

ACADEMICS AT RISK IN TURKEY

The coup attempt on July 15, 2016 stands as the **most ruinous mark to the legal and political grounds of the Turkish Republic** and continues to do so. Due to the coup attempt many people have been stripped from their ebullience, charged with allegations in abetting the coup and serving as members of a terrorist group, been unlawfully released from their jobs or incarcerated under the articles specified by the state of emergency period. Hence after the declaration of the state of emergency laws, a “legal” basis for unlawful prosecution and illegitimate actions was formed.

Academics in Turkey after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt stands as certainly **one of the most severely affected branches of civil structure if not the most**. On July 23, 2016 2 days after the emergency decree-laws were established the state ordered the **closure of 15 universities displacing over 60,000 students and rendering 2,808 academicians jobless** according to the State of Turkish Higher Education’s report. The data published by the same report displayed an immense **8,535 academicians released from duty** by December 2017 virtually quadrupling the July 2016 figure. As stated by another report compiled by BBC Turkey **at least 23,427 academicians lost their jobs** either due to direct dismissals or reasons pertaining to university closures.

In reality January 2016, 6 months Prior to the coup attempt, marks the inception of the witch-hunt against academicians following the “**Academics for Peace**” petition. The respective petition, signed by **1,128 education personnel**, left the signatories with very severe and exasperating upshots ranging from criminal prosecutions, dismissals and detentions to travel restrictions. The most up-to-date consolidated numbers exhibit **more than 9,200 higher education personnel subject to direct targeting alongside over 60,000 scholars, administrators, and students affected materially or incurring tangible losses ascribed to government and institutional actions**.

Perhaps the pinnacle of the maltreatment of academicians did not take place during the process of prosecutions but after imprisonment. **Dr. Ahmet Turan Ozelik** no doubt is an exemplar of this persecution. **Dr Ozelik was confined in Balikesir Bandirma prison for 14 months after a 21 day psychological torture inflicted prior to his transfer**. During his imprisonment he **developed colon cancer**, notwithstanding his health issued **he was denied preventive treatment**. After rigorous efforts he was released, yet soon after following his release **he passed away from colon cancer**.