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 Ozcelik no doubt is an exemplar of this persecution. Dr Ozcelik 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.