

**MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON DAYS:
PUNISHMENT FOR A LIFE DEDICATED TO THE PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today is July 4, 2012. I am writing this narrative in Cell No: C1-68 of Ankara F-type Maximum Security Prison No. 1. I was arrested on June 25. I am accused of attempting to conspire to overthrow the government in 1997, at which time I was the president of the Council of Higher Education.

What follows is an account of the charges against me, my responses to them, and how I have reacted to such gross injustice and abomination of law. Before I proceed any further, I feel it is necessary to provide some background information. Without that, a reader from the west would find it difficult, in fact almost impossible, to understand the events described here. Even I find it very challenging to find the appropriate words in the English language to describe certain events and concepts as they neither happen in the west, nor do they exist in the western mind and legal systems.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Turkish Political Scene

The Turkish Republic was ruled by the *Peoples Republican Party* (PRP) and the *Democrat Party* (DP) and its successors; Demirel's *Justice Party* (JP) and *True Path Party* (TPP), and Özal's *Motherland Party*. DP was closed after the first coup on May 27, 1960, and both PRP and JP were closed after the second coup on September 12, 1980.

All of these parties were secular; western oriented and strictly adhered to the underpinnings of the republic founded by Atatürk. In 1996 the Turkish political scene took a radical turn. We had our first Islamist Prime Minister. Erbakan, the charismatic leader of the *Welfare Party* (WP) formed a coalition with Çiller, who had been elected party leader of TPP after Demirel became the President of the Republic.

In retrospect, I have come to regard the May 27 coup as the biggest calamity that has befallen on the Turkish political scene. It came at a time when we had a functioning, though with many shortcomings, two-party parliamentary democracy. Turkey was a full member of NATO, OECD, the European Parliament, and was on a path where she had, in my opinion, a far better chance of full membership in the EU. It should be recalled that both Portugal and Spain were dictatorships then.

On September 12, 1980, I was away in the United States as a Fulbright scholar and visiting professor. Like the vast majority of the Turks, I too was relieved to see a long and bloody period of country-wide street violence and strife come to an end. Looking back, however, I came to realize that, in terms of its long-lasting effects, it was just as harmful, if not more, as the May 27 coup. Demirel's JP and Ecevit's PRP, the two pillars of the secular republic founded by Atatürk, his right and left arms, were closed. This caused the center of the Turkish politics to collapse and paved the way for the advent of political Islam, which until then had been at the fringes. This was eventually conjoined by the unleashing of Kurdish separatism. Whether these were the unintended or the intended consequences is a matter of conjecture.

Erbakan zealously embarked on a political agenda that led to country-wide consternation and social tensions. A relevant case in point is a speech he made in which he stated that he would make the university rectors "stand at attention before the headscarf".

This brings us to the headscarf issue. In the late eighties, the Constitutional Court had banned the wearing of headscarf in universities. The case had been taken to the European Court of Human Rights, which had upheld the ban. Legally, it was and still is a watertight case.

In the Turkish legal system, rulings of the Constitutional Court are binding on even the parliament. This is why no law has been passed to date to remove the ban. Thus, universities had no choice but to enforce it. Islamist politicians, on the other hand, were successfully exploiting the issue to further their cause by exerting unjust and unfair pressure on the Council of Higher Education (CHE) and university administrations. With Erbakan's remarks I have quoted previously, tension caused by the issue had climaxed.

I was appointed as the president of the Council of Higher Education on December 5, 1995 by President Demirel. In various meetings of the Council and the Rectors' Committee, we decided to approach the situation flexibly, but without conceding from the Constitutional Court ruling.

Tensions in the Turkish Society kept increasing in all fronts, and events took a new turn after the meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on February 28, 1997. The NSC is chaired by the President of the Republic, and comprises the Prime Minister, a number of key ministers, Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) and commanders of the army, navy, air force and gendarmerie. After long and heated discussions, NSC adopted a number of measures to be recommended to the government in order to prevent the advent of the political Islam. At first, Erbakan resisted, but after a few days he issued a government directive to all public agencies to take the necessary actions to enforce the measures adopted by the NSC.

At the time, I was away in the United States to attend a conference on teacher training. I really felt nothing extraordinary about what was going on, and besides, Erbakan's directive included no specific measures to be taken by the universities.

The adopted measures included the increasing of the period of compulsory basic education from five to eight years. This meant that the 3-year junior sections of all high schools were to be joined with the 5-year primary schools with a common 8-year basic education curriculum. Thus, secondary level vocational schools to train imams and preachers (IHL, the Turkish acronym) would consist only of the upper secondary schools with no junior-level sections.

The measures in general included a number of actions to be more vigilant against radical Islam in the public sphere, and each public agency was required to monitor implementation. As I have later learnt from the Turkish media, the TGS had established within itself a working group named West Working Group (WWG). We took no such specific actions within the CHE or in the universities in line with our autonomous status within the Turkish public system.

Again, according to what I later learnt from the Turkish media, the functions of the WWG were later transferred to a similar ad hoc committee, this time established within the prime ministry to oversee the overall implementation of the measures.

Erbakan remained as the prime minister until June 1997, when according to the coalition protocol, prime ministership would be transferred to Çiller, the leader of the junior coalition partner. His resignation was accepted by the President, but rather than Çiller, Demirel appointed Yılmaz as the prime minister. A new coalition was formed by Yılmaz's Motherland Party, Ecevit's Democratic Socialist Party and a number of MPs who had resigned from Çiller's TPP.

The rest is history. The Islamists and a number of liberals have dubbed this particular NSC meeting as a "postmodern coup" and the ensuing period as "the 28 February Process". This is the coup I am charged with, which they conspired to ruin me.

2.2 The Council of Higher Education (CHE): What it is and What it does

The CHE is a constitutional autonomous body charged with the governance of all higher education in the country. Its membership includes those appointed by the President, those appointed by the prime minister and those elected by universities in equal numbers. Until recently, the TGS also appointed one member. During my term in office, 1995-2003, he was a three-star general who was formerly the commander of the Air Force Academy.

The CHE has wide ranging powers which include the approval of budgets and programs, determining the methods and procedures for admission of students to these programs, appointment of university rectors and deans, issuing equivalency to foreign diplomas, establishing national committees in specific areas, organizing and monitoring programs for training future faculty members.

There are separate codes of conduct for staff and students issued by the CHE that are implemented by individual disciplinary committees in universities. The CHE acts as a disciplinary committee for university rectors and those rulings by university disciplinary committees that involve the expulsion of staff. In all such disciplinary and administrative matters, the CHE is assisted by a Supervisory Board and an army of legal councilors.

All power, tasks and responsibilities of the CHE are described in minute details in laws and regulations. All of its actions are subject to the scrutiny of courts.

At this point, I emphatically underline a pertinent aspect of this body of laws, rules and regulations. There is no area of authority and power in which the president of the CHE can take action or exercise authority all by himself. He is only responsible for the implementation of decisions of the CHE, where he has just one vote.

The annual performances of all academic staff are evaluated at various levels, chairpersons-, directors-, deans-, and rectors-level. In case of a discrepancy between levels, the president of the CHE makes the final decision, who also directly evaluates the performance of rectors and vice-rectors. All staff that has been evaluated negatively is notified, and he/she has the right to take the case to court. Staff evaluation is the only area where the president of the CHE has some discretion and direct power.

I now turn to admission of students to higher education programs. This is done centrally by a nation-wide examination prepared, implemented and proctored by the Student Selection and Placement Center (SSPC), which, until recently, was under the CHE. The structure of the central test is set forth by the CHE.

2.3 What the CHE did in 1995-2003

My basic approach in this period was to create a competitive environment in Turkish higher education by emphasizing quality, benchmarking, evaluation and assessment at the national and the international levels. I tried to strengthen university administrations by concentrating on the roles of the CHE in setting goals and monitoring performance.

I once again emphatically underline that I made no changes in the various ways that had been established in the early eighties by which the CHE communicated and interacted with other organs of the state, including TGS, NSC, ministries, security forces, etc.

I will not go into all details of the many things accomplished in that period. For those interested, I refer them to Prof. Üstun Ergüder, the rector of Boğazici University, and Prof. Gülsün Sağlamer, the rector of İstanbul Technical University, during that period. Instead, I will concentrate on several areas, in which what CHE accomplished led to my arrest and imprisonment after fifteen years.

A few years before I started, the CHE had developed a junior faculty training program jointly with the Ministry of National Education (MoE). Hundreds of students were selected and sent abroad. The program was costing millions of dollars annually, but there was no monitoring and evaluation. The CHE was inundated with letters from organizations, individuals, the various public agencies of the Turkish Republic, which alleged that some of these students were performing poorly, others were in less than adequate institutions, and a number of them were involved in anti-secular or separatist activities.

In order to establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism as well as to develop new and more cost-effective programs, the CHE established the National Committee for Training Faculty Members. As required by law, the status of the committee was published in the Official Gazette. The committee comprised senior faculty members with internationally recognized credentials and experience in running such graduate-level programs. Groups of committee members visited institutions abroad and carefully evaluated all the information that had reached the CHE.

Upon the recommendation of the committee, the CHE recalled a number of students, and to give them another chance, placed them in graduate-level programs in leading Turkish universities. New faculty development programs were established in a number of Turkish universities, which are still running and are much more effective.

With the same legal authority and procedure, the CHE also established the National Committee of Divinity, comprising senior professors of divinity in the country. The purpose of the committee was to advise the CHE on the ways and means by which academic support could be provided to the provision of religious services to a predominantly Muslim population. The CHE approved 2-year associate-level program by distance education to which employees of the Pious Affairs Administration with secondary-level diplomas from the previously mentioned vocational religious schools were admitted without going through the central admission examination, which they had failed to pass so far. It should be noted that two members of this committee, Prof. Sait Yazicioğlu and Prof. Mehmet Aydın, later become ministers in *Justice and Development Party (AKP)* government.

Turkey is a major student exporting country. According to UNESCO statistics, there are an estimated 50,000 Turkish students studying abroad. It is naturally a matter of national interest that these students study in internationally recognized institutions, not in diploma-mills, rogue providers and obscure schools. Traditionally, United States, United Kingdom, Germany and France were the main destinations of Turkish students. With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and international travel becoming much easier and cheaper, our students started to go to all kinds of establishments in many other countries too.

New destinations included former Soviet Bloc countries, quasi-institutions in the United States, and Western Europe. Incompatibility with the Turkish system stemmed from the structure of programs and a vast array of quality issues. Muslim countries, in addition to those just mentioned, presented a further problem because Turkish higher education legislation strictly stipulates a secular system.

To address all such issues pertaining to equivalency of foreign diplomas, the CHE adopted a set of rules and regulations that were published in the Official Gazette. Each application was evaluated according to these rules, which included expert opinions from related departments in Turkish universities, systematic examinations in professional areas such as medicine and law, and comparison with the practice of national academic recognition information centers (NARICs) in Western Europe. Diplomas in divinity and Islamic studies were evaluated by the previously mentioned National Committee of Divinity.

An office was set up within the CHE headed by a lawyer to process thousands of such applications. Each case was evaluated and decided by the CHE on the basis of expert opinions received. The CHE eventually decided not to recognize diplomas from many institutions in Muslim countries and those in the regulated professional fields such as law, engineering and medicine obtained in former Soviet Bloc countries. A striking case in point was the relegation of El-Ezher diplomas from bachelor to associate level as recommended by the National Committee of Divinity. Again, it is clear that, in all the foregoing, there was not a single case in which I made a decision all by myself as the president of the council.

The CHE also revoked the equivalency of Pakistani diplomas. A course entitled "Islamic Ideology" given in every semester is compulsory in curricula of all degree programs in Pakistani universities. This means that the said course comprises close to twenty percent of curricula. This is clearly incompatible with the strictly secular higher education system in Turkey.

The Pakistani government was naturally very upset. The ambassador, a retired general, came to see me on this issue. I vividly remember the conversation. His point was that what the CHE had done was incompatible with the traditionally close relations between our countries. I gave him a lengthy explanation, at the end of which he was decrying the appalling condition to which Pakistani had deteriorated. It was Ramadan. He had accepted my offer of refreshments.

My other big crime was changing the university admission system as if it was a decision I had taken all by myself. Here is the background to this issue.

Prior to 1998, when the system was changed, two tests were taken by students. The first test was more or less a comprehension and reasoning test based on basic concepts in Turkish language, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences. Its subject matter content was about fifty percent. The second test was a number of compartmentalized tests, one hundred percent based on subject matter content in various areas. The final score to be used in admission was calculated as a composite of the scores in the two tests and high school performance. Approximately, high school performance counted seven percent, first test three percent and the second test ninety percent.

What this meant was that high schools meant nothing to the students. Truancy in the final year had reached catastrophic proportions. What a student studied at the secondary level had no bearing on what type of tertiary-level programs he or she could apply to. That is, whether you were in a vocational school or in a general academic high school made no difference.

Thus, as of the mid-nineties, the secondary level education was in a state of nearly total collapse. It had long been supplanted by a nation-wide coaching industry charging astronomical fees and dulling the minds of generations. The collateral damage caused by such high-stakes testing was immense.

We started working on this problem in early 1996, in collaboration with the MoE. The project was completed in April 1998, but its announcement to the public was postponed

until July 30 when it would be finalized in a meeting of the CHE. The reason for the postponement was not to confuse the nearly 1.5 million students who would be taking the exam in the old system in mid-June.

In the new system, the second test was eliminated as simulations carried out on previous year's results clearly showed that the two tests were one hundred percent correlated. Thus, the new system would consist of the first test plus high school performance, whose weight was increased from seven to twenty-two percent. Relationships were also established between secondary- and tertiary-level programs. Thus, a student seeking admission in these established educational tracks would get full credit for high school performance (HSP); his/her admission score (AS) would be calculated as follows:

$$AS = (0.22)(HSP) + (0.78)(TS)$$

where TS is the test score. No restrictions were placed on tertiary-level programs that students could apply to. A student in any secondary-level program, including vocational programs, was free to apply to any tertiary-level program. But when the student applied to a tertiary-level program outside of the previously mentioned secondary-tertiary tracks, only forty percent of his or her high school performance would be counted, and the admission score would be calculated as:

$$AS = (0.40)(0.22)(HSP) + (0.78)(TS)$$

The 0.40 was not a magic number. It was the common share of Turkish language, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences in the curricula of some one hundred secondary-level programs in Turkey. It was calculated by curriculum experts of MoE and SSPC. Thus, on the average sixty percent of the courses in a given high school program were specific to that program, and as such were preparatory to only some, not all of the tertiary-level programs. This was the basis of the secondary-tertiary tracks I have mentioned previously. To further clarify this point, consider a student in the science section of a general high school. If he or she applied to say engineering and medicine programs, full credit would be given for high school performance. On the other hand, if the student applied to social science program, only forty percent of his or her high school performance would count.

This was the beginning of what came to be known as the "coefficient controversy" on account of the 0.4 multiplier I have mentioned above. Despite all our efforts, the new system was leaked on May 17, 1998. Immediately, a huge campaign was started by two groups: the cracking industry, which faced huge revenue losses and the Islamists. To a foreigner the former group is easy to grasp. The reaction of the Islamists, on the other hand, needs further elaboration. At the core of their reaction were the IHL, the vocational religious schools. Originally established in the 1920s to train enlightened personnel to be employed in the provisions of religious services, over time, they had effectively become a religious general education track operating in tandem with the secular tracks. Preferred destination of these IHL graduates were law, public education and teacher training along with divinity and Arabic studies. In the new system, they would get full credit for high school performance only if they applied to the latter two programs and a few other similar ones

such as philosophy. Otherwise, they would only get forty percent of their high school performance.

The CHE never specifically targeted the IHL. If it had, there was enough legal basis and authority to allow the IHL graduates to apply only to divinity programs. I know I have become too technical and boring. But, allow me to explain this subtle legal point.

As I have pointed out before, the IHL were established on the basis of the law on the Unity of Education, enacted on March 3, 1924, just a few months after the proclamation of the Republic. Article 4 of this law is quite specific on the aim of these schools: to train personnel to be employed in the provision of religious services.

The Law on the Unity of Education is part and parcel of the current Constitution along with a number of other laws enacted in the early days of the Republic establishing its underpinning tenets. As such, it supercedes all other legislation. With such strong legal basis, the CHE could have restricted the admission of IHL graduates to programs related to the provision of religious services had it targeted those schools as alleged by the Islamists. What we were trying to do at the CHE was to develop a streamlined, flexible and easily readable admission system that was also structurally compatible with the secondary level as well as reestablishing the central role of the school, the classroom and the teacher.

Following its leakage to the press, the campaign against the new system was picking up momentum. It was raised to another level a fortnight before the July 1998 meeting of the CHE, when an official letter from the Turkish General Staff (TGS) came. The letter was signed by a four-star general, Çevik Bir, the second in command at the TGS. It was addressed to the CHE, not to me personally. It was asking us to reconsider the new system, because, in their opinion, increasing the contribution of high school performance could be exploited by teachers and potentially lead to grade inflation in some schools.

It was a very unusual situation. Since the early eighties, it was common to receive official letters from the NSC and TGS, which were concerned with information they had received from various sources about separatist and radical Islamist activities in universities, or asking us to support security-related programs and research in universities. But, nothing like this one, as far as I knew.

I vividly remember the expression on the face of my office director; she knew I would be furious at such blatantly inappropriate infringement on the affairs of an autonomous constitutional body. Indeed I was. I considered various options including an official written response. This would have implied an acknowledgment of a power of TGS for which there was no legal basis. The letter would probably leak to the press and lead to a scandalous controversy.

In the end, I decided to pay a visit to General Bir myself and tell him that we would disregard this letter and stick to the system that had been developed over more than a year of hard work. We had a short and friendly meeting. In its July 1998 meeting, the CHE approved the new system without any changes, which would take effect in 1999.

How was I to know that Çevik Bir's letter would come back to haunt me and poison my life after exactly fifteen years.

In 1999 President Demirel reappointed me for a second term. I served as the president of the CHE until December 5, 2003. I have not been in or near the premises of the Council since then, during which three presidents have succeeded me.

3. A CIVILIAN SUSPECT IN A COUP ATTEMPT INQUIRY

I was enjoying the pleasures of retirement in the company of my beloved wife, Güniz, and was absorbed in studying higher education as a scholarly pursuit. I now have to my credit four books on various aspects of the subject, two in the United States, one in Italy, and one in Turkey; four chapters in books published in the United States, the UK and Australia; and numerous speeches and conference presentations. In 2011, UNESCO included me among the hundred persons whose views and works profoundly influenced the development of higher education in the past decade.

While I was internationally recognized, I was made a villain at home, someone who had caused female students wearing headscarf to shed tears; someone who had darkened the futures of IHL graduates, etc. I was taunted in every imaginable way. I was charged with being a member of Ergenekon, a secret armed terrorist organization. I was detained for four days and the court case is still going on. I defended myself in court on February 20, 2012. The judge asked me just three perfunctory questions. I am cautiously confident that I will be acquitted, as they obviously have no case against me.

In the meantime, General Bir's infamous letter, which was naturally kept in the official archives of the CHE, was leaked to the press. A number of "persons in power" started to make statements to the press, alleging that I had acted on the express order of General Bir to design the new admission system in 1998. I answered this baseless allegation along the lines I have outlined in the previous section. It was to no avail.

Then in early February 2012 the prosecutor of the Specially Authorized Court (SAC) in Ankara started an inquiry into the so-called 28 February Process, charging that it was an attempted coup. Several waves of arrests followed, in which some sixty high-ranking officers, including General Bir and force commander in 1997 were charged with becoming members of an illegal organization. Apparently, the prosecutor was suspecting that the West Working Group (WWG) was in fact an illegal organization, a junta so to speak. The police then raided the premises of the CHE and confiscated archived documentation. Even that did not rattle me. I had done nothing illegal, never acted outside of my legal authority.

I was following these events just as a concerned citizen without in any way associating myself with what was going on. All I knew about WWG was what I read in the media since 1997. During the so-called 28 February Process I had no contact with the TGS, other than occasional courtesy visits to leaving and incoming chiefs of TGS, the infamous meeting with General Bir, and when they had asked for the assistance of CHE in establishing a think-tank within the TGS. I recall no instance in which a high-ranking officer even implied anything to

me as to what the CHE should do. This also goes for General (ret.) Erdoğan Öznal who was the TGS appointee in the CHE at the time.

Thus, I was completely detached from what was going on in the 28 February Process inquiry. With this frame of mind, we went to our summer home in Çesme, near İzmir, my hometown. Güniz and I were looking forward to the longest summer vacation in our lives in one of the most beautiful and chic resorts in the whole world, where our son Murat, who lives in the United States, would later join us.

On June 17 we started our Adriatic cruise, which we had to cancel last year because of my detached retina surgeries. On June 22 we were enjoying the beautiful town of Kotor in Montenegro, when Güniz's phone rang. It was our maid in Ankara. She had seen a news flash on TV. The prosecutor had issued a warrant for me to be "brought in for interrogation" in the 28 February inquiry. I did not know what that phrase meant, but we started getting phone calls from our friends, and the picture became clearer: I was wanted.

I immediately called my lawyer and asked him to notify the prosecutor that our ship would dock in İzmir on June 24, and that I would immediately surrender to the police at the port.

In the meantime, the news had spread among the cruise passengers. It was on all Turkish TV stations, which we received on board. I was awash with a sea of sympathy. All were telling me to disembark and go to the United States where my son lives. Some were even offering me cash in case I did not have enough. All were convinced that I would be arrested and left to rot in jail as have been the case for many in other similar political court cases currently proceeding in Turkey.

I told all these wonderful people, most of whom we had just met on the cruise, that I had done nothing wrong, had always remained within law, and that all I knew about the '28 February Process" and the "West Working Group (WWG)" was what the Turkish media had been reporting. I did not for a second consider fleeing.

When I disembarked at İzmir port, I kissed my beloved wife Güniz good bye, immediately reported to the police, and told them I was surrendering. They said there was no warrant for me to be taken into custody, and that I was free to go. That meant that even at that point, I would go to the airport and fly to anywhere in the world. Neither I nor Güniz would consider anything of the kind. We drove back to Ankara. The next morning at 9 AM sharp, I reported to the prosecutor accompanied by my lawyer, Elif, a wonderful lady, who is the senior assistant of Sedat, my senior lawyer. Both Sedat and Elif have done so much for me that they are now part of our family. I do not know, if I will ever be able to reciprocate their friendship and kindness.

The interrogation started at 11 am. Here are the questions the prosecutor asked and my responses to them as I recall.

1. He showed me two notebooks in which someone had recorded in pencil and in handwriting information about staff in universities. I said I had never seen those notebooks, had never instructed anyone in the CHE to record such information, and that

had I known when I was in office that someone was recording such information, I would have started an inquiry. I also added that government agencies as well as private individuals do write to the CHE informing about university staff allegedly involved in illegal activities, and that the CHE has established procedures for handling that kind of communication, which involve official documents and record keeping, but nothing like handwritten notes in private notebooks. I have left the premises of the CHE almost nine years ago, never gone back, and had no idea about what these notebooks were and who might have kept them.

2. The prosecutor showed me some documentation prepared by the WWG on the measures to be implemented to abate radical Islam. These included a number of recommendations concerning the CHE. The prosecutor's view was that the actions taken by the CHE in the following areas were along these lines:

- Equivalency of foreign diplomas,
- Faculty member training abroad,
- Headscarf ban.

He also showed another WWG document, in which it was stated that any material to be passed to the CHE should be through General (ret.) Erdoğan Öznal, the TGS appointee to the CHE and General (ret.) Sedat Aritürk, a former university rector whom the CHE had later appointed as the chairman of the Supervisory Board.

My response was, I had never seen those documents before, had had no contact with the WWG, and that no one had passed on any information or request from the WWG as to what the CHE should or should not do. On the three specific issues he asked me, I gave the detailed explanations I have previously presented in this narrative.

3. In my previous altercation (entanglement) with the new Turkish legal system, the infamous Ergenekon case, my apartment had been searched. This time, there was no house search. The confiscated material was transferred from the Ergenekon court to the 28 February Process court. In this material was a photocopy of a pamphlet about the Gülen movement, a controversial religious group now with a worldwide network, and allegedly very powerful in the new Turkish legal system and police force. On it was a handwritten note by General (ret.) Öznal, who apparently had given it to me, some fifteen years ago. The prosecutor asked me what I did or intended to do with it.

I tried to explain to him that it was common among the CHE members to pass on to each other books and other written material they thought were interesting. I also added that all such written material, reports, books, etc. that had been accumulated in my office and official residence had been packed and transported to our private apartment at the end of my term. I had not opened the said pamphlet, was not aware of its existence until it was confiscated and had naturally not done nor was intending to do with it. Besides, I added, the Internet and the Turkish media and publications contain literally hundreds, perhaps thousands of such pamphlets, books, reports, news pieces, etc., about the Gülen movement. I also remember adding that General (ret.) Öznal was a prolific writer – he had written a book on etiquette and table manners when he was the commander

of the Air Force Academy; he would always remind us that one held a wine glass by its stem to avoid warming its contents – and an avid reader. He had also retained many of his disciplined ways, such as adding handwritten courtesy notes.

4. His final question was the infamous General Bir letter of July 14, 1998 concerning the new admission system. Again, I presented all the information that I have previously given in this narrative. I also gave him a copy of a book I had published in 2008, which contained detailed information, on the admission system adopted in 1998, the rationales for it, and an international survey of practices in other countries.

The interrogation lasted for about four hours. Throughout, my dear Elif was smiling, nodding her head in approval to my responses, and giving me the thumbs up sign. I was quite relaxed and making plans about where we would take Elif and Sedat for dinner, as well as for our return to Çesme.

Gullible me! I had completely failed to miss the significance of some remarks by the prosecutor. Looking back, I remember two that I now think were in fact Freudian slips. One was about one of our doctoral students in the United States who had tried to slaughter a lamb in the university quadrangle during the Moslem Sacrifice Feast. When I brought this up, the prosecutor responded by saying that it was part of the Islamic practice that the faithful could sacrifice lamb as they saw to it. I also failed at that time to see the significance of his remarks on the headscarf issue: Was it not wrong to disallow poor female students and nurses in university hospitals to practice their religion as they saw fit?

After about an hour and a half, the prosecutor announced his decision: he was sending me to court with a request for my arrest. Elif and I were stunned. She tried to console me that the court would allow no injustice. How wrong she was!

The court was just one judge. His ruling after two hours of deliberation was that I should be arrested. So in the evening of June 25, 2012, I was placed in cell C1-68 of Ankara F-type Maximum Security Prison No.1, to which from here on I will refer to as F-1/C1-68.

According to the Turkish penal code, the following are the bases for such an arrest decision: the nature of the alleged crime, the potential for the accused to tamper with the evidence and witnesses, and the possibility of fleeing. Obviously, none of these, other than the heavy penalty required by the alleged crime applied in my case. I had voluntarily returned from abroad and subjected myself to interrogation. There was no way I could temper with evidence or witnesses. The police had already searched the premises of the CHE back in March, I had not been on those premises for the past nine years, and if I were to go there, the new CHE people would be mortified.

More importantly, could the evidence presented during my interrogation, in any imaginable way, be used to construct a case against me? It was null and void, a prosecutor in any civilized country, would apologize for inconveniencing me and see me to the door to shake hands and say goodbye. When Elif, Sedat, and Said, Sadat's junior assistant, came to visit me, Sedat, who is very careful and conservative in his choice of words, apologized to me as a

member of the legal profession. He said, with moist eyes, that he had never experienced such a travesty, such abomination of law

4. THE AFTERMATH

My arrest led to a huge backlash both at home and abroad. I had managed to call my beloved wife Güniz before being taken to prison, and told her that there was some sort of dark force that was determined to avenge me by making me rot in prison. My last sentence to her was: "Forget me, Güniz".

Güniz is a very mild-mannered, soft-spoken person with an angelic face, mind and heart. She tries to avoid confrontation, and shuns publicity. A highly accomplished professor of chemical engineering at Middle East technical University, a former Fulbright scholar, visiting professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Northeastern University, she takes more pride in the way she dotes on me and our son Murat, who has a PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from Northwestern University, now an American citizen working in the Silicon Valley. Without Güniz around, I am totally helpless, she maintains the household, and also handles all our financial matters; I do not know how much money we have in our bank account. Without her, I simply cannot survive.

After my arrest, she surpassed herself, and gave interviews to the press. For a week, not a day passed without something about my arrest in the Turkish media. "Forget me, Güniz" became a headline, which became an apt description of the appalling state of the Turkish legal system at the present.

Articles appeared in Nature and Science expressing the horror of the international scientific community. Both Güniz and Murat received calls of support from the Academy of Science. They were able to reach Murat at O'Hare where he was on his way to Turkey to be with his mother.

Public opinion had been mounting against the Specially Authorized Courts since the start of a number of what eventually came to be perceived as politically motivated court cases. These are well documented at home and abroad; I will not delve into them. As a result, the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister too started speaking against them. Finally, over the weekend following my arrest, the Parliament in a marathon session abolished these courts and enacted a number of changes that are aimed at preventing arrests on weak, in my case, nonexistent, evidence.

Today is July 7, Saturday. I am anxiously waiting to hear from Sedat and Elif that I have been released from prison.

Let me now describe the prison conditions. I am sharing a cell with two retired colonels, two real gentlemen, who are also charged in the 28 February Process inquiry. The cell is a split level unit of 25 square meters each. The upper level is where we sleep. Three beds and three small metal closets, no curtains in the windows. The lower level contains a plastic table and three plastic chairs, a sink and a food storage cabinet. The shower and the toilet

are also in this level, which opens to a fifty square meter yard. The yard is concrete and surrounded by high walls with barbed wires at the top where you can only see the sky.

My cell mates had bought a small TV and a tea brewing set. I bought a small fridge. Nothing can be brought in from the outside, other than limited personal clothing. Inmates are allowed to shop for toiletries, food, clothing, furniture, TV sets and fridges in the canteen. The choice is, of course, very limited. Your orders are taken on Mondays, delivery is on Tuesdays. Newspapers are also available on monthly orders.

There is continuous hot water. Three meals are served everyday. Meals are free, but we pay for electricity. Prison issue soft metal plates and cutlery are available. Plastic tableware can also be bought from the canteen. Food is not inedible, but it is a far cry from Güniz's gourmet cooking.

Güniz, my son, and my brothers are allowed to visit me every week. We are separated by a glass partition and talk with a phone in three visits. One week is when we are allowed to meet openly in a common room. In that meeting, up to six friends you have listed can also visit you. Every week you are allowed ten minutes of phone conversation with a person of your choosing. Your lawyers can visit you anytime and can stay as long as necessary. Other than lawyer meetings, all other conversations are recorded. Books are allowed from the outside after inspection and approval by the prison authorities.

This particular complex comprises nine prisons. Our section has been reserved for those charged in the 28 February Process inquiry. I am the only civilian in this group of sixty high-ranking officers. I can't believe I am here, it is truly a nightmare. The other sections are for PKK and similar terrorist groups. Strict measures are enforced to prevent them coming into contact with us. We are also not allowed to meet with others in our section, that is, there is no sectional common room and dining hall. Meals are delivered through a small hole in a bolted, heavy metal door.

Each section has an infirmary and there is also a small scale central hospital. Any prescription medication is supplied free of charge.

You can visit the infirmary any time you ask for. A doctor and a dentist are available on certain days of the week, but a health technician is there on all working days. There is no Internet connection. You can send and receive letters which are censored.

When I was first brought here, I had a state of mind unlike anything I had experienced before. It was a combination of revolt against a gross injustice, fear, revulsion, loneliness, and a sense of loss of loved ones. I did not eat anything for almost 150 hours, my blood pressure had risen to upper limits as I had stopped taking my medication. In that state of mind, I had come to the conclusion that the only way to avenge this gross injustice and end this unbearable misery was to kill myself. Since there was no way to commit suicide, the only option was to starve myself to death. I was intravenously fed with glucose solution twice.

It was again my beloved Güniz, my guardian angel who brought me back to life. She sent word with Elif that she too would stop eating if I did not start eating. When I saw her and Murat, accompanied by my three closest friends; Ali Kantur, Mehmet Ali Bayar and Tufan Sesigürgil in our first open meeting, I realized that I had to endure this pain for their sake.

What now keeps me going is their sweet smell from our embrace that day. I am now more optimistic, but that bitter lump is still in my chest. I try to get rid of it by crying. Every night when I go to bed, I try to fall asleep imagining that my beloved Güniz is in my arms. When during the night I search for her feet with mine and can't find them, the reality hits me and I start crying again to get rid of that lump in my chest.

So the days go by. There is no such thing as "good prison conditions". I have come to the conclusion that all judges and prosecutors should spend some time as inmates before they start their careers so that they internalize what restricting one's freedom means.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I have previously pointed out, the charge against me is to conspire to fully or partially incapacitate and to overthrow the government by using force and violent means. This is in reference to the so called 28 February Process that I have quoted previously.

So far, some sixty former officers have been arrested, including the commanders of the army, navy, air force and gendarmerie, the second in command at the TGS and all those who had been assigned to the WWG at the time.

I am the only civilian! I have no idea about what went on behind the doors. I keep racking my mind, trying to remember and reconstruct events that are supposed to have taken place fifteen years ago. I am constantly questioning my memory to answer questions such as: Have I attended any secret meetings? Have I had any clandestine contact with any of the officers I am supposed to have conspired with? Has anyone passed on any information or instruction to me concerning the overthrow of the Erbakan government? Have I done anything unlawful as the president of the CHE? The answer to all these questions is an emphatic no. Besides what means do I have to use force and violent means? Where are my guns? I have never held a gun in my life even when I was doing my military service.

Furthermore, where is the coup? How can one speak of a coup when the government has remained in office for four months, at which time the prime minister has handed his resignation in line with the coalition protocol. These are not my words; they are from President Demirel's testimony to the Parliamentary committee currently investigating past coups.

So, why am I here? The answer to this question was aptly provided by the spokesperson of the ruling AKP, Hüseyin Çelik, who was the Minister of National Education during my last year as the president of the CHE in 2003. What he said in short was I was paying for my actions as the president of the CHE and in that it served me right that I should be put in jail and tried in court.

Hüseyin Çelik, who has no love lost for me like the vast majority of Islamists, has succinctly provided the reasons underlying my predicament. I have nothing further to add at this point. The question is how long I can maintain my sanity against such gross injustice expressed by mouths salivating with vengeance. The bigger question is, of course, for how long the Turks can endure all this.

Throughout my life; I have pursued academic excellence and upheld human intellect above all. Where I should get rewarded, I now get punished for that.