

alternatif

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POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

TURKEY

REFUGEES IN TURKEY: THE CHANGED PARADIGM AND THE CURRENT SITUATION
Shattered lives: The crushed honour of humanity



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Heinrich Böll Stiftung - Turkey Representation

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- Democracy
- Foreign Policy
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Having come to stay – A change in Turkey's immigration policy?

With the EU and Turkey having agreed on a common action plan in December, the political will to change the course in the refugee crisis seems to have materialized in an agreement that might be beneficial for both actors. For Turkey a rapprochement with the EU comes at a time when it stands relatively isolated in the international arena, as both the relationship with Russia and the brief regional powerbroker role that Turkey had in the Middle East lie shattered. While it might be a positive development that the EU and Turkey revitalize their relationship, it seems like an anachronistic policy that does not really match the current domestic situations in both geographies. The EU is facing its biggest crisis since its creation: Greece might leave the Euro-zone and through that start a motion that might shatter the common currency; the UK might hold a referendum that would mean leaving the EU altogether; right-wing xenophobic parties are on the rise and weaken the union from within and the refugee crisis has brought the level of disagreement between EU members into the limelight. Not only is it unclear if the EU is in any position to admit new members even in the medium term, it is also unclear if a Turkey which leads a war in the south-east, limits democratic rights of the population and cracks down on oppositional media is really interested in undergoing the EU's scrutiny.

In any case, we should not forget that the deal forged between the EU and Turkey might have been made on the backs of the refugee population in Turkey. Reports from human rights organizations on detention and pushbacks of refugees captured by Turkish authorities seem to confirm that. The EU, eager to have Turkey limit the number of refugees who reach the Greek shore, is willing to pay three billion euro, but is very hesitant to specify what will happen with the refugees caught while crossing the Aegean sea. Imprisoning them or pushing them back to Syria is illegal under international

law. It remains to be seen, if the EU is willing to accept such practices, just to be free of further refugees reaching its own borders.

In the end, fleeing to the EU's shores will always be more attractive for refugees than staying in Turkey, where even those from Iraq and Syria who have a legal status see often relatively little chance to establish a future perspective for them and their families. For this to happen, Turkey will have to invest heavily into a new integration policy. This is not only a challenge financially and politically, it will also be a challenge to the societal narrative that is based on neglecting diversity even within the current Turkish society.

Knowing that the refugee crisis will continue to be on top of the Turkish agenda not only in terms of Turkey-EU relations, but also with regard to the country's domestic and regional policies, we gave wide coverage to the issue in this *Alternatif*. Göksun Yazıcı, Ezgi Koman and Kemal Vural Tarlan have made valuable contributions in illustrating the current situation with their analyses on different aspects of the refugee crisis. Jens Siegert's article elaborates on the recent tension between Russia and Turkey following the downing of a Russian SU-24 bomber on the Turkish-Syrian border by a Turkish warplane within a broader historical and political context. In this issue, you will also read an interview with Bekir Ağrıdır, General Manager of KONDA, about the November election with a special emphasis on the "failure" of pre-election polls, and the political implications of the unexpected election results. The results obviously will remain on the agenda in the coming months concerning first and foremost the fate of the peace process. In the hope of having prepared an interesting and insightful issue of *Alternatif*, we like to wish all our readers a happy and productive new year.

On behalf of the *Alternatif* team
Kristian Brakel

REFUGEES: BASIC INFORMATION - FIGURES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A **refugee** is a person who flees her or his country either owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, or because the state cannot or will not protect her or him. Procedures of refuge have been created to identify whether a person complies with the legal definition of a refugee. When a country recognizes a person as a refugee, it provides to that person international protection in place of the protection that the country of origin fails to provide. An asylum seeker is a person who has fled her or his country to seek protection but has yet to be recognized as a refugee.

Foreign nationals who do not comply with the requirements of applicable national legislation and rules are defined as **irregular migrants**. They may also be called "undocumented migrants." Here the word "irregular" refers only to that person's conditions of entrance into or stay in the concerned country.

A **migrant** is a person who moves from one country to another permanently or temporarily, mostly to find work or reunite with family members. Foreign nationals who have the right to stay in the concerned country according to the national legislation are called regular migrants.

Asylum seekers cannot be forced to return to the country of origin while their applications for refuge are in process. According to international law, refugee status is not constituent but declaratory, and precedes the legally granted refuge.



Push-back is sending back a person by force to the country where they came from (or in some cases out to the open sea) a short while after they cross the border. Push-back is generally practiced on groups of migrants or refugees. The deportation of a group of individuals without regard for their individual cases corresponds to mass deportation, and it is illegal according to international law.

Refoulement means sending a person back to the place where she or he runs the risk of facing serious human rights violations ("oppression" or "serious damage"). Individuals who find themselves in such a circumstance have the right to access international protection. International law forbids the refoulement of refugees and asylum seekers to the country which they had to flee, in line with the so-called principle of non-refoulement. The said principle also covers individuals who risk serious human rights abuses such as torture and capital punishment, but do not legally fulfill the definition of refugee. Indirect refoulement, on the other hand, means sending an individual to a third country where he or she will risk serious damage, and is also forbidden by international law.

According to UN's 2014 Global Trends Report issued in June 2015, the number of refugees worldwide has exceeded 60 million for the first time ever. Every one out of 122 individuals across the world is a refugee, displaced person or asylum seeker. If the said population constituted a nation, it would be the world's 24th most populous country.

About the migration route

The itinerary which connects Turkey to the European Union (EU) has been in use for many years by refugees and migrants who come from Asia, the Middle East, Somalian peninsula, North and Sub-Saharan Africa. The land route passes through northwestern Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria, while the sea route goes from Turkey's Aegean shores to the Greek islands.

Up until 2010, a large part of migrants and refugees strived to cross the Aegean Sea on small boats and reach Greece. However, this route changed this year and shifted towards the region around the Evros River, which constitutes the Greece-Turkey land border. One reason for this shift was increased sea patrol by Greek coastal guards with the support of Frontex (European Border Agency), and another reason was the Greek government's clearing of anti-personnel mines which used to lay along the land border, thus making the said itinerary less dangerous for refugees willing to leave Tur-

key on foot. However, in mid-August 2012, Greece placed a 10.5-km long wire-mesh fence along the northern section of the said land border where crossing occurs more frequently.

On the other hand, the number of migrants arrested on the Greek islands or in the Aegean Sea has went from 169 in 2012 to 3,265 in 2013. In 2013, there were 1,109 irregular entrances from Turkey to Greece on land versus 11,447 by sea. The number of individuals trying to pass from Turkey to Greece by sea continued to increase in 2014 as 43,518 refugees and migrants succeeded in reaching the Greek islands. There were 1,903 illegal entrances to Greece by land. According to data from UNHCR, 416,245 individuals have reached the Greek islands as of October 5, 2015. 97% of these individuals come from the countries who send the highest number of refugees with 70% hailing from Syria.

Wire-mesh fences along the European border as of November 2015

EU member states placed wire-mesh 235 kilometres of fences at a cost of 175,000,000 Euros.

States have the right to control their borders; however, they must comply with international liabilities for human rights. Measures for border protection should not prevent refugees from reaching a safe place and seeking asylum. European leaders' emphasis on the prevention of irregular migration raises visible and invisible borders around the EU. Although EU member states have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, they seem to do almost everything possible to avoid taking any responsibility or making any commitment about the refugees of the world and to prevent them from entering their area of jurisdiction.

According to IOM data as of December 8, over 909,000 migrants and refugees reached Europe by sea this year versus 219,000 in 2014. In November 2015, the same source reported that 3,500 migrants and refugees lost their lives at sea while trying to reach Europe.

The number of Syrian refugees in Europe: **512, 909** individuals across all European countries.

18.8 km of wire-mesh fence around the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla along the Moroccan border.

175 km of wire-mesh fence along the Hungarian-Serbian border.

30 km (set to be increased to 130 km) of wire-mesh fence along the Bulgarian-Turkish border.

Yunanistan-Türkiye 10.5 km of wire-mesh fence along the Greek-Turkish border running parallel to the Evros River.

Asylum Law in Turkey – Basic information

Syrian war victims who started to arrive in Turkey in April 2011 and now number around 2.2 million are not described as refugees according to Turkish asylum law.

In response to the large population movements which took place during and after World War II, the right to asylum was defined in a special United Nations Convention on the basis of Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Geneva Convention) signed on July 28, 1951 by representatives of 26 countries defined the concept of the refugee, the rights of refugees and the obligations of states. Turkey is a signatory to this convention.

Limitations based on the phrase “events occurring in Europe before 1 January 1951” found in the original introductory note was lifted—albeit partially—with the 1967 New York Protocol; however, a number of countries including Turkey still apply a geographical limitation. As such, Turkey implements the 1951 Geneva Convention with geographic limitations, and thus denies refugee status to migrants from outside Europe. Law Number 6458 on the

International Protection of Foreign Nationals, approved on April 4, 2013, is the first piece of legislation in Turkey regarding asylum law. The law has replaced the concept of asylum seeker found in the 1994 Regulation with the term “conditional refugee,” and states that conditional refugees will be allowed to stay in Turkey until being sent to a third country. However, the geographic limitation exists in the law, too. According to Article 62 of the said law, “A conditional refugee is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for belonging to a race, religion, national or social group due to events taking place in non-European countries.” Nevertheless Article 61/1 defines a “refugee” as someone who has the same fear due to “events taking place in European countries.”

According to Article 91, “Temporary protection is the protection granted to foreign nationals who were forced to flee their countries, cannot return to their country of origin, and arrive at or cross the Turkish border in search for urgent and temporary protection.” The Regulation on Temporary Protection, which regulates the conditions of Syrian refugees based on this article, came into force in October 2014. Although the regulation was passed in response to the flow of migrants from the Syrian war, its jurisdiction is not limited to Syrians.

(Source: Legal Situation of Syrians in Turkey, Seta Report, 2015)

December 2015: EU-Turkey Summit on Refugees

On November 29, 2015 the EU-Turkey Summit took place, aiming to “revive relations with Turkey and stem the flow of migrants” in the words of the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. At the summit, leaders of the EU and Turkey agreed to cooperate in order to control the flow of Syrian migrants to the EU.

At the summit held in Brussels, the EU committed itself to enhancing relations with Turkey in three areas in return for its cooperation in the issue of refugees: the

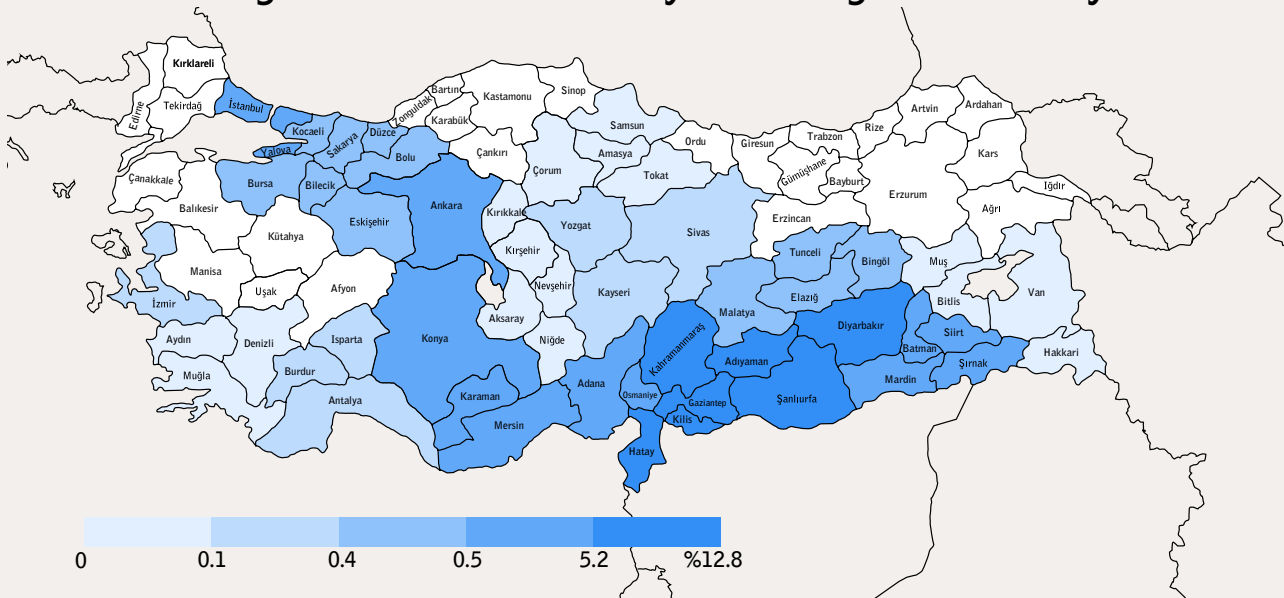
acceleration of Turkey’s EU membership process; financial support of 3 billion Euros; granting Turkish citizens visa-free travel to the Schengen Zone; and the admission of 400,000 Syrians to Europe by legal means.

Cooperation is demanded from Turkey in the following areas: Ankara will reinforce border security; fight effectively against human trafficking; and sign the Readmission Agreement.

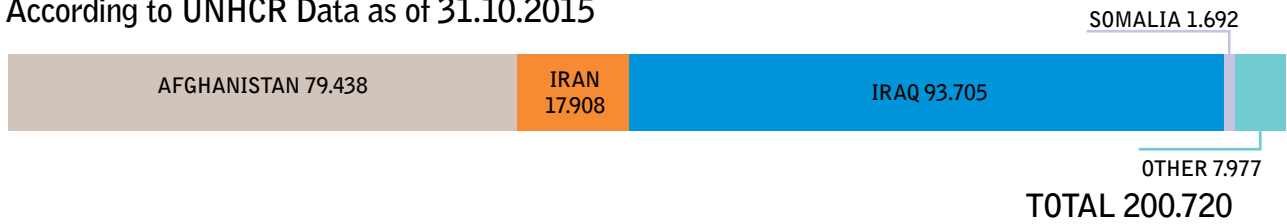
EU Commission’s ex-vice president

Verheugen made the following assessment of the summit: “It is evident that EU has brought its relations with Turkey to the next level; but not with a view to fulfilling its promise of membership to Turkey but rather due to its need for Turkey to overcome the refugee crisis. Some EU leaders have openly stated that ‘We speak to Turkey because we have to.’ I do not think that mutual trust can be rebuilt through such a perspective. There has been no essential change to EU’s policies in regard to Turkey.”

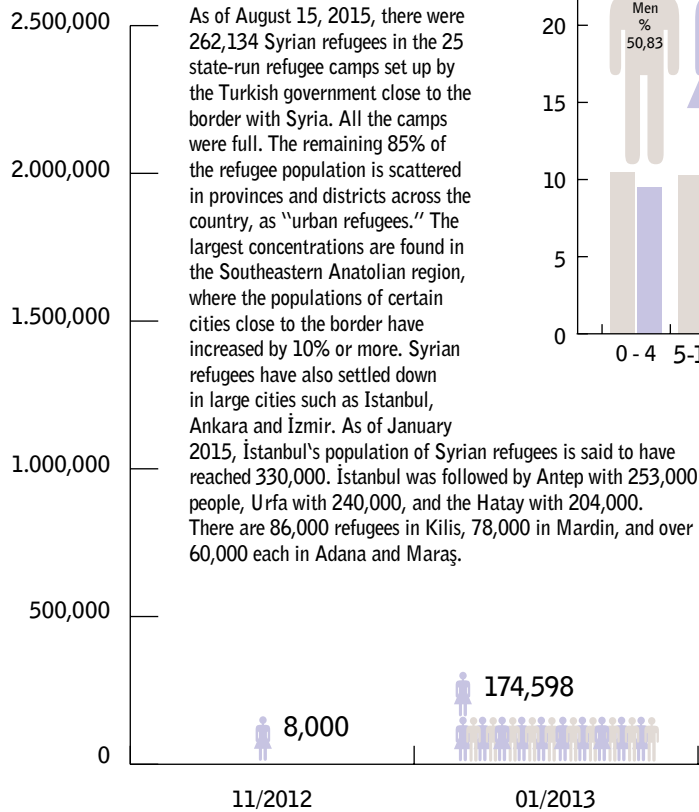
Large concentrations of Syrian refugees in Turkey



The Breakdown by Nations of Non-Syrian Asylum Seekers in Turkey According to UNHCR Data as of 31.10.2015

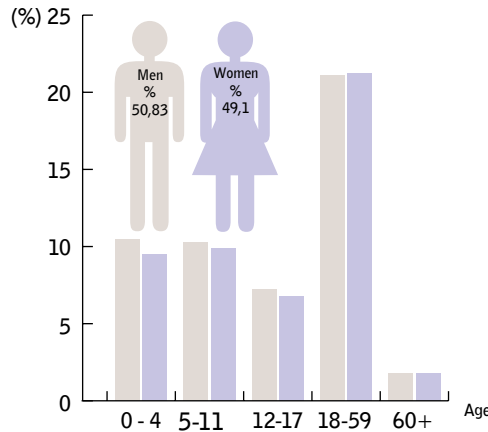


Increase in the Number of Syrian Refugees from 2011 to 2015



As of August 15, 2015, there were 262,134 Syrian refugees in the 25 state-run refugee camps set up by the Turkish government close to the border with Syria. All the camps were full. The remaining 85% of the refugee population is scattered in provinces and districts across the country, as "urban refugees." The largest concentrations are found in the Southeastern Anatolian region, where the populations of certain cities close to the border have increased by 10% or more. Syrian refugees have also settled down in large cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir. As of January 2015, İstanbul's population of Syrian refugees is said to have reached 330,000. İstanbul was followed by Antep with 253,000 people, Urfa with 240,000, and the Hatay with 204,000. There are 86,000 refugees in Kilis, 78,000 in Mardin, and over 60,000 each in Adana and Maraş.

Breakdown by age and gender



Source: UNHCR-Turkey

Source: HRW report on refugee children, December 2015.

Around 90% of school-age children in the 25 state-run refugee camps in Turkey attend school regularly. However, these children constitute only 13% of all school-age Syrian children in Turkey, since most Syrian children live outside the refugee camps, in towns and villages, and their attendance rate is much lower. In 2014-2015, only 25% of this population attended school. Around **485,000 children still have no access to education.**

708,000 of the over 2 million Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey are at school-age.

UNICEF estimates that in total, around **3 million** Syrian children cannot attend school.

In the academic year 2014-2015, only **212,000** of these were enrolled at primary and junior high schools.

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Shift of Turkey's refugee paradigm: What next?

Göksun Yazıcı

Turkey's paradigm concerning Syrian refugees has changed completely in as short as six weeks. Let us begin with a brief summary of the latest events which will be detailed further below. Merkel's visit to Turkey accelerated the process which culminated in a significant resolution at the EU-Turkey summit on November 2. According to this resolution, Turkey will be granted three billion Euros in aid in return for sheltering refugees. New chapters will be opened in Turkey's membership talks with the EU. The next chapter to be opened will be the seventeenth on economic and monetary policy, which was opened on December 14 as planned.

This economic chapter underlines the independence of the Central Bank and states that it should not finance public corporations, and thus upholds the growth of the private sector. Although it places an emphasis on free circulation and talks about "free circulation of the labor force," its main focus is the circulation of capital.

It is not so difficult to open a chapter. Fourteen out of 33 chapters have been opened for Turkey; however, only one was concluded. That is, Turkey has passed only one "lesson." The other chapters are still open, and not much will change if one more is opened. It is not clear how the "economic aid" of three billion Euros will be paid. There is an ambiguous plan which suggests that 500 million Euros will be paid from the EU's joint budget and that the rest will be assumed by individual countries. There is no payment plan, nor any clarity on what is to be done with this sum. Neither the EU nor Turkey has made any

explanations as to where the money will be spent.

If this sum of money whose destination is unclear is granted as "aid," in response to Turkey's statement "We have spent seven billion Euros for refugees in four years; the burden needs to be shared," then we can guess that it will not be spent on large scale structural change. The government might have assumed that this money will be paid to cover some of its previous expenses.

However, there is clarity on one point: Turkey will stop the irregular flow of migrants to Europe, and serve as a "safe country" which will take back those refugees who trespass the EU border. This is one of the issues we shall discuss in detail. Turkey's refugee paradigm, which is currently shaped by the Regulation on Temporary Protection, will undergo a complete overhaul. Hence, we will present some more detailed predictions as to which directions the new paradigm might take.

Border patrol and "bribery"

After the summit on November 29, the government announced that Turkish citizens will be able to travel to the EU visa-free in 2016. However, this is not certain. In brief, although the summit of November 29 was presented by the government to the domestic public as a "huge success," this is far from the truth. Let us leave aside the issue of what is beneficial about partnering up with a Europe which is becoming increasingly protectionist in the face of the flow of refugees, and is shifting towards pure neoliberalism without any economic safety nets. The EU does not embrace Turkey; it is just bribing Turkey to transform it into a border patrol unit.

We are not alone in pointing out that



Göksun Yazıcı

Author for Express magazine and Bianet. She worked in several refugee protection programs in Urfa and Hatay. Previously, she was the editor of the Migration Studies series of Bilgi University Publications.



The main agenda of the Merkel-Erdogan meeting in October at the Yıldız Palace was refugees. Chancellor Merkel's statement about the issue was as following: "I wish to express that we are well aware how difficult the task that Turkey has taken by accepting more than 2 million refugees, is. We can foresee that the refugee mobility could increase arrive EU, through Turkey. We argue that Turkey's burden must be shared. Starting out from these common duties, we decided upon the need for a closer and intense cooperation between Turkey and the EU."

this summit and the three billion Euros are tantamount to bribery. Right after the summit, the ex-president of Belgium, Guy Verhofstadt, wrote that Europe's refugee problem cannot be solved by "bribing Turkey." Caricatures published after the summit depicted Turkey as a watchdog. In short, despite the government's claims on the domestic front, Turkey has not gained any prestige or grown closer to the EU. Even if it eventually does get close to the EU, such an acquisition would not clean the stain left by this bribe. This bargain on refugees' lives will remain a dark spot in both Turkish and EU history.

The Emergency in the EU

The number of Syrian refugees living in Turkey is 2.4 million according to official figures, and around 3 million according to non-official estimates. It is calculated that around 15% of Turkey's official refugee population crossed into the European Union in the first six months of 2015. Of these people, 80% of them preferred not the land route, but the sea route to the Greek islands. Civilian populations were mobilized upon seeing bodies of refugees hitting the shores of the Aegean during summer months. Along the Turkish coast, on Greek islands and across Europe, solidarity networks were formed to aid the refugees.

We are going through the severest refugee crisis since World War II. Civil societies which approach the crisis through a "humanitarian" perspective miss the fact that such a humanitarian perspective is indeed reductionist. They disregard the fact that a political and economic crisis has triggered this huge refugee crisis, albeit in the absence of a World War III.

The deaths of refugees are a result of the proxy wars waged in the region. When looking at refugees, we cannot overlook the policies of the states behind these proxy wars.¹ Although the EU has brought nation-states under a single umbrella and lifted internal borders, as a common "market project," it will always have a formidable external border.

Europe has rarely applied its concepts of "liberty and equality" to non-European peoples. Let us not forget that we should defend these values despite the EU, and not by basing our values on Europe's joint market project. The EU did not want to accept an inflow of refugees to whom it would have to offer rights and assistance, and instead chose to reinforce its borders. The EU should not have been expected to give a "humanitarian" reaction to this crisis anyway, because it never was a "humanitarian" union. The EU states never officially embraced the refugees the way their populations did. As a political and economic union, the EU has always met the requirements of a capitalist economy.

There were a number of reasons obliging refugees to go from Turkey to Europe. First, migrants protected by the Regulation on Temporary Protection have no refugee status. Although on paper the regulation grants them access to basic services such as education and health, they have difficulty in actually obtaining these services and do not have the right to apply for a work permit or refugee status. Turkey is a purgatory where refugees have no status, and are obliged to wait as asylum seekers or guests. Turkey has purposefully turned a blind eye on refugees' irregular movement towards Europe in order to show Europe that it is an indispensable country. Afterwards, it used this movement as a bargaining chip -towards Europe and other countries in the region.

The Conditions of the new refugee paradigm

In return for three billion Euros, Europe wants Turkey to change its Regulation on Temporary Protection, and to give migrants refugee status with a new law or regulation. As such, there is a shift in the paradigm represented by Regulation on Temporary Protection, which has been in force for four years. The basic premises of the new refugee paradigm accepted by Turkey in return for three billion Euros are as follows: 1) Turkey should advance the implementation of the Readmission Agreement. Let us note that the European Union has already signed a Readmission Agreement not only with Turkey but with all other member candidates and many other countries neighboring the EU. The EU views this regulation as a policy of the neighborhood. 2) The irregular flow of migrants from Turkey to the EU should be stopped. Refugees ought to be sent through legal mechanisms, and the quota must be increased. 3) Refugees' living standards in Turkey should be improved.

Application of the conditions

These premises are to be implemented as follows: 1) Any migrant who makes an irregular entrance to the EU from any neighboring country will be sent to Turkey. 2) Turkey and the EU will reinforce border security to prevent irregular entrance. 3) After setting a quota on the number of refugees to be admitted, Europe will open up centers in Turkey for refugee admission. Refugees will be able to apply to these centers; however, EU nations will decide which refugees are to be admitted. The quota is expected to be around 400,000. Considering the EU's laws of harmonization, it can be assumed that highly skilled individuals will be accepted. 4) Turkey will bring Syrian refugees out of the "guest / asylum seeker" status, revise the Regulation on Temporary Protection, and pass a more permanent regulation or law. Accordingly, refugees will be given the right to work.

As a market union, the EU wants to pay its way out of this humanitarian crisis, which it helped create in the first place by joining the tragic proxy war in Syria. The EU did not disclose a plan as to when and how this money will be paid. There is word that committees will be set up to audit its expenditure, but the Turkish government is claimed to have said "Give us the money and let go of the rest." In brief, the sum of this dirty deal has been agreed upon. Although one might think that it could partially improve

refugees' lives, the dirty deal is really about the well-being of national capitalist economies.

Dirty deal and cheap labor

On November 29, the Association for Solidarity with Refugees (Mülteci-Der) called upon all the leaders to put an end this dirty deal to no avail, since the leaders are themselves engaged in this deal. As mentioned above, Turkey has guaranteed three billion Euros in return for arresting refugees, locking them up and keeping them from reaching Europe. However, neither Europe nor Turkey has made any explanations as to how the money will be transferred and where it will be spent.

The right to work to be given to refugees and will pose a significant problem in a country already grappling with chronic unemployment. If the government transfers this money to the private sector with the aim of creating "new areas of employment," it may be quite difficult to monitor the transparency of private enterprises. Furthermore, this could open the way to an even more fierce exploitation of refugees, already perceived by employers as cheap labor. Refugees may thus be pitted against local cheap labor to bring wages even lower—indeed, since the market logic rests on the competition of workers among themselves, such a possibility is not far-fetched at all.

The improvement of education conditions was also demanded by the EU; however, there has been no work on the education infrastructure as of yet. In short, Turkey seems to have promised only border patrol in return for the money. Refugees are highly doubtful as to whether living in Turkey will provide them with any benefits. The refugees I have spoken to in the Hatay province do not believe that the EU money will be spent on them.

"Aleppo will not forgive you"

Although Turkey fashions itself as the protector of the Sunni population and refugees in the region, refugees in Turkey are cognizant that Turkey is in fact arming the opposition and pursuing sectarian policies across the region. The youth who, in continuation of the Arab Spring, had taken to the streets to protest the Baath regime were obliged to withdraw within a couple of months. With their revolution hijacked and their country thrust into civil war, refugees do not view Turkey as a protector.

A young refugee I have spoken to in Hatay says, "We did not know who was Alawi and who



© Eren Aytağ / NarPhotos

was not; there was no problem of sectarianism.” They are angry at Turkey for its sectarian stance and for making refugees dependent on humanitarian assistance, instead of providing them with rights to preserve their self-respect. They are fully aware of Turkey’s role in the proxy war and annoyed with men sporting Salafi beards walking the streets of Hatay. “We were staging civilian protests; the Baath regime responded with violence. However, the so-called opposition of today has no connection to us.” In an echo of Fehim Taştekin’s interview with Samir Aita, this 26-year old man says “Aleppo will not forgive Turkey. Turkey did not offer us a home; instead it destroyed our home.”

A Misleading profile of refugees: “Well-behaved, obedient, Sunni”

In accepting its new role as a border patrol, Turkey might be thinking that it will come across refugees who are “well-behaved, obedient, Sunni, and therefore appreciative of Turkey.” However, a large part of the refugee population is angry at Turkey because of its role in Syria and the arming of opponents, their lack of basic rights and the opportunity to apply for refugee status, and obligation to work at low-paid jobs. The recognition of refugee status will allow them to raise their voice on issues about which they have to remain silent now. They do not want to be exploited as cheap labor, nor be deprived of education and democratic rights.

We are on the “same ship” with refugees

Turkey cannot rule the refugee population the way it rules the locals—that is, through oppression and security politics. Refugees will be even angrier at Turkey for its new role in border patrol. Besides, the disruption of the peace process and resumption of war in the Kurdish provinces, the suppression of democratic rights, the shift towards a security state, and high youth unemployment levels all suggest that significant social unrest may be in store for Turkey.

Unless it discusses these issues at length, brings a democratic solution to the refugee question, and negotiates with the Kurdish political movement and economic problems, Turkey will come to resemble Syria.

Although Europe insists on seeing Turkey as a “safe country” which will serve as a refugee camp, and flashes smiles at the Turkish government, Turkey will never be a safe country for neither refugees nor citizens unless it resolves social tensions through democratic means.

The only way to wake up from this nightmare and to prevent Turkey from becoming a prison for refugees and ourselves is to see that we are on the same ship with refugees and to wage joint democratic struggles.

Muhammed Ahmed, 14 years old, works 11 hours a day for a monthly salary of 550 TL (eq. 170 EUR). A recent survey, conducted by TISK (Confederation of Turkey’s Employer Unions) and HÜGO (Hacettepe University Center for Migration and Politics Research) and published early December, which collected opinions, expectations and advice from the business world concerning the Syrians in Turkey, points to the high number of working children under 18 years and raises concerns over the problem of child labor which started to increase again with the arrival of Syrian refugees. According to the survey, more than 400 thousand Syrians work informally in low paid jobs, under unhealthy conditions, and most of them are children.

1 For a detailed discussion of the proxy war, see Fehim Taştekin, *Suriye, Yıkıl Git, Diren Kal*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Syrian Refugee Children and the Barriers Against the Right to Education

Ezgi Koman

*We are refugees, banished individuals.
And the land that has accepted us will be no home,
but an exile.
We sit there uneasily, as near the border as possible*
Bertolt Brecht

"This world is an equalizing and unequal world, inviting everyone to the table, but shutting the door in majority's face: equalizing in its imposed thoughts and habits, unequal in its opportunities..." is the introductory sentence of Eduardo Galeano's *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*.^{*} He says that the most fervent supporters of universal peace are those countries producing and selling the most arms, adding that a neighbor in our world is not a security but a threat. He remarks that what prevails in this world are different kinds of negligence, forgetfulness, submission, depersonalization and dislocation.

It is because the world rotates upside down that the number of dislocated people has outreached that of the Second World War. This number is the highest known in human history. According to the data presented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of refugees all over the world has exceeded 50 million. Six and a half million of these people will probably have to live as refugees for many years to come.

Two and a half million of these refugees are living in Turkey. People forced to migrate from Afghanistan, Iran, and Somali and, for the last five years, Syria, are carrying the hope for new life in Turkey. Only a transition point for refugees before the civil war in Syria, Turkey has now transformed into an asylum country. More than half of the registered two million refugees having been forced

to migrate from Syria to Turkey are composed of children. And by September 2015, 663,000 of these children will have reached school-age.

According to Article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkey is obliged to take necessary measures to make it available for all refugee children located in its own territory to enjoy the rights stated in the said convention. To what extent, then, does Turkey fulfill this obligation?

In this country, where they come after escaping from war, leaving behind their relatives, homes, schools, after covering a long and difficult journey, these children are now unfortunately exposed to many violations of their rights.

Getting a leg in the door following a difficult journey

Meeting its obligations stated in human rights documents, Turkey opened its doors to people escaping from war in Syria in 2011. Yet it is not enough just to open one's doors. Due to policies and practices that disregard human rights, for the last five years refugee children have been grappling with increasingly severe problems.

Three years after Syrians entered Turkey, the first migration law became effective as of April 2014. The definition of child in the said law, however, conflicts with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the objections by non-governmental organizations, this law defines a child as "a minor person under the age of 18." Then, if a child legally became an "adult" before the age of 18, they would not be defined as a child and have access to these rights. This could happen, for instance, if they were married. Along with this rather dangerous legal definition, the rights of refugee children are not well known and services offered to children are considered as a favor. More-



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over, children rights are often violated, sometimes due to physical insecurity in the camps where they stay, sometimes during migration to another country, and sometimes in job 'accidents' or hate crimes to which they are subjected. Unfortunately, there is no detailed and transparent statistical data record regarding these violations. According to the Child Agenda Association's Children's Right to Life Report 2014,¹ at least thirty eight refugee children lost their lives due to various reasons. However, these figures are limited and do not significantly reflect the extent of the problem.

The children who survive, on the other hand, cannot access their right to sufficient nutrition and therefore, come face to face with serious problems in terms of health rights. In spite of legislative regulations, children are deprived of regular medications, preventive health services, and generally are subjected to a variety of obstacles in accessing health rights.

The employment of children and labor exploitation is another problematic field. As a consequence of the fact that Syrian adults are denied work permits, children are employed for a pittance at illegal workplaces in unregulated, informal and inhumane conditions. To make matters worse, they are exposed to bias-motivated murders, discrimination and other sorts of violence at workplaces.² Refugee children are generally employed in waste collection, textile mills, and shoe workshops. And there are very limited or no sanctions for the workplaces employing them in this manner.

Many violations of rights, such as being forced

into marriage, commercial sexual exploitation, violence, discrimination, etc., are now ordinary practices in the daily lives of refugee children. But we are deprived of data through which we could illustrate the aspects of these violations. There is no rights-based data system about the condition of refugee children (for example, their total number, age, gender, locations, requirements, etc.). It is, of course, not possible to develop an effective policy in the absence of such data. And in the absence of an effective policy, available sources are inevitably misused.

Refugee children's right to education

The right to education, a legal obligation in accordance with international conventions and the constitution, is one of the fundamental rights enabling other child rights to be put into practice. According to UNESCO's research in 2011, Syrian children devoid of the right to education are at more risk of abuse and maltreatment, exhibit more symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (nervousness, stress, anxiety, hopelessness...) and experience various regressions in their physical and psychological developments.

Even though an important regulation was issued in September 2014 to allow Syrian children to go to state schools, they still face many barriers in accessing their right to education. This situation leads many Syrian families based in Turkey

Since April 2011, when the first migration waves from Syria started, approximately 150.000 Syrian babies were born in Turkey. The number of Syrian children below 18 years is almost 1,2 million. Of those 600.000 who are at school age, not more than 20% have access to regular education.

to take their chances or even to put their lives at risk to migrate to other countries or to send their children there so that their children can receive an education. Unfortunately, before they are able to arrive at a country where they might get an education, many of these children lose their lives on this imposed and tough journey. It has not taken much time for the image of Aylan Kurdi lying dead on the shore to be inscribed into the memory of humanity. The Kurdi family had decided to migrate to Canada so that Aylan and his brother could continue their education. But it was not to be. Similar to Aylan's fate, by October 2015 at least seventy children had lost their lives while trying to migrate.

The circular letter issued in 2014 with regard to the education of Syrian children made it possible for these children either to go to state schools or to the Temporary Education Centers, where they could access the Syrian curriculum in Arabic. However, they were often charged a fee, as these centers lacked sufficient resources. However, in spite of this formal letter, as of September 2015, approximately 60% of Syrian children cannot access any form of education. And those Syrian children incorporated into the education system experience a great deal of problems beginning from the enrollment process onwards.

Research carried out by the Bilgi University Child Studies Unit indicates that due to a lack of infrastructure and necessary support mechanisms, even those Syrian children who could access education are not able to enjoy the right to education in real terms.³ Similarly, another report prepared by the Human Rights Watch on the same issue points out that, despite the adoption of the law enabling Syrian children to go to state schools, fundamental obstacles such as linguistic barriers and problems of social adaptation and economic difficulties contribute to the violation of these children's right to education.⁴

Obstacles against school enrollment

The families of Syrian children wanting to go to school in Turkey must first register at the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) or at the District Police Department. If the child wanting to enroll into a school has no passport, it is enough for her to give personal identifying information. They take her fingerprint, her picture and register the information given by her. The Foreigner Identity Card is given to those who have a residence permit and the Temporary Protection Identity Card to those under temporary protection.

But this is not a smooth process, as Syrians can be put into trouble either by the authorities car-

rying out the procedure or due to a lack of relevant knowledge. During the registration process, Syrian families are sometimes required to present documents, which is often not possible, as they do not have any proof of residence, rental contract or utility bill, documents which can all be taken from the neighborhood directorate (muhtarlık). Such difficulties pose serious obstacles in enrolling children into schools.

In the wake of a possible completion of the enrollment process

First of all, Syrian children and their families do not have sufficient information about enrollment into schools, to they cannot even apply for enrollment. And several impediments tend to be experienced by those trying to get their children enrolled into school thanks to the help of some people from Turkey, living nearby and knowledgeable about the matter, and of other refugees acquainted with this process. For instance, school administrators can refuse these children either arbitrarily or due to lack of knowledge; besides, they can ask for documents which they are not able to provide. Supposing that they have overcome all barriers and enrolled in school, let's look at what they usually experience when they start school:

* Syrian children, most of whose only language is Arabic, face a linguistic barrier at schools where Turkish is the language of instruction. Language is the basis for a child not only to understand and make sense of the world but also to express herself. If a child's school does not instruct her in her mother tongue, that child cannot be regarded as enjoying the right to education.

* Education appears to be free of charge, yet expenses like transportation and stationery equipment add up to a high amount. Either not being able to work due to a lack of work permit or illegally working in very poor conditions, Syrian families cannot cover these expenses, so they have to take their children out of school.

* Refugee children can be exposed to bullying at schools from their peers, teachers and the families of other children. And this can lead to them yielding to this bullying or their families not sending their children to school anymore. When bullying is not effectively dealt with it can affect the child's whole development in a negative way and can disrupt her life.

* Apart from the Temporary Education Centers, the majority of which charge fees, state schools do not have a separate curriculum appropriate to Syrian children. These children have to make a transition to an education system very different than the previous one to which they had attended.

And this negatively affects their academic success.

* Teachers do not have sufficient information neither about refugee children nor about relevant procedures. They can fall short of dealing with classroom problems such as discrimination and exclusion, etc.

* In the case of arbitrary attitudes and violations of rights experienced in the field of education, there are no paths to legal remedies for refugee children. And this causes violations of rights to go unpunished.

The story of Syrian Mohammed and Samir, as told in the report prepared by the Human Rights Watch, is in fact a good summary of all these problems.

Samir and Mohammed's story

Eleven year old Samir and seven year old Mohammed are two brothers living in İzmir. Samir does not go to school and works with his father all day long at a shoe workshop on a salary below the minimum wage. As for Mohammed, who passed the first class at the state school in their neighborhood, he is very successful both at school and in social terms. Due to war, Samir and Mohammed escaped from Aleppo with their parents in the beginning of 2013. They first went to Beirut, but they could not go to school because of the over-crowded classrooms. In 2014, they moved to İzmir where their relatives lived. Having taken their Foreigner Identity Cards, their parents went to enroll them in school. The school was within walking distance from their home and was free of charge. School administrators placed Samir into the fifth and Mohammed into the first class. Mohammed could easily adapt to a new environment and to a new language, as he was quite young. All of his grades are high. Mohammed, who is the only Syrian in his classroom, tells his story in the following way:

I love school. My teacher and my friends are good, very polite and respectful. I speak Turkish; it is not yet perfect, but I'm learning. I want to be a teacher when I finish school. My dad says that I am successful and that I will do much better when I master Turkish.

Unlike Mohammed, Samir had little knowledge of Turkish when he started school. He says that it is impossible to follow the lessons:

I had finished the second class in Syria. I could not go to the third class as my school in Aleppo was bombed. I did not go to school also in Lebanon... And here I could not benefit from the school due to the language problem. I felt excluded. Other children used to mock at me, but I did not understand what they even said. My teacher was well disposed toward me, but as we could not understand each

other, I would get bored and tired.

On the other hand, here is how Samir's father depicts their problem:

We asked for the school administration to place him into a lower class. They said that it was impossible for them to allow him to study at a lower class on account of his age and physical development. We tried to explain that it is very hard for Arabs to learn Turkish, but they did not allow it. They did not even bother finding a solution to the problem.

A week after enrollment, Samir said that he did not want to go to school anymore. His father said, "The state is not interested in whether we send our children to school or not." After Samir dropped out of school, no one even called the family to inquire into the matter.

Suggestions

So, what can be done to improve these conditions? Here is the list of suggestions prepared by 32 organizations in September:⁵

* A mutual procedure should be followed at the District Police Departments and the General Directorate of Migration Management units to which Syrians apply in order to register and get a temporary protection identity card.

* During border crossing or temporary registration, information should be provided about access to educational services for all Syrians and their companions.

* Measures (such as preparatory class, language courses, etc.) should be taken in order to help Syrian children enrolled in state schools overcome problems stemming from language barriers.

* Information should be provided about the difficult living conditions, rights, available services that Syrians can use, and relevant mechanisms to teachers and administrators. It should be ensured that they behave toward Syrian children with a rights-based approach.

* Activities and programs should be planned with the aim of facilitating Syrian and Turkish children and their families to co-exist peacefully and breaking down possible prejudices between the two communities.

* With respect to working with children exposed to the trauma of war and migration, and dealing with possible discriminatory practices and bullying between students, the pedagogical training of teachers should be enhanced.

* A guidance system should be formed whereby Syrian children exposed to the trauma of war and migration can be supported in their own mother tongue.

* Free notebooks, books, stationery equipment and other school material should be provided to

children in order to enable them to benefit from educational services.

* With respect to children's access to education, regional differences should be minimized and efforts should be made to ensure that all Syrian students equally benefit from educational support services.

It is possible to build a new life together

A rights-based refugee policy capable of presenting durable solutions must be implemented, not only so that children have the right to education, but also for preventing all violations of rights experienced by refugee children and to enable them to get rid of the effects of war. They need to build a new life by becoming empowered and looking to future with hope. Without such a policy, it does not seem possible to eradicate the current problems only with the help of temporary resources and the limited solutions of non-governmental organizations.

If we do not ignore the fact that most of the current problems (child marriage, child labor, lack of education in the first language, violence, etc.) are also experienced by other children in Turkey, we can think of this process as being a possibility to rebuild rights-based child policies for all child-

ren in Turkey. However, looking at the problems that have worsened in the last five years, along with the attitude and approach exhibited by the state, we cannot help but lose hope. It is for this reason that non-governmental organizations and rights-based initiatives must come together with refugees (especially with children, young, women and LGBTI refugees) and find ways to build a life together where we can peacefully guarantee our rights and freedoms. An alternative way of rotating the world upside down will, perhaps, pass through the ground we would cover together with refugees.

* This sentence has been translated here from its Turkish version (translator's note).

- 1 http://www.gundemcocuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Yasam_Hakki_Raporu_2014.pdf (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 2 <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/iskenderun-da-suriyeli-2-cocuk-gundem-2150926> (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 3 <http://www.cocukcalismalari.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Suriyeli-Cocuklar-Egitim-Sistemi-Politika-Notu.pdf> (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 4 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/turkey1115tu_web.pdf (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 5 <http://www.gundemcocuk.org/haberler/ortak-aciklama-multeci-cocuklara-saglanacak-egitim-olanaklari-lutuf-degil-devletlerin-yukumlulugudur> (last access date December 21, 2015).

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Dom of Syria: The “other” refugees

Kemal Vural Tarlan

I believe that the current conditions of globalization require us to debate the rights of individuals from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, that is, the rights of the “others.” I will draw on Kant’s essay entitled “Perpetual Peace” to strengthen my argument. Today, as we seem to stand on the verge of global war, the current conditions of globalization correspond to a reality which spans from the “European Constitution” to the increased blurriness of the century-old borders in the Middle East. This reality also points to humanity’s progress towards “days of perpetual peace.”



Kemal Vural Tarlan

Researcher – Documentary Photographer. Since 2000, Kemal Vural Tarlan has been conducting visual sociology and anthropology research among Roma communities living in the Middle East. His studies, articles and photos were featured in numerous international symposia, congresses, exhibitions and other events. He has written penned articles on the rights of refugees from the Middle East and worked as an activist. In 2013 and 2014, he worked on “Syria in Transit”, an exhibition of photography, videos, sounds and objects on Syrian refugees from the Turkish border to the UK. The exhibition went on a tour of London, Berlin, Kiel, Madrid, Istanbul and Gaziantep. He holds an international press card and is a member of the European Sociological Association.

On the one hand, we witness and experience how the masses “longing for spring” took to the squares to bring down the remnants of dilapidated, dictatorial nation states; and how the bloody retreat of those uprisings evolved into medieval barbarism. Women are now sold on slave markets due to ethnic, religious and political/ ideological differences, children’s dead bodies hit the shores of the Mediterranean, massacres and executions are broadcast live, radicals raised in the Western education system organize serial killings with cold blood in the neighborhoods in which they used to live. On the other hand, the defeated masses, with their hopes exhausted, abandon their homes and lands to reach the borders of Europe, a place they had thought to be the homeland of the concepts of “rights and equality”, and come face to face with the real Europe. On the one hand, the civilized world drops tons of bombs every day on this region, on the other, another region that had lifted its internal borders and wrote equality and justice on its flag confronts the “other.”

The perception of Gadjos

In his articles on being the “other”, living with the “other” and opening up a space for the “other” between different cultures, Jürgen Habermas suggests that “Embracing is not turning on oneself and closing oneself to the other. Embracing the other means keeping the social borders open to everyone—especially to those who are stranger to each other and wish to remain so.” From Kant’s era to the present day, the debates around the concept of nation have necessarily included issues such as inequalities across the globe, human rights and “the rights of the others.”

All of this urges us to ask ourselves whether we will live together with the “other.” The distinction between the other and the local becomes blurred in many times and places. This in a way resembles the ambiguity about the location of the border between the East and the West. Just like every region has its “East,” everyone has an “other.” The most obvious example can be seen in us Gadjos’ perceptions of the Roma people.¹ For centuries, this people has been discriminated against and ostracized across the world.

The Dom people are an ethnic community thought to number around 5 million and live in almost all Middle Eastern countries. They speak the Domari language of the Indo-European language family. Having worked as ironsmiths, tinsmiths, tanners, basketmakers, dentists, circumcisers, musicians and fortunetellers. The Dom are facing employment as these crafts become obsolete.

For hundreds of years, the Dom led a nomadic life in order to perform these crafts and met the neighboring peoples’ demand for work tools, kitchenware, etc. With the increase in population and the development of manufacturing and mass production, they have simply become unable to make a living with their traditional crafts. They had to take refuge in the cities, working there as day laborers or



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unskilled workers.

The tumultuous political and social life, civil wars and conflicts in the Middle East have rendered daily life increasingly difficult for these people.

Living at “degree zero”

In this era of upheaval, the Dom people suffered significantly, experiencing famine, poverty and all kinds of violence. Discriminated against and othered even in times of peace, these people could not meet their most basic needs such as health, education and shelter, and were very adversely affected by the conflict during civil war although they remained neutral. Obligated to a life at “degree zero,” the Dom were obliged to hit the road, abandoning their makeshift tents and huts. The destruction and violence created by war and civil war has further aggravated their basic problems in terms of social security, shelter, nutrition and health.

The Syrian civil war makes life extremely hard for all the ethnic groups and religious minorities of this country. Today, the Dom who left Syria to take refuge in Turkey state that they are being forced to migrate by both the regime and opponents, and their houses and belongings are being demolished and plundered although they have remained neutral during the four-year conflict.

Among others, Aleppo’s Haydariya neighborhood that was inhabited by the Dom was heavily

bombarded from air, leading to countless deaths and forced migration. Especially in regions controlled by radical Islamist groups, whose power has recently increased, the violence against the Dom is on the rise. These groups seize the Dom’s homes and belongings on the pretext that they are not “true Muslims” and subject them to lethal violence.

These groups which base their war effort on religious and sectarian grounds exert increasing violence on groups with different belief systems. Especially groups such as Abdals of the Alevi-Bektashi faith were forced to abandon their homes in Aleppo, Idlib, Hama or Mumbuc due to radical Islamist pressure, and sought refuge in regions under regime control or in neighboring countries where they were obliged to live as nomads. Witnesses state that these attacks lead to death and serious injury, children’s hands are cut off on charges of theft, and women are abducted and subjected to sexual violence.

The Syrian Dom seeking refuge in Turkey state that their relatives who stay behind have had to flee to the western provinces of Latakia and Damascus where conflict and air raids are not as intense, or to the cantons of Afrin, Kobane and Qamishli under Kurdish control. The heavy fighting in the cities and lack of access to health services and nutrition have driven some of these communities to other countries. Nowadays, tens of thousands of asylum seekers try to survive in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq under conditions of famine and poverty.

Although refugee camps in Turkey are praised for their high standards, for the time being it is known that approximately 80% of all Syrian origin people are living outside the camps due to various reasons. Also Dom refugees live in their self-built tent camps, ruins and abandoned buildings and change their places frequently.

Refugee camps and the Dom

Dom refugees do not generally stay in refugee camps, and do not want to. The main underlying reasons are the prejudice and discrimination they face from other camp dwellers and the management. Due to the ethnic, religious or political polarization in the camps, limitation of free circulation, tight controls on entry and exit, the feelings of isolation and imprisonment, these groups do not perceive these camps as spaces where they can live freely.

As such, Dom refugees choose to stay in their own tent camps, in makeshift tents, or in derelict or abandoned buildings. Those without a roof sleep on the streets and in parks. Only a handful of families can afford to live together in rented houses. Such houses are mostly located in neighborhoods where local Roma communities live in Turkey. Due to a decree recently issued by the Ministry of Interior, their tents are frequently burnt or torn down. Groups survive on petty jobs they find on a daily basis and have no money for rent; therefore, they are obliged to move frequently. Since they face more pressure in small towns, they choose to migrate to large cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir in order to get lost in the crowd.

The lifestyle of the Dom refugees makes it almost impossible to register their activities. The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), which registers the activities of Syrian refugees in Turkey, either cannot access these groups or is unwilling to register them due to prejudice. Today many members of the community lack the ID cards normally given out to refugees by registration centers. The Dom list the reasons for these as their undocumented passage through the border, lack of information about the registration process or misinformation, and the tendency to avoid state officers.

On the other hand, the members of the community who live in tents or ruins, cannot obtain the certificate of residence which is required for registration. Even those who meet all the criteria are made to wait for no apparent reason, and are sometimes denied their documents. On the other hand, not everyone wants to obtain a foreigner identification card owing to their return to nomadism to find jobs, and the fact that such cards are valid only in the province of issue. Individuals who lack these cards cannot access health services and assistance.

The NGOs' and aid organizations' demands for assistance to these individuals are ignored by officers on the grounds that this would encourage people to live on the streets.

Dom refugees who live in makeshift tents, ask for assistance or work on the streets are always prone to the arbitrary interventions of security for-

ces and become their targets. Dom refugees in Turkey have immense difficulty in finding jobs. They walk the streets with the hope of finding casual work, and collect waste for recycling. When they find a job, they usually have to work very long hours for a very low pay. They are obliged to cede to exploitation. Women and children either peddle small necessities (kleenex, lighters, etc.) or collect food and aid on the streets.

For four years, these refugee groups who try to survive in Turkey despite all these adversities have been discriminated against and othered. What are the reasons for this? NGOs and refugee aid organizations, unfortunately including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, lack information about this community. This renders a 40,000-strong community invisible. Syrian refugees are generally perceived as a homogenous group of Sunnite, Arab individuals; there is some knowledge about relatively larger ethnicities such as Turkmens, Kurds and Circassians, but groups such as the Roma—seen by the remaining groups as the “other”—continue to be ignored, disregarded, ostracized as ever.

The unraveling of communal life

In these communities, dispersed groups and families become vulnerable to all kinds of danger. The Dom communities living in the Middle East are composed of smaller tribes, which are further divided into large families living together. Each group is composed of 5 to 15 families which in fact lead a communal life. Although they live in separate tents or houses, the tradition of solidarity persists. A leader who directs and orients the group also manages their relations with the outside world.

This communal lifestyle also protects such a self-enclosed society against external threats. Their ancient tradition lives on in this manner. This communal living leads to the virtual absence of the sense of private property, the group's compensation for any individual or familial shortcomings, particularly the protection of children and women, endurance against tough living conditions—in short, the strength to resist assimilation into the social and economic system of Gadjos.

The fragmentation of these relationships in periods of upheaval, such as war and conflict, thrusts individuals and families who are not adapted to living alone into an unknown world. The fragmentation of groups creates tears in the social fabric. Forced to engage with an unknown system in order to find employment, shelter and food, these individuals become vulnerable to danger. Children who sell things on the street, women who ask for help, or men who are willing to do any kind of work easily get tangled up in crime.

Caught between security forces and the media

On the other hand, the media in Turkey tends to cover Dom refugees in a negative way, as “beggars from Syria” or “Syrian Gypsies,” portraying their tough living conditions as their own lifestyle choice. Articles written in this vein fuel further discrimination against Dom refugees.

The anti-Syrian sentiment which grips the Turkish society at times is directed mainly at this community, with the encouragement of some media outlets. Unfortunately certain individuals including some spokespeople of Syrian refugees tell the media “These people are Gypsies who were beggars back in Syria. We do not want them; they are not Arabs.” As a result, the society and security forces are mobilized against the community. The Ministry of Interior has issued a decree which orders the “internment of Syrian refugees who beg on the streets.” The decree was sent to the governors’ offices of all provinces, and security forces offered two options to Syrian asylum seekers who live in the streets or in makeshift tents: Either settle down in a refugee camp or rent a house. If they refused to do one or the other, they were to be sent back to Syria. In fact, the Doms were the direct target of this decree. Many governors applied the decree to the letter and authorized the security forces. A witch hunt took place in certain provinces and districts. Children asking for aid on the streets were sent to camps without the knowledge of their families. Individuals and groups who refused to live in AFAD-controlled camps were driven away, forcing some of them to return to Syria despite the ongoing war.

Lots of talk, no legislation

To conclude, the Roma people are the victims of “civil wars” waged by different peoples, ethnic and religious groups with whom they had been living for centuries. During the recent Middle Eastern popular uprisings that started out four years ago, groups of Dom were again caught between the warring sides, as had happened in previous experiences. For centuries, this ancient people carried in their collective memory the massacre and suffering they have gone through in various wars and civil wars, and transmitted these “hard times” to younger generations with the magic of the word. Now, more suffering is inscribed on the hearts of “the world’s free souls.” Tough days await the “others” of the Middle East.

Recent political negotiations, lump sum payments and promises for keeping refugees away from the borders of Europe are yet another indication of the fact that we are still tangled in the nation



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state mentality. However, did not Kant aspire to days of perpetual peace in a Europe without borders? The events of recent years in the world show us that, in the age of globalization, war is global just like everything else.

What do our governments, those who rule Middle Eastern countries reshaped by the popular uprisings, think about the Roma and other religious and ethnic minorities? As long as their discourse of equality is not translated into concrete legislation, as long as these peoples’ right to live humanely in “peace and equality” is not guaranteed by law, the multicultural structure of the Middle East and the world is due to degenerate.

Among over two million Syrian refugees in Turkey, there are roughly 40.000 Dom people. They constitute the most invisible and excluded group of all refugees, even within the refugee community itself as well as for the NGOs working with refugees.

1 Gadjo is a term used by Roma people to denote someone who is not Romani, a stranger.

DEMOCRACY / INTERVIEW WITH BEKİR AĞIRDİR

"A Surreal State of Mind"

Interview: Merve Erol

The AKP (Justice and Development Party) managed to overcome its defeat in the June 7 elections by attaining one of the highest voting rates in its history in the November 1 elections. We talked to Bekir Ağırdir from the KONDA research and consultancy company about the election results that led many researchers to throw in the towel.

Before the November 1 elections, you said that the elections results could in fact not be predicted and that the situation at the time was full of uncertainties. In a sense, you turned out to be right. What was it that led you to make this comment about the elections, to use adjectives like "weird" or "surreal" with respect to the recent social life in Turkey?

For the last five years, we have followed a monthly moral index, which is similar to a consumer confidence index. Especially in September and November, the expectation of a crisis among the population has reached the highest level in this five-year period, 75%. In other words, three out of four people in the country said that "I'm expecting a big economic crisis in the next three to four months." A government could not be formed, negotiations were held to form a coalition, etc., so we asked the question, "How do you evaluate these five months?" 82% of people replied that "this is a big political crisis." This is the second data. Third, we asked the question, "How do you consider the current environment of battles and terrorism?" and the percentage of those who regarded this problem as an immediate problem capable of directly affecting their everyday lives rose to 62-63%. Emotionally speaking, all these three data pointed to an extremely worried, anxious society whose expectations completely

transformed into despair and pessimism. On the other hand, you look at political choices and they seemed to be the same as they were six months or one year ago. If we suppose that the percentage of those saying that they would participate in the elections rose to 50%, this would be an indication that could lead us to say that they are showing a reaction to politics. All these political findings showed us, as it were, nothing changes, but when you look at non-political findings, everyone sounds the alarm. This was what I called weird. If the determining factor in the motivation for election is fear, anxiety or worry, we cannot measure behavior driven by fear, anxiety or panic either in a laboratory environment or with a survey. What people can do in a moment of panic is not something measurable. Four out of five people in the country believed that recent developments amount to a big crisis. And one out of four people believed that there would be a crisis in the following three to four months. This state of mind did not seem to me to be a measurable thing.

So what was it that led to the picture resulting with the November 1 elections?

This picture was drawn neither by hopes and utopias nor by promises and lists of candidates. It might be the case that, among fifty-four million voters, 100,000 people voted just because Beşir Atalay was again a candidate or there may be 120,000 pensioners saying that they had been promised a 100 lira increase in their salaries, but the determining factor for the votes and main characteristics of 47,000,000 voters out of 54,000,000 voters was not hope but fear, anxiety and search for the peace and harmony for the household. This was not quite measurable. The weird fact or the surreal situation was that no picture was reflected in the political data. According to political science,



Bekir Ağırdir

Bekir Ağırdir was born in 1956 in Denizli. In 1979 he graduated from the METU, Dept. of Management. During 1979-80 he worked at the information processing center of CHP. After 1980 he worked in the private sector, mainly in the informatics field. Between 2003-2005 he was the secretary general of History Foundation. Besides his current duties at KONDA, he is actively engaged in several NGOs.



In the June elections, AKP got 40.87% of the votes, meaning an electorate of 18.867.411 people. In the elections in November, which were held due to the failed coalition negotiations, 23.681.926 people voted for AKP, meaning 49.5% of the total votes.

if there is a power ruling the country for thirteen years, people would naturally turn toward the power, not to the opposition, in such times of crisis. The fact that the power did not receive its share from this crisis, but, on the contrary, gained an increase in its votes is not something quite predictable or normally acceptable; this is something quite surreal. Looking from 2002 to November 2015, the AKP showed a normal rise until 2011, then a decline. Such a tendency to rise and decline is valid for every product, idea, party or brand. Nonetheless, this was not a real decline, as they managed to bounce back without any void in power, which is something rarely experienced in the world. And this was led by the fears, anxieties, and perceptions of threat regarding the peace and harmony for the household.

The AKP lost a great deal of its votes in the June 7 elections, yet its 40%, was still quite high in consideration of the recent political history of Turkey. Was this 40% of voters, which supported the AKP against all odds, an attractive core for the November 1 elections?

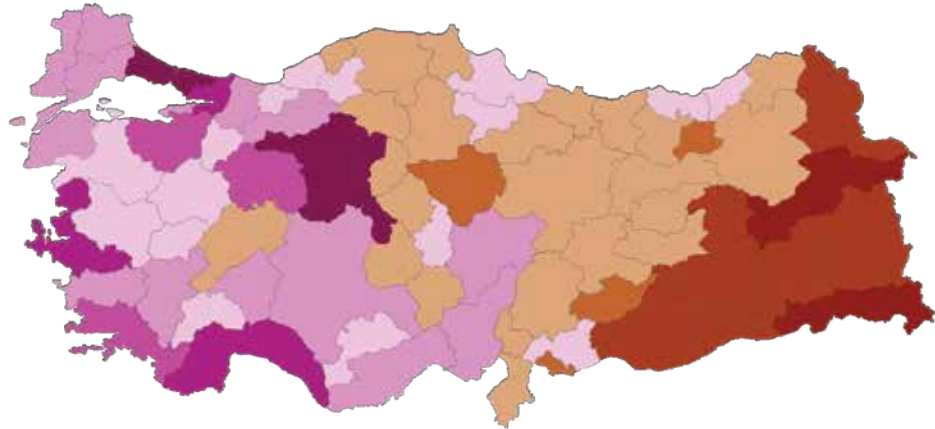
With 54 million people, every party has a core vote. Some people have intellectual or ideological leanings and some people have emotional leanings. Just as I cannot explain why I am a Galatasaray fan, some people have a liking for a leader. Every party takes its core vote from these 54 million people. As for some of the rest, we call them *sympathetic voters*. It might be the case that they completely set their heart on that party, or that their ideological leanings do not coincide with that of that party, but they vote for them for some reason. Being among the core voter within the party, s/he then shifts to being a sympathetic voter

when she begins to criticize it. If her criticisms continue, she shifts into the grey area. In that grey area, she then becomes a neutral voter, beginning to listen to another party and paying heed to what they say. If she has not still heard something stealing her heart or reason away, she goes back to what is familiar during the election. One of the determining factors in this picture is the absence of political competition. The CHP (Republican People's Party), the MHP (Nationalist Action Party) or the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)—the HDP being of course much different than the other two—were not able to generate a utopia that would attract great masses or those social segments would have turned away from the AKP. People naturally turned to the AKP. The total number of the AKP's core voters is 18 million. Compared with the total number of 54 million voters in general, this adds up to 35%! Depending on the voter turnout, this 35% amounts to 42-45%. With the help of its sympathetic voters, the AKP's share of the vote has thus far shifted between 41% and 47%. On June 1, this was 18.5 million people; their core voters were locked in. From December 17 onwards, the AKP gradually lost approximately 2 million of its voters to the MHP. And they lost approximately 1.5 to 2 million voters to the HDP, but that core was not eroded and remained very steady. Since the core of other parties could not produce something sufficiently strong, a considerable portion of sway voters again turned to the AKP. Along with fear and the absence of political competition, there is an ongoing polarization between those supporting the AKP and those opposing it. Against three other parties, the AKP came to power alone and we knew even

The map shows the socio-economic development levels of cities, according to the data provided by the Development Ministry. Those in brown are the least developed regions of the country, those in purple the relatively developed ones (increasing as the color gets darker).

(Source: Konda '15 Barometer- November 1, box and electorate analysis)

Socio-economic development level of cities



before the election how 38 million people would vote, no matter the circumstances. There is a core of 18 million AKP voters and 20 million votes are distributed among three other parties. Between 54 million general voters and 38 million core voters there is a grey area with 16 million voters, a segment not yet committed to the mental and emotional embargo of this polarization. Whatever Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says, 38 million voters are categorically either for it or against it, but the people within the grey area can, for example, say that “the AKP can be right in three events and wrong in five events,” which indicates that they are a sensible social segment. The result of the elections are determined by the turnout of non-polarized 16 million of people within the grey area and their specific political behavior in the election. The grey area shifted this time to the AKP.

Outside of staying away from polarization, do these people comprising the grey area have any social or class partners?

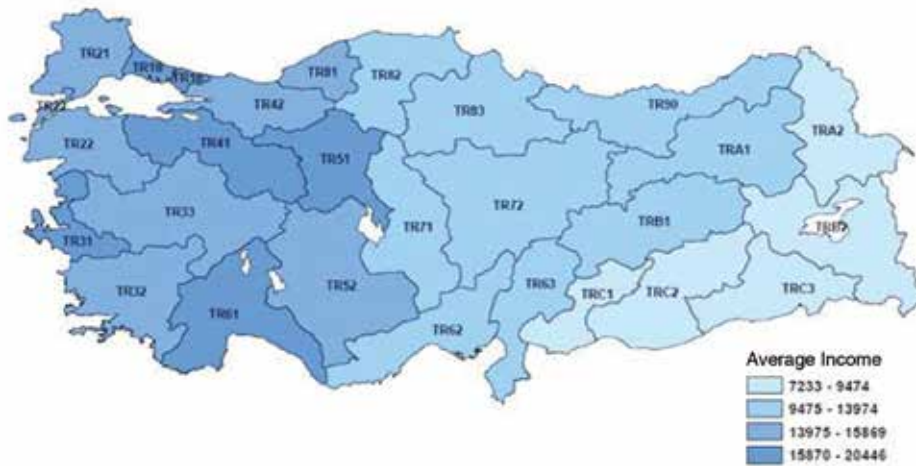
These people cannot be monolithically defined as the educated or the uneducated, or working or unemployed women. These are people who, unlike the other 38 million people, have not elevated politics to be a subject or main center of their lives. For one thing, among 54 million voters, there are 6 million people who are not interested in the elections anyway, as they only read the sports pages of newspapers. Approximately 35% of voters, i.e., about 20 million people, vote in intellectual accordance with their parties; we call them *ideological voters*. They may not literally know the party program, but if they call themselves conservative Islamists, what they naturally think of is the AKP. Approximately 25% of voters, i.e., about 14 million people, relate not to the party but to the leader. Tayyip Erdoğan has this charisma. And there is an approximately 20% of voters, i.e., about 11 million people, whom we call *emotional or supporter voters*. Finally, there

is a group of 10% of voters in which we are also included. They think they know everything and complain that “none of these parties is mine,” but vote for one of them in the end anyway. Another 10% is the total opposite of us.

In this case, we are talking not about a society estranged from politics over the years, but about a highly politicized one.

To be more precise, people have strong frames of mind. The most important determining factor in this election was the following: politics in Turkey was locked up into identities. And this is such a time when commonsense does not work at all. Two figures in our November 1 Ballot Box Analysis report offer a very clear understanding of this issue. You instruct the computer to distribute over the outer space, like a constellation of stars, the similarity, closeness or distance between the 81 provinces in terms of election results. And then you begin to make sense of this, trying to understand on what basis it has distinguished them. One of the significant distinguishing axes in politics in Turkey is the discrepancy between Turkish and Kurdish provinces. It is relatively easy to explain this discrepancy, but how can one explain Edirne, Kırklareli, İzmir or Aydın? There are a series of explanations for this. For example, one can distinguish them on the basis of their socio-economic level of development, and this is not only an economic level of development. There are also many data, such as seats in movie theatres, number of books sold, hospitals, and the number of beds per one hundred people. TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) calculates all these figures and publishes annual reports, comparing 81 provinces in terms of these data. It is also possible to term some developed provinces, and others undeveloped. The provinces under the influence of the HDP are the most underdeveloped provinces, those under the influence of the CHP are the most developed ones, and those under the influence

Household income per head



The map was constructed with the TÜİK data, which shows 26 sub-regions according to their household income levels. The lowest levels are represented in light blue, the highest ones in dark blue. (Source: Konda '15 Barometer- November 1, box and electorate analysis)

of the AKP are places with a desire to develop. One can also define these provinces in terms of education, as undereducated or highly educated provinces. And there is another third axis, with highly religious provinces, on the one hand, and provinces with tenuous religiosity, on the other. It is possible to define the four corners of Turkey as Kurdistan, Turkism, religious and secular. This is where politics in Turkey gets stuck. This mapping shows the spatial successes and failures of the bicentennial story of development in these lands. It is also possible to say that these four identities, these four parties are products of a historical process. The current polarization seems to explain the issue, but if you look a little closer, you can see the determining historical processes at the bottom.

Well, are we then condemned to these identities? For example, it has always been said that the HDP has succeeded to the extent that it overcomes this identity politics...

The HDP always tried to overcome this to the best of its ability and took 13% of the votes in the June 7 elections, but Kurdish nationalists and PKK stood in their way. This is now just a dream. If it had really been successful, it would have replaced the CHP and risen to 25% with the secular voters. From 1983 to 2002, the party winning the first place in general elections has always been a different one. In one period, it was the SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) that came to the fore, then it was the DSP (Democratic Left Party), then the Refah (Welfare) Party and the MHP... Since 1987, a time when sociological, social, and demographic change in Turkey was at its fastest momentum, there has been no future vision agreed upon by society as the whole. Therefore, the winning party in the general elections always varied, which means that society gave each of them a chance. Whether the DSP, the SHP or Refah came to power just because it was

their turn or not is a separate matter of debate, but they must have done something different as the electorate predominantly voted for them. Therefore, the AKP is a product, a result of a process. Moreover, it is a product of a period full of great social changes: the level of education, computers, transportation, roads, cars, planes, mobile phones, exports, globalization, the information society... At a time when whole life changed due to both global and internal dynamics, society searched for an answer, a vision, but could not find it in any party. On the other hand, there was a time when the whole system hit the wall in dismay: the February 28 coup, the 1999 Marmara Earthquake, and the 2000-2001 economic crisis. Within these four years, all social systems came up against a brick wall. AKP used the time between 2000 and 2007 in a proper way. If it had continued its path in the former Welfare Party, it would not have been able to grasp this opportunity. Perhaps, first coming to power alone, the AKP would also have used its turn and it would have been another party's turn in 2007. But it made use of this opportunity and the whole story turned to a different channel.

The AKP has formed one of the strongest governments in the history of the Turkish Republic, but how can we explain the fact that they maintain this strength after thirteen years?

Together with November 1, we have had 18 general elections and five very critical ruptures in our history. The first was the 1950 elections, the Democrat Party against the party that founded the republic. In the 1961-65 elections, it was the Justice Party against the coup and generals; they hanged the leader of the Democrat Party on the grounds that he had sold the country, but the same party came to power alone five years later. 1973 was Ecevit's success. In 1983 it was Özal, despite generals. And

Six different city clusters, constructed according to the election results. The first three clusters are composed of cities where AKP is almost the only dominant party. In the 4th cluster are cities where AKP, CHP and MHP coexist. The 5th cluster shows cities with CHP dominance and the in 6th cluster are cities with HDP dominance. (Source: Konda '15 Barometer- November 1, box and electorate analysis)

Results of November 1, 2015 General Elections, Political Preference Profile at the Level of Cities



Political preference profile in clusters	Clusters	Akp	Chp	Mhp	Hdp	Other	Total
Akp, Mhp, other parties	1	67,9	9,1	13,3	6,7	2,9	100
Akp, other parties	2	65	17,5	10,5	4	2,9	100
Akp, Mhp, other parties	3	53,8	18,3	22,6	1,9	3,4	100
Akp, Chp, Mhp	4	50,1	27,9	13,9	5,6	2,5	100
Chp	5	42,8	34,8	11,9	8	2,4	100
Hdp	6	28,8	2,8	2	64,2	2,2	100
Total-Turkey %		49,5	25,4	11,9	10,8	2,5	100

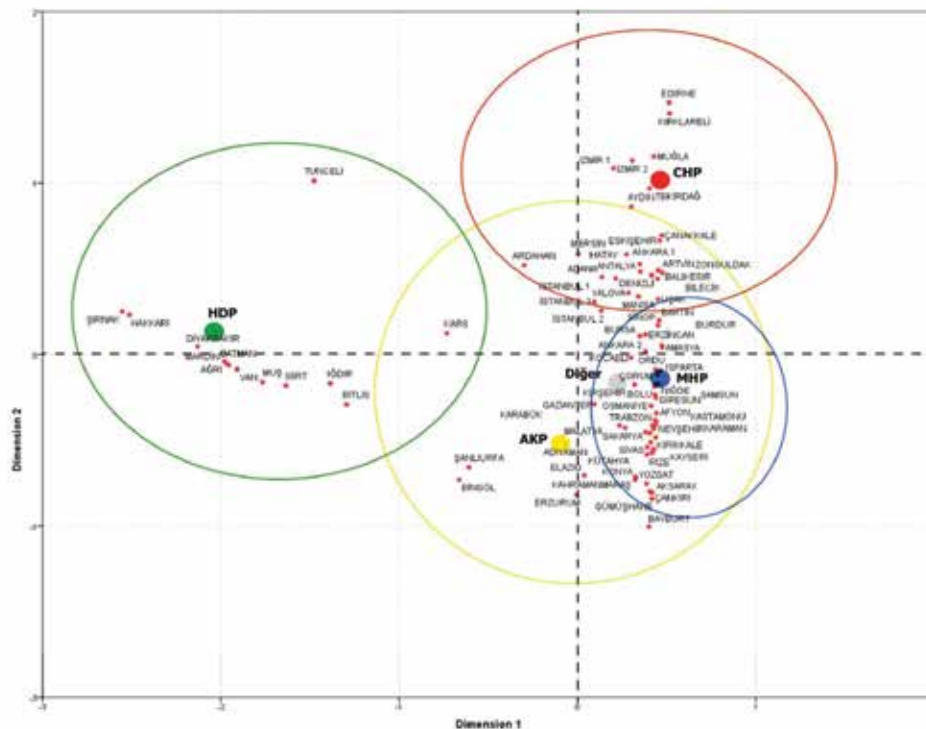
finally the AKP. You know what some people say, “doesn’t the society in Turkey want change and democracy?” What better indication than all of these things? All ruptures are in favor of the party purporting to change the whole system. And if today there were another party, purporting to really change the system, giving confidence with its cadres and words, a party outside the current ones, it would secure the votes.

However, it is again the AKP who has created the current chaotic situation in the country, pulling the strings of the economy and being responsible for it, leaving the negotiation table and returning to a battle situation, and moving away from the EU norms it once espoused and promised. How can it maintain this social support despite all these contradictions?

The AKP has two faces that totally oppose each other like night and day. On the one hand, it is a reformist party, that claims to change a number of things; and on the other hand, there is a party that has not done anything for this cause in the last four years. It is a strange that even Tayyip Erdoğan says today that “the system has got stuck, thus we have to renew the system.” He also says “let’s change the constitution” to which the CHP replies “we shall not negotiate the first four articles of the constitution.” The one in power says “the system has got stuck,” and the one in opposition says “we should not change the system.” The AKP’s government program with declaring elections and a

transparency package is more comprehensive than the CHP’s. Whether or not they will be successful, or whether they are sincere in these demands or not, those are separate matters of debate. But in terms of perception and image, it is still the AKP presenting itself to society as the one saying “we should change the system.” And society is extremely anxious, aware of the problem in Syria, the battle situation, the shot down Russian jet fighter... Yet we do not know the extent of society’s consent or to what it will give its consent. Looking on the basis of current actors, here is how I see the situation: Looking at the situation whether with the eyes of Kurds, women, Alevis, environmentalists, or whatever, it is a fact that one hundred or two hundred years of development or modernization model has been blocked in Turkey. We have nowhere to go. All of our problems are in front of us for all the world to see; all of them are simultaneously not only visible but also at a configuration where they lead to violence. Even environmental protests are carried out with violence. Therefore, the problem is the problem of renewing Turkey’s model, and all actors feel the need to do this. Also within the AKP, there are some people wishing for the maintenance of the old system or some who desire to establish or search for a new model. The CHP and the army also feel it. The country’s salvation depends on the question where the reformist, progressive wings will predominate. This was what excited me about the HDP, the part to which I tried to make a

November 1, Election Results Correspondence Analysis



Graphic shows a correspondence analysis according to the election results of cities. It can be concluded that the horizontal axis that explains the general political picture of Turkish politics and the results of the November 1 elections is defined by ethnic identity. The vertical axis lists the cities and parties on a socio-economic development scale; on the top of the axis are developed cities, below are developing cities. It is possible to interpret this axis by the education level of those cities. Yet, research findings of Konda also indicate that this axis represents the different religiosity levels respectively. In other words, the four corners of these axes represent the identities within which the politics of the country is stuck, i.e. Turkism, Kurdism, laicism, and islamism. (Source: Konda '15 Barometer- November 1, box and electorate analysis)

contribution. There is another issue capable of affecting the whole play: How long will Tayyip Erdoğan continue his blind insistence on the presidency, or how long will he continue his controlled crises in order to force society to agree upon presidency? Of course, there is also a third element: The Middle East. Two states previously known by the names of Syria and Iraq are now gone, but more fatefully, the points where the 200-year old model has gotten stuck are also the problems of the region. Sectarian or religious wars in the region will also become our internal problem tomorrow. The Kurdish problem has always been an internal problem anyway. Citizens gave their votes, and yes, they gave a support not expected even by AKP itself, and now they have taken a back seat, waiting to see whether the party they voted for will figure out a solution or not. But if these solutions are not found, I am not sure whether society would give its consent to continually live in the midst of this uncertainty coupled only with identities and polarization.

Is the mass of people within the grey area one that can be easily manipulated by the AKP, a mass that can easily be persuaded into either peace or conflicts?

I think that the AKP was really successful until 2007. Following Ergenekon, Republican rallies, the April 27 E- Memorandum and a host of other problems, the AKP realized that there was no constellation within the bureaucracy and the state with which it could form any

alliance, and it thus formed its line of defense in the street. Some part of this line of defense was carried out as a practice of the social state, perhaps as policies of conscience, but it immediately moved on to use this relation and the growth in economy as a means to transform masses into supporters of the AKP. From 2010 onwards, steps were taken toward the third phase; following the 2010 referendum, gaining of 58% of the votes and the dramatic Gezi events, this turned out to be a transformation of AKP supporters into supporters of Erdoğan himself. He fabricated this process even while arranging lists of candidates and election declarations in 2011. The lists of candidates in 2011 are the AKP lists with the highest number of statist bureaucrats. It was then that Muammer Güler and the like showed up on the lists. Showing its determination not to shy away from its rule limiting members from running more than three periods, the AKP also liquidated dissidents within the party. And Gezi led to the transformation of the masses, who just became supporters of the AKP and into supporters of Erdoğan. Those 18 million votes were secured not all of a sudden, but step by step. What about now? How will the AKP be able to maintain 4-5, 5 million people, whose votes it gained with the overall 23.5 million votes in November 1, following the 18.5 million votes on June 7? It seems that they are now going on with strategy of national pride, fighting with the hegemonic powers of the world. Does this

strategy work? Yes, it works. It works because chauvinism is strong in these lands. There is of course an inclination toward authoritarianism. Belief in the rule of law is already low. There is a predominant search for a leader by those wishing not for legal mechanisms but for a strong man deciding everything, so there is a social state of mind that might lend itself to its realization. On the other hand, this is not the old Turkey. 93% of the people live in cities and 52% of this 93% live in 11 metropolises. The distinction between a city and a metropolis is as the following: Uşak is a city, so too is İstanbul, but the relations of solidarity, moral and cultural codes in Uşak are not the same as those in İstanbul. The social groups behind the AKP, whom we call modern conservatives, have also seen another world; they think in global terms and take part in global business. Behind Mr. Erdoğan, there is a social group comprising 23 million people that would unhesitatingly give a leg up for dictatorship. But there is also an opposite climate.

What was the extent of the social support for the solution process when it was at its highest?

As Konda, we gave up following this process in 2014 and after all, this social support was never at 80-90%. Even if it had been so, they would have been asked why the solution of this problem was being delayed if there was 90% support for it. But this is not the case. The Kurdish problem is primarily a problem between Kurds and the state, but in the 40-year period when this problem continued without being resolved, it gained a second social aspect. When the peace process started in 2013, the support level was 35-40% and the percentage of those opposing it was about 30%. The masses in between were unsure, yet the support level has always been high among Kurds. From January to July, it rose to around 55% and the percentage of those opposing it decreased. However, it then began to decline from 55%. And by the end of the year, it had returned to its previous situation. We penned an evaluation report where we said that we will not measure this anymore. For one thing, the promises of this process to society in general were not certain. Let's say that we have made a peace, but what do we mean by this and what is going to happen tomorrow? The government's shortcoming was that they did not explain the will to co-existence, democracy, and cultural pluralism. There was a limit to commonplaces or lofty phrasings like fraternity. But there was a need for different interactions between civil society and local administrations, a need for the proliferation of sites and actors. Most

importantly, other formal negotiations had to be carried out in the parliament in the legitimate political sphere. Besides, the problem of trust between the two parties could not be overcome. No effort has been made to resolve the paranoia among Turks about the division of the state and the suspicion among Kurds about a possible deception. But as of today, everyone wants to restart with the Dolmabahçe consensus, which was not sufficiently backed when it was first declared. And this is the paradox. If it had then been backed with heart and soul, the thing called the Dolmabahçe consensus would not have been so easily sacrificed.

Is this their highest vote, not in terms of the number of parliamentarians, but in terms of the overall population?

Except for the results of the June 7 elections, it is the first time the AKP secured such a low number of parliamentarians. On the other hand, in terms of its electoral base, it increased this figure to 23 million—the previous highest figure was 22 million.

Is this the picture that allows Erdoğan to say we should “adapt the constitution to the actual situation?”

What we experience is the return of model that is two hundred years old. It is extremely centralist, monolithic in approaching not only every problem with a single method but also citizens themselves with a single identity; a state model of the “mass production” era. It is impossible for this system not to generate any arbitrariness. If you were a prime minister, maybe you would begin to say “I need to be a president” in the fifteenth year of your term of office, and Mr. Erdoğan began to say this in his eighth year. There is now such an order and law that enables one to select the location for the third bridge while hovering with a helicopter and to say “let's skip 4G and move on to 4, 5 G Internet.” It is impossible not to fall in love with this power once you use it. It is precisely for this reason that there should not be a presidency. We have a complicated life requiring us to decentralize and democratize decision-making processes and to increase actors and focus points of these processes, but we are now discussing a system gradually centralizing and making everything uniform. This is not only a Mr. Erdoğan problem; we should be able to discuss this issue more calmly, regardless of his desire for presidency. The current parliamentary system is, in its essence, not much different from the presidency they wish for. So we cannot also propose this as a solution, but we are not able to discuss new solutions either, so we get nowhere.

ECOLOGY

Nuclear perception management from Akkuyu to İğneada

Filiz Yavuz

One of the oldest hoaxes of politics is this: Whenever a politician makes a mess of something for some reason, he or she slyly diverts people's attention to another thing. They do this so that no one could say "what the hell is going on?" or even call them to account. And they do this so that things that have just fallen off the rails could be fixed up all nice without anyone noticing whatsoever, and that, if there are new rails at stake, they could be properly covered up. It is not a hard business for a politician to put up new carpets under which things can be swept. In fact, one of the other oldest hoaxes of the business of politics is to fabricate cover-ups with all shapes and size for all issues and to do this without even caring whether all these contradict each other or not. This is what has recently happened in the case of İğneada. Or should we say the Akkuyu question?

Jets shooting down Akkuyu!

Though positioned at different sides in the ongoing war in Syria, Russia and Turkey have tried not to allow this difference in belligerency to have its repercussions regarding their mutual commerce. However, with the Russian jet fighters violating Turkish airspace via Syria, quite a stir has been created between the two countries. This newly arisen tension has inescapably raised the question of the future of the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant to be built and operated by Russia. Nuclear plant protestors rejoiced in the news, hoping that "Akkuyu might get rid of the trouble amidst this turmoil," but the President of the Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was probably one of the people who began to feel uneasy about the future of Akkuyu, as he made the following statement, where he felt the need to caution (!) Russia: "If they don't build Mersin Akkuyu, someone else would come and do it. They have already made a three billion dollar

investment there. So it is Russia that must be more sensitive in this issue. We are the number one natural gas consumer of Russia. To lose Turkey would be a huge loss. If required, Turkey can also provide natural gas from very different sources."¹

Naturally, Erdoğan never did mention the possibility of Turkey really being kept in the dark if Russia decided to switch off valves to shut off the flow of natural gas to its neighbor. But it was not just the matter of natural gas that was at stake. Russia, for example, could say: "I will not buy the citrus fruits you produce. Go and find yourself another market!" And this indeed became a reality. But no attention has been paid to this issue, either. This is another rule of politics: Behave as if the whole world is in need of your own country!

Rosatom: No change in Akkuyu

On October 9, a day after Erdoğan's statement, Taner Yıldız, the former Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, lowered the degree of the tension only a little: "The Russian Federation is having a business transaction. Therefore, in the event that such a project is put under jeopardy here, and I don't quite think that it would happen, it is a fact that the Russian Federation would lose money."² The emphasis in this statement was on the sub-sentence, "I don't quite think that it [the project] would happen," and he also hastened to add that the Rosatom authorities had stated that this project would not be affected by this crisis.

Where are these three billion dollars?

In spite of the decrease in tension, a mess has already been made anyway. It has turned out that, despite all the years that have passed, there is no concrete proj-



Filiz Yavuz

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ect for Akkuyu! If steps had been taken to initiate the project and some progress had been made, it would not be possible to say “if you don’t do it, another one can do it.” This would amount to changing technology, which is not possible, especially in the case of a nuclear power station. Yet this was not the only thing that leaked out. In his column in the daily *Birgün*, the journalist Özgür Gürbüz pointed out to an issue probably overlooked by most of us.³ There was nothing else other than the central building of Akkuyu NGS, their information offices in Mersin and Büyükelceci and expenditures for the spot film, and the project did not yet start. So where were these three billion dollars that were mentioned by Erdoğan spent?

The remaining option: İğneada

This being the case, it was necessary to distract attention in order to prevent an increase in the number of people inquiring into the issue, even if this number would be only one or two. The remaining option was İğneada, coming to the rescue whenever a trouble is run into in the nuclear field. Ali Rıza Alaboyun, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources for the temporary government serving for two months between the two elections, happened to say that they would “probably” construct the third nuclear plant in İğneada. However, the conspicuous detail in this statement was, as implied also by his use of the adjective “probably,” the claim that steps were starting to be taken to hold negotiations with companies for the prospective nuclear plant, even though no conclusive step

was taken to specify İğneada as the location. Here is how Alaboyun depicted these negotiations: “As for the third plant, a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Chinese and the American Westinghouse company. They are now conducting research, but of course this does not mean that this is not open to other firms. We are holding negotiations with those who are interested in making a bid. The Japanese also have an interest and we want the technology of this nuclear facility to be the same.”⁴

Message to Russia

As a matter of fact, this was not a worthwhile statement. For it was not certain whether the nuclear plant would be really constructed or whether its location would really be İğneada. There was just an intention. Although the names of some companies were mentioned, the overall statements were extremely ambiguous. Moreover, it was rather noteworthy that Russia was not mentioned among the countries interested in building the third nuclear plant. And this brought to mind the likelihood that Turkey tried to get a message across to Russia, with which it currently had tense relations: “There are many slices in our cake and there are many suitors. You can take a slice only if you have a head on your shoulders!”

When the issue of the third nuclear plant received negative reactions on social media and then from the press, no new statement was made about the matter. As the saying goes, two birds had been killed with one stone. The message was not only given to the relevant country but also people’s attention was diverted to

Protest against the launch of the nuclear power plant held in İstanbul. (26/04/2015)

İğneada. The operation was finished.

The real crisis, however, broke out on November 24. On account of a violation of airspace, Turkey shot down a Russian jet. Then we all watched the ensuing commotion. What remained after this tumult were the strained relations between the two countries that verged on the breaking point, a Turkey getting deeper and deeper in the Middle East swamp and a package of economic sanctions signed by Putin against Turkey. In addition, there was the statement made by Alexander Kurdin, the Director of the Department of Strategic Studies in Energy at the Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation: "The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Station project will not be totally cancelled, but political developments could lead to a delay in the project."⁵ Thus the Turkish Stream pipeline project was shelved.

The Impossibility of a nuclear plant in İğneada

Briefly stated, things have completely gotten off the rails in Akkuyu. For this very reason, it is the case that Sinop and İğneada are more frequently mentioned in relation to this development despite the fact that no decision has been taken to build a nuclear plant in İğneada⁶ and that, according to the Thrace Regional Plan and the State Council's decisions, it is not possible to construct power plants not only in İğneada, but also in the whole Thrace region. As we have said, this is all perception management!

It should not be forgotten that, even though it is legally impossible to build a nuclear plant in İğneada, it is difficult to prevent the political powers that be from declaring the 'good' news that they are going to build the İğneada nuclear plant. Even if a nuclear plant cannot and will not be made, this, unfortunately, does not mean that they would not try taking up this business, that they would not disturb the ecological balance during the construction process, that they would not enter into an agreement with a country and, finally, that they would not leave people holding the burden of material compensation that might ensue for renegeing on the agreement when the nuclear plant construction were to be left unfinished for some reason.

Bulgaria protects; Turkey annihilates

Meanwhile, the people living in the region and ecologists are quite worried. What gives them worry are not just the above-mentioned issues. The most frequently mentioned issue is the deep spot (longoz) forests in İğneada. Deep spot forests, also known as "flooding" (subasar) forests, are special ecosystems that occur where the river builds up as a consequence of the

sand brought by streams into the sea, thus forming a coastal levee and closing off the mouth of the stream. These rarely found forests are located in Turkey only in İğneada (Kırklareli), Sarıkum (Sinop) and Acarlar (Sakarya). The deep spot forests in İğneada are the largest ones in Europe and the second largest in the world after the Amazons.

Bulgaria and the rest of the world know the value of these unique forests. The deep spot forests located within the Bulgarian part of the Strandzha Mountains are under the protection of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves Site specified by UNESCO and Natura 2000, the ecological protection network within the EU's boundaries. The deep spot forests in Turkey and the creatures living in these forests are under the threat of marble quarries; and, despite the State Council's decision, of five thermal plants, and the possibility of a nuclear plant.

Life source

In terms of animal diversity, İğneada is also very rich. More than half of the bird species and 57% of all mammal species in Turkey live here. İğneada also hosts 184 endangered bird species. In accordance with the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats to which it is a party, Turkey has to protect these 184 endangered species. Within the scope of these deep spot forests, there are in total 544 plant species, three of which are endemic and eleven of which are globally endangered; 310 insect species; 28 fish species; and 17 reptile species.

İğneada is a life source. It supplies drinking water not only for the creatures in nature but also for the whole region of Thrace. It has numerous natural attractions. Some people here earn their living by fishery and ecological agriculture and this place has also high potential for ecotourism.

A possible nuclear plant construction and the erection of transmission lines extending for miles and miles, distributing electricity to be produced at the plant, would definitely harm these deep spot forests. The substitution of the fresh water in deep forests by the salty water coming from the sea would annihilate creatures. Moreover, the fresh water sources of the Thrace region would evaporate and fishery would receive a blow.

Radiation knowing no limits

When it comes to the issue of nuclear plant, one usually speaks of the geographical attractions and the vital significance of the place upon which a plant is planned to be constructed. But there are limits to this emphasis aiming at raising awareness. It has to be particularly emphasized that reactions taking

the form of questions such as “how can one build a nuclear plant in this paradise?” do not implicitly mean that one could build a nuclear plant if this place were not like a paradise. This is because a nuclear plant does not just affect the location where it is situated; the radiation generated in a probable accident knows no urban or territorial limits.

What if an accident happens?

In the modeling study carried out by the Chamber of Environmental Engineers regarding the nuclear plant that might be constructed in İğneada, it was found that in a case of accident, the whole of the Thrace region, İstanbul and north Aegean region, i.e., agricultural fields, olive groves and touristic centers would be massively affected. The western Black Sea region, the coastal Aegean region and the coastal Mediterranean region would not also be able to escape from radiation clouds.

One must immediately stress that a probable accident would not only affect Turkey but also many other countries. İğneada is only twelve kilometers away from the Bulgarian border. Greece, the Balkan countries, Mediterranean countries and especially Bulgaria are also under threat. Bulgaria has already articulated its concern about the nuclear plant. Metin Feyzioğlu, the Head of the Union of the Turkish Bar Associations, issued a call for solidarity against the nuclear threat to the bars of neighboring countries with reference to the nuclear plant planned to be built in Sinop. He received a reply from Bulgaria. The Union of the Bulgarian Bar Associations stated that they are absolutely against the idea of installing a nuclear plant, pointing to the Chernobyl disaster as their main justification: “As a neighboring country, we are worried with regard to a probable nuclear accident.”⁷ This is Bulgaria’s concern only about the nuclear plant planned to be built in Sinop. And it is not difficult at all to guess that they would much more vehemently oppose a nuclear plant for İğneada, which is very near their border with Turkey.

Don’t underestimate your neighbor

Don’t ever say “what would it take if neighboring countries opposed Turkey’s nuclear plants?” For one thing, they can apply pressure on Turkey in the international level. EU countries, notably Bulgaria and Greece, and the Republic of Cyprus and Armenia are parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ESPOO). The aim of this convention is to assess, with the participation of contracting states and the public, the project phase of activities that might lead to pollution in a transboundary context. And



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to no one’s surprise, Turkey is not a party to this convention! And when we also take into account the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency has found Turkey’s nuclear infrastructure to be insufficient, thus giving no credit to it, it can be easily understood that the sanction power of neighboring countries against Turkey in the international arena should not be underestimated at all.

However, the only way to stop nuclear plants is not to wait for the inevitable opposition by neighboring peoples to possible nuclear plants in Turkey, but to cooperate with them in this respect. And international cooperation is not as hard as it first seems. In contrast to the hoaxes of politicians, the greatest power of the people is to come together when life is at stake.

A view from the İğneada floodplain forests. Earlier in July this year, the North Forests Defense Group has organized an İğneada Camping Action nearby to point out to the possible devastating outcomes of a thermal plant here and called for solidarity against the destruction of the whole Thrace area.

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- 2 Taner Yıldız’dan nükleer santral açıklaması”, Habertürk, 9 October 2015. www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/enerji/haber/1138001-taner-yildizdan-nukleer-santral-aciklamasi (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 3 Özgür Gürbüz, “3 milyar dolar nereye harcadı?”, BirGün, 16 October 2015, www.birgun.net/haber-detay/3-milyar-dolar-nereye-harcandi-92490.html (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 4 Hazal Ocak, “İğneada’ya nükleer darbesi”, Cumhuriyet, 14 October 2014, www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/cevre/388237/igneada_ya_nukleer_darbesi.html (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 5 Alexander Kurdin: “Nükleer santral iptal olmaz, ama ertelenebilir”, Hürriyet, 26 November 2015, www.hurriyet.com.tr/alexander-kurdin-nukleer-santral-iptal-olmaz-ama-ertelenebilir-40019129 (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 6 Hüseyin Şimşek, “Hangisi yalan söylüyor?”, BirGün, 16 October 2015, www.birgun.net/haber-detay/hangisi-yalan-soyluyor-92466.html (last access date 21 December 2015).
- 7 “Sinop’ta yapılmak istenen nükleer santrale komşular da tepkili”, BirGün, 9 November 2015, www.birgun.net/haber-detay/sinop-ta-yapilmak-istenen-nukleer-santrale-komsular-da-tepkili-94659.html (last access date 21 December 2015).

ECOLOGY

Pasture areas zoned for construction increases dependence on foreign resources

Ali Ekber Yıldırım

It is estimated that there are 3.4 billion hectares of pasture areas all over the world. Twelve percent of these areas are located in China, 11% in Australia, 7% in the USA, and 6% in Brasil. Turkey is ranked as 46th among the countries having the largest pasture areas in the world with 14,6 million hectares.¹

and stockbreeding, pasture areas are approached with a rent-seeking perspective and legislative regulations take shape accordingly. We are going to discuss the issue of legislative regulations in detail. In order to be able to understand these regulations, however, it will be useful to zoom in to examine Turkey's pasture assets.

Pasture areas are becoming smaller

In the countries where livestock farming is developed and given importance, great attention is given to conserving pasture areas and they are used in productive ways. Pastures are considered crucial not only in terms of feeding the animals, producing fodder and forage crops but also in terms of preserving natural resources and sustainable agricultural production.

In Turkey, on the other hand, especially in the recent years, pastures have been regarded as areas for plundering and sources of unearned income. Because pasture areas are public property belonging to the Treasury, they are targeted by anyone, as exemplified by the proverb "public property (is as vacant and never-ending as) the sea, whoever holds off from feeding on it (is as dumb as) a pig."* Whenever a public authority or a private enterprise intends to make a new investment, it sets its eyes on one of these Treasury lands. And one part of the Treasury lands is pasture areas.

Because stockbreeding is not seriously taken into consideration, pasture areas are easily disposed of. It is regarded as a comparatively "profitable" business to build tourist facilities, industrial plants or shopping malls on grassy areas. And this is presented as an indication of development and prosperity.

Once importance is not given to agriculture

According to the data provided by Turkish Statistical Institution (TÜİK) for the year 2014, there are 14.6 billion hectares of grass and pasture areas, which is equal to approximately 20% of the total area of Turkey and to approximately 38% of the total agricultural area in Turkey. Pasture areas are becoming smaller each year. That is to say, while in the year 1940 the grass and pasture asset of Turkey was 44.2 million hectares, it decreased to 28.7 million hectares after 20 years in 1960. It is estimated that while the grass and pasture areas decreased to 14.2 million hectares in the year 1990, now the figure is at 14.6 million hectares as of 2014. It is believed that the recent increase is related to locating and recording the pasture areas. Furthermore, the level of pasture areas that have been located and ascertained up to now by the ministry is 10.3 million hectares, not 14.6 hectares.

What is more striking is the table of change in pasture areas on a regional basis, prepared by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock. While pasture areas in the Aegean Region were 1,027,900 in the year 1970, it has fallen to 388,846 hectares in the year 2014. For the same period of time, the pasture asset of the Marmara region has receded from 463, 600 hectares to 280, 619 hectares. In the Mediterranean region the level of pastures has receded from 1,002,400 to 501,765



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hectares while in the Central Anatolia region it has receded from 5,888, 200 to 3,762,055 hectares. In the 1970-2014 period, the level of pasture areas has receded from 1,993, 100 to 1,073, 371 hectares in the Black Sea region while it has receded from 9,162,100 to 3, 824, 257 hectares in the Eastern Anatolia region. For the same period of time, the pasture areas in the Southeastern Anatolia region have decreased from 2,165, 100 to 553, 256 hectares.

It becomes much easier to use pasture areas out of purpose as the processes of locating, delimitating and assignment proceed very slowly. Pasture areas are being reduced at a rapid rate due to the opening up of pasture areas to agricultural production. They are also transformed into forest land through afforestation projects. In addition, they are zoned for construction and transformed into mass housing estates within the scope of urban transformation projects in the recent years. Apart from that, the problems in the livestock sector, the migration from rural areas to urban areas and evacuation of villages, and the lack of pasture improvement are also among the factors causing these areas to shrink.

Pasture areas have not been properly measured for 17 years

Through a number of legislative developments, pasture areas are being opened up for uses outside of their original purpose. To be more precise, pasture areas are being transformed

into rent-seeking areas. When one looks at the legislative regulations that have been put into effect since 1924 when the Village Law was adopted to regulate grass and pasture land, the Pasture Law 4342 went into effect on February 28, 1998 after being published in the governmental Official Gazette. Five months after the law was enacted, the Pasture Regulations were issued on July 31, 1998.

The law seeks to locate and delimit pastures, summer pastures, winter pastures and public grassland and meadows as well as assigning them to villages or municipalities, regulate their use according to specified rules, and increase their productivity through maintenance and improvement efforts.

Although it has been 17 years since the enactment of the Pasture Law, procedures for locating and delimiting pasture areas have not yet been completed. Therefore the pasture areas could not be assigned. As it is stated by the law, in order to define a place as pasture, summer pasture or winter pasture, it has to be identified as such through certification by official documents as well as expert reports. After this identification, boundaries of the places determined as grasslands, pastures, summer pastures and winter pastures must be indicated in due form on 1/5000 scaled maps based on the triangulation system of the country in question. Also, these boundaries must be demarcated with permanent marks: that is to say, they must be delimited. Following

There has been a tremendous decline in the available size of pasture areas in Turkey. Throughout the last 45 years, the biggest shrinking has occurred in the pasture areas of East Anatolia. While it hosted more than 9 million hectares of pasture land in 1970's, this number decreased to 3.8 millions according to the 2014 figures.

the locating and delimiting procedures, the use of grasslands, pastures, summer pastures and winter pastures has to be regulated according to the principles of productivity and social justice; and they should be left and assigned to a number of villages or municipalities for individual or collective use.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, since the enactment of the Pasture Law in 1998 until the end of 2014, the level of pasture areas which has been located is 10,348,169 hectares. Of these areas, locating procedures have been completed only for 5.9 million hectares. However, there is no clear data regarding the assignments.

Heavy pressure for land leasing

The situation is more desperate when it comes to pasture improvement. According to the data provided by the ministry, during the 2000-2014 period only the improvement of an area of 500,000 hectares was carried out. Pasture areas are relatively more susceptible to be used outside of their original purposes or disposed of when they are unimproved. Thus, many pastures remain idle because the state does not allocate sufficient resources for that purpose and does not carry out measures to improve them. There is another reason behind the fact why such measures have not been carried out. As is known, one of the significant arrangements initiated with the Pastures Law is the practice of leasing out pasture areas. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, during 2006-2012 period, 1.2 million hectares of pasture land have been leased out. More than double the amount of improved pasture area has been leased out for the use of private enterprise.

Since 2010, a great number of enterprises has been put into operation thanks to low interest government loans for livestock. The non-sector investors exert significant pressure in order to procure the assignment of pasture areas in their investment regions to themselves through leasing. Because the government does not allocate sufficient resources for improvement and productive use of pasture areas, leasing out these areas remains as the only option, as it were. The widespread discourse goes like: "since these pastures are not being used by villagers, it is better to lease them out to private sector and let them improve and use them more productively."

Pastures opened to rent-seeking concerns through legislation

After the Pastures Law and pastures regulations went into effect they were amended several times. In particular, Article 14, which regulated the assignment purpose of pastures, has gone through changes many times.

Legislative regulations enabling the use of pasture areas outside of their original purpose has been made through legislative decrees, which is a step frequently taken by governments. One of the most obvious examples of this situation in the recent years is the Legislative Decree published in the Official Gazette on August 17, 2011. The legislative decree changed Article 27 of the Construction Zoning Law (İmar Yasası) and introduced the statutory provision that "provisions of the Act 5403 for Soil Protection and Land Use does not apply to built-up areas in villages." With this change, residential and tourist facilities have been allowed to be built in areas within village boundaries.

Moreover, with the same Legislative Decree, an additional article has been added to the Construction Zoning Law: "Except for the parts of the areas necessary for public services, parts of the pastures, summer pastures and winter pastures which have been decided to be appropriate as provisional residential areas for conventional use can be assigned to demandants for a price and up to 29 years. Parts of pastures, summer pastures and winter pastures which remain in the scope of tourist destinations and culture and tourism development regions can be assigned to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to be used and benefited from in accordance with the Act 2634 for the encouragement of tourism."

Pasture areas has been opened up to construction with this additional article allowing pasture areas to be used outside of their original purpose.

The Rural-urban distinction has been abolished; pastures have fallen into abeyance

One of the significant legislative regulations enabling the opening up of pasture areas to out-of-purpose uses and rent-seeking investments is the act which has been put into effect after being published in the Official

Gazette on December 6, 2012. It is entitled “the Law on Establishing Metropolitan Municipalities and Twenty-Six Districts in 13 Provinces and Amendment of Some Laws and Legislative Decrees.” Known by the public as the Metropolitan City Law (Compound-city Law), this law, as it were, has abolished the urban-rural distinction in Turkey. More than 16,000 villages within the boundaries of municipalities have been turned into neighborhoods of cities. Estates belonging to village legal entities have been handed over to municipalities and other state institutions; these estates include pastures.

The most comprehensive change has been made by the Omnibus Bill 6552 enacted in the year 2014. A provision was added so that the assignment purpose could be changed for the areas declared by the Council of Ministers as urban transformation and development project areas. Therefore pasture areas has been opened to settlement as urban transformation and development project areas. This has completely paved the way for rent-seeking use of pasture areas.

Pay the 20-year Price for Pasturage Once , and the Pasture Area Can Be Zoned for Construction

Along with the changes in the Pastures Law, the Pastures Regulation and especially the Article 8 of the Regulation that regulates the assignment purpose have frequently been changed. The last amendment was published in the Official Gazette on October 30, 2015.

The following is an extract from the amendment which opens pastures to misuse and construction in exchange for a twenty-year fodder price:

Of the areas declared by the Council of Ministers as urban transformation and development project areas, modification procedures related to the assignment purpose of the lands which has been assigned by law as pasture, summer pasture and winter pastures, or the lands which have been immemorially used used for that purpose, are subject to the general provisions of the Article 14 of the law and Article 8 of this regulation. Because it is not possible to make modifications in the assignment purpose of pastures, an application for receiving assent of the Pastures Commission regarding summer pastures and winter pastures whose condition and class are good or very good should be made with a 1/5000 scaled map of the area. These areas will be declared urban transformation and development project areas in order to preclude public nuisance which may occur before the decree of the Council of Ministers.

In applications for assignment purpose modifications, the application file has to be attached with the decree of the Council of Ministers together with a sketch regarding the urban transformation and development area in question, a 1/5000 scaled map conforming to cadastral techniques of the immovable properties within the scope of the urban transformation and development project areas together with other information and documents required by the commission.

Following the modification to the assignment purpose by the Office of the Governor, the twenty-year fodder price should be deposited. After depositing the fodder price, the final elementary construction plan is required to be presented to the commission within a 2-year period of time. The modification to the assignment purpose is rendered invalid in case the plans in question are not presented within the specified period of time. If the construction plans are finalized in accordance with the modification to the assignment purpose, registration of the lands in question is conducted on behalf of the Treasury while the registration of pastures belonging to foundations is conducted on behalf of the foundation.

This amendment clearly declares pastures and grasslands to be urban transformation areas and paves the way for opening them to be zoned for construction.

As a result of amendments to the law, the amount of pasture areas, which is already inadequate, will be reduced even more. The misuse of pasture areas, that are of great significance in terms of livestock sector, is going to increase Turkey’s already existing fodder dependency on foreign sources.

As stated in the Red Meat Strategy published by General Directorate of Livestock under the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Turkey is dependent on the import terms of 40-45% of its fodder raw materials.

Fodder deficit is 20 million tons

According to the Red Meat Strategy, fodder cost in stockbreeding constitutes 25-40% of total inputs. Both coarse fodder production and mixed feed production are inadequate in Turkey. Because 40-45% of the mixed feed is dependent on imported fodder raw materials, mixed feed costs increase. This situation influences red meat production costs negatively. The proportion of coarse fodder used in stockbreeding has to be increased for

more efficient stockbreeding and for cheaper meat production. Of the total 73,600,000 tons of coarse fodder need, only 58,600,000 tons is supplied by grasslands, pastures, forage plants, silage, garden meadows and straw. The coarse fodder deficit is 15,000,000 tons. As for the mixed feed, the situation does not look bright, either. Of the total 14,100,000 tons of mixed feed need, only 9,100,000 tons can be supplied. Hence, the mixed feed deficit is 5,000,000 tons.

According to the evidence provided by the ministry, in Turkey, coarse fodders are supplied by three primary sources: grass and pastures, forage plants, and remnants of plant production. Existing pasture areas have been substantially diminished, damaged and weakened. It is of vital importance to improve pasture areas and to prevent them from being misused.

Consumers are going to purchase meat and milk at higher prices

Taking that picture into consideration, danger bells start to ring for the animal production sector after zoning pasture areas for construction. It is also predicted that people will leave the agriculture and stockbreeding sectors due to the transformation of transforming villages into neighborhoods. Not only do producers face risk, but also consumers as they are the ones who are exposed to the greatest danger. That is because with a decrease in fodder production foreign source dependency will increase as pasture areas get reduced. This, in turn, will increase the production costs of meat and milk. Consumers will have to purchase meat, milk and other animal products at higher prices.

As it is well known, with the advent of foreign-source-dependent livestock policy, especially since 2010, Turkey has increased imports of all kinds of animal products, cattle and small cattle livestock, calves for fattening, carcass meat, and animals for breeding. Turkey even had to import straw for a while.

The current policies do not support

production but increase imports. To a large extent, these policies cause government aid and low-interest government loans to imports. The current policy functions to transfer domestic resources abroad.

An entrepreneur who has been given low-interest government loans for making investment has to import livestock because there is not a sufficient number of animals in the country. Likewise, because of inadequate pasture areas and insufficient fodder production, the entrepreneur in question has to import fodder, too. In 2015, three billion Turkish liras of government support for stockbreeding also went to imports for the same reasons. That is to say, Turkey's annual support for stockbreeding is three billion Turkish liras while it pays three billion dollars just for importing fodder. In this case, three times what the government pays in support are given to imports.

In conclusion, while Turkey assigns its pasture areas to industry, tourism and mass housing on the one hand, it imports billion of dollars worth of fodder raw materials on the other. Turkey even imports straw. It is impossible to support sustainable stockbreeding with such a policy. Turkey must stop following the import-oriented livestock policy and increase its own production in livestock. In accordance with this, the misuse of pasture areas have to be prevented. The locating of pastures should be completed. Then the pastures have to be improved and made possible for breeders to use. Grass should grow on pastures, not housing projects nor facilities.

1 In this article, I have made use of the paper entitled "Protecting Our Grass and Pasture, and Changes in their Use and Recent Developments" by Cafer Olcayto Sabancı and Tamer Yavuz of Ahi Evran University, Department of Field Crops, presented in the VIII. Technical Congress organized as part of the Agriculture Week 2015/Agricultural Engineers Chamber.

* "Devlet malı deniz, yemeyen domuz."

FOREIGN POLICY

Tension between Russia and Turkey

Over-ambitious goals and obsessive persistence

Jens Siegert

Relations between Russia and Turkey had been very positive until November 26, 2015. Despite being a member of the NATO, which is synonymous with the devil in Russia, Turkey had started to be perceived as a part of the same anti-Western front under the rule of Erdoğan, who had previously served first as prime minister and is currently its president.



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The similarities between the styles of rule employed by Putin and Erdoğan were met with approval and appraisal rather than criticism. Russia considered Turkey to be following the same path as itself: Turkey was thought to have renounced the wrong path, turning back from a modern, open society towards a way of life with strong authoritarian and religious overtones. On the other hand, both countries' exclusion by the West, especially on the part of the EU, was seen by Russia as another common bond. Other common traits were grandiose imperial pasts, and market economies coupled with more or less authoritarian political regimes. However, the parallels between Russia and Turkey ended there.

Turkey's head-spinning pace of economic growth in the last two decades has not depended on the exploitation of raw materials such as oil and natural gas as is the case with Russia, and as such, can be considered more sustainable. Furthermore, the demographic evolutions of the two countries are also heading in different directions. Even as Turkey's population will grow rapidly in the coming decades,

Russia's demographic transformation is closer to those seen in EU nations, with falling birth rates and a gradual yet inevitable rise in the median age. The Russian population at employment age is expected to fall by 600,000 to 800,000 per annum in the next decade.

An analysis of the historical trend reveals that the last few years will go down in history as an exceptional period for Russia-Turkey relations. Although the West (dominated first by Europe, and then by the USA from mid-20th century onwards) is the archenemy in the eyes of both the Russian government and population, Turkey and especially its predecessor Ottoman Empire could easily take the second spot in the list of foreign enemies.

With the exception of a brief period in the 1920s when the nascent Soviet Union supported the Kemalist revolution and the last period of detente which has been recently cut short, the relationship between Russia/Soviet Union and Ottoman Empire/Turkey has always been one of intense competition.

This was especially true in the 19th century. In this period, Russian and Ottoman irredentisms locked horns in Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans, on colonialist, ethnic and religious grounds. The event which has most bitterly marked the Russian collective memory is the alliance between their archenemy, the West and their second worst enemy, the Ottomans against the Russians during the Crimean War.

Since the downing of a Russian SU-24 bomber on the Turkish-Syrian border by a Turkish warplane in late November, the Russian (state) channels have been busy airing Erdoğan's dirty laundry in public. According to these channels, in order to expand his personal sphere of power, Erdoğan changes the constitution, manipulates history, represses



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the opposition and hollows out the institutions of democracy. Furthermore, his government is tainted with nepotism and corruption. The TV channel Rossiya-24 reports that the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, goes so far as to cite Freedom House, which it previously wanted to declare an institution “non grata” in Russia. Accordingly, in the press freedom index published by Freedom House, Turkey is categorized among countries whose press is “partially free” and ranks at 120 in the list. Rossiya-24 of course does feel the need to mention that Russia is ranked at 176 in the same list (in the “not free” category).

Russia’s ‘sanctions’

In Russian propaganda, Turkey’s status was transformed from “prominent partner” to a top enemy with lightning speed. It is useful to look at a short, concise list (not without omissions) of the events of a few days at the end of November and in early December. Charter flights between Turkey and Russia were banned. From January 1, 2016 onwards, Turkish citizens will again be obliged to obtain a visa when traveling to Russia (the visa requirement was lifted mutually in 2011, and Turkey had largely benefited from the annual arrival of 4.5 million Russian tourists). Russian travel agencies will not be marketing trips or holi-

days in Turkey. Four days after the downing of the bomber, Vladimir Putin said on Ukas that many products imported from Turkey will be placed on an embargo list. In the following week, the government added tomatoes, grapes, peaches and other food items to the index; however, the embargo is expected to take effect in January in order to prevent possible discontent due to fruit and vegetable shortage during the religious festivals.

Turkish companies will not receive any orders from Russia, and Turkish workers will no longer be employed there. The Russian Minister of Sports Vitali Mutko has banned Russian clubs from signing Turkish players. Many universities in Russia unilaterally canceled their collaboration agreements with their Turkish counterparts in a week, and joint research projects were also suspended by Russia.

In addition, a number of symbolic measures were put into place. Some were decided upon by the state, and some by individuals who were either more royalist than the king or simply afraid. The lower house of the Russian parliament, the Duma, will start a debate on a new bill which will make it a crime to deny the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Moscow’s All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature closed down the Russian-Turkish Science and Culture Center and declared that it was no longer possible to access Turkish books and films. A Russian choir conductor named Mihail

Syrian demonstrators burn pictures of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during a protest against Russian’s support of the Assad regime in front of the Russian Consulate in Istanbul.

Turetski, whose surname means Turkish, indicated that his surname had nothing to do with Turkey and that he was considering changing it. An MP from the Duma stated that Russia should demand Turkey to return Hagia Sophia to the Orthodox Church. Vladimir Jirinovski, supposedly representing the political opposition in Russia, suggested that a nuclear bomb should be dropped on the Bosphorus to trigger a tsunami which will hit Istanbul.

In the annual speeches he delivered in the two houses of the parliament, Vladimir Putin said, "Perhaps only Allah knows why they did this. And it seems Allah decided to punish the ruling clique in Turkey by relieving them of their sense and judgment." Later he added that Russia's response would be "responsible" yet "resolved" and "harsh." In the final instance, Russia does not want to completely disrupt its communication with Turkey as it did with Georgia in 2008.

Although Putin is avoiding meeting with the Turkish president, purposely joined the group photo at the Paris COP21 late, and refuses to respond to the calls of his Turkish counterpart, the diplomatic ties between the two countries have not been damaged seriously until now. The nuclear power plant to be built by the state-owned Rosatom on Turkey's Mediterranean shore will not be affected by the sanctions; however, the construction of a pipeline through the Black Sea, which was decided upon in January 2015, may be shelved without even getting started. Since its inception, the Turkish Stream was a political project designed to bypass the Ukraine in natural gas exports to Europe. It is not an economically feasible project for Russia as things stand.

What did and did not happen in Georgia and Ukraine

The really surprising thing here is not Turkey's transition into Russia's archenemy in a sense, but rather the swift and radical nature of this shift which has not met with any resistance. Similar processes took place with Georgia, for instance, in 2006, and the Ukraine in 2015. However, in both cases, it took quite a lot of time for the tension between the states and societies to peak. In the autumn of 2006, when the Russian police started a hunt across the country for ethnic Georgians or Georgian citizens to deport them, there was no public consensus on the issue. Even after the short-lived clashes of August 2008, the dust settled rather quickly.

A year ago, after the clashes in Eastern

Ukraine following the occupation of Crimea, the escalation occurred relatively faster, yet the Russian propaganda machine had had to strive quite a bit to generate an atmosphere of hatred across the country, despite the fact that the propaganda officials had already worked very hard after the Orange Revolution of 2006 and had made use of the natural gas skirmish of 2009. The officials relaxed their position on the issue this summer, and as a result, public opinion polls about relations with Ukraine and Ukrainians already point to a *détente*, albeit limited. These two cases of swift *détente* suggest that both campaigns were mostly symbolic; because your relations with the countries you are at war can be expected take such a turn. The very public hatred directed against the two neighboring countries is not deeply rooted in the emotional life of Russia and Russians, and is unrealistic in nature.

"The Saakashvili trap"

When Turkey is the issue, however, the roots of the conflict seem to run deeper. What is certain is that the anger or resentment created by the downing of a plane does not suffice to explain such a deterioration of relations as soon as the button was pressed in Kremlin. Apparently, Putin is not aware that the trap he set for the then Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili back in 2008, is being set up now for himself by Erdoğan. At the time, Saakashvili was sure that the (military) attacks he organized against Russian troops in South Ossetia, considered to be a part of Georgia by international agreements, would not meet with any sanctions thanks to the USA's support for Georgia. However, Russia was looking for a pretext to attack Georgia and immediately seized the occasion.

In Syria, Russians thought that Turkey (as a NATO member) would not dare to respond to Russia's border violations -big or small- due to pressure from its allies, especially the USA. Indeed, NATO had acquiesced to Russia's air space violations during risky maneuvers which had regularly taken place in its Northern European border (especially in the Baltic states, Great Britain and Norway). It seems that the prevalent view in Moscow was that NATO would likewise refrain from a direct military confrontation with Russia in Syria and choose instead to restrain Turkey.

However, Russia was wrong about Turkey. At the moment, it is not so crucial whether the downing of the bomber was a decision by Turkey (which I think is the case) or whether it was endorsed (openly or covertly) by the USA. The

most important thing is whether the Russian plane violated Turkish air space and if Turkey can be justified in shooting it down. The Baltic states, Norway or Great Britain do not have a war in their country, nor do they have one directly on their borders. Turkey does.

Taking victory for granted

This erroneous decision at least partially explains the harsh reaction by Russia; this is the reaction of a bully assured of its rightfulness and then suddenly meeting with unexpected resistance. But it is also the reaction of one who already feels too secure as the winner, at least in this round. This reaction by Russia is in a way similar to the harsh reaction it gave to the "Maidan" in the Ukraine in the winter of 2013-14. Just as the Kremlin had dissuaded the Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich from signing the association agreement with the EU and had instead convinced him to move closer to the Eurasian Union dominated by Russia, it now believed that it had caught the West off guard in Syria and was about to dominate it.

After Russia bombed the enemies of the Assad regime for two months, (most of whom were allies to Turkey and other NATO members), almost no one spoke anymore of the Ukraine, and Russia seemed once again to become a prominent actor in the Middle East, where it was not possible to take a single step without its prior approval. Obama lifted the decision to freeze relations, which was taken after the annexation of Crimea, and did things that put Russia in a good light: maintaining negotiations between Russia and the USA on the level of presidents at an equal standing at the G20 summit in Antalya in mid-November and the climate summit in Paris in end-November. More importantly, according to Russia, the USA had done so, not willingly, but because it was forced by Russians. On top of it, due to the terror attacks in Paris and the wave of migrants from Syria to Europe, more and more voices were suggesting that despite everything (that is, at the expense of the Ukraine) the West needed to establish an anti-terror coalition with Russia in the Middle East.

All these explain partially, if not totally, why Russia's reaction was directed (almost) exclusively against Turkey and why the USA and NATO were exempt from its harsh reaction. Although it is very hard for Russia to swallow the downing of its bomber, taking a hard-line stance towards the USA or NATO would urge them to review their willingness to cooperate with Russia despite Crimea and Donbass. Furthermore, despite its highly cocky stance, even at the highest echelons, Russia is not militarily or economically ready for a direct confrontation with NATO. The Russian government is fully aware of this fact.

The third reason for Turkey's very quick transformation into Russia's top enemy is the historical context mentioned above.

An independent center: A weak center

However, whatever may be the reasons for this sudden explosion of hatred and fear towards Turks, the course of events suggests that Russia's foreign policy is very far from being consistent. It is apparently almost impossible for a regime which lacks a thought out position and a corresponding ideology, but which tries to attain complete autonomy, to establish truly robust and sustainable alliances.

It seems that Russia is currently trapped within the over-ambitious goals of its foreign policy. The almost obsessive persistence in becoming a super power in a multipolar world has turned Russia into an independent, yet isolated and rather weak center. It may be said that it is the weakest of the states that (want to) compete in the top league.

The world imagined by the Russian political class is ruled by the 19th century style politics of sheer force. In this world, there can be no true friends—only temporary allies. These allies may be China, Turkey or even Iran, which seems set to replace Turkey. As a result, you make many enemies, enjoy the support of voters, and as such increase your presidential rating (the only legitimate basis of your power). However, over the long, such a stance costs more energy than the country has in store.

CULTURE

Frenzy: The bitter irony of reality

Interview: Ayşegül Oğuz

Considered to be one of the best films of 2015, *Abluka* (*Frenzy*) had its world premiere at the 72th Venice Film Festival and was deemed worthy of the Arca Cinemagiovani prize. Described by the festival's director Alberto Barbera as "A strong, harsh movie with an aspect of political allegory", *Frenzy* starts with the story of Kadir, who is released on probation after twenty years in prison. In return for his release, Kadir starts to work as a snitch for the state in slums inhabited by political dissidents, while making a living as a garbage collector. In one of those neighborhoods, he runs into his brother Ahmet... And the narrative evolves, depicting layer after layer of the current Turkish political panorama. Let us lend an ear to the director Emin Alper on his film...

Emin Alper

Born in 1974 in Konya, Emin Alper studied economics and history at Boğaziçi University, before obtaining his PhD on Modern Turkish History from the same university. His first feature-length film *Beyond the Hill* received Caligari Film Award at Berlin Film Festival and Best Film Award at İstanbul Film Festival. A faculty member at İstanbul Technical University, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Emin Alper has penned numerous articles on cinema and politics in various magazines.

The only female character in *Frenzy* (*Abluka*) is Meral, a mysterious woman. Why did you feel the need to create a character like this?

Emin Alper: In order to turn Kadir's world upside down. Recently out of prison, Kadir is trying to go back to normal life, and to establish stable relationships based on trust. In this search for stability, he also strives to strengthen his ties with his brother and family. On the other hand, we have Ali and Meral, Kadir's only friends in the neighborhood—two people whom he can trust in this neighborhood surrounded with enemies from the inside and outside. Furthermore, he is also impressed by Meral's charm. Ali and Meral's shift to the ranks of suspects, even enemies, would turn Kadir's world upside down. His brother Ahmet does not give him the warm welcome he expects, and he is unable to fulfill his dream of reuniting his family. This disappointment takes their toll on

him, and make his relations with Meral very complicated. So Ali and Meral are two characters that are conceived to upend Kadir's world.

Meral and Ali gradually turn into Kadir's enemies. For the sake of his freedom, Kadir is obliged to turn into a snitch and is slowly overcome with suspicion. How did the characters of the two brothers, Kadir and Ahmet, appear in your process of writing?

He does not immediately categorize Meral as an enemy; he hesitates first. Kadir's dream explains this in a sense. Maybe he wishes to save Meral. The characters' journey was long. The first draft of the story featured a snitch who collected garbage, and a parallel story between Ahmet and the dog. Later, these two stories merged in my head. I had the idea of Ahmet turning in on himself with the dog and becoming paranoid, and also rendering his snitch brother paranoid.

You frequently cite literature among your inspirations. Apparently the character Ahmet is based on a story by Thomas Mann. What element in that story triggered the desire to write your own story?

I had read *A Man and His Dog* many years ago. It is the story of a miserable, insane person, mocked by everyone around him. He cannot connect with anyone except a stray dog. The story tells of how his relation with the dog becomes unhealthy. He goes so far as to maim the animal in order to prevent it from going out. A light bulb went off in my head: What would it be like if this character was also a paid killer of stray dogs? At that point, I started to build the story in the Turkish context. It turned into the story of a man abandoned by his wife, an event that damages his manhood, who then creates an intimate bond with a dog while hunting other dogs down.

There are strong parallels between *Frenzy* and the current state of things in Turkey. In an interview, you say that the Suruç massacre took place



on the day you received an invitation for the Venice Film Festival. Hundreds of people lost their lives in the run up to the general elections in November, and the horrible events of those five months made everyone's head spin. How did that tough period affect your relation with the film?

The ambiguity of the specific period of the events in the story is related to this pessimistic outlook. This is not an issue of the past. While conceptualizing this film, the fact that Turkey fails to resolve its problems urged me to make it ambiguous; it is not clear whether the story is in the past or future. Pessimism is implicit in the film. At any time, Turkey may fall into such a situation or even worse. Whenever you say "Things could not get any worse" they do. Of course there are events which inspire optimism; very surprising things happen from time to time. In general, however, especially at the moment, it is very hard to come across something that makes you smile. Nonetheless, despite this implicit pessimism of the film, we were not so gloomy during the shooting. During editing, in fact throughout June, the outlook was relatively sanguine. We were filled with hope after the June elections. In July, however, everything turned upside down. In line with the pessimism in the story, this country surprised us once again and presented us an even bleaker picture than we expected. A frenzy literally came into our lives with the eruption of war in summer. I did not expect that the concept of frenzy would become so real all of a sudden.

Was the film's name Abluka (Frenzy) from the very beginning?

The name changed a lot, yet we had decided on Abluka (literally "blockade") before July. The first name we had in mind was Cinnet (literally "mania"), and that's where the English name

Frenzy comes from. Finally, we decided on Abluka. The Suruç massacre took place three or four weeks later. Later, cities came under military blockade one after the other...

You describe the film's atmosphere and the state of blockades it describes, as "apocalyptic." What kind of a relation do you see between the deprivation and poverty you portray and the reality of blockade?

It is very ironic indeed. We described the film as dystopian and apocalyptic at the same time, but used only location shooting. When you think of a dystopian film in the Hollywood style, the budget would have to be huge. Yet since Turkey lives on the verge of dystopia, it naturally presents you with such locations. All we did was exaggerate this and emphasize it with small touches. All the weird places in the film—the bar, garbage market, neighborhood—are actual locations.

What struck you most when you first walked into these locations?

There was no parallel between what I conceptualized on the drawing board and the actual locations. What I had in mind was a more classical *gecekondu*

Tülin Özen playing Meral and Mehmet Özgür playing Kadir.



© Alican Şahin

neighborhood, or shantytown. In the past, the hills of the Balgat neighborhood of Ankara were full of such small houses. Yet that neighborhood is no more. Some neighborhoods like this still exist in İzmir. The atmosphere changed as soon as we stepped into the Şahintepe neighborhood of Halkalı, Istanbul, which is isolated from the rest of the town. Downtown Istanbul was sunny; when we went past Küçükçekmece, however, clouds covered the sky; it was dark and windy. We were very impressed as soon as we saw the neighborhood. I asked myself, “Was I impressed so much because of the sudden turn in the weather?” Then we went back a few more times in more clement weather. Interestingly enough the place really has a micro climate of its own, as we were told during the shooting. It is always two to three degrees colder than İstanbul. It rains there all the time, even when İstanbul is dry. This unique climate intensified the sense of isolation. Şahintepe is surrounded with high-rise buildings: the new apartment buildings of Başakşehir, blocks built by the Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ), skyscrapers. In a sense, the neighborhood is cut off from ‘civilization’ by motor ways, and constitutes the extreme edge of İstanbul. After some time, you really feel that İstanbul ends there. And of course people still use old stoves, and coal smoke covers the entire neighborhood. All these aspects struck me.

Killing dogs is like a ‘deep state’ operation carried out by local municipalities. Kadir’s work as a snitch who poses as a garbage collector, and Ahmet’s position as a dog killer in the municipality are reflections of similar mindsets. What is your take on this intolerance towards dogs, oneself or women, or this proclivity to cruelty and oppression?

This is precisely the mentality criticized by the film: Viewing the entire issue from a security perspective and eradicating a part of the human or animal population that is seen as a threat to human security or the urban image. It is a cliché, but I will still say it: If all you have is a hammer, everything

looks like a nail. This is a summary of Turkey’s recent history. As long as the state and its toolkit are authoritarian, it approaches all problems with the urge to annihilate. That is because the presence of other political perspectives would oblige it to share its power. Maybe the social struggles in Turkey are too weak. Across the world, when faced with staunch opposition, the powerful say “That is enough, our casualties are too high” and decide to share some of the power they hold. Maybe the things have not reached that point in Turkey. The society does not yet have this reflex of punishing those in power. In the end, it all depends on the society. Currently, society does not complain about seeing its leaders concentrate power in their hands. On the contrary, they encourage it. They do not fully comprehend how the concentration of power in the hands of the rulers will hurt themselves or their children over the long run.

There is something blurred about Kadir’s relation with Ahmet, maybe a touch of male competition. For instance, we do not know why Ahmet was abandoned by his wife. He is very young and has suicidal tendencies. And why does he kill dogs? What is the reason behind this ambiguity?

Yes, there are blurred aspects of the story. I do not like to clarify everything—the same was true in *Beyond the Hill* (Tepenin Ardı). There is a technical side to this. If you write a novel, you have to narrate in detail the events and characters. Cinema does not have similar instruments; if you try to do the same, it really looks out of place. What do you normally do to recount, say Ahmet’s or Kadir’s life? You should write dialogue; have explanatory dialogue... Well, that is the thing I detest most in a movie! In a chat Ahmet and Kadir would normally talk about completely different things, but you make them give information about their past! When you want to build a multi-layer movie with multiple characters, you have to strike a delicate balance. Certain things should be overt, but others should remain covert. One can more or less guess why Ahmet does this job—it’s for money. I prefer to place clues. For instance Coni (the dog) gets lost and then finds the way back home, only to get beaten up by Ahmet. In that scene I expect the viewer to ask “Hey, does this guy beat his wife?” Alternatively, his wife might have grown bored of him due to his reserved, taciturn nature. Basically, I do not like presenting explanations in a movie, and prefer to proceed with implications, small touches.

Do you think current day Turkish society is as paranoid as you depict it in the film?

Maybe not to such a degree, but our society is surely paranoid. We are number one in uncovering conspiracies! This does not always have to be a political conspiracy. The characters in this film live in a political atmosphere, and that politicizes



the film. However, in Turkey, we always tend to view anything that happens to ourselves as a conspiracy by our friends.

There is no need for snitches in our society, because all neighbors double as voluntary snitches...

The snitch law has come into force. Anyone who denounces the member of an illegal organization receives money. This is very dangerous; people can put the finger on anyone, just to get money. On the other hand, a similar paranoid mechanism is in place to uncover the so-called parallel state; everyone suspects each other as a possible member of the parallel state. That's how people build their political career. Politics is not the only source of paranoia. Mistrust has many sources in Turkey. We have all the obsessions of a self-enclosed society, trying to conduct everything in secret...

The film focuses on the parallels between state violence and revolutionary violence. What urged you to bring these two elements together in the film? Did you feel the need to take sides?

The film does not pitch revolutionary violence against state violence. The film takes revolutionary violence as a fact; it does not question or analyze it. It prefers to focus on the state and its allies. In this sense, it emphasizes the hollowness of the state's discourse of national unity and fraternity, by pointing out how the state's securitization policies destroy individuals. Even fraternity is impossible in such an atmosphere, as suggested by Fatih Özgüven. One reason to keep the identity of the leftist organization so ambiguous was to make the story universal. That's why I conceptualized the story without a specific period and location. This story could be set in Peru, Africa, Turkey or Palestine. The leftist organization in the film remains obscure on purpose. To me, the film is about a state that attempts to stand firm by implementing securitization policies during a civil war, and its subjects. Indeed, I saw this come across in various festivals. Even in countries which do not have such a period of conflict in their recent history, say Japan, the audience could relate to the film. I can say that the film has managed to become universal in this sense. Naturally, as always, the film draws more interest in societies with intense conflict, just like *Beyond the Hill*. For instance, its screening rights were sold in the Balkans, in Belgrade. It will go on tour in ex-Yugoslavia. Its rights were sold in Greece, too.

Frenzy triggers one association after the other... Ahmet is taken for a terrorist and 'captured dead' in a house riddled with bullets. This brings to mind downtown Istanbul, the blockades in the Turkish provinces over the last six months, and the houses and lives taken by the police.

That is because history constantly repeats itself in Turkey. While planning the film, we drew some



Berkay Ateş, as Ahmet.

inspiration from the past and from our imaginations; but we were also surprised to see that we actually drew a lot of inspiration from the future, too. In fact, the future is a repetition of our past experiences in different versions. This is ironic for Turkey.

You are also an academic who conducts studies social struggles; what is the connection between your academic efforts and cinematographic work?

It certainly helps. Social science readings on social movements, armed struggles and methods developed by states in response have greatly expanded my knowledge on the issue. Otherwise, you would have to depart only from micro observations while telling a story. You try to envision what people may be thinking or imagining, what a character may be considering while taking this or that step. You place yourself in their shoes. It helps me a lot to test these ideas with macro level studies. Some studies on the issue go against all of our preconceptions and assumptions. In the run up to the elections, we tried to place ourselves in voters' shoes and thought, "People will punish the government." However, election results showed that people were thinking in a totally different way!

The image of a man holding a gun stands out in both of your motion pictures. On the other hand, there are many impressive scenes where men fall weak, become childish or are humiliated in *Frenzy*.

When you focus on political violence, the issue of masculinity and images of men holding guns inevitably come into the picture. In Turkey, the problem of masculinity always runs parallel to the problem of immaturity, of unending adolescence. Our main issue is adolescence. Men acting like adolescents make the matter at hand worse. They feel the need to constantly prove their manhood, are not at peace with themselves, so always feel the urge to smash things. From the president of Trabzonspor football club to numerous politicians, this condition of unending adolescence makes men insufferable. Therefore, the men in my films are child-like and act in stupid, pathetic ways.

HUMAN LANDSCAPE / GÜLFER AKKAYA

Being and a continual becoming

Gülfer Akkaya

A Kurdish Alevi village in Anatolia. In a snowy February when even peoples' hands and feet are frozen as hard as rock, a woman, tired out from continually giving birth to children, had horrific labor pain and grappled with death for days while bearing her eleventh child. A dark-skinned baby girl thus came to see the light of the day.

Humans are part of the society to which they belong. Their character, identities and life adventures are shaped within that society. And this would also be the case for the life adventure of this little dark-skinned girl.

Even before she was born, her father had to migrate to Germany as a worker. The 1970's were a time when many people from that village and from all around Anatolia had gone abroad as workers. Labor migration, especially to Germany, would continue in waves. The concept of "*expatriot*" (*gurbetçi*) became a part of life. Folk songs were written, novels penned and movies made about these expatriot workers.

Being an "Alamancı"

A social category called "*Alamancı*" (indicating labor migrants in Germany) emerged. These people from Germany had Deutsche Mark as currency rather than Turkish Lira, which meant, in the eyes of some others, that they were rich. However, the family of the "*Alamancı*" girl was not rich at all. And she would not understand for years why others

perceived them as rich.

Even though she intuited that being an "*Alamancı*" was not something that valuable in the end, she did not want to talk to anyone about this. They would not understand her anyway. They would understand neither the fact that her father did not love Germany nor the fact that the Marks he earned were not worth the price he paid.

Only after she grew up and went into politics would this little girl understand the meaning and problems of being a migrant worker like her father. And she would also come to understand that she was connected to this situation.

In the 1970's the socialist movement gained momentum in Turkey. Socialism made its way even into her little village in Anatolia. It was easy for her to get acquainted with socialism, since she had already been born in a "socialist village."

Being an Alevi

They moved to the city of Sivas when she turned eight. The people in the city did not look like them. They spoke a different language and believed in a different God. She was later enrolled in school. She only had a partial understanding of the language spoken there and was not able to fully understand what others said or to make herself understood. She thus felt ashamed. She was ill-treated and excluded. In response, she decided to talk as little as possible at school. In her first year she spent time with her elder sisters at school, not with her peers. There was a difference she could not understand between her and others at school.

It was not a good time for questioning issues like these. These were the years when the



political climate in Turkey was very harsh. The coup d'état of September 12, 1980 occurred, leading socialists to be locked up in prisons and killed in streets. Others outside the prisons had to find ways to hide themselves and protect their own lives.

In a city where the fascist regime of September 12 and Islamism reigned (one should also bear in mind that this city would also witness the Madımak massacre in 1993), her family resisted death threats and kept up their struggle to survive. Children were strictly cautioned at home: "Don't you dare tell at school that you are Alevi-Qizilbash!" Their friends constantly tried to beat them up and humiliate them by saying "You are Alevis!" The little dark girl did not talk about these experiences at home. But she was indignant and not silent, even through the beatings, insults, or other discrimination. The days at primary school helped her to understand the meaning of being an Alevi and a leftist. Later in life, she would remember her days at secondary and high school as days of resistance maintained by a fully self-confident girl who came to accept herself.

Due to concerns about making a livelihood, they moved to Istanbul in 1987. Istanbul was not like Sivas. It was big, colorful and spectacular. Here there was a more libertarian political atmosphere. She believed that her life could change here. And this was just what happened.

Massive worker demonstrations broke out between 1988 and 1989. This was the first time she witnessed such a demonstration. She joined a rally, thus in fact participating in the socialist struggle without even getting to know Istanbul and talking to her family about this new commitment. She found what she had been searching for. But unfortunately, the workers' struggle ended with a sorrowful defeat. However, this was also the beginning of the long, active struggle of a very young girl from high school.

Gülfer Akkaya

Being a Woman

At the same period, journalist Duygu Asena's book "Woman Has No Name" (*Kadının Adı Yok*) was published. In a very short time period, this book was reprinted tens of times. The whole country was shaken with discussions about women's rights and the equality of women and men. This young woman now got to know the word feminism. She then took this word, which she had heard for the first time in her life, and stored it. She took this book and read it. Its content was not foreign to her. The woman author of the book was also under pressure at home and could attain freedom only after attending university and having a profession. At this point in her life, she also took a decision: "If I want to be free, I must also go to university."



Being a Kurd

By the 1990's, she was a university student and it was at this period that she began to be conscious of being Kurdish. Another harsh climate started to take hold of the country within this period. After the 1980's, a time when socialists, Alevi-Qizilbashs were killed and massacred in streets, in detention or in prisons, the 1990's was a time when Kurds began to be exposed to such violence. Murders by unknown assailants, bombings of newspaper offices, village burnings, village evacuations, migrations forced by the state were some of the ordinary practices carried out in this period. On the one hand, Alevis were massacred (1993 Sivas Madimak massacre, 1995 Istanbul Gazi-Umraniye massacre) and socialists' homes were raided. They died in detention and as a result of torture; on the other hand, efforts were made to wage a psychological war on Kurds by pressuring them and carrying out massacres.

Being a Feminist

Meanwhile, this young female university student transformed into a feminist, coupling her struggle against capital with her struggle against patriarchy as a feminist woman. Life would thus become further complicated, yet

everything also fell into place. Along with the socialist struggle aiming at liberating the whole world, she began to grasp the meaning of the Kurdish identitarian struggle. But above all else, she began to fight sexism everywhere, including discrimination within the above-mentioned struggles, on the basis of the motto "one is not born a woman, but becomes one."

Towards the end of the 1990's, the state significantly increased its violence against Alevi-Qizilbashs, Kurds and communists. In these years, this young woman deciphered the codes of her social belongings, becoming aware of the historical background of herself, the social class to which she belonged, her gender and identities in all areas where she struggled as a political subject. All this would surely raise her consciousness. Along with all these, there was a word that had been in her mind since childhood: Koçgiri. At last, she built up her courage to ask: "Father, what happened in Koçgiri?" Her father was startled at this question, but replied to by cautioning his daughter, urging her to get away from politics: "My daughter, you don't know anything about the state." And he did not say anything else. Until that day, her daughter had come face to face with the tyrannical aspect of the state and she would continue to encounter it, and as she inquired into the unspoken, untold history of Koçgiri, she would better grasp her father's point.

Being from Koçgiri

Koçgiri is the geographical location inhabited by Kurdish Alevi from Sivas. It is the name of the first Kurdish rebellion for an independent Kurdistan, which occurred before the foundation of the Republic between 1919 and 1920. Another factor that was significant in this rebellion is the fact that it not only embraced the Kurdish identity, but also the Alevi-Qizilbash identity. For many years, people from Koçgiri did not want even to mention this rebellion that had been violently suppressed by Mustafa Kemal and tried to protect themselves from the wrath of the state by keeping silent and preventing other generations to be exposed to the same violence.

The state has marked pariticular social groups that it considers dangerous. In the eyes of the state, these groups are dangerous and must thus be exterminated. One of these codes is the 3K's, combining the first K letters in the corresponding Turkish words for Kurdish, Qizilbash and Communist. In addition to these three K's, our protagonist had two more K's: She was a woman (kadın in Turkish) enlisted by the discriminatory state and was also from Koçgiri, a person who had the memory of the Koçgiri rebellion. These five K's deemed dangerous by the state can be seen as the five fundamental elements constituting this young woman.

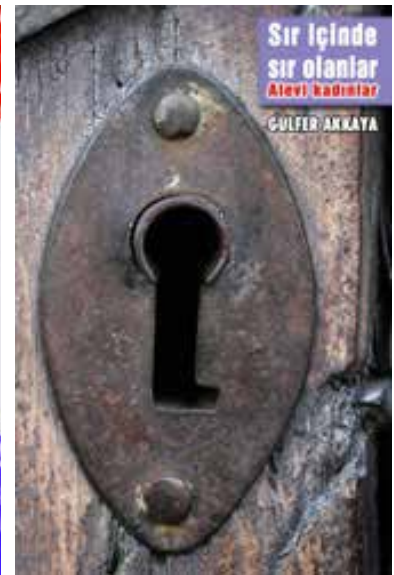
Just as the Ottoman Empire, which was its predecessor, the Turkish Republic carried out specific extermination policies against Alevi-Qizilbashes, Kurds and communists throughout its history. And our young woman also felt the effects of this.

Being an Author

Dating from 1990's onwards, one of the pillars of her active struggle was writing. She thought writing was a political act and never stopped writing. She also worked for years as an editor at socialist and feminist magazines.

Beginning at the end of the first decade of the 2000's, she carried out research about on women, especially about the intersections of being a socialist and Alevi woman in Turkey, and wrote books about these issues. Currently, she is working on her fourth book.

All social groups have problems in the country and feel the need for democracy, equality and freedom. She does not do politics in order to make judgments without getting herself involved, to liberate others or to prove what a democrat she is. The reason underlying her practical politics is that the social groups to which she



belongs do not have any other chance to emancipate themselves from the policies of persecution carried out by the tyrant state. She believes in changing life by writing and acting.

When she was enrolled into the primary school at the age of eight, the first academic term was about to come to an end. As she did not have a full comprehension of the language, she was immediately placed at the classroom desk where the lazy students were sitting. She looked at the book in front of her and did not understand a thing that was written there. She then felt ambitious and learned to read before the end of the second term. From the moment she learned how to read and write, she has not given up reading and writing for even a second.

Her illiterate mother noticed her enthusiasm and bought her books. It was a luxury for large and poor families to buy books, but she was always been surrounded with books. Her mother always advised her by saying, "read and study, my girl." The little dark girl took this advice seriously.

Our author is aware that in this sexist country where more than two million women are still illiterate, being able to earn her living by writing, despite all difficulties, is a kind of "privilege." She never forgets it and gratefully remembers all those who have supported her on this path.

A person relects the land and the climate where she was born. How could it be otherwise? She also looks like the land and the climate of her origin. As fragile as the wild flowers growing through the cracks in the rocks; as tenacious and resistant against those not recognizing her right to live.

Nowadays, she continues her political struggle at the Peoples' Democratic Party, of which she is a founding member. And feminism is her indispensable banner of equality and freedom.

In "Sanki Eşittik" (As if we were equal), Akkaya elaborates on the revolutionary movement in Turkey during the 1960-70s from a feminist perspective and through the life stories of ten revolutionary women who we actively engaged in the movement at that time. The latest book of Akkaya "Sır içinde sır olanlar" (Those who vanish in the secret) which she wrote against the male hegemony in Alevi narratives, methods and perspectives, is the first attempt to make Alevi women visible.

NEWS FROM hbsd

The Sustainable Life Film Festival

Inspirational stories of people who are making an effort for carving out a better future all over the world met the audience at the Sustainable Life Film Festival during November 19-22!

Arising out of a dream of a sharing, open, fair, understanding, diversity-embracing, life-cherishing society, The Sustainable Life Film Festival (SLFF) started on November 19 in Istanbul and was held on November 20-22 in all other provinces. Having our support as Heinrich Böll Stiftung Association from the year 2012 on, The Sustainable Life Film Festival has been continually organized since 2008 with the purpose of offering an insight into the notion of sustainability, raising awareness about interacting systemic problems, and sharing inspirational solutions.

Living through its 8th year by 2015, SLFF has given wide publicity to the documentaries featuring holistic views and creative solutions, selected each year out of hundreds of films, and sought to remind the audience their ability to move beyond being a helpless part of the problem and be part of the solution.

This year, too, in cooperation with the local teams paying attention to the Sustainable Life Collective's call to action "You Can Do It, Too," SLFF was held simultaneously in 23 movie theaters in 20 provinces and districts. The provinces and districts where the festival was held were: Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Artvin, Balıkesir, Bayındır (Izmir), Bodrum (Muğla), Bursa, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, Fethiye (Muğla), Giresun, Istanbul, Izmir, Kayseri, Konya, Mersin, Trabzon and Urla (Izmir).

Films that are holistic in view, offering solutions and appealing to the heart

As in previous years, SLFF has this year also presented a program full of films calling the audience to action. 30 films figuring in this year's selection have demonstrated that in fact all the issues we face today about water, transportation, climate, energy, fashion, agriculture etc. are all symptoms; and they invited us to perceive the real problems lying at the root of these symptoms by exhibiting the interconnection among all these different problems. Following the documentary films, speakers delivered speeches, and music and performance groups took the stage and enriched the festival program.



"GERMANY'S ROLE
IN THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE":

Book presentation and talk with Jürgen Gottschlich

The daily *taz* newspaper's Turkey correspondent Jürgen Gottschlich got together with readers at an event to promote his book *Beihilfe zum Völkermord: Deutschlands Rolle bei der Vernichtung der Armenier* (Assisting Genocide: Germany's Role in the Annihilation of the Armenians) printed in early 2015 by Ch. Links Verlag in Germany, based on a study supported by our association. At the talk organized in the evening of December 2 at Galeri Birzamanlar, Gottschlich explained how and why he started to think about the German state's role in the genocide, and shared his experiences during visits to Turkish and German archives to explore the issue. He observed that Germany's role in the Armenian genocide cannot be limited to a passive position, such as turning a blind eye on the events, and based this claim on the relations, especially military ones, between the Ottomans and German Empire which predated World War I. He also gave a number of examples of how the events of 1915 were personally approved of and supported by high ranking German officers. In the very first days following the implementation of the decision to force Armenians to migrate, a number of German diplomats informed their government that this would soon turn into the extermination of all Anatolian Armenians. simply in order to prevent being held accountable in the future.

Please click on the link to access the voice record of the discussion which started with the author's presentation and continued with a Q&A session: <http://tr.boell.org/de/2015/12/04/podcast-beihilfe-zum-voelkermord-deutschlands-rolle-bei-der-vernichtung-der-armenier>



COP21 PARIS: Historical compromise between obligation and proposal

At the twenty-first meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held between November 30 and December 11 in Paris, 195 countries agreed upon a resolution. Most of these parties also set a specific date to ratify the Paris Agreement in their national assemblies. Accordingly, the agreement is scheduled to be taken up in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in April 2016. In the previous COP (Conference of Parties) talks such as COP20 Lima, COP19 Warsaw, COP18 Doha, COP17 Duban, COP16 Cancun, and the greatest disappointment of them all, COP15 Copenhagen, the parties had failed to produce a legally binding text with specific pollution (carbon emission) mitigation targets. As such, the consensus of 195 nations on the Paris Agreement may be seen as a political achievement. A delegation from the Heinrich Böll Stiftung attended the COP21, and observed an atmosphere of political partnership and agreement unseen in the previous meetings.

What kinds of discussions took place at the COP21 that resulted in a final text? An analysis of the 105-page minutes of the 11-day summit shows that most of the meetings focused on finance. At the press conference by Carbon Leaders held on the third day of the summit, OECD Secretary-General Jose Angel Gurría had already stated that the subject of this summit was not the environment but finance, and he was correct. Financial issues debated throughout the summit were taken up in the final text in some way. The most important topics were pricing carbon emissions and setting up and elaborating a governance mechanism for financing the fight against climate change, because the fight against climate change harbors great economic potential for the carbon market. Naturally, this draws huge interest from the business world.

The most striking output from the agreement is the target of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This target is defined at the Article 2, section 1, paragraph a of the agreement; however it is does not legally binding. In a sense, it points to a necessity, presents an analysis and makes a proposal. Indeed, this is a confession of the fact that the gravity of the situation is clear to all, yet the countries can take only limited steps in response. Nevertheless the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius, as suggested by the climate activist Bill McKibben, is an instrument which civil society can use from now on to remind the leaders of the Paris Agreement what they agreed upon.

Aside from finance, the most heated debates concerned losses and damages, that is, the issue of countries who suffer losses and damages due to climate change. They have urgent needs but have difficulty in accessing financial support. As a result, this subject was given a significance in the agreement. However, in terms of climate justice, the developed countries' proposals to compensate the damages they have caused is rather insufficient and limited. In this respect, the Paris Agreement cannot be said to uphold climate justice. Furthermore, the agreement does not make a clear-cut statement as to how climate finance mobilization will be brought about, and whether carbon pricing or taxation could create such a mobilization. Yet again, Article 9 of the Paris Agreement includes language which oscillates between obligations and proposals.

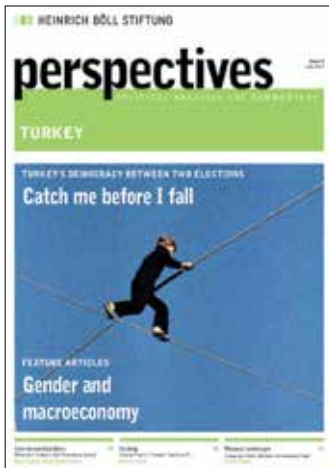
The talks had come to a standstill when the issues of human rights, the status of refugees, and gender were brought to the table. It is pleasing to see the agreement's preface, if not its articles, make a clear mention of human rights and gender.

To conclude, the fact that the articles mostly put forth proposals rather than obligations suggests that the itinerary does not end in but simply passes through Paris. As such, issues now left at the stage of proposal will most probably be hotly debated at the COP 22 summit to be held next year in Morocco on November 7 - 18. At the COP21, most countries agreed upon the Paris agreement, which claims to fight against the climate change but does not go all the way. Activities and protests held by civil society showed that it is keen on continuing to pressure decision makers to take legally binding, timely and radical decisions to fight climate change.



*From a protest on the 4th day of the summit,
by youth organizations that demanded:
"Don't kill our future!".*

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