

STATEMENT
BY THE EASDALE FOUNDATION FOR LABOUR RESEARCH (EMAR)
REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENTS AROUND
THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF A RECTOR
TO THE BOSPHORUS UNIVERSITY, ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Dear Friends,

The events that have been taking place in Istanbul and across Turkey following the President's "appointment" of a member of his party as Rector to the Bosphorus University (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi), ignoring the university's traditions and customs, have now gone beyond the framework of a simple "appointment".

On January 2, 2021 President RT Erdoğan ordered, the appointment of a member of the ruling AKP party as rector, in order to "sort out" those supposedly "not for us" at Bosphorus University (BU).

This decision was thought to be "by the book", and therefore legitimate.

However, this "legal" appointment, which ignored long respected traditions and conventions, was not seen as "legitimate" and drew reactions from the students & teaching staff of BU, individuals at other higher educational bodies and the people on the street.

Faculty members and students declared that they would not accept the regime's "plagiarist" rector and have been insisting on that for over a month and a half now.

In response, the regime's police and private security prevented students from entering their own schools, literally "handcuffed" university gates, raided student homes at night, mistreated and detained many students.

President Erdoğan and Interior Minister Soyulu accused the students of all kinds of crimes, from working for other countries to being "terrorists".

However, these kinds of political stunts, were not accepted at home or abroad. The efforts of some provocateurs to make Muslim believers attack the protesting students as "unbelievers" did not help either. Moreover, some religious students gave their open support to the protests.

This made the President and the Interior Minister even more angry. Whilst Special Teams arrested protesters in several cities, it was announced that demonstrating students "would be shown their (miserable) place", in the negative sense. However, the court release of the so-called "terrorists" falsified the accusations of the President and his team.

At the point we reached today, it is obvious that the clash between the heavy guns of the AKP-MHP regime led by the "chief", i.e., the President and the students, academicians, and intellectuals of the country, who have been declared "*gayri milli*" - i.e. "not of us" - is actually a real "fight of wills".

These events are actually a reflection of a true class struggle, where the ranks of adversaries are distinguished more clearly with time!

On the one hand, there are tens of thousands of young people and their families, who want democracy and freedom but are timid giants at present. They have no tools at hand except for their studentship, teaching, progressiveness, and the legitimacy of their reactions to injustice in the country.

On the opposite side, there is a government of the nationalist-Islamist AKP-MHP coalition, a “fateful unity” that has absolute majority and hence the full power to enact any law it wants from the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM), which it rules with iron gloves; and has under its tight control an army with tanks, cannons, airplanes etc, the powerful Diyanet (religious arm of the State) with tens of thousands of mosques, a huge police organisation, a judicial institution with an army of prosecutors & judges, media organisations and intelligence services that exclusively play to the government's tunes.

However, this government, despite holding all power in its wings is not keen to abide by the rules it sets, laws it approves / amends, follow the old bureaucratic customs and procedures of the country, and act according to its own Constitution, as well as act in accordance with the international agreements and conventions signed by Turkey, acting in accordance with the rules and conventions of international law, and also seems insistent on ignoring criticisms of its practices.

President Erdogan and the elements of his nationalist-religious ruling team rather behave like a close-knitted gang that is unprepared to account to anyone for its actions.

This is what our youth & society defies and refuses to accept!

Students, lecturers, the people on the street, intellectuals, believe that the decisions and practices of a government acting like a gang are not “legitimate”.

The President and his company respond to the critics not by persuading the society of its legitimacy by advancing democratic processes, but by issuing “absolute orders” for citizens to abide by, and calling opponents “infidels”, “terrorists”, “agents / enemies of state” etc, and react, for example to the LGBTQ+ citizens’ participation in the recent anti-government actions almost like middle-age inquisitors.

It is clear that various elements of society in Turkey that are timid at present, despite having enormous social power, are no longer prepared to accept the surly, insolent behaviour of the government and the legitimacy & authority of the decisions of Erdogan & Soylu. Statements and street protests in an increasing number of institutions of higher education in quite a few cities (35+ centres, according to one report) and the explosion of protests in social media should be regarded as sign of this. They are currently insufficient but reliable social health indicators.

AKP-MHP government under Erdogan has for years followed an economic policy of profiteering, an imperialist foreign policy coupled with an oppressive, repulsive, fascistic domestic political line. This may have made a small minority multi-billionaires but simultaneously brought the social-economic conditions of the working millions to the brink of destruction and destitution.

Turkey is defined now and then in the international arena as a "bashibozouk", a "rogue state" which often does not recognize rule of law, and/or tolerate criticism.

Injustice, inequality, oppression, lack of freedom, unemployment and poverty are the main problems in the country.

It is therefore not wrong, under the given circumstances, to question the legitimacy, justice, legality and authority of practices of this government: rather, it is socially correct and legitimate.

By evaluating the developments in this framework, EMAR Foundation for Labour Research fully supports the student youth who have proven their progressive and revolutionary capabilities throughout history, and academia who are the main pillars of scientific-academic work, in their opposition to Erdogan regime's imperious and illegitimate decisions.

EMAR, as a responsible progressive institution, is fundamentally disturbed by the labelling of the opposition as "terrorist" by the AKP-MHP regime, the threatening of society, and the regime's

arbitrary and unaccountable practices. In short, EMAR is ill at ease with this nationalist-Islamist regime of oppression and terror.

With this understanding, EMAR declares its support to all academic, democratic and social initiatives which demand the removal of police from Boğaziçi University, and all other higher education institutions; an end to the regime's arbitrary appointments and illegitimate attacks on the freedom of education and the ideal of democratic and autonomous university; and finally, expulsion of M Bulu, arbitrary Rector, a proponent of the Erdogan regime, and the like from the university.

For A Democratic and Autonomous University! Long Live the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy!

EMAR Foundation for Labour Research

Note:

Two months have passed since Erdogan regime's illegitimate action and the academicians' and students' resistance is still very much alive and growing.

Students and academicians of Bogazici University need your active solidarity more than ever. (March 1, 2021).