

MAY 2018 | ACADEMICS AT RISK

REPORT ON THE STATE OF HIGHER
EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

THE DETERIORATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: PERILS OF PERSECUTING ACADEMICIANS



PREPARED BY ACADEMICS AT RISK

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA IN TURKEY

The coup attempt on July 15, 2016 has been the utmost damaging incident that continues to affect the Turkish legal and political life. The July 15 coup attempt has produced greater sociological consequences than combined effects of coup d'etats and military memorandums throughout the history of the Republic. Due to the coup attempt, hundreds of thousands of people have lost their livelihoods due to allegations of assisting the coup attempt and being the member of a terrorist organization, been subjected to unlawful practices of the state of emergency period, and more importantly public trust has been shaken to its core.

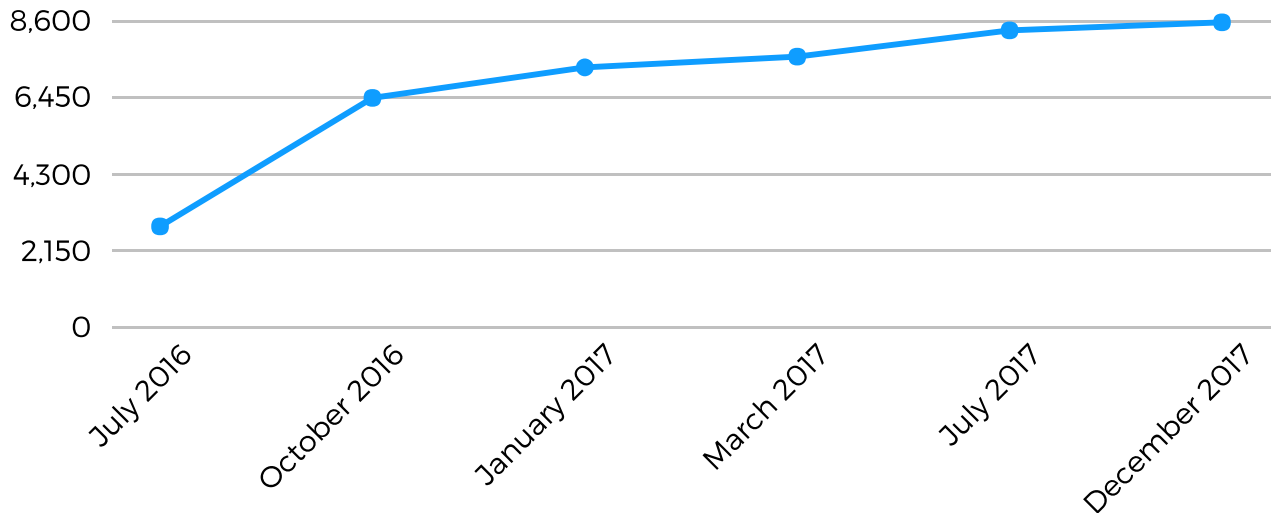
After the July 15 coup attempt, the National Security Council (MGK) and the Ministerial Cabinet declared a state of emergency for a period of three months on July 20, 2016 on the basis of the Turkish Constitution's Article 120. After the implementation of the state of emergency plans, the first emergency decree-law (KHK), No. 667 KHK, was published on July 23, 2016 and it was followed by a total of 31 KHKs in the following 20 months. The extension of the state of emergency every three months and successive introduction of emergency decree-laws created a "legal" basis for unlawful practices in Turkey.

The number of administrative employees at universities shut down by the No. 667 KHK due to their alleged relationship with the Gulen Movement is 1,349. According to the official figures published by Turkey's Council of Higher Education (YOK), 2,808 academicians have lost their jobs. According to a report prepared by the Human Rights Partner Platform (IHOP), of the thousands of dismissed academicians, 372 have either been dismissed directly by KHK or their contracts have not been renewed. As a result, when the numbers of KHK dismissals and the signatories to the Academics for Peace petition are combined, a total of 8.247 academicians have lost their jobs. However, according to another data set compiled by BBC Turkey, at least 23.427 academicians have lost their positions either due to direct dismissals or university closures since September 1, 2016.



OPPRESSION IN NUMBERS

ACADEMICS DISMISSED BY DECREE-LAW



DISMISSALS AND DISPLACEMENTS SINCE JULY 15, 2016

60,000

DISPLACED STUDENTS

8,535

DISMISSED ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

15

CLOSED UNIVERSITIES

On July 23, two days after the declaration of the state of emergency, the state ordered 15 universities closed, displacing some 60,000 students and leaving 2,808 academic personnel unemployed. Since then, the state has issued nine separate decrees ordering the dismissals of higher education personnel and expulsions of students. To date, these actions have rendered jobless some 8,535 academic personnel (see chart above), as well as at least 1,349 administrative personnel. Those individuals who have been permanently dismissed are also subject to a lifetime ban from applying to civil service positions, effectively ending their higher education careers in Turkey.

DISMISSALS AND DETAINMENTS

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Highlights from Scholar's at Risk's "Letter on Attacks on Higher Education in Turkey"



Robert Quinn
Executive Director of
Scholars at Risk

The targeting in January 2016 of the signatories to what came to be known as the "Academics for Peace" petition marked a major escalation of actions against higher education personnel in Turkey. Following the release of the petition, all 1,128 of the signatories then in Turkey were placed under investigation; a large percentage of those were subsequently targeted with administrative, civil and criminal investigations, dismissals and expulsions, arrests and detentions, prosecutions, and restrictions on travel. The situation worsened dramatically following the government's declaration of a state of emergency in July 2016, with to date more than 9,200 higher education personnel and students targeted directly, and over 60,000 higher education scholars, administrators and students materially affected by government and institutional actions.

We therefore respectfully urge you to take all necessary steps to reverse these dangerous and destructive actions. In particular, we implore you to: (i) suspend any investigations, prosecutions, detentions, or other actions against individuals based solely on the nonviolent exercise of the right to academic freedom, freedom of expression, or freedom of association; (ii) ensure the restoration of status for those denied access to study or to their professions based on such conduct; (iii) take the steps necessary to ensure that the State of Emergency Procedures Investigation Commission has the resources and independence needed to ensure just and swift resolution of wrongful dismissals and expulsions; and (iv) ensure the restoration of passports and the right to travel for those affected by the actions described above, including persons dismissed from their positions and their families.

"If not quickly reversed, these actions will undermine Turkey's status as an international center for learning and intellectual exchange"

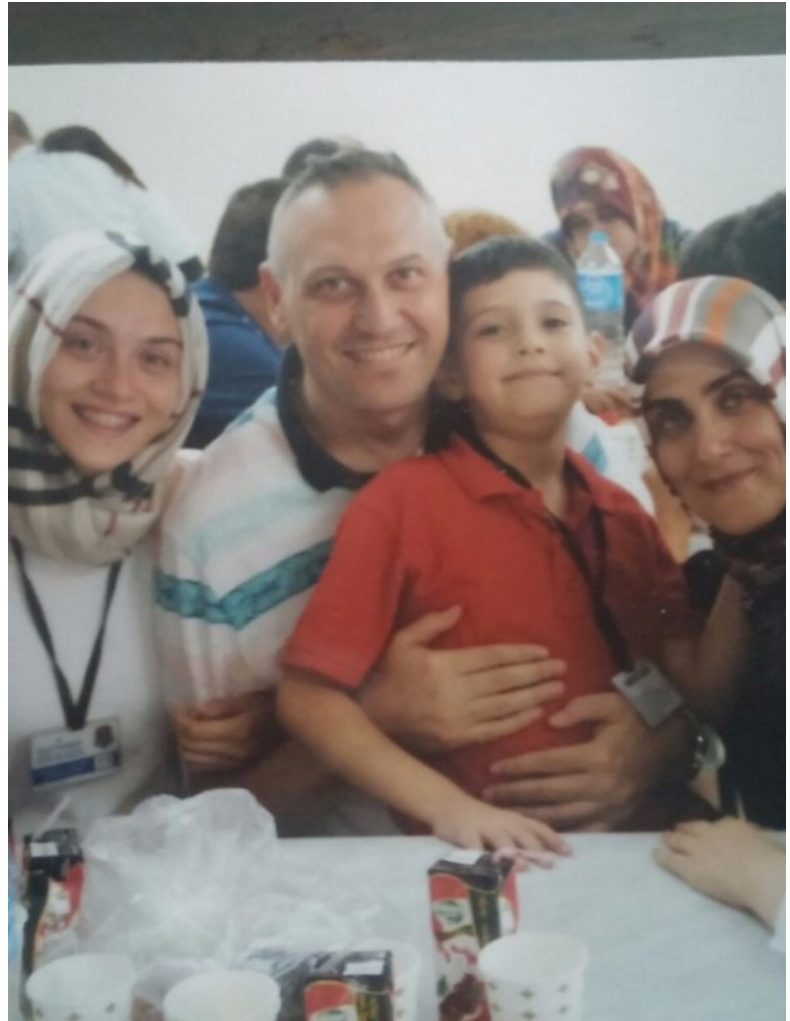
Twitter: @AcademicsAtRisk

A TRAGIC CASE OF DISMISSAL

PROFESSOR DR. OZCERIT LEFT TO DIE

Summary of Advocates of Silenced Turkey's "The Assault on Academia"

Dr. Ahmet Turan Ozcerit, an associate professor at Sakarya University's Computer Engineering Department, was detained as a result of phone calls made to the police by an unknown third-party and subjected to 21 days of psychological torture before being transferred to the Balikesir Bandirma Prison. Throughout the next 14 months at the Bandirma Prison, Ozcerit was denied medical treatment despite experiencing serious health problems and he was ultimately diagnosed with colon cancer due to not receiving any preventative treatment. Although Ozcerit was released as a result of intensive legal efforts, his colon cancer had reached stage 4 by the time of his release, given that he was barred from seeing a doctor. Ozcerit was released from custody due to health complications but he passed away on February 12. Ozcerit's pain, who was laid to rest at Ankara's Karsiyaka Cemetery, did not come to an end with his death however. Friends and family who had gathered to mourn Ozcerit's passing were reported to the police by their neighbors for mourning his death. The fact that a mourning family was reported to the police shows the extent of the hate that has been instilled in the Turkish society against the Hizmet Movement.



"Ozcerit was denied medical treatment despite experiencing serious health problems and he was ultimately diagnosed with colon cancer due to not receiving any preventative treatment"