had been in office since 2010. The three remaining significant candidates, Mustafa Akıncı, Sibel Siber and Kudret Özersay, who highlighted “change” and “clean politics” as the main focus of their election campaigns, received the support of 70% of the voters. The second round of the elections on 26 April was largely seen as a referendum between those who are satisfied with the status quo, incontestably represented by Derviş Eroğlu, and those who support a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation as well as change, clean politics and good governance in Northern Cyprus represented by Mustafa Akıncı. In the end, the second round was won by Mustafa Akıncı, who obtained 60.5% of the votes against Derviş Eroğlu, with a major difference of 21 %. In a way, this result can be interpreted as the failure of the status quo and an approval to those who desire change – that is, a solution to the Cyprus conflict and good governance in Northern Cyprus.

Starting from the second half of the 1970s, Northern Cyprus has been governed by right-wing parties and up to the 2000s the ‘Cyprus Problem’ was by and large handled solely by the late president (and community leader) Rauf Denktaş, a right-wing politician who supported the status

quo. He believed in “No solution in Cyprus is the solution” basing this policy on the belief that the division of the island will be cemented as the time goes by without a solution to the Cyprus conflict. For a long period of time, while the Turkish Cypriot community has been labelled as the “intransigent” side in Cyprus peace negotiations in the eyes of the international community, the same community has struggled against extreme partisanship and nepotism of the majority of the governments in Northern Cyprus. Making things worse, the submissiveness of the governments as well as the majority of the presidents of Northern Cyprus regarding the “interventions of Turkey into the domestic affairs in Cyprus” did not go unnoticed by the Turkish Cypriots. All these factors have led to the formation of a frustrated and upset community in Northern Cyprus. In a way, Turkish Cypriots directed their fury towards Dr. Derviş Eroğlu, a former prime minister of the governments formed by the right-wing National Unity Party for 18 years. He was a firm follower of the Denktaş tradition and strong supporter of the established system (the status quo) in Northern Cyprus during his tenure as president which commenced in 2010.

Mustafa Akıncı’s political career started in 1976 when he became the first elected Mayor of the Nicosia Turkish Municipality at the age of 28. Since the beginning of his involvement in politics, he has become known for his distinct qualities in politics such as hard-work, steadfastness and seriousness, a distance from corrupt politics and support towards a federal solution in Cyprus. In addition to these qualities, Akıncı collaborated with the then Greek Cypriot Mayor of Nicosia on the implementation of the Nicosia Sewerage Project and the Nicosia Master Plan, which contributed to his positive image both in Northern and Southern Cyprus. In a nutshell, Mustafa Akıncı’s name is twined with



*Representing a bi-communal federation and clean politics, as opposed to Derviş Eroğlu who represented the status quo, Mustafa Akıncı got 60% of the votes and became the new president of TRNC.*

“clean politics” and a “federal solution” in the Greek Cypriot community. Hence, the election of Mustafa Akıncı as the new president of the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) and the new Turkish Cypriot leader in the eyes of the international community has brought fresh hope to those who support a federal solution in Greek Cypriot politics. In this respect, no Greek Cypriot leader will have the luxury of refusing to attend the peace talks with a Turkish Cypriot leader like Mustafa Akıncı, who has supported a federal solution in Cyprus throughout his political career, that is, the establishment of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation consisting of two politically equal communities. The Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Anastasiades has not missed any opportunity to leave the negotiation table in the past, and used Turkey’s declaration of Navtex (navigational telex) in searching for natural gas as a reason to leave the table in October 2014. He interrupted the peace talks with the former Turkish Cypriot community leader Derviş Eroğlu, a strong supporter of a “two-state” solution, but it is expected that this time he will not have the luxury to withdraw from the negotiations with Mustafa Akıncı.

At the very beginning of his election campaign, Mustafa Akıncı presented the public a detailed document outlining his vision and throughout his campaign, he explained his four-dimensional policies to public without using conventional campaign methods such as defamation of the other candidates:

1. Solution Oriented Policies
2. Responding to Social Issues
3. A Relationship with Turkey Based on Mutual

Respect

#### 4. An Independent and Impartial Presidency

In short, Akıncı stated that he will pursue a pro-solution and reconciliatory stance on the Cyprus problem; that he will not be a figure head in the office but actively engage in social issues in the country; that unlike his predecessor, he will have equal distance to all the political parties without prejudice; and that he will transform the existing TRNC-Turkey relations into one that is based on mutual respect and equal footing.

### Relations with Turkey

Mustafa Akıncı’s firm stance in the crisis in his encounter with the president of the Republic of Turkey Tayyip Erdoğan on his first day of presidency regarding the nature of the relationship between the Turkish Republic and the TRNC—whether the relationship should be one of a “mother and child” or “fraternal”—and his declaration that he would stand by his words are important signals indicating that during the post-election period, he will abide by his four-

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Mustafa Akıncı’s name is twined with “clean politics” and “federal solution” in the Greek Cypriot community. Hence, the election of Mustafa Akıncı as the new president of the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) and the new ‘Turkish Cypriot leader’ in the eyes of the international community has brought fresh hope for those who support a federal solution in Greek Cypriot politics.

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dimensional vision. This has received the support of 60.5% of the community. In other words, Akıncı's relationship with Turkey during the new era will neither be based on 'surrenderism' nor 'confrontationalism' and in this respect, he will transform the relationship between the TRNC and the Turkish Republic into one of reconciliation, dialogue and problem-solving.

It is widely believed that part of the reason for the spat between Erdoğan and Akıncı was due to the election season in Turkey where Erdoğan resorted to a nationalist and heroic discourse in order to cash in on Turkish citizens' votes for the Justice and Development Party (the AKP). This was typical of Erdoğan as exemplified in his famous Davos 'One Minute' episode in January 2009 or when he called Turkish Cypriots 'free-riders' ('besleme') in January 2011. It is also widely believed that after the general elections in Turkey on 7 June 2015, the discursive tension between Turkey and the TRNC will decrease dramatically. Most probably, the post-election relations between Turkey and the TRNC will be more technical and based on more rationality and less valor ('hamaset') during Akıncı's presidency.

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Akıncı's relationship with Turkey during the new era will neither be based on "surrenderism" nor 'confrontationalism' and, in this respect, he will transform the relationship between the TRNC and the Turkish Republic onto reconciliation, dialogue and problem-solving grounds.

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## The EU Element

The usual Turkish Cypriot position vis-à-vis the EU's enhanced role in the Cyprus issue had always been negative. The Turkish side quite frequently indicated that the EU is not able to play an impartial role in the Cyprus issue as long as Greece and the Greek Cypriot dominated Republic of Cyprus are full members of the EU while Turkey is not. Hence, the Turkish side has always opposed the idea of the EU's enhanced involvement in the Cyprus peace negotiations, as well as having developed an allergy to Greek Cypriot arguments like "the Cyprus solution should be based on EU values." However, there are strong indications that Mustafa Akıncı will not be adamant on this issue. Akıncı has always been a pro-EU politician who based his previous election campaigns on championing a united Cyprus' EU membership as well as such EU values as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights for all citizens. It is only natural to expect that he will in fact welcome more EU involvement in the process of solving the Cyprus

problem as well as in the period after a solution has been implemented. Therefore, compared to the Eroğlu presidency, one can expect that there will be a rapid enhancement of relations between the EU and the Turkish Cypriots. The indicators of this are the recent enthusiastic visits of the several EU member countries' ambassadors to Akıncı to congratulate him on his election victory. Hence, it is naturally expected that there will be more open and enhanced dialogue between the current Turkish Cypriot leader and the EU (countries and officials).

A better and enhanced dialogue between the Turkish Cypriots and the EU is also expected to positively influence the relations between Turkey and the EU. However, the improvement of the Turkish-EU relations are based on several other important factors, such as Turkey's record sheet on the quality of its democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Unfortunately, Turkey's track record on these issues in the last couple of years is, simply put, not very encouraging.

## The Inter-communal Peace Negotiations and the CBMs (Confidence Building Measures)

Regarding the inter-communal peace talks in Cyprus, the signals coming from the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot leaderships so far have been quite positive. The relevant background for the start of the negotiations has been ensured by the UN, USA, Turkey and Greece as the relevant stakeholders. For example, Turkey's non-renewal of the Navtex and the Greek Cypriot side's putting a hold on the gas drilling activities of the Eni-Kogas partnership are not coincidental. These deliberate steps paved the way towards the resumption of the peace talks between the new Turkish Cypriot leader and his Greek Cypriot counterpart within a new context freed from external factors that would derail the negotiation process. Hence, the two leaders have started the negotiations soon after Akıncı's election and complemented the negotiations with a series of confidence building measures that have already positively transformed the political climate between the two sides in Cyprus, ranging from opening new checkpoints for crossing of the people to the other side of the UN buffer zone to uniting the electricity grids of the two sides.

However, I believe that one needs to be a bit cautious before jumping to the conclusion that the Cyprus conflict will be resolved soon, as we have witnessed many failures in the Cyprus peace talks in the past. Hence, one needs to carefully evaluate the chances of success in the current



Mustafa Akıncı (on the right) was one of the founders of the Limassol beat group Kareler (The Squares). In 1969, when he entered the METU, he left the group of which he used to be the guitarist since 1966.

peace talks. Having commenced on February 11, 2014, the previous round of peace talks that were put on hold in October 2014 were based on a one-page joint declaration agreed by both leaders. This declaration, which was reluctantly accepted by both leaders as a result of the initiative of the USA and Turkey, has serious problems in three areas.

No formal or informal calendar for negotiations agreed by two sides was specified.

Whether the sides accept formerly agreed issues ("convergences") that form the basis for the negotiations is unclear.

The modality of the negotiations, in other words, the format, method and frequency of the negotiations to be carried out by leaders, negotiators/special representatives and technical teams, is unclear.

It is known that Akıncı and Anastasiades repeated their endorsement for the February 11, 2014 joint declaration that has serious weaknesses regarding the process of the negotiations. If the aim of the two leaders now is to finalize the negotiations with success, the peace talks should start and proceed in the right context and with the right approach. For this to happen, prompt specification of the three above-mentioned weak spots in the joint declaration is of utmost importance in the resumption of peace talks with clearer goals, modality and calendar.

Finally, it is of utmost importance that the peace talks that are carried out by the two community leaders be conducted differently from what has been done up to now - i.e., totally in isolation from the communities. Instead, the talks should adopt a more inclusive methodology allowing the hopes, fears and desires of both communities to be integrated

into the peace process. On one hand, we need to bring fresh hope to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, who have lost their hopes for a solution in Cyprus and on the other hand, we need to bridge the big gap of trust between the two communities. The most important tool in this respect would be the implementation of a series of confidence building measures (CBMs) between the two communities. In this way, positive change will be brought to the very lives of the ordinary people who can then observe that cooperation between the two communities is indeed possible and that it is something desirable. In this way, the possibility and desirability of a federative solution, or a 'mega cooperation,' based on the power-sharing between the two communities will be solidified. These confidence building measures may focus on an array of potential areas of collaboration which may include a mobile phone roaming agreement between the two communities, opening of the fenced area of Varosha, allowing Turkish Cypriots to have direct trade with the EU through the Famagusta Port, and erasing all traces of hatred and racism from both communities' history books. A simultaneous implementation of confidence building measures that would accompany the official track of the peace negotiations at leaders' level has not been tried before. A methodology as such would go beyond the accustomed pattern of behavior and will transform the peace process into a broader, more inclusive and democratic method. The current peace process started with signs of this format that I proposed above and I hope that the two leaders do not let go of the CBM track for the sake of focusing solely on substantive issues of the Cyprus problem for a comprehensive solution.

## CULTURE

# Why was “Bakur: A Guerilla Documentary” not screened in the festival?

Esin Berktaş

Bakur, a feature-length documentary produced in 2015, was to be screened as part of the non-competing category in the Istanbul Film Festival organized annually by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV). However, neither this documentary nor many of the films and documentaries which were to participate in the film festival were able to be screened. The apparent reason was that Bakur: A Guerilla Documentary did not have the registration document required by the Ministry of Culture.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the registration document was not demanded until the date of the documentary's screening caused public indignation and 21 filmmakers whose films were to be screened in the festival withdrew their films from the festival to support the producer and directors of Bakur.<sup>2</sup>



## Esin Berktaş

Esin Berktaş was born in Izmir in 1975. She graduated from the Department of Sociology at the Middle East Technical University, received a master's degree from the Department of Graphic Design at Bilkent University and her Proficiency in Art from the Department of Cinema and TV at the Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts. She has written several sociological essays and has translated work on world cinema and the cinema of Turkey. She is the author of the book 1940'lı Yılların Türk Sineması [The Turkish Cinema of 1940s] published by Agora Publishing. Currently, he teaches courses on cinema and art.

Directed by Ertuğrul Mavioglu and Çayan Demirel, Bakur (North) is about the daily lives of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) guerillas. Many film-makers, artists and intellectuals are of the opinion that the main reason for the censorship imposed on the film is its story. This documentary is not the only work of art which was censored, banned and prevented from being presented for telling the story of the lives, thoughts, aims and ideals of the PKK guerillas.<sup>3</sup> What are the reasons used to justify censorship in film festivals and in the history of Turkish cinema in general? What are the legal and social processes that ensured the continuation of these justifications?

## Censorship in cinema

Censorship is legally defined as the “measures taken by the state to control any kind of oral, writ-

ten, visual or vocal publication.” The main lines of the censorship applied to the films by the state in Turkey were determined by the Regulation on the Control of Films and Film Scripts adopted in 1939. According to this regulation, the films which:

- politically propagate in favor of any state
- humiliate any race or nation
- insult the feelings of friendly states or nations
- propagate in favor of a religion
- propagate in favor of a political, economic or social ideology that is against the national regime
- run counter to general decency and morality and national feelings
- dishonor and propagate against military service
- are dangerous for the order and security of the country
- encourage people to commit a crime
- and include scenes which may be used to propagate against Turkey cannot be authorized for screening.

This regulation, which was used to restrict and control both the imported and domestic films during the Second World War, continued to be used until 1980s with various amendments despite several attempts of film-makers and politicians to the contrary. However, these fundamental articles reflect the thinking which legally constitutes the backbone of censorship. According to this regulation, the state's “official” understanding of national unity, national integrity, ideology, propaganda, symbol, military structuring, religious values, sexuality and morality cannot be interpreted, shown, criticized, changed and spread by the citizens. This understanding of the state which was constituted and legitimated under conditions of war has permeated the totality of artistic production and continues to exist up to this date. This condition has limited people's access to many important cultural workers and their valuable production. Contrary to the reason of its existence, this regulation hindered the accumulation of cultural capital of the country.





In 2004, with the 7th article of the Law on the Evaluation, Classification and Support of Cinema Films (law number 5224), it was made obligatory that “cinema films, produced domestically or imported, are evaluated and classified allowing for recording and registration before their commercial distribution and screening.” Under the same law, it was stated that “the films which were found to be inappropriate as a result of the evaluation and classification shall not be commercially distributed and screened.”<sup>4</sup> In 2005, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism prepared the Regulation on Procedures and Principles regarding the Evaluation and Classification of Cinema Films with the aim to “determine the procedures and principles regarding the evaluation and classification of all kinds of imported or domestic films so that they are recorded and registered before being presented for commercial distribution and screening and the establishment of committees and sub-committees for evaluation and classification.” The 15th article of this regulation<sup>5</sup> constituted the reference point of the letter sent by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to the Istanbul Foundation of Culture and Arts to censor and warn against the film *Bakur: A Guerilla Documentary*.

Since the very early days of censorship, hegemonic power and the ways in which it presents, defends and protects itself has had to deal with criticism and protests. The largest problem which hinders the sharing and reception of cultural production in our country is the various restrictions imposed on films due to their subject matters, the people whose story they tell, the places in which they are shot, the language they use and the movie theaters in which they are screened. The Istanbul

Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) may seem to be an intermediary institution; however, it acted in an incompetent and partisan manner in giving in to the pressure of the Ministry of Culture that demanded a “work registration document” for the screening of the film. If one of the principal aims of the Istanbul Film Festival is to support directors making new and creative films, it is crucial that this first feature-length documentary, which deals with a very significant subject in relation to the political and social history of the country, is able to reach an audience.

### The types of censorship imposed on films in Turkey

Many films shot and screened in Turkey could be given as examples for the films censored in accordance with the legal regulations that I summarized above. These films may be grouped under four categories as follows:

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Directed by Ertuğrul Mavioğlu and Çayan Demirel, *Bakur (North)* is about the daily lives of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) guerillas. Many film-makers, artists and intellectuals are of the opinion that the main reason for the censorship imposed on the film is its story. This documentary is not the only work of art which has been censored, banned and prevented from being presented for telling the story of the lives, thoughts, aims and ideals of the PKK guerillas.

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*In a reply to the critics of the film, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, the co-director of “Bakur” asks: “What we have done can simply be translated as following: Which PKK do you prefer? Do you prefer children who go on combats and kill soldiers? Or rather a PKK which plays marbles, rolls out doughs, walks around in the mountains? Those who criticize the film shall decide on this”.*

- Films for which work operation licenses were not issued<sup>6</sup>
- Films which were accepted conditionally (requiring partial changes or removal of certain scenes)<sup>7</sup>
- Films which are rejected and/or are prevented from being distributed or screened<sup>8</sup>
- Films subjected to repressions other than state censorship.<sup>9</sup>

An analysis on the practices of censorship related to the work operation licenses will be informative in terms of understanding the extent to which censorship practices are still used today.

The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) may seem to be merely an intermediary institution; however, it acted in an incompetent and partisan manner in giving in to the pressure exerted by the Ministry of Culture demanding “work registration and recording document” for the screening of the film. If one of the principal aims of the Istanbul Film Festival is to support directors making new and creative films, it is crucial that this first feature-length documentary, which deals with a very significant subject in relation to the political and social history of the country, is able to reach an audience.

### What is registered by the Ministry of Culture?

The screening of *Bakur*, which had been announced to be screened at the 34th Istanbul Film Festival, was cancelled on its screening date 12 April 2015 with the following statement:

“As per the statute, festival participation requires that ‘films produced within the country are registered and recorded.’ The screening of films produced in Turkey without this certificate results in legal sanctions, therefore the Istanbul Film Festival will not be able to screen films that do not have the aforementioned certificate. As such, the screening of *Bakur / North* directed by Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioglu, previously scheduled to be shown at 16.00 on Sunday, April 12, at the Atlas Movie Theatre, will not take place. A future screening date of the film will be announced on the condition that it acquires this registration certificate.”

Considering the history of the state censorship, we may conclude that the documentary, which represents the lives of PKK guerillas in the mountains “showing life how it is really lived there,” was banned for representing the philosophical, social and artistic dimensions of the guerilla in a poetic and natural manner, which is contrary to its representation as a violent, relent-

less and barbaric kind of organization.<sup>10</sup> *Bakur* depicts the structures and representations of the guerilla’s differentiated understanding brought about by the war, equality of men and women, the consciousness of women, class structure and family relations, representing what one of the guerillas in the film calls “dervishes of the mountains”. Bringing the struggle which began in 1938 in Dersim to the 21st century, it enables the audience to learn about “these lands which have a spirit.”

Ertuğrul Mavioglu, one of the directors of the film, says the following about the developments related to the film and the theme of the film, which was shot in approximately four months:

“...We entered the PKK camps and documented what we saw. No one kneaded dough for us since they were already eating bread themselves. No one played with marbles for us; because they really spend their time by playing with marbles and solving puzzles. Our response is this: which PKK would you prefer? Would you prefer kids who kill the soldiers and engage in combats? Or, a PKK which plays with marbles, kneads dough, wanders around the mountains and engages with the people? Those who criticize need to decide that.”<sup>11</sup>

“The first and foremost thing was to ensure that the work could be conducted in an independent way. We would not venture into that work if there would be any demands related to its content. We work independently and we prefer to work with our own preferences, points of view and the things we see. They accepted that. Their only request was to have no filming that would put their security at risk. Our aim was not to put anyone in jeopardy. We just wanted to document. Therefore, their request was acceptable.”<sup>12</sup>

As the statements above illustrate, the documentary directed by Mavioglu and Demirel is a documentary expression of a popular political organization. It is located in the Middle East, expecting new conflicts and wars. It has emerged as a continuation of age-old civilizations and struggles for the identity, life, existence and future of a people. These kinds of realistic works are important both for these reasons and for the place they might have in the current peace process.

In this context, the official processes relating to the classification, evaluation and censoring of films need to be either applied to all films in the same manner or be abolished for all the films since they have turned into repressive practices. It is difficult not to have access to a work of art in the digital-global age in which we live. Therefore, the fairest and most conscientious attitude would be to let the audience interpret the works of art including films. The fundamental condition

to create the transformations aimed at abolishing censorship is to respect the labour of the artists like the labour of any other people and to defend the rights of all citizens “to freedom of expression and to express themselves artistically.”<sup>13</sup>

Otherwise, one day we may find ourselves without memory, tongue-tied and silenced like ‘some’ of the filmmakers, theater actors, dancers, musicians, journalists, scholars and politicians.

The fundamental condition required to create the transformations aimed at abolishing censorship is to respect the labour of the artists like the labour of any other people, and to defend the right of all citizens “to freedom of expression and to express themselves artistically.”

- 1 Bakur: A Guerilla Documentary could be watched online thanks to the support of the Surela Film, the producer of the documentary.
- 2 “The obligatory recording and registration is an obligatory process completed in exchange for a specific fee to record and register cinematographic and musical works by the producers that make the first fixation of films and phonogram producers that make the first fixation of sounds for the purpose of preventing violation of their rights, facilitating proof of rightholdership and tracking the authority to exercise economic rights, and without the aim of creating any rights.” (<http://www.telifhaklari.gov.tr/ana/sayfa.asp?id=405>).
- 3 The book titled Dağın Kadın Hali [Being Women in the Mountains], prepared by Arzu Demir and published by Ceylan Yayıncılık in 2014, was found to be objectionable and banned in the Diyarbakır D-type prison and Kandıra Numbered 2 F-type Prison (2.5.2015, [www.firatnews.com](http://www.firatnews.com)).
- 4 Duygu Çağla Doğan, “Sinemanın Toplum Hayatındaki Rolü ve Denetimi” [The Role of Cinema in Social Life and its Control] *Hukuk Gündemi Dergisi*, 2010-2, p.77; <http://teftis.kulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,14244/sinema-filmlerinin-degerlendirilmesi-ve-siniflandirilma-.html>
- 5 The article of the regulation which explains the obligation of recording and registration is as follows:  
“Films to be screened as part of artistic events:  
Article 15— Any kind of responsibility which emerges from the screening of foreign films brought from abroad to be screened to the public or to participate in the contests held in fairs, film festivals, festivities or similar artistic events organized within the country without any other commercial distribution or screening lies with the organizing committee of these events.  
The organizing committees have to receive the positive opinion of the “Artistic Events Commission” in relation to the events mentioned in the paragraph above. The Commission in question is comprised of representatives of the related professional associations, with one representative from each association. The head of the Commission is selected from among the members and its secretariat is run by the professional association which is the oldest one by its establishment date. The Commission determines its procedures and principles of operation with a meeting held in the beginning of each year. It submits its annual working report to the Ministry until the end of the January of the following year. The Commission is to notify the Ministry about the events for which it gave positive opinion at least one week before the starting date of the event in question.  
The films produced within the country may participate in these events provided that they are recorded and registered.”
- 6 Films such as *Hiçbir Yerde* (Nowhere), 9, *Sarı Günler* (Yellow Days), *Büyük Adam Küçük Aşk* (Big Man Little Love), *Bakur* (North).
- 7 Films such as *Aysel Batakılı Damın Kızı* (Aysel, The Girl From the Swampy Roof), *Hudutların Kanunu* (Law of the Border)
- 8 Films such as *Aşık Veysel’in Hayatı* (Life of Aşık Veysel), *Yılanların Öcü* (Revenge of the Snakes), *Susuz Yaz* (Dry Summer), *Umut* (Hope), *Yol* (The Road), *Otobüs* (The Bus).
- 9 Metin Erksan’s film *Sevmek Zamanı* (Time to Love) was not bought by any producer on the grounds that it will not have a success at the box office and could not be screened at movie theaters (<http://ozgur-gundem.com/yazi/47055/metin-erksan-ve-teofilo-stevenson>)
- 10 <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11245/bakur-belgeseline-kayit-tescil-belgesi-sansuru>; [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/257947/\\_Dagdan\\_inmek\\_istemi-yoruz\\_diyorlar\\_.html#](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/257947/_Dagdan_inmek_istemi-yoruz_diyorlar_.html#); <http://www.sendika.org/2015/04/gerillayi-anlatan-bakur-belgeseli-istanbul-film-festivali-programindan-cikarildi/>; <https://hakangungorarsivi.wordpress.com/2015/05/03/ertugrul-mavioglu-ekip-olarak-sansuru-hazmetmedik/>; <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/diger/163727-festivalde-bir-gerilla-belgeseli-bakur-kuzey>
- 11 [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/257947/\\_Dagdan\\_inmek\\_istemi-yoruz\\_diyorlar\\_.html#](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/257947/_Dagdan_inmek_istemi-yoruz_diyorlar_.html#)
- 12 <https://hakangungorarsivi.wordpress.com/2015/05/03/ertugrul-mavioglu-ekip-olarak-sansuru-hazmetmedik/>
- 13 The following entities, associations, societies and groups have taken the first steps towards organizing against censorship: <http://sansurekarsi.org/>, <http://www.sinemaakademi.com/>, Belgesel Sinemacılar Birliği (BSB- The Association of Documentary Filmmakers), Çağdaş Sinema Oyuncuları Derneği (ÇASOD- Contemporary Screen Actors’ Guild), Film Yönetmenleri Derneği (FİLMYÖN- Film Directors Guild), Oyuncular Sendikası (Actors Union), Senaryo ve Diyalog Yazarı Sinema Eseri Sahipleri Meslek Birliği (SENARİSTBİR- Screenwriters and Dialog Writers Film Works Owners Guild), Senaryo Yazarları Derneği (SEN-DER- Screenwriters Association), Sinema Emekçileri Sendikası (SİNESEN), Sinema Eseri Yapımcıları Meslek Birliği (SE-YAP), Sinema Oyuncuları Derneği (SODER), Sinema Oyuncuları Meslek Birliği (BİROY- Film Actors Society), Sinema ve Televizyon Eseri Sahipleri Meslek Birliği (SETEM- Cinema and Television Works Owners’ Society), Türkiye Sinema Eseri Sahipleri Meslek Birliği (SESAM- Cinematographic Work Owners’ Society of Turkey), Boğaziçi Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu (BGST- Boğaziçi Society of Performance Arts) Oyuncu Sendikası (Actor Union), Türkiye Görüntü Yönetmenleri Derneği (Association of Directors of Photography in Turkey), Sinema Televizyon Sendikası (Union of Cinema and Television), Yeni Sinema Hareketi (New Cinema Movement), İşçi Filmleri Festivali (Labor Film Festival), Documentarist, İstanbul Belgesel Günleri (İstanbul Documentary Days), Hangi İnsan Hakları Film Festivali (Which Human Rights? Film Festival), Emek Bizim İstanbul Bizim (Emek is Ours, İstanbul is Ours) and Gökyüzü Oyuncuları (Actors of the Sky).



## CULTURE

# “One Hundred Years of Sorrow”: Remembrance of 1915 in Diyarbakır

Interview: Merve Erol

An important center of the Armenian genocide was Diyarbakır. Both the urban Armenian population and the convoys passing through the city were massacred. In their study *One Hundred Years of Sorrow - On the Track of Social Memory: 1915 Diyarbakır*, (“Yüzyıllık Ah! – Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde: 1915 Diyarbakır”) published by the İsmail Beşikçi Foundation, Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç searched for the specter of genocide haunting the city by drawing on intergenerational transmissions, political facts and the reflections of the genocide in Kurdish literature.



**Adnan Çelik**

He was born in 1983 in the Kulp (Pasor) district of Diyarbakır. He graduated from Diyarbakır University Faculty of Educational Sciences. He served as a researcher in the project “1915, Diyarbakır, Kurds”, carried out by the İsmail Beşikçi Foundation. He co-authored with Namık Kemal Dinç “One Hundred Years of Sorrow - On the Track of Social Memory: 1915 Diyarbakır”, (“Yüzyıllık Ah! – Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde: 1915 Diyarbakır”) a book product of the above-mentioned project. Continuing his PhD titled “State Violence in Northern Kurdistan and the Socio-Anthropological Dimensions of Intra-Kurdish Conflicts since 2012 at the Paris EHESS Political Anthropology Department, Çelik is also a member of the editorial board *Toplum ve Kuram*, a journal focusing on Kurdish studies.

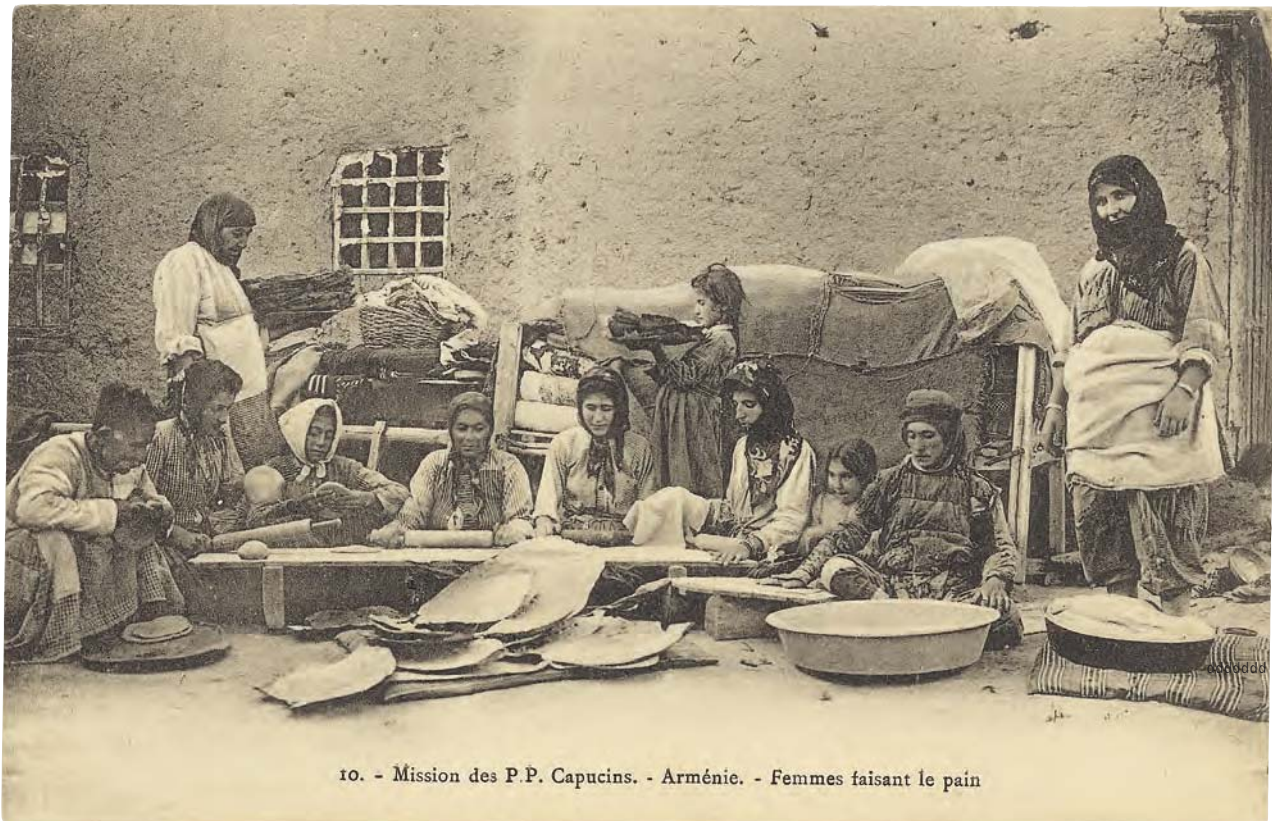
Are you both from Diyarbakır? Have you run across any traces of 1915 in places you were born and lived?

Namık Kemal Dinç: I am from Erzincan and Adnan is from Diyarbakır. 1915 was experienced somewhat differently in Erzincan and Diyarbakır, and there are also differences in the ways in which it was subsequently remembered. The Armenian population in Erzincan was dramatically exterminated, but both cities can be regarded as Armenian cities. Especially in Diyarbakır, Armenian people had very serious influence on urban life and culture. Their number was also high. You say in your book that there were sixty thousand Armenians living in Diyarbakır...

Dinç: We came to this conclusion by drawing on other sources; otherwise there are very different figures. The Armenian population comprised 25-30% of the whole population in the city, which is not an insignificant statistic. In his travelogue the *Seyâhatnâme*, Evliya Çelebi said that Diyarbakır is also an

Armenian city. According to him, as plenty of Armenians were settled there and left their mark on the culture, art, music, life styles and commerce of the city, it is an Armenian city. Our study also shows very clearly that this abundance of Islamized Armenians has introduced another history whose effects are still with us today. There are plenty of Armenian people remaining within the tribes in Diyarbakır. As for Erzincan, for example in our village, people spoke of two to three Armenian women. It is also the same in the neighboring village. There are stories about children seized or hidden by others, but it is impossible to talk about families or men continuing their lives. This is not only about 1915. From 1917-18, that is, from the end of the war, another constellation also surfaced in Erzincan. After the retreat of the Russian army, conflicts were experienced with the remaining Armenians, which led to mutual massacres. Physically speaking, perhaps it was impossible to speak of Armenians in Diyarbakır anymore, but Islamized Armenians continued their existence considerably. There are no people in Erzincan who say “I am also an Armenian; we also have an Armenian lineage.” There are some church remnants, some properties left over by Armenians, yet Armenians themselves do not exist there anymore.

Adnan Çelik: Before 1915, approximately 30% of Diyarbakır’s population consisted of non-Muslims like Assyrians, Chaldeans, and particularly Armenians. There were Arabs, Turkmens and Kurds. Especially after the 1990’s, i.e., after the migration from the rural areas to urban centers, and as a consequence of the earlier liquidation of Armenians and non-Muslims, Diyarbakır increasingly became a Kurdish city; with the rise of the Kurdish political movement and



10. - Mission des P.P. Capucins. - Arménie. - Femmes faisant le pain

especially due to the Diyarbakır Prison, it was transformed into a political capital, a center. Historically speaking, it is indeed a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic city. But unfortunately it lost this character in the wake of 1915.

Has the memory of Armenians been suppressed in Diyarbakır as much as it has been done in Erzincan?

Çelik: It could not and cannot be suppressed, because something always reminds people of Armenians. It is always possible to feel the presence of Armenians in districts and villages. Why do people of Diyarbakır and Kurds remember the Armenian genocide so vividly? Extreme forms of violence were implemented during the genocide. This violence has been inscribed into the bodies, hearts and memories of people. It is still traumatic; that people have not been able to forget these violence narratives. Some of your interviewees talked with ease about the 1990's, about the atrocities they went through. However, when it comes to the Armenian genocide, they wanted to turn off the tape recorder. They had difficulties while talking...

Çelik: Yes, it is difficult to talk about it, but it is perhaps something inexpressible. However, when one refers to the past practices of violence, the seriousness and the scale of the situation becomes apparent. The majority

of Armenian convoys brought from the north during the genocide passed through Diyarbakır and Mardin. Many killings were perpetrated in the province of Diyarbakır. Some places where people were killed are now associated with this slaughter. The memories of these places had a great impact upon people.

These are desolate places, aren't they? Straits, rivers, caves...

Çelik: These are places out of sight. Places where it is possible to rapidly and easily make the bodies of killed people disappear. Chasms, caves, pits, straits, cisterns... There were many Armenians in Diyarbakır who were able to survive. Some of them were Islamized and some of them continued their daily existence in their own religion. We know that until the 1960's and 1970's 10 to 20 families lived in Lice, Silvan and Kulp making their living from various crafts. All these dynamics enabled this memory to be brought into the present and kept them always alive. And some of your interviewees paint a very positive picture about the mutual life of Kurds and Armenians before 1915. For instance, the starting point of the book is the institution of "kirve." Is this a sort of emotional atonement or does it correspond to reality or do people just wish for it to be so?

Diñç: It is true that the relation between Kurds and Armenians started to deteriorate from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

*Women making bread in an Armenian village. Postcard by Capusin priests. (Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago With the Postcards from the Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno, Osman Köker [Ed.], Bir Zamanlar Publication, 2005.*



**Namık Kemal Diñç**

He graduated from Istanbul University History Department in 2008. He continues his long-standing engagement in recent Kurdish history as an independent researcher. He was one of the founders of the Toplum ve Kuram and the Zan Social-Political-Economic Research Foundation. He produced programs for the IMC-TV which began its broadcasting life in 2011. He served as the coordinator of the oral history project "1915 Diyarbakır, Kurds" carried out by the İsmail Beşikçi Foundation and then co-authored with Namık Kemal Diñç the book "One Hundred Years of Sorrow - On the Track of Social Memory: 1915 Diyarbakır", ("Yüzyıllık Ah! - Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde: 1915 Diyarbakır") which was prepared as a result of a comprehensive fieldwork.



It was thought that Tanzimat policies were in favor of Armenians and against Kurds. Generally speaking, Tanzimat policies called for equality, but Muslims were discontented because they were losing their privileges and witnessing the loss of their sovereignty. The Ottoman state's aim was to hold together different people with these policies of equality.

It is said that the corrosion of Kurdish unity after the suppression of the Bedirhan Revolt had also its share in this situation. Is this true?

Dinç: But we also know that Bedirhan perpetrated two major massacres against Nestorian Christians. When the rebellion was suppressed and Bedirhan was arrested by the Ottoman state in 1847, the Armenian-Greek Patriarch in Istanbul published an announcement addressing all Armenians. He put the Ottoman sultan Abdulmecit on a pedestal and said, "You have saved us from these savage Kurds by vanquishing Bedirhan". But these peoples lived together in the same land for over 3000 years. It is stated in many genocide narratives that one could not even distinguish these peoples by their clothes; we know that local people were asked to identify Armenians. They often could speak each other's languages. Of course, there were some periods of disappointment or resentment, but they lived together in the same villages, and more importantly, they had established a

mutual economic life.

Let's say an Armenian village pays a tax to Istanbul, but also pays another to the Kurdish bey under the name of protection. What kind of an economic cooperation is this?

Dinç: This double taxation appeared after the Tanzimat. Prior to that, the state did not receive any tax from them. The tax was taken through Kurdish beys, who took their own share and if he had to pay any tax, he gave it to the state. Over 400 hundred years of Ottoman rule, Kurds had some privileges. Some rights were accorded to them in a context one might call autonomy. The Ottoman state was certainly an external force. It was established only in urban centers. Even if you take the periphery of Diyarbakır as an example, the Kurdish bey in Silvan was much more influential and stronger than the official of the Ottoman state. Major Noel made observations about this. He makes a remark about the economic relations between Kurds and Armenians: "Kurdish is a widespread language. And Kurds are not the murderers of Armenians. They saved Armenians from the hands of Turks many times." In other words, he says: "In economic terms, Armenians cannot survive without Kurds." This statement is from 1919. One of the reasons for the continued existence of ten families in towns was to maintain this economic life. The economic life of Kurds thus received a severe

Christians from Diyarbakır.  
Postcard by Capusin priests.  
(Armenians in Turkey 100 Years  
Ago With the Postcards from  
the Collection of Orlando Carlo  
Calumeno, Osman Köker [Ed.],  
Bir Zamanlar Publication,  
2005.







blow with the departure of Armenians. Kurds were partly engaged in animal husbandry and partly in agriculture. And Armenians were engaged in agriculture, artisanship, trades, etc. As a matter of fact, the relationship between them is one of mutual benefit. So why were Armenians good at artisanship and trades? It is because Kurds and other Muslim elements were seen as a combat force. They often went to wars and did not come back. However, as Christians were not recruited, Armenians could subsist on these jobs. They were also imposed to pay a heavy tax called *jizya*. Every man above the age of 12-13 had to pay *jizya*, which was also phrased as the head tax. But how could they pay it? By earning income. Therefore, they had motivation to excel not only in agriculture but also in trades and artisanship.

What is the meaning of the Bedirhan tribe for the unity of Kurds? Is it the case that a dissolution appeared among Kurds after them and this dissolution was concretized in the form of harassment of Armenian villages? Dinç: There was no Bedirhan tribe, but a "*beylik*". Tribes are composed of sub-units. A *beylik* is a structure above the confederations of tribes. There was certainly a dissolution in this period. Apart from Bedirhan, there were some *beyliks* in Van, Muş, Bitlis, Diyarbakır and Ağrı. The *Beylik* of Doğubeyazıt was a very famous one. There were lots of *beys* in Erzurum. All these *beyliks* were terminated in 1848. Their lands were confiscated; and

if any agreement was negotiated, some part of the incomes obtained from the land were assigned to them as a salary. Otherwise, as was the case for the Bedirhan *beylik*, the state exiled them. It was then impossible for Bedirhans to set foot on their own lands. The power structure was changed along with the land regime and administrative structuring. The state confiscated their lands. In 1858, the Land Code was introduced. Land started to be distributed and taxes were collected through this framework. Just at this period, after the liquidation of *beys*, Kurdistan was transformed into a geography of sheer chaos. The Ottoman state appointed governors and district governors and there are some reports written by them: "We cannot maintain the administration, we cannot control the tribes, everyone is at odds with everyone..." *Beys* had established an order there thanks to their authority, but the governors appointed by the state did not have any position to

Kurdish woman milking the goat and Armenian women grinding wheat. Postcard by Capusin priests. (Armenians in Turkey 100 Years Ago With the Postcards from the Collection of Orlando Carlo Calumeno, Osman Köker [Ed.], Bir Zamanlar Publication, 2005.

Why do people of Diyarbakır and Kurds remember the Armenian genocide so vividly? Why is this memory so powerful? For one thing, there were inconceivable practices of violence. Extreme forms of violence were implemented during the genocide. This violence has been inscribed into the bodies, hearts and memories of people. It is still traumatic; people have not been able to forget these violence narratives. Genocide continues to be remembered with these practices of violence.

re-establish an order on their own, because the tribes did not recognize their authority. In that period, a new ruling class appeared among Kurds that became an alternative to beys. And these people were religious functionaries, sheikhs and mullahs. From this date onwards, the pioneers of political movements in Kurdistan were sheikhs. The Sheikh Ubeydullah Movement emerged after 1881; Mele Selim in 1914 and Sheikh Said in 1925. These figures came to the fore with their religious authority. On the other hand, the Armenian Regulation was introduced in 1862, which led to the formation of the Armenian Assembly. It had the quality of a constitution. This assembly had members wherever Armenians lived and also had

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It is true that the relationship between Kurds and Armenians started to deteriorate at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was thought that Tanzimat policies were in favor of Armenians and against Kurds. Generally speaking, Tanzimat policies called for equality, but Muslims were discontented because they were losing their privileges and witnessing the loss of their sovereignty. The Ottoman state's aim was to hold together different people with these policies of equality.

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representatives in Kurdistan. As Christian representatives stepped forward in the public realm, Muslim religious representatives and mullahs came to the fore as a response. Another reason for this was that sheikhs appropriated most of the lands following the newly-instituted land code. Sheikhs were also the owners of great land tracts and emerged as major merchants. For example, Sheikh Ubeydullah, who revolted against the state in 1880, was a landowner, having a monopoly on tobacco. Abdulhamid II made the second strategic move. He came to power in 1876 and pursued pan-Islamist politics as a reaction to the Tanzimat policies, espousing a politics oriented towards winning the hearts of Muslims, and by extension Kurds, who felt offended by the Tanzimat. This period was dominated by Kurdish religious functionaries, a period when the pivotal rupture broke out not only for Kurds themselves but also for the relations between Kurds and Armenians. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 erupted during this period. Article 61 added to the Berlin Treaty stipulated that attacks by Kurds and Circassians against Armenians be prevented and reforms be made in favor of Armenians in six provinces. Here is how this term "reform" was perceived among Kurds:

An Armenian state would be established here and Kurds would be slaves to Armenians. This societal tension started to increase in 1878-79 and with the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, the relationship between Kurds and Armenians were ruined. The reform proposition for "six provinces" seems somewhat similar to "democratic autonomy," doesn't it?

Çelik: If it had been properly implemented, then it would have come close to it. It could have been an attempt trying to create opportunities for different religious and ethnic groups to live together. It is not something as elaborately thought out as the current idea of democratic autonomy, but it is now understood that it was then a relatively democratic concept.

Dinç: Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state encountered a similar practice in the lands it had lost. First, they had demanded autonomy, which also included specifications such as a local gendarme force, i.e., the establishment of a local police and defense force. For instance, in Bulgaria, it was first thought that Bulgaria would be divided into three parts with a Western gendarme force to be deployed there as a guarantee. In other words, security shifted onto another hands and the Ottoman state came side by side with other military powers. Their position was to protect Ottoman citizens from the Ottoman state itself. Of course, this had a gradual progression, culminating in independence. Having previously been divided into three parts, Bulgaria then appeared as a single and united entity. And then it dealt the great blow in the Balkan War. The Ottoman state feared a similar possibility regarding the Armenians. But in fact, the Ottoman state did not want to recognize equality.

Dinç: It certainly did not want to recognize equality. But the Tanzimat period is somewhat different. Laws and edicts enacted in this period were quite progressive, containing theoretical steps to ensure equality. The Reform Edict of 1856 was a continuation of Tanzimat. It enabled Christian elements to be represented in local assemblies and abolished the jizya tax. These were parts of a policy of equality the Tanzimat could not create.

On the other hand, there is 1908, a year witnessing demonstrations with flags and banners in different languages. Albeit temporary, a feeling of fraternity emerged. But a year later Armenians were being massacred in Adana. The Armenian organizations in 1908





were also the first ones espousing socialist ideas. And the populations they represented lived in Eastern Anatolia to a large extent. What is the heritage handed over by these organizations and political demands to the region in question?

**Dinç:** For sure, there are some differences. In terms of the socialist experience, there are some differences between what was the case a hundred years ago and the following periods. Nonetheless, we know that they had this kind of political affiliation. These are all referred to in the memoirs of Armen Garo (Karekin Pasturmacyan) and in the writings, speeches and memoirs of Armenians committed to militant organizations in the late nineteenth century. There was the famous raid on the Ottoman Bank (1896). “Westerners should apply pressure upon the Ottomans so that we obtain our rights” summed up their perspective. This is a Narodnik-style armed propaganda, an anarchist style. What was the connection between this method and the people? How organized were they, how strong were the Dashnaks or the Hinchaks? As far as Dr. Reşid was concerned everyone was organized in all villages including women and children.

**Çelik:** In fact, their organizations were weak. Perhaps it is possible to correlate them with the founding period of the PKK. It might be possible to think that students

and intellectuals came together under a perspective of national liberation and integrated the people into this mobilization through armed and political propaganda. They argued that they ultimately did not pursue a separatist politics against the CUP and therefore waged their struggle within the Ottoman framework.

**Dinç:** 1908 was in fact a spring of freedom. A constitutional monarchy was proclaimed on June 24 and members of the Committee of Union and Progress gradually started to take state power. And after the 31st March Incident and the Raid on the Sublime Porte, they immediately turned to Abdulhamidian policies right from the moment when they grabbed state power. This reaction against difference continued. If you look at Diyarbakır, you could then see a serious social and class transformation. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards,

*The Kurdish Troop in the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, Diyarbakır. (1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler [Armenians in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of 1915], Raymond H. Kevorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, Aras Publications, 2012.)*

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There was a symbiotic, interdependent economic relation between Armenians and Kurds. The economic life of Kurds thus received a severe blow with the departure of Armenians. Kurds were partly engaged in animal husbandry and partly in agriculture. And Armenians were engaged in agriculture, artisanship, trades, etc. As a matter of fact, the relationship between them was one of mutual benefit. It was impossible for one to live without the other.

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Muslim urban notables were concentrated at the center of Diyarbakır. Among them were some avaricious people saying “let’s seize the properties of the non-Muslims.” As of 1908, all of them were Unionists. They were engaged in politics and also represented state power. Some of them were mayors, parliamentarians and district governors. Viewed from the local network of the UPC, they expected that this kind of politics would bring personal benefits. According to the Kurdish newspapers in 1908, the greatest problem was the land problem. This was one of the hot topics of debate. Most of the Kurds, especially those tribe members that had joined the rank of Hamidiye cavalries, seized Armenians’ lands and some of the Armenians escaped to Russia. And when the Second Constitutional Monarchy was proclaimed, they came back and said: “Now there is freedom, so we want our lands back.” But Kurds resisted, so they ended up in court. There was a tension line and a new political elite and notables that

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So why were Armenians good at artisanship and trades? It is because Kurds and other Muslim elements were regarded rather as a combat force. They often went to wars and did not come back. However, as Christians were not recruited, Armenians could subsist on these jobs. They were also imposed to pay a heavy tax called jizya. Every men above the age of 12-13 had to pay jizya, which was also phrased as the head tax. But how could they pay it? By earning income. Therefore, they tried to excel not only at agriculture but also at trades and artisanship.

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could potentially exploit the situation. The intersection of central policies and new local power dynamics led them toward a politics excluding the Christians.

On the other hand, there is a new order instituted by the center, the Unionist power, via the governor Dr. Reşit. He harbored positivist inclinations, defining Armenians as microbes that need to be immediately removed from the body. He had also some experiences with the Greek in the Aegean Region...

Çelik: Hamit Bozarslan co-authored a book with Raymond Kévorkian and Vincent Duclert, where they dwell on the politization of the CUP members. They argue that these people envisioned politics within an extremely positivist, completely social Darwinist framework and that one cannot separate the process leading them to genocide from this framework. They imagined politics as an evolutionary battleground and

did not feel any ethical inconvenience while eliminating their rivals. Dr. Reşit was, after all, one of the five founding members of the CUP. He had accepted these ideas before coming to Diyarbakır.

Diğ: Dr. Reşit was born in Dagestan and his family came to Anatolia as exiles. He went to the Military School of Medicine. As you know, this was where the CUP was founded. They divided the six provinces into two, planning to deploy a general inspector in three provinces, and another inspector in the other three provinces. Reşit was appointed as an assistant and then later appointed as a governor to Mosul. Talat Paşa sent a telegram to him saying, “We are thinking about appointing you to Diyarbakır.” “No, I’ve just come to Mosul and I don’t want to make another trip,” he replied but they reached an agreement in the end. “If I am to serve there, I have some conditions,” he said, “I want to take the military Circassian unit here to Diyarbakır.” In a telegram he sent to Talat Paşa, he made it crystal clear: “I am on the side of solving this problem in the quickest way possible.”

He was someone who believed that every Armenian, even those living in the villages of Diyarbakır, was a committee member, which corresponds to today’s usage of the term “terrorist.” In March 1915, he was appointed to Diyarbakır and came to Diyarbakır from Mosul in late March and early April. And as soon as he came, he started organizing the formation of two commissions, one of which was an investigation commission, inquiring into the current situation. In a sense, he formed public opinion in this way. Second, he launched a militia organization. Led by the Colonel Mustafa Nusret Bey, this organization included all the urban notables from Yasinizade Şevki Bey to Nakıbzades. And they started their operations around April 10. There is not even a month between his arrival and the start of operations.

We can suppose that this organization not only included urban notables, but also extended to tribes, can’t we?

Çelik: Pirinçizade Fevzi Bey, an urban notable, frequently organized trips to Cizre. On the pretext of the Russian threat and the argument that Armenians would transform the region into Armenia and eradicate Muslims, they prepared the people for the genocide. In rural areas, too, there were some actors committed to the Ottoman bureaucracy. Even if they did not have the sovereignty that the aghas and beys used to have, these local actors had organic ties to the bureaucracy, the governor and the urban



Armenian youngsters in their traditional long tunics, Çinkuş. (1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler [Armenians in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of 1915], Raymond H. Kevorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, Aras Publications, 2012.)

notables, who were under the direction of the governor. Even though they did not directly participate in the genocide, they played a significant role in its implementation. We know that in some places religious functionaries encouraged people to resort to violence against Armenians by basing their argument on Islam. But we should also note this: During the genocide, there were also some local actors and religious functionaries protecting Armenians, objecting to directives sent from the center. Generally speaking, semi-bureaucratic categories such as aghas, beys and sheikhs had a very serious role in the social organization of the genocide. And another element is the paramilitary Kurdish militias of 1915, that is, the bejiks. As paramilitary elements, the El-Xamsin Unit deployed in Mardin and the Butchers' Troop in Van took a role in the deportation and slaughter of Armenians. In Diyarbakır, there was another organization called cendirmeyen bejik. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, all men under the age of 45 were accordingly recruited. Bejiks were selected from those men above the age of 45, who were physically in a good condition, had a high level of physical mobility, knew their own locality well and could collect intelligence there. Especially during the exportation of Armenian convoys, they attacked these convoys, trying to find and kill those Armenians who hid. Today people associate Cendirmeyen bejiks with the temporary village guards of the 1990's. As for Diyarbakır, not only the Armenians

of Diyarbakır but also the convoys passing through were killed. Is this true?

Çelik: According to the Ottoman census, the number of Armenians living in Diyarbakır before 1915 was around 60.000-65.000. But the governor Dr. Reşit stated in his own telegram that he dealt with 126.000 people. This means that a number of people, corresponding to the whole figure of the Armenian population in Diyarbakır, were "dealt with" from outside, that is, from the deportation convoys coming from the north! Can we say that the memory of 1915 is more vividly kept alive in Diyarbakır in comparison to the whole of Turkey? The people of Diyarbakır probably know the origins of the wealth of urban notables. They remember it, see places where people were massacred and remember them, too. Can we say that this has been an underlying tragedy throughout Republican history?

Çelik: These factors are the fundamental dynamics enabling this memory to be more vividly kept alive, but no oral historical

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Article 61 added to the Berlin Treaty stipulated that attacks by Kurds and Circassians against Armenians be prevented and reforms be made in favor of Armenians in six provinces. Here is how this term "reform" was perceived among Kurds: An Armenian state would be established here and Kurds would be slaves to Armenians. This societal tension started to increase in 1878-79 and with the establishment of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments, the relations between Kurds and Armenians would be ruined.

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1908 was in fact a spring of freedom. A constitutional monarchy was proclaimed on June 24 and members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) gradually started to take state power. And after the 31st March incident and the raid on the Sublime Porte, they immediately turned to Abdulhamidian policies right from the moment when they grabbed state.

study has been carried out in other places of Turkey and Kurdistan within the scale that we adopted in our own work, so it is not safe to say that Diyarbakır's memory is more vivid. Memory is something which can sometimes be silenced and sometimes re-activated. What we feel within the context of Diyarbakır is that the memory intentionally spoken of in this social realm has been enabled in part due to the momentum created by the political discourse of the Kurdish movement. This movement has produced another historical interpretation refuting and disproving the official history thesis. In another historical reading, the Kurdish movement has stated that this is a genocide, a genocide planned by the CUP and in which some local Kurdish

*From left to right: An Armenian and Kurd from Diyarbakır and a Kurd from Palu, 1873. (1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler [Armenians in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of 1915], Raymond H. Kevorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, Aras Publications, 2012.)*



actors also participated. One of the main dynamics making it possible for this memory to get collectivized and brought onto the public space is the attitude taken by the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish movement has created a historiography which has made it possible for a series of things to be expressed for the first time, things which have been suppressed, silenced, covered with a veil of denial and not voiced in the public sphere. In our interviews people often made a connection between the violence against Armenians and the violence perpetrated against Kurds. There are even some Kurdish expressions about this: "Em şîv in, hûn paşîv in", roughly meaning "We are the dinner and you will be the next meal."

Dinç: At the beginning of this talk, we compared Erzincan and Diyarbakır. There is no such politicization in Erzincan.

There are very vivid accounts in the book: accounts and testimonies about the moments of slaughter, about how the survivors could cope with this situation. These accounts are like a living narrative...

Çelik: First of all, this has to do with the relation between collective memory and culture and identity. There is a very strong correlation between the oral cultural tradition of Kurds and this memory. I remember that until the early 1990's there was no television in the village, no adult apart from my peers went to school, and that while spending time together for a long time in a single room, people always talked about the past and a story was re-narrated for tens, perhaps hundreds of times. Our current sensibilities, ethical questionings, and the political possibilities of the current moment also influence the way we remember and narrate. The stories narrated by executioners killing Armenians were formerly very famous in Diyarbakır. In coffeehouses and people's homes, they talked about how many Armenians they had killed. No people we interviewed spoke of this proudly or excitedly, but with embarrassment and sometimes with sheer silence.

Is it possible that this stems from the characteristics of the people you chose or to which you have had access?

Çelik: We wanted to interview a broad spectrum of people. We wanted to have diversity in terms of people's political affiliations, gender and age. We interviewed people voting for AKP, HÜDA-PAR and HDP; young and old people, and rural and urban people. We also interviewed Hezbollah members. Very interestingly, there are



some differentiations with respect to the justification of histories, but there is a similar commonality with their remembrance. People from every family, every kind of social class often have heard or been exposed to these stories.

In the past, the concept of genocide was perhaps not able to be clearly defined and accepted, but when you look today at the same regions, at Shengal, Northern Syria and ISIL, you can get an impression of 1915. Would you agree?

Dinç: While carrying out this study, we were investigating a genocide perpetrated a hundred years ago, searching to find out the ways in which it is being remembered. Just when we started our fieldwork, a genocide was carried out in Shengal. It was the summer of 2014, a period when we wrote some texts and sent them to each other for evaluation. It is sorrowful to write about the Armenian genocide, which leaves a deep impact upon you, but there is also another genocide happening just before your eyes. There are many overlaps between it and what you read and write, it is almost the same and it happens in a region very close by. This was emotionally hard for us.

Çelik: The reason why you study a suffering, a tragedy experienced a hundred years ago is to proliferate opportunities for confronting the past today, and the same suffering, the same tragedy is perpetrated with very similar methods in front of everyone's eyes. The Armenian genocide was the first "modern" genocide of the 20th century, but it was not the last. From Holocaust to Rwanda and Indonesia, many similar genocides took place. And I am afraid that they continue to take place. The Yazidi genocide in Shengal is just one of most recent examples of this. While dealing with the issue of confronting the past, we need to really reflect upon the kinds of historiographies and politizations leading people to be so insensitive to and deny these sufferings and tragedies. Confronting the past is not only done to accept past suffering. It is also done in order to demand a series of regulations that would create the conditions to prevent another occurrence of such suffering. I am saying this with the particular example of Turkey in mind. Kurds have not been exposed to such a concentrated massacre as was the case for Armenians, but Alevis and Kurds in Turkey have been experiencing the tradition of state violence for over a century. The emergence of a new historiography is necessary in order to avert this. We need to discard the notorious



criteria of Turkishness that is seen as the founding ideology of the republic; then we could constitute a new political contract for co-existence together.

One cannot help but remember the concept of "founding partnership," which is also sometimes voiced by the Kurdish movement itself. But this partnership seems to include 1915 too...

Dinç: The argument that "we founded this republic together" is not an innocent one. It would be best to say "the Turkish republic was founded in 1915."

A Kurd from Palu, a Muslim and an Armenian woman from Diyarbakır, 1873. (1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ermeniler [Armenians in the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of 1915], Raymond H. Kevorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, Aras Publications, 2012.)

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, Muslim urban notables developed a critical mass in the center of Diyarbakır. Among them were some avaricious people saying "let's seize the properties of the non-Muslims." In 1908, all of them were Unionists. They were engaged in politics and also represented state power. Some of them were mayors, parliamentarians and caimakams. Viewed from the local network of the UPC, they expected that this kind of politics would bring benefits to themselves.

## HUMAN LANDSCAPE

# Carrying water to the struggle which will change the life

Nazik Işık

When I was five years old, I learned how to read and write, and also noticed that a lot of women were illiterate while the great majority of men were literate. I thought that women of the same age as my mother should know how to read and write. I ventured to teach them and tired out the aunts who embraced me with love. I do not remember if any one of them learned how to read and write. However, now when I look back, I see that I enjoyed challenges—if there was problem, I wanted to help solve it.

Perhaps that is the reason why I tried a lot to include the disabled, veiled, Kurdish and lesbian women, in other words women who were exposed to multiple forms of discrimination, when we set out to prepare civil society shadow reports. On the third day after I became the Secretary General of Women's Branch in CHP, I invited everyone, including the veiled women and the representatives of LGBT people, to the Head Office to learn about what they think on the Constitution Referendum in 2010. In my positions as project coordinator in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and a planning specialist in the State Planning Organization, all kinds of women were able to approach me. We ate together in the cafeteria and discussed issues with each other.

I remember reading for my classmates in the primary school. I was in third grade when we started to run the library, which we founded with 1500 books, all of which we had bound nearly one by one. It had a reading hall and book lending service. My primary school teacher must have dealt with this crazy girl with glasses, running all around, by guiding her to activities in

sports, theatre and library. What I learned from those years is that there are multiple ways of getting involved and intervening in life.

I must be the only kid who read every book by the order in which they were placed on the shelves at the Ahmet Vefik Paşa People's Library, in which I was enrolled by my mother on the same day on which I was enrolled in the secondary school. Reading gave me the opportunity to witness the multiplicity of lives which I could not live or observe. Maybe that is how I learned not to shy away from touching different lives and saying "hello" to anyone, thinking that we have something in common with everyone. I can talk and learn about everything- about the lace and embroidery, the flour and the firewood used by bakers, the insects at which the kids look and the henna on the hair of the aunts which turned orange and the beads of the uncles and their hooded boots. That is why I gathered so many stories to tell.

## The idea of changing life

I used to teach math to my friends when I was in secondary school. I was a 14-year-old senior student at the secondary school when I started to teach science to my younger friends in the Karşıyaka Halkevi (People's House). I opposed the execution of Deniz Gezmiş that year (1972) and participated in petitions. I am against capital punishment since that day. I worked for it to be abolished and now I work so that it is not brought back.

I had already understood that I could do a lot to change people's lives before I came to think that we could change the life itself. It was not out of charity that I thought so; I really believed at a very early age that we all had a right to live better lives. I was in high school when I understood that it is good to change things step by step but much better to have a complete change. We needed to





be organized and attain power to have complete change. However, it is very important both to know what to do and to have the necessary human and economic power when you came to power.

For many years, I worked to win people one by one and to develop a common political struggle on the one hand, and to learn about planned and programmed progress and development on the other. I studied at the Faculty of Political Science. The reason was that I wanted my people to live in a developed country and I wanted to be one of those people who would achieve that goal. I wanted to work in the State Planning Organization—and I did.

It was the striking encounter I had with women when I was five that led me to prioritize care about women's lives all the time and to be very concerned about inequalities and discrimination. I witnessed the worst kind of discrimination at an early age because I had to behave as an elder sister to my disabled elder brother. I understood at an early age that struggling for rights did not have an age and that my sense of justice and courage would suffice for that struggle.

### **DAL (Deep Interrogation Laboratory), Mamak, SBP (the Socialist Union Party)**

People like me of course have their share from the coups that occurred in this country. I had my share as well. I was brought to the Mamak Prison after the torture center DAL (Derin Araştırma

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I was in high school when I understood that it is good to change things step by step but much better to have a complete change. We needed to be organized and attain power to have complete change.

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Laboratuvarı- Deep Interrogation Laboratory) in Ankara... I am proud to be one of those women who struggled to continue being humane, honourable humans in Mamak. I still remember Mamak each time we sing the Turkish National Anthem and swear to struggle so that what we went through would not be lived again. I know that dictatorships make dishonourable, coward and faint-hearted people who give in to the evil and avoid change. That is why I fight so that we don't go through it again.

I continue to participate in women's struggle which I joined in my college years. Previously, I tried to contribute to the empowerment of women so that they can participate in life. I taught them how to read and write, to earn money by working at home, to attain knowledge to raise their children better and to have a say in matters related to their neighborhood as women and mothers...

Then came the struggle against violence against women. I cannot forget how excited I was when I undertook to lead the panel which we organized in Ankara as the first panel on domestic violence. I do not really know how many cities I wandered to talk to women and men and explain them what violence against women was and






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I am an economist specializing in social policies and the labor market. Besides my expertise on planning, I taught social policy at the university level for 12 years and worked with new organizations such as the Working Group on Home-Based Working Women.

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why it was a problem of democracy, a political problem. As the Socialist Unity Party was founded, we struggled to define domestic violence and violence against women as a crime against the party. I cannot forget how astonished I was to find myself standing on the table of the council during the discussions.

### Women's Solidarity Association, Women's Coalition and European Women's Lobby

It has been 25-26 years since I wrote the project for the first women's counseling center and shelter in Ankara. I am one of the women who founded the Women's Solidarity Association. I worked in the association myself for seven years. We touched the lives of thousands of women and changed the future of thousands of children with that counseling centre and shelter. We made struggle against violence against women one of the tasks of the state, changed the laws and other regulations, had the women's counseling centres and shelters defined as public institutions, prepared action plans and reported the real situation with our follow-up reports.

I was one of the few feminists who supported the foundation of the General Directorate on the Status and Problems of Women. Then, I worked as the vice general director of that institution

as well. In 2000s, I wrote the framework of the first project of the state on domestic violence against women, which was implemented with the financial support of the European Union. I was the counseling coordinator who prepared and implemented the training program on how to treat women exposed to violence, which was included in the in-service training of the police. I spent two and a half years doing that and now we have too little at hand. In other words, we still have a lot to do.

I am really proud to be one of the women who laid the foundation of many commonalities through the Women's Coalition, European Women's Lobby, the CEDAW Shadow Reports and the Shadow Report on the 2000 Millennium Special Session.

### CHP Women's Branch, Working Group on Home-Based Working Women

I have always been interested in politics. I participated in politics actively since my college years. I left my civil service post in 2002 for this reason. I have been the Secretary General of Women's Branch, Party Assembly Member and deputy member of the Central Executive Board in CHP (Republican People's Party). I wanted to be a member of the parliament but have not been able to achieve that yet. I still rush around. I think many important improvements happened in women's place in politics and I had a hand in it! I am happy about that.

In 1996, I wanted to found the Working Group on Local Politics to increase the number of female mayors and council members and encourage them and to have municipalities meet with women. We finally achieved that goal in 2004. I am glad that this work that took four and a half years to complete still continues as an important part of the work of the "Women-friendly Cities." I am also glad that the work we conduct with the Equality of Women and Men Commissions at the Equal Life Association started to bear fruits.

I am an economist specializing in issues of social policies and the labor market. Besides my expertise on planning, I taught social policy at the university for 12 years and worked on new building up organizations with the Working Group on Home-Based Working Women. It is my sixth year in the Rural Development Initiative.

Now I have a lot to do. Those who want to change life have to carry water to a rich struggle in various fields. Even if we could not green everywhere we touched, I am glad to have had so many great experiences which prove that we left a mark. This article is one of them. Thank you.

## NEWS FROM hbs

# Soil Atlas 2015

The Soil Atlas, a publication listing facts and figures about soil, land and fields, has been translated into Turkish. Previously published exclusively in German and English, the Turkish version report has been enriched with updated information from Turkey and expert opinions.

Why are land prices constantly rising? How much soil is lost every year? How many square kilometres of cropland and pasture grounds are imported in order to meet food consumption? Who is the real owner of the land?

Land and soil speculation, explosive prices, increasing soil loss as a result of erosion and sealing, the effects of the international agro-industry on production and food availability across the globe, the problems associated with the virtual import of agricultural land and land distribution: Following the successful tradition of the Meat Atlas, the Soil Atlas 2015 provides insights into the current state of the soils on which we depend and highlights the threats posed to them in numerous illustrations and texts.

The atlas includes articles which take up the subject of soil and the difficult relationship between the peasants, soil and the governments in Turkey and the history of dispossession. The atlas also brings in facts and figures to address the effects of the recently passed laws and the share of women in land ownership, and explain how land usurpation in Turkey has been made possible by the state itself whereas the world literature shows that land usurpation usually takes place by a foreign country's government and/or corporations.

Prepared on the occasion of the International Year of Soils, the Soil Atlas 2015 aims to inform the public, improve the ability of consumers to make informed decisions and sketch out pathways to a responsible agriculture and soils policy.

The Soil Atlas 2015 clearly demonstrates that the land and soil loss is gradually increasing. To illustrate, the size of land



which was put out of agricultural use between 2001 and 2010 in Turkey amounts to 827,007 hectares. The primary reason why farmland is put to non-agricultural use is industrial and housing enterprises. In Germany, the spreading of cities and roads causes 77 hectares of soil to be lost every day. That is the size of 100 football pitches. At the same time, Germany imports agricultural products and other consumption goods, grown in an area of 80 million hectares, which is twice as large as the total area

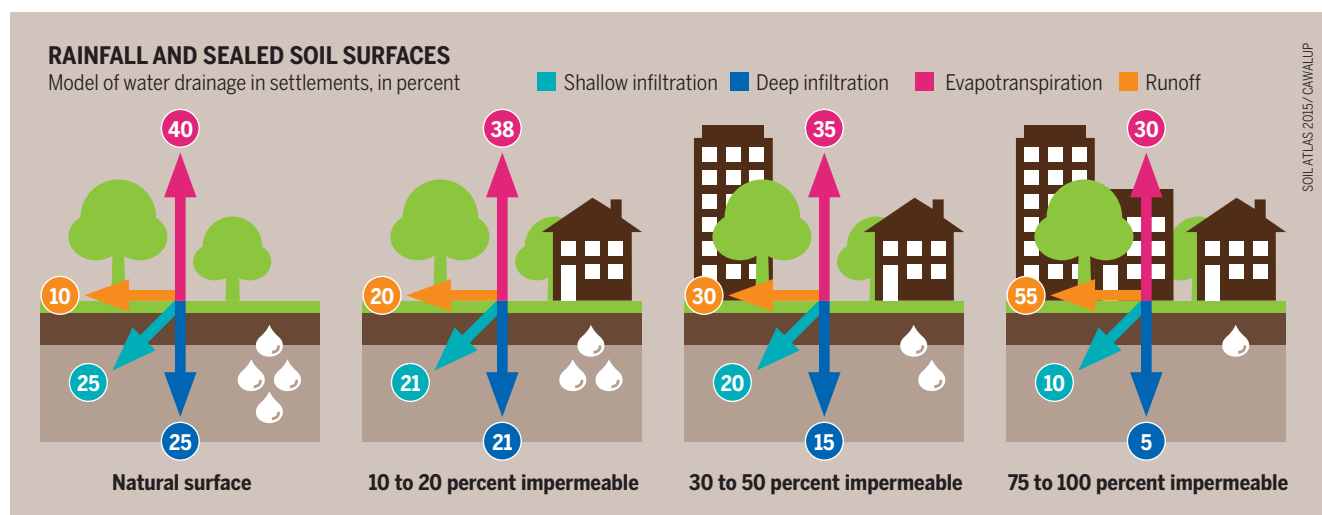
of Germany. The situation is

not so heart-warming on the scale of the European Union, either; To meet the consumption needs of its population, the EU needs 640 million hectares of agricultural land which is one and a half times bigger than the total area of its 28 member states.

About 60 percent of the area used to meet the European consumption demand lies outside the European Union. This makes Europe the continent that is most dependent on land beyond its borders to sustain its life style, agricultural industry and hunger for energy.

Barbara Unmüßig, President of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, is critical of Europe's growing demand for land: "The EU is the world's largest 'importer' of land. Most of that land contributes to our intensive meat industry, for which we import huge quantities of feed from countries in the Global South. As a result, small farmers and medium-sized operations are increasingly losing their land and thus the basis for their livelihoods and food security."

According to Unmüßig, "Each EU citizen uses 1.3 hectares of land annually – that's equivalent to two football pitches and six times the amount of land used by a citizen of Bangladesh. Given the critical food situation in many countries, this flies in the face of justice and is also ecologically



untenable. In this context, not only are European consumers called upon to adopt more responsible consumption habits, but there's a particular onus on politicians to act: the EU and Germany must rethink their agriculture policies and incrementally end industrial animal production."

On the occasion of the UN Year of Soils, the publishers of the Soil Atlas 2015 intend to show why the protection of soils

should concern us all and what can succeed to attain better soil protection. It is well worth following a just and sustainable soil and land policy. And the consumers can also make a contribution by taking soil conservation into account while doing their daily shopping.

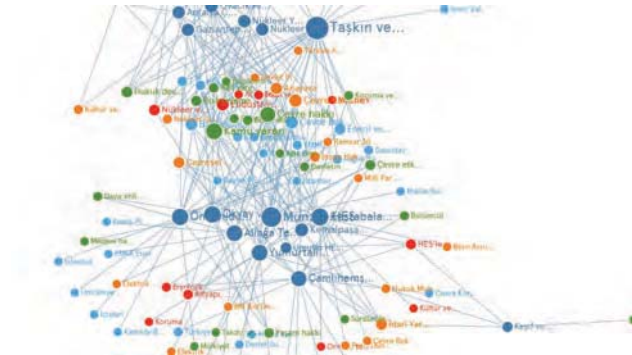
The Soil Atlas 2015 and many printable graphics can be viewed and downloaded at [www.tr.boell.org](http://www.tr.boell.org)

# Environmental Lawsuits: Network map of relations of legislation, institutions and concepts

The Map of Environmental Violations in Turkey Project carried out by Transparency International Turkey and the Environmental Law Association with the financial support of the European Union and co-financing of Heinrich Böll Stiftung has been finalized. The project is being implemented in an attempt to contribute to the domain of environmental law and environmental struggle and the fundamental goals are to raise the level of awareness about the legal tools available in the field of environmental struggles and to support other studies in this field.

In the scope of the project, over 500 high court decisions (Supreme Court of Appeals, Council of State, Constitutional Court, European Court of Human Rights/ECHR) on environmental violations have been analyzed in terms of violation area, actors, related legislation and related institutions. Two expert lawyers and two expert academic lawyers examined these law cases and chose the decisions which are considered precedents for environmental struggle. The chosen decisions were put on the decision cards created in the mapping workshops led by the expert lawyers and project experts. The first version of the map ensued as a result of these workshops.

Originally, our objective was to access a greater number of



court decisions in order to draw a panoramic picture of the decisions given by high courts on environmental conflicts in Turkey during the initial phases of the project. However, we experienced serious difficulty in accessing high court decisions due to the unfortunate fact that not all the decisions (except for the ones issued by the Constitutional Court and ECHR) are shared with the public. These difficulties prompted us to expand the map with details and quality rather than increasing the number of cases cited in the map, and to include the decisions which could serve as precedents and could be educational for partners who struggle with environmental lawsuits. One criterion that played an important role in the selection of decisions was the fact that the scope of the examined event should be the widest among many similar rulings. Additionally, the related court decision should serve as a precedent. Furthermore, the rulings which shed light on the greatest number of elements within their scope or which created a novel legal approach to the case were also given





priority during the selection. Consequently, we finalized the map with 20 decisions after a review of over 500 cases.

Since we want the map to be meaningful and effective for everyone who takes part in the environmental struggle, we organized strategy workshops after the first raw version of the map came out. Various workshops were held separately to exchange views and ideas with the help of the map with lawyers, academics, activists and media members, who constitute the primary target audience of the project. The workshops also hosted discussions with the activists who created the “Diren Çevre” (Resist Environment) map and the activists from the Networks of Dispossession over the ways of making connections among different maps.

As a result of all these efforts, we developed the project on the basis of the Graphcommons Network Mapping Platform, and the “Network Map of Relations of Legislation, Institutions and Concepts in Environmental Lawsuits” was created. After the map was completed, contact meetings were organized in Istanbul, Mersin and Izmir in May not only to provide information about the map and the process leading us to create it but also to uncover new possibilities of cooperation. Thanks to these meetings, we had an opportunity to meet with the lawyers, activists and non-governmental representatives whom we had not had a chance to contact before. The suggestions given by the participants during the meetings

have also enriched the map. For example, the suggestion to add a lexicon including the definitions of the legal concepts underlying the 20 court decisions has been quite effective both in terms of increasing legal literacy and making the map more practical. The map can be viewed on the project web site at the moment: <http://www.cevredavalariharitasi.org/>

In addition to the map, the details of the project and the publications will also be accessible via the project web site. With the aim to increase knowledge sharing and support transparency in access to information, not only the chosen decisions but also all the decisions ruled during the preparation of the map will be open to public view on the project web site. Although the official term of the project has ended, we would like to continue cooperating with our partners and updating the map with new decisions. We hope the development of this map will be a guiding tool for everyone as long as the struggle goes on.

Besides the map and the web site, there is also the project report which will soon be published. The report affords an extended project description and provides some suggestions. Both the report and the little booklet, which is prepared about the right to information and includes a guide to reading court decisions, will be accessible on the web site.

Transparency International Turkey  
<http://www.cevredavalariharitasi.org/>

## Nine general elections with the coup laws

The general parliamentary election held on June 7, 2015, has been the third election we have gone through in the last 15 months, following the presidential election last August and the local elections in March 2014. Even under the most optimistic scenario, the arithmetic of the parliament formed after the June 7, election predicts a new election within two years at most. It is also certainly conceivable that an early election calendar is established in one month's time unless the coalition possibilities considered after the election can be realized, which would lead to an early election in November or December. The aim of this article, however, is not to present a political analysis of the election results but rather to carry out an evaluation of the June 7 election in terms of the right to vote and stand for election according to the observations of the Association for Monitoring Equal Rights.

### International Standards and the June 7 Election

The fundamental criteria for democratic elections should ensure that the conditions of universal and equal suffrage, candidate eligibility, secret ballot and the free expression of the voters' will are maintained for all the voters without any discrimination and restrictions through periodically held and honest elections in which the freedom of expression, the

freedom of association, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of action and the right to take legal action effectively is protected.

The UN Human Rights Committee<sup>1</sup> states the following in regard to the prevention of discrimination in the exercise of the right to vote and stand for election in its General Comment No. 25, and obliges the State parties to take the necessary steps: “Positive measures should be taken to overcome specific difficulties, such as illiteracy, language barriers, poverty or impediments to freedom of movement which prevent persons entitled to vote from exercising their rights effectively. Information and materials about voting should be available in minority languages. Specific methods, such as photographs and symbols, should be adopted to ensure that illiterate voters have adequate information on which to base their choice. If residence requirements apply to registration, they must be reasonable, and should not be imposed in such a way as to exclude the homeless from the right to vote.”<sup>2</sup>

The 7 June election has been the 9th general election held after the coup implemented specific laws. The preceding governments and parliaments formed in those eight elections have failed to conduct the necessary changes to harmonize the electoral legislation with international standards. Various amendments are needed: the ten percent election threshold should be lowered; the Law on Political Parties should be democratized; the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) decisions should be opened to judicial review; the transparency of election campaigns should be ensured; the neutrality of public authorities and institutions should be monitored in the electoral process; freedom of expression and association

should be guaranteed during election campaigns, and the conditions of fair representation should be attained.

In this election, Turkey has once again failed to implement the principles of the covenants to which it is a party.

Due to the fact that the electoral registers were based on residence address, homeless forced to live on the streets, women living at shelters needing to be protected from male violence and the Roma people who live in tents were excluded from the right to vote.

■ The political parties failed to take gender equality into account while determining their candidates.

■ Once again, people with disabilities have not been able to attain sufficient parliamentary representation: There are only three MPs with disabilities in the new parliament.

■ None of the political parties nominated a LGBTI candidate from a place where s/he ran a high probability of being elected.

■ Public authorities and institutions violated the principle of neutrality; radio and TV channels of the state did not treat all the political parties in an equal manner; and the President clearly campaigned for a specific party.

■ No party or candidate disclosed its election campaign budget to the public.

■ The candidates' ethnic, religious and gender identities were questioned throughout the election campaigns, resulting in a discourse of hate and discrimination.

■ The attacks against the parties and candidates increased and became more widespread throughout the electoral process but they have not been effectively investigated. The freedom of expression and association was not protected. The attacks were based on racist arguments.

■ The majority of the seasonal workers in the agriculture/construction/tourism sectors as well as the elderly and the disabled who were not able to get out of their houses could not vote on election day. Once again, the voters with disabilities were denied accessible polling stations.

■ The Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) did not provide sufficient training for the polling station staff, and the presiding officers were not fully conversant with the legal procedure.

■ The principle of gender equality was once again ignored while appointing the presiding officers in this election.

■ YSK did not conduct voter training programs for illiterate or non-Turkish speaking voters.

■ The voters who live abroad experienced restrictions concerning the right to stand for election.

■ In some countries, no polling stations were set up, resulting in the denial of the voting rights of the voters residing in those countries. The electoral turnout declined in some countries

since there was only one central polling station available for all the voters.

■ Problems arose due to the fact that the overseas ballot boxes were kept at embassies for several days and the votes were counted in Turkey.

As regards compliance with international standards, one gain has been attained: Two Kurdish women dwelling in Istanbul filed an application with YSK in March for a voter training to be made available in Kurdish. YSK replied the application with the statement: "The training film prepared for the 25th General Parliamentary Election to be held on Sunday, June 7 2015 has been prepared in Turkish. All forms of electioneering by political parties and candidates can be freely conducted in other languages and dialects besides Turkish. Since preparation of the training films also in Kurdish would require us to provide them in other languages and dialects as well, we are sorry to inform you that it is not possible to meet your demand." After the women filed an appeal against the decision, YSK passed the decision no. 1040 on 27.05.2015, which recognizes the non-Turkish speaking voters' right to access to information in their native tongue. The aforementioned YSK decision applies not only to voters who do not speak Turkish but also to illiterate and hearing impaired voters who can now exercise their right to access to information through sign language.

The parliament has broken grounds in that Romani, Mhallami, Yezidi and, once again after 50 years, Armenian deputies have been elected, and the highest number of female deputies in the history of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey have entered the parliament.

The parliament has the best composition of the last 35 years in terms of advocating everyone's right to vote and standing for election, preventing discrimination, including diverse backgrounds of ethnic, religious and gender identities, women and people with disabilities.

Nejat Taştan

1 The Human Rights Committee is the authorized body that monitors the implementation of the United Nations (UN) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Turkey is a party to the Covenant and is therefore obliged to follow its principles.

2 Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 25. For a Turkish translation, please see: Lema Uyar (ed. and tr.), Birleşmiş Milletler'de İnsan Hakları Yorumları: İnsan Hakları Komitesi ve Ekonomik, Sosyal ve Kültürel Haklar Komitesi 1981-2006, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Publications, 2006.



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