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## Input for HRC report – SRFORB

**Ref : Input for Advocacy of Hatred Based on Religion or Belief  
UN Human Rights Council (55th session)**

**To: Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief  
From: ADO ALEVİ PHILOSOPHY CENTER ASSOCIATION- TURKEY**

The Islamic World has been divided into two major denominations, namely Sunni and Shia from the very early times. Alevi faith that has been considered closer to the Shia, even though with deep differentiations, has been the belief system of the nomadic Turcoman tribes throughout the history of Central Asia, Anatolia and the Balkans. Alevi community in Ottoman World has been a target of hatred, intolerance, and discrimination based on their belief since the 16th century following establishment of SAFAVID state. The Ottomans preferred the Sunni mould due to their political preferences after than; thus, different interpretations of Islam, especially Alevi Islam, have been excluded and discriminated. Even though in the Republican Turkey black letter law appears to be providing legal equality, Alevi community does not enjoy equal citizenship rights based on their belief. Even though several decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) confirm Alevi demands judicially, Turkey remains hesitant in providing their rights. Especially after the 1960 's by the strengthening of fundamentalist Islam this hesitance gradually converted into hatred and intolerance that led to several conflicts and massacres <sup>1</sup>. After the Madımak – Sivas massacre of 1993 Alevi communities chose to be organized in hundreds of CSO 's that some of them built their places of worship (Cemevi). Henceforth armed conflicts transformed, into civil disobedience,

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<sup>1</sup> \* 1966 Ortaca Massacre: A ten-day conflict in June, death toll unknown

\* 15 December 1968: Attack on Hekimhan Teacher Training School. 13 teachers expelled. Many students were expelled from the school.

\* 5 March 1971: Kırıkhan- 2 killed, 17 wounded. dozens of houses and businesses destroyed and looted.

\* 7 November 1975: Akçadağ Teacher Training School raid .20 teachers and 600 students are expelled.

\* 17/20. April 1978: Malatya - 8 dead, 100 injured, 100 million TL damage.

\* 4/5 September 1978: First Sivas events 10 dead, many injured

\* 19/26 December 1978: Maraş Massacre 150 Alevi killed, 500 wounded. Over 200 houses were burnt down, 100 workplaces were destroyed.

\* 19/27 May 1980: Çorum 50 killed, 200 wounded

\* 2 July 1993: Madımak. During the Pir Sultan Abdal Festivities, Madımak Hotel was burnt down, 33 writers, poets, thinkers, mostly Alevi, 2 hotel employees and 2 attackers were killed.

\* 5 July 1993: Başbağlar- 29 people were killed; 214 houses were burnt down.

\* 12/15 March 1995: Gazi neighbourhood, Istanbul. 23 killed, 400 wounded

\* 15 March 1995: Ümraniye- 5 dead 20 injured





however frictions between the Sunni and the Alevi parties remained in form of hatred, intolerance and discrimination.

In this context recognition of Cem Houses (*Cemevi*) as Alevi places of worship was brought before the Court in “*Cem Foundation (Cem Vakfi) vs. Turkey*”, with the ECtHR<sup>2</sup> resolving in 2015 that Turkey was in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. Afterwards in two more cases Turkey was found to be in the wrong by the ECtHR concerning compulsory religious education. (*Hasan and Eylem Zengin vs. Turkey, 2007; Mansur Yalçın and others vs. Turkey, 2014*). In both cases, the Court concluded that the Turkish educational system did not meet the requirements of objectivity and pluralism, and that insufficient content was provided to respect Alevi parents' beliefs. On 26 April 2016, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, in “*İzzettin Doğan and Others vs. Turkey*”, concluded that Turkey had violated the European Convention on Human Rights, calling the inability of adherents to the Alevi faith to benefit from religious public services as "religious discrimination". Despite several judgements of the ECtHR against Turkey regarding Alevi demands, and decisions of the Committee of Ministers (CM) of European Council (EC) for their implementation, very insufficient steps have been taken by the state so far, even though June 2024 has been given by the CM as a dead-line.

Two instances shall be displayed in this document as major forms of hatred, intolerance and direct /indirect discrimination; namely in religious education and in bureaucracy.

In addition to ongoing discrimination in religious education, in June 2023, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) signed a new Protocol (ÇEDES) to be put into operation in the 2023-24 academic year. Within the scope of the project, which appears to pave the way for the surrender of education to the Diyanet and people working in religious services such as imams, muezzins and preachers are appointed under the name of "spiritual counsellors" to primary and secondary schools. According to the project, the staff and volunteer students who will take part in the activities to be carried out in the Diyanet Youth Centres will be determined by the provincial and district Diyanet offices. Many activities will be organised through clubs to be established in schools under the name of "Values Club" in the auspices of Sunni clergy without any pedagogical or educational training. The Diyanet will play an active role in supporting activities themed "Compassion" and "Benevolence". The

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<sup>2</sup> Turkey became party to the ECHR back in 1954, although it can be said that the effects of the Convention on the legal order in Turkey were seen only after the recognition of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 1990.





programme's activity pool will also include activities such as "examples of values from the life of our Prophet". Within the scope of the protocol, activities shall also be organised in places other than schools. Courses within the scope of ÇEDES can be held in the venues provided by the parties to the protocol if "Provincial and district national education directorates give their approval".

The protocol and application procedures have received great protests from education professionals and families. Several court applications have made for the annulment of the protocol by educational staff syndicates and lawyer groups.

The major teachers' union (Egitim-Sen) of the country have applied to the supreme court of justice (Danıstay) for the annulment of the protocol in June 2023 with following points.

- Protocol clearly violates UNIFIED EDUCATION LAW No 430, Art 36 of Law no 657 about State Bureaucracy, Constitutional Court decision no E.1889/1, Art. 128 of "Constitution", Art. 43 and 47 of Law no 1139 "Basic Law on National Education, Art. 28 of Law No 652 "Organisation and duties of the Ministry of National Education" by interfering the authority of the National Board of Education.

Although annulment case is standing against Supreme court, government have already started to assign religious staff to primary and secondary schools which is creating great frustration among secular, liberal and non-Sunni population. The Alevi community, which makes up 20% of the population, has been seeking a legal solution to this issue since 2005, but the government keeps refusing implementation of local and international court decisions and accept recognised education models. The Sunni-Muslim educational system is based on assimilating the children of non-Sunni believers or non-believers, especially Alevi population.

As a summary although Turkish state laws are secular, pluralist and aims modern educational applications our government is trying to convert this educational system to a Sunni-Islam oriented fundamentalist education. So far government has not implemented ECtHR judgements since 2016, have not implemented our Constitutional Court Judgment since April 2022. The approach triggers discrimination, hate speech, delaying or ignoring law enforcements and recently especially after 7 Oct.2023 Hamas – Israel clash we have increased antisemitic and anti-minority declarations and street meetings. We are sorry to point out that state educational policies are highly fundamentalist, bridging and ignoring court judgments and in spite of strong resistance of part of the society and minorities working to further strengthen already partially applied Sunni Muslim fundamentalist educational system.





Sunnification policies of the state is not limited to the educational system, but plays a severe discriminatory role in bureaucracy, local administrations, military and police forces, as well. In this context, Alevi civil servants face conducts of hatred and systematic discrimination that eventually force them to resignation or to retirement. Promotions of Alevi staff are blocked, delayed, and their ranks are even reduced by ungrounded allegations. A group of civil servants in the Postal Administration (PTT) in the region of Elazığ and Malatya, where ratio of Alevi population is relatively high is an example of such intolerance, discrimination, and violence based on religion and belief. In the context of auditing, several Alevi staff have been targeted by ungrounded accusations involving professional insufficiency, immoral behaviour, and regulatory defaults. Cases have been filed by the targeted staff and the courts decided in favour of the plaintiffs in all cases; however administrative and disciplinary punishments against them have not been annulled by the state authorities.

A.K., a successful programmer who has a degree in Mathematical Engineering and a master's degree in Computer Engineering from Istanbul Technical University started working at PTT A.Ş. in 2000 and continued his career by passing the management exam in 2011. After various central management positions, he became the Malatya Post Processing and Distribution Centre Manager. In this position he was awarded for his performance. H. A., the chief in the same office, passed the exam being the first in Turkey. B. İ., the head postman, was the most experienced staff of the Malatya Post Processing and Distribution Centre Directorate. All three are of Alevi faith, and they have become subjected to numerous disciplinary penalties unjustly and unlawfully. Public prosecutor of Malatya city found the allegations baseless and cancelled the investigation on 2020<sup>3</sup>. All penalties had no reason and were only an oppression done to them due to their faith. A.K. and Head Postman B.İ. were 1st Class Centre Managers at PTT AŞ. However, without even a transfer period, they were transferred to 4th Class Centre Managers in another province, which they did not deserve clearly. Although 1<sup>st</sup>. Administrative Court of Malatya decided to cancel the illegitimate appointment in 2021<sup>4</sup> PTT has not yet applied the judgement. On contrary pressure on the Alevi staff have been increased. New allegations were created, and all allegations were rejected again by Public Prosecutor. In the same region each Alevi civil servant in the context of auditing were given disciplinary penalties and all were cancelled by the courts or prosecutors. Some others were subjected to ungrounded accusations of extra-marital affairs which led to family

<sup>3</sup> <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1Lb0tWk7apbF4g4vTXvBGzw36OkX2dyb> Public Prosecutor decision that allegations were not acceptable and baseless. 24.Nov.2020

<sup>4</sup> <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/search?q=A.%20K>. Annulment judgement of Malatya 1st Administrative court dated 3.Nov.2021





disputes involving divorces. Psychological and psychosocial impacts of State agent's unlawful conduct of his hatred due to religion have been severe which created cultural and social violence. We just wanted to give a representative case in a single region of the country. Such or similar pressure is exerted to state employees in many other sectors and locations.

## CONCLUSION

In an age that the authoritarian politics to be in acceleration, Turkey is no exception. Unfortunately, we observe that hate speech, intolerant conduct, and discrimination to be leading to physical and psychological violence, seemingly triggered by the fundamentalist government coalition partners and their agencies. We hope that international institutions, primarily the United Nations, to be providing remedies for the authoritative state conducts that vision only their own preferences, which clearly crashes democratic principles. It is evident that hatred, intolerance and discrimination not only damage the peace and harmony in a given society, but also wound STG globally. We would like to express our readiness to provide any input, in order to be contributing to develop responses to countering advocacy of hatred and their impacts.

On the other hand, especially after 7 Oct.2023 Hamas-Israel crisis hate speech and intolerance is rapidly increasing in Turkey, some street protests are ongoing currently, on 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 Etz Hatim Synagogue of IZMIR / Turkey was attacked. We are concerned that hate speech, intolerance will rise to more physical destructive levels and expect UN to take necessary measures to secure a peace atmosphere.

We are honoured to submit our contribution to the call of Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief for Call for input: "Advocacy of Hatred Based on Religion or Belief - Transformative Responses" with deadline of 29. October.2023.

We will be at your disposal for further information, documentation and clarifications if and when necessary.

Kindest regards

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