Turkey’s New Normal: Torture and Ill-Treatment

Turkey, after the failed coup attempt has been a tumultuous ground for human rights. Many subtopics of human rights violations were brought into the spotlight especially after the declaration of the state of emergency. Perhaps some of the most important derivatives of such violations are torture and maltreatment. Although a state of emergency can help condense and concentrate efforts to bring perpetrators into justice it does not grant the government a blank check to suspend human rights. Even though a delicate matter like suspect and prisoner rights can never be dispensable, Turkey is currently infamous for infringing plenty of them from a global standpoint.

Since the coup attempt in 2016 a hefty sum of 160,000 people were detained 152,000 of which were state officials varying from teachers to lawyers. According to the government’s statement a majority of these detainees were associated with the Gulen movement. Since 2016 an overwhelming 7,907 cases of human rights violations occurred among these were 2,278 victims of torture and within that number 423 of them occurred under police detention. Methods of torture included but were not limited to thumps, electrical chairs, and sexual assault threats (particularly women). In addition, 48 extralegal killings were reported which were deemed tolerable under “troubling” provisions vaguely stated in emergency decree 667.

Besides the aforementioned brutishness, safeguards available to any prisoner were denied by the detainers. Among those violated safeguards were reasonable detention and legal review arrangements, access to medical reports, right to choose a lawyer, and last but not least monitoring the places of detention. Considering the absence of these safeguards combined with the turmoil within cells detainees came to be more vulnerable to mental and physical abuse.

Numerous examples of each different method of torture can be exemplified, whether that is a teacher beaten to death and his autopsy altered (teacher Aciikkolu), or a woman tortured remorselessly in front of her husband (Asli S.). The defiling of basic detainee rights is not only tarnishing Turkey’s reputation in the world stage yet it is also obliviously and gradually driving the Turkish government to a dead end.