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Exile and plurality in neoliberal times: Turkey's Academics for Peace

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Abstract

Today thousands of academics from Turkey, along with others from Syria, Iran, and Egypt are deserting their homeland in search of intellectual refuge in Western countries. These exiled academics have been attempting to practice diverse forms of teaching and researching, both in Turkey and in exile. We argue that the struggles of oppositional academics inside and outside Turkey today offer insight into the nature of the global crisis in neoliberal academia based on precarious working conditions of knowledge producers and commodification of education. Some of the answers to this crisis may lie, as they did in the 1930s and 1940s, in the hands of those same persecuted scholars who bring with them academic perspectives forged in oppressive regimes. In a short period of time Academics for Peace accomplished two goals. They have resisted through peaceful, anti-violent civil disobedience the political pressure brought to bear upon them by the increasingly authoritarian Turkish government, daring to demand and then create a new, more plural public Turkish space. Second, they have dared, even in the face of academic and civic precariousness, to take a critical stance toward the marketization and hierarchization of Turkish and European universities and in response to forge new autonomous ways of teaching and researching in their home and host countries. An approach that goes beyond humanitarianizing the support given to dissident academics has the potential to pluralize academy.

Exile and Plurality in Neoliberal Times: Turkey's Academics for Peace[1]

Seçkin Sertdemir Özdemir, Nil Mutluer, Esra Özyürek

On April 24, 2018 in Berlin, the international organization Scholars at Risk (SAR) conferred their Courage to Think award not to a lone scholar but to one thousand and twenty-eight scholars jointly. The recipient was Academics for Peace/*Barış İçin Akademisyenler*, a group of academic signatories to the January 2016 "We will not be a party to this crime!" peace petition (Academics for Peace 2016) urging the Turkish government to halt its accelerating violence in the Kurdish provinces and return to stalled peace negotiations with the Kurds, act in conformance with national and international law. This was the first time that a sizable group of academics of Kurdish and non-Kurdish backgrounds from Turkey had come together in solidarity to make concrete demands on the politically taboo subject of Turkish state violence toward the Kurds. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reacted immediately by criminalizing the petition and the petitioners. He accused the signatories of treason and terrorist propaganda and announced the launch of a crimi-

nal investigation. With the failed coup attempt of July 2016 and Erdoğan's move to consolidate authoritarian power, mass disciplinary action by and against universities followed, resulting in suspension, criminal investigations and prosecution, arrest, and detention, of the petitioners. Thousands of academics lost their jobs.

Two years later, in the wake of the ensuing exodus of Turkish scholars abroad and Euro-American academy efforts to temporarily absorb a portion of them,[2] in the 2018 Courage to Think Award Ceremony SAR board chair Catherine Simpson emphasized the connection between the defense of academic and democratic freedoms globally: "Our award recipient tonight is not one courageous individual, but many who are using their skills as researchers, writers and teachers to resist a dark moment, in their case in the history of Turkish higher education. In doing so, they are an embodiment of the responsibility to explain and defend both higher education and democratic values."

We are three signatories of the Academics for Peace petition who are now exiled in Europe. One of us lost their position at a Turkish university immediately after President Erdoğan's crackdown in January 2016, traveled to Germany, and became a Philipp Schwarz fellow for scholars at risk. Another resigned as a result of bullying by her institution, moved to Europe and became an independent scholar financially dependent on her family. The last has long held full-time teaching positions at American and European universities. The first two who were employed in Turkey in 2016 are currently under administrative and criminal investigation. All three received undergrad-

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[2] Although we touch on an earlier wave of academic exile to North America in the 1930s and 1940s, our analysis of contemporary Turkish scholars in exile pertains to those in Europe.

uate degrees in Turkey and graduate degrees in Europe or the United States. We met as exiles through the international solidarity movement that coalesced after the criminalization of the petitioners. While working together to decode the legal system in Turkey, navigate immigration law in various European countries, and convince universities to accept Turkish scholars at risk as visiting scholars, we found ourselves, like other scholars in exile before us, self-reflexively theorizing the exilic conditions of knowledge production and academic employment that now affect our own our colleagues' lives. Based on our lived experiences, our interactions with institutional representatives, and a series of face-to-face interviews with fifteen of Turkish scholars at risk now in Europe, we examine the potential for and the limits to integration of exiled intellectuals and the plurality of positionality and knowledge production they represent into academic structures, culture, and production both inside and outside Turkey. Despite feeling grateful, we argue that there is much to be gained by critically analyzing the generous support European and North American universities provide for such academics at risk. We suggest that because the temporary support schemes provided for well-qualified exiled academics are often framed as humanitarian projects rather than solidarity, academics who dared to challenge political systems in their own countries become fresh source of precarious labor for the marketized education system and it misses the opportunity of pluralizing knowledge production.

Since the 1980s universities became operating actors with a key role to improve marketization and developed policies to further their entrepreneurial abilities and individual performances (Olssen and Peters). Contemporary universities officially promote diversity based on the recognition and affirmation of cultural and factual diversity within a political body. This paradigm considers socially recognized differences as a richness in itself and yet remains indifferent to unex-

pected conflicts and problems derived from such claims of recognition. (Tassin 2006: 510-511).

According to Sara Ahmed, this diversity paradigm have been used for adapting the academia into

marketization:

> diversity has a commercial value and can be used as a way not only marketing the univer-
> sity but of making the university into a marketplace. Others have called this the 'Benetton
> model' of diversity, in which diversity becomes an aesthetic style or a way of 'rebrand-
> ing' an organisation […].(and) as a management term." (2012, 52)

Such diversity policies do not aim at solve the conflict and politics derived from distinctions and

differences, but rather cover and obscure them. More importantly, "the word 'diversity' invokes

difference but does not necessarily evoke commitment to action or redistributive justice. (Ahmad

2012: 52-53), The same logic approaches exiled academics as refugees who happen to be are be-

ing considered as refugees who happen to be academics and their political demand to be recog-

nized as peer fellows have been veiled. As a result, they can only appear in the public sphere as

adding diversity or as a generous act of humanitarian policy.

Hence, instead of the term of diversity, we prefer the concept of 'plurality' which is considered

as a condition of action and speech by Hannah Arendt. Arendt's concept of plurality is different

from diversity because it simultaneously assumes equality and distinction –a quality overlooked

in claims of diversity. For Arendt both qualities are crucial because: "If men were not equal, they

could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and

foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being

distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor

action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough. (1958: 175-176)

Arendt's understanding of plurality gives us a clue to understand the nature of new claims of political subjectivities and also the recent precariousness that is deeply connected to the diversity paradigm. In other words, plurality allows us to consider the reclaiming subject as an equal and distinct actor who appears in the public sphere with his/her singularised action and speech. We suggest that an inquiry of exiled academics who found refuge in European universities as a part of the academic diversity policies is a good place to understand how these policies are in crisis. Regarding academics at risk as refugees who happen to be academics by profession masks the singularity of the conditions in which each academic is exiled. There is no space to discuss how Academics for Peace, for example, were exiled both because they highlighted state violence against Kurds and also because they resisted accepting themselves merely as pegs in the marketized knowledge production. They wanted to stress that the knowledge they have of what is happening in the Kurdish regions of Turkey gives them a political responsibility of making it public. The European and American universities that give them protection on temporary basis now expects them to be qualified additions into the labor reserve ready to serve the fluctuating needs of the commodified education system as soon as their scholarship is over. Can their experiences and activism, instead, be a force to question violence against minorities and commodification of knowledge in their new temporary homes?

To investigate the transformative potential of current exiled Turkish academics in the US and Europe, we look first at the institutional structures and material conditions that allowed earlier

waves of exiled scholars from Germany in the 1930s to impact academic culture in the US and how the experience of exile informs their critique of the authoritarian state. We then turn to a study of the political persecution of academics at risk in Turkey and how international institutions of higher education have responded to their plight, highlighting the problems these contemporary Turkish academics in exile encounter in their home and host countries. This analysis reveals the imbrication of two elements of these scholars' experience of exile within the neoliberal crisis facing academia globally—their persecution at home in Turkey and the paucity of long-term, durable solutions offered to them within European universities. This then allows for a discussion of the institutional and material possibilities for and obstacles to transformative academic enrichment in Europe through absorption of and encounter with contemporary Turkish and other academics in exile. We argue that the struggles of oppositional academics inside and outside Turkey today offer insight into the nature of the global crisis in neoliberal academia based on precarious working conditions of knowledge producers and commodification of education. We suggest that some of the answers to this crisis may lie, as they did in the 1930s and 1940s, in the hands of those same persecuted scholars who bring with them academic perspectives forged in oppressive regimes. Their insights into the inherent de-democratizing and homogenizing threat posed by neoliberalism to independent scholarship, we argue, is of great relevance to the future workings of the academy in neoliberal democracies.

Academic Exile from Authoritarianism and Durable Transnational Solidarity

Totalitarian regimes have long used exile as a political method of expelling whole communities for the purpose of enforcing total domination. Dissident writers, authors, artists and thinkers who

were forced to leave Germany and other German-occupied countries during the Third Reich such as Walter Benjamin (2006), Simone Weil (2014), Stefan Zweig (1943), Hannah Arendt (1958, 1994) and Theodor Adorno (1951), turned their situation into an existential question and produced an immense literature about the experience of being uprooted and forced into exile by the rise of authoritarianism. The questions they posed and the perspectives they brought to bear, particularly on the social sciences, have been transformative for intellectual traditions in their host countries, their home countries after the war, and across the world (Coser 1984; Wiggershaus 1995; Jay 1996; Kettler and Lauer 2005; Jenemann 2007; Wheatland 2009; Fair-Schulz and Kessler 2011; Burke 2017). As Azade Seyhan (2005) has noted,

"It is perhaps no coincidence that the critique of the Enlightenment and its ideals of progress, freedom from authority, and normative humanism have most rigorously been examined by thinkers such as Horkheimer and Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and Walter Benjamin, whose lives and careers were compromised and interrupted by exile and extremity during the Nazi reign of terror. Their reflections on and redefinitions of modernity, morality, and agency are determined to a large extent by the specific condition of exile itself" (275).

Such exilic figures have had a lasting impact on the social sciences and humanities, notably for our purposes here the German Jewish philologist Erich Auerbach who fled from Germany to Turkey in 1935 where he composed his most influential work, *Mimesis* (1953), first published in German in 1946. Edward Said's theoretical leveraging of Auerbach in Istanbul and the importance of the loss of home to the academic conscience and the vantage point of ethical critique

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has been particularly productive (Said 1993, 2002; Mufti 1998; Konuk 2008, 2010).

It is important here to note the institutional and material conditions necessary for exiled scholars of this period have made their mark on Euro-American academia. After the Nazis seized power in 1933 dismissing over thirty-nine percent of all university teachers in Germany (Krohn 1993, 12), Alvin Johnson, director at the New School for Social Research in New York, formed the University in Exile[3] and took the initiative of offering refuge to German and Jewish scholars at risk. Johnson was able to raise money to host a long list of distinguished scholars, including Max Wertheimer, Hans Jonas, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and Adolph Lowe, while across town, Columbia University became home to German scholars Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (Krohn 1993). By all accounts, this absorption of German and Jewish refugee scholars after 1933 into American institutions of higher learning despite an anti-semitic and anti-German atmosphere (Greenville 2015; Rösh 2014) was of a durable nature: by 1947, seventy-seven percent of schol-ars exiled in 1933 had obtained faculty positions (Kent 1953).

In 1941 the New School established yet another university in exile in New York for French scholars, L'École Libre des Hautes Études, chartered by the French and Belgian governments in exile and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation (Johnson 1942; Zolberg and Callamard 1998; Chaubet and Loyer 2000). At the end of the war, the École Libre officially severed its ties with the New School, relocated to France where it became an attractive place for exiled sociologists, anthropologists, historians, economists, philosophers, and political scientists, and eventually evolved into the acclaimed L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Many dis-

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[3] Subsequently renamed as the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science.

tinguished French academics, including Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Claude Lévi Strauss, Fernand Braudel, François Furet, and Thomas Piketty have been members of this prototypically interdisciplinary institution.

When scholars were dismissed en masse from German universities in 1933, European and American scholars, politicians, and philanthropists responded by setting up the Emergency Committee for Displaced German and European Scholars associated with the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York and the Academic Assistance Council—still a central force in the protection of scholars in exile, now known as the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA)—in the UK (Anonymous 1933; Anonymous 1935; Duggan and Drury 1948). The *Comité des Savants* in France (1933), the *Academisch Steunfonds* in the Netherlands (1934), and the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in Britain (1936) were created for the same purposes (Heilbron, Guilhot, and Laurent 2008, 153).

Today, alongside new initiatives, some of the very organizations established to help German scholars during the Third Reich help scholars fleeing other countries. In an ironic twist of history, while German and Jewish scholars escaping the Third Reich left in desperation for new intellectual homes in places like the US, the UK, Switzerland, Turkey, and Palestine, among other countries (Heilbron, Guilhot, and Laurent 2008, 153), academics fleeing Turkey and Syria today constitute the largest group of scholars at risk in Europe, with hundreds of Turkish scholars having found an intellectual home in Germany, France, and the UK. The global Scholars at Risk Network's *Summary Report on Activities 2016–2017* underlines that because of the war in Iraq and Syria and the political pressure on academia in Turkey, between September 1, 2016 and Au-

gust 31, 2017 receipt of applications for urgent assistance increased by four hundred percent over and above the average for the period of 2011 to 2016, a span of five years (2017b, 4), exceeding 700 scholar applications. SAR was able to find a secure place for 366 scholars in danger in 2017, including over 158 academic positions, their highest annual record to date (4), of which 270 scholars originating in Turkey (6).

New initiatives have also been established in memory of old ones. In June 2016, the German government and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation launched a fellowship fund in name of the German Jewish chemist Philipp Schwartz who organized the escape of hundreds of German scholars to Turkey in an initiative that helped to establish universities in the new republic (Reisman 2007; Konuk 2008, 2010; Eden and Irzık 2012). In the 2017–2018 academic year, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative awarded two-year fellowships to three hundred academics at risk from Syria and Turkey (Alexander van Humboldt n.d.). Other foundations associated with political parties such as the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation of the Left Party, *Die Linke* (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. n.d.) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of the Social Democrat Party (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. n.d.), both in Germany, also support exiled scholars. Since January 2017, France welcomes international researchers in an emergency situation through the new *Programme National d'Aide à l'Accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil* (PAUSE) program for periods of six to twelve months (Collège de France n.d.). In 2017, PAUSE supported sixty scholars from Syria and Turkey; some from Turkey however, were unable to benefit from the support because their passports had been cancelled by the Turkish government, meaning that they could not exit Turkey (Collège de France 2017). Currently, many other smaller initiatives across Europe help

hundreds of scholars in exile each year through the supply of temporary scholarship or fellow-ships for periods of a few months up to two years.

From Academics for Peace to Academics in Exile

Just as in the 1930s when scholars left Germany piecemeal or in event-triggered waves, Academics for Peace as we know it today did not begin life as an organization, but rather as disparate and dispersed scholars of conscience brought together in solidarity in a singular public gesture as signatories to the "We will not be a party to this crime!" peace petition on January 11, 2016. The reaction of the Turkish state was immediate and much more heavy handed than most signatories expected. Dubbing the signatories "fifth column" terrorists and accusing them of being "traitors, ignoramuses, colonialists, and pseudointellectuals," President Erdoğan and the ruling elite de-nounced the group in the media (Weaver 2016 and see Mutluer 2017, Tekdemir, Toivanen, and Başer 2018:106). A mafia leader suspected of illicit ties to the state openly threatened the aca-demics that he would "take a shower in [their] blood" (Hürriyet 2016). Rather than put a halt to the petition, these actions resulted in over one thousand additional petitioners being added within the week, the number of signatories climbing from 1128 to 2212 virtually overnight. Simultane-ously, the Council of Higher Education, the national institution that supervises all universities in Turkey, began to take measures against Academics for Peace. Within a brief period, disciplinary and criminal investigations began and hundreds of academics were suspended from their jobs and a few detained (See Başer, Akgönül, and Öztürk 2017; Özkırımlı 2017). In the aftermath of the state of emergency measures following the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, thousands of signatories were banned from public service, some put on trial on the basis of Article 7/2 of the Turkish Anti-Terror Act and Article 53 of the Turkish Penal Code, "Carrying Out Propaganda

for a Terrorist Organization." Alongside Academics for Peace signatories, opposition politicians and groups, journalists, media workers, writers, and other academics were also purged. According to the latest report from the Human Rights Joint Platform (2017), 5,717 academics in Turkey have been removed from public service via the state of emergency decree laws. An additional 3,041 academic staff formerly employed in private universities have lost their jobs due to forced university closures.

Table 1: Rights Violations of Academics for Peace[4]

Rights Violations	Public	Private	Total
Removed and banned from public service via the decree laws + dismissal + resignation + retirement	424	74	498
Removed and banned from public service via the decree laws	378	8	386
Dismissal	38	48	86
Resignation	18	24	42
Forced retirement	25	1	26
Disciplinary investigation	442	63	505
Disciplinary investigation. Decision of the Investigation Committee: Dismissal from public service. Pending Council of Higher Education (YÖK) approval	107	5	112
Preventive suspension	90	11	101
Suspension from administrative duty	3	4	7
Police custody	67	3	70
Pre-trial detention	2	2	4
On trial			265

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[4] Published by Academics for Peace (2017). See https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/node/314.

Sentence of 15 months with suspension of the pronouncement of the judgement			12
Sentence of 15 months without suspension			1

The first criminal procedures against four Academics for Peace signatories were filed in March 2016, two months after the publication of the petition and four months before the failed coup (Academics for Peace 2018). When they held a press conference restating their commitment to the petition three of them were arrested and kept on remand in pre-trial detention for forty days. In October 2017, the Istanbul prosecutor's office indicted 265 signatories on the grounds of having "carried out terrorist propaganda," a crime that carries a prison sentence of up to seven and half years (Butler and Ertür 2017). As of May 2018, in lots of these hearings the criminal courts suspended sentences and in others academics are currently facing possible imprisonment (Kural 2018).

Institutionally, signatories to the 2016 "We will not be a party to this crime!" peace petition were not organized under the framework of a formal association until quite some time after signing. Most of the signatories did not know each other and have signed the petition online after noticing it on social media, not different from many progressive academics signing petitions globally in web sites such as Change.org. While the organization Academics for Peace has existed since November 2012, it did not absorb the peace petition signatories until the politically motivated academic purges of 2016 and 2017 forced Turkish scholars to build more effective networks of social solidarity. Many did so only after leaving Turkey, helping to build local branches of Academics for Peace in the countries to which they fled. Despite the persecution and purging they

had experienced, Turkish scholars, now working under the aegis of Academics for Peace, continued their efforts to create new venues and platforms of public education outside the traditional bounds of universities. Paradoxically, their persecution by and exile from Turkish academic institutions, from Turkey itself, and even, as we shall see, their marginalization within institutions of higher learning in their host countries, has led them to question the predominant neoliberal model of academic institutions as exclusive, hierarchically organized, commodified, and marketized. This critical perspective and the living of academic lives in exile has meant, too, that these scholars have devised what we take to be exciting new and diverse forms of teaching and researching, both in Turkey and in exile abroad.

A considerable number of Academics for Peace scholars have fled persecution in Turkey and have now become integrated in a mostly temporary fashion into European and North American academic and intellectual life. Through short-term visiting positions secured via programs such as Scholars at Risk, Council for At-Risk Academics, and other smaller national programs, they bring with them to institutes of higher learning in Europe the same critical stance of conscience they had displayed in Turkey, their analyses strengthened and deepened by the building of new transnational solidarity networks. Alongside exiled artists, journalists, and other knowledge producers and their local colleagues in Europe, these exiled academics are busy facilitating new scholarly, artistic, and literary collaborations. The aim is to open up transnational, deeply diverse public spaces for critical thinking in which new methods and ideologies of knowledge production may be born. While there is much promise in these activities, as we shall see, the transnational connections and solidarities thus far engendered also pose challenges.

Exile and Humanitarianism, or Becoming "Victims to be Saved"

Although the mass scholarly exiles of the 1930s and the 2010s share certain similarities, an analysis of the differences can bring the contemporary moment more sharply into focus. While the 1930 wave took place during an era of totalitarian regimes, the current exile takes place during an era where the neoliberal-authoritarian state is on the rise. Where the majority of exiled academics during the 1930s and 1940s were left stateless and had to apply for asylum and citizenship, today's exiled scholars from Turkey often do not seek asylum in their host society and instead obtain work permits via temporary fellowships or grants. These scholars in exile do face a high risk of becoming stateless or stuck in their host country because their passports have been cancelled by the Turkish state. Academics who might otherwise leave Turkey find themselves stuck there for the same reason—their passports have been cancelled. Stuck in Turkey, they have lost their freedom of movement, the right to work, and other civil and political rights. Unlike the political circumstances under which scholars of the 1930s sought refuge outside of Germany, the current condition of political persecution and purge in Turkey has not yet been explicitly identified and recognized by all European countries. In academic circles in Germany, for instance, it is German academics of Turkish descent with close familial ties to Turkey and idealistic ethnically German academics who have put into motion the admirable German programs of support and solidarity there. The response of each individual European country to Turkish academics and the local capacity of rescue organizations to absorb them varies according to the country's relationship with Turkey.

Furthermore, although European solidarity initiatives fellowship programs play an active and important role in incorporating scholars at risk, those most likely to receive support are not nec-

essarily those who are at greatest risk. Those who receive the fellowships tend to be scholars who have been educated in North American and European universities and have published extensively in the English language, or in French or German, in high-ranking journals. Indeed, competitive credentials become a major predictor of exiled academics' ability to escape persecution. This observation further reveals how previously established networks within the precarious neoliberal academy remain structurally closed to the plurality of voices, ideas, and approaches. It also creates tensions and competition in the academy; exiled scholars who receive these awards often become a target for feelings of resentment from young local scholars who are not happy to see more competition in the increasingly competitive neoliberal academic labor market.

A pervasive and unescapable finding is that because of the short-term nature of support, solidarity programs in effect function as humanitarian aid projects that offer temporary safety to scholars at risk but in a remarkable number of cases do not manage to integrate them into local mechanisms of academic knowledge production and teaching. Exiled academics in Germany had a difficult time explaining why the unfortunately paternalistic name of a well-meaning program that matched local scholars with exiled academics, "Adopt a Scholar," made them feel uncomfortable. When universities host academic exiles, they are not always invited into the classroom or even into the usual functioning of departments but are more often left to fend for themselves in almost total isolation from academic circles. Feeling that they are viewed as objects of humanitarian policy rather than as peers, many reward recipients spend their three to twenty-four months of support confused about where to concentrate their energies. In a particularly telling finding, a common objection we heard among host institution staff to the hosting of a scholar at risk was the absence of programmatic psychological support for traumatized scholars. This hu-

manitarian lens that is built into current responses casts scholars in exile not as peers and poten-

tial contributors to European academic life, but as needy guests who do not properly belong

within the host department, but whose presence is tolerated for humanitarian reasons.

Another through going finding is that the neoliberal version of this humanitarian rubric positions

academic exiles as potential refugees of preference, given that the prospect of their integration

into the mainstream of Western societies is regarded as considerably brighter than that of other

less-educated (yet real) refugees. As such, academic exiles are expected to become new contribu-

tors to the European academic market. During meetings with academics in exile, German bu-

reaucrats and professors regularly define academia as a "marketplace," suggesting positions in

industrial and service markets as alternative carrier options for those academic exiles who find it

difficult to "integrate" into the mainstream of the host country's academic environment. Exiled

Turkish scholars thus find themselves positioned as high-skilled immigrants in university and

research sectors that are driven by a market ideology.

It is not only within academia that academic exiles are regarded within the framework of a "dam-

sel in distress" fantasy. Some organizations who agree to raise funds in solidarity—for example a

teachers' union in Brussels—request that exiled academics supply photographs and dramatic sto-

ries of academic suffering in Turkey for their campaign. The mainstream media tends to portray

academics in exile as victims to be rescued from their persecutor—in the Turkish case, from the

wicked dictator Erdoğan. In their search for stories of victimization, they settle on the juicy es-

cape stories of exiled scholars. In an article published in *OpenDemocracy*, one of the authors of

this paper, Nil Mutluer, narrated her encounter with mainstream media.

> The Western gaze needs fresh victims and apparently it sees in me one of those new vic-
> tims. How do I know this? I read it in the newspaper, in the Wall Street Journal [Parkinson
> and Peker 2016], no less. Here is what the WSJ said about me on August 24, 2016:
> "In Istanbul, Nil Mutluer grabbed her 3-year-old daughter and raced with a suitcase toward
> Turkey's coast. The former sociology-department chair at the city's Nisantasi [Nişantaşı]
> University narrowly escaped the nation's looming dragnet. 'Authorities had already begun
> questioning colleagues at the airports,' said Dr. Mutluer, a Western-leaning liberal who
> took a ferry to Greece en route to an academic post in Berlin."
> A striking beginning for a newspaper story isn't it? An academic single mother escapes
> with only one suitcase and her three-year-old daughter, via Greece to boot! Touching too—
> exactly the sort of human interest story of victimization that the Western gaze seems to
> demand from its news outlets.

The Transformative Potential of Scholars in Exile in Neoliberal Times

As may be seen in the findings and analysis above, because scholars at risk are framed in terms of a victim-persecutor-savior narrative, a political problem par excellence that involves not only countries that criminalize freedom of expression but also the precarization of academic work in neoliberal societies around the world is handled as a humanitarian problem for which temporary solutions apply. When they made their appearance in European universities as exiles, the Academics for Peace scholars found themselves confronted with an academic establishment in Eu-

rope that had implicitly accepted neoliberal modes of knowledge production and work, including academic precariousness. Unlike their 1930s predecessors who escaped to (more or less) liberal regimes, today's exiled scholars seek refuge in European and North American universities that have been under neoliberal pressure since the 1980s (Thompson 1970; Altbach 2001; Radice 2013; Rustin 2016). Since that time, academia has been increasingly viewed as a system regulated by market principles and competition, thereby rendering the working conditions of academics increasingly more fragile and precarious (Gee 2017). Via ranking criteria, research has been reduced to impact factors and the instrumentalization of knowledge (Burawoy 2010). By following the needs of the market, this neoliberal framework reduces the valence of democratic values and principals such as academic freedom, critical debate, public engagement, reflexivity, and plurality, moving ever closer toward de-democratization (Masao 2002; Giroux 2004; McClennen 2010; Burawoy 2010; Woodman 2017; Keily 2017). This neoliberal transformation of the university directly influences the positioning of newcomers as "others" in the academic hierarchy. In continental Europe, academic exiles often meet simultaneously and unreflexively with the words "integration" "competition," part of the lexicon of European academia's stubborn practical resistance to internationalization and diversification despite its institutional commitments to diversity. This gap between structures of diversity and the experience of those academics in exile who embody it is what Sarah Ahmed (2012) has termed "non-performatives"—institutional structures that "do not bring into effect that which they name" (119).

Like their World War II predecessors, contemporary Turkish academics in exile are exiles of conscience, having mounted scholarly critiques of the status quo of a longstanding cycle of violence against minorities in their home country long before their arrival as exiles. Becoming a

signatory to the "We will not be a party to this crime!" peace petition was an act of academic conscience and civil courage, one that sought to promote plurality and a lasting political and structural alternative to the belligerent nationalist discourse of social unity. The aim was to break the cycle of violence and challenge status-quo politics by deliberating on the possibility of peace based on the principles of plurality and democratic rights. The petitioners called not only for a Turkey that is inclusive of ethnic and cultural difference, but also for a mode of critical thinking that recognizes a multiplicity of ideas and opinions equally, especially as they relate to ongoing political struggles in Turkey. Most petitioners did not expect a major change would come as a result of the small act of signing a petition, but they felt like they owe an act of witnessing to intensifying violence.

We argue that as exiles of conscience, Academics for Peace scholars are uniquely positioned to initiate a new thinking frame in Europe and Turkey, one that focuses on durable solutions, not humanitarian Band-Aids. Together with their co-signatories still in Turkey, exiled academics offer solutions via direct criticism of ossified academic structures and hierarchies and by the forging of new spaces of transnational knowledge creation.

Academics for Peace exiles who struggle now with precarization and marginalization during their stays at host institutions outside Turkey are in fact already familiar with these forms of social insecurity. By the early 2000s, the global reach of neoliberalization had already commodified knowledge and labor in the Turkish academy (Inal and Akkaymak 2012), but with greater centralization (Vatansever and Yalçın 2016). Changes to the structure of Turkish academia since the 1980 military coup have sought to shift the function, objectives, and scope of universities so

as to transform them into competitive, hierarchical, centrally-controlled institutions. In effect, the institutional autonomy of universities and the academic freedom of scholars have both been under attack for decades in Turkey. Turkish universities have long been required to prove themselves by their enterprise, tested not in the last instance according to scientific excellence, but according to their loyalty to the government. It is for this reason that the current political pressure exerted on academics by university administrators and the Council of Higher Education (*YOK*), the state institution that supervises all universities in Turkey, was both swift and efficient; the structures and personnel were already in place (Ozyurek 2018).

Those Academics for Peace signatories who remain in Turkey simultaneously face political and market induced pressures in Turkey. Having been dismissed and blacklisted, they have been unable to find jobs at Turkish universities and many of them have been banned from public services entirely. Shortly after the publication of the peace petition and the resulting persecution, an academic workshop took place in Istanbul, out of which the *Kampüssüzler* (No-Campus) movement born, a non-exclusive educational movement open to scholars and nonscholars both within and outside the academy. While the immediate purpose for launching No-Campus was to create an alternative platform for dismissed scholars, it has gradually taken form with broader goals in mind: to theorize and hash out inclusive research and teaching modes and methods, to transport academic knowledge to spaces outside the university campus, and to fashion an alternative, non-hierarchical, interdisciplinary, dynamic, autonomous academia (Başdaş, and Akbal 2017). Under the state of emergency imposed after the July 2016 attempted coup, dismissed scholars founded ten such non-institutional academies in Ankara, Antalya, Dersim, Eskişehir, Istanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Mardin, Mersin, and Urfa. Their first activity in 2016, carried out with the support of

the No-Campus movement, was to hold solidarity lectures delivered by dismissed academics in Eskişehir, İstanbul. The first Solidarity Academy (*Dayanışma Akademileri*) was then founded in Kocaeli in September 2016. At the moment, the movement is focused on finding creative solutions to pervasive academic problems in the wake of the purges: assigning shadow supervisors for students whose supervisors have been dismissed and organizing online courses so that existing and new students and the public may continue learn from dismissed scholars. Today, these ten Solidarity Academies work in collaboration, organizing regular workshops on knowledge production, intellectual emancipation, autonomous universities, and how to challenge the disciplinary divides between the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. They aspire to build an autonomous, horizontal, diversified, critical, and cross-disciplinary academy.

> Who Are We? We are the academics who have taken their share in the neoliberal authoritarianization process in Turkey, and who have been dismissed from their positions in the universities for standing against oppression, war, violence and injustice. Aims? We aim to relate academic knowledge production to the prioritization of peace, nonviolence and justice in the sociopolitical sphere. We aim to continue such knowledge production processes in the non-university spheres. We aim to maintain our relation with the dare-to knowledge that requires courage in producing and sharing knowledge, prioritizing peace vis-a-vis the authoritarian structures. In so doing we aim to produce and share knowledge with reference to equality, freedom, and solidarity that are excluded from the university sites (Dayanışma Akademileri n.d.).

Outside of Turkey, Academics for Peace exiles have also been busy building international solidarity networks in collaboration with civil society actors in their host societies in Germany, France, the UK, and North America. Each country cohort has produced its own distinctive initiative consistent with the changing political circumstances that pertain. A solidarity group in France was created in January 2016 with the strong support of French academics immediately following the petition announcement. Together they helped to mobilize government representatives to create the Collège de France's PAUSE program for scholars at risk. Academics in exile in France have also carried out several awareness campaigns and seminars at French universities concerning the Turkish state's assaults on academic freedom.

Of all the solidarity networks outside Turkey, Germany deserves special mention, because it has been the most welcoming country for Turkish scholars at risk. No doubt, the existence of a sizable Turkish and Kurdish diaspora and longstanding Turkish–German connections have facilitated this favorable state of affairs. Intriguingly for our purposes here, the German support group for Academics for Peace has recently launched Off-University, a self-styled academy without borders initiative, in collaboration with the Solidarity Academies in Turkey and with funding from the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung and the University of Potsdam. Their first international conference, "Tough Questions about Peace," took place on October 7, 2017 (Off-University 2017). Off-University is an open and cost-free online educational platform that was "established for and by academics from Turkey yet addresses itself to academics all over the world," its mission based on "a commitment to peace in the world and to living together in diversity and it therefore seeks to develop education-research activities that are less hierarchical and more democratic" (Off-

University n.d.). Their latest initiative is to establish certified distance learning and study programs that will grant diplomas to students outside Germany, from Turkey and elsewhere.

Academics for Peace members living in Germany have also established the Scientists for Peace (*Wissenschaftlerinnen für den Frieden*) foundation, whose main purpose is to carry out academic projects on peace while maintaining solidarity relations with dismissed colleagues in Turkey. Last, but certainly not least, in November 2017, Academics for Peace scholars in exile worked together with the Institute of Turkish Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Berlin-based Forum *Transregionale Studien*, and the *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen* to create an Academy in Exile for scholars from or in Turkey (Academy in Exile 2017; Boeddeling 2017). Established originally with support from *Volkswagen Stiftung* and with additional funding from IIE Scholar Rescue Fund and *Freudenberg Stiftung*, the academy is offering two-year fellowships to Turkish academics under threat, and has organized a conference for October 2018 entitled "Exile and Academic Freedom Today" (Academy in Exile 2018).

There are also a number of ad hoc instances of academic cooperation in Germany. One example is a collaborative course called "Academics on the Move: Notions of Exile, Remigration and Translocal Solidarity" which has opened for Summer 2018 under the coordination of an established scholar at Humboldt University in Berlin and involves exiled scholars affiliated with Humboldt and Freie Universities and Touro College. Another example is the workshop series planned and organized by scholar at risk academics from Turkey in cooperation with academics, journalists, artists and activists from different countries such as Egypt, Iran, Germany, Syria and Turkey. The aim of these workshops is to form platforms for interdisciplinary knowledge shar-

ing. "We are not waiting for the Revolution: Feminist struggles at times of crisis - Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Iran" is the first panel and workshop organized by Humboldt University, Alice-Salomon Hochschule and Adopt a Revolution in June 2018. Other examples include cases in which exiled scholars have been invited by established colleagues to take over their positions while they are temporarily on leave. Since such interim appointments are merit-based in Germany, they provide important opportunities for exiled scholars to find their way into the academic establishment.

It is telling that involvement in the peace petition, in scholarly solidarity movements activities in Turkey, and in inciting solidarity activities abroad form the core of the indictments against Academics for Peace and the allegations of "terrorist propaganda." The same seventeen-page uniform bill of indictment that charges all petition signatories uniformly with participation in an organized act against the Republic of Turkey and its government also accuses them of participating in Solidarity Academies and of rendering Turkey a target international public opinion (Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office 2016). In other words, what incited the prosecutor's opprobrium was not only the signing of a public, international petition criticizing Turkey's violent policies against Kurds, but that the accused subsequently organized solidarity networks across the country and the world.

Conclusion

In Turkey, both the marketization of knowledge production and learning and the authoritarian tendencies of the current AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Justice and Development Party) government put scholars who dare to imagine a more peaceful, plural, and democratic world at increased risk. As scholars of conscience, Academics for Peace critically deliberate and actively

engage on the political issues par excellence of our times: militarism, nationalism, and authoritarianism; the commodification, de-democratization, and exclusivist nature of universities. Through their scholarly, educational, and public work, they strive to create new diversified public spaces for alternative visions based on peaceful coexistence as a counter their government's attempts to dominate entirely the various fields and forms of knowledge production and circulation. As their 1930s predecessors did, these academics in exile endeavor to bring about new autonomous research and teaching contexts and transnational solidarity networks so as to foster critical thinking and engagement.

The functioning of today's exiled scholars, however, is closely tied to their precarious social status and the conditions of their employment in their host countries. Their success is therefore dependent on the shifting status of European academia and immigration policies. For Turkish academics at risk, performative (actual) integration does not merely mean affiliation with an institution of higher education, but, more concretely, a secure academic position within which they can think, debate, engage, teach, and write. Indeed, given the short-term, temporary nature of the positions currently open to scholars at risk in Europe, it is difficult to imagine how today's Turkish academics in exile will be able to impact European academia to the extent that their German and Jewish antecedents did after the second world war.

With these caveats and obstacles in mind, we nevertheless contend that in a very short time, Academics for Peace has been able to accomplish two major tasks. First, they have resisted through peaceful, anti-violent civil disobedience the political pressure brought to bear upon them by the increasingly authoritarian Turkish government, daring to demand and then create a new, more

plural public Turkish space. Second, they have dared, even in the face of academic and civic pre-
cariousness, to take a critical stance toward the marketization and hierarchization of Turkish and
European universities and in response to forge new autonomous ways of teaching and research-
ing in their home and host countries.

These accomplishments reveal that today's academics in exile pursue their academic and civil
missions of defending free democratic space and plurality in the countries they come from and
currently exiled in. In this respect Academic for Peace, and other exiled scholars, have the poten-
tial to create platforms and spaces for what Khatibi (1983) called "an other thinking" which is a
state of being free to think from within the traditions that these academics come from and reside
in and yet not being confined by either of them in one's thinking. (Mignolo 2000). In our view,
through their "courage to think" in the face of major political issues of our times positions Aca-
demics for Peace scholars are premier candidates for thinking deeply, ethically and in "an other
way" on plurality both inside and outside academia in the Middle East and in Europe.

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