

As the signatories to the Peace Petition of January 11, 2016, we have gone through many various types of repression since we shared our claim to peace with the public by the declaration titled “We Will Not Be A Party To This Crime.” We have also experienced a variety of solidarity practices. Since January 2016, more than 500 of our colleagues were separated from their universities and from their students through dismissal from public service, firing, and forced retirement. Four of our colleagues were detained for weeks.

And now we are on the edge of a new phase. The signatories to the January 11 Peace Petition, publicly known as the Academics for Peace Petition, are being sued on an individual basis on the accusation of “propagandizing for terror” (See Turkish Anti- Terror Law, Article 7/2). The public prosecutor proposes imprisonment extending to 7.5 years.

First the signatory academics from İstanbul University and Galatasaray University were sued at the Criminal Court. They were followed by the signatory academics from Marmara University, Yıldız Technical University, İstanbul Technical University, Özyeğin University and Kemerburgaz University. And it is very likely that signatories from other universities and cities will be added to this chain.

(As of November 15, 2017 only one tenth of the signatory academics are sued. The cases are organized so as to extend from December 2017 to April 2018.)

The cases are opened with the same ‘copy and paste’ bill of indictment, but on an individual basis. The cases are distributed to different Criminal Courts, on different dates and in 10-minute intervals so as to preempt the sued academics from standing together.

For that reason, the support extended from members of universities and institutions in the country and abroad has been of the utmost importance to us. In this new turn of events, where we are well aware that it is not the individual academics who are being sued, but the claim to peace and the voice of the free science that put forth this claim that are on trial, we need your support more than ever.

As one of the peace academicians, I want to mention some of our activities and calls to the international academic communities in order to build solidarity, to resist and to become resilient as well.

Ulaş Bayraktar is one of my colleagues from Mersin; we were banned from the public services with the same decree, Nr. 689. He said that our real public service is just beginning after this decree. In order to do that, we are trying to build new forms of universities, such as solidarity academies and street academies. And meanwhile, for protecting the academic freedom in Turkey’s universities, at least what is left from it, we called for a targeted academic boycott.

With the solidarity academies and the street academies, my colleagues in Turkey are trying to do their best, to reach the students, workers, city dwellers and all the people around in order to share and reproduce the academical knowledge.

And this act, basically teaching in these academies, has also been added to the bill of indictment as a so called terrorist activity.

But still there are solidarity academies in Kocaeli, İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Mersin, Dersim, Eskişehir and Urfa. There are also street academies in Ankara and With No Campus Initiative in İstanbul. In the coming days, we, the peace academicians in Germany, will announce a solidarity academy in Germany as well. And Off-University made its opening on the 7th of October in Berlin. The common ground of all these new initiatives is our effort to maintain our academic work despite all the pressure and obstacles. The Off- University in Germany tries to find new ways to support the academicians in Turkey and in the mean time tries to establish a new form of university in the neoliberal era. The search for new forms of producing, sharing and reproducing knowledge is a valuable and very difficult effort. We are trying to survive from the ongoing attacks of Erdoğan's Islamic neoliberal regime and in the mean time we are trying to create new spheres to survive.

As for the call for academic boycott, it is also related to our struggle to protect the values like academic freedom, the dignity of academicians and freedom of speech in the universities of Turkey. This is a targeted and evidence-based academic boycott against the current Turkish higher education system. And boycotting the universities in Turkey such as Ankara or Mersin University doesn't mean that you are cutting all your relations with the academicians and students in Turkey. On the contrary, it means that you are helping the academicians and the students, who are trying to defend the universal values of the universities. For example, instead of inviting Ankara University's rector for a speech, you can invite the academicians from the solidarity academies. Or instead of organizing a symposium with these universities, which are responsible of academic purge, you can organize a symposium with the universities, which at least don't fire academicians because of their views. Targeted boycott means that you are helping the academicians and students in Turkey for their struggle to access to public spheres, to civic rights and even the right for life. Otherwise the academical atmosphere of Turkey will be totally destroyed. To avoid this total destruction, we have called the universities around the World to boycott the most responsible universities in these processes.

There are a lot of things you can do for the academicians and students in Turkey. You can stand by us in the courts starting from December 5, 2017 by sending monitoring teams, by observers, generating news, and through transparency and dissemination of information. You can visit the solidarity academies in Turkey or in Germany. You can give lectures or speeches in these academies, also possible via Skype. You can establish new bounds and collaborations with the academicians who are trying to resist. You can offer positions to the researchers and most importantly to the Phd students. You can fund Off University or help us to find funds. And at least, you can raise your voice and give us hope. Because we will continue in our claim to peace and life and to stand against all kinds of rights violations and injustices.

I want to finish with a quote from Elie Wiesel: "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the

tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the centre of the universe”.

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