



EĞİTİM SEN eğitim ve bilim emekçileri sendikası
23 OCAK 1995



Repressions Against Those Who Struggle for Peace, Democracy and Labor Continue to Increase in Turkey

For a long time, pressure and intimidation policies have been carried out against the forces of labor and democracy in Turkey. These repressive policies have turned into a clear policy of violence and intimidation aimed at sections of the labor struggle for democracy and peace, and especially at progressive, opposition sections of society since 2016.

The government uses all the possibilities of the state to intimidate anyone who does not think like himself, does not support its policies, and puts every institution under pressure. The political power and its supporters accuse labor and professional organizations outside their control, as well as the political opposition, of "terrorist collaborationism" and they are provoking racism and escalating social tension.

Illegal Dismissals of Education Workers and Trade Union Members

There is a systematic pressure on sections of the opposition trade unions in Turkey, especially those fighting for labor and democracy. Especially after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, illegal practices and pressures against dissident functions including KESK and Eğitim Sen increased and despite the high judicial decisions, ECHR decisions and international conventions, the most basic trade union activities were tried to be covered by crime. Our number of members, which was 120 thousand before the coup attempt on July 15, has declined to 70 thousand due to the pressures and threats experienced over the past years. Managers and members of our trade union often face threats of investigation, expulsion, dismissal.

Actions and activities carried out within the framework of the trade union struggle are the subject of investigation by the government. Due to press statements, participation in rallies, calls and announcements of trade union events that they shared on their social media accounts, a large number of our members have been investigated and faced unlawful penalties. As a result of all this unlaw implementations, 1602 members of Eğitim Sen were dismissed. Although 520 of our members were later reinstated, the requests of the remaining members to be reinstated were rejected.

After the 2016 military coup attempt 34 thousand 393 people from the Ministry of National Education and 7 thousand 312 people from higher education institutions (5 thousand 904 academicians, thousand 408 administrative personnel) were removed from public office by the extraordinary State Legislative Decrees.

The State of Emergency (OHAL) Operations Review Commission announced that 115,130 out of 126,674 applications for rights violations were decided. The Commission has responded to 101 thousand 58 applications with a refusal. To date, a decision has been made on 91 percent of the total applications, while the review of 11,544 applications is ongoing.

With the issuance of the Decree Law, education and science workers were not only deprived of their jobs, they were prevented from doing their professions that they had earned as a result of long

efforts. As a result of these, their and their families' lives were turned into a nightmare and sentenced to starvation. The teachers decommissioned during the State of Emergency faced very serious difficulties, and about 60 educators, including educators and academics, committed suicide because they could not stand the injustice they experienced.

Egitim Sen has frequently requested from the Education International of which we are a member and other international trade union institutions that the political power and especially the Ministry of Education, the employer side, be warned about the systematic pressure, intimidation and trade union discrimination against our trade union.

The Effects of the Earthquake Disaster on Education

Turkey is located on the most active earthquake belts of the world and ranks among the first in the world in terms of earthquake risk. There have been many destructive earthquakes in the past in the geography in which Turkey is located. After each earthquake, tens of thousands of people lost their lives due to the lack of necessary precautions and wrong urban policies.

With the earthquake disaster, not only the buildings but also the country's governance regime, economy, and urbanisation policies based entirely on rent rather than on nature and science were destroyed. The main reason for such a massive destruction is the central and local government policies that prioritise the needs of capital over the security of life and property of the people.

As a result of the earthquakes, not only the buildings but also the education system was left under the rubble. According to the data for the 2021-22 academic year, approximately 203,483 children in the 5-17 age group are out of education in the earthquake zone. Research draws attention to the fact that children whose ties with school have weakened are more likely not to return to education after the disaster. While some schools were opened gradually during the earthquake, some were not opened at all. Since a serious psychological support process was not provided for the children who were transferred, they had problems of adaptation to schools and could not participate in the education process. Necessary measures were not taken to prevent a similar situation at the beginning of the 2023/'24 academic year.

The very low level of budget allocated to education, the fact that schools are not ready for education, the lack of a concrete compensatory policy and the continuation of housing and nutrition problems show that we have a much darker picture in terms of the education process this term. It is inevitable that a period of interruption in the education process will affect the whole education life. For this reason, in order to maintain education in healthy and safe environments in the earthquake zone, it is necessary to create study and study environments for students, to coordinate these environments by professional people and to closely monitor the students affected by the earthquake.

In order for the students in the earthquake zone to overcome the earthquake trauma, it is important to ensure their access to education as well as the widespread and regular provision of psychological support for these students. However, there are insufficiencies in long-term psychological support that should be provided to children in earthquake zones.

It is also important to evaluate the earthquake process of refugee children. While these children were already experiencing difficulties in accessing education, their limited access to education has increased after the disaster. Moreover, cases of violence and abuse against girls have increased, and the increase in child labour after the disaster has also hindered access to education to a great extent.

Religious Policies in Education

In the education system in Turkey, children face discrimination based on gender, ethnic origin, language, sect and belief due to curricula, textbooks and practices. Turkey's education system is far from gender equality and is under the intense pressure and control of the dominant ideology, which is becoming increasingly religious in character.

The political power has been implementing policies in the field of education in line with its own political-ideological goals for a long time. The 'marketist' and 'religious education' centred practices implemented in cooperation with various foundations and associations directly affect students, teachers, education labourers and parents.

Non-scientific interventions in the education curriculum, reduction of philosophy-science courses, opening of masjids in schools, compulsory religion classes for children with special needs, taking pre-school and primary school students to mosques, etc. draw attention in terms of the religiousisation of education. The fact that coeducation has been openly targeted for a few years and the practices of separating classes according to gender, starting from imam hatip schools, show that the dimensions of the problem are much larger.

The Turkish Ministry of National Education has made significant changes to the weekly timetables to be implemented in the 2023/'24 academic year. Accordingly, courses in foreign languages were abolished, elective courses in arts and sports were narrowed down, and the number of hours for religion courses in primary and secondary schools was increased. The addition of four hours of compulsory elective and four hours of optional elective courses to the eight hours of compulsory religion classes in high schools, thus increasing the number of hours of religion classes to 16 hours, is a purely political and ideological choice. Following the amendment, foreign elective courses and fine arts courses were removed from the elective course schedule in Anatolian high schools in the 2022/'23 academic year. Making radical changes in the curriculum and increasing the number of religious courses two weeks before the opening of schools is against the principles of secular and democratic education.

To date, many cooperation protocols have been signed between the Ministry of National Education and the Presidency of Religious Affairs, religious foundations and associations. While the process of religiousisation of education has accelerated through joint projects implemented in schools over the past years, practices that directly target secular education and secular lifestyle have been implemented step by step.

The ÇEDES Project is the latest example of the government's aim to shape the education system in line with its political-ideological and religious-cultural needs.

The Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Presidency of Religious Affairs have been holding nationwide meetings and taking various decisions within the scope of the "I am sensitive to my environment, I claim my values" (ÇEDES) project.

The ÇEDES Project, which puts religious and spiritual values at the centre, was prepared and started to be implemented with a content contrary to the secular-scientific understanding of education and the science of pedagogy. The project covers "all high schools, secondary schools, primary schools and kindergartens, as well as all mosques and Qur'an courses in provincial centres and districts in order to make students adopt our national, spiritual, moral, humanitarian and cultural values". Within the scope of the project, imams without pedagogical training were assigned to schools as

'spiritual counsellors' through the Directorates of National Education and provincial mufti offices under the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

ÇEDES will pave the way for preachers, Qur'an course instructors and graduates of the Faculty of Theology to work as 'spiritual counsellors' in schools. Spiritual counsellors will meet with students outside of school at the camps of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports and participate in "values education" activities that provide religious indoctrination.

Egitim Sen organised a big rally in Izmir and filed a lawsuit to the Council of State for the cancellation of the ÇEDES project, which threatens secular education and secular life.

The Governments' Decision to Withdraw from Istanbul Convention

On the other hand, the nationalist and conservative political power decided to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, one of the most important achievements of women, and has not backed down from this decision despite all objections. The government has very serious interventions against the body, labor and lifestyle of women, and these attacks and interventions are increasing, and as a result, news of women's murders and violence against women are not falling off the agenda.

On the one hand, the economic crisis, epidemic conditions and current capitalist policies have made women the primary source of informal employment, flexible, precarious and temporary employment areas in the server, while on the other hand, it is noteworthy that women are targeted first in layoffs.

Inequality in Education

In terms of the curriculum, textbooks and application areas of the education system in Turkey, children face discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, language and belief. Turkey's education system is far from gender equality and it is under the intense pressure and control of the dominant nationalist ideology, which is gradually gaining a religious content. Ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity in the country is hardly reflected in education programs and textbooks. In access to education, steps are not taken to eliminate the disadvantages of girls, refugee children and children with different mother tongues. The situations arising from capitalist and nationalist policies in Turkey lead to regional, class and gender inequalities do these are important factors for students to drop out of their education.

The Problem of Education in Mother Tongue Still Unresolved

The view that education in mother tongue is a fundamental human right is accepted worldwide and has been recognised by the resolutions of many international organisations, including the United Nations. Regardless of gender, ethnic and religious identity, everyone has the right to self-development and self-creation. It is only through education - education in one's mother tongue - that human existence and development in all its aspects can be made possible.

Education in the mother tongue is one of the primary conditions for children's mental development, their ability to learn and their acquisition of a healthy identity, and is a fundamental principle of pedagogy. It is pedagogically unacceptable for a child who has learnt about the world and his/her environment in his/her mother tongue until the age of primary education to start education in a language that is foreign to him/her without any transition process. Depriving individuals of the right to education in their mother tongue negatively affects mental development and the process of acquiring identity from childhood.

In Turkey, elective courses in "living languages and dialects" have been introduced since September 2012. However, it has been observed over the past years that these courses are insufficient. Moreover,

school administrations create difficulties for students to freely choose elective courses. Since school administrations do not provide adequate information, parents are misled and are told that 'there are not enough applicants' or 'there are not enough teachers to teach this course' and thus they are made to give up their choice. Upon the insistent demands of the parents, for example, instead of appointing a Kurdish teacher, the problem is avoided by giving additional lessons to Kurdish-speaking branch teachers.

The Ministry of National Education (MEB) has announced that it will appoint 50 people to the Kurdish Language Teaching Programme under the title "Living Languages and Dialects" this year. According to the announcement, 35 of the 50 people will be appointed as "Kurmanji" and 15 as "Zazaki" dialect teachers. The Ministry's Kurdish language teaching staff was two in 2022 and only three in 2021. If the positions announced this year are fully filled, the total number of Kurdish teachers appointed will be 132. In the academic year 2022-2023, 24,368 students chose this course.

The tens of millions of people living in Turkey are deprived of the right to education in their mother tongue. The prohibition of mother tongue education prevents the development of indigenous languages and cultures and paves the way for their extinction over time. These approaches, which are incompatible with humanity, free thought, science and human rights, must be abandoned as soon as possible. Necessary arrangements must be made for individuals to use their mother tongue in education and training.

Privatization of Schools in Turkey

As in all areas of social life, the field of education has been separated from its public and social functions and transformed into a large 'economic sector' shaped by a 'competitive' logic according to the 'free market' mechanism. The multifaceted commercialization of education and the numerous practices that mean the step-by-step privatization of educational services have increased markedly with the AKP government.

In recent years, Turkey's education system has been managed with a more marketistic and more reactionary approach, political staffing in schools has been largely completed, and parents have been forced to spend more out of pocket to get their children to study than in previous periods.

In this process, where it is ignored that education is one of the basic human rights, education has been commercialized more and more. As a result, millions of children and young people have been deprived of the right to education, forced to receive education according to the social class to which they belong (imam hatips and vocational high schools) or have been unable to continue their education.

In Turkey, the ministry of national education continues its policy of explicitly directing students and their parents to private schools while trying to completely eliminate the increasingly narrow public nature of education. With the state's incentive policies, the number of private schools and the number of students attending these schools have increased significantly.

In the average of OECD countries, expenditures made from public resources at primary and secondary education levels constitute 90 percent of education expenditures, while expenditures from household and private sources constitute 9 percent. In Turkey, as a result of the commercialization in education, the rate of the public education expenditures is 75 percent, and the rate of the education expenditures made from household and private sources is 25 percent.

The steps taken by the political power in the field of education in line with its own political-ideological goals for a long time, and the "marketist" and "religious education" centered practices implemented in cooperation with various foundations and associations directly affect teachers, education workers, parents and especially students.

Moreover, making coeducation a clear target and segregation of classes according to gender show that the dimensions of the problem are much larger.

The Distinction Between Permanent-Contracted-Paid Teachers Negatively Affects the Quality of Education

After 15 July, as in all public institutions, contracted teacher appointments in the field of education started to be made through oral exams/interviews. The insistence on interview practice in teacher appointments has led to the abandonment of merit and its replacement with loyalty. After 15 July 2016, not a single permanent teacher appointment was made and all teachers were appointed on contract basis. Nearly 100 thousand paid teachers are expected to work in the 2023/'24 academic year.

The indispensable element of education is the teacher and the quality of education is directly proportional to the quality of the teacher. It is not possible for contracted and paid teachers to benefit students and education in general with their current working conditions. For this reason, there should be no distinction between permanent, contracted or paid teachers.

All contractual, paid or any other teaching practices should be terminated. Paid teaching, which has been practised for years, is one of the main problems in education, therefore the right to equal pay for equal work and all personal professional rights must be applied to all teachers. In order to ensure continuity, regularity and quality of public services, all kinds of precarious employment practices in education should be abandoned, the problem of unassigned teachers should be solved permanently and permanent and secure employment should be provided for everyone.

Repeal the Teaching Profession Law!

No to Career Hierarchy!

Equal Pay for Equal Work!

We are going through a period when we are forbidden to even express our criticism, democratic reaction and demands against the Teaching Profession Law in Turkey. While we wanted to convey our demands in front of the Ministry of National Education on September 8th, 2022, we subjected to police violence in front of the Egitim Sen' headquarters, ignoring our union rights and freedoms.

Egitim Sen's executives and branch heads were blocked by a large number of police gathered in front of the headquarters, they were informed that absolutely no one could leave the building. Egitim Sen's headquarters was virtually besieged.

The Ministry of Interior, Ankara Governor's Office and Law Enforcement have clearly committed crimes by acting in violation of international conventions, the constitutions and domestic law norms. Although we made our press statement after our determined and organized stance, we know very well that this is neither the first nor the last unlawful practice of a totalitarian administration.

The same totalitarian management mentality has also appeared in the Teaching Profession Law. The Teaching Profession Law was enacted in 2022 by the government, despite all the criticisms of the education workers, which was prepared against the will of the teachers, without considering their rights and demands. While the Constitutional Court process was continuing, the regulation was published and the implementation of the teaching career steps process started.

- The Teaching Profession Law is an arrangement which has led to inequality among teachers by segregating teachers who work for their students albeit in the same school, in the same class, same branches into different careers (paid teacher, contracted teacher, permanent teacher, specialist teacher, head teacher) and by trying to legitimize the application of different salaries according to this artificial segregation.
- While it was expected that the practice of paid teachers would be terminated with the Teaching Profession Law and that contracted teachers would be recruited with all their rights, on the contrary, this Law subjected permanent teachers to the hierarchy of expert teachers and head teachers. However, the real expectation of all teachers is secure work, equal pay for equal work, professional reputation and respect.
- The Teaching Profession Law abolished the central written examination and created a “Candidate Evaluation Commission” and thus started an arbitrary and oppressive process that would lead to political discrimination in the first appointment the teaching.
- The Teaching Profession Law states that “there is no career without an exam”. However, transition exams between career steps will have very negative effects on teachers, parents and students. The feelings of the teacher, who is exposed to the proficiency exam despite years of the hard work for their students, will overshadow the quality of education.
- In this period when the economic crisis deepens and education workers are crushed by inflation, efforts are made to index the economic and personal entitlements of workers to career ladders and exams.
- In the perception of the parents, the distinction of “adequate teacher” and “inadequate teachers” will be added to distinction between “qualified school” and “unqualified school”. This perception created from the perspective of the parents will also have serious effects on the students. There will be a “specialist teacher’s class” and a “head teacher class” in the school, and unequal practices will emerge in ensuring the right to education at the level of perception. This process will disrupt the professional dignity of the teacher, the communication between the school and the family, and the work peace.
- There is no regulation in the law regarding teachers working in private schools. This situation continues to be the most important problem regarding the principle of equality in teacher employment and equal pay for equal work. The fact that private school teachers have not been evaluated within the scope of Teaching Profession Law is also a proof that these colleagues are seen as cheap labor within the market-oriented education approach.

A comprehensive Teaching Profession Law has to secure the economic demands, job security, social, democratic and personal rights of all education workers. Therefore, the professional law, which should be regulated in accordance with the “Recommendations on the Status of Teachers” adapted by the ILO and UNESCO on 5 October 1966.

For these reasons;

We want a humanely livable wage arrangement above the poverty line for all education and science workers, without any discrimination, and the improvement of personal rights to be carried out immediately.

We are against the exam and career steps of education workers to be held within the scope of this law and regulation. We demand that this law be canceled and that this process that devalues teacher labor should be stopped as soon as possible.

We want a real professional law that will be prepared with a democratic and participatory approach in line with our demands, criticisms and suggestions regarding our economic, social, professional and personal rights.

As EGITIM SEN, we need international solidarity more than ever, and we thank you in advance for the sensitivity you have shown.