



SUSPICIOUS DEATHS AND SUICIDES **IN TURKEY**

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Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) is an advocacy organization that promotes the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms with a special focus on Turkey, a nation of 80 million that is facing significant backsliding in its parliamentary democracy under its autocratic leaders.

SCF, a non-profit organization, was set up by a group of journalists who have been forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey .

SCF is committed to serving as a reference source by providing a broader picture of rights violations in Turkey, monitoring daily developments on fact-based investigative journalism and documenting individual cases of the infringement of fundamental rights. The founders of SCF are top-notch journalists who had managed national dailies in Turkey and worked for leading media outlets before they were forced to leave. They have the expertise, human resources and network on the ground to track events in Turkey despite serious challenges.

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SUSPICIOUS DEATHS AND SUICIDES IN TURKEY

Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declares “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” This was also enshrined in Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976). The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) is dedicated to protecting people against torture and inhuman treatment.

According to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), “No one shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment.” Turkey, which is also a party to this binding convention as well as the UN conventions above, considers ill-treatment and torture to be serious crimes according to articles in its own Constitution as well as provisions in the Turkish Penal Code.¹

Following a failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, there has been a massive increase in cases of ill-treatment and torture, along with unprecedented mass arrests and detentions in Turkey. In statements and criminal complaints made by defendants and their family members, widespread torture practices have been uncovered in detention centers and prisons. These practices range from verbal abuse and threats to physical violence that includes beatings, rape, exposure to icy water, strappado, sleep deprivation, denial of food and water, limiting access to fresh air, restricting exercise and forced alcohol and drug consumption

There have been serious allegations that many suspects died as a result of physical and psychological torture but described by authorities as suicides in what appears to be a cover-up. In some cases, where a prosecutor launched inquiries into suspicious deaths, concerns remain as to the effectiveness of impartial and independent investigation under emergency rule, which has given the government extra powers.

There is considerable evidence to conclude that torture and ill-treatment have been systematically committed by government officials since the July 15 coup attempt and that these allegations have not been effectively investigated by the judiciary or the executive branches of government.

1] In Articles 94 and 95 of the Turkish Penal Code, torture and persecution are clearly regarded as crimes against humanity. The crime of torture in the Turkish Penal Code requires punishment of up to 12 years' imprisonment with minimum sentencing set at three years. If the offense is committed against a child, pregnant woman, lawyer or other public official, the punishment changes to an 8 to 15-year sentence, and if it is sexual harassment then punishment becomes a 10 to 15-year sentence. The law says, “Those who participate in the crime are punished as those who commit the crime.” The penal provision for the crime of torture resulting in death is aggravated life imprisonment.



A complaint filed by an individual who was arrested on terror charges claimed that he was assaulted, mistreated and subjected to threats while in custody in northeastern Trabzon province. Yet the prosecutor's office refused to investigate, citing a government executive order under emergency rule. The prosecutor said Article 9 of Decree Law No. 667, which was published in the Official Gazette on July 23, 2016, states: "Legal, administrative, financial and criminal liabilities shall not arise in respect of the persons who have adopted decisions and fulfilled their duties within the scope of this Decree Law."

Another question that needs to be addressed is why some people allegedly chose to commit suicide out of fear of likely detention before their arrest or after their release from detention. There are genuine concerns about extrajudicial killings outside of prisons and detentions centers that were allegedly orchestrated by members of security.

The Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) has investigated and documented 53 suspected deaths in the last six months alone. These cases must be thoroughly and effectively investigated by independent authorities. Public officials who have willingly contributed to these deaths, neglected their duties or played a role in any capacity must be punished. There were claims of suspicious deaths under custody or in prison, but the Turkish government has not been forthcoming in sharing the details of these cases with the public. SCF remains concerned that there may be cases in which families are afraid of filing complaints for fear of persecution and further victimization.

Although the 53 alleged suicide cases SCF has been able to document may suggest a pattern of impunity in Turkey's prisons and detention centers (some are unofficial holding centers), it is likely that they represent only a partial picture in the terrible drama being played out in Turkey. An official document that was leaked to the press revealed how the government was concerned about a fact-finding visit by the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) of the Council of Europe (CoE) between Aug. 28 and Sept. 6, 2016 and ordered police to stop using unofficial detention centers such as sports halls.²

2] Turkey removes evidence of torture, maltreatment in prisons ahead of CPT visit
<http://www.turkishminute.com/2016/09/08/turkey-removes-evidence-torture-maltreatment-prisons-ahead-cpt-visit/> Sept. 8, 2016

STATE OF EMERGENCY AND MASS DETENTIONS

Members of the junta, who called themselves the “Peace at Home Council,” attempted an unsuccessful military coup on July 15, 2016 in Turkey. During this attempt, 246 people, mostly civilians, lost their lives. The chief of general staff announced on the morning of July 16 that 104 coup plotters³ were killed during the attempt. Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım announced on Aug. 17, 2016⁴ that the number of coup plotters killed in this attempt was 36. This contradiction between the numbers has never been clarified, and the identities of the slain soldiers have not been disclosed. Because of the difference in the statements of the prime minister and the chief of general staff, allegations that some soldiers were lynched during public interventions or in detention have been the subject of debate.⁵

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and government officials claimed from the initial hours of the coup bid that the attempt was carried out by the Gülen movement, although “it was not clear which group or groups were behind the coup and no investigation has yet been launched. The parliamentary commission that was established to investigate the coup attempt was prevented from conducting a thorough probe when its work was abruptly stopped by the votes of ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lawmakers.

The commission, controlled by the AKP majority, did not even hear suspects who were accused of taking part in the coup or summon President Erdoğan, government officials, intelligence chief Hakan Fidan or Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar, who the coup plotters allegedly targeted.

Following the coup attempt, especially on July 20, when the State of Emergency (OHAL) was declared, a large number of people were arrested and detained throughout the country. Thousands of people from professional groups such as judges, prosecutors, soldiers, police, journalists, teachers, academics, union workers and businesspeople have been charged with coup plotting and membership in a terrorist organization. Periods of detention, which were normally four days, were extended to 30 days under OHAL conditions. Detainees were denied access to lawyers, and contact with family members was restricted.

3] Gen. Ümit Dündar, deputy chief of general staff, held a press conference (16.07.2016). Dündar said that in the coup attempt, 41 police officers, 2 soldiers, 47 civilians, 90 people in total, were martyred, and 104 coup plotters were killed. <http://www.posta.com.tr/orgeneral-dundar-104-darbeci-olu-ele-gecirildi-haberi-353491>

4] Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım: 36 coup plotters were killed, 49 wounded (17.08.2017). <http://www.sanalbasi.com/basbakan-yildirim-feto-operasyonlarinin-bilancosunu-acikladi-15113419/>

5] The protests crossed the line, and some of the soldiers under the command of the coup officers were lynched by a crowd (18.07.2016). http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/569344/Sokaktaki_tehlike.html

6] The AKP government claimed that the Hizmet Movement was behind the coup. Fethullah Gülen, the US-based cleric that inspired the movement, has denied the charges. Gülen called for cooperation from the Turkish government and demanded that an international and independent commission investigate the coup attempt (12.08.2016). <http://www.diken.com.tr/gulenin-turkiyeye-donme-sarti-uluslararasi-bagimsiz-bir-komisyon-kurulsun/>

In the following five months, 103,850 people were treated as “suspects” .⁷ Some of these people taken into custody were kept in gymnasiums and factory buildings because there was no room in detention facilities. Some people were questioned by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) in unknown locations. A total of 45,012 of the detainees had been formally arrested as of Feb. 20, 2017. This number has reached to 47,128 according to monitoring web site TurkeyPurge.com a month later.⁸



OFFICIAL NEWS AGENCY RELEASED IMAGES OF TORTURE

Findings concerning the pressure, ill-treatment and torture of suspects during the operations, during the detention period and after the arrests were reflected in international reports. The official Anadolu news agency (AA) and the official television station TRT published images and photographs of individuals in custody, especially in the early days. The difference in the condition of these people, which can be seen in the images that were shot while they were being taken into custody and then when they were being referred to court, clearly demonstrated that they were the victims of torture.

European Parliament President Martin Schulz explained that the Turkish government has started to exact revenge from its opponents and critics by means of a well-prepared plan. “The European Parliament strongly condemns the military coup and we are happy that it failed, but on the other hand we are very worried about the recent development during the last days and it is not only worrying me because of the death penalty and the debate about

7] According to information obtained from the Ministry of Justice, within the framework of the investigations initiated by chief public prosecutors, about 103,850 people were subject to legal action over the Hizmet Movement within 5 months. A total of 41,326 of the detainees were arrested (02.01.2017).

<http://www.aha.com.tr/haber-fetoden-41-bin-326-kisi-tutuklandi-614000/>. The website TurkeyPurge put the number of arrested people at 45,012.

8] Turkey widens post-coup purge (17.03.2017) <http://turkeypurge.com>

it, but also 13,000 people suspended from their jobs, 6,000 arrested, which shows that obviously the government was well prepared and what we are seeing is a kind of revenge.”⁹

“By removing safeguards against torture, the Turkish government effectively wrote a blank check to law enforcement agencies to torture and mistreat detainees as they like,” said Hugh Williamson, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “The cases we have documented seem to indicate that some have done just that. Turkey’s government should reinstate these crucial safeguards now,” he added.¹⁰

The deaths of 54 persons who allegedly committed suicide after being detained, in detention, in prison, after being released or due to fear of being taken into custody after the July 15 coup attempt should be considered suspicious until a thorough and rigorous probe, conducted by competent and independent bodies free of political pressure, concludes otherwise. The fact that 22 of these suspicious deaths occurred in prison and five in police custody raises more questions on the conditions that led to the deaths of these people.

Turkey had previously accepted responsibility for the crime of torture related to the death of a prisoner named Engin Çeber in prison on Oct. 7, 2008. Then-Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin, who made a statement on behalf of the AKP government, said, “I apologize on behalf of the state and the government.”

However, it seems that the AKP government has been making an additional effort to hush up these recently recorded suspicious death cases rather than investigating them in an effective manner. The scandalous remark by a senior member of the ruling AKP who is entrusted with running a body tasked to insure that torture does not take place in Turkish prisons confirms this pattern of abuse. Mehmet Metiner, the head of the Prison Subcommittee of the Human Rights Investigation Commission in Parliament, officially announced that they would not investigate allegations of torture of those arrested for the alleged coup attempt.

That drew the ire of the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP). Özgür Özel, the deputy chairman of the CHP parliamentary group and a former member of the Prison Monitoring Commission, said that all deaths in custody, in detention or in prison are “suspicious deaths” by nature.

Özel summarizes the government’s attitude towards torture as follows: “The hardship in this process is that Mehmet Metiner, AKP chairman of the relevant commission, said that they would not hear these claims. ... However, if there are many allegations of ill-treatment, beatings and torture all over Turkey, they need to be investigated.”

Apart from the statements by AKP parliamentary commission member Mehmet Metiner

9] Statement by Martin Schulz, EP President, on the situation in Turkey after the failed coup attempt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECOV9QEpi6k> (19.07.2016)

10] Turkey: Emergency Decrees Facilitate Torture <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/25/turkey-emergency-decrees-facilitate-torture> (25.10.2017)

that he would not hear allegations of torture after the coup attempt, there are also other serious statements. The statement of the AKP's former Sakarya deputy Ali İnci telling coup plotters "I have some advice for you. You'd better commit suicide before we hang you"¹¹ clearly shows that the government is motivated by vengeful emotions and is setting aside the fair judicial process.

Turkey's Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekçi has said that the ruling AKP government would punish plotters of the recent failed military coup attempt so severely that they would beg for death. "We will put them into such holes [jails] for punishment that they won't even be able to see the sun of God as long as they breathe. They will not see the light of day. They will not hear a human voice. They will beg for death, saying 'Just kill us...'. This [capital punishment] is what I also want from my heart. But never forget that even if we execute them all, I would not feel avenged."¹²

On the other hand, the fact that the case of Abdullah B., who was detained and arrested with his two-month pregnant wife in Trabzon and his complaint to the public prosecutor that he was beaten, mistreated and subjected to threat by police officers while in custody was rejected on the grounds of the State of Emergency (OHAL) clearly shows that this attitude was supported by the judiciary. Public prosecutor Eşref Aktaş decided that the police officers in this process did not have legal, administrative, financial or criminal responsibility regardless of what kind of crime they committed.¹³

The Stockholm Center for Freedom observed that relatives of victims were reluctant to provide information about investigating suspicious deaths because they were concerned that they would face punishment and similar problems if authorities became aware of that. Because of the fact that autopsy reports and investigation files were kept confidential, the information about suspicious deaths had to be obtained mainly from open sources. The government blocks access to information, suppresses the coverage of and does not share documents about these deaths with the public.

Apart from the cases of suspected deaths in prisons and detention centers, the suicide cases of persons who were subjected to detention and interrogation but later released under a decision of judicial supervision or discharged from public service, or whose identity cards were confiscated and assets seized are also included in this report. SCF believes that the extraordinary factors that cause normal and healthy people to go to the extreme of taking their own life under immense pressure by the government cannot be ignored.

The suspicious death cases which SCF believes must be probed by an independent, impartial investigating bodies are as follows:

11] Talimat açık, işkence gizli (22.11.2016)

<http://www.tr724.com/talimat-acik-iskence-gizli-mehmet-yildiz/>

12] Economy minister says gov't will make coup plotters beg for death <https://www.turkishminute.com/2016/08/01/economy-minister-says-govt-will-make-coup-plotters-beg-for-death/> Ekonomi Bakanı: Bu darbecilere öyle bir ceza vereceğiz ki "Gebertin bizi" diye yalvaracaklar! (01.08.2016)

13] 'Even if the police threaten or beat you, you cannot do anything!' (15.01.2017)

<http://odatv.com/polis-sizi-tehdit-de-etse-darp-da-etse-bir-sey-yapamazsiniz-1501171200.html>

FERHAT DAŞ, JULY 15, 2016

It has been claimed that Sgt. Ferhat Daş committed suicide after refusing to obey the order of his commander to open fire on people during the coup attempt. However, serious contradictions emerged after the examination of eyewitness accounts and video footage. The family is hoping that the prosecution's investigation will reveal the truth and exonerate Sgt. Daş.



Spc. Sgt. Ibrahim Donat told police in his interrogation about the night of July 15 that Daş had shouted “We are not traitors” in response to the crowd saying things such as “Aren’t you a citizen of this country? This is a coup” and then committed suicide by discharging his own gun under his chin.

Then Donat continued as follows: “After the suicide, we opened the door of the tank, a citizen got our commander from the tank and took him to the hospital in an ambulance. Other citizens took us to the nearby police car there, and we surrendered to the police.”

¹⁴ This incident, which is recorded similarly in police records, was told very differently in the report of the state-owned Anadolu News Agency. In the news of AA, which obtained the opinion of Kaya Aydın, a relative of Ferhat Daş, the suspicious suicide was explained as follows: “They went out for a military exercise. The commander ordered them to open fire on civilians. He said he couldn’t. Then the commander pointed a gun and said, ‘I will shoot you.’ Then he said, ‘I’d rather die by the bullet of my own weapon than die by a bullet from your weapon.’ He did not open fire on the civilians, and he shot himself in the head with his own gun.” ¹⁵

The details in the camera footage ¹⁶ taken that night near Sabiha Gökçen Airport just before his death contradicts these accounts, however. According to the footage, there was a big crowd around Daş, who was standing on top of the tank. Daş is seen talking to these people for a while with his hands up. The crowd with a Turkish flag started to shout “Recep Tayyip Erdoğan” and surrounded Daş. Then the video is interrupted. It is certain that Daş did not use his weapon inside the tank before the crowd circled the tank.

When the body of Sgt. Daş was brought to his hometown of Geben in Kahramanmaraş province for his funeral, no official imam was assigned by the government’s Directorate of Religious Affairs for the burial service. He was buried by the municipality with the help of a bulldozer at midnight on the grounds that he was a “traitor.” The family was traumatized by the experience and faced accusations that “your son was a coup plotter.” Daş, who was

¹⁴ Tankçı Astsubay Çavuş Ferhat Daş “darbeci değilim” diyerek intihar etmiş (29.07.2016) <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1273762-tankci-astsubay-cavus-ferhat-das-darbeci-degilim-diyerek-intihar-etmis>

¹⁵ Sivillere ateş açma emrine uymayıp kendi kafasına sıktı (18.07.2017) <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-sivillere-ates-acma-emri-ne-uymayip-kendi-kafasına-sikti-968019-gundem/>

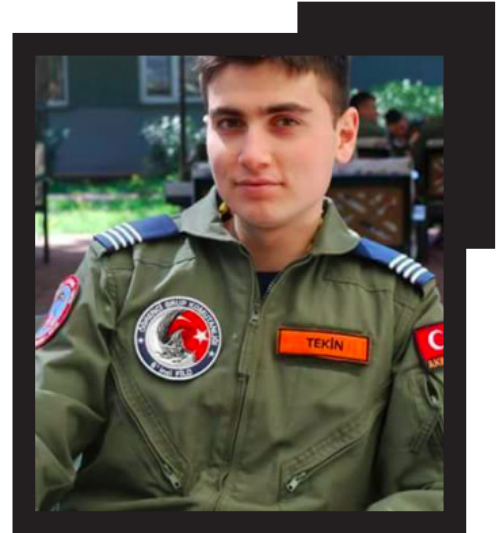
¹⁶ (27.07.2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hty3NU5clQE>

declared a hero by the official news agency of the state, was also discharged from the Turkish military although he was already dead. Suspicions surrounding his death have not been cleared up even six months after his death. As he most likely died after the intervention of the crowd, the possibility of a lynching is highly likely. The prosecutor's investigation into the case is still continuing.

MURAT TEKİN, JULY 15, 2016

Murat Tekin (21), second-year air force student, was killed on the night of July 15, 2016 when his throat was slit by an angry mob according to an account by his sister which was also backed up by an autopsy report.

Graphic video footage showing a soldier lying on the Bosphorus Bridge in a pool of blood was widely circulated on social media in the aftermath of the coup attempt. While many said the soldier's throat was slit because of his involvement in the coup, pro-government media outlets and social media users either refused to accept the allegation or claimed that the video and accompanying images were from a separate terrorist explosion.



Mehtap Tekin, the grieving sister, told the Çağdaş Ses news platform, claiming that an autopsy on the body of her slain brother proved that her brother was killed with a knife while surrendering to the police.¹⁷

“We are taking you to the most realistic military exercise that you have ever seen,” commanders at the military school told students, according to Mehtap Tekin.

Tekin had studied at Işıklar Military High School in Bursa for five years and then enrolled in the Air Force Academy in Istanbul last year, his sister said, adding that neither Murat nor his classmates was even aware of the coup attempt until they were in the middle of it.

Mehtap said friends of her brother told her about the night and how they were convinced they should gather on the Bosphorus Bridge.

Some students were told that eight suicide bombers had been on the Istanbul streets, and some were told that the president had been arrested, according to Murat's friends.

“With traumatic lesions and stab wounds detected on his body, the person in question was

17] Linç edilen öğrencinin ablası: ‘Çocuklar otobüste uyuyormuş...’ (07.08.2016) <http://www.cagdasses.com/guncel/48326/linc-edilen-ogrencinin-ablasi-cocuklar-otobuste-uyuyormus>

found to be killed due to pressure on his throat and mechanical asphyxia,” Mehtap quoted the autopsy on her brother as saying.

“I asked one of my doctor friends to help me understand the report more clearly, and she said: “He was battered, stabbed and asphyxiated before he was killed. Someone taped his mouth and someone put pressure on his throat. This is not the kind of trauma that is caused by only one person’,” Mehtap said.

The main opposition Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP) called for an investigation into brutal killing of cadet.

▶ **SEGVAN YAMAN, JULY 18, 2016**



The Democratic Regions Party (DBP) district board member in the Uludere district of southeastern Şırnak province, Segvan Yaman (42), who was being held in the Rize Kalkandere L-Type Prison, reportedly committed suicide on July 18, 2016. Yaman was alleged to have attempted to commit suicide twice before. It was stated that Yaman was sent to Rize from Şırnak with several other detainees in June. Yaman, arrested as part of an investigation into the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella organization that encompasses the terrorist Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), had been in prison for nine months.

Yaman’s elder brother E.Y, who is seeking legal aid from the Human Rights Association (IHD), said: “I do not believe my brother committed suicide. The prison administration called us and said my brother committed suicide. I called him last Tuesday. He said he was fine and comfortable in Rize. Why did he commit suicide? My brother was a person who was constantly arrested, and he sometimes had some problems. But he was not a person to commit suicide. “

Yaman’s family filed a complaint with the help of the IHD. Meanwhile, it has been found that there were similar suicide cases previously reported in Rize Kalkandere Prison.

▶ **HASAN HAYRİ ALP, JULY 19, 2016**

Hasan Hayri Alp, a prisoner who was jailed in Sincan F-Type Prison as part of probe into the Far-left Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), reportedly died as the result of a heart attack. President of Turkey’s Human Rights Association (IHD) Öztürk Türkdoğan, who held public officials responsible for the death, emphasized that violations of rights in prisons were increasing with the implementation of OHAL.



HASAN YÜCEL, JULY 20, 2016



Service Battalion Commander Col. Hasan Yücel (42) was one of the officers assigned to General Staff headquarters on July 15. It has been claimed that Yücel committed suicide on July 20, 2016 at 10:30 in his room at the headquarters. It was also claimed that while two friends were present, he pointed his gun to his heart and pulled the trigger.

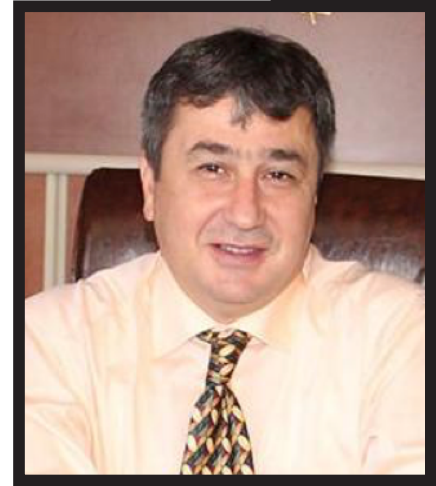
Journalist Murat Çelik wrote about the suicide of Yücel, claiming that Yücel was sad and regretful for failing to stop the plotters of the coup and kept saying, “I could not prevent it, could not prevent the coup plotters [from carrying out the attempt],” and then he committed suicide after a deep depression. According to opposing claims, Yücel died as a consequence of heavy torture in the interrogation room that

was illegally installed at General Staff headquarters. Yücel, who also served in the Special Forces Command, had numerous medals and citations for distinguished service.¹⁸

NECMİ AKMAN, JULY 20, 2016

It has been stated that Manisa-Ahmetli District Governor Necmi Akman, who had also been discharged due to allegations of being a plotter of the coup, had allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with the gun of his security guard, a police officer identified only by the initials A.G.

His case was brought to the attention of the Turkish Parliament when a letter written by Akman was read out loud in the legislature. In his letter to his wife and daughters, Akman used the following expressions: “I am confident of myself. I always stayed loyal to the president, the commander-in-chief, to the government. But now if my existence is a threat to my country, my flag, my commander-in-chief and my government, then my duty as a district governor is to remove this threat.”¹⁹ There was no official ceremony for Akman, who is survived by a wife and two children.



After the alleged suicide the prosecution launched an investigation. The fate of the investigation was not disclosed to the public.

¹⁸] Cadi avı travması: 20 intihar (17.10.2016)

<http://romanyahaber.com/2016/10/17/cadi-avi-travmasi-20-intihar/>

¹⁹] Kaymakam'ın veda mektubu yürek burktu

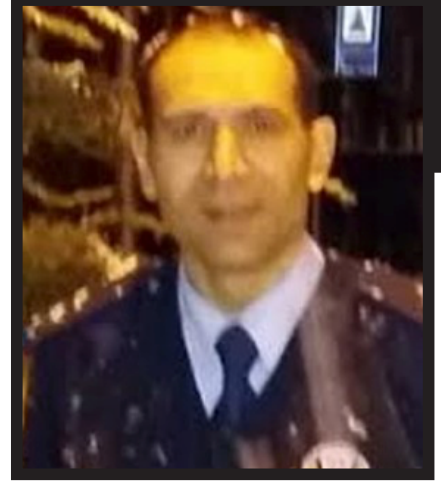
(03.08.2016) <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kaymakamin-veda-mektubu-yurek-burktu-40180096>

MUTLU ÇİL, JULY 20 2016

Deputy Commissioner Mutlu Çil was one of 900 police officers who were discharged from Ankara police headquarters immediately after the coup attempt.

Çil was appointed to the Ankara Security Directorate from the intelligence department after major corruption investigations in December 2013 that incriminated President Erdoğan, his family members and his business and political associates.

He was discharged from service on the grounds of “illegal wiretapping” in 2014, and he was held in prison for four months and then tried. Çil, who was appointed to the Altındağ District Security Directorate in 2014, was appointed to the Güdül District Security Directorate after he was released. It has been stated that Commissioner Çil, who was taken into custody for a second time, was suffering from depression and that he committed suicide, saying, “They could not accuse me of being a member of the parallel structure,” in the Güdül Governor’s Office building, using his government-issued gun.

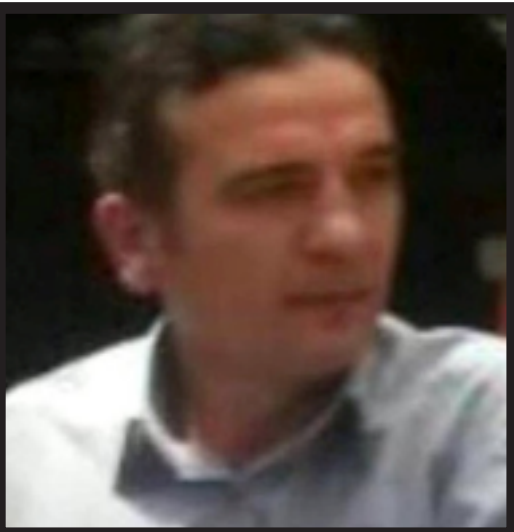


MUHAMMET MERTOĞLU, JULY 22, 2016

Police Chief Muhammet Mertoğlu, who was appointed to the Ulus district of Bartın province after the coup attempt, allegedly committed suicide saying “You suspect me too?” during a search of his room on July 22. Mertoğlu succeeded Police Chief Levent Mustafaoglu, who was detained on the grounds of being a coup plotter.

Speaking at the funeral, Serhat Tezsever, chief of police in Karabük, made remarkable statements about the death of Mertoğlu, saying: “It was a painful accident” and “We are having hard times, but the stalwart people of this country are at their posts. Our brother commissioner was also an officer assigned there. He was sent there to serve the country, the nation.

Unfortunately, he died as a result of a painful accident at the beginning of his service. May God put him in the highest, most eminent position. As a state, we stand by him; he was martyred during his service.” The outcome of the prosecution’s investigation into this suspicious death is unknown.



▶ **LEVENT ÖNDER, JULY 22, 2016**

The suicide case of Lt. Col. Levent Önder, who was deputy chief of staff of the 3rd Commando Brigade in southeastern Siirt province, is also shown among the suspicious deaths. Önder was alleged to have suffered from depression because he could not prevent events in Siirt during the coup attempt and committed suicide with his own pistol.

Önder was appointed to replace Col. Alican Erkilitlioglu, who was arrested for alleged involvement in the coup attempt. The governor of Siirt made the following statement regarding the suspected suicide: “Lieutenant Colonel Önder entered into a depression by not getting over the July 15 coup attempt and the ensuing events. Önder felt inadequate for not being able to prevent the plans of the terrorists. Önder voluntarily gave testimony as a witness to the prosecutor’s office and ended his life in the wake of the crisis he experienced.”²⁰



▶ **HALİL GÖK, JULY 22, 2016**

Police officer Halil Gök, who worked at the district police department in the town of Akçakoca in northwestern Düzce province, was responsible for monitoring regional traffic. He allegedly committed suicide when he learned that he was going to be discharged after the coup attempt. It has been stated that Gök went to the basement of the Regional Traffic Supervision Station building, held the gun to his head and pulled the trigger. An investigation into the suspicious suicide has been launched.

▶ **İSMAİL ÇAKMAK, JULY 23, 2016**

According to official records, Lt. Col. Ismail Çakmak, who was arrested on the grounds that he was a coup plotter and put in Silivri Prison, committed suicide by hanging himself with a bed sheet in his cell. According to another statement, Çakmak committed suicide by hanging himself in the stairwell of the prison. Çakmak had reportedly been tortured and subjected to strip searches during detention when he refused to admit to the charges against him.

20] Siirt'te Yarbay Levent Önder intihar etti (22.07.2016)
<http://www.ulusalpost.com/siirtte-yarbay-levent-onder-intihar-etti-49155h.htm>

His relatives shared the records of Çakmak's statement given to police on the night he was taken into custody. Çakmak, who served as battalion commander in the 23rd Motorized Infantry Regiment, stated that he had been sent to the Kartal Bridge together with his contingent on the orders of Regimental Commander Col. Ömer Faruk Köse on July 15, who said "there was an incident." The testimony of Çakmak is as follows:

"When we came to the Kartal Bridge, there was no citizen gathering. We also warned people coming in that 'there is a notice of an incident.' Subsequently, the regimental commander came along with four lieutenants and one major. He said to me, 'It's a coup d'état. They will inform you. Let's follow the instructions.' I told the regimental commander, 'I am out of that business. I do not accept such an order. I did not enter this business.' I ordered my troops to go back. However, a part of my contingent that could not be transported to the barracks due to a roadblock went to the Maltepe military lodgings and some of them went to Tuzla. I returned to the barracks in a civilian vehicle. When we went to the Kartal Bridge, we took our shields and batons with us, not our weapons. I certainly did not know about an event like a coup. I will never accept those charges. They said, 'There is a disturbance; intervene in it.' We got back when we learned of their real intentions. I want to be released."

MUSTAFA TÖRER, JULY 28, 2016



Mustafa Törer, a furniture maker, was taken into custody within the scope of the investigation into the Hizmet Movement in Iskenderun after the July 15 coup attempt. Törer, 52, who was detained for three days, was formally arrested on July 27, 2016. He reportedly died after a heart attack in İskenderun Prison a day later. As a result of the autopsy carried out by the Adana Council of Forensic Medicine, the cause of death was determined to have been a heart attack. Hatay Governor Ercan Topaca made a different statement about

Törer, a prominent figure in the city. Topaca stated that Mustafa Törer died due to a diabetic coma he had lapsed into in prison. ²¹

Törer was allegedly subjected to ill-treatment and torture while in custody.

HİDAYET MERAL, JULY 30, 2016

Hidayet Meral (32), a police officer assigned to the Provincial Police Department in Bartın, allegedly committed suicide in front of the police station. Meral served as a bodyguard to district governor Selçuk Şakar in the town



²¹] (28.07.2016) <https://twitter.com/topacaercan/status/758739860433756162>

of Ulus in Bartın province. Şakar was detained within the scope of an investigation into the Gülen Movement after the coup attempt. After the arrest of the district governor, a police officer was reassigned to the Bartın provincial department, and was on guard duty in front of the police station when he allegedly shot himself in the head. He was married and the father of one, and his wife was pregnant with their second child. An investigation was opened into the police officer's suicide. The chief of police of the same district, Muhammad Mertoğlu, was also announced as having committed suicide.

VEDAT SAVLU, AUGUST 2, 2016

According to the official statement, businessman Vedat Savlu, who police attempted to take into custody at at his house at 6:30 in the morning on Aug. 2, 2016 as part of an investigation into the Gülen movement in Isparta, fell from the fourth floor while trying to escape the police. Savlu, who was taken to Şifa Hospital by ambulance, was later declared dead. Police also claimed that Savlu had thrown a suitcase from the building.



It was claimed that the Savlu had committed suicide by jumping rather than falling off from the balcony of his apartment. In video footage, he was seen to have fallen, landing on the concrete floor.²²

GÖKHAN AÇIKKOLU, AUGUST 5, 2016



Gökhan Açikkolu, a teacher who was taken into custody on July 23, died on Aug. 5, 2016, the 14th day of his detention in the custody of the anti-terror units of the Istanbul Police Department. On the fifth day of his detention Açikkolu, who was diabetic, was taken to a public hospital's emergency ward. Even though his chronic illness was detected, he continued to be kept in custody

His family and relatives maintained that Açikkolu was tortured and subjected to ill-treatment. The abuse even continued after his death when authorities wanted to

bury him in a special graveyard called the "Traitors' Cemetery," which was established after the failed coup bid. The authorities did not want to allow religious rituals to be performed for

22] (02.08.2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qnwkQw-EpY>

Açıkkolu. His father Ayhan Açıkkolu said his diabetic son could not stand what he had lived through in detention and died from a heart attack. The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office announced that an investigation had been launched into Açıkkolu's death. They confirmed that Açıkkolu was taken to the hospital twice during his time in detention.

MUHAMMET ÖZMEN, AUGUST 9, 2016

Muhammet Özmen (50), whose salary was seized within the scope of an investigation into the Hizmet Movement in the province of Zonguldak, reportedly committed suicide. It is not known whether an investigation has been opened into Özmen, who lived in the village of Bayat in the Ereğli district.

AHMET BEŞLİ, AUGUST 10, 2016

According to official statements, Police Chief Ahmet Beşli (39) committed suicide in front of his colleagues. Beşli, who did not want to be taken into custody in the Belen district of Hatay, shot himself with his own gun before the eyes of police officers and committed suicide. Beşli was taken to a private hospital near the headquarters in an ambulance called by relatives. His family claimed that the incident was not a suicide, but that he was killed during interrogation in the police station.



ÖMER ÇUBUKLU, SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

Ömer Çubuklu, a prison guard who was arrested as part of the coup investigation, allegedly hanged himself with a shoelaces and a drawstring when he was put in in a solitary cell in the İzmir No.2 F-type Prison. The prison guards found his lifeless body hung from a window in the cell at 1:30 am. An investigation was launched into his death, since shoelaces and drawstrings are prohibited in prisons.



MUSTAFA GÜNEYLER, SEPTEMBER 2, 2016

Mustafa Güneyler (50), a teacher who had been discharged within the scope of an investigation into the Gülen movement in the town of Osmanlı in Bilecik province, reportedly committed suicide. It was claimed that Güneyler fell into a depression after being dismissed from his job by government executive order no. 672 on Sept. 2, 2016. He allegedly killed himself by turning on a gas cylinder at home.

BEDİH KURUCAN SEPTEMBER 9, 2016

Bedih Kurucan (30), convicted of the murder of his wife in April 2010 in the town of İnegöl in Bursa province, reportedly hanged himself in the Muğla E-type Prison on Sept. 9, 2016.



SEYFETTİN YİĞİT, SEPTEMBER 16, 2016



Seyfettin Yiğit (50), a public prosecutor who served in Bursa, was found hanging in a toilet in the Bursa E-Type Prison. He was detained for alleged links to the Gülen movement. It was claimed that Yiğit committed suicide by hanging himself with a clothesline in the toilet of his ward on the night of Sept. 15, the fourth day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday, after he met with his family during open visitation hours.

Engin Altay, deputy chairman of the main opposition CHP parliamentary group, said the death of prosecutor Yiğit should be investigated.

Altay said: “There is doubt in our minds. We think that Seyfettin Yiğit was killed.”²³

Yiğit’s family also claimed that the prosecutor’s death was a murder, not a suicide.²⁴ Yiğit was incarcerated in the H-type prison on July 20, along with other judges and prosecutors being held in custody. He was married and the father of four. His body was found at 5:30 a.m. by friends in his ward.

The autopsy of Yiğit was performed at the Bursa Council of Forensic Medicine. Yiğit’s wife, Ayşe İlknur testified that her husband was not a person who would commit suicide. Yiğit’s 16-year-old daughter Ayça Yiğit said her father had nothing to do with the Gülen movement,

23] Yiğit’in ölümü araştırılmalı (04.10.2016) <http://sinoppusulasi.com.tr/mobil/news.php?id=1498>

24] Cezaevinde ölü bulunan savcının ailesi: İntihar değil cinayet (17.09.2016) <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201609171024863842-savci-intihar-cinayet-feto/>

either, and in fact was an opponent of Gülen. She argued that it was a murder.

Ayça Yiğit stated that her father Yiğit wrote many letters from prison after he was arrested. She said: “We had an open contact meeting during a visit to the prison to see my father because of Eid al-Adha. He was quite well. He was not bad. He told us that he wrote letters to us and that he would send them slowly. My dad did not write those letters at the last moment. There were three or four letters. A letter was written to President Erdoğan. We are waiting for the letters. We haven’t gotten them yet. But we do not believe they were suicide notes.”²⁵

In the following days Ayşe İlknur said she glanced at letters that were put in the case file at the prosecutor’s office. Yiğit said he wanted his wife to take good care of the children in the letters that went into the investigation file. Yiğit wanted their children to study well in school and help their mother. He wanted her to ask around for a person in Kağıthane who was a friend in common with President Erdoğan. He also wrote that he liked President Erdoğan very much.

His wife also noted that although her husband allegedly committed suicide on Sept. 15, there was a date on one of the letters of Sept. 19. Obviously he would send the letter that day, suggesting he was not planning suicide at all. “The words in the letter do not sound like those of a person who is prone to committing suicide,” she said, adding that her husband had advised many things to her and the children for the future. “We expect these letters to be given to us in the coming days,” she underlined.

The investigation into the death of the Seyfettin Yiğit is still ongoing.



ALİ DEREBAŞI, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

Ali Derebaşı, the director of the Barbaros kindergarten in the central province of Kayseri, reportedly committed suicide after his wife, who was also a teacher, had been brought to court on allegations that she was a member of the Gülen movement and was suspended from her job on Sept. 19 from the school he directed.

Derebaşı came to the kindergarten building at 6:30 in the morning and ended his life by hanging himself. Crime scene investigation teams and homicide detectives reportedly found a note from Derebaşı that said: “Death is at the door. It is not clear when death will come.” It is claimed that Derebaşı, married and a father of

three, had a psychological disorder.

25] İntihar eden savcı 4 mektup yazmış (26.09.2016)
<http://www.gazetevatan.com/intihar-eden-savci-4-mektup-yazmis-989201-gundem/>

CEGERXWIN (CİGERHUN) AKDENİZ, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

Cegerxwin Akdeniz (17) reportedly died in a fire started by juvenile prisoners at the Şırnak T-Type Prison on Sept. 28. His father, Atilla Akdeniz, was convinced that his son had been executed in prison. He said his son, who had been reported to have lost his life in the fire, was detained in the southeastern town of Cizre nine months earlier. Atilla stated that his son and his friend Seyit Rıza Şaran (16) were alone in the cell when the fire started. Reminding that guards patrolled the cells 24 hours a day, father Akdeniz said: “How could they be burned? My son’s whole body was totally burned. This is savagery. My son reportedly died from smoke inhalation, but his body was incinerated.”

The father claimed that his son was executed by state forces. He noted: “Every time we went to see our son they said there was a curfew in the city, so we could not see him... They put my son in a cell and then burned him to death.” An investigation into the death in the prison was launched.²⁶

SEYİT RIZA ŞARAN, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

Seyit Rıza Şaran (16) was seriously injured in the prison fire in the Şırnak T-Type Closed Prison and was taken to Şırnak State Hospital. He reportedly died on Oct. 3. An investigation into his death was opened.

Lawyer Büşra Demir, a member of the Human Rights Association, claimed in her report about the prison that the pressure on political prisoners in the Şırnak T-Type Closed Prison increased every day and that activities such as social events, sports and such had been prohibited since July 15, 2016. She stated that a juvenile prisoner who had previously been in the same ward with Cigerhun Akdeniz and Seyit Rıza Şaran knew of the event but did not want to talk about it because he was afraid.

EMRAH OĞUZ, OCTOBER 3, 2016



Emrah Oğuz (32), a police officer employed by the Bayburt Police Department and one of tens of thousands of police officers who were dismissed from their jobs, reportedly committed suicide on Oct. 3, 2016. Oğuz allegedly ended his life by shooting himself with his gun in the garden of the Bayburt Police Department, where he went to hand in his gun.

26] “Oğlumu yaktılar” (01.10.2016) <http://ozgurlukcudemokrasi.com/2016/10/01/oglumu-yaktilar/>

ADEM TIRAŞ, OCTOBER 4, 2016

Adem Tıraş (26), a police officer suspended from duty in Mersin, committed suicide by shooting himself in a park one day after he handed in his gun and badge to the police department. He reportedly committed suicide after becoming depressed.



ÖNDER IRMAK, OCTOBER 10, 2016



Air Force noncommissioned officer Sgt. Maj. Önder Irmak (39), who was taken into custody by the Eskişehir Police Department over alleged links to the Gülen movement, reportedly committed suicide by drinking cleaning liquids he took from the bathroom during his detention. However, in detention centers, there are no chemicals kept in the bathrooms, including cleaning materials.

The prosecutor's office opened an investigation into workers Ö.Ç and M.Y., who allegedly left the chemicals in the toilet, and into the police officers working in the anti-terror branch. The Eskişehir Police Department claimed in a written statement that there were serious allegations about Irmak as part of the investigation into the Gülen movement. Irmak's family believes the incident was not a suicide, but death as a result of torture.

HASAN TAŞTAN, OCTOBER 11, 2016

Hasan Taştan (53), an imam who was allegedly depressed, committed suicide after his son M. Taştan was arrested as part of a crackdown on the Gülen movement in Hakkari province. Taştan, who served as the imam of the Zeytinli Garden Mosque in the Turgut Türkalp neighborhood of the Toroslar district of Mersin, committed suicide in the house next to the mosque after night prayer.



ENVER ŞENTÜRK, OCTOBER 13, 2016



Enver Şentürk (31) was suspended from his job as a guard in the Adıyaman E-Type Prison over alleged links to the Gülen movement. He reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself in the stairwell of the eighth floor of a 10-story building. Şentürk was married and the father of one.

DURSUN KAYNAR, OCTOBER 13, 2016

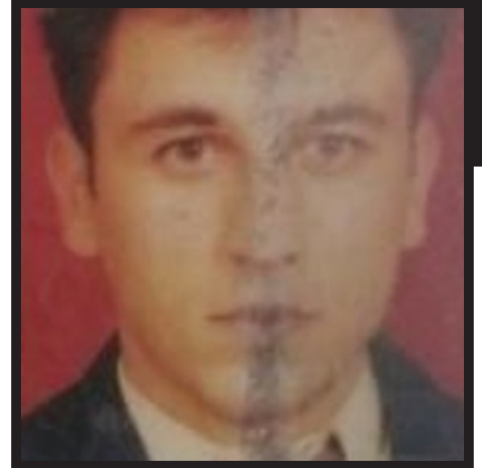
Dursun Kaynar (49), who was detained for the crimes of murder and causing bodily harm, committed suicide in the Kütahya E-Type Closed Prison. Kaynar had wounded Ömriye Uçar and killed her son on Oct. 6, 2015 in Kütahya province. He had been detained for a year and was alleged to have suffered from psychological disorders and committed suicide by hanging himself.

MEHMET ALİ İNAL, OCTOBER 20, 2016

Mehmet Ali İnal (47), who was detained in the Sivas E-Type Closed Prison, reportedly hung himself with a belt in his ward. An investigation was opened into his death. İnal was detained on July 12 for injuring bus hostess G.Y.

HAKKI TOPAL, OCTOBER 21, 2016

Hakkı Topal, a police officer who was suspended from duty on Oct. 4 in Çorum over alleged links to Gülen, allegedly committed suicide. He reportedly hanged himself in a forested area near Seydim Lake. Cigdem Topal, the wife of the police officer, stated that she called the police when she could not reach her husband on his mobile phone. Police and gendarmerie teams found Topal's body hanging from a tree. The prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into the death of the police officer. His wife said, "You have finished us, my husband was not guilty." Topal was the father of two.

**CAHİT KORKMAZ, OCTOBER 25, 2016**

Cahit Korkmaz (44), a police officer in Bursa, reportedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his own gun out of fear of being investigated over his alleged links to the Gülen movement.

Korkmaz, a police officer for 18 years, served in the archives section at the Çekirge Police Department in the district of Osmangazi. He reportedly went to the recreation room and fired one shot at his heart after he prayed. It was stated that his colleagues who ran to the room at the sound of a gunshot found Korkmaz lying in a pool of blood. Korkmaz, who was taken to the hospital, was unable to be saved.

Korkmaz reportedly asked his friend just half an hour before the incident: “Are they including me in the investigation of FETÖ because I pray? Will they put me in prison? Will my family perish? I’m afraid I’ll be hunted because of Bylock wiretapping.” Korkmaz reportedly left this note to his family: “I love you very much, you have nothing to do with me committing suicide. Only fear has brought me to this point.”

► İRFAN KIZILARSLAN, NOVEMBER 5, 2016

İrfan Kızılarşlan, a colonel who was the head of the Kastamonu Gendarmerie Regional Command, was arrested on July 17 as part of an investigation into the coup attempt. It was stated that Kızılarşlan, who was subsequently dismissed from the Turkish Armed Forces, allegedly committed suicide in his prison ward.

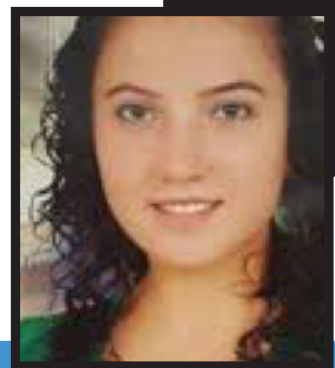


Kızılarşlan was being held at the Tokat T-Type Çamlıbel Prison. Kızılarşlan’s body, which was found early in the morning, was taken to the Tokat State Hospital morgue for an autopsy. An investigation into the incident has begun. It was claimed that Kızılarşlan committed suicide by hanging himself from a window with a shoestring. An investigation was opened since security precautions are very strict in the prison and shoestrings are forbidden there. However, the fate of the investigation is not known.

► ZEHRA EPLİ, NOVEMBER 7, 2016

Zehra Epli, detained at Gebze Prison for Women, ended her life by setting herself on fire in protest of the arrest of Kurdish politicians. Lawyers from the Libertarian Lawyers Association and Arif Yılmaz, co-chair of Istanbul Solidarity with Prisoners Association, went to the facility to obtain information from the authorities.

Epli’s cellmates told lawyers that “Epli set herself ablaze to protest operations targeting Kurdish lawmakers and the government’s security policies.” According to the Milliyet newspaper and IHA news agency, Epli ended her life by hanging herself with a headscarf. Epli, who was convicted of membership in the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK),



reportedly hanged herself early in the morning, and guards called 112 after finding her body. A 112 Emergency Service team performed 45 minutes of heart massage on Epli, but she could not be saved. The prosecutor's office has launched an investigation into the incident.

BURAK AÇIKALIN, NOVEMBER 8, 2016

Burak Açıkalın, who was detained in an F-type prison in the Hacılar district of Kırıkkale, allegedly committed suicide on Nov. 8, 2016. Açıkalın was among a number of engineers employed by the intelligence branch of the police department and was detained after July 15 on the grounds that he allegedly leaked information to a government whistleblower on Twitter known as Fuat Avni. It was claimed that he was tortured after refusing to sign a prepared confession.

MUHARREM BAHÇIVAN, NOVEMBER 11, 2016

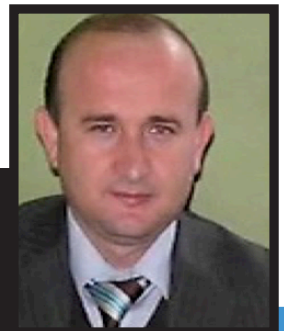
Muharrem Bahçivan (29) reportedly committed suicide by hanging himself in the Aydın E-Type Prison, where he was imprisoned for assault. It was stated that Bahçivan had previously been in the open section of the prison and was put in the closed section because he had escaped and was captured some time earlier. An investigation is under way into the death of Bahçivan, whose jail sentence was about to be completed in January 2017.

MEHMET EMİN DOĞAN, NOVEMBER 18, 2016

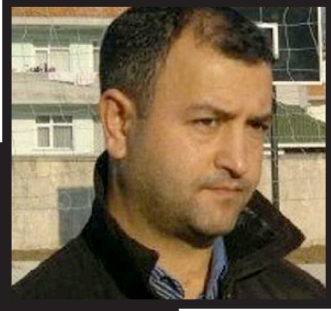
Mehmet Emin Doğan (29), who had been incarcerated in the Tekirdag F-Type Closed Prison for six years, reportedly committed suicide. A brother of Doğan also died suspiciously seven months ago in Batman Prison. The prison administration explained that Doğan committed suicide because of "psychological problems." Doğan's family, suspicious of this statement, filed a criminal complaint.

BEHÇET EMDİ, NOVEMBER 19, 2016

Behçet Emdî (43), a teacher who had previously been suspended from duty and arrested on Nov. 17 on coup charges, allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself in prison. Emdî, who was taken to the Karabük T-Type Prison, was reported to have taken his life by hanging himself with a shoestring attached to the window in the prison bathroom at 7:00 a.m. on the morning of July 19. Emdî was found dead by other prisoners. Emdî's body was brought to Ankara for autopsy. He was the father of two and worked as a social studies teacher in the Safranbolu Misak-ı Milli Secondary School, Emdî's wife, a nurse, was previously fired as part of an investigation into the Gülen movement.



HAYRULLAH TAMTÜRK, NOVEMBER 21, 2016

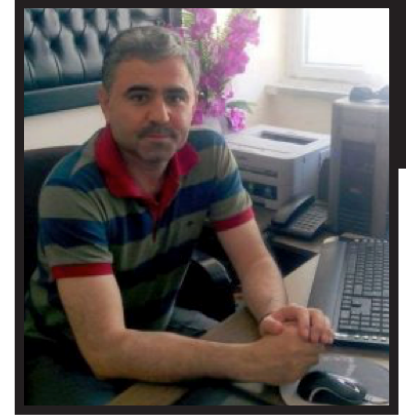


Hayrullah Tamtürk (40) was dismissed from his job while working as deputy police chief in Bilecik province. He had 17 years of service before he was purged as part of a government crackdown on the Gülen movement.

The deputy chief took his wife and children to visit his father-in-law in the town of Karasu in Sakarya province. He allegedly hung himself when he was alone in the house. The family found his body.

ERGÜLÜ YILDIZ, NOVEMBER 24, 2016

Ergülü Yıldız (47), a teacher who was suspended from his job after the failed coup attempt, allegedly committed suicide on Nov. 24, Teachers Day. Yıldız was working as an assistant principal at an elementary school in the Sungurlu district of Çorum province. He was first suspended and then taken into custody on alleged links to the Gülen movement. He was later released under judicial supervision and was obliged to check in at the police station every week.



Relatives who had not heard from him for some time called the police. When officers broke into his apartment in the Fatih district of Istanbul, they found his body hanging from the ceiling.

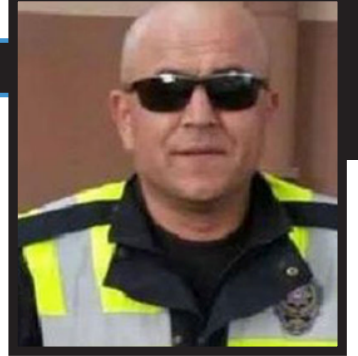
ÜNAL TAKMAKLI, NOVEMBER 29, 2016



Ünal Takmaklı (77), a businessman who voluntarily testified to the Aydın Nazilli Police Department even though there was no investigation into him after his two brothers were taken into custody on coup charges, was arrested on July 28. He was the founder of the Uğur Deep Freezing Plant and known for his philanthropic and charitable donations. He died on Nov. 29, 2016 reportedly as a result of a heart attack at the Menemen T-Type Prison, where he was being held. A prosecutor launched an investigation into his death.

HASAN HÜSEYİN CAN, DECEMBER 1, 2016

Hasan Hüseyin Can (46), a police officer who was working at the motor vehicle registry and inspection unit in Hatay province, was taken into custody over his alleged links to the Gülen movement. He was later released but was required to check in with the police department on a weekly basis. Can, a father of two, allegedly shot himself in the head while home alone.



BEYTULLAH AKİL, DECEMBER 11, 2016

Beytullah Akil, who was incarcerated in the Şırnak T-Type Prison, allegedly ended his life by hanging to protest prison conditions and pressures on the Kurdish people. Akil was arrested three years ago and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Human Rights Association (İHD) lawyer Gülseren Yoleri said: “We were worried about the allegations of torture that we heard. Our last visit was to Şırnak Prison. A young prisoner was paralyzed because of torture. Although there were traces of torture on his face, the doctor reported that he was healthy. After this meeting, Akil committed suicide in order to protest the torture.”²⁷

MEHMET OLDUM, DECEMBER 21, 2016

Mehmet Oldum (34), a police officer, was taken into custody over alleged links to the Gülen movement. He allegedly hung himself in the house of his grandfather in the village of Ardiç in the Osmaniye district. Oldum’s dead body was found by his brother. An investigation into his death launched by the prosecutor’s office is still under way.

HAKAN EKİNCİ, DECEMBER 23, 2016

Hakan Ekinci, a convict in the Edirne F-Type High Security Prison, was found to have committed suicide by hanging himself from iron bed railings with a bed sheet on Dec. 23 after he was told he would be transferred to another prison. Ekinci was convicted on charges of “damaging public property, threat, insult, theft, minor fraud and drug distribution.”

²⁷ Cezaevinden nakil istemi reddedilen hükümlü intihar etti (20.12.2016) <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/cezaevinden-nakil-istemi-reddedilen-hukumli-int-40317999>

MEHMET İNAM, OCAK 5, 2017

Mehmet İnam, a dentist in İzmir's Kemalpaşa district, was arrested as part of a government crackdown on the Gülen movement. He allegedly died of a heart attack on Jan. 5, 2017 in Menemen Prison, where he was being held. Relatives claimed he was not given medication that he needed for a heart problem. It is alleged that treatment for a large number of prisoners who have serious health problems is not being fully provided.²⁸

SADULLAH KARA, JANUARY 7, 2017

Sadullah Kara (35), a police officer who was assigned to the Kartal Courthouse, allegedly committed suicide when he was notified of his suspension over an investigation into the Gülen movement. When police units came to inform him of the decision and asked him to hand over his gun and ID, Kara reportedly shot himself in the head in the police station located at the courthouse. However, it was later revealed that there was no official notification of his suspension but that he was asked to report to police headquarters and turn over his gun.

ZEKİ CEZAYIRLIOĞLU, JANUARY 16, 2017



Zeki Cezayirlioğlu (44) was a police officer who had been suspended over alleged links to the Gülen movement but was later reinstated after he was cleared of all charges. He allegedly tried to commit suicide by drinking pesticide due to the exclusion and mobbing he had suffered since returning to duty.

Cezayirlioğlu was assigned to the Karabük Police Vocational Training Center when he attempted to kill himself and was immediately taken to the hospital. He recovered after treatment. However, following his discharge from the hospital, Cezayirlioğlu committed suicide by shooting himself in the head while his wife and two children were at home.

28] İHD: There are 905 sick detainees in prisons: The Human Rights Association (İHD) announced on Oct. 26, World Patients' Rights Day, that there are 905 sick patients in total in prisons and 323 of them are seriously ill. (28.07.2016) <http://gazeteyolculuk.net/gundem/tokat-cezaevinde-hak-ihlalleri-tedavisi-yapilmayan-tutuklu-kor-oldu.html> (31.12.2016) <http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/ahmet-turkun-saglik-durumu-hakkinda-aciklama> (14.12.2016) <http://www.nazillimanset.com/nazillili-isadamlarinin-durumu-ciddi/>

HASAN ORHAN ÇETİN, FEBRUARY 19, 2017

Hasan Orhan Çetin (30), a biochemistry assistant at the İzmir Katip Çelebi University Atatürk Teaching and Research Hospital, allegedly committed suicide after he became depressed following his suspension from duty as part of a crackdown on the Gülen movement. He reportedly jumped from the 10th floor of the hospital where he worked and ended his life. Devastated by her husband's death, his wife was hospitalized for treatment in the same hospital.

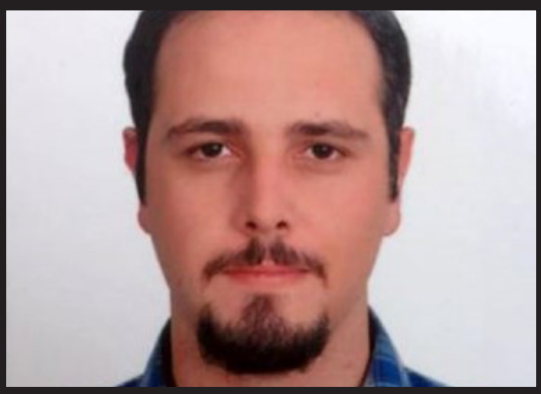


Çetin was dismissed from his job two days before he reportedly committed suicide. Ahmet Doğruyol, head of the İzmir branch of the Turkish Health Union, said: "Labeling as traitors or punishing people who work and function as law-abiding citizens without seeing the result of legal proceedings hurts the people's conscience and causes trauma. Our duty as a state is not to lose people but to win people." ²⁹ The public prosecutor launched an investigation into Çetin's suicide.

MEHMET FATİH TRAŞ, FEBRUARY 25, 2017

Mehmet Fatih Traş (34), a research assistant at Çukurova University in the southern Turkish province of Adana, committed suicide in his home after he was fired from his job at the university.

Traş was one of the signatories of a peace declaration which in early 2016 called on the government to halt operations by security forces in southeastern Turkey, restore peace to the nation and return to the negotiating table to restart shelved talks with the Kurds to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. A total of 1,128 academics signed the declaration, which attracted widespread criticism from the government.



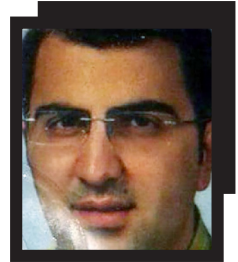
Traş was fired from his job at the university after he finished his doctoral studies. His employment contract was not renewed. The Adana branch of the Education Personnel Union (Eğitim Sen) made a statement concerning Traş's death and said the academic committed suicide as a result of psychological trauma he experienced after losing his job.

²⁹ Fetöden açığa alınan doktor intihar etti (19.02.2017)
<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/fetoden-aciga-alinan-doktor-intihar-etti-40370758>

The peace declaration frustrated President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, leading to retribution against the academics. Some of the insults Erdoğan used against them included “so-called intellectuals,” “a flock called intellectuals,” “traitors” and “rough copies of intellectuals.”

MUSTAFA SADIK AKDAĞ, FEBRUARY 27, 2017

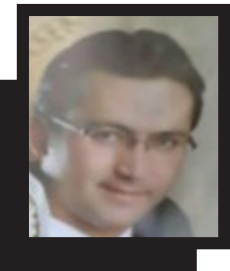
Mustafa Sadık Akdağ (34), assistant professor in the faculty of dentistry at Ordu University in Turkey’s Black Sea region, committed suicide, apparently because of the psychological trauma he experienced from being investigated due to alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. Akdağ shot himself to death in the house of one of his friends in the Black Sea province of Trabzon. Leaving a suicide note behind, he wrote: “Nobody is responsible for my death. An accusation was directed at me. I am referring those who directed this accusation at me to God.”



Turkish media reports said Akdağ was recently interrogated by prosecutors due to alleged links to the Gülen movement and released. Akdağ’s body was taken to the Trabzon Council of Forensic Medicine for autopsy, while an investigation has been launched into his death.

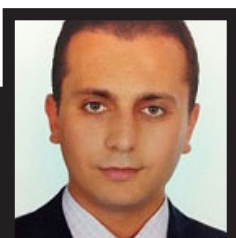
MEHMET TOSUN, MARCH 6, 2017

Mehmet Tosun (29), a judge who was expelled from his job and detained on July 19, 2016 over alleged involvement in the July 15 coup attempt, died of cancer. He was interrogated by the police and prosecutor but later released under judicial supervision that required him to check in with the police department on a regular basis and banned from travelling abroad.



MUSTAFA ZÜMRE, MARCH 8, 2017

Mustafa Zümre, a computer engineer at the 15th Missile Base Command in İstanbul who was dismissed from his post, has been found dead after he was missing for 78 days. Zümre, for whom an arrest warrant was issued due to alleged Gülen links, reportedly went to the Umurca village of Edirne’s Meriç district along with his wife and children on Dec. 12 to cross the Maritsa River to reach Greece in order to escape the witch-hunt against Gülen followers in Turkey.



Zümre reportedly jumped into the Maritsa River while he was fleeing a gendarmerie team. His body was found in the Maritsa River on March 8 by Turkish military patrols six kilometers from the riverbank where he went missing.

According to a report by online newsportal TurkishMinute.com, Zümre was tortured during the custody. “During the mass arrests [following the coup attempt of July 15], Mustafa was also detained and released. When I asked him what happened during detention, he said: ‘Let’s not talk about it. Some parts can never be told. But I can say that they tried everything you can imagine as torture on me,’” said the source, who asked to remain anonymous. “Mustafa told me that ‘if they detain me again, they will not leave me alive.’ That’s the reason he was trying to leave Turkey,” added the source.

SUICIDE ATTEMPTS NOT RESULTING IN DEATH

Most of those who attempted to commit suicide were successful, but some were saved. A few of them whose names were reported in the press are as follows:

BİRKAN ÇÖREZ, JULY 22, 2016

Col. Birkan Çörez, an instructor at Kuleli Military High School, wanted to commit suicide by jumping from the Bosphorus Bridge. Çörez was persuaded to stop his attempt and was later taken into custody. He was released because there was no investigation into him as part of the coup attempt. In his police interrogation, Çörez said he had tried to prevent the coup plotters but failed.

SEVİM G., AUGUST 16, 2016

Sevim G., wife of M.G., who was taken into custody as part of an investigation into the Gülen movement in Denizli, attempted to commit suicide by cutting her throat with a knife on Aug. 16, 2016. It was claimed that she wanted to kill herself because she could not accept the detention of her husband.

MEDİNE ÜNAL, AUGUST 26, 2016

Medina Ünal attempted to take her life by overdosing on medication on Aug. 26, 2016 after the arrest of her husband, Umit Ünal, a public prosecutor, on charges of alleged links to the Gülen movement.

H. H., SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

H.H. (46), a teacher who was arrested as part of the crackdown on the Gülen movement in Kayseri, allegedly attempted to commit suicide by hanging himself in the Nevşehir E Type Closed Prison, where he was transferred on Sept. 1. Prison guards, alerted by H.H.'s cellmates, administered emergency treatment. H.H. was rushed to Nevşehir State Hospital by ambulance.

S. F., JANUARY 7, 2017

S.F. attempted suicide after he was reported several times to the police by anonymous sources claiming that he was linked to the Gülen movement. He reportedly fell into depression and tried to kill himself by drinking pesticide in the village of Bostanözü in Karaman province. He was saved after being taken to a hospital.

A.A., JANUARY 8, 2017

A.A. (36), a police officer, was arrested and incarcerated in Samsun Prison as part of an investigation into the Gülen movement. He allegedly attempted to take his own life by hanging himself in the toilet. A.A. was rescued by an 112 Emergency Service team and was taken to Samsun Teaching and Research Hospital for treatment. An investigation was launched into the case.

MISSING PERSONS

There are also cases of missing persons who are not on the list of “suspicious deaths” but are missing and have not been located since the July 15 failed coup attempt. Their families are concerned about their safety.

A.O., NOVEMBER 1, 2016

A.O., an intelligence officer who was suspended and later dismissed over alleged links to the Gülen movement, has been missing since Nov. 1. The family is worried about his life and filed an application with authorities stating that A.O. was suspended from his job on July 17 and then dismissed.

His wife and her lawyer, Süleyman Serdar Balkanlı, applied to the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) to inquire about A.O. MİT’s response was that “A.O was discharged from his job on Aug. 2, 2016 as result of the investigation and a complaint was filed against him with the Ankara Public Prosecutor’s Office. There is no any other record of him since then.

A columnist from the Sözcü newspaper, Saygı Öztürk, wrote about the case and made this comment about A.O.: “Suicides and missing persons should be taken very seriously. It should not be ignored that foreign intelligence services or terrorist organizations could be behind these events.”³⁰

30] Engineer who drowned while fleeing Turkey was tortured in custody (17.03. 2017) <https://www.turkishminute.com/2017/03/17/engineer-drowned-maritsa-river-tortured-custody/>

SUICIDE CASES MAY INCREASE

International and national human rights organizations are concerned that cases of torture and abuse in detention centers and prisons are on the rise. Due to the fact that the government is not forthcoming with information on such cases but rather tries to hush them up by intimidation tactics, many victims and their relatives are afraid of sharing information with the public. Retaliation and punishment by authorities are of paramount concern in the minds of many families who are forced to remain silent.

There is genuine concern in Turkey that the number of suicide cases which were in fact murders but portrayed as suicide may actually increase further in the oppressive environment under its current government, which is tightly controlled by President Erdoğan. Many may feel frustrated and helpless after the government unlawfully purged them from government jobs, seized their assets or imprisoned them on highly dubious charges under questionable evidence, if any. Families are subjected to restrictions in prison visits to their loved ones and face difficulty in finding lawyers to represent them. In many cases, prisoners are transferred from one prison to another, further burdening families that have to endure long trips just to see their imprisoned relatives.

The cases of suspicious suicides and extrajudicial executions as well as torture may very well increase as a law that grants police the authority to interrogate detainees whenever they want and for as long as they want without a prosecutor's order or court supervision has been passed by the government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Judicial independence and impartiality must be restored in Turkey to enable the end of political repression. There must be no impunity for torture and cases of ill-treatment, and those who engage in such practices must be held accountable.

The state is obligated to protect citizens' right to life in all circumstances, even in cases where a person attempts to take his or her own life. This is an obligation that must be met with greater sensitivity, especially for people in prison. Even if the suspects and detainees committed suicide as claimed, this does not eliminate the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice, which oversees prisons. Rigorous international monitoring is also needed to insure compliance with relevant conventions that Turkey has acceded to and agreed.

Unfortunately, the existence of judicial independence in Turkey is questionable given the immense pressure exerted by the government and President Erdoğan. When thousands of judges and prosecutors continue to be detained or arrested at the whim of Turkey's strongman president, it is impossible for the judiciary to render decisions that are not to the liking of the government.

The government brought in partisans and loyalists to replace thousands of sacked judges and prosecutors, making it impossible for a thorough investigation into alleged cases of torture and abuse in prisons and detention centers. The systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms has become the rule rather than the exception in the new Turkey. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights suggests there has been serious rights violations in torture cases and suspicious deaths in Turkey, in sharp contrast to other European countries.

Turkey should restore the rule of law and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and fulfill its international commitments that are part of the conventions to which it has acceded. International human rights organizations must monitor, supervise and document torture and abuse cases as well as extrajudicial executions in Turkey. The victimization of families as a result of these gross violations should be addressed by helping them cope with the trauma by providing legal, psychological and medical aid. Families who avoid even filing complaints about these violations due to the prevailing empire of fear and witch hunting in Turkey should be assured of their safety and protected.