

**The Situation of  
Kurdish  
Writing in Turkey**



# **Monitoring of Linguistic and Cultural Rights**

The Situation of Kurdish Writing in Turkey

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Amed, December 2020

## MONITORING LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union provided under Etkiniz EU Programme. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Children First Association and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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## Summary

*This short report is an attempt to monitor linguistic rights in the field of Kurdish text and writing. Like all other spheres of life, in the current atmosphere in Turkey, there are many violations of the rights of freedom of expression, freedom of thought, of writing; censorship, bans, crackdowns, attacks and arrests push more boundaries in this area every day.*

*This report was prepared after face-to-face meetings and written interviews with a number of sensitive and diligent Kurdish writers, volunteers and check out study.*

*Although all the problems in this field are mainly due to the lack of Kurdish identity and official status, problems such as the criminalization of Kurdish writing and writers, the narrowing of the Kurdish market, the lack of comprehensive education, and the weakness of political and social advocacy, disorder, lack of field institutions and weakness of cooperation and collaboration tighten the boundaries of this field. Only after proper identification and reporting of these legal, social and economic issues, with political reforms such as gaining official status for Kurdish identity and language, widespread Kurdish education, positive discrimination for Kurdish, strengthening self-determination rights. and lifting the bans will this issue and issue will be able to be resolved.*

*Despite external problems that need to be addressed by public administrators, the burden falls on the civil society actors in order to force the authorities to make these changes.*

*These actors must defend national and international diplomacy through strong domestic and international diplomacy, establish de facto bilingualism<sup>1</sup> in civil and political institutions, strive to raise the prestige of the Kurdish people, and spread a strong sense of self-determination and use language and culture effectively in the media and communication.*

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1 The word 'bilingualism' means Kurdish and Turkish for Turkey. When 'Kurdish' is also used, of course, Kurdish is meant in all dialects and dialects. The relationship between Kurmanji and Kirmancki should in no way be the same as the current relationship between Kurdish and Turkish.

## **Introduction<sup>2</sup>**

The greatest task of writing is to perpetuate, transmit and disseminate thought. The text serves as a bridge and cultural definition between generations and peoples. The work done in the field of writing also preserves the identity of the community and strengthens the hold on national voices, colors and feelings.

Of course, because Kurdish is specifically and systematically subjected to genocidal attacks, writing in Kurdish is also a decolonial attitude. It is resistance and rebellion against tyranny itself.

Writing, along with education and communication, accomplishes standardization in language.

As there is no Kurdish-language secondary education in Turkey, the burden of standardization on the language falls on the shoulders of writers and publishers. Writing is also a key tool for preserving an existing language and developing a language; proverbs and sayings are a mirror of culture, and maintain a very different perspective on life. Adding new words to the language expands the 'borders of life'.

Because of its importance, it may cause the state to engage with language and writing.

The ruling elites want to banish freedom of thought and establish authoritarian regimes.

This is already a new form of 'metallurgy' in this day and age.

"Language, which throughout history has been influential in the occupation of the brains, has always been the first element / stage in land grabbing, independence and rights."<sup>3</sup>

Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995) also state that "Metamorphoses used to kill soil, water and natural resources or the bodies of their oppressed

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2 Many people tried and supported the preparation of this short report. For their help and support, in particular with the General Executive Committee of the Kurdish PEN Center, Dr. Cuma Çiçek, Savaş Dede, Roza Metina and Cevahir Sadak Duzgun and many thanks to other all Kurdish faithful and volunteers.

3 Hastice Altun Demir, "Mother Tongue, Its Importance, The Struggle in Turkey, The Works done," *Gyneology* 13 (2019): 127-138.

(slavery) but now with the help of knowledge industry tools such as education, public media, religion, etc. trying to occupy the human brain.”<sup>4</sup>

In Turkey, too, the political applications made by the authoritarian regime are aimed at this, and of course Kurdish writers also fall into the category of these applications, and the same harassment in the field of writing, language and culture is seen as the most difficult.

### The Aim "Purpose"

*The Linguistic and Cultural Rights Monitoring Project* has been prepared by "Children at First Association" in collaboration with the Kurdish Language and Culture Network with the aim of protecting and promoting the Kurdish language and culture.

In the framework of this project are five thematic reports on the monitoring of linguistic and cultural rights that have been prepared and disseminated as part of this project.<sup>5</sup>

In the framework of this project this is the sixth report prepared. The purpose of this report on Kurdish writing in Turkey is to examine the impact of monolingual policy on the right to use language in the field of writing, as well as the main violations and problems that occur in this field within the framework of national law and international law. It aims to make those responsible for violations even more open and accountable to the public. The report also aims to develop policy proposals for both civil society organizations and public authorities to strengthen individual and collective efforts to improve and promote human rights.

### Targeted groups

The first target group is public institutions and political responsibilities. Because the report reminds them of the responsibilities of these actors under

4 Tove Skutnabb-Kangas & Robert Phillipson, "Linguicide and Linguicism", R. Phillipson & T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Eds.), *Papers in European language Policy*. Roskilde: Roskilde Universitets center, Lingvistgruppen, 1995), 83-91.

5 Omer Fidan, *As a Fundamental Element of Mother Tongue Culture and Its Use* (Amed: Children First Association, 2020); Omer Fidan, *Survey Evaluation of the Kurdish Language and Culture Network* (Amed: Children First Association, 2020); Omer Fidan, *The Situation of Kurdish Language and Education in Turkey* (Amed: Children First Association, 2020); Savaş Dede, *Report on Children and Language Rights* (Amed: Children First Association, 2020); Savaş Dede, *Health and Language Rights Report* (Amed: Children First Association, 2020). This report is available on the website of the Kurdish Language and Culture Network. See: [www.torakurdi.org](http://www.torakurdi.org)



national and international law and draws their attention to linguistic rights in the field of writing.

It also offers them some political possibility to strengthen the language rights. The second target group of this report is Kurdish actors and writing institutions.

Kurdish writers and publishers; This group also includes civil society organizations that have been established to strengthen Kurdish writing and writing. Reports that the problems of these groups are being seen even more and better in the public sphere.

It also provides political suggestions to these actors to strengthen and advance their advocacy efforts for the use of the Kurdish language. The last target group is Kurdish readers themselves.

Because they are the first part to benefit from Kurdish writing activities.

And when language rights are violated in the field of writing, the first group whose rights are violated are the readers themselves.

### **The Framework of Working**

The framework of this report is essentially written and authored. Therefore, it basically includes authors and their products, as well as publishing houses that publish products in Kurdish. Although the aim was to carry out this work on a large scale, conditions due to the pandemic did not allow this and monitoring work was carried out in / from Diyarbakir. Therefore, the place of war and space in terms of place and war is basically Amed.

In addition, the report contains data from all over Turkey, and assessments are made throughout Turkey. Because the books of Kurdish publishing houses are sold in Kurdish metropolises along with Kurdish cities, especially in Istanbul. Kurdish writers are also read in Kurdish cities in other cities of Turkey. Writers from Istanbul, Izmir, Bitlis, Samsur and Urfa also took part in the online conference. Writers from outside Turkey also participated in both the online meetings of the Kurdish PEN Center and the International PEN, which was part of the monitoring work.

### **The Place of Kurdish Writing in the Field of International Law**

In order to make a more systematic observation in the field of Kurdish writing, here we will make a limited analysis of the concepts of freedom of thought

and expression in international law and the exercise of this freedom in the right to mother language.

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right to "freedom of thought and expression" without limitation.<sup>6</sup>

Article 19 of the Civil and Political Rights Convention, although recognizing those rights, imposes certain restrictions.

This right may be restricted in accordance with the provisions of 19/3 under the terms and conditions laid down by law for the protection of order against the name and voice of others, national security, public health and public morality. Article 20 of the same treaty does not consider the call for war and hate speech within the framework of this right.<sup>7</sup>

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) deals with freedom of expression and imposes certain restrictions.<sup>8</sup> According to this point, "everyone has the right to self-determination" but this right to "assign duties and responsibilities" is defined by law and in a democratic society should not be against "national security, public security, public order, crime prevention, the protection of the health and morals and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others ". However, when looking at previous judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), it can be seen that only in very specific cases have restrictions on freedom of expression been imposed. Accordingly, the setting of the limits clearly stated in the law must be in accordance with the objectives of this point. There must be no conflict between them and democratic values and they must be in line with the objective.<sup>9</sup>

Articles 25 and 26 of the 1982 Constitution, in addition to expressions such as "unity of the state and an indivisible people" which cannot take place in regimes restricting certain rights of international human rights law, are amendments to the treaties. which have been mentioned above, include. However, the other clauses of Article 28, which begin with "the press is free, cannot be censored", directly describe how censorship is done. It should be noted that

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6 United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 10.12.1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> accessed: 26.12.2020.

7 United Nations, "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," 16.12.1966, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>, accessed: 26.12.2020.

8 Council of Europe, "European Convention on Human Rights," 4.11.1950, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf) accessed: 26.12.2020.

9 For example, the United Kingdom Handside V Resolution of 1976 stated that freedom of expression "is not limited to opinions and information that are seen as supportive or harmful and meaningless, but also to ideas and information that are seen as are not against the state or any part of the society, they are called influential and annoying" and this decision has become one of the requirements of the decision of the Constitutional Court regarding Zübeyde Fusun Ustel and others. (R.G. Date and Number: 19/9/2019 - 30893).

between 1959 and 2019, and with 356 convictions, the country most condemned by the DMME for freedom of expression was Turkey.<sup>10</sup> The second largest country in the world in this regard, with 72 convictions. It is Russia. It should also be noted in particular that most of the applications that have been submitted since 2015 are also in the decision-making process.

The DMME stated in its decision in the 2005 Alinak V Turkey case that the collection of books was a violation of Article 10 of the PMME.

Again, the DMME saw that the collection of books in Ozturk and Turkey's 2005 decision as propaganda for a "terrorist" organization was against freedom of expression. Turkish courts have defended themselves based on sources in the books of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, Ismail Besikci and Gunay Aslan. However, the DMME ruled that imposing fines and imprisonment for the publisher and collecting books was a violation of freedom of expression. According to the DMME, the actions taken are against the principle of *nulla poena sine lege* (a person cannot be punished for doing something not prohibited by law) and are "requirements in a democratic society".

The same decision specifically states that "there is no doubt that the collection of books is a violation of the applicant's freedom to publish documents and books, and that this is an arbitrary aspect of freedom of expression."

Another issue of international law related to Kurdish writing is the issue of minority language rights. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>11</sup> prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>12</sup>, Article 2, 17 Articles 29 and 30 and the Preliminary Charter of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>13</sup>, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Rights of Minorities<sup>14</sup>, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>15</sup> are some of the inter-

10 European Court of Human Rights, 2020. "Overview 1959-2019," 2020, [https://echr.coe.int/Documents/Overview\\_19592019\\_ENG.pdf](https://echr.coe.int/Documents/Overview_19592019_ENG.pdf), accessed 26.12.2020.

11 United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

12 United Nations, "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," 21.12.2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>, accessed: 26.12.2020.

13 United Nations. "Convention on the Rights of the Child," 20.11.1989, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>, accessed: 26.12.2020.

14 Council of Europe, "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities," 1.11.1995, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007cdac>, accessed: 26.12.2020.

15 Council of Europe, "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages," 5.11. 1992, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680695175>, accessed: 26.12.2020.

national treaties that have been made in this area.

When one looks at the treaties made about minority languages, one sees that their primary purpose is to protect minority languages and issues such as race, gender, religion of minorities. Restrictions on language right in a society, especially on ethnic groups or other identities, can lead to different groups in many areas becoming victims of human rights violations. One of the most interesting examples in this regard is the defense against rights or actions regarding writing and authorship. Thus, for example, section (d) of Article 7 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages enables the state to facilitate and encourage the written and oral use of languages.

Although all kinds of prohibitions against writers and their works are issues of freedom of expression, if these prohibitions are imposed on Kurdish writers and publications in Kurdish, it is also discriminatory. According to the DMME's judgments mentioned above, freedom of expression can be restricted within certain criteria and with very narrow interpretations. Nevertheless, in the state of emergency following the events of 15 July 2016, hundreds of institutions working in the fields of freedom of thought, language and culture were closed, books were collected and authors were deprived of their liberty.<sup>16</sup>

As is also understood from the agreements mentioned above, the prohibition of discrimination can be accepted as part of the law in accordance with customs and traditions. Turkey's actions against Kurdish writers and publications in Kurdish are a direct violation of international law.

### **The Method**

This report, prepared in three months, is a result of monitoring the field of Kurdish language and Kurdish writers. Three methods were used to prepare this report. In the first instance, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the inability to hold face-to-face meetings, a focus meeting of the writers' table was attended by 16 writers (3 women, 13 men), 4 members of the Kurdish Language and Culture Network secretariat (2 women, 2 men) and the project consultantion has been done online. The writers who participated in this meeting are people who have been involved in this work since the beginning of the establishment of the Kurdish Language and Culture Network, in many

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16 Human Rights Association, "Turkey Report on the State of Emergency" 26/10/2017, 12/26/2020 <https://www.ihd.org.tr/ihd-istanbul-subesi-ohalde-turkiye-raporu/> arrived date 26.12.2020.

different ways, under the umbrella of various institutions, agencies, and platforms for the development of Kurdish writing. They have tried for years and with these efforts they have love and respect in the hearts of the Kurdish people. In the second phase, six specific questions were sent in writing to the meeting participant. Some of them answered these questions in writing before the meeting and some after the meeting. A total of 16 written forms have reached us. These responses were a clearer source for this report. In the third phase, one-on-one face-to-face and online interviews were conducted with nine other authors on the same questions.

Although many writers' groups, platforms, initiatives and institutions have been established in Turkey so far, detailed data on the situation of writers has not been recorded and disseminated by these institutions. Therefore, in order to obtain accurate and numerical information recorded in this field, in addition to the above three methods, the author of this report has also participated in two international meetings of the Kurdish PEN Center.<sup>17</sup> The first meeting was the 86th General Assembly<sup>18</sup> of the International PEN which took place between 2 and 6 November with the participation of 90 PEN centers and 296 participants. During this meeting, the annual reports on Kurdish writers from all over Kurdistan were prepared by the committees<sup>19</sup> of the Kurdish PEN Center. These reports were also used to prepare this report for you. The second meeting was held on November 13, 2020, hosted by the Kurdish PEN Center, on November 15, International Writers' Day in Prisons.<sup>20</sup> Many Kurdish and international writers attended the meeting, where articles on the situation of imprisoned writers were presented and discussed.

## **The Main Problems of Kurdish Writing**

Observations on writing in Kurdish show that there are many problems in this area. Here are some of the key issues that came up in the meetings and meetings:

***Criminalization of Kurdish writing:*** In a country where the language is semi-restricted, writers fear that something will happen to them because of

17 Fidan, Omer, Active Center of International PEN: Kurdish PEN Center, <https://pen-kurd.org/despek/>, 15.12.2019

18 See the 86th International PEN General Assembly for more information: <https://pen-international.org/who-we-are/annual-congress/2020>

19 Writers Committee for Peace, Writers Committee in Prisons, Language and Translation Rights Committee, Women Writers Committee, Writers Abroad Committee.

20 Jin News, "Kurdish PEN organized a program for Writers' Day in Prisons," 13.11.2020, <http://www.jinnews16.xyz/kr/HEMU-NUCE/content/view/150883?page=18>, history access: 23.12.2020

writing in Kurdish. They swallow many of their writings for fear of the safety of their souls; in the heart of every writer there are 'lodges of writing that smell'. Due to the rejection, blackmail and informal banning of Kurdish and Kurdishness, the society shuns products in Kurdish and the insistence on Kurdish remains a marginal position.

In the case of criminalization, the arrest of Kurdish writers, the banning of books in Kurdish and the punishment of publishers have a profound effect on society. According to information obtained during the monitoring work, 43 Kurdish writers are currently in prison (See Appendix 1). Also, between 2016 and 2019, 109 books by Kurdish publishers were banned.<sup>21</sup> 31 of these books are in Kurdish (See Appendix 2). Due to these pressures on Kurdish writers and books, despite the fact that productivity and productivity are increasing, there are still many problems in the delivery of products. Many products are not available, many people still see the construction of a Kurdish library in their homes as a threat to their safety. Although a very important area of Kurdish literacy, applications in prisons ensure that those in prisons are deprived of foreign products, while those outside are deprived of the products of prisoners.<sup>22</sup>

***Narrowing of marketing the Kurdish language:*** The middle class is educated all over the world, the middle class of Kurds read less Kurdish. Again, due to the insistence on the denial of Kurdish, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism does not recognize books in Kurdish for libraries. It also affects the market and the market, as well as incentives, morale and motivation. Although writing is not a job in itself, all writers are forced to do something else for their own benefit. Because there is no strong market for writing in Kurdish, there is a weakness both in terms of creativity and ownership. Kurdish writers write mainly with the reflex and motivation of preserving and strengthening the language. Too often this becomes the first goal and the 'how' of the text comes before the 'what'; style is seen as more important than content. That is to say, language protection concerns are often seen in the content and purpose of the text.

***Lack of widespread education:*** Lack of widespread education in Kurdish has made the written Kurdish language remain the language of a small group. The best-selling books are Kurdish learning books and dictionaries. After all, the best-

21 Kurdish PEN Center, "Books banned in the North", 15.11.2020, <https://pen-kurd.org/pirtuken-li-bakur-hatine-qedexekirin/> access date: 21.12.2020

22 Mesopotamia Agency, "Authorities did not give 30 copies of prisoners' books and sent them back" 02.10.2020, <http://mezopotamyaajansi24.com/kr/HEM-NCE/content/view/111269>, accessed: 22.12.2020

selling books are children's books with a circulation of no more than 7,000. The closure of Kurdish education institutions<sup>23</sup> has taken a heavy toll on the market and popularity of Kurdish books. Because along with Kurdish learning books, dictionaries and children's books, the best-selling literary books every year are included in the curricula of these institutions.<sup>24</sup> Apart from these books, there are very few literary books that are distributed - no more than 2000. Temporary magazines that are published also have a circulation between 1500 and 2500's. The Kurdish weekly newspaper, Xwebûn, which had a circulation of 4,500 in its first issue<sup>25</sup>, has now dropped to 2,000.<sup>26</sup> Again the Zring magazine, whose first issue<sup>27</sup> had a circulation of 12,000, has now dropped to 3,000.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, despite all the problems, pressures and attacks, due to the unparalleled potential of the subject and the need for writing, experience and data with years and the strength of Kurdish, the number of books that are published is increasing every year. According to the work done (there may be 5-10% error) in Turkey there were 190 in 2016, 171 in 2017, 231 in 2018, in 2019 ' or 252 and in 2020 268 books in Kurmanji and Kirmancki published by different publishers.<sup>29</sup>

**Weaknesses in Advocacy in the Political and Social Spheres:** Kurdish politics does not see linguistic and cultural rights as fundamental rights and does not make them one of its main agendas.

Wherever it goes the spread has now turned into self-abnegation<sup>30</sup>, because

23 Institutions such as Kurdi-Der (It had branches in about 40 cities and towns in Kurdistan and Turkey), TZP Kurdi, Kurdish Institute of Istanbul, Kurdi-Der in Ankara, etc. were closed down by Decrees with the Rule of Law (KHK).

24 Some books such as The Kurdish Shepherd of the Car of Shamo, The Memory of Qeder by Mehmed Uzun, Jana Gel by Ehmedbrahim Ehmed, The Peshmerga of Rehim Qazi, The Poems of Cegerxwîn, jenêrgeleya Arjen Ari, Janyaya Rênas Jiyan, The Poems of Abdullah Peşêw and koêrko Berkes, etc. take place in Kurdish education, and are increasingly known and acquired.

25 Issue 1 was released on 22.12.2019.

26 Editor Cetin Altun says in an interview with him that there are four reasons for this: 1 - Digitally, more is being read on the internet. 2 - Due to the Covid-19 pandemic its spread is difficult and reduced. 3 - Turkish public distribution companies do not distribute Ownership, they do not have the power to distribute everywhere. 4 - Many people do not dare to take it for fear of losing their lives.

27 The 1st issue was released in October / October 2019,

28 Ziring CEO Zeynel Bulut said in an interview that the reasons for the drop in Zring circulation were the policies applied meant many people did not dare to take the magazine for fear of their lives and work, and the Covid-19 pandemic. the drop in circulation is impressive.

MedMuzik, "Here is the list of Kurdish books published in 2020", 01.01.2021, <http://medmuzik.tv/vaye-listeya-pirtuken-kurdi-yen-di-2020an-de-hatine-capkirin/> dîrok accessed: 01.02.2021

29 Diyarname, "2018: All Kurdish Books Published this Year", 31.12.2018, <https://diyarname.com/news.php?idx=33986>, access date: 22.12.2020; Bianet, "Diary: 252 Books Published in Kurdish in 2019," 02.01.2020, <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/pirtuk/217971-diyarname-di-sala-2019e-de-252-pirtuk-bi-kurdi-hatiye-capkirin>, access date: 22.12.2020.

30 Although this concept is not widely used, the Kurdish writers' community does not accept this concept, although there is a spontaneous rationale, which is basically due to 'own' reasons, again due to the policies that have been implemented. In other words, the Kurds do not hide themselves, as a result of many actions, the colors and methods of their protection by the rulers have changed.

the problem of man and man has not yet been resolved, this field is seen as a tali field and one can say that a negligence has been created against this field. In addition to Kurdish politics, Kurdish institutions and agencies in the field of civil society do not have a strong position for the protection and development of Kurdish language.

***There is no organizational system, and there is weakness caused by collaboration and compromise:*** Although the Kurdish writing community is expanding day by day, there are no strong institutions with mature cadres. There is no strong collaboration between the writers, and everyone works independently. The rights that are being sought remain the same as the case of individuals and do not change the case much. There are no institutions to promote, reward, or critique Kurdish-language products. Because there is no strong response / return to the writers for their products, the writers themselves do not quite understand the level of their products, so they do not try to be more productive. There are few Kurdish publishers who do their job professionally, many of them do not grant authors copyrights, and some of them even charge authors for publishing books. Even so, owning one is still beyond the reach of the average person.

Another strength of the institution is the lack of economic opportunities. In short we can say; due to legal, social and economic issues and problems, like all other tasks, the formation of institutions becomes very difficult. While all these institutions are being set up with all these disadvantages, the attacks on those institutions are being carried out more systematically and these institutions are being directly targeted, marginalized, criminalized and terrorized along with their members.

***Modernization:*** There is a problem in the Kurdish relationship with modern times. The habitat of the people and the language has changed. According to the new life, the existing language remains weak. In many cases the forms of another language are imposed on Kurdish. The theme that is created in many Kurdish products is not peculiar to Kurdish. The ignorance of Kurdish writers by foreign languages makes the writers of the world not recognize them in their own language, because Kurdish books are rarely translated into other languages, and the world does not recognize the Kurds and the power of Kurdish. The number of translated Kurdish books is already low. However, only Kurdish writers with strong personal ties have the opportunity to translate their books into other languages such as Arabic, Persian, Turkish and German. In the same way, one can say that more than good products, the products of powerful writers are translated. This also leads to the ignorance or misunderstanding of the Kurds



by other peoples. Writing is seen and done as a spiritual work. Kurdish writers often see themselves as different and higher from society because of this 'awareness'. This makes the field of writing remain elitist in Kurdish society. The spirit and sensitivity of women in relation to the Kurdish language, history and culture is stronger but women write less.

### **Some Examples of Linguistic Rights Violations**

The state is well aware of the importance of the field of writing and authorship and with many different actions and persuasions insists that the Kurds distance themselves from Kurdish and abandon it. The small steps of the so-called 'positive' ones that have been taken are basically an attempt to destroy and damage the Kurdish language, the Kurdish tradition and the Kurdish consciousness.<sup>31</sup> Every day new pains are pouring in from the attacks on the Kurds. Although they are on the agenda in some areas such as social media and the Kurdish media, unfortunately with the same aggressive and denial mindset in the Turkish public media either these events never take place or take place in a different way. Dozens of writers are arrested, books are banned, publishers are arrested, statues of Ahmad Khani are torn down, the names of parks and institutions named with Kurdish intellectuals and writers are changed, and so on. Some of these examples that only happened in 2020 are:

08.12.2020: Despite the fact that prisoners in the Assembly are registered in languages such as English, Arabic, etc., so far several speeches and sentences in Kurdish have been recorded as "xxxxx". After HDP MPs rejected this, the Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly declared that Kurdish as an unknown language had never been registered in the Assembly. On the same day, HDP MP Meral Daniş Beştaş spoke in Kurdish and was registered as "xxxxx". Similarly, MP Feleknaş Uca celebrated the Yezidi holiday in Kurdish on 12.12.2020, but her words in Kurdish were recorded as "xxxxx" in the records of the Assembly.

03.12.2020: Writer Gulgeş Deryaspî was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months prison.<sup>32</sup>

31 The court has sentenced Kadri Yıldırım, because he commented on the translation of Mem and Zin that was translated by Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (Istanbul: Avesta Publications, 2011); Ehmedê Xani, *Mem û Zîn* (Ankara: Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, 2010).

32 Rudaw, "The court sentenced the Kurdish writer to 6 years and 3 months," 03.12.2020, <https://www.rudaw.net/kurmanci/kurdistan/0312202015>, access date: 21.12.2020.

20.11.2020: Roza Metina, Mehmet Sait Arzu, Dilan Aydin and Kurdish teacher Mehmet Salih Ongun, the director of the Kurdish PEN Center, the founding director of the Kurdish Writers 'Association and a member of the Firat Journalists' Association, were detained.<sup>33</sup> These individuals were detained and released because they had attended a meeting as writers. But their cases are ongoing, they are not allowed to go outside and they have to go to the police station periodically to make appointments. Their babies were taken away, their membership in civil society and their activities were declared crimes.

18.11.2020: Nezir Çakan, Founding Director of the Kurdish Writers' Association and Member of the Kurdish PEN Center, was arrested.<sup>34</sup>

26.06.2020: Writers Azad Zal, Nesrin Navdar, Adil Qazi, Brahim Khalil Taş, Mehmet Devîren, researcher Suphi Îzol, journalist Ayşe Kara were detained.<sup>35</sup> Despite the fact that the detainees were released after a while, their cases continued, they were banned from leaving Turkey and had to go to the police station once a week to prove that they had not absconded. In the homes of these individuals many books with banners of the Ministry of Culture were seized as 'evidence', their membership of the Writers 'Association and the Writers' Commission were listed as a crime in their statements. With these detentions, writer Ferat Dengizî was sentenced to 10 years in prison, Bahadîn Robar to 8 years, Mîrza Roni to 7 years and Adil Başaran to 7 years in prison.

22.06.2020: Batman Municipality Governor removed Kurdish writings from the streets and signs.<sup>36</sup>

14.01.2020: As for years, the publishing companies of magazines and newspapers did not and still do not publish Kurdish magazines and newspapers. After PTT decided not to publish Selahattin Demirtaş (one of which has been translated into Kurdish), many other websites and booksellers decided that they would not sell many books in Kurdish. Avesta Publishing House<sup>37</sup> General Manager Abdullah Kes-

33 Xwebûn, "Several lawyers were detained", 23.11.2020, <https://xwebun.org/nu-operasyonen-qirkirina-siyasi-benavber-didomin/>, access date: 23.12.2020; PEN International, "PEN International is alarmed at the reported arrest earlier today, 20 November, of three members of its Kurdish PEN Center in Diyarbakir, south east Turkey," 20.11.2020, <https://pen-international.org/news/pen-international-is-alarmed-at-the-reported-arrest-earlier-today-20-november-of-three-members-of-its-kurdish-pen-center-in-diyarbakir-south-east-turkey>, access date: 22.12.2020.

34 Diyarname Website, "Author Nezir Çakan was suspended," 18.11.2020, <https://diyarname.com/news.php?idx=49693>, accessed: 21.12.2020.

35 New page, "Publisher and writer Azad Zal arrested," 01.07.2020, <http://www.rupelanu.com/wesanger-u-niviskar-azad-zal-hat-girtin-11887h.htm>, accessed: 22.12.2020; Susma 24, "J&J Yayınevi sahibi Azad Zal gözaltına alındı," 26.06.2020, <https://susma24.com/jj-yayinevi-sahibi-azad-zal-gozaltina-alindi/>, accessed: 22.12.2020.

36 Gazete Duvar, "Trustee mayor took Kurdish in Batman," 22.06.2020,

37 Istanbul-based Avesta Publishing House was founded in 1995 and has published hundreds of books in Kurdish and has a special place among Kurdish publishers. See: <https://www.avestakitap.com/>

kin also draws attention to the same issue in his interviews and says that there is a real censorship.<sup>38</sup>

### **Some Suggestions for Solution**

As a result of the monitoring work, the proposals made below are classified under two headings: Suggestions for political reform and Suggestions for civil society actors.

#### **Suggestions for political reform**

Kurdish writers and intellectuals have focused on the need for political reform in order to strengthen language rights in Turkey. The main recommendations in this regard are:

**Legal recognition of Kurdish language and identity:** These issues are all related to the recognition and non-recognition of Kurdish identity. Therefore, first of all, the existence of the Kurds must be officially recognized and the Kurds must have an official status in order for normalization to begin. This should be done by amending the Turkish Constitution. In addition, the state must accept and comply with all international conventions and declarations on the rights of identity, language and culture without any conditions, without prejudice or objections.

**Education in Kurdish:** Even if the amendment to the Constitution takes a long time, the Ministries of Education and Culture should initiate Kurdish and Kurdish education from the beginning of school with small changes in their applications and support all kinds of institutions and activities for Kurdish language and culture.

**Positive discrimination for Kurdish:** Positive discrimination for Kurdish should be made and support given to writers and publishers.

**Strengthening the right to self-expression and lifting the ban:** The right to self-expression must be strengthened. To this end international treaties on this subject should be recognized and domestic legislation should be updated. The right to self-expression must also include the right to use language. Writers who have exercised their right to self-expression or participated in poli-

<sup>38</sup> Independent Türkçe:

<https://www.indyurk.com/node/263826/cözüm-sürecinden-sonra-çıkma-giren-kürt-vayıncılığı-yeni-bir-çıkış-arıyor>, access date: 22.12.2020

tical activities should be released. In addition, the ban on books should end and the bans on Kurdish books should be lifted.

### **Suggestions for civil society actors**

In addition to suggestions for political reform, participants also made some suggestions for civil society actors. The main recommendations for civil society actors are:

**National and international advocacy:** Writers' institutions and agencies must become a leading force for this through strong diplomacy around the world. There must be a solidarity between the Kurdish language and culture, a strong force to force the state to take some steps. Despite the pressure that will be placed on the state, all actors and civil society organizations should try to get the support of international powers, including the state to abide by the treaties and declarations of rights that they have created.

In order for the demand for the use of Kurdish in every field to be strengthened, millions of signatures must be collected from the people and with those signatures, official applications must be made in Turkey and all over the world. Doubts about the strength of Kurdish literature in the hearts and minds of Kurds must be removed through various promotional activities. Prejudices against the Kurds should be ignored. This can also be done with live and online training, workshops, seminars, panels etc. The state and state institutions must be pressured in every possible way to be forced to accept and use Kurdish. All authors and publishers should apply for state support for all their books to be printed, distributed in libraries and so on. There must be a de facto situation in which literacy in Kurdish is seen as a positive attribute for finding work.

**De facto bilingualism in civil and political institutions:** Kurdish institutions and parties should immediately adopt bilingualism in all their work and activities without waiting for any changes in the law. This application will create both a strong recognition and a strong ownership in Kurdish and this ownership will be one of the greatest signs of Kurdish salvation from all records and clauses. Attacks and protectionist policies against the Kurds must be stopped so that the Kurds themselves are not afraid of the Kurds, do not see the Kurds as something out of the ordinary with everyone staking a claim and living with it. As an internal policy of protecting Kurdish from the dominant language, those who do not speak Kurdish should not be included in Kurdish

civil institutions of language and culture. Whether Kurds or non-Kurds, those who take part in these institutions should not impose the dominant language on that institution.

***Raising Kurdish prestige among the people:*** All Kurdish institutions, intellectuals and leaders should strive to raise Kurdish prestige. In order for Kurdish writers to write alone and devote all their energy and time to writing, they must be employed in Kurdish institutions. In addition, writers and artists who work in Kurdish should be praised, rewarded, given access to public policy, and their views and suggestions on public policy should be heard.

***Use of media and communication to strengthen awareness:*** Media and communication in the field of language and culture should be knowledgeable, alert and active. Because there is no public education, the strongest bridge between institutions and the public is the media. The media must act with this awareness and be able to reach the people through the language used and developed by the writers.

## **Conclusion**

In this report, we have tried to give a brief overview of the situation of Kurdish writing and authorship in Turkey. In this work meeting with Kurdish writers, two international meetings in which Kurdish writers also participated on the internet, field research and face-to-face interviews were the basis focus for us. We tried to emphasize the importance of this field, at the local and international level, the mission that is being carried out in this field and its activities, the main problems in this field, the challenges and barriers facing actors and activists in this field, proposals for solutions and generally explain with some examples.

As mentioned in this short report in many different example and ways, the field of writing is also one of the basic elements for the preservation of language and culture, as well as the fields of education and communication. In order for a language and culture to flourish, to expand the horizons of thought, to limit the boundaries of life, to be recognized both by members of the people who speak their language and culture and by the whole world, the field of writing and authorship is the most who may carry this freight. Therefore, the way should be opened for this field, opportunities should be created for volunteers and officials in this field, their work should be recognized and disseminated. In this way a common public consciousness is formed, with this consciousness the records and bonds are broken and with the enlightenment the society is brought to light.

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**Appendix 01: Kurdish Writers in Prisons**

Thanks to the hard work, effort and hard work of the Kurdish PEN Center in a short period of time, as many as we could and we learned, 43 Kurdish writers writing in Kurdish are still in prison.

1. A. Hamit Orbay: Tekirdag F Type F Detention Center (2 Nolu F Type Detention Center Tekirdağ)
2. A. Menaf Osman: Akhisar T Type Prison / MANISA (T-Type Kapalı Cezaevi-C / 8 Akhisar / MANISA)
3. Abdullah Babat: 2. Ankara / Sincan High Penitentiary Institution (Ankara / Sincan 2 Nolu F Tipi Kapalı Penitentiary Institution)
4. Ahmed Gerez: Beşikduzu T-Type Prison / Trabzon (Trabzon Beşikdüzü T Type Kapalı Penitentiary)
5. Ahmed Hussein: Kandira T Type Prison (Kandira T Type Kapalı Cezaevi)
6. Ali Alp: 2. Yeni Şakran İzmir / Aliaga Prison Imprisonment Institution (Yeni Şakran 2 nolu T Type İzmir / Aliaga Penitentiary Type)
7. Ali Koç: Karabuk T Type Detention Center (T Type Kapalı Cezaevi Karabük Prison)
8. Burhan Eviz: Eşen Fethiye / Mugla T-Type Prison (Eşen T Type Kapalı Cezaevi / Muğla Fethiye Prison)
9. Cebrael Ancar: Alexandria T Type Detention Center (İskenderun T Tipi Kapalı Cezaevi)
10. Cengiz Eker: 3. Şakran / İzmir Type T Prison (3 Nolu T Type Şakran / İzmir Penitentiary)
11. Erdogan Uçar: 3. Şakran Type T Prison (Şakran 3 Zero Type / İzmir Penitentiary)
12. Fecriye Benek: Bayburt Type M Prison (Bayburt Type M Penal Prison)
13. Hacı Nahsan: 2. High Security Prison Type F / A Block / Tekirdag ((2 Nolu F type Yuksek Guvenlikli Cezaevi A Blok Tekirdağ)
14. Hussein Duman: Burhaniye T Type Prison (T Kapalı Cezaevi Balıkesir Burhaniye)
15. İdris Erenç: Aliğa F Type Prison /İzmir (Aliğa F Type Prison İzmir Penitentiary)
16. İskender Karaman: Tekirda F Type F Detention Center (Tekirda F Type Capital Penitentiary)
17. Kerem Bilen: Trabzon E-Type Detention Center (E Tipi Kapalı Cezaevi

Trabzon)

18. Laleş Çeliker: 1. Tekirdag F Type F Detention Center (Tekirdağ 1 No'lu F Type Penal Prison)

19. Leyla Atabay: Elbistan / Maraş Type E Prison (Elbistan E Maraş Penitentiary Type)

20. Mahmut Aslan: Metris Type E Prison (Metris E Type Kapalı Cezaevi)

21. Mahmut Baran: 3. Şakran Type T Prison Aliaga / Izmir (ŞAKRAN 3 No'lu T Type Penitentiary C-15. Aliğa / Izmir)

22. Mahmut Yamalak: 2. Bunyan / Kayseri Type T Prison (2 Nolu T Type Kapalı Cezaevi Bünyan / Kayseri Prison)

23. Medya Yaklav: Ankara Sincan Women's Prison (Sincan Kadın Cezaevi)

24. Mehmet Ali Yaşa: Aliaga Type F Prison / izmir (İzmir Penitentiary Type F Prison)

25. Mizgin Ronak (Mizgin Aydın): Gebze Type M Prison (Gebze M Type Penitentiary)

26. Muhammed Inal: 1. Kandıra Type F Prison (Kandıra 1 nolu F tipi cezaevi)

27. Murat Turk: Kandıra Type F Prison (Kandıra F Type Penitentiary)

28. Necmettin Tural: 1. Tekirdag Type F Detention Center (1 Nolu F Type Penitentiary)

29. Orhan Sakci: New Shakran Prison in Aliaga / IZMIR (New Shakran Penitentiary on Campus T3 9. Koguş Aliaga / IZMIR)

30. Ramazan Çeper: Edirne F Type Prison (Edirne F Type Kapalı Cezaevi)

31. Riza Kazici: Product Name (I Will Be You): She lost her life in 2015 in Kandıra Prison.

32. Rizgar Turhan: Opium Type E Closed Prison (E Type Type Opium Prison)

33. Rojbin Perişan: Gebze M Type Women's Prison (Gebze M Tipi Kadın Kapalı Hapishanesi)

34. Servet Ozkan: Van High Security Prison (Van Yüksek Güvenlikli Kapalı Cezaevi VAN)

35. Sinan Sutpak: Execution Institution of Elbistan / Meraş Type E Prison (Kahraman Maraş Elbistan E Type Kapalı Penitentiary Institution)

36. Teyfik Hêja (Teyfik Yaşli): Bolu Type F Prison (Bolu F Type Penitentiary)

37. Yaşar Aslan: 2. High Security Prison Type F / A Block / Tekirda ((2 Zero type Yuksek Guvenlikli Penitentiary A Block Tekirdağ)

38. Nezir Çakan: 3. Ankara Sincan Type L Prison (Ankara Sincan 3 Nolu L Type Penitentiary)

39. Mustafa Tunçyuzlu: Şakran T Type Takran Prison of Izmir Province
40. Osman Kapan: Bolu Type F Prison
41. Lokman Aslan: Patnos Prison of Agiri L Type
42. Hüseyin Güçlü: 2nd Şakran Prison of Izmir Aliaga Type K
43. Cahit Baskara:

## **Appendix 02: Some Kurdish Books That are Banned in Turkey**

In recent years, many Kurdish books published by Kurdish publishers such as J&J, Name, Ar, Avesta, Aram, Sitav have been banned. These books have been banned on the grounds of "organizational propaganda". Despite the bans, fines are sometimes imposed on publishers. For example, Mehmet Ali Yaşa's book "Sorgulên Şevê" published by Sitav Publishing House was sued in 2015 and fined the publisher with a fine of 33,300 TL. In June 2019, the Supreme Court upheld the fine. Sitav Publishing House now imposes this penalty every month, but the book has not been banned, and the reason for the book ban has never been announced to Sitav Publishing House. All three Mizgin Ronak books have been banned for a year, and have been banned from Sitav Publishing House. , but the reason for the ban was not disclosed to the publisher and the publisher was not notified that the ban had been lifted. Thus Cairo Batei realized that all three books were banned.

According to the data we received, 88 books from Aram Publishing, 3 from J&J Publishing, 1 from Are Publishing, 1 from Letter Publishing, 4 from Sitav Publishing, 12 from Avesta Publishing, a total of 109 books were banned. 31 of these books are in Kurdish. The books that are in Kurdish and have been banned are:

### **Prohibited books of Sitav Publishing**

1. (Nobedarê Gulên Kobanê), The Guard of Kobanê Flower), Author: Mizgin Ronak, Year of Prohibition: 2018
2. Rojhat, Author: Mizgin Ronak, Year of Prohibition: 2018
3. Gorçiya Ne Em, Author: Mizgin Ronak, Year of Prohibition: 2018

### **Prohibited books of Avesta Publishing**

1. (Tevgera Neteweyî ya Kurd), The Kurdish National Movement, Author: Chris Kurschera, Translation from French: Fikret Başkaya, Year of Prohibition: 2018
2. (Kurd û Kurdistan) Kurds and Kurdistan, Author: Abdurahman Qasimlo, Translation from English: Bbrahim Bingoll, Year of Prohibition: 2018
3. (Serhildana Gelê Kurd 1880 Şêx Êbeydullahê Nehrî), The Uprising of the Kurdish People 1880 Sheikh Ubaydullah Nehri, Author: Jalil Jalil, Transla-

tion from Russian: Yaşar Abdulselamoglu

4. Pûsûlayên Rayan û Baweriyên bi Xwîn, Rêvebirina Neteweyîya Kurd a li Tirkîyeyê, Author: Robert Olson, Year of Prohibition: 2018

5. (Rêwitiya Welatê Mêrên Wêrek Traveling the Country of Brave Men), Author: Dana Adams Schmidt, Year of Prohibition: 2018

6. (Komara Kurd a Mehabadê, Di Polîtîkayên Hêzên Mezin de Kurd) The Kurd Republic of Mahabad, Kurds in the Policies of the Great Powers, Author: Borhaneddin A. Yassin, Year of Prohibition: 2018

7. Building the Diaspora in the Kurds of Sweden and France and Nationalizing Relations, Author: Khalid Khayati, Year of Prohibition: 2018

8. (Li Welatê Min Xerîbek, Polîtîkayên Aîdiyetê Yên Ciwanên Kurd ên Swêdê), A Stranger in My Country, Swedish Kurdish Youth Affiliation Policies, Author: Barzoo Eliassi, Year of Prohibition: 2018

9. (Di Şerê Çaldiranê de Osmanî), The Ottomans, Safavids and Kurds in the Battle of Chaldiran, First Kurdish-Ottoman Alliance, Author: Murad Ciwan, Year of Prohibition: 2018

10. (Ji Dîroka Yezidiyan Helbest û Ravekirinên Dîrokî ) Poetry and Historical Explanations from Yezidi History, Author: Philip G. Kreyenbroek & Khalil Cindi Reşow, Year of Prohibition: 2018

11. (Di Bin Ala Kurdistanê de Çalakî û Jiyana Mustafa Barzanî,) Activities and Lives of Mustafa Barzani under the Flag of Kurdistan, Author: Xoşevi Babekr / Pael Shethman, Year of Prohibition: 2018

12. (Li Iraqê Komkujî, Tevgera Leşkerî Ya Li Dijî Kurdan Hat Ajotin) Massacre in Iraq, Military Movement Against Kurds Driven, Author: Middle East Watch, Year of Prohibition: 2018

### **Prohibited books of Aram Publishing:**

1. Hawar, Author: Ali Oruç, Year of Prohibition: 2016

2. (Geliyê Zîlan Jêderka Jin û Janê), The Valley of Zilan Source of Women and Pain, Author: Devrim Serhad, Year of Prohibition: 2016

3. Vakayiname, Author: Musa Anter, Year of Prohibition: 2016

4. (Rojhilata Navîn) Middle East, Author: Rustem Cudi, Year of Prohibition: 2016

5. (Em bûn baran) We Became Rain, Author: Mizgin Ronak, Year of Prohibition: 2016

6. (Gedeyê şîrîn), Author: Nîzamettin Akkurt, Year of Prohibition: 2016

7. Hedera Azad Hanaseyen (Guerrilla Memories), Year of Prohibition: 2016
8. Friendship Diary, Author: Beritan Hilal, Year of Prohibition: 2016
9. (Şaristani û Nijadperestî) Civilization and Racism, Author: Osman Ozce-lik, Year of Prohibition: 2017
10. (Girê Şêran Serhildan) Hill of Lions Rebellion, Author: Menaf Osman, Year of Prohibition: 2017
11. (Bênav) Untitled, Author: Hussein Engizek, Year of Prohibition: 2018
12. (Qêrîn), Author: Xezal Îke, Year of Prohibition: 2018
13. (Îdeolojî) Ideology, Author: Rustem Cudi, Year of Prohibition: 2016

### **Prohibited Books by J&J Publishing**

1. (Rûpelên Binaxkirî) Grounded Pages, Author: Faysal demzdemir, Year of Prohibition: 2016
2. (Rojnivîska Rojdayê) Rojda's diary, Author: Faysal demzdemir, Year of Prohibition: 2016

### **Forbidden Books of Letter Publishing**

1. (Hêviyên Winda) Lost Hopes, Author: Foreign Country, Year of Prohibition: 2019



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E-mail: [info@torakurdi.org](mailto:info@torakurdi.org)