

As teachers, academicians, sociologists and civil servants who were purged under the state of emergency decree, we have been on sit-in protest in front of Human Rights Monument in Ankara, Turkey* over 150 days to protest against injustice. Since November 9th 2016, in order not to forget the injustice we faced with, we are making a stand. To keep the fire inside us alive, not to let it chill and not to lose the feeling of “how could you take our jobs from us?”, we are making a stand. Let us be the last. We are making a stand in order not to let one more worker being thrown away from public with emergency decree without any explanation. We are making a stand to lead the way for other purged public workers so that they would not sink into despair and put an end to their lives**.

Over four and a half months we have been shouting our guts out: How dare you take our bread? Who are you? Who do you think you are to cross out our decades-old labour in one stroke, in one night? Have you ever met our parents? Do you know the school desk we sat at? How many sleepless nights we had, how many examinations we took, how many thresholds we passed, how many books we read? Have you seen the laboring hands of our father? Do you have any idea about the challenges our parents experienced in order to provide us better education? Do you know the teacher who caressed our hair? Can you fill one of your emergency decrees with the effort our teachers put to teach us poetry, music, and trueness? How many students did we touched, assisted and how many smiling eyes of them did we looked at, can you count?

Thousands of laborers purged from the public service under emergency decree have been asking similar questions today. They are holding their grudge for losing their job they have been working for years in one night. We are the ones who have decided to put our questions into resistance. For months, we have been telling people the injustice we experienced. We received signatures expressing our intention to return to our jobs, we handed the signatures in to the authorities. We went to the neighborhoods, handed out leaflets, knocked the doors one by one, and told our story. We went to schools and told our story to teachers. We went to universities and told our story to students, faculty members. International press organizations mentioned about our resistance on their newspapers and channels. Even the national media, who has been controlled by the AKP government, could not turn a blind eye to our resistance. Our struggle broke the censorship and the resistance was published in the news bulletins of the mainstream media.

Even the trees, the birds, the insects, the stone beneath our feet, the sky above us and the buildings nearby did hear our voice, our heartbeat, our excitement, our anger but the authorities who rule the country under state of emergency did not. They actually did, but they pretended that they didn't hear. We have decided to put our bodies into hunger so that those turning a blind eye shall hear our voice. The resistance of the public workers was embodied with our physical presence in front of the human rights monument. We resisted the police assaults with our bodies. We resisted the perishing cold of Ankara with our bodies. Today, we are making our bodies the main emplacement of our resistance. We carry the war into our bodies with our own will. On March 11, 2017*** we are starting indefinite hunger strike.

Our hunger is so clear and pure that it will wipe out the starvation policies of the AKP government over the public workers. We are not afraid of being hungry, we will wear our hunger as a badge to protect our honour. We never surrender. We never give up. We never obey your injustice. You will see us. You will hear us. We will make you give us our jobs back.

We will win with our hunger!

Academician Nuriye Gülmen

Teacher Semih Özakça

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Ankara/Turkey

*A well-known hallmark in a crowded pedestrian street in the heart of Ankara.

** Dr Mehmet Fatih Traş, 33, ended his own life after being removed from his duties at Cukurova University.

***We were taken into custody by anti-terror police of Turkey two days before March 11, 2017 after a press conference about declaration of our hunger strike. So we started indefinite hunger strike two days earlier than the announced date.