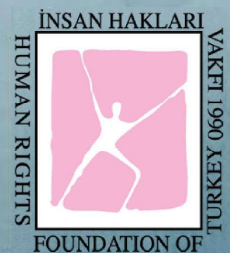


academic purge in Turkey

Human Rights Violations, Losses, and
Empowerment

executive summary

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Preface

Over the last couple of years, universities and academics in Turkey have faced unprecedentedly severe political pressure. Beginning with the by now internationally well-known Peace Petition in January 2016, scholars who publicly took a critical stance against the resumption of armed clashes in Southeastern provinces were widely targeted by state authorities and university administrations alike. The oppression on scholars evolved into a new phase with the State of Emergency in July 2016. A total of 6,081 academics were dismissed from their posts by emergency decrees, 406 of whom were the signatories of the Peace Petition. The sweeping measures taken against academics included imprisonment, arrests, undue treatment, judicial prosecutions, university-based disciplinary investigations, dismissals and travel bans.

This executive summary outlines the main findings of a comprehensive research which explored Turkey's academic purge and its effects. The research was part of a two-year project, "Supporting Academics as a Human Rights Actor in a Challenging Context", run by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). The research team was composed of academics who had themselves been dismissed from public universities for having signed the Peace Petition. The full report of the research, originally published in Turkish in November 2019, is available at www.tihvakademi.org.

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1. Introduction

During the two-year State of Emergency from July 20, 2016 to July 19, 2018, a total of 6,081 academics were dismissed from Turkish universities by emergency executive decrees. This study aims to investigate the juridical, economic, social and traumatic impacts of human rights violations against these academics. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the scope of the human rights violations individually experienced by the dismissed academics?
2. What are the traumatic effects of the human rights violations, threats and oppressive practices on such academics?
3. What sort of remedial methods have the academics developed in order to cope with these traumatic effects?

The primary focus of this study is to identify human rights violations on the basis of definitions contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the European Convention of Human Rights. The diagnostic framework covers a variety of violations suffered by dismissed academics and their families, paying particular attention to violations of the right to life, liberty and security of person, presumption of innocence, right to protection of privacy, right to work, right to equal pay, right to social security, right to retirement, right to property, right to education, right to assembly and organization, as well as those violations which may be observed during detention or arrest.

The study's second objective is to determine the losses resulting from these violations. "Trauma" is used as the key concept to explain the cycle of violation and loss. In conceptualizing the traumatic process caused by political violence, the research draws on the literature pertaining to social, collective, cultural, complex, and ongoing trauma. The losses examined in the scope of the research are classified as "economic", "academic", "social" and "health related".

The study concludes with an investigation into the means by which the dismissed academics cope with the traumas caused by the human rights violations and consequent losses. In this context, the study also aims to identify the role of individual factors, collectivity and, of course, political processes in handling traumatic effects. Taking these factors into consideration, the study seeks to understand how traditional solidarity networks and forms, institutional solidarity and support practices, social networks and changing social environment played a role in the resilience of dismissed academics and in the remedial reconstruction of their feeling of belonging.

2. Research Method

A mixed research method has been adopted. Surveys were used in order to collect extensive data, while interviews were carried out for a deeper analysis of the data collected.

The research was conducted on the basis of a distinction between two groups of dismissed academics: (1) those who were affiliated with Academics for Peace, i.e. the signatories of the Peace Petition, and (2) those who were dismissed for other reasons. The rationale behind this distinction is that the reason for the dismissal of Academics for Peace – even though not officially declared – was that they overtly signed the petition and went through the same procedure of dismissal.

The research project was originally designed as cross-sectional, to represent 6,081 academics dismissed by emergency decree. However, in the first few months of the fieldwork which started in August 2018, significant limitations were encountered in trying to reach the target sample size. These difficulties included contacting dismissed academics other than Academics for Peace and the high number of refusals by those who were contacted to participate in the surveys and/or interviews. Many of the academics contacted were either unable or unwilling to participate in surveys or interviews due to the ongoing lawsuits and other hardships in their daily lives, most notably feelings of anxiety and the “desire to become invisible”.

Accordingly, the survey was carried out exclusively with Academics for Peace. 248 out of the 398 dismissed signatories participated in the survey, and 244 of those questionnaires were included in the analysis.¹ Thus, the sample of dismissed Academics for Peace was represented by 61.3 percent.² Aside from the representation rate, the distribution of the participants in terms of gender, academic title and scientific background was in conformity with the research universe. A total of 93 academics were interviewed during the research. 50 of them were dismissed for having signed the Peace Petition, while 43 were dismissed for other reasons.³ The distribution of participants in terms of gender, academic title and scientific background was taken into consideration in the former group, but not in the latter. For the latter group, the snowball technique was used. The fieldwork was carried out over an eleven-month period between August 2018 and July 2019.

¹ The total number of signatories of the Peace Petition who were dismissed from their jobs by State of Emergency decrees is 406. Eight of them used to work either in institutions other than universities or as administrative staff at universities, so they were excluded from the research universe. One uncompleted questionnaire and three questionnaires completed during the pilot study were not included in the analysis.

² The representation rate rises to 66 percent, if those dismissed academics who took part in the research team or advised them in the preparation process are excluded from the research universe. Additionally, the fact that a significant number of academics moved abroad should also be taken into consideration.

³ All but two interviews were voice recorded and analyzed through the software package MAXQDA. As two of the academics did not allow voice recording, their interviews were not included in the analysis to avoid inconsistencies. Therefore, the total number of analyzed interviews is 91.

3. Dismissal by Emergency Decree as a Gross Violation of Human Rights

During the State of Emergency, 125,678⁴ people were dismissed from the public sector. Of these, 6,081 were academics dismissed from various universities. Within the framework of this study, dismissal by an emergency decree is considered a “gross violation of human rights”. This requires some clarification.

In international human rights documents and guides, the term “gross violation” is often used interchangeably with “serious violation”. It should be noted, however, that there is no well-established consensus on the scope and content of the phrase. Nevertheless, it is a recurring expression in international human rights documents, which alludes to the fact that it responds to a certain need. The usage of the term clearly covers two major domains of human rights, namely (1) civil and political rights, as well as (2) social and economic rights, while at the same time referring to a broad concept of human dignity.⁵

Advocates of the term often refer to the Vienna Declaration of 1993. “[G]ross and systematic violations”, according to the wording of the Declaration, “include, as well as torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, summary and arbitrary executions, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, all forms of racism, racial discrimination and apartheid, foreign occupation and alien domination, xenophobia, poverty, hunger and other denials of economic, social and cultural rights, religious intolerance, terrorism, discrimination against women and lack of the rule of law.”⁶

Taking our cue from the Vienna Declaration, we argue that dismissal by emergency decree constitutes a gross violation of human rights, firstly because it abrogates the *rule of law* and denies the *right to fair trial*. To use the wording of the Declaration, it is a kind of “summary and arbitrary execution” in that accusation and punishment are imposed simultaneously and without trial, thereby abrogating the *presumption of innocence*.

Secondly, those who have been dismissed in this way have been partially stripped of their *legal personhood* as well as of a good many of their social, political and economic rights, including the right to work, right to education, right to political participation, and right to health care. All of this amounts to a fundamental debasement of one’s status as an equal citizen before the law, and therefore may appropriately be called a form of *civil death*.

Thirdly, dismissal by emergency decree constitutes a gross violation of human rights insofar as it led to *social stigmatization* and *systematic discrimination*. The cited ground for these dismissals was the uncorroborated accusation that the dismissed had been “linked to terrorist organizations”, paving the way for discriminatory formal and informal practices in both social and institutional interactions. Stigmatization through state-sponsored public

⁴ The official number released by the State of Emergency Commission as of January 2, 2020 <https://ohalkomisyonu.tccb.gov.tr/>.

⁵ See Takhmina Karimova, *What amounts to ‘a serious violation of international human rights law’?* (Geneva: Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2014).

⁶ Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June, 1993, §30: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx>.

discourse created a highly hostile social and institutional environment in which attitudes such as feeling reluctant to send one's children to the same school as those of the dismissed turned out to be widespread. Accordingly, the dismissed were forced to hide themselves, become socially invisible, and to form enclosed circles with others in a similar predicament.

The final aspect of why dismissal by emergency decree constitutes a gross violation of human rights is related to *political violence*. In many cases, the dismissed persons were treated as enemies of the state and subjected to arbitrary detention and imprisonment, torture and inhuman treatment. The fact that some of them went “missing” and later turned out to have been illegally detained for months reveals the extent of political violence against the dismissed. Combined with the stigmatizing and discriminatory statements of political authorities, such instances of political violence indicate that the dismissed have been gravely dehumanized by state actors.

In most cases, dismissal by emergency decree was the first or “original” violation, which in turn paved the way for subsequent violations. The next section presents the findings of the field research concerning the human rights violations against dismissed academics.

4. Research Findings on the Violation of Rights

In supplementary lists of the emergency decrees, the Official Gazette published the full names and institutional affiliations of all dismissed personnel, including the academics. This alone constitutes a violation of the presumption of innocence and the right of privacy as prescribed, respectively, in Articles 11 and 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The field research demonstrates that the signatories of the Academics for Peace petition were exposed to a variety of violations beginning in January 2016, i.e., just after the announcement of the petition, whereas other dismissed academics suffered severe violations directly after the State of Emergency was declared in July 2016.

4.1. Violation of the right to life, liberty and security of person: targetings, threats and attacks against academics

Targetings, threats and attacks against academics constitute a direct violation of UDHR Article 3, which states that “everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.”

Participants of the survey reported that information regarding their dismissal were publicly disclosed and with the intent of targeting in diverse media such as national and local news sites, social media, the Official Gazette and the supplementary lists of the emergency decrees. 84.8% of the participants stated that their personal information was disclosed in one or more sites with the intention of targeting. Academics, especially those in small towns, were targeted through the disclosure of their workplace and further threatened. Electronic media with a rate of 72.95% is the leading media for targeting, followed by social media with a rate of 61%. The target pointers mentioned by participants include “the

President”, “the Prime Minister”, “government authorities”, “ministers”, “AKP MPs”, “mayors”, “governors”, “local politicians from AKP and MHP”, “journalists”, “Sedat Peker” and “some faculty members”. Participants also stated that university student councils, other student bodies and ultra-nationalist student groups made targeting statements against them both on Facebook and through flyers distributed on campus.

Academics dismissed for other reasons were also targeted. They were exposed to threats and attacks, both verbal and physical. Violations reportedly took place in “social media”, “national media”, “news agencies”; the perpetrators included “columnists”, “the President”, “the AKP-MHP coalition”, “the police”, “Sedat Peker”, and their own family members. Such violations are at times *generic* in the sense that they address everyone dismissed through emergency decrees, while at other times they are *specifically* directed in person to academics themselves and their families.

55.3% of survey participants stated that they had received a threat either verbally or in writing from at least one of the following sources: other individuals, groups, institutions. Individual threats were received via (1) national and local media, (2) online venues such as social media and e-mails “containing insults, expletives, verbal abuse and threats”, (3) written messages with a similar content left at one’s home or office, and (4) face to face interactions. The leading threat was Sedat Peker’s public statement against Academics for Peace: “We will shower in your blood”. 31 participants of the survey mentioned it as a direct threat. Group threats are reported to have come from the ultra-nationalist “Grey Wolves”, their student organizations at universities, student councils, and AKP’s youth organization. And the major sources of institutional threats are reported to be the pro-government union of teachers (Eğitim-Bir-Sen), universities, and pro-government newspapers.

21 participants affiliated with Academics for Peace reported that they were physically attacked for a reason related to their dismissal.

4.2. Violation of the right to work and the right to equal pay

The first two clauses of UDHR Article 23 state that (1) “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”, and that (2) “everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work”. Both clauses were severely violated in the case of dismissed academics. Dismissal by emergency decree involves an indefinite ban from public duty for life. Moreover, the preclusion of the right to work exceeds the public sector and extends into private employment as well. Upon their dismissal, many academics applied for alternative jobs in the private sector, but were not hired due to special codes in their social security records that intimidated possible employers. Some had to work informally, without job security and with significantly lower wages than they would have received had they been formally hired.

36.9% of the survey participants reported that they were unemployed at the time. But if the retired academics among them is extracted, the unemployment rate becomes 23.8%. 60.2% of the participants stated that they were not hired due to social security records showing

them having been dismissed by emergency decree. An additional 12.6% claimed to have experienced similar difficulties in getting a job. Since the political discourse stigmatizes the dismissed persons as “linked to terrorist organizations”, they are de facto considered to be “objectionable” by employers.

In addition to de facto preventions, there are also official ones. Among these is the cancellation of professional licenses by various authorities. 18 participants stated that their professional license or certificate had been cancelled. These include lawyer license, mediator license, certificate of workplace physician, certificate of occupational safety specialist trainer, and planning competency document for city planners.

During the interviews, academics dismissed for reasons other than the Peace Petition expressed similar difficulties, such as the severe effects of stigmatization in the job market, and their being prevented from practicing various professions through the cancellation of their licenses.

4.3. Violation of the right to social security

According to Article 22 of the UDHR, “everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security”. At the time the survey was carried out, 44.6% of the survey participants were working without social security. Dismissed academics felt constrained to accept precarious work principally because they had no other form of income or financial support. Another frequently cited reason for accepting this type of work was the fact that employers, fearful of government sanctions and other punitive measures for hiring someone dismissed by decree, would only agree to employ dismissed academics on an informal basis, i.e., without registering with them on the social security system.

Another aspect of social security is the right to retirement. In some cases, dismissed academics who qualified for retirement reported that they were not paid their full pension, or that the bureaucratic procedures were more protracted than those who were not dismissed.

4.4. Violation of the right to property

Article 17 of the UDHR states that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property”. However, among those who participated in the survey, some reported that they could not sell their real estate due to injunction, that they were denied access to their own bank accounts, and that their credit cards were cancelled.

4.5. Violation of the right to education

The right to education is provided by Article 20 of the UDHR and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

20.1% of the survey participants who had been enrolled in an academic program reported that they had not been able to continue with the program. In the case of graduate students among the Academics for Peace, the prominent reasons given for their program withdrawal were the unlawful practices of universities after the release of the Peace Petition, the

problems they encountered with their academic advisors, and economic difficulties resulting from their dismissal.

The primary reasons cited for changes in advisor were either ideological differences or the advisors' fear of punitive repercussions due to the crackdown on Academics for Peace. Some graduate students reported that their advisors had "abandoned" them, that they had to change both advisor and thesis subject, and that consequently they could not complete their dissertation. Other graduate students reported that they had problems because their advisors themselves were dismissed.

Among the academics who were dismissed for reasons other than the petition, oft-cited problems regarding graduate studies include the following: abdication of thesis juries, expulsion from the graduate program, coercive freezing of studentship, insufficient advisor support due to ideological differences, and withdrawal on account of imprisonment.

4.6. Violation of the right to assembly and organization

Organizations of different kinds (including associations, foundations and cooperatives) are reported to have faced bureaucratic obstacles in their establishment if the founding board members included dismissed academics. Nearly 30% of survey participants indicated that they had been involved in the establishment of a new association, foundation or cooperative; 80% of these reported that they had faced some sort of bureaucratic or legal problem during the establishment phase.

4.7. Detained and imprisoned academics

Following the announcement of the State of Emergency many academics, along with individuals from other professions, were arrested and taken into custody. Within the scope of this research, it is observed that detention was common especially among academics dismissed for other reasons than the Peace Petition, and that the violations they suffered vary widely from the right to legal counselling to access to medical care.

Of the Peace Petitioners, 35 were taken into custody for reasons which they suspect are related to their dismissal. Three of them assert that they were arrested for the same reason. Detention practices vary widely depending on one's city or university, which clearly demonstrates the arbitrariness of these practices. In total, 16 academics from Kocaeli, Van, Erzurum, Ankara and Bolu stated that they were taken into custody immediately after the release of the Petition and remained in custody for anywhere between 6 and 24 hours. Detention periods of other signatory academics taken into custody vary from one to twelve days. The problems they faced during detention include the following:

- "isolation" (2 people),
- "overcrowded conditions" (7 people),
- "insufficient number of beds" (5 people),
- "lack of suitable food for conditions such as sickness, age or pregnancy" (5 people),
- "less than three meals a day" (4 people),
- "lack of clean drinking water" (2 people),
- "unclean toilet and/or shower space" (7 people),

- “lack of a store for the provision of food and hygiene material, or prohibitively high prices” (3 people),
- “lighting problems such as lack of natural daylight, inadequate lighting or lights continuously switched on” (7 people),
- “ventilation problems such as no yard time or inadequate indoor ventilation” (9 people),
- “inadequate indoor heating, either too hot or too cold” (4 people),
- “medical care problems such as no health personnel, ignored examination requests, no medical care privacy” (4 people),
- “inadequate access to relatives/friends, and prevention of regular visits and correspondence” (3 people),
- “inadequate legal counseling, denial of privacy in meetings with legal counsel, recording of meetings and correspondence with legal counsel, or the denial of legal counsel altogether” (2 people).

During the interviews with participants, academics dismissed for reasons other than the Peace Petition reported similar violations and problems concerning the conditions of their detention and imprisonment. The following points were raised:

- refusal to give a reason for the detention,
- unwarranted house and car search without the owner or lawyer present,
- breaking and entering the house without justification,
- seizure of all electronic devices without the provision of digital copies,
- issuing of arrest warrants in violation of the right to a fair trial,
- failure to inform the relatives of the detainee,
- prevention of access to a lawyer,
- being forced to testify without a lawyer,
- testifying under duress,
- truncated meeting with lawyers and in the presence of law officers,
- arbitrary prison sentences (ranging from 3 to 19 months),
- isolation,
- overcrowded cells (23 people in a cell designed for seven),
- custody in places designed for other purposes such as gymnasiums or seminar halls,
- strip searched,
- insufficient and unhygienic supply of food and drinking water,
- no access to clean toilets or showers,
- ventilation problems,
- insufficient and inadequate access to medical care (in contravention of the provisions of the Istanbul Protocol),
- psychological violence,
- inability to access resources required for defense (blocked access to one’s own file).

4.8. Violation or loss of rights involving relatives and family members

Violations against dismissed academics likewise extend to their relatives and family members. This is an indication of the fact that those dismissed by emergency decree are

considered to be and discriminated against as a “special group”, which is a direct violation of the prohibition on discrimination as prescribed in Article 2 of the UDHR.

41.4% of the survey participants have at least one relative who incurred at least one loss or violation of rights. Primary loss in this category is the confiscation of passports with a rate of 79.8%. 15 participants further reported that their relatives were not employed or assigned work due to the fact that they were related to a dismissed academic, while 5 participants reported that a relative lost his/her job for the same reason.

Similarly, academics dismissed for reasons other than the Peace Petition also reported that the passports of their spouses were confiscated or their spouses were banned from travelling abroad, that their relatives were dismissed because of their own original dismissal, and that their relatives were denied employment in the public sector for the same reason.

5. Research Findings on Loss and Trauma

Political violence leads to human rights violations and this inevitably leads to losses on the part of those abused. These are not, however, merely material and economic losses which may be deemed recoverable, but also social, cultural and psychological losses. Stigmatization and exclusionary practices, for example, constitute a structural kind of violence that discredits and marginalizes the victims, while at the same time depriving them of any means of self-expression and representation. Losses such as these can only be recovered societally. But when political and social actors, and in particular government agencies, neglect to take restorative steps and instead either assume a “none of my business” stance, or, what is worse, maintain the state of violation, then such losses lead to new violations or lay the ground for further abuses. This gives rise to a vicious cycle whereby violations lead to new losses, and these losses engender new violations. It is crucial to understand the myriad ways in which this vicious cycle bears on those who are caught up in it, affecting them both individually and collectively, both as a matter of identity and as a matter of social standing.

This section aims to make visible the trauma of dismissed academics. Such visibility matters not only because social recognition of such loss is the first step in overcoming trauma, but also because it contributes to the pursuit of justice, which is essential, particularly from the standpoint of human rights, to the collective recovery of politically inflicted harm. In what follows, the losses sustained by dismissed academics are categorized under four heads: (1) economic, (2) academic, (3) social, and (4) health-related.

5.1. Economic losses and their effects

The first and most direct manifestation of economic loss experienced by dismissed academics is the loss of income. The survey of dismissed petitioners reveals that 88.5% of the participants had no or very poor income upon dismissal. In response to interview questions about their economic situation, both the petitioners and those dismissed for other reasons principally mentioned unemployment, debt, financial loss, and the hardship of

making a living. Economic loss is described primarily in terms of the “struggle to survive”. Many stated that they had difficulty meeting even daily needs, including nutrition and housing, and were reduced to subsistence level.

As a direct consequence of stigmatization and having become “objectionable”, the dismissed academics have also encountered severe problems in their job search. Having been “dismissed by decree” seems to have a twofold effect. The first is abstention from making job applications, in the belief that the job will be denied them on account of their having been dismissed by decree. Almost a third of the surveyed petitioners (29%) reported that they had abstained from applying for jobs. The second effect is the reality of being denied jobs on account of their having been dismissed by decree. 44.9% of the surveyed petitioners reported that they had received no response to their job applications, were denied work, or had trouble getting a job for reasons related to their dismissal. Similarly, those dismissed for other reasons mostly reported that they were denied work because of the stigma attached to being dismissed.

Academics who were able to find jobs have been forced to work in harsh conditions with low wages and without social security. Many dismissed academics were also compelled to do more than one job to earn a sustainable income. Of the surveyed petitioners, 29% were working in more than one job. Only 40.9% of them were employed full time, whereas 38.3% do piecework. Dismissed academics are usually employed in jobs with no relation to their academic expertise and for which they are vastly over-qualified. Adapting to economic hardship constitutes a sort of labor in itself, a precarious form of labor that is based on necessity rather than choice and is severely exposed to exploitation.

5.2. Academic losses

One of the most serious rights violations caused by dismissal is the right to develop oneself materially and morally. The condition in which an academic can realize oneself as an academic is having the opportunity to produce, disseminate and share knowledge; that is, having access to education and research, which are the constituent elements of the academy. While executive decrees have prohibited work in the public sector, employment in private universities has also been effectively yet illegally banned via YÖK (The Council of Higher Education). Thus dismissal from university has taken away the condition of self-realization. Hence for the 6,081 dismissed academics, a severe blow to their existence, identity, and ability to produce and disseminate knowledge. Excluding academics from education and research undertaken in Turkish universities, and from spaces and mediums of knowledge production, dissemination and discussion as a whole, constitutes a violation of academic freedom. This is because aside from severely curtailing the dismissed academics’ employment opportunities, dismissal by executive decree has also rescinded their right to participate freely in academic circles and to participate in academic activities on the basis of academic merit and principles.

Academic repression is observed to be varied and widespread among dismissed academics. These practices of oppression and intimidation have occurred both within the university and from institutions outside the university. In the case of Academics for Peace,

academic repression started with the announcement of the Petition and its subsequent vilification as a “crime” by political entities. Accordingly, the academic repression of Academics for Peace started before the dismissals.

Academic repression of Academics for Peace was not only restricted to the practices of university administrations, but also extended to the practices of other academics as a result of the “stigmatization” and “criminalization” of Academics for Peace. Academic repression resulting from the practices of university administrations involved administrative investigations, removal from boards and commissions, removal from posts, denial of positions and appointments, cancellation of courses, and cancellation of contracts, projects, consultancies, and associate professorship applications. Repression as performed by other academics who disregarded academic principles included removal from academic activities and publications, withdrawal from postgraduate thesis supervision/thesis steering and from thesis defence committee membership, and/or removal of academic support as required by this position.

In addition, TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) sent out a notice to all journals indexed by ULAKBİM and to those using its hosting services, urging the removal of dismissed academics from editorial boards and publishing lists and the cancellation of their referee positions.⁷ Many academic journals adjusted their publication policies accordingly. Thus, dismissed academics have been excluded from the academic field through the practices both of academic administrations and of colleagues who disregarded academic principles and merit.

One of the main components of academic life is participation in scientific activities where academics follow developments in their fields and share their own work and insights. Hence, exclusion from academic activities such as congresses, panels and conferences is a repressive act against the execution of their professional role.

These forms of academic repression, dating from before the dismissals and gaining pace thereafter, deprived the academics of their capacity to realize themselves, and of their access to academic resources. It is observed that having lost connection with the university, academics have faced major difficulties in continuing their scientific research. Of those participating in the survey, 63.8% reported having difficulty in accessing resources for academic work. Academic resources include on the one hand printed publications and databases and on the other field specific resources as required by different disciplines. For example, laboratories in the field of basic sciences, access to patients in the field of clinical medicine, and the ability to practice on a regular basis in the field of arts, are all considered crucial for the respective disciplines. Preventing academics from carrying out their academic activities in universities has not only deprived them of material resources, but also largely limited the possibilities for producing scientific knowledge interactively and collectively.

⁷ ULAKBİM is the national academic index of Turkey. For academic assignments and promotions (especially with regards to associate professorships), it is required to have published in journals indexed by ULAKBİM.

It was not only dismissed academics but also their students who experienced losses caused by academic repression, the most basic indicator of which was the cancellation of postgraduate thesis supervisions. These acts of repression have hindered the academics' relationship with their students and their labour in this field has been confiscated. These practices have also had negative effects on students. These are one of the pillars of the academy and the expertise of academic advisors in the subject and methodology of a thesis is essential. It is understood that such academic concerns have been ignored when appointing new supervisors to the students of the dismissed academics. Academics who have been subject to oppression, repression and exclusion before and after their dismissal expressed a significant loss in their motivation for participation in academic activities, if not for academic activity itself, due in particular to the socio-political atmosphere, the conditions in which the activities took place and their thoughts and attitudes towards higher education institutions.

5.3. Social losses

Being the most visible manifestation of an atmosphere of political violence and fear during the State of Emergency, dismissal by emergency decree has also caused social losses. The practice of criminalization, stigmatization and exclusion, together with violations of human rights, have irrevocably harmed and in some cases broken interpersonal and social relationships. Social participation and the social existence of persons through meaningful relationships based on trust and collectivity have been seriously damaged since the dismissals. This deterioration in social relationships as a result of stigmatization and exclusion are considered social losses.

Academics interviewed in the course of the survey cited exclusion and stigmatization as the primary causes of loss of identity and value. Social identity represents a subject in social life and relates that subject to other identities. Moreover, each identity serves as a reference point in social life for "a person's perception, imagination and idea of whom they are" since each identity is shaped by and within an ethos of social norms, principles, and expectations. In other words, social identity influences a person's conceptual framework and plays an important role in maintaining a person's mental and psychological coherence. The government's widespread use of an exclusionary discourse, which targeted academics via a variety of actors, led to the exclusion of the dismissed academics from the category of the socially acceptable according to the norms of society. The resulting stigmatization manifested itself through socially opprobrious labels such as "terrorist", "dark", and "*müstemleke aydınları*" (colonial intellectuals) which might engendered the perception of being seen as a threat. Stigmatization denotes a sharp disjunction between the assumed and the actual social identity of a person and induces the re-categorization of that person out of the category to which s/he was assumed to belong.⁸ For the dismissed academics, loss of identity does not only mean the loss of a socially acceptable label but of being re-labeled by the government and associated actors/mechanisms with derogatory, defamatory and

⁸ See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963).

generally socially unacceptable epithets. Here, the loss of identity leads not only to the loss of academic position and status, but also to the existential disregard of the targeted academic and his/her effacement from the symbolic system. Accordingly, the loss of identity may give rise to a form of detachment from or suspension of the coordinates (e.g., perceptions of the past, present and future) that have hitherto guided the dismissed academic and given him/her stability as well as mental and psychological coherence. Although the majority of the dismissed academics asserted that they were supported by their parents, spouses and children, exclusion and stigmatization mechanisms affected even their family relationships, which are assumed to be the most basic in a person's life. Those who claimed not to be supported by their families linked this to the differences between their own political views and positions and those of their families. Some of the academics, however, asserted that they were criminalized and stigmatized particularly by their families. In some cases, disagreement reached the point of disconnection with the family, creating feelings of distance and abandonment.

In other cases, concealing the dismissal used either by the academics or their families both as a way of coping with the losses or preventing further losses pursuant upon possible stigmatization.

The social relations in which the practice of exclusion is most commonly experienced are those with colleagues and the academic environment. The survey reveals that 52.8% of the dismissed Academics for Peace have been excluded by their co-workers at the university and 50.8% by their fellow colleagues. Furthermore, throughout the process that began with the signing of the Peace Petition and continued with the dismissals, 75.4% of academics stated that at least one of their colleagues did not want to be seen with them, 46.6% stated that their colleagues were uncomfortable with their old/new photos and shares on their social media, and 76.6% stated that their friends expressed their indifference to the process. Similar results are observed in interviews with academics who were dismissed for reasons other than signing the Petition. They stated that co-workers and colleagues with whom they had close relationships suddenly severed contact entirely. The dismissed academics describe their colleagues' practice of exclusion as a kind of withdrawal, invisibilization, and non-recognition process. Many of the interviewed participants attributed the distancing of their colleagues and their exclusionary behavior to a conformist tendency in the academy and society in general, and related this to political pressure.

Exclusion and loss of identity are accompanied by feelings of worthlessness. It needs to be borne in mind that the dismissal itself is a stigma. When viewed in conjunction with a loss of identity, dismissal is an attempt to exclude an individual from the symbolic universe and the common sphere of meaning: "Not being recognized" means being excluded from this sphere and being deprived of rights. This counts as direct violence insofar as an addressee is expunged and as symbolic violence in terms of its social, cultural and psychological consequences. According to the survey data, 13.6% of academics stated that they felt unworthy in the eyes of their families, 16.0% in the eyes of their close circles, 38.3% in that of their university co-workers, 40.3% in that of their fellow colleagues and 64.9% in

the eyes of the general public. The loss of identity and self-worth also contaminated relations with the country and the society at large.

All of the interviewed Academics for Peace believe that they have been blacklisted by the government and do not feel protected under Turkish law. 97.1% of them do not feel safe in general; 93.0% think that they are discriminated against in Turkey; 92.6% that they will be subjected to intimidation or oppression even if they return to work; 91.3% that there are prejudices against them; 83.6% that they are considered a public threat; and 42.8% that they will never recover their value in society. It is observed in the interviews that labelling, stigmatization and discrimination go hand in hand with feelings of being continuously under threat, fear for their life and personal safety, and fear and psychological preparation for the worst.

The dismissed academics believe that the discrimination they have suffered has weakened social ties and eroded trust, and carries the risk of increased polarization. The loss of confidence in society and the state is inseparable from a diminished sense of belonging. The diminution in the sense of belonging becomes more evident upon examination of the data pertaining to the academics' thoughts about going/living abroad. The dismissed signatories who want to go abroad or remain indecisive in this regard constitutes almost half of the sample. The data collected through interviews reveals that those who want to go abroad is ten times more than those who say they do not. The desire to go abroad accompanied feelings of despair, uncertainty, and pessimism about the legal process, the possibility of returning to academia, and the likelihood of future normalization. Similarly, 31 of the 41 academics who were dismissed for other reasons stated that they wanted to move abroad. This desire was expressed mostly in conjunction with with the hope for a safer future for themselves and their children, and a desire to continue their academic career.

5.4. Effects on health

Denial of access to economic, social and cultural resources and the concomitant restriction of freedom as a result of political violence have traumatic effects on an individual. By damaging the individual's close ties to their work, social and cultural environment, these effects can lead to both physical and mental health problems if not treated. When discussing individual health outcomes, trauma should be treated not merely as a psychosomatic condition, but, more importantly, as a sociopolitical event. This is because interventions for clinical diagnoses alone provide very limited benefits to the healing processes, especially with mental health problems, unless political violence is terminated or well functioning justice and restoration mechanisms are ensured.⁹ One thing to note here is that health problems and social trauma continue to reproduce each other in a cyclical not linear way.¹⁰

⁹ Alette Smeulers, Fred Grünfeld, *International Crimes and Other Gross Human Rights Violations* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2011), pp. 243-266.

¹⁰ Derrick Silove, "Adaptation, Ecosocial Safety Signals, and the Trajectory of PTSD", in *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, Mark Barad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 242-258.

For example, if a person is depressed due to the trauma caused by the loss of the right to work, failure to treat that depression will in turn greatly diminish that person's ability to find a job. The breaking of this cycle can be achieved both through social interventions as part of the functioning mechanisms of justice and restoration and by providing access to appropriate health services.

Within the scope of this research, the surveyed participants were asked about physical and mental health problems experienced after dismissal. The results reveal that about half of the surveyed Academics for Peace believe that the dismissal process affected their physical health, even if now healed; whereas two-thirds of them continue to suffer from mental health problems. The most commonly reported mental health problems are sleep problems (62.8%), concentration and attention difficulties (61.9%), affective withdrawal or collapse (58.3%), quick-temper (49.0%); physical health problems of psychosomatic origin such as palpitations (23.1%), shortness of breath (17.4%), chest pain (11.6%), and high blood pressure (9.5%).

Of the academics surveyed, 47.4% were diagnosed with depression, 31.0% with anxiety disorders, 20.7% with post-traumatic stress disorders, 12.1% with musculoskeletal diseases, and 9.5% with hypertension. Taking the sample as a whole, the incidence of depression is 22.5%; anxiety disorder 14.8%; PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) 9.8%; musculoskeletal diseases 5.7% and hypertension 4.5%. The incidence of any form of mental illness is 64.4% among the surveyed academics and 30.3% in the whole sample, while the incidence of any form of physical disease is 44.4% among those admitted to health institutions and 20.9% in the whole sample.

The incidence of depression among academics is similar to that observed among the victims of torture and maltreatment, while the incidence of PTSD is found to be lower. However, one in three people were diagnosed with anxiety disorder. Thus, the incidence of diseases diagnosed by doctors is equal to that seen in victims of mass trauma, torture and maltreatment and is at a much higher level than the same age group in Turkish society. The high incidence of health problems may be explained by the ongoing trauma and the fear of being exposed to new and unexpected forms of violence.

In interviews with academics dismissed for other reasons, no systematic questions were asked about health problems. Nevertheless, negative emotions such as tension/stress, anxiety, anger, shock, "burnout", shame, low motivation, and low concentration threshold were reported. Other complaints included psychiatric disorders such as depression, panic attacks and anxiety disorders, and health problems such as anxiety-related sleep disorders, palpitations, plus weight gain and weight loss in prison.

6. Coping with Violations, Losses and their Effects

The serious losses sustained by both the Academics for Peace and the academics dismissed for other reasons are directly attributable to the human rights violations of stigmatization and exclusion. Having been exposed to violence and suffered from the traumatic effects

thereof, the dismissed academics have had to develop effective strategies and solutions to cope with enduring uncertainty, the sudden changes that have affected their lives, and the detrimental effects of systematic oppression, threats and rights violations to which they have been subject.

6.1. Subject formation

To cope with the human rights violations, losses and their traumatic effects, the dismissed Academics for Peace have rejected a passive, “victimized” acceptance of the developments that have detrimentally affected their lives. On the contrary, they have taken a proactive stance and enacted a process of subject formation as a means of resisting oppression and standing shoulder to shoulder in their struggle for presence.

6.2. Tenacity in claiming justice and rights

Central to the process of subject formation as adopted by the Academics for Peace in their struggle for presence is their persistent demand for peace, justice and human rights. In other words, instead of seeking compensation for their losses, they demanded justice and a restoration of their rights, thereby pursuing a principal rather than seeking redress for a personal grievance.

6.3. Solidarity

The need to resist oppression, criminalization, marginalization, injustice, unlawful practices and human rights violations and to repair the consequent damaged drew the Academics for Peace together. Out of a strong feeling of solidarity, a collective identity emerged among a diverse group of academics. Unknown to each other before, or acquainted solely in the context of their common profession, this collective identity enabled the Academics for Peace to practice a collective form of action in their struggle for justice.

6.4. Organization

Academics for Peace have established a network of solidarity based on politically and intellectually driven voluntary labour that involved commitment and persistence. This network rendered possible the judicial processes of the indicted signatories, the giving of support during the trials at the Çağlayan Court, forming a communication network with lawyers to share legal advice, sharing information and experiences with each other, and making the trials and different processes visible in the media, thereby bringing them into the public arena.

The Academics for Peace struggle has also involved maintaining their scholarly presence outside mainstream higher education institutions. Findings reveal that they have addressed this need by holding on to the idea that academic activities need not be restricted to mainstream higher education institutions and collectively developing alternative spaces within which to pursue their academic activities. One of the most prominent examples of this is the “solidarity academies”. This struggle for scholarly presence has been one of the strongest pillars of empowerment.

6.5. Actors strengthening and spreading solidarity

For the dismissed Academics for Peace, solidarity has been an effective antidote to the crushing experience of exclusion. Findings reveal that this solidarity movement was facilitated by an enlarged network that involved not only the signatory Academics for Peace who were dismissed but also persons and institutions within a larger circle who have been part and parcel of the process in different ways. Due to such an enlarged network of solidarity, the dismissed academics have been able to become actors of their own empowerment. As Agmon states, Academics for Peace have been at the centre of a creative and resilient solidarity based on “reciprocal support and solidarity” furnished by other activists, professionals, artists, friends and family members.¹¹ This solidarity has been expanded by institutions and professional groups who declared their support for the Academics for Peace either through public announcements and petitions or by signing the Peace Petition. Institutions such as the Education and Science Workers’ Union (Eğitim-Sen), the Health Workers’ Union (SES), the Labour and Democracy Powers, and international non-governmental organizations all declared their solidarity with Academics for Peace.

Findings reveal that these networks of solidarity have also embraced media institutions such as Bianet, and some of the academics dismissed for other reasons, major factors being past experiences of political struggle, organization and inter-relationships.

6.6. Solidarity and organized struggle is learned through confrontation

Interviews conducted within the framework of this research have also revealed that “solidarity” is perceived in different ways by some of the academics who were dismissed for other reasons. Narratives of these academics, many of whom have different social and political backgrounds, indicate that they have embraced the position of “being victimized” and perceive solidarity as “solidarity with the victimized”, where reciprocal support and help practices stand centre stage.

State violence and human rights violations and losses have also precipitated confrontation between the academics dismissed for other reasons and “others”, i.e. other people who differ in political view, belief and ethnic identity. This confrontation has led the former to find themselves in the same position as the stigmatized, the othered and the discriminated against and to understand their suffering. It has also precipitated a rupture and a cognitive transformation on the side of the academics dismissed for other reasons, with regard to their understanding and interpretation of the community within which they have positioned themselves on the basis of their beliefs.

This confrontation has also engendered closer relationships with “the others”, whom the academics dismissed for other reasons have long othered and from whom they have distanced themselves. This confrontation and interaction with “the others” has enabled these academics to notice not only the “aggrievement” of “the others” but also their own “social

¹¹ Iris Agmon, “On the Civil Struggle of Academics in Turkey: the Peace Petition Signers”, *Humanities Common* (2019), p. 10, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/3pbt-kk41>.

withdrawal”. It has also enabled them to take part in a new kind of solidarity and struggle that reflects the pursuit of rights and justice, which they have learned through cooperation and solidarity. The Confederation of Public Labourers’ Unions (KESK) and the Human Rights Association (İHD) are the institutions that have initiated and spread solidarity and struggle based on rights and justice. They have opened up a new realm for academics dismissed for other reasons and enabled them not only to maintain their academic presence in new ways, but to make sense of the traumatic experience they have been going through.

6.7. Empowerment requires solidarity, organization and persistence

The dismissed academics have put considerable effort into their struggle to repair the damage caused by intensifying oppression, criminalization and marginalization and to reconstruct their future by standing in solidarity with each other. This struggle requires solidarity, organization and persistence and has been pursued not for personal compensation but for the establishment of rights and justice. This demand has empowered rather than cowed the dismissed academics.

7. Conclusion

This research focused on the dismissal of academics by Emergency Decree Laws during the State of Emergency and documented the rights violations, losses and their traumatic effects on dismissed academics as well as their coping and empowerment strategies. One of the main findings of this research is that this process is characterized by the practices of criminalization and stigmatization, which are intertwined with human rights violations, obstruction and discrimination.

Although the manner in which the decree law dismissals were executed led to violations of rights per se, the findings regarding the post-dismissal period reveal that the political atmosphere and the politicians’ statements prompted an ongoing cycle of rights violations and losses for the dismissed academics. Rights violations span a broad spectrum in terms of basic human rights and rights regulated by international conventions. The stigmatizing discourses and practices, which started before the dismissals, continue to create repression and losses for the dismissed academics even after the cessation of the State of Emergency. These losses and repression have led to social and psychological breaks, ruptures and transformations within the dismissed individuals as well as their families and relatives. At this point, it is necessary to underline several points indicated by the research findings.

Violation of the rule of law and legal security

The findings of this study indicate that legal security, one of the basic requirements of the rule of law, has been violated in Turkey.

A close inspection of the State of Emergency decrees and especially of the dismissals executed in accordance with these decrees, indicates that the material basis for the dismissal of public officials was neither predictable nor specified. Although such ambiguous and unspecified expressions as “having connections with the terrorist organization” or

“threatening national security” were presented as grounds for the dismissal of individuals from public office, in many cases the alleged actions of those dismissed individuals were not specified. In those cases where individuals were dismissed on specific grounds, equally vague reasons were given such as signing a declaration, sending their children to certain schools and / or depositing money in certain banks.

The state of unpredictability and uncertainty manifested itself in the post-dismissal period and even after the cessation of the State of Emergency. While the executive’s use of authority has become limitless, its discretionary power has in many cases become an arbitrary practice. As a result of this, any legal oversight of the decree laws was impossible and any means of objection to the decree law procedures blocked. The State of Emergency Commission, which was set up as an objection mechanism in the later stages of the State of Emergency, proved ineffectual.

The violations and obstructions reported in this study are the kinds of violation that require immediate compensation in terms of the individuals exposed to them and the launching of justice and repair processes. In terms of both individual and societal implications and consequences, it is clear that reporting on the dismissals by decree laws during the State of Emergency should not be limited to merely documenting violations and obstructions. A rights-based reading of the effects of the reported violations on people’s processes of survival and self-actualization and the reasons for the confiscation of the means of these processes is imperative. This type of reading is important to shed light on the process, dispel the fog caused by the diversity and prevalence of violations and rebuild a sociality. Only this kind of reading, based on the principles of truth and justice, can reveal the sources and consequences of the violations and lay down the foundations of a new sociality that will prevent these violations from recurring.

Rights violations and losses

Losses caused by violations of rights mean restricting the possibilities and capacities of people to “exist” and “act” as individuals and social beings. The “civil death” discourse and subsequent practices, which have become widespread with the dismissals by decree and thereafter, cannot be evaluated solely with regard to inequality dynamics. It also means depriving the dismissed individuals of life sources, and dis severing them from their chosen and meaningful social participation. In addition, preventing individuals from using their professional and intellectual skills in a manner that ignores the individuals’ efforts to establish their own identity can be seen as a serious violation and one which is synonymous with identity destruction or even anonymization. As we attempted to reveal in the report, the social and economic consequences of this de-identification has been the conversion of the dismissed persons into an unqualified workforce. Ultimately, being dismissed by a decree law means the destruction of social existence for these people, in other words, their removal from being a social entity.

The findings of the study reveal that there is a predominant feeling both among the dismissed Academics for Peace and the academics dismissed for reasons other than signing the peace declaration, namely that they are not seen as equal citizens in Turkey, that they

are exposed to stigmatization and profiling, and that they and their families will not be able to establish a safe and equal life here as long as current conditions continue. The dismissed academics also frequently expressed a desire and need to go abroad in order to continue their lives and / or academic careers. In addition to the fact that the idea of a sociality on the basis of trust and equality disappeared, the conviction has become prevalent that the hope of realizing this can only be achieved through a change in the political conditions, which shows the importance of introducing compensation and recuperation procedures in the upcoming period for the reconstruction of socialization in Turkey.

Standing together, resistance and empowerment

In a political environment dominated by profound unpredictability, academics, like most people living in Turkey, are also adversely affected and driven into desperation and helplessness. Within this framework, it is important to understand the academics' coping and empowerment strategies. Of course, the strategies in question are not homogeneous and continuous; they vary depending on individuals and change over time. As observed in the face of all other shocks and adverse events, the case of dismissed academics involves a process that includes ruptures and retreats.

The findings of this study reveal that the dismissed Academics for Peace and other academics dismissed for other reasons exhibited significant differences in addition to overlappings and intersections. Thus, while the solidarity created at different levels under difficult conditions was common to both groups, there were differences in the content, components and patterns of solidarity.

Looking at the case of the Academics for Peace, it is seen that the political solidarity started to emerge simultaneously with the incrimination of the signatories from the first day of the announcement of the peace declaration. Political solidarity involves individuals consciously gathering around a purpose against a certain type of injustice, oppression, social sensitivity (*hassasiyet*) and tyranny and responding to the situation in question.¹² The main element that has brought academics together has been their insistence on resisting oppression, injustice, non-legal practices and the accusations of actors, especially of political power, actively involved in violations. This persistence has become both the tool and the aim of solidarity.¹³ A “we”, a “collectivity” has emerged by weaving discourse and action together.

This collectivity has interlaced the solidarity with the individuals and institutions that have supported and carried the signing action beyond the signatures, such as the families and relatives of the signatory academics, national and international support signatures, labor and democracy forces, national and international academic institutions and media outlets. In addition, since the outset of dismissals by decree laws, solidarity has been cemented by Solidarity Academies with their “persistence in maintaining their scholarly presence”.

¹² Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 51.

¹³ Kurt Bayertz, “Four uses of ‘Solidarity’”, in *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), pp. 3-28.

Academics dismissed for reasons other than signing the peace petition also differ in their empowerment strategies as a group that is highly heterogeneous in terms of the procedures and forms of dismissal. The differences in coping and empowerment strategies spring from the individuals' diverse social and political backgrounds.

It can be said that approximately six thousand academics that were dismissed due to non-signature reasons did not show any signs of collectivity before the dismissals, and the only thing that this group shared after the dismissal was the dismissal itself. It is therefore understandable that a “we” and a strong and inclusive collective agency did not emerge among these academics, unlike the one among the Academics for Peace. However, it is observed that the dismissal process has displaced stereotypes and prejudices, which in a sociological sense set the ground for the internal-external group distinction, at least for the academics interviewed in this study. In other words, dismissed academics that define themselves as conservative started to form a new ground of solidarity in the process that resulted from the practices of criminalization, stigmatization and exclusion from the “acceptable” category. This ground – both as words and actions – enabled the gradual emergence of solidarity by means of distrusting the dominant discourse that stigmatized these people as culpable and objectionable as well as realizing the suffering and pain created by this very language.

This solidarity, expressed in terms of “social solidarity” and “supporting the victim”, has not been realized in the form of direct political intervention and resistance; it does, however, harbour the hope of a new sociality. It can be said that meeting different people in the post-dismissal period and showing solidarity with them albeit in the form of helping each other indicates, at least in terms of moral obligations, a sociality including those who are different. Ultimately, the mental transformation expressed by many academics who were dismissed for reasons other than signing the petition and who defined themselves as conservative attest to this fact.

These agencies, which also enable those who have been dismissed for different reasons to know each other and to establish new partnerships, are important in terms of both expanding the grounds of resistance and empowerment and carrying the possibility of a new coexistence with reference to a common principle of justice among differences.