

PRESSURES ON THE CHILDREN OF PURGED PUBLIC SERVANTS (KHK): HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GAZIANTEP-CENTERED OPERATION

1. INTRODUCTION

On May 6, 2025, a large-scale security operation was carried out simultaneously across 47 provinces in Turkey, coordinated from the central province of Gaziantep. Detention warrants were issued for 208 individuals alleged to be affiliated with the organization publicly referred to as the “FETÖ/PDY armed terrorist group.”

What stands out is that the detentions primarily targeted the children of former public servants who were dismissed from their jobs by emergency decree laws (KHK) following the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. The fact that most of the detainees are between the ages of 18 and 25 suggests a pattern of systematic victimization directed toward the second generation.

2. LACK OF LEGAL BASIS AND RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The individuals targeted in the operation are not being charged with serious crimes supported by concrete and individualized evidence. Instead, routine aspects of their lives such as travel abroad, social connections, and daily practices have been used as grounds for accusations.

In public statements made by the Turkish Minister of Interior, participation in international education programs such as Erasmus, or travel abroad for family visits, was cited among the reasons for the operation.

Those detained were denied access to legal counsel for the first 24 hours, and restrictions were placed on access to their case files. These practices clearly violate the right to a fair trial as guaranteed under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

During interrogations, individuals were asked questions concerning matters within the sphere of personal freedom - such as why they traveled abroad, how they purchased their tickets, or why they sent money to friends - thereby treating freedom of movement and the right to private life as grounds for accusation.

Furthermore, family ties were included in the investigation. Legal proceedings or affiliation-related circumstances previously experienced by first-degree relatives, such as parents or siblings, were treated as evidence. As emphasized in the European Court of Human Rights' 2023 Yalçinkaya judgment, such practices are incompatible with the rule of law in light of the principle of "no punishment without law."

3. PROFILES OF THE DETAINEES

The common characteristics of the individuals targeted in the operation are generally as follows:

- Young adults and university students aged between 18 and 25,
- Children of individuals dismissed from public service,
- Family members of individuals previously subjected to legal proceedings in Turkey,
- Individuals whose family members were forced to leave the country.

It is understood that some young people, having reached the age of 18, were unable to benefit from family reunification rights in Europe and therefore traveled to third countries (for example, the Balkans) to meet their families. Even such circumstances were used as grounds for detention.

4. AN ONGOING PATTERN OF OPERATIONS

This operation reflects a recurring pattern seen in previous incidents. For example, the Antalya-centered "Maydanoz Döner" investigation of February 21, 2025, which our association reported to you on March 2, 2025, targeted private-sector businesses employing individuals dismissed from public service by emergency decrees (KHK).

Similarly, in another operation carried out on May 7, 2024, similar measures were taken against a total of 41 young people, including 15 high-school students who were minors. In these investigations, even participation in social events and religious activities was used as a basis for accusations.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gaziantep-centered operation demonstrates that security policies that emerged in Turkey after 2016 affect not only individuals, but also their family members and especially their children. Fundamental rights such as freedom of movement, privacy, the right to education, and respect for family life are being violated through these practices, placing the future of second-generation individuals at serious risk.

Within the framework of this report, our association strongly recommends that such incidents be assessed in context in asylum applications submitted by individuals who have experienced victimization under similar conditions. In this regard, it is clear that individuals may be subjected to investigations solely because of family ties or social relationships, while security policies undermine legal safeguards.

It is also important for international human rights institutions to closely monitor these systematic human rights violations in Turkey and to take the necessary steps. Such practices cause individuals to be completely excluded from social life and lead them into a process that may be described as “social death.” Indeed, the situation has reached a point at which even the “right to life” is under threat.

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