

1 MAY '77
THE VOICES OF
THOSE WHO LOST
THEIR LOVED ONES.

1 MAY '77
AND IMPUNITY.

**AHMET GÖZÜKARA, ALEKSANDROS
KONTEAS, ALİ SİDAL, ALİ YEŞİLGÜL,
BAYRAM ÇITAK, BAYRAM EYİ,
BAYRAM SÜRÜCÜ, DİRAN NİGİZ,
ERCÜMENT GÜRKUT, GARABET AKYAN,
HACER İPEK SAMAN, HAMDİ TOKA,
HASAN YILDIRIM, HATİCE ALTUN,
HİKMET ÖZKÜRKÇÜ, HÜSEYİN
KIRKIN, JALE YEŞİLNİL, KADİR
BALCI, KADRIYE DUMAN (KIYMET
KOCAMIŞ), KAHRAMAN ALSANCAK,
KENAN ÇATAK, LEYLA ALTI Parmak,
MAHMUT ATILLA ÖZBELEN,
MUSTAFA ELMAS, MEHMET ALİ GENÇ,
MEHMET ALİ KOL, MERAL CEBREN
(ÖZKOL), MÜRTEZİM OLTULU, MUSTAFA
ERTAN, NAZAN ÜNALDI, NAZMİ ARI,
NİYAZI DARI, ÖMER NARMAN, ÖZCAN
GÜRKAN, RAMAZAN SARI, RASİM
ELMAS, SİBEL AÇIKALIN, TEVFİK
BEYSOY, YÜCEL ELBİSTANLI, ZİYA
BAKİ, 35 YAŞINDA BİR ERKEK**

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1 May '77 The Voices of Those Who Lost Their Loved Ones 1 May '77 and Impunity

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From the Foundation

Nadire Mater

They died on Taksim Square on 1 May 1977. The İstanbul Public Prosecutor's Office submitted the indictment to the İstanbul 2nd Heavy Penal Court at the end of the month.

The defendants were the 98 people they collected from the square, among them were Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) executives. In other words, they were those who came for the festivities. They were acquitted.

The perpetrators of the deaths and injuries were bullets and people crushing one another. No public officials stood trial. The 1st Nationalist Front Government headed by Süleyman Demirel, which was in power at the time, did not take any responsibility as well. The "case" that was not filed dropped due to the statute of limitations.

It was not only who died ended up dead; spouses, children, siblings were also affected, they could not find a job, they were afraid, they had to build a new world with completely different lives;

some relatives did/could not speak even today, 44 years later, they kept their silence.

■ **Behiye Özkürkçü:** *Yet my father was the culprit. They persecuted us a lot. I had clipped articles, news published in the press about my father and put them into a file. I gave it to my mother for her to hide it at the time of the '80 coup, and she told me that she hid it in the coal cellar. I think she had to burn them all, because I was not able to reach any documents afterward.*

We are meeting with the lost ones on 1 May 1977 through their spouses, children, siblings, friends. We know, it is overdue work. Many publications were released about '77, and they were very good works.

The discussion was usually made over the "who did it" witnesses. So much so that we could not search for who the deceased were, we could not even agree on numbers, we could not talk through "impunity," we could not demand a trial.

According to the autopsy report, 34 people died, the identity of one is uncertain. Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) Press, Broadcast and Public Relations Department Director Fahrettin Engin Erdoğan announced the number of deaths as 41 in 2009.

In the first part of this work, 27 of the people who died in Taksim in 1977 are no longer just numbers, they join among us with their short lives, jobs, joblessness, poorness, those whom they loved, songs, books, with what their loved ones from all around the country told Tuğçe Yılmaz. Thanks to them, teachers, seven students with one being 11 years old, 16 workers, three health workers, one police officer, with their deaths, show who participate in Workers' Days and the reversed reality.

In the second part entitled "1 May 1977 and Impunity," DİSK chairpersons Süleyman Çelebi, Kani Beko, and Arzu Çerkezoğlu, one of the DİSK secretary generals, Fehmi Işıklar, and Eğitim-Sen Chairperson Nejla Kurul wrote on what happened in the '77 Workers' Day and impunity. Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK) Chairperson Sami Evren brought that year to today with his article entitled "Turkey-1977 Political Panorama." And Tuğçe Yılmaz offered a look through the eyes of a 29-year-old with her articles "Tracing the Trail of a Massacre of 43 Years Ago" and "The Court Years of the Untried 1 May 1977."

Impunity, in the simplest terms, is the lack of the investigation of a rights

violation, the finding, trial and punishment of its perpetrators, and those who were aggrieved by the crime not being compensated for it. The subject underlined here is the responsibility of the state.

The term impunity is widely used in relation to grave and systematic rights violations that occurred at the hands of actors that the state created itself or condoned or as a result of the lack of the supervision of the state or its institutions. [Truth Justice Memory Center]

In our work, the narratives of the relatives and the impunity articles meet just at the titles of "right to justice", "right to know the truth", "right to compensation", "guarantee of non-recurrence," which are materialized in various human rights conventions that were signed by United Nations, the Council of Europe being in the first place and states - including Turkey - and in the texts of local and global rights organizations.

What happened on 1 May 1977 is among the "severe violations" listed by the Council of Europe as extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, neglects that risk lives and health, sexual assault and harassment, torture and inhumane or humiliating treatment by public officials, etc.

Why are we talking about 1 May 1977 now. Impunity is one of the important subject titles of bianet's reporting. Rights-based reporting is not only a reporting of rights, violations and

struggle against violations that is focused on "now". Just as repeated in narrative and articles, the conclusion "if they were tried, maybe the mass killings would not have occurred" indicates the importance of "Memory" in reporting.

■ **Mete Çıtak:** *Because light is not shed on 1 May '77, we will suffer much more pain like that. And the same things will happen again. Those who are responsible for the pain inflicted on people will not be found. No one will receive punishment. If we are living in a democratic country, the opposite of this should happen.*

Tahir Elçi used to say, "In cases that drop due to the statute of limitations, families should apply to the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the state did not carry out an adequate investigation and find the perpetrators. If they cannot get a result, they should file a complaint at the ECtHR."

International documents also say that the statute of limitations cannot be the case in "severe violations"; those who are responsible should be found, the perpetrators should stand trial.

We published the first article on 1 May 2020. Tuğçe pursued the relatives with extraordinary excitement, curiosity and energy. Sami Evren was always with 1 May 1977 in reaching the relatives and writing. Bülent Aydın, Eğitim Sen teachers, unionists, rights circles, those we couldn't mention their names, made it possible for us to reach the loved ones of those who lost their lives. The TÜSTAV archive was an important source. Kate Ferguson, Amy Spangler and İdil Aydoğan

translated the work into English. Editor-in-Chief Nazan Özcan contributed to the preparation of publication. Selay Dalaklı and Volga Kuşçuoğlu worked the file, including the translations of "Foreword" and "1977-Turkey's Political Panorama." Social media editor Yağmur Karagöz ran the social media campaign designed by PİKAN. Also, they undertook its visual application with Korcan Uğur. The book design and application is from Ali Seçkin Karayol. The cover design by Emre Senan was a great contribution. The support of the Etkiniz team was also valuable. Of course, none of our works would have happened without our general coordinator Evren Gönül, office administrator Ruşen Efe and secretary Leyla İşbilir.

This work could not have been realized without this solidarity.

We are thankful.

Now, as bianet, we have two appeals.

For the loved ones:

The loved ones of our losses whom we were not able to reach and who could/did not speak for this work that still waits to be completed.

For the parliament, political parties, unions, rights organizations, media, everyone:

There is only one month left until May 1, 2021. Let the agenda of this Workers' Day be "impunity". Let '77 be the first step. Let Taksim be the 1 May square.

As we know, impunity makes people daring, for the record.

Those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977

Those we spoke with their loved ones

Ahmet Gözükara

(34, teacher)

Ali Sidal

(18, worker)

Bayram Çıtak

(37, teacher)

Bayram Eyi

(50, construction worker)

Diran Nigiz

(34, worker)

Ercüment Gürkut

(27, university student)

Hacer İpek Saman

(24, university student)

Hamdi Toka

(35, peddler)

Hasan Yıldırım

(31, Uzel worker)

Hikmet Özkürkçü

(39, teacher)

Hüseyin Kırkın

(26, worker)

Jale Yeşilnil

(17, high school student)

Kadir Balcı

(35, salesperson)

Kıymet Kocamış (Kadriye Duman)

(25, nurse)

Kahraman Alsancak

(29, Uzel worker)

Kenan Çatak

(30, teacher)

Mahmut Atilla Özbelen

(26, worker-university student)

Mustafa Elmas

(33, teacher)

Mehmet Ali Genç

(60, guard)

Mürtezim Oltulu

(42, worker)

Nazan Ünalı

(19, university student)

Nazmi Arı

(26, police officer)

Niyazi Darı

(24, worker-university student)

Ömer Narman

(31, teacher)

Rasim Elmas

(41, cinema laborer)

Sibel Açıkalin

(18, university student)

Ziya Baki

(29, Uzel worker)

Those who did/could not speak with their loved ones

Aleksandros Konteas (57, worker)

Bayram Sürücü (worker)

Garabet Akyan (54, worker)

Hatice Altun (21)

Leyla Altıparmak (19, nurse)

Meral Cebren Özkol (43, nurses aide)

Mustafa Ertan (student)

Ramazan Sarı (11, primary school student)

Those only the names of whom are known

Ali Yeşilgül, Mehmet Ali Kol, Özcan Gürkan, Tevfik Beysoy, Yücel Elbistanlı

The one whose name is unknown

35 yaşlarında bir erkek

Political panorama of Turkey - 1977

Sami Evren

8 women, 25 men...

Six teachers, seven students, 16 workers, three health workers, one police officer.

Five shot, 29 crushed and inflicted crush injuries...

And impunity!

34 people known with autopsy reports and civil registers, one of them unidentified... Injured people, prisons and courts where the aggrieved parties were put on trial, not the responsible ones...

The political history of authoritarian states will always be a closed book in cosmic rooms. Putting a historical period on its agenda, bianet has undertaken an important research to break the hegemony of official history.

Meeting the hurt loved ones of the massacred 44 years later does not mean soothing consciences. On the contrary, it means questioning the lack of conscience, impunity and dirty political history.

The 1970s

Having withdrawn as the head of Republican People's Party (CHP) in line with his decision at the meeting on May 7, 1972 during the CHP's 5th Extraordinary Convention, İsmet İnönü's time in office as the CHP Chair ended after 33 years, 4 months, 11 days.

With Bülent Ecevit as the new leader of the CHP, left opposition groups started to make their presence felt on the political scene in a more well-organized manner.

At the first general elections that he took part in 1973, Ecevit increased the left votes by receiving 33.3 percent of the votes. With the coalition government that he formed with the National Salvation Party (MSP) of Necmettin Erbakan in 1974, he became the Prime Minister for the first time. His government carried out the Cyprus Operation in 1974.

The United States of America (USA) imposed an arms embargo on Turkey

after the Cyprus Operation. Turkey's response to this move in 1975 and afterwards was to stop the activities of US bases.

The embargo was lifted in 1978, the bases started operating again. When we came to the 2000s, only the İncirlik base remained in Turkey. Let's note here that there are 90 nuclear warheads in the İncirlik base.

In 2010, Turkey had a new US Base: Kürecik Missile Defense Radar Station.

Ecevit was, at every opportunity, repeating that he would lift the ban on opium poppies. In March 1974, the government informed Washington that it had the intention to start plantation of opium poppies. On July 1, it declared that opium poppy plantation would start under strict state control in seven provinces of Turkey.

While the talks on opium poppies in Turkey were still ongoing at the US Congress, the House of Representatives, on July 16, 1974, suspended all military, economic and other aids to Turkey as well as the licenses for the sale of all ammunition and services for purposes of defense and transportation of arms.

While this tension between the US and Ecevit's government consolidated Ecevit's power in domestic politics, it was concerning for the US.

Ahead of 1977

The contradictions within the CHP-MSP coalition government gradually increased

in 10 months with the inclusion of political prisoners in the general amnesty and the disagreements about Cyprus; they ended with Ecevit's resignation on September 18, 1974.

As the above-party 38th Government, headed by Sadi İrmak, could not receive the vote of confidence, the 1st Nationalist Front Government was formed, with Süleyman Demirel as the Prime Minister.

Turkey entered 1977 with the 39th Government formed on March 31, 1975.

The Prime Minister was Süleyman Demirel. The coalition formed under the name of Nationalist Front (NF government) consisted of four political parties: Justice Party (AP), National Salvation Party (MSP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and Republican Trust Party (CGP).

On April 5, the NF government moved the general elections scheduled for October 14, 1977 to an earlier date, to June 5, due to economic and political instability.

While the elections of June 5, 1977 were approaching, Turkey was breathing an air of 'civil war', so to speak. A few murders were committed almost every day.

The attacks reached out to Ecevit. Ecevit was attacked during his election rallies in Niksar and Şiran on April 26 and 27, 1977.

157 citizens lost their lives in political conflicts in the first five months of 1977, when the domestic political tension was constantly escalating.

Socialist movements

The existence of socialist states in the world and their fragmentation were reflected in the socialist movements in Turkey as well. The half-projections of the liberation movements in the Soviet Union, China, Albania and Latin America were organized in Turkey, too.

The conflicts within the left were irreconcilable due to political differences. The fractions within the left reached such an extent that they could lay the ground for conflicts and provocations. These fractions were not only within the youth, but within labor unions, democratic mass organizations and universities as well; they were in all aspects of life.

It was now impossible for some groups to hold a protest demonstration or a rally together. However, organizations with high numbers of members such as the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) and the Unity and Solidarity Association of All Teachers (TÖB-DER) contained these groups within themselves. For this reason, May 1 organized by the DİSK was an organization that all political groups wanted to participate in.

In that period, pro-Soviet groups, which were powerful in labor unions, especially organizations such as the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) and Socialist Workers' Party (TSİP) of Turkey announced that they would not let the groups that they defined as "Maoist Grey Wolves" enter the May 1 site.

Unionization

In 1976, the number of workers in Turkey, with a population of 41 million, was 2 million 17 thousand 875 and the number of unionized workers was 924 thousand 124. In 1976, 190 thousand workers were unionized in 25 unions affiliated with the DİSK.

In the period of 1967-1970, the DİSK was mostly organized in private sector businesses in the Marmara Region. According to the union records, the number of DİSK members reached 500 thousand in 1980, when the total number of workers was 2 million 204 thousand 807 and the number of unionized workers was 1 million 49 thousand 330.

We can say that the rapid increase in the number of DİSK members, its active involvement in the struggle for rights and its political attitudes in the struggle for democracy ruled out political power holders and employer organizations. In the 1977 elections, the DİSK declared its decision to support the CHP.

Attempted assassinations of Ecevit

* When Stavros Psihopedrisdes from Southern Cyprus pointed his gun at Ecevit from New York Waldorf Astoria Hotel in July 1976, security guard Bernard assigned by the FBI jumped on him; Ecevit was taken away from the scene of the incident in the meanwhile.

* The attempted assassination of Bülent Ecevit at İzmir Çiğli Airport in May 1977



was the darkest of all. On May 29, 1977, when Ecevit was about to get in the electoral campaign bus while preparing for an election rally in İzmir, a person approached him and opened fire. The bullet hit and wounded Mehmet İsvan at the back. As it "turned out" after the incident, the person who opened fire was a police officer on duty at the police station. The police claimed responsibility and in the trial that ended in 1980, he was sentenced to three months in prison and a judicial fine of 500 liras over the incident that was attributed to "carelessness."

It was detected that the weapon used in the attempted assassination was a US-made Tengas brand gun; there were three of them in Turkey and they belonged to the Special Warfare Department. The company that produced the gun followed the course of the wound in Mehmet İsvan's leg for over 10 years and had him treated in Switzerland.

Coup allegation in the MIT report

Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel retired General Kemal Ersun, the Commander of

Land Forces, from office on June 1, 1977, a month after May 1, 1977 and four days before the general elections. Considering that the Military Council, where promotions and retirements were concluded, would convene in August, this dismissal from office was extraordinary.

The National Intelligence Organization (MIT) was allegedly giving reports to Prime Minister Demirel, indicating that General Ersun was seeking an MHP-supported coup.

For this very reason, Demirel, due to the intelligence that he received, sent a note to Ecevit ahead of his grand rally in İstanbul on June 3, saying, "Shots will be fired at you with long-barreled guns from Sheraton Hotel during your rally on June 3."

In response to this letter, Ecevit said, "I will be in Taksim tomorrow." In his propaganda speech aired on radio for the elections on June 5, 1977, he shared the "information" that he had been given intelligence about an assassination attempt against him, asking everyone to not come to the rally for this reason. He announced that he would be in Taksim on his own.

Ecevit was at Taksim Square on June 3, 1977; he was not alone, the square was full of people.

Ecevit held the rally while General Ersun, together with the military personnel involved in the allegations, were retired in an ex officio manner. As the line broke up, General Kenan Evren, even though he was third in the line for command, was appointed as the commander of land forces. Afterwards, it was commented that with this appointment, the first steps were taken to form the command echelon of the September 12, 1980 military coup.

May 1 statements

Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel:

"Kemal Türkler did not finalize the rally in any way, he prolonged it. These incidents brought about by Kemal Türkler, by this villain are a continuation of June 15 incidents. It was done by Maoist groups... CHP mayor Ahmet İsvan was also at the DiSK's rally. There were also people from the TIP. If they do not see communism as a danger, incidents come to that point." (May 1, 1977, before the Ministerial Cabinet Meeting)

Joint statement by İstanbul Governor Namık Kemal Şentürk and İstanbul Security Director Nihat Kaner:

"The rally organized by the DiSK continued in a normal manner. However, shortly before the people dispersed, some groups infiltrated the Taksim site. It has been detected by witnesses and with various documents that this group that infiltrated the site started the conflict.

This conflict, which could have ended more terribly, was prevented as security forces confronted it sacrificially. In fact, a plunder, a pillage was quelled with the measures taken instantaneously." (In the evening of May 1, 1977)

CHP Chair Bülent Ecevit:

"I am of the opinion that some groups that are within the state, or at least benefiting from the state power, but falling outside the control field of the democratic state of law, are the main factor behind these incidents and both flanks of the government want to benefit from these organizations, instead of taking the necessary measures." (May 7, 1977, Speech at CHP İzmir Rally)

Bülent Ecevit's letter to President Fahri Korutürk:

"...Some of these actions are of such quality that they could be organized only by a powerful organization, not by the kids in sight. Especially the Taksim incident of May 1, 1977 gives this impression.

"The aim of this organized act was to create intimidation, fear and panic among the people, among over 100 thousand people watching the rally... The panzers, stationed inside and outside the site, started to sound sirens, moved from one side of the site to the other among people, threw stun grenades, sprayed water on people who took refuge somewhere and opened fire, which emerged as another factor that led the mass of 100 thousand people who lost their normal sense of judgement and cool to a large extent and were fearing for their lives to get panicked faster." (Letter dated May 7)

Opinions of six deputy prosecuting attorneys who prepared the Indictment of the May 1, 1977 Trial:

“The state gave permission to the DİSK for the May 1 rally. If a state gives permission for a rally, it is obligated to ensure that the rally in question is held in security. Here, the state is guilty due to its failure to provide security. They know that incidents might erupt, incidents erupt and they cannot catch a single gun that went off. The ones who were on duty at the time must be asked: You knew that incidents might erupt; how come did you not bring a single serious defendant before the judge even though the incidents that you had guessed erupted? It is a wonder that I am the only public officer defendant of this incident.”

Statement by İstanbul Mayor Ahmet İsvan:

“In that period, they were not doing anything else other than criticizing one another. I do not consider a left provocation possible. It is not something considered that they caused such an incident at the rally of the DİSK. They were breaking off, new fractions were coming up; but I do not deem it likely, considering their relationship with the DİSK. As a branch, we were of course watching them... A provocation caused by security officers is not possible. If one had done it, the other would have filed a complaint; if the other had done it, the first one would have complained. In fact, the unpleasant situation caused by the Police Association (Pol-Der) - Police Union (Pol-Bir) dispute, at least in the May 1 incident, is something that lifts the curtain of mystery on the police.” (From the interview given to Emel

Armutçu for Yeni Gündem, issue: 8, 1986.)

Directorate General of Security Subversive Activities Branch Director Fevzi Karaman:

“When we look at the ones who survived the disaster with injuries, we are faced with a more different situation. As long as we could detect, there are 34 people injured by firearms, most of them in fatal parts of their bodies such as the head and chest. The reason why these injuries did not end in death was that several hospitals, primarily Beyoğlu İlk Yardım Hospital, were in close proximity to the Taksim site and the injured people taken to these hospitals underwent medical intervention very quickly. If it had not been the case, the number of people who would have lost their lives due to firearm injuries would be certainly higher.”

(Directorate General of Security Subversive Activities Branch Director Fevzi Karaman, from his interview to Tanil Bora for YeniGündem, issue: 8, 1986)

Allegations of laying the ground for coup

The allegations that the Massacre of May 1, 1977 was organized to lay the ground for the coup.

Considering the army's tutelage over the governments in Turkey's political history, the resolutions of the National Security Council (NSC) and their interference in the elected governments in previous periods, the increase in the incidents that would legitimize a coup started to signal that there were preparations for a new coup.

The massacre of May 1, 1977 was the leading incident in that regard. The fact that the army was seen above politics by society and politicians were worn out multiplied the reasons for the army's seizure of power, which led several issues to be discussed in relation to the September 12 coup in its aftermath. The unsolved incidents and murders gave weight to these thoughts.

May 1 in the September 12 Trial

As a matter of fact, the massacre of May 1, 1977 was one of the subject matters in the court case where the putschists of September 12, 1980 were put on trial.

The first hearing of the case filed against Kenan Evren, the then Chief of General Staff and the 7th President of Turkey, and retired General Tahsin Şahinkaya, the then Chief of Air Staff, over the coup of September 12, 1980 was held at the Ankara 12th High Criminal Court on April 4, 2012.

The information about May 1, 1977 requested by the court was added to the file (documents dated January 19, 2012 and file no. 201/3), the minutes taken down by the police on that day were also among the documents sent to court by the Security Directorate. In the file sent by the Directorate General of Security, there were also the intelligence reports about the period before May 1 and the results of the investigation carried out after May 1.

When the background and aftermath of

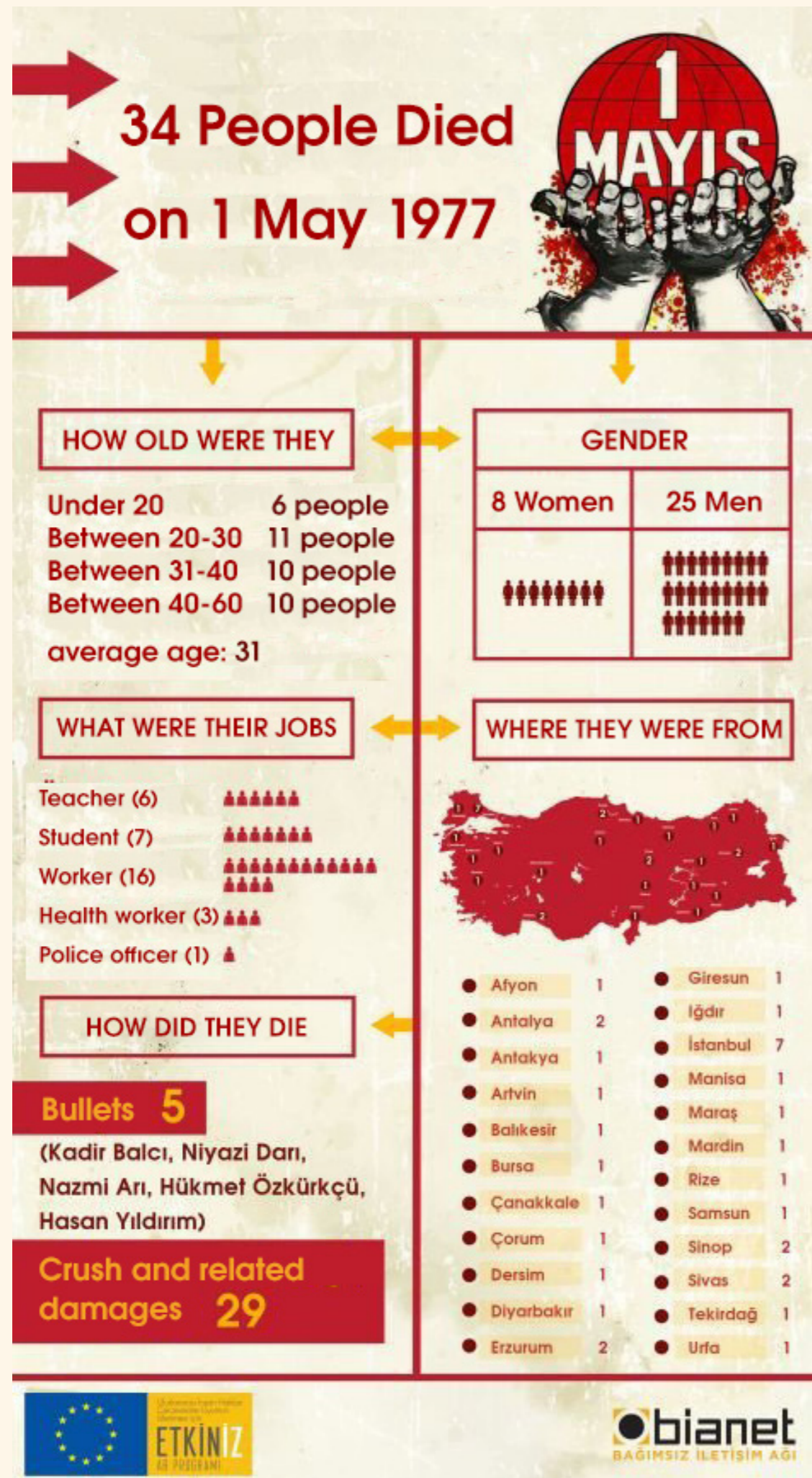
May 1, 1977 is considered in the information and documents added to the file of September 12, 1980 case, it is clearly seen that though it was detected that incidents would occur on May 1, the state did not take the necessary measures.

The Security Directorate reported the information in such a way that it gave weight to the idea that the massacre took place as a result of the conflicts that erupted among left groups. It needs to be separately noted that the September 12, 1980 case, which was not a real trial as it was written all over it, was filed years after the coup and putschists could not live long enough to see its results.

'Special Warfare Department' statement by Ecevit

“During my term in office as the Prime Minister in 1974, late General Semih Sancar, the then Chief of General Staff, wanted several millions from the Prime Ministry's discretionary fund for an urgent need. The amount requested from me was nearly the entire money in the discretionary fund...”

“I had to ask the General Staff for what purpose this money was requested. The reply was 'We want it for the Special Warfare Department.' I had not even heard the name of such an official department till then... I asked, 'How were the expenses of this department met till now?' I was informed that the USA met all the expenses of the department with a secret fund until then; however, the USA cut this financial



contribution and they had to request money from the discretionary fund of the Prime Ministry...

"I asked about the location of the Special Warfare Department. The answer I received was 'It is in the same building as the American Military Assistance Board'... I guess it was natural for me to get surprised and concerned... I requested information about the functions and structure of this department... A briefing was arranged for me. It was attended by late Chief of General Staff Semih Sancar and General Kemal Yamak, whom I then learned was the head of the Special Warfare Department, as well as a couple of other military officers to give information.

Trustworthy 'patriots'

"Ecevit, during his time in office as the Prime Minister in 1978-1979, learned in a trip to the east that a commander was working at the 'Special Warfare Department', got suspicious about the situation and wanted to get information. The following dialogue ensued between the two: 'So, let's say... Could the MHP Chair in this district also be an undercover element in the civilian extension of the Special Warfare Department?'

'Yes, he is, but he is a very trustworthy, patriotic friend of ours.'" (November 28, 1990, Milliyet newspaper, Evrensel newspaper)

A year with 3 governments

Bülent Ecevit's CHP won 213 seats at the

Parliament by receiving 41 percent of the votes. President Fahri Korutürk assigned him with forming the government.

Ecevit formed the minority government on June 21. Unfortunately, this government could survive only for a full month. As it could not get a vote of confidence from the Parliament, it fell on July 21, 1977.

On the same day, Süleyman Demirel, as the Prime Minister, formed the 41st government by a coalition of the National Salvation Party and Nationalist Movement Party. The name of the government was now the 2nd Nationalist Front government. Therefore, the 39th government should be called the 1st Nationalist Front government.

That being the case, 1977 became one of the unique years with three governments.

Figures from May 1, 1977

With a population of 4 million, İstanbul's Governor was Namık Kemal Şentürk, its Mayor was Ahmet İsvan and Security Director was Nihat Kaner.

As for the 39th government or the 1st Nationalist Party coalition government, as it is widely known, it was headed by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, its Deputy Prime Ministers were MHP Chair Alparslan Türkeş, MSP Chair Necmettin Erbakan and Republican Trust Party Chair Turan Feyzioğlu.

While Sebahattin Özbek (DYP) was the

Interior Minister, Zeyyat Baykara (Independent) was the Justice Minister.

The Chief of General Staff was General Semih Sancar, the Commander of Land Forces was General Namık Kemal Ersun, the Commander of Air Forces was General Ethem Ayan, the Commander of Naval Forces was Admiral Bülend Ulusu and the Gendarmerie Commander was General Sedat Celasun.

Today

The Massacre of May 1, 1977 has come down in records as the bloodiest massacre in Turkey's political history. It became one of the important grounds for the 1980 coup that happened three years later. There has never been a desire

to solve the mystery behind the incidents and it cannot be solved.

The real reason why the massacre of May 1, 1977 has remained as the 'deepest' scheme in our memory is Turkey's political panorama. In the incidents that left their marks on Turkey's near and distance history, the state's situation is always suspicious.

The state "secret" considered legitimate by the state to survive and its deep relations have been widely written about, told and discussed. As long as there is no democratic transformation in our country, this debate or the massacres and incidents that have been going on since the schemes and incidents before the massacre of May 1, 1977 will never end.

Sami Evren —

Alumni of Konya Selçuk Institution of Education Department of Sciences. Member of All Teachers Unification and Solidarity Association (TÖB-DER). In the 1990s, he actively participated in organizing Revolutionary Teachers. He is a founder of Eğit-Sen union, which has an important role in public employees' union struggle. The book The History of Education Laborers (From Encümen-i Muallimin to Eğitim-Sen), which he prepared with Siyami Erdem and Cafer Yıldırım, was published in 1995. He acted as the chairperson of the Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK) in its 2nd and 4th terms. In 2010, he demanded the organizational law be enforced in line with the statements of a woman working at KESK who alleged that she was harassed. After the board of directors rejected the demand, he resigned as the chair of KESK. He founded the Özgürlükçü Sol news website. The site was closed upon a court order. He writes for Demokrat Haber and bianet.

FIRST PART

The Voices of Those Who Lost Their Loved Ones



**Film industry worker
Rasim Elmas, 41, died in Taksim**

Birsen Kement was 17 years old when she lost her father, Rasim Elmas. When she was told at Police Headquarters, “You’ll find your father in the morgue,” she only heard part of it. She says that when she opened her eyes on Monday, 2 May, she had “doubled in age overnight.”

One of those whose lives was taken on Kazancı Slope on 1 May 1977, a date that has gone down in modern Turkish history as “Bloody First of May.”

Rasim Elmas was 41 years old when he lost his life. Known for his generosity and for always helping those in need, he was often called by the nickname “Dayı” [meaning “Uncle”]. According to the autopsy report, the cause of death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of rib fractures and compression of the chest, along with cerebral oedema.

Birsen Kement was only 17 years old when she lost her father, Rasim Elmas. When she was told at Police Headquarters, “You’ll find your father in the morgue,” she didn’t even hear the word “morgue.” She was excited that she would be able to find her father. But, she says, when she opened her eyes on Monday, 2 May, she had “doubled in age overnight.”

Birsen Kement talks about 1 May 1977, which she recalls moment for moment, telling us about her father, Rasim Elmas,

and how her life changed after his death:

My dad worked in cinema. He was a film industry worker.

He went to check in on the film company that day, to see if there were any problems with the machines. Before that, he’d warned me, with a kind of parental instinct, not to go to the First of May rally that weekend. That Sunday, both of us were at home and it was almost like we kept checking each other, watching to see who would leave first to go to the square. Around 3-3.30pm my mum and I left, to go visit my uncle’s family; but of course, that was just part of my plan. I wanted to be able to leave the house so I could then go to the square. My dad left home after we did.

That Sunday, I left without giving him a kiss goodbye. Because I was thinking, better not be too affectionate and give him the chance to hold me back. That has always weighed on me.

My dad’s friends saw him after he left around 3-3.30pm. In fact, he ran into a director friend of his who said to him, “Why are you going there, it’s so crowded.” My dad never liked crowds. Even when he walked along the street, he always walked in the middle of the road, saying, “You never know, a couple could get in a fight and break the windows and something could fall on my head.” He was that careful.

But he still went. Both of us were at the square that day; but I ended up arriving later than my dad did. By the time I got there, all hell had already broken loose,

I was only able to get as far as this spot where everyone was making their way to Harbiye. I couldn't get to the actual square. But then I guess all this happened around 7.30pm. My dad was there and in fact, he'd spent about two hours at a clubhouse run by a relative of ours before he even went to the square. It was while he was on Kazancı Slope making his way home that it happened.

I know what happened from the people who were there, from our friends who survived. It's said that shots were fired from the Water Administration Building and also from the Intercontinental Hotel that were both located there on the First of May Square. That led to chaos and pandemonium. And it was around 7.30-8pm, during the speech by Kemal Türkler, president of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey [DİSK], that the real explosion happened.

We finally made it home but my dad didn't show up of course. My brother and I had a journal and we were writing some stuff in it. I was so sad and upset about what had happened that day, and as I kept wondering what all had happened, who all had died, I wrote down these lines by Nâzım Hikmet in the daybook: "If you don't burn, and I don't burn, how ever shall the darkness emerge into light." Of course, at the time I didn't yet know that our own family was amongst those who were burned.

My dad didn't come home that night, or the next morning either.

Sometimes he didn't come home because of work, because the film company

would call him in or he'd have to go somewhere, for example. But when it got late and he still hadn't showed up, we all began to sense something was wrong.

My brother and I made a decision; he himself was still just 16 years old, he hadn't yet done his military service. We decided to split up—I said that my mum and I would go check at the police headquarters, and he should go to the hospitals. So that's how we did it. First we went to Gayrettepe, Mecidiyeköy. That's where the Second [Police] Precinct was. It was absolute chaos there. Then they told me, "You might find your father in the morgue, or try the First Precinct."

So the words "First Precinct" and "morgue" kept going round and round in my head, but really, at that moment, I was just excited at the prospect of finding my dad. I mean, I was happy we were going to find him.

What my mum and I saw when we reached Taksim Square though was just horrifying. The pavement was wet, it was slick with blood and water. There were socks and undershirts strewn on the ground, and clubs of various lengths with nails sticking out of them... It was as if war had broken out and this was one of the battlegrounds.

Then we went to the First Precinct. We passed through these round, wooden places. I gave my statement to the police of course, and they asked me questions... There was this fair-haired officer, I'll never forget him. "You'll find him at the morgue," he said, and I was elated. Of course I thought I'd find my father alive.

The friend who had taken me [to the precinct] brought me back home, where I found my brother. It was like he'd gone mad. "I found dad. Dad's dead," he said. I don't remember what state I was in after I heard the words "found" and "dead."

My brother had found our father at the morgue, they'd put him in one of the drawers at the morgue.

They made us pay for his body. We had to pay to get his body out of the morgue. We took him to the Ortaköy Mosque and from there to the Aşyan Cemetery where our family burial ground is.

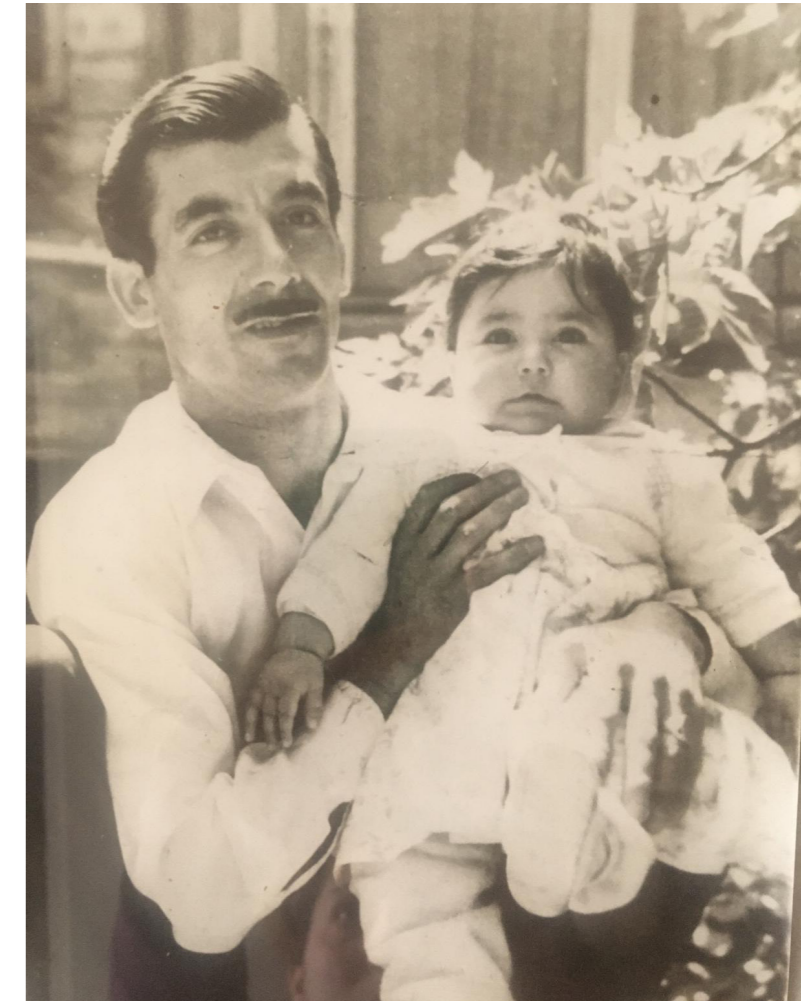
At my age now, the things I experienced back then no longer seem that horrible to me—because we experienced such dreadful things after 1 May 1977 as well. Torture, suspicious deaths that were never investigated, murders; explosions, all of the things that the youth and their families went through back then... When I compare my father dying at the age of 41 to all of that, what I went through then no longer seems so horrible to me.

There are people who've been tortured, who've been in prison for 20 years or more. What I suffered is next to nothing really, compared to what so many of our friends and comrades have been through. But for years I felt this pain in my back—because that's how they killed my father, by trampling on him and crushing his back.

Though I don't know the exact circumstances under which he fell, I could never shake the image of that crowd, the smoke, and my father's back being crushed.

On the other hand, we were also told that there was a knife wound on his arm. We weren't allowed to see the autopsy report at the time.

Back then there was an organisation for film industry workers called Film-San. And I think, though I'm not certain, that they were prejudiced about my dad being at the First of May demonstration, because back then, Film-San leaned



more to the right. After my dad died, they didn't offer us support of any kind; in fact, they didn't even come to pay their condolences.

After my dad died, I doubled in age overnight. In a manner of speaking, I was the one who became my mum's husband, so to speak. I had to look after everything.

“He even ironed his money “

My dad was a modern, enlightened man. No one talked much about politics at home, but when we reached 12 or 13 years old, my brother and I began to understand and discuss the world, and, for example, to read the classics. My dad left us to our own devices for the most part. But when he died, I had a kind of epiphany. I asked myself all kinds of questions: Why did your dad die? Who killed him? What is celebrated on this holiday anyway? Why did it turn so bloody?

My dad was a humanist.

The two of us had a very different kind of relationship. I still live in the house my dad left us, I've been here some 50 years. As a little girl, I was in love with my father. We'd write poetry together. We'd take trips on the weekends, we'd even go out for a beer together now and then. He loved to travel, he was always going somewhere. He was a very stylish man. He even ironed his money. And his circle of friends was a rather colourful bunch too. Sometimes I think to myself, he lived life so fully while he was alive, because his life was bound to be cut short.

He was always helping those who'd suffered some misfortune. His nickname was “Dayı” [Uncle]. Not because he was the tough, masculine uncle type, but because he was so generous, always helping those in need. I'm not saying this just because he's my dad, everybody knew my dad to be like that. I can't say he was like this or like that politically, that

he was “this kind of right-winger” or “that kind of leftist”. Because he wasn't.

He was a slim man, and a very elegant man, delicate and graceful. He grew up without a mother, so maybe that's why he was so emotional. He always told me, “You're my mother too, you're everything to me.” I remember during the Cyprus Conflict of 1974, he cried so much. He'd cry so much for the orphaned children. My mum and dad weren't really alike at all. For both of them it was their second marriage. I mean, as I understand it, neither of them was able to find what they were looking for.

My dad was doing contract work at the time. And he had about 900 days' worth of insurance. We didn't get anything from any kind of insurance though, like a survivor's pension, life insurance, worker's compensation insurance, none of it. My mum was an illiterate woman from Anatolia. The only thing we had was this home we're sitting in right now. We had no income. And since my dad was the only one in the family who worked, we didn't have any kind of security. So of course it was a very difficult time for us. There were days our mother made us soup from flour. So, I mean, it's true what they say: “The ember burns wherever it falls”—that's what happened to us.

So even though my dad wanted nothing more than for me to get a good education, after his death, I had to quit school and start working. Think about what life was like 40 years ago. Think about the state of consciousness back then, what it meant to survive. First I got



a job at a laboratory, then at a publishing house, at Gelişim Publications. Since I started working at 18, I retired at 38. I worked during all that time and after too.

1 May 1977 filled me with such anxiety about the future, that I always lived with this feeling that something bad could happen to us at any moment, and that we mustn't depend on others.

Although physically my life may not have changed that much, intellectually and psychologically, it changed a lot. Besides dealing with the emotions of a girl who's lost her father, I had to bear the weight of knowing what it means to be a labourer on Labour Day. And after that day, I too became a true labourer.

For me, it wasn't so much Sunday but Monday that was important. Tuesday was very important. Every day after that was so important. After my dad died, the windows through which I viewed life

became much more meaningful. I tried to look with a more precise eye, with a better outlook. Sometimes I wonder if I'd still be the kind of person I am, if my dad hadn't died the way he did. That has something to do with the stuff a person is made of too, of course, but for me the connection with my father is so precious. I thank him for raising me the way he did.

My dad didn't deserve to die that way. Nobody deserves to die that way. Only people who've lost their fathers at a young age, who have endured poverty, and survived such a blow, can understand me. They'll understand what remains unspoken.

“They thought even a memorial was too much to ask”

On 1 May 1977, 34 people died, 8 of them women. As far as I know, most of those

families have left Turkey. There are just a few of us families left, that you can meet with, that you can see in person. I'm also on the executive committee of the 78'ers Foundation. We did our best to see that the judicial system address all these crimes. It's clear of course who the perpetrators are. This massacre was organised by powers that include counterinsurgency forces. Turkey has a very powerful intelligence organisation. Do they really not know who did this? How can they not? For us, it doesn't matter if they reveal the perpetrators to be Ahmet so-and-so or Mehmet such-and-such. We know who did this. But we don't know in whose name they did it, the source of this brutality. We don't understand.

One dimension of the reason my dad was there that day is fate, but then there are also the dimensions of mind and logic, of consciousness, of course. But no matter how we look at it, it was inevitable that we experience something like this. 1 May 1977 contributed so much to the lives of me and my family, but it caused us tremendous loss as well.

What happened on 1 May 1977, was a harbinger of what would happen later in Turkey, sociologically and psychologically. That's how I see it. Later, it would be compounded by the massacres in Sivas, Maraş, Ankara, and everything that happened in the South East. In this respect, 1 May 1977 was a turning point.

And I don't think they misunderstood us, because they didn't misunderstand my dad, they understood him perfectly well. They didn't want us, they didn't like us,

precisely because they understood us. They did away with the fruit of a tree by tearing off its branches one by one. Unfortunately, we are facing mighty imperialist forces, but we are here, and we continue to exist. So long as the world turns, this conflict will continue, but our struggle will continue too.

Everyone was there to laugh that day. They were on the First of May Square to celebrate the holiday. That day was a holiday. There was a huge crowd. Whoever pushed the button, it resulted in that holiday turning to bloodshed.

We consider the First of May a day of commemoration. If it were a holiday, then all people, regardless of religion, language, or race, would have been compensated for the sweat of their brows. We just wanted it to be a holiday. We just wanted peace.

We've asked many times for something to be done. We asked that we be able to commemorate our dead on Kazancı Slope. At the very least we wanted a memorial to be erected there, with the names of our dead. Many of our friends appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, I myself didn't; but I don't think there is a statute of limitations for crimes against humanity. I'm a person who loves her country, I would take no pleasure in taking my country to the Court of Human Rights. But sadly, no one did anything for us, they did nothing to take care of us. The state should have looked after us. Instead, we looked after ourselves.

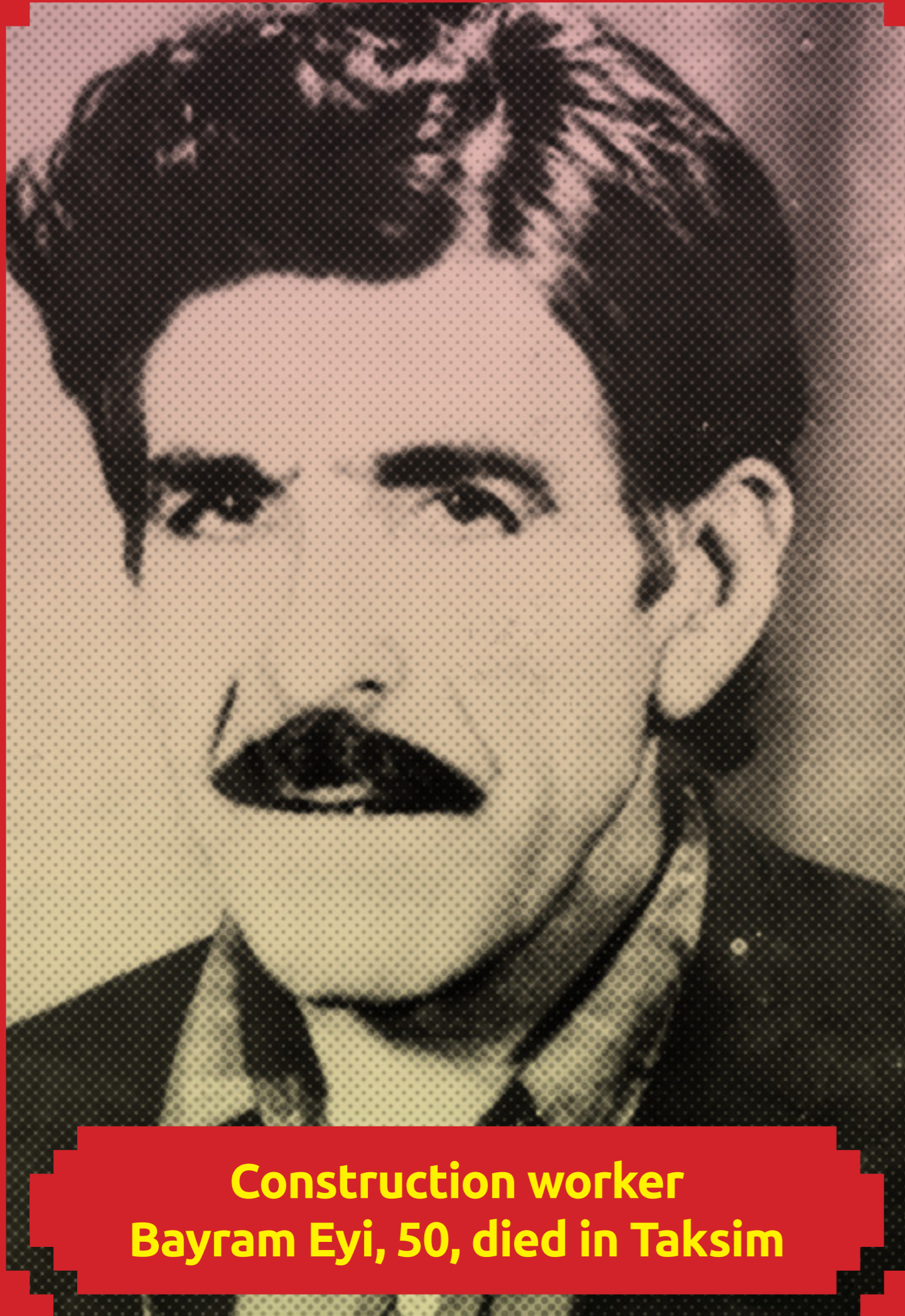
We just wanted for Taksim Square to be

renamed the First of May Square, and for there to be a memorial erected there with the names of our dead on it. But they thought even that was too much to ask.

Up to now we've been told not to go there, and now we're dealing with the pandemic. We've always been told to go to Bakırköy, or to Kadıköy. But a commemoration doesn't really mean much to me if it's not held in Taksim. Have I gone to the marches?

Of course I have. But if you ask me, the call to come to the other squares is for the workers, while Taksim is for a "commemoration."

I'm going to go to Taksim this year too. The various organisations are going beforehand for the commemoration. I am someone whose father was killed, was murdered there. I'm going there not to celebrate but to commemorate my father, and I do not think I will be stopped.



**Construction worker
Bayram Eyı, 50, died in Taksim**

“After losing my father, I never missed a First of May rally. This state owes me, because it was the state that murdered my father,” says Zeki Eyı, who lost his father at the age of 17.

Construction worker Bayram Eyı was in Taksim Square on 1 May 1977. He died when a volley of gunfire was opened on the crowd. He was 50 years old at the time. He had come to Istanbul from the village of Soğuk, now known as Özler, in Erzurum-Aşkale, in the 1950s, marrying Resmigül towards the end of the decade.

Zeki Eyı, unbeknownst to his father, was also at Taksim Square on 1 May 1977. He was sharing in the elation of 1 May together with people he referred to as his “abiler ve ablalar”—his “big brothers and big sisters.” He was 17 years old when his father died.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of death was mechanical asphyxia caused by compression of the chest and abdomen.

43 years have passed since 1 May 1977. Although there are plenty of videos about “The Bloody First of May” circulating even on social media, we have known little to nothing about the individuals who lost their lives that day. Zeki Eyı and

his wife Naciye Eyı, together with their daughters Ayçe İdil and Ayçe Gülen, all welcomed us into their home to tell us this story.

Zeki Eyı told us about his father, about the First of May demonstrations of 1977, which he and his father both went to, unbeknownst to one another, and about the challenges and difficulties his father faced as a labourer.

Actually, it’s difficult for me to talk about my father even now, I mean, it’s hard. I get emotional.

A father leaves home one morning, but doesn’t return that evening. That’s a really hard situation for a child to deal with.

I was in high school when I lost my father. I happened to go to Taksim that First of May too, but I kept it from my father. I didn’t tell him of course because I thought if he knew, he wouldn’t let me go. I mean, I knew there would be revolutionaries there, but what I saw that day was such a huge crowd of revolutionaries from all these different fractions. All of them were like big brothers and big sisters to me.

My dad didn’t possess much in the way of theoretical knowledge, but he always spoke of his respect for revolutionaries. He talked about Deniz Gezmiş a lot, for example. My dad loved revolutionaries, he was proud of them.

One of the most important things I inherited from my dad was a respect for revolutionaries. So for example, I now view all of the revolutionaries of our generation, regardless of what fraction

they belonged to, as my father's children. And the new generation, for me, are like my father's grandchildren.

I'm still not sure just how he ended up joining the First of May rally that day, but thinking about it over the years, this is what I figure must have happened: My dad had most certainly become acquainted with some revolutionaries. Maybe he got a pamphlet from them, or a newspaper, or maybe a magazine. So there must have been some people there that day that he knew. Of course, at the same time, he was an Alevi and a worker; that alone was sufficient reason for him to take part in the rally.

He must have got ready the night before, but he never mentioned to us that he was going to Taksim, so as not to encourage us, I think. After all, families behave protectively toward their children.

My dad was a supporter of the People's Republican Party [CHP]. Earlier we'd gone to Ecevit's demonstrations and the like, but, politically, 1 May 1977 was the most important demonstration my dad ever went to, I mean, as far as I know. And it was the first demonstration I ever attended.

If I'd told my dad at the time that I wanted to go to the First of May rally, he wouldn't have told me not to, but I didn't say anything, because I thought he'd try to stop me. And so I didn't tell him about it the evening before either. As a result, both of us actually ended up sleeping that night, I imagine, full of excitement about the demonstration the following day.

My dad was a construction worker. He was a wiper. They called them wipers, they wiped the tiles clean. He had his own machine. He didn't belong to any union, he worked on his own, with his own machine. Whenever there was a job, he'd take it. Most of the time though, he never got paid.

He called the rich "bigwigs." My dad talked with us a lot, shared his woes. In his words, he worked with bigwigs. He had a notebook where he wrote down the wages he was due that he never received. Or rather, a notebook where I wrote them down for him, since he didn't know how to read or write himself. Someone told me they'd seen my father, that the contractors hadn't paid him again. My dad had a small fruit knife that he used to peel fruit for us. He'd brandished that knife, but just then a friend of his showed up. I'll never forget that. Whenever someone isn't given what they deserve, I think of my father doing that, of those contractors who didn't give my dad his due.

My dad had no tolerance for injustice. I have this one particular memory of him, for example. They'd come to destroy our shanty at one point, right while he was building it. My dad was sentenced to three months for resisting them, and he spent two months in prison.

The reason for it was that they wanted him to pay a bribe, to keep them from tearing the house down, but my dad refused. Besides, he didn't have the money to give them anyway. Back then there was what was called the "Social Police," an earlier version of today's riot

police. He got sentenced for resisting them. I was nine years old. A relative of ours went to pick my dad up. He brought a package of raisins and roasted chickpeas that night. I was asleep when he arrived. When I woke up, I was so happy to see him. And ever since, whenever I eat raisins and roasted chickpeas, I think of him.

In my second year of middle school I got lung fever, came down with pneumonia I mean. My dad came and got me from school to take me to the tuberculosis dispensary. At that age, you don't want your parents showing up at school of course, but there he was, my father, and moreover he was crying because I was sick. And so there I was trying to calm him, saying, "Don't cry, dad." We went to the tuberculosis dispensary. There were two elderly doctors there.

When we went in for my exam, they lifted up my shirt. My brother had drawn the sign of Zagor on my chest in watercolour, because I was sick. When the doctor lifted up my shirt he laughed and asked me, "What's this now, son?" I remember that they treated us really well. They were progressive, revolutionary doctors, I think. Or we just thought at the time that anyone who treated us well must be a revolutionary. Once we were back out in the hallway, they told my dad that I'd recovered. One of the doctors placed his hand on my dad's shoulder and told him, "Don't worry yourself anymore now, you anxious daddy."

Back then we didn't have a TV, we only had a radio. What I remember of that period is what my dad listened to on the

radio, and things I observed in daily life. All the while, I was actually observing my father, I've finally come to realize that.



He'd go to the market, for example, and he'd immediately be pulling something out of a bag to give to the kids there. Once I did the same thing, imitating him, I gave a piece of candy, or something, to a kid, I don't recall exactly. My dad jumped in and told me, "If you're going to give a child something, you can't give them just one, you have to give them all of it." Human values were incredibly

important to him. And he had this spirit of resistance that he got from being an Alevi.

After our house was torn down, they gave my father another punishment. This time he was given a fine of 500 lira.

The police were always coming by our place, being rude to us, saying things like, "Where's your father? Just tell him to go give his deposition already," or "Tell your father to get down to the station and give his deposition and be done with it." When I told my dad about it, he set off for the station of course. They threw him straight into jail, because of the fine. Our relatives put the money together and got him released. Once again, I was asleep when he got home, and he woke me up, he was smiling and he said to me: "Look at what happened now, son—you sent me to the station and they locked me up." I'll never forget the smile on his face. Anyone else would've been angry.

As for the kind of father he was, well, he was a great father. You know that saying, "A true father beats you and he loves you too." Well, my dad never treated us like that.

But once there was this thing that happened. I was in the first grade, and one day I told him, "I'm not going to school." He pleaded with me for an hour, telling me, "Go to school son, please. What else are you going to do if not go to school?" But by the end of that hour, he'd run out of patience, and rightfully so. There were these small shovels next to the furnace, he took one of them and gave me a good beating, making sure not

to hit me where he could break something though. Then he set me down on his lap and said, "Let's see you not go to school now." That beating did me some real good. I also slept really well after.

Sometimes when we played at home, a window would get broken. And a broken window for a labourer, with the money he makes, is a big deal. If someone had broken a window, they'd go to bed early that day. The idea was that our dad would have his first reaction while we were asleep, and so he wouldn't reprimand us. And then the next day, everybody would continue on with their lives as normal.

My dad was a great friend, a true friend. But we were afraid of him too, of course. We're a family of five siblings, four boys, and one girl. Our mother Resmigül passed away in 2004.

After my father died, I enrolled in night school. I was working during the day and going to school at night. One of my biggest regrets has always been that my dad never got to see me earn money, and that I never got to buy him clothes, nice stuff to wear. If only I'd had the chance to look after him.

When martial law was relaxed back in 1985-86, I put a commemorative notice in the paper for my father. I thought, when I had the notice published, that other families would see it and that together, we'd be stronger, but nothing really came of it. After that I continued putting regular commemorative notices in the paper. In Evrensel, in Cumhuriyet...

Then just recently, the press started to take a strange interest in 1 May 1977. Even some members of the mainstream media reached out to us, because the trial had turned into a circus of sorts. I was interviewed by a newspaper or two at the time; if you ask me though, they weren't doing it with good intentions. So of course their interest waned after a while.

I went to the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey [DİSK] about the trial once; but as far as I know, no countersuit was filed. At one point I tried to get together with the other families. I went to the Human Rights Association, which was in Aksaray at the time, and I told them I wanted to meet other "First of May Families" if possible.

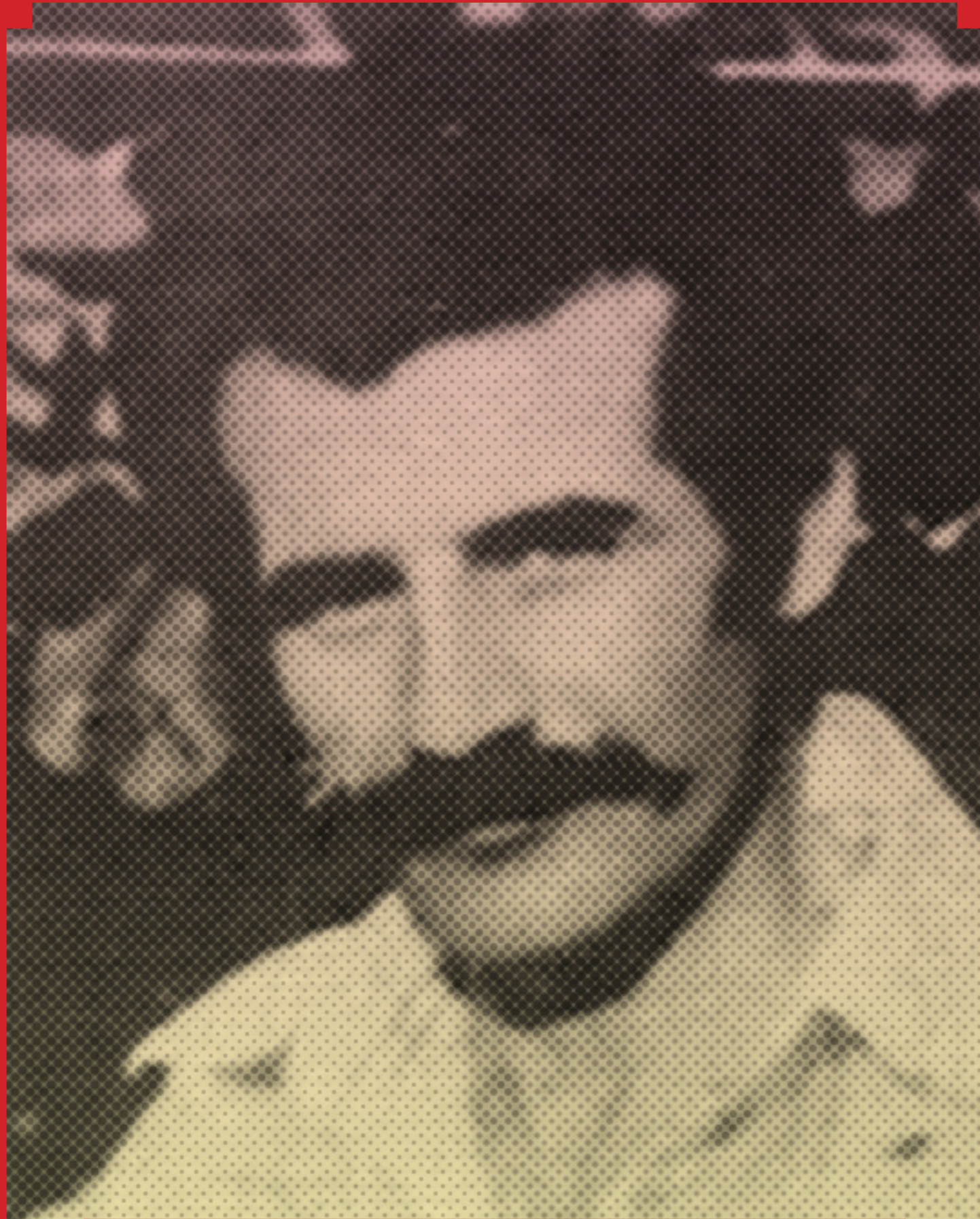
I just wish the people responsible would be put on trial so that the whole world would hear and learn about what happened there that day.

Taksim was packed full of people that day

and it was like everyone knew each other. Everyone was so happy. Normally you would never see Yıldız Slope so crowded. But that day, a massacre happened.

There in Taksim, where normally the police would come rushing if someone so much as raised their voice, on that day, volleys of gunfire were shot at labourers. It's said that there were 500 thousand labourers that day in Taksim. The population at the time must have been 5-6 million. So what a huge proportion of the total that was, just think about it. The bourgeoisie were afraid of these people. After I lost my father, I never missed a First of May rally. I always thought that if I didn't go, it would mean one less person, and I went to every First of May rally, for my father, and for all the labourers who were massacred. But my real motivation during all of this has been the knowledge that I am owed something.

I always thought, "The state owes me." This state owes me, first and foremost, because the state murdered my father.



Teacher Bayram Çitak 37, died in Taksim

We heard the story of teacher Bayram Çitak from his eldest son, Mete Çitak, who lives in Izmir, and from his friend Selahattin Koçak from the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers (TÖB-DER) and the Unity Solidarity movement.

“Afterwards we all managed to meet in Beşiktaş. I was responsible for the coach. We looked [at the list of names], we counted and counted, Bayram wasn't there. Then we learned that Bayram was dead. We'd been walking arm in arm, but we lost him.”

“My father was full of joy about going to that demonstration that day, but he never returned. Of course what we experienced should be considered a massacre.”

Bayram Çitak, 37, from the town of Şarkışla in Sivas, was a teacher and member of TÖB-DER. He lived with his wife and three sons in Ankara.

Bayram Çitak had asked to be appointed to a new teaching position that would take him from Sivas to the Mamak Derbent Primary School in Ankara, because his son, Mete Çitak, was about to start middle school, and there was no middle school in their village.

A graduate of the Pamukpınar Teaching

College, Bayram Çitak became involved in TÖB-DER not long after arriving in Ankara. He tried to provide for his wife and three children with his teacher's salary.

According to the autopsy report his cause of death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of compression of the chest, and internal bleeding caused by numerous rib fractures.

We hear the story of Bayram Çitak from his eldest son, Mete Çitak, who lives in Izmir, and his friend Selahattin Koçak from TÖB-DER and the Unity Solidarity movement.





Bayram Çitak's Son, Mete Çitak:

There were us three kids. I was the oldest. But when I say oldest, I was only 13 when I lost my father. I was still a child. My siblings were ten and five.

We took the news that my father had died really badly. Everyone in the family was distraught, everyone started crying. Imagine a 13-year-old child who has learned his father has died. Whatever a child might go through at such a time, I went through it all.

At that time we were living in Ankara, in Ayrancı; but my dad worked in Mamak. My dad was really a village teacher.

He was a member of TÖB-DER. He'd go everywhere with TÖB-DER, to all the demonstrations. He was well liked at the association.

"A day of celebration is now remembered for its dead"

As far as I know, 37 people lost their lives there that day. It's a day, a rally, that should have had a celebratory atmosphere, but now we remember it, commemorate it together with the dead.

After losing my dad, our house was filled with great sadness. Nothing was the way it was before. Back then we were three siblings, now we're two. After losing my father, my mum started working, she brought us up.

My dad was a good father to all of us. He was enough for all of us. He was everything you expect a father to be.

He was also greatly loved by his friends.

One of my strongest memories of my father is this: My dad was my teacher too. He forbade me from calling him "dad" at school. He'd say, "Call me 'sir' at school." One day I said "dad," it just slipped out. I got a bit of hiding for that.

"None of those responsible have been punished"

This is what I generally think about 1 May 1977. If those responsible for all we've been through had been made known, if they'd been punished, I would probably have felt differently. But not a single one of those responsible has been named, nobody's been punished. No investigation was even carried out against anyone. The trial reached the statute of limitations.

Over 40 years have passed. Easy to say, not so easy to live.

It's such a shame for this country. The truth behind an incident like this should have been uncovered. Because the truth of 1 May 1977 has never been revealed, we will continue to suffer like this for a long time. And the same things will happen again. Those responsible for people's suffering will never be found. No one will be punished.

If we live in a democratic country, then this is the exact opposite of what should have happened.

Of course, over time we got used to the fact that my dad wasn't with us. In the same way everyone else got used to it, so did we. I'm 55 years old now. I was 13 when we lost my dad. If he were still alive

today, he would have been 80.

I've been able to commemorate my father every year on 1 May in Gündoğdu Square in Izmir. But this year we probably won't be able to do that either because of the pandemic.

Bayram Çitak's friend, Selahattin Koçak:

In 1976, I was involved in the administration of the Unity Solidarity [Birlik Dayanışma] movement, working in schools. It was through this work that I met Bayram at the Derbent Primary School. We were from the same area, we were neighbours. I went to the Teaching College at Pazarören, he was at Pamukpınar. These were schools that had once been Village Institutes.



Over time, our discussions moved on to deeper topics, we got into political debates, and then Bayram also joined the Unity Solidarity movement.

Bayram had three children, one of them had leukaemia. We'd go to the hospital together, to Hacettepe, for his son's blood transfusions. He'd feel really bad whenever he went on his own.

The family got by on one wage. They lived in a shanty in Ayrancı. Bayram was a poor teacher who lived in such a place, trying to bring up three children, one of them ill, on a single wage.

At the same time he was a determined, resolute comrade, a real fighter.

He was a courageous warrior. He was kind-hearted. At times he could also be hot-tempered. At TÖB-DER meetings, for example, he'd get riled up quickly. That was entirely because of his financial difficulties. He loved other people. He'd regularly get together with his friends from school, with his other friends. Everyone loved and respected him.

We went to the demonstration on 1 May 1977 together. We decided to sit somewhere before we went. We went to a restaurant on Necatibey Street in Ankara and had some food and a couple of glasses of rakı as well, doubles, and shared our woes.

Then we got on the same coach and went to Istanbul. We got off in Beşiktaş and joined the TÖB-DER contingent. We joined the group around midday, and it was around 4-4.30pm by the time we

reached the square. We were in front of what is now the Marmara Hotel. When Kemal Türkler's speech was coming to an end he said, "Come on guys, let's head back to the buses."

Bayram and I were walking side by side, arms linked. Then suddenly all hell broke loose, shots were fired. Our arms were linked, you know, I pulled and pulled but Bayram didn't come. They told us to run towards the stage so we did. I thought he had been shot, but he wasn't hit by a bullet. We learned about it at his funeral. Bayram died in the crush, going towards Kazancı Slope.

We had a friend called Ahmet. Ahmet and I sent the coach back to Ankara and we stayed in Istanbul for the body. We collected the body the next day and brought it to Ankara, to that shanty.

From there we took him to the Karşıyaka Cemetery where we buried him.

He'd worked for 10 years, so at that time we fought to get his pension rights for his family. We got into lots of fights with the Provincial Directorate for National Education. They said to us things like, "What was he doing there?" We had to fight for it but we managed to get Bayram his pension rights for his 10 years of work.

A campaign was started through Unity Solidarity and we shared it with the whole of TÖB-DER. We tried to help his family as much as we could.

After that we always kept in touch with his wife and children...



**High school student
Jale Yeşilnil, 17, died in Taksim**

Hale Yeşilnil tells us about her sister Jale's birth and her 17 years of life, while author Kadir Akin speaks of their days together at the Göztepe Cultural Association, the police attack during their final farewell to her, and the graveside commemoration for her, 43 years later.

"She began private tutoring during her second year in high school. With the money she earned she bought herself a pair of green cords, from the Grand Bazaar I think, while shopping with our mum, and she was extremely pleased. They really suited her. She was wearing those cords on 1 May. And the red jacket she had on belonged to Filiz."
- Hale Yeşilnil, sister

"This year finally, at the last minute, her older sister told me where Jale was buried. After 43 years I was able to commemorate Jale beside her grave. Mücahit and I removed the weeds from her grave and planted purple, red, and green flowers. Her sister said Jale liked daisies, so we didn't forget the daisies."
- Kadir Akin, friend

Jale Yeşilnil is perhaps one of the most well-known of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977. We recognise her from photographs held up each year at the First of May commemorations, and especially those held by women.

Jale was just 17 years old when her life

was taken from her on 1 May 1977. She was always sensitive towards others and what was going on around her. She wanted to become a doctor and examine and treat the poor for free.

On 1 May 1977 she left home for a picnic with her friends in Çamlıca. Her mother helped her prepare. But Jale never returned home again.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of her death was mechanical asphyxia accompanied by rib fractures as a result of compression of the chest and abdomen.

Her older sister, Hale Yeşilnil, had not spoken to anyone about Jale until today. She named her daughter after the sister she had lost.

We hear Jale Yeşilnil's story from Hale Yeşilnil, who speaks of her younger sister with great love, compassion and admiration, and from the author Kadir Akin, who knew her from the Göztepe Cultural Association.

Hale Yeşilnil, sister:

My father was a railway station manager at the Turkish State Railways. We moved to the Gölbaşı district of Adıyaman when he was transferred there. That was the year I started primary school, and on 15 June 1960, my sister Jale was born there.

It was a beautiful June morning. My mother delivered all of her children at home with the help of a midwife. Before Jale's birth, my older brother and I were sent out into the garden. My mother's



Kurdish helper, our bacı, informed us when the birth was over.

When I arrived at my mother's side, I saw a baby with wide open eyes, and a beautiful smile that I remember to this day. She was beautiful. I can honestly say that I never heard Jale cry. Sometimes my mother would wake her up because she had been sleeping too long.

Even at this she would smile as she opened her eyes. Jale had a childhood filled with love and joy. I witnessed several occasions at different gatherings when people would turn to look again at her ever-smiling face.

When my father was transferred to Nazilli, my mother's Kurdish helper who we all loved dearly, wouldn't leave the station until the train had left.

"How will I live separated from this beautiful girl of mine," she wept. Yet she herself was a mother of six, back home in her village which was an hour and a half, maybe two hours away.

We had educated, enlightened, democratic parents. We were all fortunate in this very fundamental way. My father was, by disposition, a man of few words, but my mother was very different. Jale inherited my mother's beauty and temperament. She was naturally productive, creative, and strong. She read a lot.

When Jale was two years old, we left Gölbaşı and moved to Nazilli. We stayed there for two years. Jale was five when my father was transferred again, to Istanbul this time. They had chosen to return to Istanbul because of my ongoing treatment. My fourth sibling was born in Nazilli. Unlike Jale, this baby cried so



loudly, and at all hours of the day, that it often drove us out of the house.

Jale would stand beside the cradle and, although still a little girl herself, she would hush the baby affectionately.

When we first moved to Istanbul, we lived in Zuhuratbaba, in the Bakırköy district, for four years. We had a landlord, Uncle Kirkor, who we all adored. They were a little reluctant at first to rent the house to a family with four children. Then he set eyes on five-year-old Jale holding my father's hand. Uncle Kirkor always said he had never seen such a sweet child.

I had to undergo serious orthopaedic surgery at Çapa Hospital. I wasn't supposed to put on any weight on my foot for months. Jale would play games with our younger sibling and include me by offering me treats.

They were great at playing house together. Jale was loving towards everyone and she was very generous too.

One day Jale told my mum that she didn't want to go to school, that she wanted to be a bride. Peruz Abla was getting married and was going to move into the flat upstairs. My younger sibling and I stayed at home, while my mother took Jale with her to the wedding ceremony.

"I'm going to be a bride just like that!" Jale had told my mother as they left the ceremony. My clever mother responded, "But darling, when you go to school, among the many things you'll learn is how to sign a document. And didn't you



see just now, that in order to be a bride, you have to be able to sign papers." After that Jale kept asking when she would start school.

The year we moved to Göztepe we were happy to be moving into our own home, rather than the lodgings provided by the state whenever my dad was transferred. Jale started Yeşilbahar Primary School. She was a very bright student. She was just as successful later at Göztepe Middle School, completing her classes every year with merit.

She graduated first in her class from Göztepe Middle School. Along with her certificate, she was given a necklace with

a gold "J" pendant. I was the only one at her graduation ceremony. My mother was with my father at the Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Medicine, where he was hospitalised. At the end of the summer, in September, my father passed away, just after turning fifty. I remember Jale's tear-filled eyes at the time of this painful loss.

My older brother was a fourth-year student at Istanbul Technical University's



Faculty of Electricity, I was a second-year student in Chemistry at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. My 46-year-old mother had to survive on my father's pension while taking care of four children. They were difficult times.

My mother was a housewife. But back then she would also do sewing and embroidery work to better provide for us. Jale registered at Aryamehr High School (now 50. Yıl Tahran High School) which had newly been founded with the

support of Rıza Pehlevi. She was a successful student in first and second grade. She received a certificate of honours every term.

She grew into a joyful, energetic young woman, she was fond of fashion and cared about her appearance, she liked make-up and everything just seemed to suit her. She used to love Nükhet Duru. She sang her songs so beautifully.

Every year of her life, she would prepare a different skit each Father's Day and Mother's Day. She would take the stage with our younger sister. But she always played the lead. She would prepare the lemonade herself and serve it with biscuits she'd bought with her own pocket money.

She was productive, talented, generous and full of heartfelt love, just like our mother. And she'd always offer a bunch of daisies that she'd picked from the side of the railway tracks that passed by Erko Sitesi, the housing complex where we lived.

Sometimes on weekends in the summer, the whole family would go to the beach of our father's [State Railways] Camp in Fenerbahçe. And sometimes on weekdays, the two of us would spend the whole day there, eating sandwiches that my mother had made. We'd get in free because we had a card. And we could get there and back on foot.

She met Orhan Özay at camp and they became close. Back then we lived at number 30, Çam Apartment Building in Erko Sitesi. I know Filiz from B-block, I

think they were friends since primary school. Our mothers knew each other from neighbourhood home gatherings.

Sometimes she would borrow clothes from Filiz and wear all different sorts of things. She loved dressing up. She began private tutoring during her second year in high school. With the money she earned she bought herself a pair of green cords, from the Grand Bazaar I think, while shopping with our mum, and she was extremely pleased. They really suited her. She was wearing those cords on 1 May. And the red jacket she had on belonged to Filiz.

When we were little, Jale and I both wanted to be doctors. We were all delighted that Jale wanted to be a doctor. In the years that followed she developed her plans further. She was going to work in Anatolia and treat patients for free at least two days a week, and she would never charge those who couldn't afford it.

We have two witnesses for the First of May. My older brother and Orhan Özay. Orhan was the one who came to our home to let us know. He said that she'd been hurt, and he and my brother left together. Then my brother identified her at the morgue.

My mother and I weren't allowed inside Osmanağa Mosque. My brother never ever spoke about this. Our relationship has never been that great anyway because of our different political views.

In the days that followed, when I asked Orhan, he never confirmed what happened

with the tank. He just mentioned the wounds she had sustained from being dragged along. Orhan was first a militant of the Liberation [Kurtuluş] movement, and then later he became a militant with the Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Unit [MLSPB]. He was severely tortured during the time of the Military Coup of 12 September [1980]. He was sentenced to execution. Unable to stand the severe torture, and partly due to pressure from his mother, he confessed and became an informant.

And then one day he was shot and killed by the police. And so, unfortunately, I really can't say exactly what happened [to my sister], no one knows. But aunt Şule, the daughter of my mother's uncle, who was there to wash Jale, only mentioned the wounds. In 1980, I did everything I could to get the morgue report, but it was no use.

After Jale's death, people we didn't know got in touch to express their condolences.

Our relationship with my brother, which was not great anyway and could become quite hurtful at times, got worse after my dad died. My brother doted on my two sisters, but his love for Jale was special. He was full of hopes and was a real believer. When 1 May 1977 happened, he was a reserve officer in the Naval Forces. All leaves had been cancelled but upon my mother's request, he was able to get leave and come to Göztepe.

All during the final week leading up to the First of May, my mother and I argued constantly. Even three days before 1 May,

I wasn't allowed out. She was always worried because I couldn't run. "If you go, I'll tie myself to the railway tracks!" she yelled at me once. I remember saying "How could you? You're a warm and loving mother to all your children!"

But on 1 May 1976, she herself had woken me at 5.30am, only reminding me to be very careful. My mother was a well-read, informed, educated woman. She knew very well that there would be provocations and that trouble would break out.

"I both knew and didn't know that Jale would be there that day."

I have always wondered why it had to be Jale and not me. She should have lived. This only added to my sorrow and I've had to live with this feeling for years.

I'll never forget two conversations the two of us had. She had a literature teacher in high school, Mehmet Başaran. A superb author and wonderful person, my mum and I had read and loved his books. After 1 May, he, his sibling and teacher friends often provided us with support.

One day, Mehmet Başaran assigned Jale the task of interviewing Aziz Nesin. She showed me the notes she had taken before the interview, questions she was going to ask him. She asked him about Anatolia's one hundred years of solitude, why the people were left in ignorance, the reasons for the poverty of these ignorant but beautiful people, and the

cause of the deprivation they faced and the lack of equal opportunities forced upon them.

Among her notes, alongside the autobiographical account of what the great author Aziz Nesin had and had not been able to achieve, and his goals and projects, were Jale's own thoughts and suggestions. She asked me afterwards, "How did you find it, sister? I want to hear what you think." I thought for a moment but I had nothing more to add. "Jale," I said, "I think it's perfect. But you know I'm not really in a position to add anything."

The second conversation I'll never forget took place the week before 1 May 1977, on the Thursday. I was at home. I was standing in the kitchen and it was just the two of us at home. Because my brother was a reserve officer, he only came home on the weekends. My mother and my youngest sister weren't home either.

"Shall we have a talk, sister, the two of us?" she asked. She placed an orange and an apple on a plate, and we went into the living room. I was on the couch, and Jale was sitting in an armchair. "You and our brother have a strained relationship, and I haven't been that close to you either, sister," she began. I objected. "Our brother just wants to protect you all, because he loves you so much. And I love you and my brother so much too," I told her, "but it just doesn't seem to work. He always sees me with my head stuck in the clouds, I know he loves me too but that's just how he is, he won't change." And she said, "He's going to be here at the



Çoğu lise öğrencisi olan gençlerin arasında yaşlı başlı insanlar da vardı. Onlar da çocuklarıyla birlikte cenazeye gelmişlerdi. Polisin ikinci bir emriyle yine elleri enselerinde diz üstü doğruldular.

weekend, mum's not going to let you go to the First of May rally anyway," she said. Then she asked my opinion about the First of May and the Liberation Movement. The Göztepe Cultural Association that Jale went to was aligned with the Liberation Movement. I knew her friends Murat and Hüseyin. We talked about them.

"You know mum's right when she says there'll be provocations, Jale," I told her, but I still didn't understand why mum would forbid us from going. "I'm going with an organisation, our friends are strong and they always look out for their crowd, we saw the same thing at the Cerrahpaşa incidents. What do you think?" I asked her.

"I'm going to Çamlıca with friends from

school, on a picnic, but of course I wish I could go to the First of May," she said. I didn't bother repeating that something was definitely going to happen, and that it was better to go to the rally along with an organisation.

When Jale woke up on Sunday morning, 1 May 1977, I was awake in the living room lying in my sofa bed. Mum was already awake too. I could hear them talking in the kitchen. Jale was boiling eggs while mum helped her get ready. I both knew and didn't know that Jale was going to be there that day. Why didn't I insist and make sure I learned for certain? This is something that still pains my heart.

As soon as I got out of bed, I said to my mum, without even saying good morning,

"In 1976, just about the same time you saw Jale off this morning, you said goodbye and sent me off to the First of May with a smile on your face. Now, by giving Jale your permission you've really hurt me," I continued. "She's gone on a picnic with her friends, while I have to stay at home!" Mum replied, "I pray for everything to turn out okay, but violence is expected to break out. I'm praying that won't be the case, that only good comes of it. But that's why I couldn't let you go this year, please understand me, my dear."

The nightmare began with the news on television that evening. No one dared speak. We grew more and more worried as the hours passed and Jale still hadn't returned. My mum and I hugged each other every now and then, crying.

It was almost 10pm when her close friend Orhan arrived. As my brother was getting dressed to leave the house, I hugged Orhan and asked, "Is she really just wounded? She is alive, isn't she? What we saw on TV was terrible." Orhan hid the truth. He said she was wounded. He and my brother left. My brother didn't return, so at around 1am we went to Zeki Coşkun's house, he lived quite close. His mother said he wasn't at home. But he was.

It turned out that as they were walking down Kazancı Slope, Jale had gone back to the square.

Jale's body waited at the morgue from 1 May to 5 May. Meanwhile, police officers, some plain-clothed and some in uniform, kept visiting our house. I just sat in the kitchen waiting for the front door at the

end of the hall to fling open. Her friends from school kept begging us, saying, "We're not going to leave her body unclaimed, are we?" We all became so close at that time.

On the morning of 2 May my brother came home devastated. Then a doctor showed up and gave us all a shot of Diazepam. We were all out of sorts under the effect of the drug. The next day, when the doctor came back and our family friends told him I hadn't slept, my mother, brother, and younger sister, we were all given shots again.

On the second day police officers started showing up. They told us that the body had to be buried as soon as it was picked up from the morgue. The plain-clothed police officers had found out from the undercover police at Istanbul Technical University [İTÜ] that I was a member of the Istanbul Technical University Faculty Association [İTÜ-DER]. I promised them that, apart from five or six of her other friends, the funeral would mainly be held with her friends from class and school, a group mostly aged 16-17, but I told them that we would march.

Jale was being carried on shoulders when I said that she would be buried next to my father in Karacaahmet. My family was hesitant, and rightly so. We were finally given permission to march beyond Osmanağa. The Police Association [Pol-Der] gave us a lot of support at the time. The fascist coup of 12 September was what finished them.

Outside of Osmanağa Mosque, we began our march. Her friends from school didn't

even let my uncle carry her coffin. "Please uncle," they told him, and made their way.

Just as the cortege had taken its position under the bridge, we were stopped by police officers with Kalashnikovs. They yelled for everyone to put their hands up and lay down. And that's when I got scared. Not for myself, but for the group that was mainly made up of 16-17 year olds.

Some were there with their mothers and fathers. But they hadn't wanted to leave their friend Jale to anyone, and they didn't leave her to the police officers carrying Kalashnikovs either. They were not afraid, not one bit. They stood there with their hearts of gold, and they never let Jale fall to the ground.

They took turns carrying the coffin as they let the police search them one at a time. When I lifted my head up to see them, I got kicked. My uncle was next to me and he got hurt worse. But there was no panic or chaos among the group. The march went on and we managed to reach the Karacaahmet Cemetery with Jale on the shoulders of her friends. Then we buried her. My dear sister in the spring of her life, who was as wise as a grown person.

Jale, you and Yusuf Aslan, Hüseyin İnan, Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and so many other revolutionaries set fire to my heart, and what a fire.

Let light be with you, my dear sister. The stars will always be your comrades. You will not be forgotten.

So long as the sun rises and the sun sets, you shall all live.

Kadir Akın speaks about Jale Yeşilnil

We were just becoming organised on the Anatolian side. I used to live in Üsküdar/Çiçekçi, and in addition to the association in Çiçekçi, I regularly visited the Göztepe Cultural Association [GKD] too. I was 19 years old. A couple of times we had meetings with friends there and Jale was with a group of seven or eight students from the Aryamehr High School. We also came across each other at a few activities on the Anatolian side.

On 1 May 1977, the Liberation group, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey [DİSK], and the Mineworkers' Union [Maden-İş] had all



gathered in Saraçhane, so the Revolutionary High Schoolers [Dev-Lis] were there too. I didn't see Jale in the crowd that day. By evening on 1 May, news of those dead was starting to come through.

We found out that Jale was dead the next day in the afternoon, and of course we were devastated. To find out that we had lost a friend who had marched in the same contingent with us on 1 May was unbearably sad. And of course, it wasn't just Jale, dozens of people we never



knew died there that day too. Every loss was met with extreme sorrow. The next day everyone was in shock, no one could have guessed we would lose so many people that day.

After receiving the news, our final duty was to bid her farewell in a ceremony. We contacted her family. We were able to hold the ceremony on 5 May. We gathered outside the Kadıköy Osmanağa Mosque and formed a cortege. We were taking Jale to the family grave in Karacaahmet.

A great number of people attended the funeral that day. There were people who had come from Çiçekçi and Göztepe. The Tepe Nautilus shopping centre that stands there now hadn't been built yet.

But the road to Karacaahmet had been, it was a new road. We started walking down that road, carrying Jale on our shoulders.

We were under an overpass and had nearly reached Duvardibi when I saw police cars close in on us and tens of plain-clothed police officers surround the whole cortege. I was at the very front so I could see everything.

They told everyone to lie down. Those carrying the coffin objected and told them that they were not putting the coffin down. A few carried on holding Jale. We later found out why this had happened. There had been a skirmish during a raid on a socialist association in Kadıköy, and a couple of officers had been wounded.

They stopped and searched us because they had received information that those involved in that skirmish might have infiltrated the cortege. They were extremely rough, they made people lie face down on the ground, and beat them, but no one was taken into custody. We continued the march again, shouting slogans. Then we sent Jale off on her final journey.

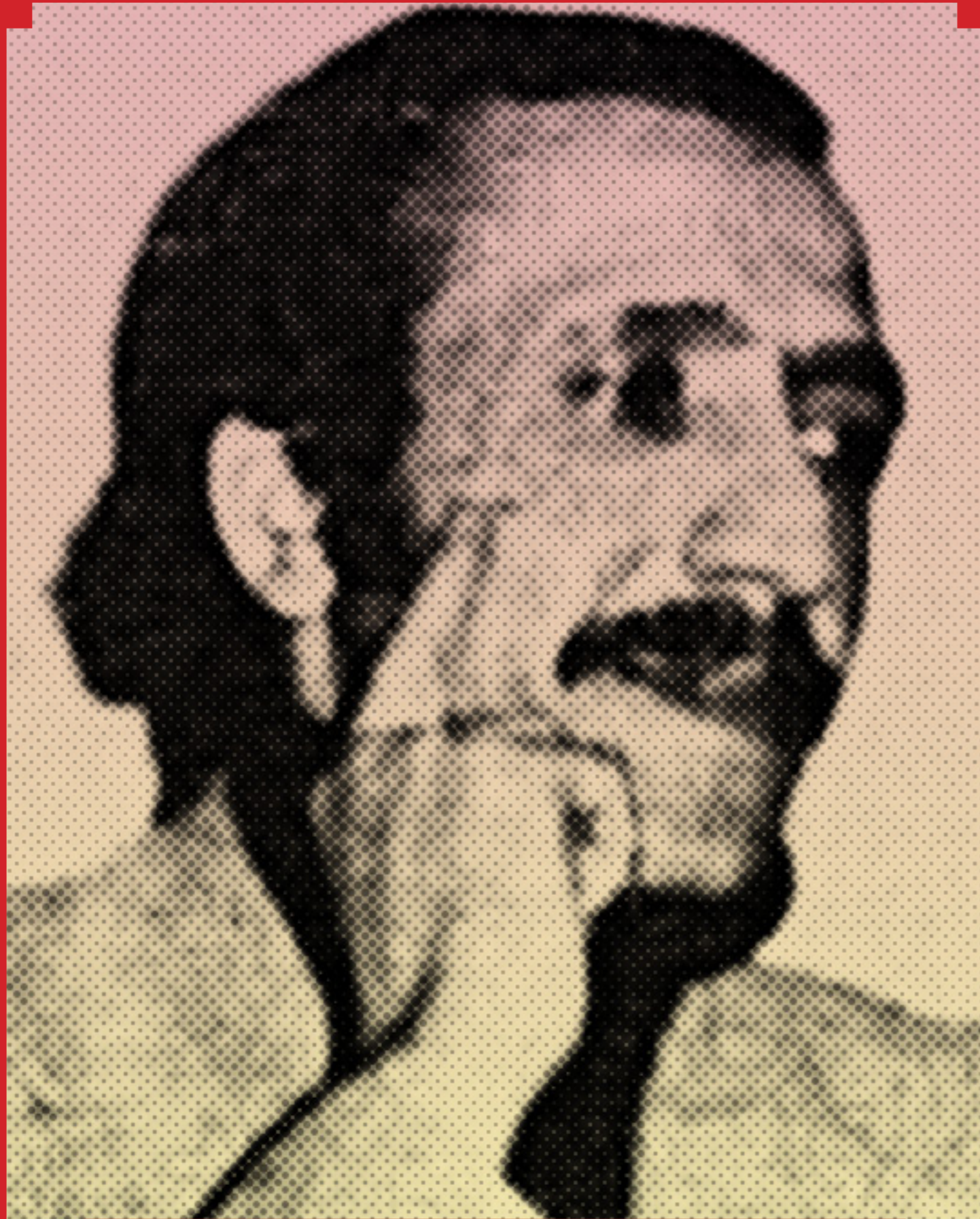
There is widespread belief that she was run over by a tank on 1 May. But I knew Jale lost her life because she was crushed by the fleeing crowd. I spoke to her family

about it later on, and they too confirmed it. During the chaos on Kazancı Slope, there was a box van parked at the top of the slope, which meant that people couldn't get away and dozens, hundreds of people fell on top of those already on the ground, piling up on top of each other.

Jale was a very beautiful young woman. Anyone who saw her, even only once or twice, was unlikely to forget her face.

This year finally, at the last minute, her older sister told me where Jale was buried. After 43 years I was able to commemorate Jale beside her grave. Mücahit and I removed the weeds from her grave and planted purple, red, and green flowers. Her sister said Jale liked daisies, so we didn't forget the daisies.

Commemorating Jale beside her grave exactly 43 years later, has taken us right back to those days...



**Teacher Kenan Çatak
31, died in Taksim**

We hear about teacher Kenan Çatak from his friends, Faik Kubilay and Muammer Başkent, both teachers and members of the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers [TÖB-DER], who went to Taksim together with Çatak on 1 May 1977.

“Kenan and I only fought once. One evening we’d been drinking rakı. I noticed Kenan had a car antenna in his hand. He’d broken the antenna off a Mercedes because it was a rich-man’s car.”
- Faik Kubilay, friend

“He taught in the evenings, and during the day he did sales work for extra money. He sold shopping bags to stores. If he hadn’t been taken from us on 1 May 1977, he was going to get married that summer.”
- Muammer Başkent, friend

Kenan Çatak was a teacher and member of TÖB-DER. He taught at the Kabataş School of Commerce. He was only 31 years old when he lost his life in Taksim Square.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was rib fractures as a result of compression of the chest and pulmonary contusion, as well as cerebral oedema and mechanical asphyxia.

He taught classes at school in the evenings, and during the day he worked a

second job to earn extra money for his wedding.

Until now, all that was known about Kenan Çatak was that he was a night-class teacher at the Kabataş School of Commerce and a member of TÖB-DER.

No relatives had spoken about him, neither had any of his friends.

When I set out to learn more about Kenan Çatak, I found that every year without fail, his friends would honour his memory in different ways. They remember the day they lost him as though it were yesterday. They too wanted to talk about their friend, and for others to know his story.

Most of all, they wanted people to know what kind of friend he was, and that, had he not lost his life on 1 May 1977, he would have got married that summer; they wanted people to understand what had been taken from him.

When I learned that Kenan Çatak had been planning to get married in the summer of 1977, I asked his friends about his fiancée.

I tried to find out about how she had coped with her loss, how her life had changed after Kenan’s death, and where she was now, but I learned that Kenan’s friends had lost touch with her after his death. They only knew that she was from Iğdır, where the couple had held their engagement ceremony.

We hear about Çatak from his childhood friend from Iğdır, Faik Kubilay, and his close friend Muammer Başkent...

Faik Kubilay, friend:

Kenan and I grew up together in Iğdır. Then we became teachers and ended up in Istanbul. He was a teacher at the Kabataş School of Commerce, I was at Kasımpaşa High School. We came to Istanbul around 1970-75. Those were our first years of teaching, we weren't even in our thirties yet.

I moved there from Kars, where I was a member of TÖB-DER. Kenan's first appointment was in Istanbul, so he joined the organisation there.

Kenan's mum was a housewife, his father was a civil servant. The Çataks were known for being an educated, hard-working family; they were well respected in Iğdır. Kenan was no different. I also knew his sibling. We used to meet up occasionally, but after Kenan died, we lost touch too.



Whenever Kenan and I spent time together we always laughed a lot. We'd go to TÖB-DER together, join in their activities. We'd read books and go to poetry readings.

We were enthusiastic, progressive, patriotic.

We spoke with Cüneyt Arkin

When the day came, we went to the First of May rally together. Me, Kenan and Muammer Başkent were all together. We knew we might lose each other in the crowd, so we agreed on a meeting point, and said we'd meet at Çiçek Pasajı after the rally.

We walked arm in arm. We even saw the actor Cüneyt Arkin and stopped to talk with him. Towards the end of the demonstration I left the square and headed towards Çiçek Pasajı, where I waited for Kenan and Muammer.

"Run"

I didn't know about what had happened. They told us, "Don't hang around here, run, the police are rounding people up." I went out and looked along İstiklal Street, and the police really were tossing people into their vans left and right. We didn't understand what was happening.

When I got home, I turned on the radio and heard there'd been an incident. They were reading out the names of the people who had died, but at that time, they read out a different name, not Kenan Çatak. It never even occurred to

me that Kenan might have been amongst those killed.

The next day

But the next day we learned that Kenan was dead. We went to the Institute of Forensic Medicine to collect his body. His father was there too and we spoke. We decided to take Kenan's body to Iğdır.

There were three or four of us in front of the Institute of Forensic Medicine, talking about the demonstration and our friend's funeral. A police officer came over to us. I don't know how, but they'd been recording us, they played it back to us. They said, "Don't even think about organising a demonstration or a protest or whatever or we'll arrest you too."

In Iğdır

His father told me to ask around and find out if Kenan had any debts. After looking into that, we sent his body to Iğdır.

In Iğdır, members of the ultranationalist Grey Wolves tried to stop his body being brought into the village. But back then the village of Melekli was known for being a democratic place. Some friends intervened and challenged them, saying, "Who do you think you are to try and stop this?" And so there was this fight about it.

He didn't want a big wedding

Kenan would often come to our house, he was very fond of my youngest daughter and was very affectionate

towards her. My daughter was very young though, so unfortunately she doesn't remember him.



Kenan was engaged, and he was making preparations for the marriage. He didn't want a big wedding ceremony though, I remember that. He wanted to get married in an official service and then go away on holiday over the summer.

Teaching

Kenan was a teacher who always did anything he could to help his students. Our basic principle was this: In the classroom, the students will look at how the teacher behaves and learn from that. We didn't need to bandy about revolutionary slogans in the classroom. I went to his school one day and saw how much his students loved him. He was like a friend to them. There is not a single person who knew him who could say that Kenan was a bad person or that they had ever fought with him.

Antenna

Kenan and I only fought once, for example. One evening we'd been drinking raki. I noticed Kenan had a car antenna in his hand. He'd broken the antenna off a Mercedes because it was a rich man's car.

I was really angry at Kenan for breaking off the antenna because he'd damaged someone's property. Then Kenan too accepted that what he'd done was wrong and wouldn't achieve anything for us.

This is how I remember Kenan: Bubbly, cheerful, someone who lit up the room and got on with everyone, a very good friend...

Muammer Başkent, friend:

Kenan Çatak and I were from the same town. We became friends in the first year of middle school and our friendship lasted until Kenan died.



We both taught in Istanbul and shared a flat. We lived in Nişantaşı. We found a flat, the owner was living in Italy, and rented it to us rather than leaving it empty. We never had any problems as flatmates either, Kenan was a really good flatmate.

I came to Istanbul in 1970; I think Kenan came at around the same time.

1 May

In 1977 he was getting ready to get married. He taught in the evenings, and during the day he did sales work for extra money. He sold shopping bags to stores. On 1 May we left the house and Kenan and I walked through Gümüşsuyu to Beşiktaş. Then we started walking from Beşiktaş to Taksim. When we reached Taksim, the group in front of us was in higher spirits than we were.

Kenan left us

Kenan left us, saying "You guys are boring, I'm going to join those kids over there." I stayed with the TÖB-DER group. Everyone was very happy and in good cheer. We saw that demonstration as a victory gained in the name of socialism.

As Kemal Türkler was giving his speech, a group started to enter Taksim Square from the direction of Tarlabaşı. The sound of gunshots came from over by Kazancı Slope. There were tanks, they started to move and there was huge panic. We fled straight away, we weren't expecting anything like that. After we'd all fled the square, we went to a café in



Aksaray where we'd often go. The names of the dead were read out on the radio, but at first the names read out were different. It was only later that we learned we'd lost Kenan.

His father came

The next day, his father came and we met with him. I still don't have the words to

describe that moment. Pain? Anger? I still can't describe it.

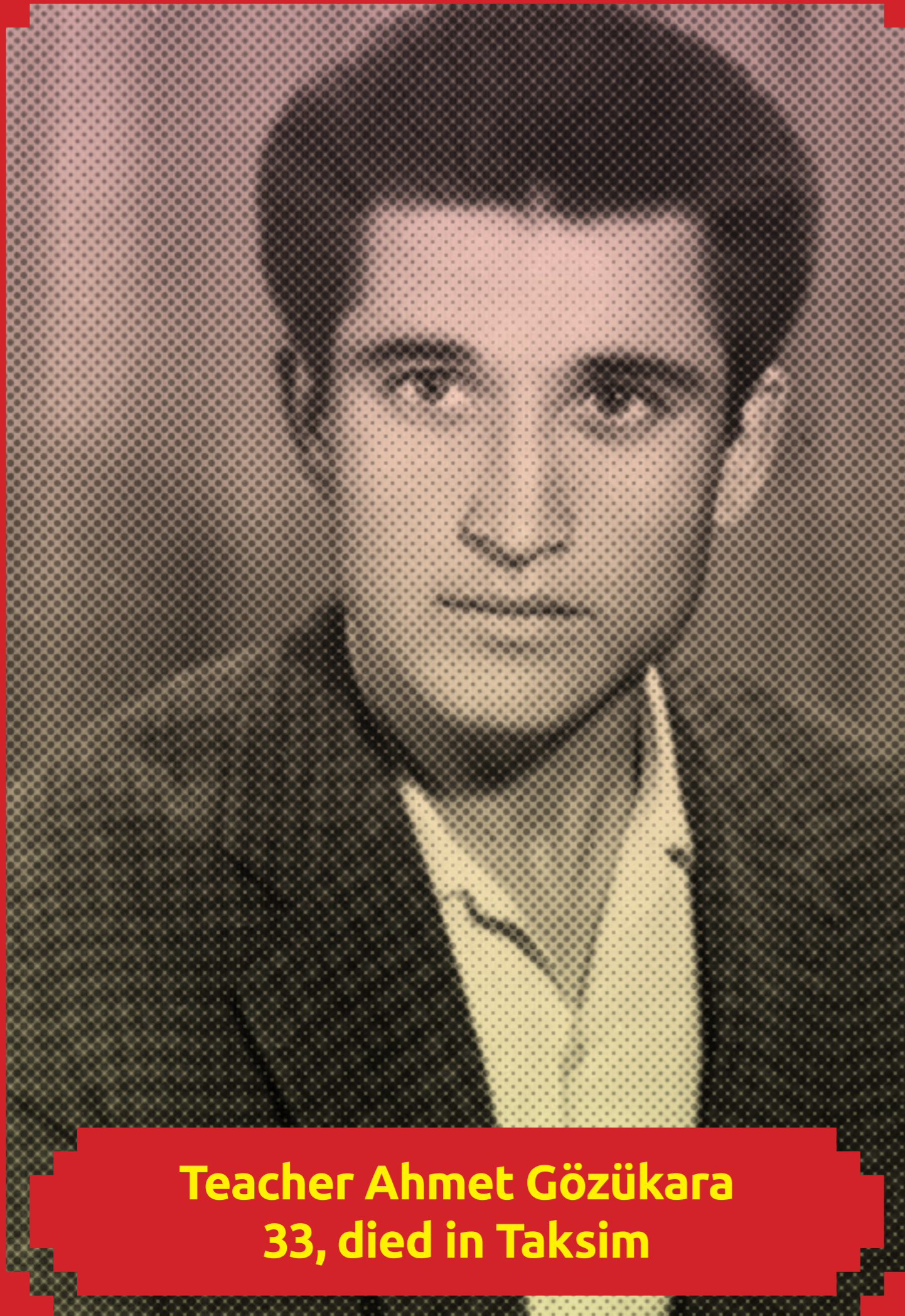
He told us we had to go to the morgue. We went, and they showed us photos. I saw Kenan's photos, he had head wounds. That's where words fail, I'm afraid. We collected his body in utter silence; his father took him to their hometown.

A good person

Kenan was a good person. He was friends with everyone. He was a socialist but wasn't a member of any particular fraction. He found value in every struggle in the name of socialism, he'd support them and work with those groups.

He believed that every movement that contributed to socialist thought deserved respect. The aim had to be the same. That's what I remember most from our discussions.

Saying that he was a good person might sound like a cliché, but being a good person was precisely what defined him. In short, Kenan wouldn't even hurt a fly, he never harmed anyone...



**Teacher Ahmet Gözükara
33, died in Taksim**

While talking about her uncle, Ahmet Gözükara, Sema Gözükara begins by saying, “Nobody has heard his life story; this is very saddening for us. This feeling of having no voice always deeply upset me.”

“Until now, my uncle’s story has never been published anywhere. Nobody has heard his life story; this is very saddening for us. I’m not sure about my other relatives, but the feeling of having no voice always deeply upset me.”

“He was an honourable, dignified man. He earned his money through hard work; in his short life he never gained anything in a way that wasn’t honourable. There was once a man named Ahmet, his surname Gözükara [meaning ‘fearless’], he was from Elbistan, he died on the First of May.”

Ahmet Gözükara is one of those who died on 1 May 1977 whose story had never before been published. Like the other teachers who lost their lives in Taksim that day, he was a member of the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers [TÖB-DER].

Ahmet Gözükara moved from Maraş to Istanbul in 1972, when he was appointed to a position at the Sultanahmet School of Commerce. He was only 33 years old

when he lost his life in Taksim. He was the first person his family lost at such a young age.

Previously, all that was known about Ahmet Gözükara was that he was a teacher at the Sultanahmet School of Commerce and a member of TÖB-DER. According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the chest and abdomen, along with cerebral oedema.

Until today, no relatives had spoken about him, neither had any of his friends. It was very difficult for me to reach his niece, Sema Gözükara, but once I found her, she accepted my invitation to talk about her uncle.

Before I contacted Sema Gözükara, I found that every year she commemorated her uncle in different ways. This was one of my motivations for reaching out to her.

Sema has never forgotten her uncle and proudly honours his memory every year. She told me that she would do as much as she could for the story of her uncle, who she loved deeply and remembers fondly to this day, to be heard.

Sema Gözükara and I spoke about Ahmet Gözükara, and she told me how her life and the lives of her large family changed after his death. She also spoke about how his eldest brother, Ali Kemal Gözükara, who was extremely fond of Ahmet, was affected by his death and about his lament to his brother in a book named, “The Ballad of the First of May”, and about much more.

Sema Gözükara, niece:

So far, my uncle's story has never been published anywhere. Nobody has heard his life story; this is very saddening for us. I'm not sure about my other relatives, but the feeling of having no voice always deeply upset me.

I visited the "Museum of Torture" when it was first opened in Ankara, and my conscience was wounded when I saw that my uncle did not appear among those killed on 1 May 1977, not even as a photograph. This was an unsettling feeling.



I came home and found a photo with my uncle in it. Using the possibilities of technology, I had his image enlarged; I then had his photo framed and gave it to the museum. The people at the museum hadn't been able to find any information about Ahmet Gözükara and were very happy to have found a trace of him.

My uncle was a person to be proud of, to boast about even. I would really like everyone to know about his story, his life, about who he was as a person.

We're from Elbistan. It's not quite in the east, but Elbistan is close to the border of Eastern Anatolia. Families there are large and very close knit.

A model relationship

Everyone in Elbistan knows the Gözükara family. Because of this family structure, our uncles were always part of our lives.

This close relationship with our relatives lasted until we had to move away from Elbistan when I was nine years old.

My uncle was a teacher at the Elbistan Middle School. He had also been my father's pupil. Of all his siblings, my father was particularly fond of Ahmet, and Ahmet of him.

They were eight siblings, but Ahmet was really special to my father.

They had a model relationship based on love and respect. Sometimes in the summer months, when they would come to see us in Ankara, I would listen to their conversations.

My uncle had a great amount of respect for my father. You know the way you love the people your mum and dad love; well, we really loved my uncle because my father was so fond of him and because he was so affectionate and protective towards us.

I remember that they talked in quiet but worried voices about the frightening course of events in the country, the brutality of capitalism, and oppression. The 1970s were years when despotism rose rapidly.

Because my father was a teacher from the Village Institute tradition, they called our family "faithless communists" too. But like my father, Ali Kemal Gözükara, his family also practiced their beliefs in private.

My uncle has always held a positive place in my memories. First of all, he was a very affectionate man—principled, fair and interested in others. He was a good person and a very good teacher. He was 33 when we lost him. He was very young.

Mahzuni Şerif

One day, I think it was 1967, there was a Mahzuni Şerif concert in Elbistan. As you know, Mahzuni was an Alevi singer-poet. Reactionaries from the Elbistan region came and raided the concert. Mahzuni Şerif's friends managed to get him out of there somehow.

At that time we lived in Bahçelievler, a neighbourhood outside the city. They'd gone to a couple of houses but no one had opened the door to them; I'm not sure if it's because they weren't in or because they were scared. Then they came to our house; my mum was at home.

My mum is a very brave woman. She opened the door and hid them in the

guest room. Then my mum sent my big sister to the city centre to tell my dad and uncle what had happened.

I remember my dad and uncle arriving in a jeep, putting Mahzuni Şerif in a car and sending him to his village, and I remember my uncle in his white trenchcoat. They didn't seem at all scared.



However, even if we weren't Alevi, that rabble could have killed us because they saw us as "communists". I clearly remember the brave stance my mum and my uncle took.

My uncle was someone who had no primitive emotions like greed; he saw money not as an end but as a means. He was an honourable, dignified man. He earned his money through hard work; in

his short life he never gained anything in a way that wasn't honourable. And so, this honourable name is the biggest legacy handed down from a father to his children.

A reader of Cumhuriyet

He was an avid reader of the Cumhuriyet newspaper. I remember that very well because he would analyse everything, even down to the adverts, and comment on them for all of us to hear.

My uncle was an idealist; just like the other members of our large family, he always tried to do things for the good of the nation. He also helped to bring the first cooperative to Elbistan. Like I said before, my father, Ali Kemal Gözükara, was a teacher from the Village Institute tradition.

One day, the reactionaries from the city attacked the teacher's canteen and put my father in a coma. I was only small, but this incident burned itself into my memory.

I remember my uncle squeezing my father's hand, and saying angrily, "You sacrificed yourself for these people and look what they've done to you." But this anger never turned to malice. He tried to approach events in a rational way, always tried to offer flowers even to his enemies.

Moved from place to place

Even though the Gözükara family weren't Alevi, they supported the Alevi struggle

for their rights. And on top of that, the label of us being communists meant that the many teachers in our family were constantly being appointed to teaching positions in different areas of the country. Even after my father was put in a coma, it wasn't the perpetrators who were punished, but my father, who was sent to Maraş.

My uncle had also been transferred to a post in Maraş before we were sent there. They stayed there for two years. My uncle's first child was born there. Two years after his daughter was born, he was transferred to Istanbul, to the Sultanahmet School of Commerce. They went there in 1972, but unfortunately he was only able to live there for five short years.

My father had retired, but my uncle wanted us to come to Istanbul too. My father even sent him his retirement bonus. My uncle was organising everything.

All our belongings were ready, and in 1977 we too were going to move to Istanbul. Of course, after my uncle's death, this never happened. Our lives went in a completely different direction. His second daughter and his son were born in Istanbul. He had three children. His son was just nine months old, I think. After my uncle died, we completely lost touch with his children.

"Large numbers dead"

On 1 May 1977, my older brother and my cousins all went from Ankara to Istanbul

for the First of May celebrations. My uncle also went to Taksim, both to check on them and look after them — because he'd caught wind of the bad atmosphere — and also, naturally, as a worker.

They went there that day in high spirits. On the evening of 1 May 1977, we were watching the evening news. I'll never forget it—we were eating dinner, even that stays in my memory. There was a news announcement saying, "Large numbers dead at the First of May demonstration." In those days the music for the TV news began with the disquieting sound of a bell.

There were lots of political incidents, people were dying every day and that music had become a traumatic sound for us. But still, when they said, "Large numbers dead," it never crossed our minds that my uncle was one of them.

"No! My brother's gone..."

When the names of the dead were being read out, they said my uncle's name too; because of the driving licence in his pocket, they said he was a driver. My uncle's driving licence was the first thing they found.

We thought it wasn't my uncle, but someone with the same name; or maybe that's what we wanted to believe. You know what they say, "The ember burns wherever it falls," so at that moment you want it to be someone else with the same name. "He can look after himself," we said. We turned our attention to my older brother and my cousins who'd gone

there with him that day.

In the morning my brother found a telephone and called my aunt's house. "I'm okay," he said. But when he got home he told us, "On the bus they were saying my uncle died." Later we learned that, unfortunately, my uncle really had died.

My dad banged his fists on his knees and said, "No! My brother's gone; his children are fatherless." I remember how much my dad suffered back in those days, it was like he would never again want anything to do with life. But time is merciless. There's no pain that time can't make you forget.

"My son stepped here"

After hearing the news, my relatives went to Istanbul to collect his body. Such a painful moment. My grandfather; a veteran of the War of Independence. He went up to the door of the morgue and begged, "I have a veteran's medal, show me my son's body."

They buried him in Istanbul, in the Zincirlikuyu Cemetery. After the funeral, my grandma and grandpa lived with us for a short time. I remember my grandma kissing the stairs in the house, saying, "My son stepped here."

In the words of his student

A former student of his who lived in Ankara told this anecdote. One day my uncle was solving a problem in class. His student said, "Sir, I think your answer is wrong." My uncle called him up to the

board and said, "Okay, come and show us the right answer."

His student thought that my uncle would be angry, that he would reprimand him, but my uncle said, "Come see me at breaktime." The student went.

My uncle said, "If you study, you could achieve great things. You really should go to university." The student's eyes filled with tears. He was such a democratic and fair person who valued other people, that's who he was.

Never forgotten

Of course, I would have liked to know my Uncle Ahmet better. I had four uncles on my father's side, but he was different.

He was very special. Just imagine, from the moment you open your eyes you are faced with an uncle who your father never stops talking about, who everyone says is very kind, and who is extremely caring towards you.

When my uncle died, I was a mess for days. I was 17 at the time. Those who loved him shed the most tears for his children who had lost their father.

As far as I've heard, his children never faced any financial difficulties thanks to my youngest uncle; after their father died, they studied at the best schools.

Time has passed since the tragic event; wounds have healed but nothing has been forgotten. We always wore my uncle on our breasts like a mark of pride. I always remember him with love, for the kindness he showed us. For exactly 43 years I have commemorated him every night in a spiritual way. I still have this desire to be close to him.

I hope that in this way his story will, at least to a certain extent, be known.

There was once a man named Ahmet, his surname was Gözükara [meaning "fearless"], he was from Elbistan, he died on the First of May.

Behiye Özkürkçü speaks of the shooting of her father in Taksim as she stood by his side, and of her 16 years of life with her father. She summarises her life after his death with the words, “Kurdish, from Siverek, her father was a member of TÖB-DER, he died in Taksim.”

“They really persecuted us. I cut out all the articles and stories about my dad from the papers and put them in a folder. In the 1980 military coup I gave it to my mum to hide, she told me she had hidden it in the coal cellar. But I think she had to burn everything, because afterwards I couldn’t find any of the documents. I only have a few left. We lost my father but he was the criminal. We were [the criminals]. Not only did we lose a family member, our darling father, but we were also persecuted for it as though we were the guilty ones.”

Hikmet Özkürkçü was a teacher and member of the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers [TÖB-DER]. He was also the head of the Karamürsel branch of TÖB-DER. He taught at the 4 Temmuz Primary School in Karamürsel. He was just 39 years old when he lost his life in Taksim.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was internal bleeding caused by penetrating injury to the chest and abdomen from a bullet wound.

He had four children: Behiye, Bülent, Hilmi and Devrim.

So far, most of the information known about him came from the memorial announcements in the local newspapers of Kocaeli. Although some family



members had spoken about him, no detailed information was known about Hikmet Özkürkçü.

I tried to reach out to Hikmet Özkürkçü’s family based on information found in articles from the local newspapers. A relative helped me to connect with Hikmet Özkürkçü’s daughter, Behiye Özkürkçü. Behiye was also with her father in Taksim on 1 May 1977.

Behiye Özkürkçü spoke about what kind of father and teacher Hikmet Özkürkçü was, how her life changed after her father’s death, what she learned from him, and the events of 1 May 1977, which she remembers as though it were yesterday.

Teacher Hikmet Özkürkçü
39, died in Taksim

Behiye Özkürkçü, daughter:

I was born in 1961. I'm retired now but I too am a member of the teachers' union, Eğitim-Sen. My father was born in 1938 in the city of Siverek in Urfa. He graduated from teaching college and studied in Sivas and Diyarbakır. He married young, at the age of 23.



He stayed in Siverek for a while, and then was exiled to Viranşehir for political reasons. From Viranşehir he was moved to Gebze. His transfer to Karamürsel was his own choice. After living in Gebze for two or three years, we moved to Karamürsel, where we lived for a long time.

Throughout his teaching career, my father was very involved with TÖB-DER. He was the president of the Karamürsel branch of TÖB-DER. He was a great support to the young revolutionaries there. In particular, he really looked out

for those who'd been in prison. He was a very kind and friendly teacher. He saw his students as his children. I'd like to tell you a story about this, that could almost be a joke. My father taught the morning section classes. Me and two of my siblings were in the afternoon section. When he came home, we would be heading to school. Occasionally we'd play truant, of course, one of us in particular skipped school a lot and my dad would get really mad.

One day my dad comes home and my mum opens the door. He sees my mum hasn't sent us to school. My mum says, "But Hikmet, the kids really were sick. They're all coughing, they're tired, that's why I didn't send them to school." My dad says, "You know, Zekiye, you're right. My kids were like that too, they were all sick, so I sent them home."

He was very devoted to us. He loved children in general.

I have three other siblings, I'm the oldest. And then the last one, Devrim, has a



mental disability. He was born in 1970. Devrim really affected our lives, and mine in particular as the oldest child and as his sister.

My dad was always like a bridge between me and my mum. He always told me that I had to support my mum. And he said to her that she had to support us, that living with a brother like that was difficult for us too, that we couldn't lead our lives in a normal way. He was a calm man who always found the middle ground.

My mum and dad

He liked to have a drink with his friends, I remember that very clearly. In Viranşehir he'd get together with the important figures of the community, and in Karamürsel with the members of TÖB-DER. But he never got drunk. He would always keep his wits about him and drop everyone around the table off at their homes.

My mum never went to school. She got married off at a very young age, at 14. She was still 14 when I was born, and she had four children one after the other. My mum was very clever, a very intelligent woman. She passed away too. She taught herself to read and write and also started learning English; she read the novels of Maxim Gorki.

She had to bring up four children, one with a mental disability, on her own, but she still joined the Progressive Women's Association. She opened up her house to the association for meetings and was actively involved in their activities.



She got involved in the association after my dad died, but like I said, before that she had read such books and broadened her horizons.

Preparations for the First of May

As the president of TÖB-DER, it was of course my dad who carried out the organisation in Karamürsel for the First of May rally. He had a difficult time, nobody wanted to take us; he found a young driver and managed to convince him. Before 1 May, my father had made us a promise: "From now on, I'm going to take one of you to each demonstration, starting with Behiye."

And the first demonstration after that was the First of May.

Under normal circumstances, he had to take me. He'd made a promise and I was expecting it. But, as you know, there were rumours about 1 May, rumours that there might be some provocation.

My school was on the edge of the city. One day I went out at breaktime and I saw my dad in the schoolyard.

"I want to talk to you," he said. "I made you a promise, Behiye. I also want to take you to Taksim, but there are some complications," he said, and told me about the turmoil of the time and his concerns.



Then he said, "Look, you could be injured, you could be arrested, you might get hurt or be scared. To be honest, I don't want you to come. But if you insist on coming, we'll go. Think about it until the evening and then tell me your decision."

Taksim'de

Of course I wanted to go. The next morning we got up early and got ready. If my disabled brother woke up early he'd get very agitated and wouldn't stop crying. As we were quietly leaving, trying not to wake him, Hilmi woke up. To make sure Devrim didn't wake up and start crying and wake the others, my dad said, "Get your brother ready, let's take him too."

I was 16 years old, Hilmi was seven or eight.

It was a fun journey. After getting off the minibus we walked for quite a while then took our place in the square. We were just below the hotel. Then everyone found their own group, the youngsters were on one side, the TÖB-DER teachers on the other.

Because I'd stayed with the group of youngsters, my dad would occasionally come over and say, "Are you hungry, I'll buy you a sesame ring if you're hungry, shall I get some water?" On the fifth floor of the hotel I saw men using a tripod and a long telescope.

I asked my dad about them. He said, "Sweetheart, these are the government's men, here to keep an eye on us," and then went back to the TÖB-DER group.

He was shot

Then it all kicked off. We heard the first gunshots and people yelling, "Down! On the ground." I lay down, my father was also on the ground and we looked at each other. We stood up and took a few

steps. My father fell. He called over to his friends for help, "Guys, I've been shot in the leg." But no one was in a position to help anyone else.

I only managed to get to within about a metre of my dad. He stood up again, but fell after taking two or three steps. This time he fell on his back. There were no bloodstains or signs of a bullet wound. But the bullet had gone through his sweater and shattered his internal organs.

The hole made by the bullet wasn't visible without pulling off his sweater. We lost the death certificate, but I remember it saying, "Police bullet".

I later looked for the certificate everywhere but couldn't find it.

After that, a young guy came and took me, I was in shock. I remember I was in shock because I kept jumping up and down. The young guy convinced me to

leave the square. He took me to a part of Istanbul where there were small cafes one next to the other.

Of course he asked me where I'd come from, how I got there. Then he found the group from Karamürsel, handed me over to them and left. My friend Yahya and my brother weren't there either. I was so busy thinking about my father that they hadn't crossed my mind, but I later heard from Yahya, he'd been taken into custody.

Seeing him for the last time

After some time passed, another young guy like the one who'd brought me to the Karamürsel group brought my brother this time, then left. We waited until 3am. I'm not sure if they'd received news about my father or not, but they decided there was nothing else for us to do, so we got on the minibus and went back to Karamürsel. We arrived in Karamürsel





around 3.30am. We received the news.

The funeral was held after my dad's body arrived. I really wanted to see my dad; I begged them to let me see him one last time. But no one let me.

Except for one person. One of the union leaders said, "Let her see him, let her rage grow."

He showed me my father's body. I wish I hadn't seen it. I broke down. I wish I'd never seen my father like that.

I'm not sure if I was scared at that moment, or sad. But his mouth was open, you could see his teeth.

You know what, after that day, every time I saw a chimney vent, that image would come to my mind. It was like I saw

that image of my dad's face in those chimney vents. And I also saw it in the waves of the sea, for some reason...

The first moment that I realised I had completely lost my father was about a month after his death. Twenty days after my dad died, my uncle passed away.

He couldn't cope with the pain of losing his brother, we thought; we lost him too, to a brain haemorrhage. We buried my uncle.

Solidarity

Afterwards, a table was set for dinner, and I put down a plate for my father too. I noticed straight away of course and took it away, but I went into the bathroom and wept. In our family, everyone would hide their sadness.

My mum would hide her sadness too, so as not to upset us.

After my dad died, my mum couldn't work. She had no school certificate, but mainly my disabled brother made it impossible for her to work. Devrim needed constant care.

TÖB-DER, the teachers in Karamürsel, our neighbours, and the unions within the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey [DİSK] looked after us really well.

Until we started receiving my dad's pension payouts, they did our shopping, paid our rent and bought our coal.

TÖB-DER in particular looked after us really well. But some awful things happened too. Money was collected for my dad in some factories, and those kind people generously gave as much as they could to help us. But that money never reached TÖB-DER or us. The only money that reached us was the money collected by the union.

Anyway, they handled the money and met our every need. Everything from our school expenses to our winter firewood...

His friends fought to get my dad's pension paid. As far as I remember, my dad's retirement bonus was a good one. His friends added money from their own pockets to that money and bought us a house. For a long time it was them who looked after us.

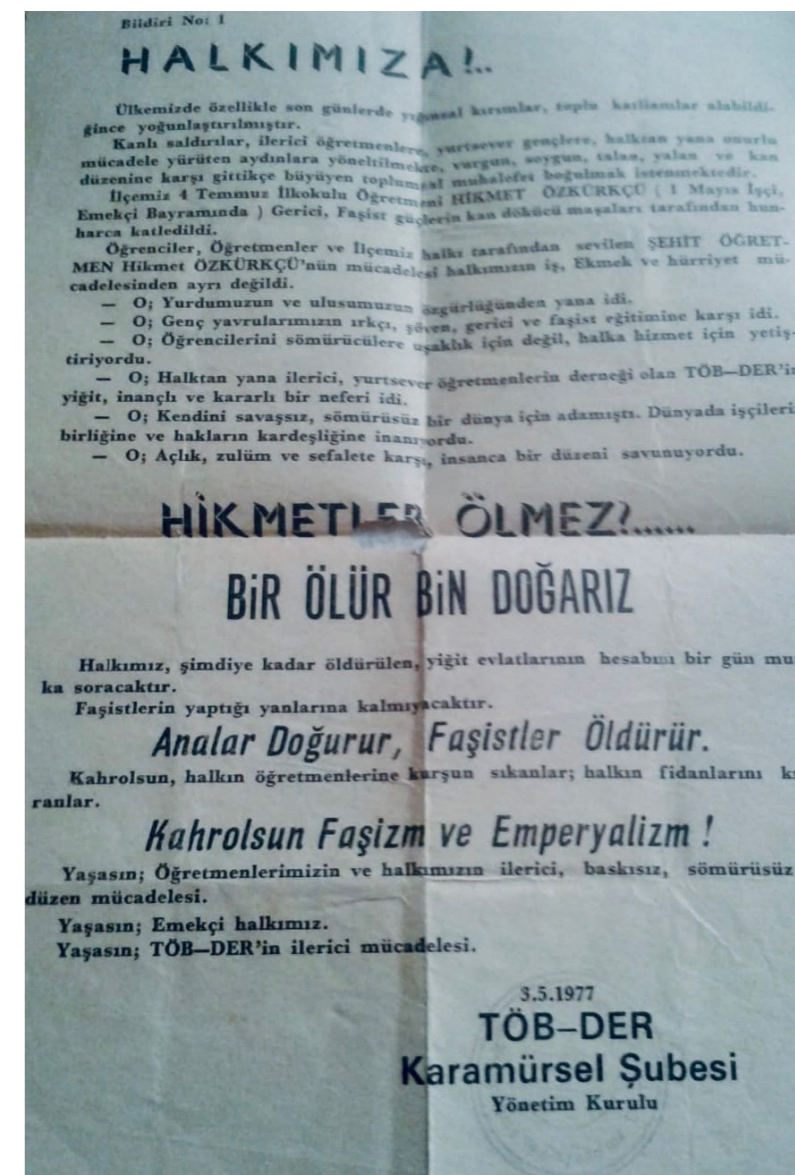
I'll never forget their kindness.

I didn't receive a teaching appointment

After my dad's death, our lives changed a lot. Hilmi became a teacher, like my dad. He's at a school in Izmir now.

My other brother, Bülent, didn't have the chance to study, for reasons out of his control. Bülent lived in Karamürsel, but his school was in İzmit. The school was full of leftists and democrats, but on his journey to school there were nothing but right-wingers.

Bülent was beaten up a few times on that journey. Both by the right-wingers



and by the police. That's why he had to drop out of school. Thanks to one of our relatives, he got a job in a shop. That man was really good to him, he later left the shop to Bülent.

As for me, after graduating from the Gazi Faculty of Education, I was faced with a financial investigation that I didn't pass. And everything was written in that report: "From Siverek, Kurdish, her father was a member of TÖB-DER, he died in Taksim."

For three years I didn't receive a teaching appointment. I suffered a lot. All my dreams and ideals were destroyed. I even worked as a cleaner in a shop because of that investigation. I just wanted to work but I couldn't get a job anywhere.

In the third year I somehow received an appointment. In 1979, I was in Mamak [Prison] because of my political activities; that also had an impact, but I think the main reason was that my father was Hikmet Özkürkçü.

The union was like our second home after my father died. This one memory comes to mind about this. Going from İzmit to Karamürsel by road was expensive, crossing by ferry was cheap. So of course Bülent had to travel by ferry.

Because it was winter, after leaving school he'd go to the union to kill time while waiting for the ferry.

One day, the police raided the union. They slapped him and said, "What are you doing here?" And Bülent said, "I'm waiting for the ferry."

This made the police mad and they beat him even more. But he really was waiting for the ferry. This was the kind of thing that meant Bülent had to drop out of school.

"Life is hard"

I have lots of memories of my dad, but one bad memory in particular stands out. I was really struggling with having to look after my disabled brother.

One day, I had an exam for an important class, I was studying but my brother wouldn't keep still. Whatever I did, he just couldn't stay still. My friends were also calling on me to come out and play.

I kept checking my brother's nappy, he'd get really agitated if he'd done something, so I thought I'd change his nappy, and if something was irritating him, I'd clean him up. But nothing.

One time when I was checking his nappy, I slapped him on the bottom to make him be quiet. He was a pale-skinned boy and his bottom immediately turned red. When I saw the red mark, I cried uncontrollably for hours. I cried and cried, but it didn't make me feel any better.

Eventually I went to the medicine cabinet and swallowed a load of pills. Nothing happened to me because I kept throwing up. Even though we were in the same house, my mum didn't notice anything for a long time; finally, on the second day, my dad said, "Sweetheart, you seem a little sluggish, are you ill?" He kept on at me, saying, "There's something wrong with

you." I burst into tears and told him, "You didn't even notice," I said.

He took me and we walked to the hospital. I'll never forget that journey. He spoke to me so nicely. "Life is hard," he said. "It's hard for you, for me, for your mother. It's even harder for you, I know, you can't enjoy your childhood. But be a little patient, so many good things will happen to you. Life won't always be like this. What would I have done if you had died, how could you do this to me?"

We went to the doctor, who said it was too late to do anything, that the pills had already entered the bloodstream, and gave me other pills to treat it. He said, "You have to take these pills once every ten minutes." And my dad stayed with me until the morning, giving me those pills every ten minutes, without missing a single one.

Fighting to end inequality

One day, my dad and I were walking along the shore in Karamürsel. My dad's teacher friends were with us too. As we passed through an area where the rich people lived, one of his friends said, "Hey, times are going to change; one day all this will be ours."

My dad got really mad at this. "This is exactly what we're fighting against, and you want to be in their place?" he said.

And he really was fighting to bring an end to those luxury buildings, to inequality.

One day, while walking in İzmit, a man with a religious beard and robes came towards us. After he'd passed, my dad let out a curse. I took him to task about this, saying, "You tell us to do one thing, you do something different. Why?" He said to me, "Behiye, these are the only people I'm scared of. They won't miss any opportunity given to them. I only do this to them. They don't accept or understand anyone. When they come to power, they won't even grant you the D in democracy." Thinking about it now, in those days there wasn't even an organised religious movement, my father told me all this 50 years before.

He never finished The Grapes of Wrath

My father really liked Yılmaz Güney, because he came from the same town as us and was a leftist, and also because he liked him as an actor.

He took me to see all his films. But I couldn't really watch the film, because afterwards he would ask questions like, "What was it about, what did the main character do, what do you think they should have done?" And I could never answer.

He would get together to read books with his friends, I remember that. He never finished The Grapes of Wrath. My dad's grave is in Karamürsel. TÖB-DER had a gravestone made for him. And they had a beautiful grave made too. The gravestone read, "Revolutionary Teacher and Martyr, Died in Taksim Square in 1977."

Gravestone

On the first holiday after my dad's death, my mum went to visit his grave. She saw the grave surrounded by gendarmes who were pulling down the gravestone. They said they had to take the gravestone to the courthouse. I mean, couldn't they just take a photo? Did they really need to tear it down?

And did they have to do it on the first day of the holiday. This was just the first time; it happened a few times.

The soldiers were doing this with the excuse of taking the gravestone to the courthouse under court order.

The person who wrote the text on the gravestone was my literature teacher. You wouldn't believe the things that happened to him. My teacher was a migrant from Bulgaria, he shouldn't have got involved in these things.

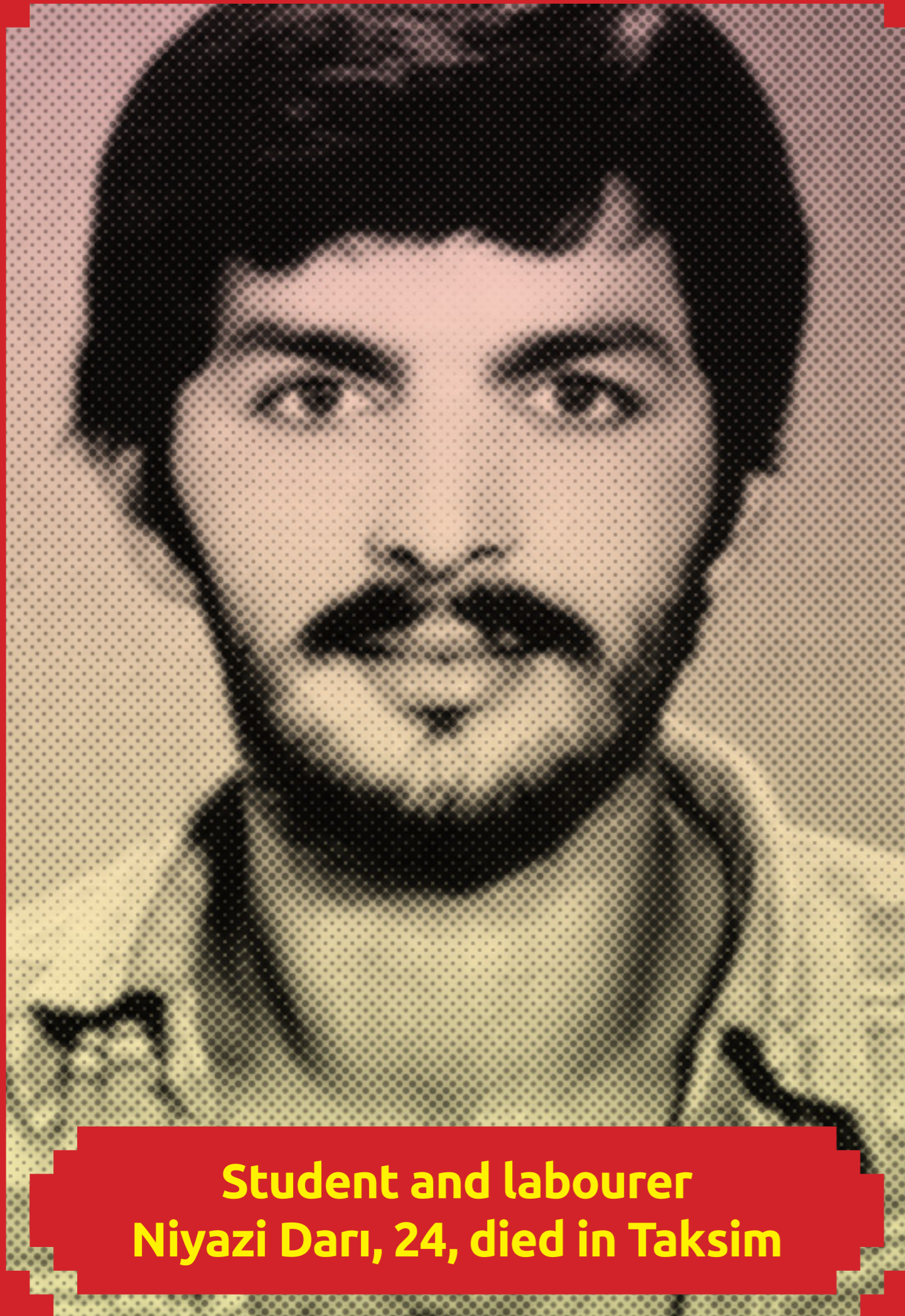
Because of the persecution he had to pack up all his things and move somewhere where he couldn't be found.

My father was still the criminal

They really persecuted us. I cut out all the articles and stories about my dad from the papers and put them in a folder. In the 1980 military coup I gave it to my mum to hide, she told me she had hidden it in the coal cellar. But I think she had to burn everything, because afterwards I couldn't find any of the documents. I only have a few left.

We lost my father, but he was still the criminal. We were [the criminals].

Unfortunately, we not only lost a family member, our darling father, but we were also persecuted for it as though we were the guilty ones...



**Student and labourer
Niyazi Dari, 24, died in Taksim**

Niyazi Dari's colleague and friend Ali Çetin, older brother Erol Dari, and high-school friend Mehmet Ali Yılmaz, who was then chair of the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey [Dev-Genç], talk about Dari's much too brief life and the ceremony at which his loved ones bid him farewell.

"He was studying and working at a factory at the same time. Like me, he made his living working at the factory. He was a revolutionary trying to make his own way in this world, on his own two feet, and who worked to change this world too. I miss him even today."
- Ali Çetin, friend

"It's obvious who's responsible, but who can you call to account? The government was behind it. Niyazi still lives within us. He's never coming back, but there's nothing to be done about it. Nothing to be done. There's no way there will ever be a trial. There's no way to bring anyone to accountability. What's done is done. And it just keeps on happening."
- Erol Dari, brother

Niyazi Dari was born in Alanya in 1953. In 1975, he got into the Department of Physical Education at the Ankara Gazi University Institute of Education. The school was under occupation by the Grey Wolves and so, in order to be able to continue his studies there, he became an active member of the Revolutionary

Youth Federation of Turkey [Dev-Genç].

He was from the Mısırlıoğulları family, a family known in Alanya for being left-leaning. Niyazi's father hadn't been able to put his other children through school and so he desperately wanted to do this for Niyazi, the third of six siblings. Niyazi's older brother too was a great support to him in this regard.



Left-Back

Niyazi Dari loved wrestling, and he also played left-back, wearing number 3, for the Alanya Kale Gençlikspor football team, which was part of the Antalya Amateur League.

On 1 May 1977 he travelled from Ankara to Istanbul together with members of the Association for the Unification and Solidarity of All Civil Servants [TÜM-

DER]. He marched behind the banner of the Revolutionary Path [Devrimci Yol]. He lost his life in Taksim. After hearing the news on the radio, Niyazi's older brother and relatives had his body brought to Alanya. Although the police tried to stop the funeral, they could not keep hundreds of Niyazi's friends from yelling out slogans and bidding him a final farewell.

Cenaze Töreni

His funeral was one of the most crowded ceremonies ever in the history of Alanya. When researching Niyazi Dari's much too brief 24-year life story, I came across a news report in the second issue of Revolutionary Path magazine to be published after 1 May 1977. There was also an interview with Niyazi Dari's older brother, Erol Dari, conducted for bianet by Beyza Kural.

I wondered who was with him on the square that day, and what Niyazi Dari's friends had to say about him. Although it did pose a challenge, I managed to reach, via Tuncer Öner, Niyazi Dari's friend Ali Çetin, who lived in the same neighbourhood and worked with him at the time at Kutlutaş Construction. I extend my thanks to them both. Ali told me about his friend Niyazi Dari, a comrade he still misses, and with whom he shared so much, even if their time together was brief.

Ali Çetin, colleague and friend:

We lived in the same neighbourhood, in Seyranbağları, Ankara. We were both

university students, and we also worked together, at the Kutlutaş Machine Industry and Iron Production Factory on the Istanbul Highway. We were studying and working at the same time. We were both welding assistants, so I mean, we were both unskilled labourers.

I was studying in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the State Academy of Architecture and Engineering Academy. Niyazi was enrolled at the Gazi Institute of Education.

Niyazi and I met in September of 1976, and in early 1977 we got him hired at the factory where I worked.

We were also both members of the Mineworkers' Union. Niyazi and I were trying to recruit other workers to the union. For as long as I knew Niyazi, he was active in the local neighbourhoods, and at the factories and schools. He had



strong social skills, and was an enterprising guy. He was a noble person.

I went to the First of May demonstration in 1977 together with the Mineworkers' Union. I did my best to get Niyazi to join me, but he told me was going to go with the Revolutionary Path, which he belonged to at the time. He marched with his own political organisation.

He was excited

Niyazi was killed by gunfire shot from above. His group was right there when it happened. The Mineworkers' Union group was closer to the podium. Life is, after all, full of coincidences, but I can't help but think that if Niyazi had been with our contingent, he might still be alive today. Of course, that's my wish for him as a friend, it's an assumption. It's your friend and you think, "If only it had happened this way instead."

Despite the dominance of the Mineworkers' Union and the Turkish Communist Party [TKP] that day, Niyazi was excited to be taking his own place on the square.

He'd been actively engaged within his own group in organising for First of May. He'd tried to convince others to take part in the demonstration. Everyone, except for the Maoist organisations, was very excited and festive that day.

A different political path

Niyazi and I would argue about which path to revolution was best, but these arguments were far more sophisticated



than the level of debate today.

We debated with one another, we tried to understand and convince each other, because we were from different political organisations. But like I said, these were more debates than arguments, between two comrades headed along the same path but with different preferences when it came to strategy.

That's what we were always talking about, whether we were in the neighbourhood or at school or at Kutlutaş. Niyazi's attitude was such that even though he wasn't aligned with the political path of the Mineworkers' Union and the Turkish Communist Party, he worked together with them, but always trying to convince those whose views diverged from his own.

He was enterprising

He and his fiancée were looking for a place to rent together. And we found them one. The people who lived in the neighbourhood where it was were more right-leaning and religious than those in Seyranbağları.

Niyazi, his fiancée, and I went to the house together.

You should have seen that shanty. They really made it someplace special, the way they furnished it and set it all up, it was adorable. I remember that house like it was yesterday. Here's a story I can tell you, to give you an idea about how enterprising Niyazi was:

In just the first couple of weeks after they moved in, Niyazi was already on excellent terms with his landlord and his neighbours.

I knew already of course that Niyazi was an extremely friendly, likeable, enterprising person, but the way he established such good relationships in that neighbourhood in such a short time really impressed me. He really stood out within his group.



The people in his group were generally a bit more distanced from the masses, they were closer to the youth of the time. So for Niyazi to be able to manage his relationships with those people so well,

that's not something everyone would have been capable of doing.

But then he had chosen that neighbourhood specifically. We lived in Kurudere, which was largely under the control of revolutionaries. When I told him we should rent him a place in Kurudere, he told me, "Ali, work needs to be done over there too, let's go there."

The funeral

After the First of May demonstrations, Niyazi Dari's body was first transported from Istanbul to Ankara. And then his fiancée, myself, and some other friends went to Alanya to bury him.

We waited at the cemetery for a while. There's this cemetery that's surrounded by pine trees and looks out onto the sea, that's where we bid our final farewell to Niyazi.

Fascists harassed us even during the funeral. While we were yelling out slogans, there were fascists just 100 meters from us, yelling out their own slogans.

Niyazi's brother told us that because Niyazi was well known there too, the fascists wouldn't be able to get away with anything. But we were sad, and full of rage, because our friend had been murdered. We thought that if they did try something, we'd take care of it.

His fiancée

Niyazi's fiancée and I kept in touch after he died. But she wasn't open to debating



politics the way Niyazi was. She was from the same political organisation as Niyazi. Later we fell out of touch for this reason. I don't recall her name right now, but I can remember her face like it was yesterday.

She was a rather beautiful woman, with sparkling eyes. And Niyazi was a handsome fellow himself. With his stature, the gaze in his eyes, his smile, he attracted attention wherever he went. And they were to be married, like I said, they were engaged.

Niyazi and I were friends for a brief time, but even in that brief amount of time, he and I established a strong bond. Niyazi got on easily with everyone, whether they had a particular political view or not.

He was friendly towards people and really put a lot of effort into trying to convince them to join the struggle. I'm not saying this in order to praise someone who has passed on, I am saying

honestly and genuinely that Niyazi was a very different, unique comrade. His death was a great loss, both for society and for me personally.

One thing about that time is that anyone who'd read so much as a book or two saw no harm in engaging in heated revolutionary debates. But Niyazi and I read a lot. We did our research. We were always trying to improve ourselves. We'd read books by Stalin, by Che, and sit and discuss them. That's the kind of wonderful comrade Niyazi was.

He was studying and working at a factory at the same time. Like me, he made his living working at the factory.

He was a revolutionary trying to make his own way in this world, on his own two feet, and who worked to change this world too.

I miss him even today.

Erol Dari, brother:

He was such a valuable person. Not only for us, but for Alanya too. The teachers and the other students at Alanya high school just loved him. Everyone loved him, he helped everyone out.

Niyazi Dari loved wrestling, and he also played left-back, wore number 3, for the Alanya Kale Gençlikspor football team, which was part of the Antalya Amateur League.

The year he was supposed to graduate, the Demirel government increased the

length of schooling from two years to three. Meanwhile he had to work too, because of our economic situation. He worked at the factory at the same time as he was studying.

Mehmet Ali Yılmaz, high-school friend:

Mehmet Ali Yılmaz, one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Path and chair at the time of Dev-Genç, describes Niyazi Darı, who he also went to high school with in Alanya, as, “a dedicated soldier of the Revolutionary Youth movement and struggle.”

“In high school, he was a friend who was left-leaning. He was one of the revolutionaries murdered on Kazancı Slope. He had gotten into the Gazi Institute of Education.”

The Gazi Institute of Education was under the occupation of the Grey Wolves, an offshoot of the Nationalist Movement Party [MHP] and they weren't letting anyone outside of their group into the school. Similar occupations of other faculties and schools at the time were supported by the coalition government of the Justice Party [AP], the Nationalist Movement Party [MHP], the National Salvation Party [MSP], and the Republican Reliance Party [CGP], known as the 1st National Front.

In his piece on anafikir.com, Mehmet Ali Yılmaz reminds readers that in those days, “revolutionary students who were kept from going to school” opposed the occupation by means of both legal measures as well in the form of mass struggle, and says that “Niyazi and other humble revolutionaries like him should not be forgotten.”

Nazan Ünalđı's friends Ayşe Seyla Ertem, Suzan Serin Kum, and Serpil Gür, spoke about Nazan's work ethic, about her notebooks that passed from hand to hand, and about her awareness and her politics.

Nazan Ünalđı was born in 1958, in Boyabat, Sinop.

She was a first-year student in the School of Foreign Languages at Istanbul University. The third child of the Ünalđı family, she went to Taksim Square on 1 May 1977 together with her older sister. She was only 19 years old when she lost her life on 1 May 1977.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of her death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of compression of the chest.

Nazan Ünalđı studied French at the School of Foreign Languages, while her friend Ayşe Seylâ Ertem studied German. Ayşe heard of her friend's death on the radio late one night. Even today, she struggles to describe the shock and pain she experienced at the time. "She was my dear, dear friend," she says of Nazan Ünalđı.

She shed countless tears in the wake of her friend's death, a friend she had sat

next to at school for three years, and whom she regretted not accompanying to the square on 1 May 1977. "My mother threatened to kill herself if I dared to go to the First of May rally that year," she says.

I reached Ayşe Seylâ Ertem via her daughter, Özge Ertem. In a photo of Özge Ertem that I came across, she is at the First of May Square on the 40th anniversary of 1 May 1977. In her hands she holds a photograph of her mother's dear, dear friend, Nazan Ünalđı.

Halime Güner helped me reach other friends of Nazan, with whom she studied at Istanbul Girls' High School. Their names were written on the class's photo composite. Some of the names have a familiar ring, and some are of people we know well.

So it will come as no surprise to learn that, in reaching out to the students of this class, which was clearly a particularly "bright" one, what I discovered affected me deeply. I found that every single one of the people I contacted to ask about their memories of Nazan Ünalđı, had built their own lives upon the foundation of the values they believed in.

They spoke of Nazan Ünalđı with high praise, as someone who had truly influenced and been an inspiration to them.

Speaking with her friends, I couldn't help but ponder what all Nazan Ünalđı, this woman who impressed everyone so greatly with her intelligence and her character, might have done had she lived. I thought first of myself at age 19, and then of all that had been taken away

**University student
Nazan Ünalđı, 19, died in Taksim**



from Nazan Ünalı. I was unable to reach any of Nazan Ünalı's family members, and so it was her friends Ayşe Seylâ Ertem, Suzan Serim Kum, and Serpil Gür who told me about her.

Ayşe Seylâ Ertem, friend:

Nazan was a wonderful friend and an excellent student. She studied every day. She always got the highest grades. She let us copy off her sometimes but she always made us study too. She did her best to teach us. She'd tell us, "If you're going to copy, fine, but at least know what you're copying!"

Nazan was often upset, but she'd never say what about. She never went into

details. She'd just shrug, saying she was in a bad mood.

We usually packed our lunches at home and gathered in the canteen to eat. There were some less fortunate students among us, boarders who got by with the little government support they received; they never had enough money to buy anything from the canteen.

Nazan was always using her own allowance to buy them sandwiches. And she'd make do with bread and cheese. Or we'd be having hotdog sandwiches, but those students would only be able to afford bread with sauce on it.

So Nazan would give them her hotdog and just eat the bread and sauce. I later

started following Nazan's example and doing this too. So the two of us always ended up eating bread with sauce during lunchtime.

Nazan's family

Nazan had no ego at all. Her friends were incredibly important to her. And she never ever talked about anyone behind their backs. Whatever she thought, she said it to your face. She was very honest.

She was her parents' third child. She had an older sister named Zülal. It was Zülal she went with on 1 May 1977. Her mother Nebahat and father Mehmet heard of her death from the radio on the bus, on their way to Boyabat.

That was the first they heard of it. Aunt Nebahat nearly fainted. Can you imagine the pain? Could there be a greater pain than that?

We cried so much

I remember that we knew the First of May Workers' Anthem by heart, and that Nazan helped me with the parts I had trouble learning. She was already going to demonstrations before 1 May 1977. She took part in political meetings as well and she was very enthusiastic about it.

My mother tried to keep me from doing all of that. She threatened to kill herself if I went to the First of May that year. She made me swear I wouldn't go. I cried so much and I felt horribly guilty about it. I was so sad that Nazan was there by herself.

I shed so many tears. Nazan's sister Zülal cried so much too. She was devastated that they'd gone to the square together but that she'd come back without Nazan.

And I cried so much too, because I'd let Nazan go without me. I'm very cool-headed in situations like that, so that's the first thought that came to my mind: that if only I'd been there, I could have saved Nazan.

Identifying the body

It was her brother-in-law who identified her, the husband of her oldest sister. She was completely unrecognizable. Which isn't surprising, since they figure she'd been crushed by a tank.

There's this sweet memory I have of her. One day Nazan came over to our house. I served leeks in olive oil, and she loved it. I went to her place a couple of weeks later and she told me she'd made me a surprise dish.

Next thing I know, I see that she's made me leeks in olive oil, my favourite dish, and she knows it's my favourite too. So she went to the trouble to cook leeks because I was coming over, and she did an excellent job of it. "Leeks in olive oil is my favourite dish as well, because it's so easy to make, no onion required," she said. We had a real laugh at that.

Her death was such a loss for us, for the country. Sadly, my dear, dear friend Nazan, she left us before being able to enjoy the true depth of friendship of that age.

*"I had a dear, dear friend,
We sat in the same row.
We shared everything
Like the bread we brought from home.
Only during language classes did we part
She off to French, me off to German
The two of us in different classrooms.
We were going to be teachers for sure
Both of us at the same school.
Together we dreamed
And even in summer holidays
We met up at every chance.
We graduated from high school
And suddenly we were separated.
She got in to the university of her choice
But it wasn't to be.
On that bloody First of May
She gave her life under a tank."*

*- Ayşe Seylâ Ertem, "R'leri Söyleyemeyen Çocuk - Bir Öğretmenin Anıları"
(The Child Who Couldn't Pronounce "R"s
- A Teacher's Memoir)*



Suzan Serim Kum, friend:

Nazan was different. She had such a good heart. She was a calm, sensitive, caring, reliable, forthright friend. What

set her apart most of all was her intelligence really. She had a profound, brilliant mind. These are the characteristics that made her unforgettable to me.

Nazan occupies a special place in my life. We were in our final year of high school. I was frequently absent from class because I was very involved in athletics. There were always lessons and exams that I missed. And so I ended up on the verge of failing my last year of high school. I was given one last chance to take a philosophy exam, and if I didn't pass, I wouldn't graduate.

Our philosophy teacher, Semahat Aköz, was a true educator. She did her best to convey to us that infinite knowledge of hers, and this of course was very hard for us. The books she recommended in preparation for the exam were different from the ones that the school and the Ministry of National Education recommended, and then there were the endless notes we had to take during her classes too.

I graduated thanks to her

As you can imagine, I was behind on class notes too because of my frequent absences. The exam was in June. Even if you memorized all of Ms. Aköz's philosophy notes, you were still bound to fail.

The reason for this is that she wanted you to answer the questions using your own words. I told Nazan how panicked I was about this exam, but I definitely did not ask her to tutor me. The next week she pulled me aside and told me she was

going to tutor me and review all of the lessons with me, and she did just that, she went over all the topics in philosophy, logic, and sociology that might show up on the exam. Plus she gave me the notes she'd taken in class so I could study those too.

Over the following days we got together a few more times and studied the topics she'd chosen. I got 9 out of 10 on that philosophy exam. So it was thanks to her that I was able graduate from Istanbul Girls' High School. That's the kind of wonderful person Nazan was.

Thoroughly different

I'll never forget, because I didn't go to her, but rather she came to me.

She understood that I needed help and even though I didn't ask her to, she showed real solidarity and helped me as much as she could. I passed her notebooks on to someone else, to help them out.

I regret that so much now. I wish I'd hung on to Nazan's notebooks.

And then one day this happened: At the time, we frequently had debates in class, where we'd talk about and discuss various topics. I recall that one day, our teacher chose "motherly love" as our debate topic.

That day Nazan addressed even the topic of motherly love in such a purely logical way that even our literature teacher was in awe of her. You could see it in the teacher's eyes.

We meanwhile berated ourselves for not having looked at it the way she had. So, you see, that's the kind of person Nazan was.

She could approach any topic from within a logical framework and discuss and debate it with you from a thoroughly different perspective.

One aspect that has made Nazan unforgettable to me is her intelligence, which I admired greatly.

Serpil Gür, friend:

If she'd lived, Nazan would have been a woman of great service to her country. I'm 63 years old now, she would have been around the same age. But it didn't happen.

Nazan and I were able to talk about so many different things, because both of us were interested in politics. And at that age, there aren't a lot of people you can discuss politics with, or question things like the state of the nation.

For example, there was the issue of migration from the rural countryside to the cities, and hemp production had been banned, and Nazan and I could sit and talk about these things. We read so much, and so we did a lot of research of course.

They were ruthlessly getting rid of teachers back then too. Nazan and I talked about this issue, considering our own teachers. We read Elementary Principles of Philosophy together.

Our philosophy teacher

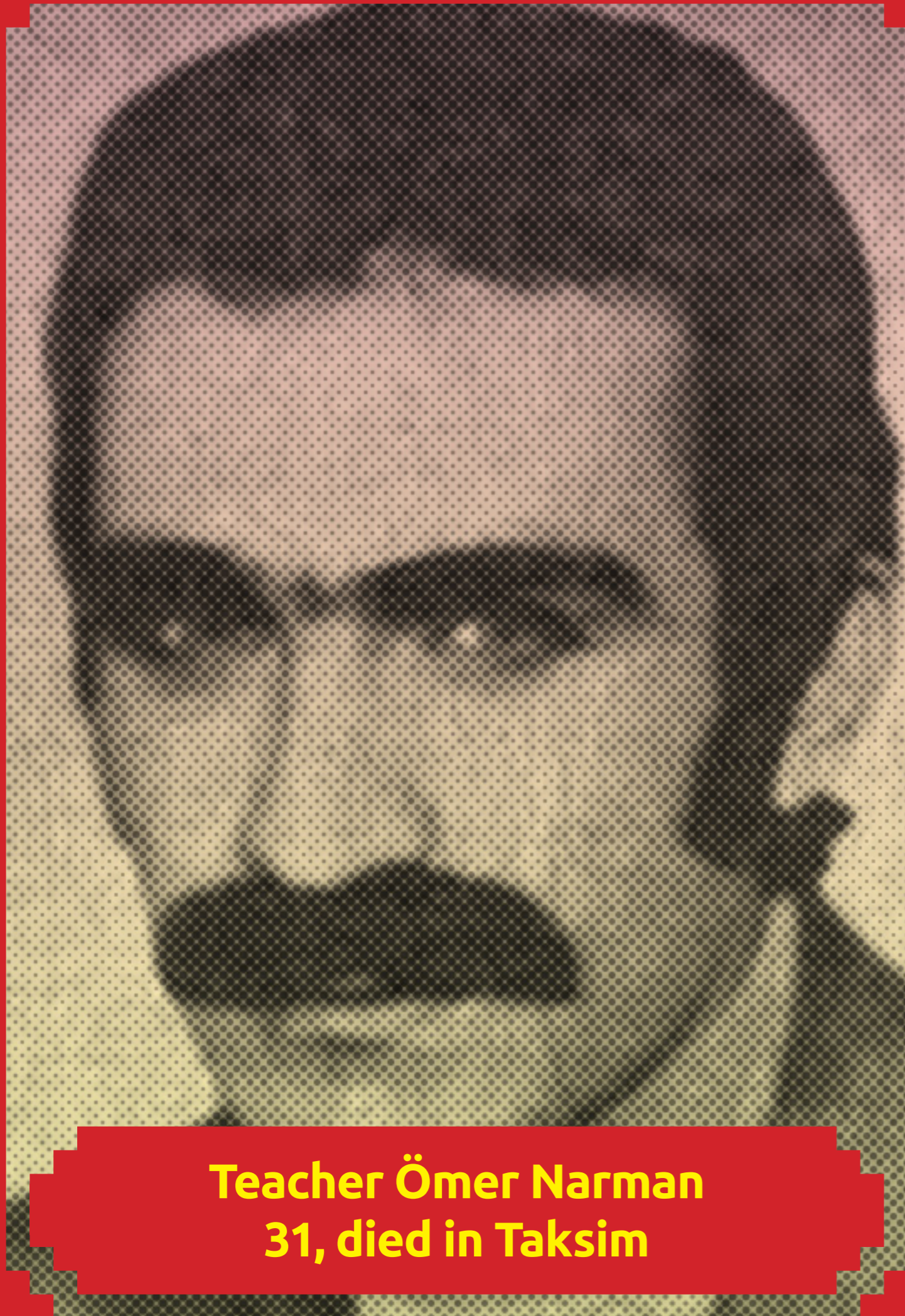
Bizi çok etkileyen bir felsefe hocamız vardı. Tartışan, okuyan çocuklar olmamızı isterdi o. Nazan da onun derslerine coşkuyla katılırdı. Sürekli soru sorardı ve bu soruların hepsini belirli bir mantık çerçevesinde sorardı. Katılımcı bir arkadaştı Nazan. Soran, sorgulayan, araştıran bir yapısı vardı her zaman.

1 Mayıs 1977'de 18 yaşımdaydım ben de. Alanda göremedim o gün Nazan'ı.

Buluşamadık. Bir sürü arkadaş birlikte gidecektik, hiçbiriyle buluşamadık.

Onunla ilgili en kötü anım da, tabii ki 1 Mayıs 1977'nin ertesi günü gazetelerde adını görmek oldu. Çok üzücü bir olaydı bu. Nazan gibi değerli pek çok insanı kaybettik o gün.

Nazan bugün yaşasa inanılmaz güzel ve iyi yerlerde olurdu. O gün ama Nazan gibi insanları aldılar elimizden. Korkunç bir şeydi yaşadığımız.



Teacher Ömer Narman 31, died in Taksim

Osman Eravcı and Cihat Kaplan spoke about their friend Ömer Narman, telling us about his family, his short life, his membership and leadership of the Alliance and Solidarity Association of all Teachers (TÖB-DER), their journey to Taksim that day and how they were unable to find their friend after the incident.

He danced the Erzurum "bar" very well. He was a funny person, a joker. He'd call everyone a "waste of space" and we'd all laugh. "Just ignore him, he's a waste of space," he'd say. He'd use it to tease people.
- Osman Eravcı, friend

A few days later we heard the names of the friends who had died on the radio. Ömer's name was read out too. After that I went to the union and I learned they had buried Ömer in the Sefaköy Cemetery.
- Cihat Kaplan, friend

Ömer Narman was born in the Narman district of Erzurum in 1946. He was one of five children - four girls and one boy - in a family of farmers. He went to the 18 Mart Primary School, the Narman Middle School and then graduated from the Erzurum Yavuz Selim Teaching College. He taught in Doğubayazıt in the Ağrı region, and also in the village of Şehitler near Narman; his last teaching position was in Istanbul. He was a board member of the Istanbul branch of TÖB-DER. He died in Taksim on 1 May 1977.

How did he die?

According to the autopsy report that we obtained from the Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (TÜSTAV), the cause of death was rib fractures caused by compression of the abdomen and chest, accompanied by mechanical asphyxia.

In other words, he died of suffocation resulting from a lack of oxygen. The report also states that the scratches on Ömer Narman's body may have been caused by falling or being pushed to the ground during the crush.

Reaching his relatives

It wasn't easy to find Ömer Narman's family and friends. With the help of Yıldırım Kaya, member of parliament for Ankara of the People's Republican Party (CHP), we learned that his last place of residence was Küçükçekmece in Istanbul.

With the help of Sami Evren, former president of the Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK) and a member of TÖB-DER in the period before its closure, we found Ömer Narman's sister, Çiğdem Narman, and his friend, Cihat Kaplan. Unfortunately health issues meant that it was not possible for us to speak to Ms. Narman.

Cihat Kaplan, former Regional Director of Social Services for Erzurum and legal advisor to the board of the Kocaeli branch of the Health Workers Union (SES), and Osman Eravcı, former member of the administration of Confederation of

Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), spoke about their friend, Ömer Narman, who died at the age of 31.

Cihat Kaplan, friend:

I was a student in the Turkish Department of the Atatürk Institute of Education in Fikirtepe, Istanbul. I was living in Gaziosmanpaşa with my older brother, Mehmet Kaplan. Mehmet was the DİSK representative for the Erka Brake Pad factory. A relative, Osman Eravcı, was a member of the DİSK administration. Through the two of them I met Ömer Narman in the Aksaray branch of TÖB-DER.



I met the late Talip Öztürk, president of TÖB-DER, and Kemal Türkler, the president of DİSK around the same time. I would see Ömer when I went to TÖB-DER in Aksaray in my free time, or at

teachers' demonstrations. The last time we met, together with my brother Mehmet and Osman Eravcı, we decided what we would do for the First of May.

They were going to join the demonstration on 1 May 1977 with their own friends.

That day

That day, I went to Aksaray early. Ömer and I both joined the TÖB-DER contingent and started walking from Aksaray; when we reached Taksim we were attacked. I remember the sound of the gunshots and the police sirens to this day. In the square, there were people who had been shot, injured, crushed. It was so sudden we didn't understand what had happened.

When everyone started running away, I fell to the ground. People ran over me. A few friends pulled me to the side, semi-conscious. My clothes were torn and I was covered in blood.

I couldn't walk. After coming to a little, I tried to walk home, and I reached Gaziosmanpaşa around 1am. Osman and my brother were there, they were injured too, but Ömer wasn't there.

Political persecution

Ömer was the only son, so his father, Lütfi, and his mother, Seher, really doted on him. In fact, when Ömer was born, they sacrificed a load of animals. Ömer's grandfather was martyred when his throat was slit during the liberation of Narman.

In 1968, after he got married, Ömer requested to be transferred away from Erzurum to escape the political persecution there, and he went to Istanbul. His wife refused to go to Istanbul, so they separated. His wife remarried but Ömer continued his life without ever remarrying. When he arrived in Istanbul in 1968, he settled in the Sultan Murat neighbourhood in Sefaköy and started teaching at the Sefaköy Sultan Murat Primary School.

Final resting place

Ömer made important contributions to the teachers' movement. His whole life he was active in the Teachers' Union of Turkey [TÖS] and then in TÖB-DER. Until he was taken from us on 1 May 1977.

After 1 May 1977, he was buried in Istanbul. We had a grave made for him in the Sefaköy Cemetery so that his mother, Seher, knows where he lies.

Osman Eravcı, friend:

My older brother knew Ömer better than I did, but my brother has also passed away. Ömer was from the same part of the country as us.

What I remember about him is limited, but I want him to be remembered, I don't want such a brilliant teacher to be forgotten.

What I remember most of Ömer's physical appearance is his eyes. Ömer sparkled. He had bright blue eyes. Auburn hair. He was handsome. He had a limp.

His father, Lütfi, would collect eggs from the villages to sell. He'd travel round the villages to sell what he could.

But he raised his five children without relying on anyone else. He lost his only son, the apple of his eye, who he doted on, at the age of 31.

Abdullah Sidal recounts the story of his brother's short life, how they found his body three days later, how they were prevented from taking him to Dersim, and how the graves of those lost in 1977 were destroyed.

Ali Sidal was born in 1959, his place of birth is registered as Nazimiye in Dersim. He was a labourer. Had he lived, he would today have been 61 years old.

Ali Sidal was just 18 when he lost his life in Taksim Square, after coming to Istanbul to provide financial support to his family. He had asked his boss for permission to be at the First of May demonstrations, and his boss had told him to go, that it was his right to be there. So that is what he did.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of Ali Sidal's death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the chest. The report also stated that the external cuts and bruises on his body may have been caused by falling or having been pushed to the ground.

To hear Ali Sidal's story, I first contacted his relative, Haydar Sidal. Haydar Sidal remembers Ali's long hair and flared trousers. He would sometimes see Ali Sidal when he visited his hometown of Nazimiye.

As far as he can remember, he says, Ali was a "revolutionary." I am also grateful to Haydar Sidal for having helped me reach one of Ali's siblings.

The youngest of six siblings, Abdullah Sidal was 7 when he lost his older brother, of whom he speaks fondly. He tells me everything he remembers about him, and what he has heard about him from his older sister too.

Abdullah Sidal, brother:

We grew up in a poor family. We were six siblings: four girls, two boys. I am the youngest.

My older brother Ali went to Istanbul when he was about 16 or 17. He didn't even get to live there a year before he died. He never knew Istanbul life.

He was staying in Nurtepe, with our oldest sister.

He went to the First of May rally with his friends because it was Labour Day.

He was trying to save someone

I am now 50 years old. One of his friends who was there with him that day told me that my older brother Ali was up in the frontlines. Then there were gunshots. Once everyone began fleeing, a tank aimed for one of the women in his group of friends and drove straight towards her.

To save her, my brother Ali threw himself in front of the tank. At least, that's what

**Labourer Ali Sidal
18, died in Taksim**

we saw when we looked at his body; he had been crushed.

A three-day search

For three days we couldn't find his body. Then some journalists let us know that there were 6-7 dead bodies in the basement of a building in Taksim.

They told us to go and check. They had been tossed one on top of the other. That's where we found my brother.

By the time we found him his skin had changed colour, it had grown darker; his body had been just lying there for three days, after all. My older sister identified him by his front teeth.

My dad still lived in the village back then. We were extremely poor.

He had never visited Istanbul. When he finally did, it was to find my brother's dead body.

First of May excitement

My parents had built a house in the village. That's why they had sent my brother to Istanbul, to earn money.

He'd only finished primary school. He didn't expect much from life but perhaps if he had lived, he might have had other hopes.

He might have got married, had children, maybe he'd have found a good job. The only thing I remember him being excited about was being at the square on 1 May.

"Terrorist"

It's so upsetting. I was little when my brother died, but my mum always told me about him. After my brother died, they called him a terrorist. Just like they did to Berkin Elvan and other children.

A year after my brother was martyred, we received his military service conscription papers. My father still hadn't registered his death. He went and told them, "He fell a martyr on 1 May."

He was the best big brother. He loved animals. He'd feed them, take care of them. He just adored them.

Attacked while visiting Taksim Monument

He always wrote to us. I remember in one of his letters he wrote, "Take a photograph of Abdullah when he comes to Nazimiye and post it to me." He missed us a lot while he was in Istanbul.

I visited the Taksim Monument a couple of times to leave flowers in memory of my brother and was attacked. I was so frightened I didn't go again. But I've been to every First of May Commemoration.

We lost both our parents in 2016, within a fortnight of each other. First my dad was unwell, so I brought him from Dersim to Istanbul.

My dad passed away. My mum was left on her own in the village so she started taking our goats out to graze herself.

Mum

She broke her leg one day. I took her to hospital too. She didn't know dad had passed away. She asked how he was, I told her he was fine.

Then she started talking about my older brother Ali. "My heart still aches with pain," she said.

"When I die, do nothing. Just bring soil from Ali's grave and place it on mine," she said.

No grave

We had buried my brother in the Alibeyköy Cemetery. I went to the Cemeteries Directorate and was told that because the burial plots for the deaths of 1977 hadn't been purchased, the graves had been destroyed.

So my brother doesn't have a grave. Someone else has been buried where he

was. Not because there was no choice but because of poverty really.

We were going to take him to Dersim

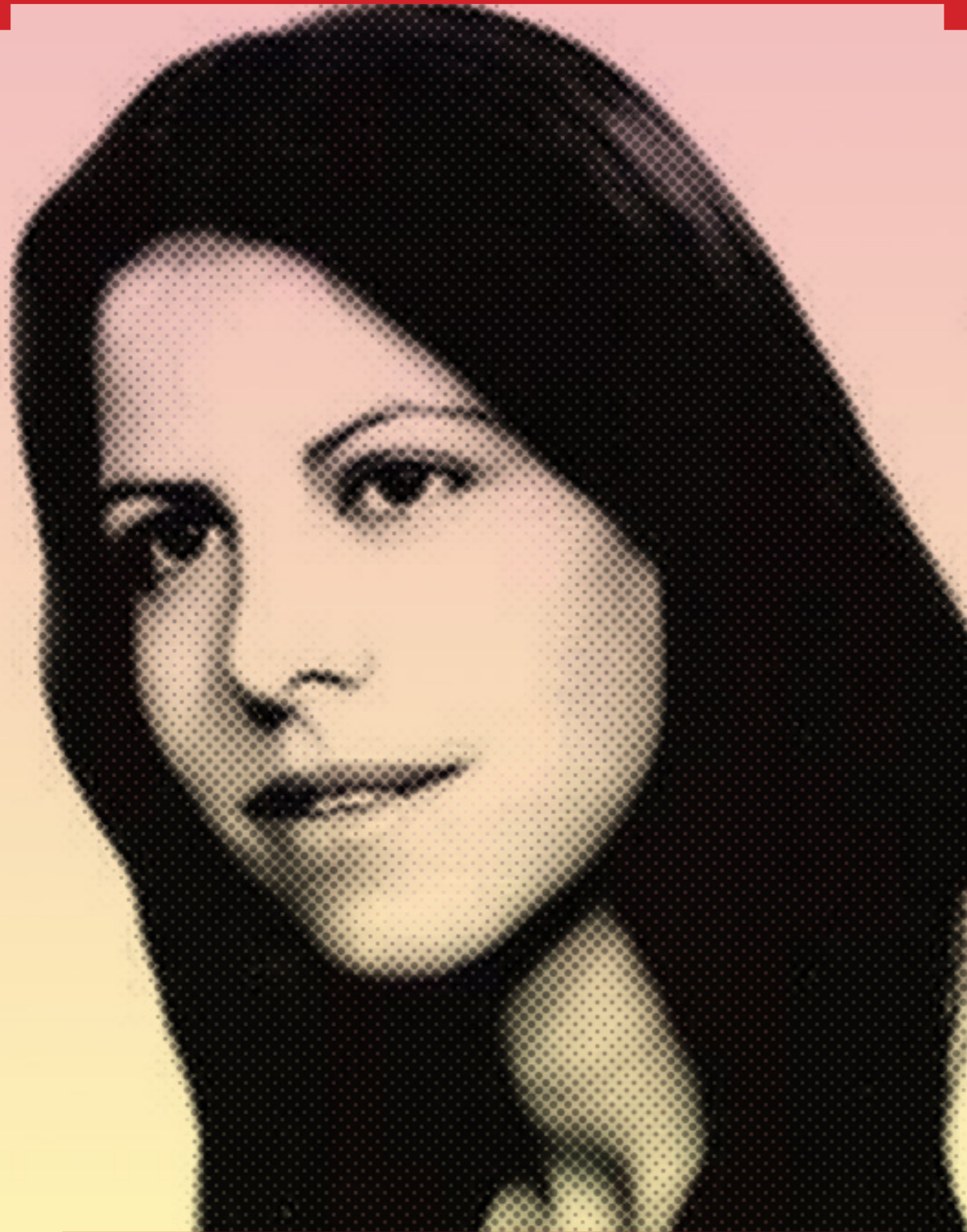
My father was going to bring my brother to Dersim but it wasn't allowed. They said if we did that there would be a riot, that it would stir up trouble.

In fact, a police chief slapped my dad in the face. He told him, "If you try to take the body, you won't see your dead [son], or his grave."

That's the state my father was in when he took my brother to Alibeyköy.

No one looked out for him

They called him a terrorist, no one stood up for him. Neither could we. If we had, they would have ended our lives too. Even though we never spoke out, we've still faced many difficulties just because we're Ali Sidal's family.



Medical nurse Kıymet Kocamiş, 25, died in Taksim

Nurcan Kunt tells us the story of her aunt, Kıymet Kocamiş, whose life was sadly cut short, how her aunt fought to forge her own life, and why she was in Taksim on 1 May 1977.

Medical nurse Kıymet Kocamiş was born in 1952, and worked at the Üsküdar Zeynep Kâmil Hospital.

In 1976 she married a military officer. When she lost her life on 1 May 1977, Nurse Kıymet was four months pregnant.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of Kıymet Kocamiş's death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the abdomen and chest. The report also said that the external cuts and bruising on her body may have been caused by falling or having been pushed to the ground.

Kadriye or Kıymet?

It was a challenge to track down information on Kıymet Kocamiş. Her name appeared on the lists, including that of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), as Kadriye Duman. The name Kıymet Kocamiş appeared in parentheses; this was the name she was known by on the island of Bozcaada, where she grew up. No one

knew her as Kadriye. The local newspapers in Bozcaada gave the name Kıymet Kocamiş in all their reports.

Upon continuing my research based on the latter name, I came across an interesting article entitled, "Was Kıymet a communist? Was she an anarchist? Was Kıymet protesting at Taksim Square?". It seemed that in the small settlement of Bozcaada, Kıymet Kocamiş's death on 1 May 1977 had been discussed at length: What happened? How did it happen? Why did she die? Was she a unionist?

Funeral Arrangements

Although it wasn't easy, the Kocamiş family was able to claim their daughter's body and take it to Bozcaada, where they laid her to rest in a quiet ceremony. In a discussion among the people of Bozcaada, it was revealed that a nurse from the island had died on 1 May 1977. For this part of the story, I am indebted to Nejat



Işık, Türkan Işık and Azize Karabıyık. I would also like to express my gratitude for their support in helping me find Kıymet Kocamiş's older sister, Nimet Biçer, and Nimet's children.

Arranging Kıymet Kocamiş's grave was what they did next. It was a collaborative effort. The painter Cemil Onay designed the gravestone, which was then made by ceramic artist Nur Sütçü, while a construction company provided the necessary materials.

Commemoration

From that day on, the islanders march to her grave every year on the First of May. The cortege was initially made up of 10-15 people, but in 2013 this number reached 100, when workers from the Çanakkale branch of DiSK joined. Mayor of Bozcaada, Akan Can Yılmaz, renamed the street where her family resided "Kıymet Kocamiş Street."

Although health issues meant I was unable to speak with Kıymet's sister Nimet Biçer, I did get to listen to her niece, Nurcan Kunt, who had heard her mother's stories about her aunt, and also had her own memories of her from childhood. Nurcan Kunt was 6 years old when her aunt, Kıymet Kocamiş, died.

Nurcan Kunt, niece:

On the list of those who died on 1 May 1977, my aunt's name appears as Kadriye Duman, but everyone in Bozcaada knew her as Kıymet. Kıymet Kocamiş. Duman is the surname she took after getting married.

It's difficult for me to speak about Aunt Kıymet. It's difficult for all of us. Her loss was devastating to our family. Because my aunt had a very happy life. She'd got an education and become a professional, a nurse, like she'd always wanted, though she really had to struggle to achieve this, of course. It was my aunt's fate to lose her life that day.

The only one to go to school

I remember her as being cheerful, soft-spoken, considerate, talkative, and full of jokes. My mum always talks about how she avoided sorrow and grief, how she was always smiling and trying to put a smile on other people's faces as well. She joked around with them all the time, and gave everyone nicknames.

They were three sisters, but my aunt was the only one to go to school. My grandfather was a farmer; he only had enough for her, she was the only one he could afford to send to school. Well, that, and of course the conditions were different back then too. My grandfather was of the mind that girls didn't need to go to school, that it was pointless really. That's why my mum didn't go to school. She wanted to be a teacher, but she wasn't able to. My aunt, though, went out of her way to go to school. My mum always says my aunt got her way. But she really had to put up a fight to get it.

She was brave

I think courage played a huge part in my aunt's success, I mean, in her being able to leave behind this small town and go to

Istanbul as a nurse. They say she wasn't afraid, that she didn't really fear anything. She just put her mind to it, said she'd make it somehow, and went to school and left the island behind.

My aunt went to the Çanakkale Vocational School of Health. When she graduated, she took up her first post in Istanbul, but unfortunately, she wasn't able to work for long. Just five or six years. And then there was her long engagement, followed by marriage, which she didn't get to enjoy for long either. She was pregnant when she died, she was expecting a baby.

She was with her husband that day, but we never saw him again after she died.

Her husband never showed

This was one of the things that upset my grandparents the most. Her husband never showed up after my aunt's death. After all, she was carrying his child and it had been a marriage of love.

We'd gone to Istanbul, the whole family, for their wedding ceremony. My parents didn't want to take us but I cried so much they changed their mind. Because I really loved my aunt. And even though my aunt was incredibly busy with all the shopping and preparations, she still made the time to take me by the hand and show me around. They had a nice house, at the top of a hill.

She was extremely caring, a good person. My grandparents did farming and had a vineyard on Bozcaada, and my mum and



aunt were expected to help them out. My aunt was always finding excuses to get out of work though, my mum laughs every time she talks about it. You know how younger children always receive the most affection, well, she used that to her advantage.

She would run off to be with her friends, and my mum would do her work too so that she wouldn't get in trouble.

My mum and my aunt always got on so well anyway, I don't recall them ever quarrelling. "I had to put up with all her fooling around, her loafing about, she'd get away with it while I'd take the blame and get told off, but I loved her more than my own life," my mum always says.

She would spend her salary on us 1 May 1977

She was a thoughtful person. She maintained her bond with my mum and my other aunt. She went to Istanbul but she always wrote to them. She always thought of her family, she had secured her own livelihood but she worried about her family and believed she should help them out too. She didn't earn much but she tried to help everyone out. There's one thing I remember really well: Whenever she visited, she always brought each of us a present. She never came without gifts. One time she bought me a coat. I have a photograph of me with that coat on. After she started working, she spent most of her salary on my grandparents. Whenever the three of them went out together, she'd be sure to buy both of them new clothes. She was always trying to do things that would make us happy.

Her being there on 1 May was a coincidence. She was out on a Sunday. They had a friend from Bozcaada who lived somewhere near Kazancı Slope, and she and her husband were visiting that friend. They'd known each other since they were kids, and they'd found each other again in Istanbul and went on seeing each other. So, the friend was from Bozcaada too, you see; she'd married and moved to Istanbul.

They saw their friend that day, chatted, drank tea. On the way back they saw the crowd. But they didn't think anything of it and carried on walking. A short while after they entered the crowd, panic erupted. In fact, another friend of my aunt from Bozcaada saw her there that day and told her, "Kiymet, you should get out of here, things aren't looking good." They turned down a side street, but couldn't get out. Then they went down another street, but it was no use. They wanted to leave but couldn't. They got stuck in the crowd. When people started fleeing my aunt fell down. Her husband was hit on the head and was injured too, so he couldn't help her up.

It was sheer coincidence

It was only by sheer coincidence that my aunt was there that day. We celebrate the First of May altogether as a family, we respect it. It is, after all, Labour Day. But that wasn't my aunt's motivation that day. She wasn't a unionist or a member of any organisation. That's why no one but her family can tell you about my aunt.

And the people of Bozcaada, people who know us.

She was just getting started

It was utter chaos when her body arrived in the village. It's a small place after all, people said all sorts of things. But everyone was deeply sad.

My grandmother's life was never the same after my aunt died. Unfortunately, she just couldn't pull herself together. She was beset by illness. People on the island talked about my aunt, wondering if she was a unionist, what she was doing there that day, and this upset my grandmother even more.

Her friends told the family that she wasn't there on purpose, that they had made plans to get together that Sunday.

Now, on the island, my aunt is commemorated every year on the First of May. They hold a march to her grave.

My mother still grieves whenever she visits my aunt's grave. It's rather traumatic for her, that her little sister passed away before she did.

Before 1 May 1977, my aunt and the whole family had a very happy life. I wish it had never happened. Her life was left half finished. She was only just getting started, she'd only just left the island...



Dilek Balcı talks about what she herself remembers and what others have said about her father, about her father's death, his joy, his passion for photography, about how her family has survived without a father, and how her mother put four children through school on her own.

Kadir Balcı was born in Rize in 1942. He worked as a counterperson at a bakery.

He was 35 years old when he lost his life. He worked at the bakery across from the French Consulate on İstiklal Street at the entrance to Taksim Square.

He'd gone up onto the terrace to watch the demonstration and to call out to people, inviting them into the bakery. He lost his life when he was hit by a bullet shot from below.

According to the autopsy, Kadir Balcı died as a result of a gunshot injury. The autopsy report states the cause of death as internal bleeding resulting from a bullet wound that damaged the liver and heart.

Reaching the family

I was able to reach Kadir Balcı's daughter, Dilek Balcı, thanks to journalist Neşe Yeşiloğlu, who had spoken with Dilek and her twin sister Özlem Balcı in 2015. Dilek Balcı was just five years old when she

lost her father, but she remembers him from both her own memories, as well as from what her mother told her about him. She recalls what a joyful and playful person he was, and how much he loved to take photographs. She says it is perhaps from her father that she inherited her own passion for photography...

Dilek Balcı tells us in her own words about Kadir Balcı's 35 years of life, about how the family was thrown into turmoil following his death, and the difficulties they experienced.

Kadir Balcı's daughter speaks

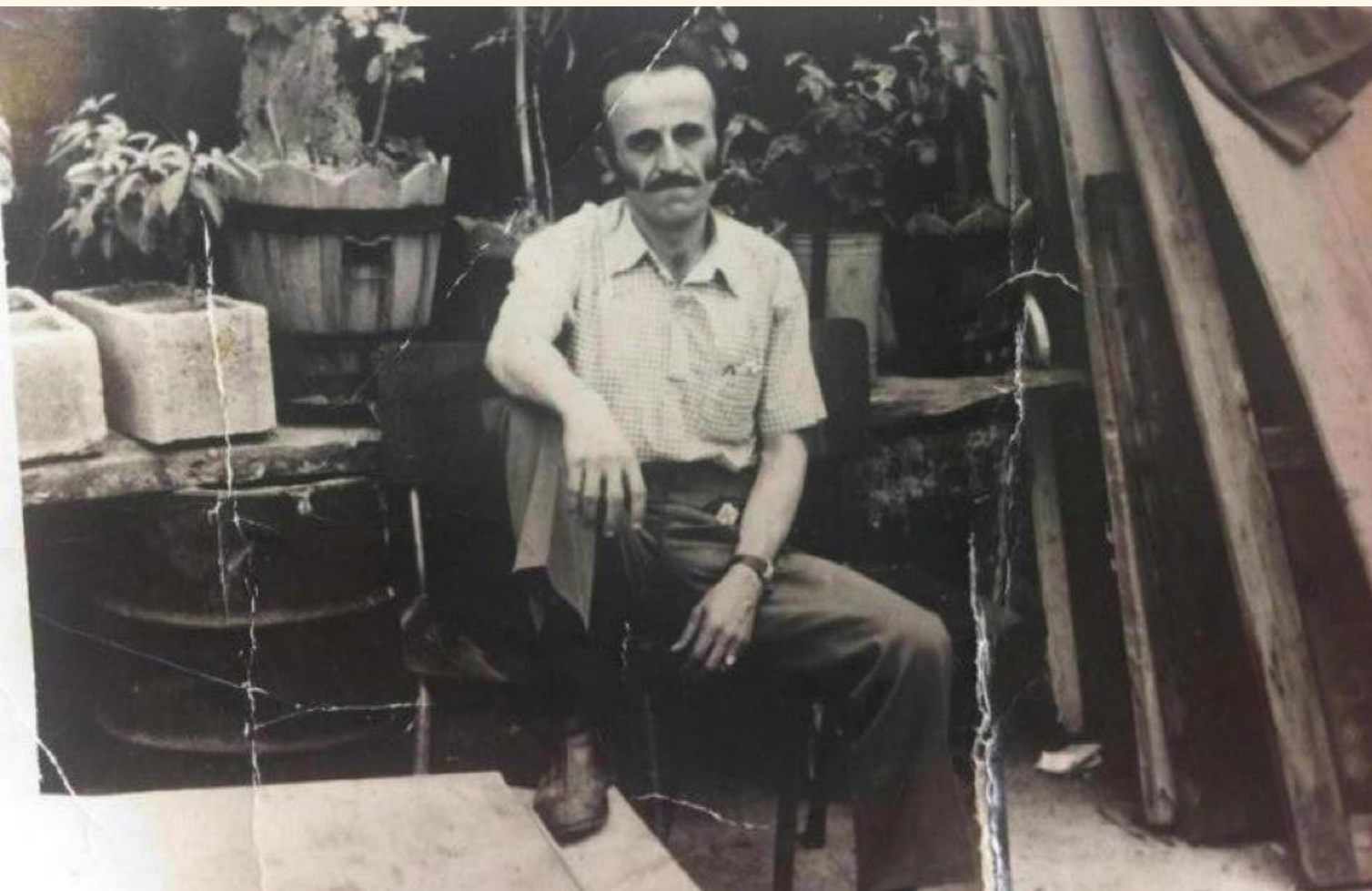
There used to be a bakery across from the French Consulate, and he worked there as a counterperson. That day he'd gone up onto the terrace to watch the demonstration and to call out to people to come back into the bakery. My dad was struck by a bullet shot from below and lost his life right there.

I was very young when I lost my dad, and as far as I myself recall, and from what I remember my mum and his friends saying, he was someone who was full of life. He loved taking photos. I get my own passion for photography from him, I think. He was very funny, always playing jokes on people. That's how everyone spoke of him after his death too.

We really struggled

There were four of us kids. The only thing our father was able to leave us was his pension. It was such a struggle for my

**Counterperson Kadir Balcı
35, died in Taksim**



mum, especially back then, to raise four kids at once. She wasn't equipped to take on the financial burden of it by herself. I won't even speak of the emotional burden.

For years the bread in our home came from the local bakery. Our clothes were hand-me-downs from our relatives or our neighbours. That's what we wore.

I can say that we grew up with the help of the people around us.

Let me put it this way: We're from Rize, and most of our food for the winter would come from Rize.

But we'd buy olives, for example, and we'd nibble at them to make them last as long as possible.

We were all able to finish school

My dad had bought a house before he died. There were still payments that had to be made on it. My mum would go to Tophane every month and make those payments. Back then of course we weren't aware of the gravity of the situation. Later we all came to understand that she had raised us under the most challenging of conditions, herself suffering such tremendous pain.

We were all able to finish school. My mum made that possible, despite the difficult circumstances. Our education was an advantage. My little sister and I both graduated from the School of Fine Arts, and we both work in design now. My older sister and older brother are

university graduates too. My older sister is a certified public accountant in Germany now, and my older brother works at a large firm.

All of us have good lives, but the conditions we lived under back then...

It's thanks to my mum, thanks to the fight she put up, that we have the good lives we have today.

1 May was taboo

1 May was taboo for us. We were forbidden from going to the First of May demonstrations. And so I never went. I really wanted to, but my mum never let me.

And for years I was unable to gather the courage to go. I was able to visit Gezi Park only after my mum passed away. And after that, I was able to go to the First of May demonstrations just once. That was in 2014. Exactly 37 years after my dad's death.

After my dad lost his life in Taksim, his

body was sent back to Rize, as is our tradition, because his family is there. He was buried in Rize.

My mum wanted to go to Rize too when she was sick. We lost her also, in 2000, to stomach cancer. I mean, the cumulation of so much pain and suffering eventually got to her, and so that's how we lost my mum.

Why him?

For years it seemed unfair to me that my dad died the way he did. I was always asking myself: Why him? Why so much pain? Why all these difficulties?

But as I grew up, I decided that some things have to happen in order to make what comes after possible. There have even been times when I've thought it was a good thing my dad was there that day, and that he died the way he did.

I hope that we come to see brighter days, more fortunate times, but I just don't know. I can only hope that we, all of us together, get to see those days.



Student Hacer İpek Saman 24, died in Taksim

Mukaddes Erdoğan, Hacer Elçin, and Talia Esenyel tell us about their hardworking, modest, quiet, and faithful friend, Hacer İpek Saman, during her years at high school and university, and how they found her grave only 12 years ago.

Hacer İpek Saman was a university student, born in 1953.

When she was killed on 1 May 1977, she was in her final year of study in the Faculty of Pharmacy at Istanbul University. Had she lived, she would have graduated in 1977.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of Hacer İpek Saman's death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the abdomen and chest. The report also stated that the external cuts and bruising on her body may have been caused by falling or having been pushed to the ground. Hacer İpek Saman was 24 years old when she lost her life on 1 May 1977.

Her friends describe her as "a calm and quiet person." They remember her petite frame and her red, plaited hair. But they also remember the words of one of her friends from the group that published the magazine Halkın Yolu (People's Path): "Don't be fooled by how calm she seems."

Theatre group

A death notice for Hacer İpek Saman was published in the newspapers. It was submitted by her friends at the "Merhaba Gösteri Topluluğu" (Hello Performance Troupe), a theatre group to which Hacer İpek belonged. However, the troupe members I was able to reach unfortunately had no information on her, they only remembered seeing her a handful of times.

Commemoration

It was only 12 years ago that Hacer İpek's friends from Halkın Yolu were able to locate Hacer İpek Saman's grave in the Zindan Arkası Cemetery in Kulaksız. Her friends have gathered by her grave in commemoration each year ever since. One year they met her family there, but they later fell out of touch. Even though her boyfriend from back then now lives abroad, I learned that he visits Hacer İpek's grave every year.

I listened to Hacer İpek's story from her friends Mukaddes Erdoğan, Hacer Elçin, and Talia Esenyel.

Mukaddes Erdoğan, friend:

I went to the Çamlıca High School for Girls [Çamlıca Kız Lisesi] as a boarding student on a scholarship. Hacer İpek was like me; she lived in Istanbul but was enrolled as a scholarship boarding student too. We were not in the same class, in fact there was a year between us. I graduated a year after her. She graduated in the 1969-1970 academic year.

Modest

There was a group of scholarship boarders. But because we were in different classes, the groups weren't always close. But we were the permanent boarding students. Hacer İpek had her own group of friends. These were wealthier children than us, the children mostly of high bureaucrats I'm guessing. I would come across Hacer during break time or in the dining hall. Hacer drew attention to herself immediately within her group of friends. Her group was fun and loud and when I come to think of it, they sort of looked down on the rest of us. But Hacer wasn't like that at all. Hacer was modest, down to earth, quiet.

Kind

She had red hair. And freckles on her face that really suited her. She didn't share the attitude of the girls in the senior year but was tolerant and kind to everyone.

Hacer got into the faculty of pharmacy after graduating from high school.

I had a classmate who studied at the same faculty as Hacer. As the two of us talked about Hacer, we came to realise that she was just as quiet in university as she had been in high school. That's why her death on 1 May 1977 was so talked about at the university.

Friends with Nazan Ünal

A friend from school once said, "She and Nazan were inseparable at university, she and Nazan went to the rally together that day." She was talking about Nazan Ünal. Nazan Ünal also died on 1 May 1977.

As members of People's Path [Halkın Yolu], People's Liberation [Halkın Kurtuluşu], and People's Unity [Halkın Birliği], we couldn't even enter the square that day. We had friends from the People's Path who knew her, but no one who knew Hacer was able to enter the square that day. In fact, people said that Nazan was marching with the People's Path. But how they managed to enter the square on their own, no one knows.

We only know that they went together and that they entered the square together. Perhaps they died together...

An elegy

I had a friend, she was a lawyer who arrived at Selimiye Prison in the autumn of 1980, I had been there since the summer. She knew Hacer from university too, they'd stayed in the same dorm. She told me about a song, an elegy that was written for Hacer.

Now as members of the Socialist Women's Assemblies [SKM], we visit Hacer at her grave each year.

This is all the information I have to share, and I know it isn't much but because women are widely disregarded in politics

and pushed aside, every bit of information about them is invaluable. I hope that as an outcome of this project, this information about Hacer will be recorded and become part of history.

Hacer Elçin, friend:

I didn't know Hacer that well. We were part of the same circle, the same magazine. We were comrades. She came to the Petroleum Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers' Union [Lastik-İş] strike a couple of times. Back then, students wanted to carry out joint initiatives with the working class. Hacer was one of them. She had red plaited hair. She was a student at the Faculty of Pharmacy.

Hacer was a very quiet person. I remember being in awe of how tranquil she was. She'd just look on, watching the men as they raised their voices and yelled at each other while debating amongst themselves.

Her grave was found 12 years ago

We didn't know where she was buried. I found her grave just 12 years ago. In the Kulaksız neighbourhood of Kasımpaşa [in Istanbul].

We asked the Cemeteries Directorate for help. They took out these huge books. We thought she would have been registered in the books on 2 May, 1977, so that's where we asked them to look. And we finally found her. Since then we visit and commemorate her every year on 1 May.



Her boyfriend visits every year

One year while we were visiting, her relatives were there too. They said they were close relatives. We chatted with them. I even took their numbers but I lost them. They told us that Hacer's boyfriend of the time was living in the US and that he came to Turkey every year to visit her grave. I was moved.

Her family was touched to see us there. During the commemoration I raised my fist, and then looked around to see that a few other women had joined me. It was an incredible moment, I can't describe it.

She was a militant

I only saw Hacer a couple of times, but I can say this much about her: She was extremely intelligent. She was a student at the Faculty of Pharmacy, which itself says something.

Hacer was a reader of Halkın Yolu. I don't know what sort of family she came from. I know that she was devoted to the struggle. Another friend from the magazine circle, Mehmet, who is also a relative of mine, once said about her: "Don't be fooled by her calm and quiet appearance, she is a militant comrade."

My comrade

I am grateful that Hacer was my comrade.

I would like to thank you for doing this work to track down these stories. No one from the press had contacted me about Hacer before. Your effort to highlight the

stories of the women who lost their lives on 1 May 1977, and make those stories heard, is invaluable. And what's more, you're undertaking this 43 years after the fact. I am sure it means a lot to her comrades and her family that other people get to know Hacer and her story.

Talia Esenyel, friend:

Hacer and I didn't study at the same faculty, but we were from the same magazine circle. That's how I knew her. She was the kind of person who generally stood to the side and observed what was going on around her.

Hacer was a petite person. She had a calm disposition. I was often quite loud for example, that may be why her calmness has stuck in my memory. She usually plaited her hair.

The Faculty of Pharmacy was largely populated by leftists. There were very few right-wingers.

On 1 May 1977, we made our posters and completed all our other preparations. We gathered at the park in Saraçhane, under the flag of the People's Path. Hacer was at the back.

We arrived at the park early and waited there for about two or three hours. I remember how excited everyone was when we started marching; people were greeting us from their balconies, and applauding us. It was this remarkable feeling of excitement. And that was so important. People were inviting revolutionaries into their homes.

Severely injured

Then we heard Hacer had been shot. She was taken to the hospital by a rally steward, and that's where she died. I think she was shot in the head. Her body had been severely injured. I remember there was blood on the outside of the coffin as it was being carried. Blood was dripping from the coffin. It was extremely upsetting.

The funeral wasn't all that crowded, but there was still a good number of us. There weren't that many people because so many had been taken into custody the day after the First of May rally, and others had to go into hiding. Still, it was a decent-sized crowd. But the people, the public didn't greet us with the same

enthusiasm as they had on 1 May. They were more anxious now. We marched to the cemetery and buried Hacer there. We had a lot of friends who knew her well but most of them were arrested and we lost touch, or some of them moved abroad. And then we had other friends who also lost their lives.

A silent hero

I am deeply touched that you contacted us in order to write Hacer's story. Because the 70's have heroes, but the generation of '78 doesn't have its own particular hero. For Hacer to be remembered as a hero today would make me immensely happy.

Because Hacer was just that, a silent hero.



Factory worker Kahraman Alsancak, 29, died in Taksim

Retired teacher Mehmet Nuri Tozak tells us about meeting Uzel Factory worker Kahraman Alsancak on Taksim Square on 1 May 1977, what they talked about, how they found his body, and Alsancak's spirit of solidarity and generosity.

Kahraman Alsancak was born in 1948. He was from the village of Cumhuriyet in Manyas, Balıkesir.

A worker at the Uzel factory, Alsancak was only 29 years old when he lost his life in Taksim on 1 May 1977. He was married and the father of two.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of Kahraman Alsancak's death was cerebral oedema due to blunt trauma to the head along with mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the abdomen and chest.

The village house where he grew up still stands, although it is now on the verge of collapse. Kahraman Alsancak is commemorated every year on the village's social media accounts.

Legacy

Unfortunately, I was unable to reach Kahraman Alsancak's children, but I was able to contact their niece, Berna Gülümser, and her husband, Mahir Babur.

I learned that Kahraman Alsancak was the maternal uncle of Berna's father. Berna recalled from her childhood that his photo hung on the wall of her grandmother's house, as a "Martyr of the First of May".

Although Berna's husband, Mahir Babur is a quite distant relative of Kahraman Alsancak, he was also interviewed by the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) in 2010-2011 during their efforts to reach the families of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977.

Mahir Babur went down on record as saying: "Because we are now the third generation, there is no information about him that I can give you.

At one point everyone was calling us, but after a while, the phone calls stopped.

We take to the squares on the First of May holding Kahraman's photo because it is our historical responsibility. We are proud of his legacy."

After speaking with Berna Gülümser and Mahir Babur, I was also able to talk, thanks to Nadir Yıldız and Tanzer Gülümser, with retired teacher Mehmet Nuri Tozak, who was a friend of Kahraman Alsancak from his village and who was with him on Taksim Square on 1 May 1977.

Nuri Tozak told me about his "brother" Kahraman, or "Kahraman Abi", about how they recovered his body, and what he experienced at the time.

Mehmet Nuri Tozak, friend:

He was an “abi”, or “big brother”, of our village. He was four or five years older than me. Because I was studying in Istanbul, Kahraman Abi and I would get together in Istanbul too.

I was at the rally on 1 May 1977, to celebrate Labour Day. I was part of the Man Factory workers group. The workers were slowly entering the square, and that’s when I saw Kahraman Abi.

He was steward

He was a steward at the demonstration, and had a red band on his arm that said “steward”. We kissed and hugged each other and talked for a bit. He told us about issues they were having at his workplace. He was unhappy about what was happening at the factory. We parted ways after that brief chat, and he went to join his own contingent.

Then we reached Serencebey Slope. They kept us, the Man Factory workers’ group, waiting there for a while, before we were finally allowed to march up the slope. When we got to the top, we saw the Beyoğlu District Branch of the Justice Party to our right. There was a group of people on the balcony. The stewards guided us to our place in line. Kemal Türkler hadn’t yet taken the stage.

We were from the same village

I looked around. There were people at

the Water Administration building too. Kahraman Abi came over to us again, this time with two other men from our village.

We were hungry after waiting for so long, so we decided to go get something to eat. But it was impossible to leave the square because of security. We were able to get permission and leave, thanks to another friend who was also a steward.

We got ourselves some meatball sandwiches. It was then that all hell broke loose. Everything was covered in a cloud of dust. We lost one another. We ran all the way to Unkapanı.

My older brother was a riot policeman, and he was on duty. He’d already told me not to go that day. He said it could get ugly, that something might happen to me if I went. I didn’t listen to him of course and went anyway.

After it all happened, I finally reached home and got some rest. I’d run all the way to Güngören.

Taksim Emergency Hospital

My older brother and I were living together at the time. We got up the next morning and went straight to the coffeehouse. I looked at the newspaper and saw that Kahraman Abi was listed among the dead. There was someone else from our village just behind us, and he joined us and the three of us set out to find his body. Like I said, my brother was a policeman, so we thought they’d listen to him.

We went to the Taksim Emergency Hospital. We asked around, trying to find out where Kahraman Abi’s body was, someone on duty there told us that they’d taken him to Sultanahmet.

So we went straight to Sultanahmet. My brother, me, and our cousin. In fact, a photo of the three of us from that day, of us waiting for his body, was printed in the newspaper Günaydın.

Number 1, number 2, number 3...

After a long wait, we went to the morgue. They’d taken photos of all the bodies and numbered them. Number 1, number 2, number 3... We couldn’t identify him of course, all the bodies were so bloated.

Then our cousin told us he’d found Kahraman Abi. He identified him from a photograph. Kahraman Abi’s wife was waiting at the door, holding their son, Ümit. He must have been four or five months old. Three or four more people from the village had come for the body too.

My brother went first, because he was a policeman. He told them, “This is the body of our relative, we want to claim it.” They asked us where we were going to take it, and when we told them to Manyas, to his village, they wouldn’t let us. “We’re under martial law, you have to pick somewhere around here, soldiers will escort you and you’ll bury it there,” they said. They assigned a squad of soldiers to accompany us.

Eight bullet wounds

They opened the morgue. The bodies had been placed in a series of drawers one above the other. They were completely naked. An attendant went and pulled out the body from the locker where Kahraman Abi was. “Is this him?” he asked. That’s how we recovered his body.

We rented a pickup truck and put him in the back.

We washed Kahraman Abi’s body. I went in while he was being washed. We counted eight bullet wounds, and there were marks on his body from having been beaten with a club too.

We took his body to Esenler, accompanied by soldiers. There was a cemetery on the hill back then, nowadays it’s a bus terminal, as far as I know. We buried him there. Then we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways.

His body

Some time later, his son came to the village. He was grown up by then. We talked about his father. And he was just like him, just like his father.

We wanted to bury him in the village, but they wouldn’t let us. Later we even spoke with Doğan Subaşı, who’s also from our village, and told him we should bring the body to the village and have a nice mausoleum built for him. Doğan said we needed the family’s permission. But his family didn’t want to go through all that, which is understandable.

A worker at Uzel

Kahraman Abi was a worker at the Uzel Factory. He told us about problems at his workplace, he wasn't happy. He told us they weren't being treated fairly at all. He had two children; a son and a daughter. He was a kind, generous person. In the village, we didn't enter a place if our elders were there, out of respect for them. That's how it was back then. We only entered the coffeehouse once our elders had left, for example. It was similar at weddings and the like. But Kahraman Abi always made sure we got in, regardless. He didn't dwell on things like that.

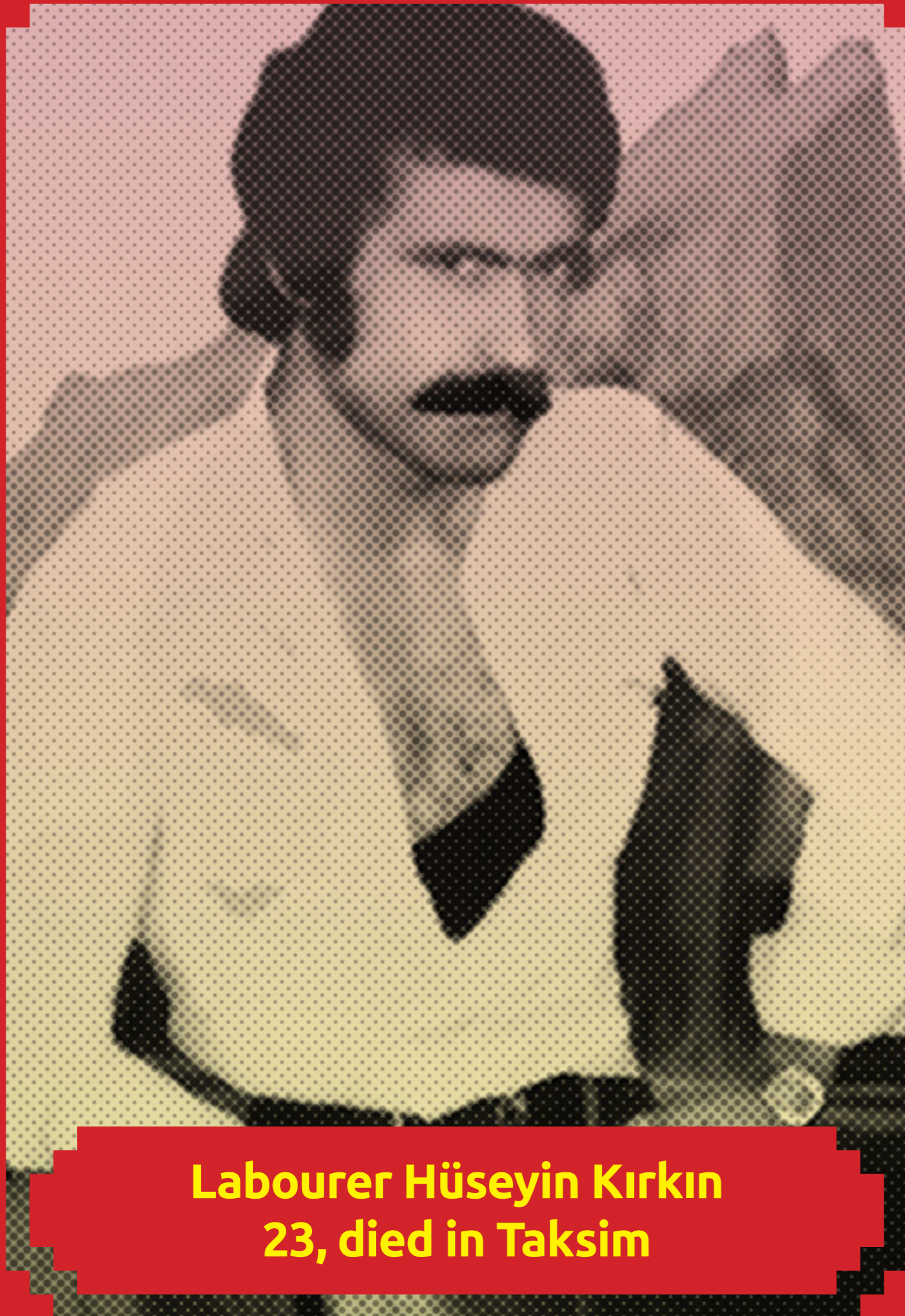
A downright good person

The girls from the village would go somewhere, for example, to shuck corn, say. And Kahraman Abi would help them out too. The village of Cumhuriyet was one of solidarity. And Kahraman Abi never hesitated to take on any sort of task, he helped take the load off of others.

Kahraman Abi was our brother, tall and handsome.

He was a downright good person.

May he rest in peace.



**Labourer Hüseyin Kırkın
23, died in Taksim**

The nephew of Hüseyin Kırkın, a labourer at the student dormitory “Ankara Site”, talks about what a fearless person his uncle was, how he could not tolerate injustice, and how upset he got when he was told not to go to the First of May.

Hüseyin Kırkın was born in 1954 in Iskilip, Çorum.

He worked at “Ankara Site” also known as the Atatürk Student Dormitory.

Kırkın was a labourer who belonged to the Union for Hotel, Restaurant, and Entertainment Venue Workers of Turkey, or “Oleyis” as it is known in short. He came to Istanbul on 1 May 1977 to be in Taksim Square, and lost his life there.

Autopsy report

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the chest. The report states that external scratches on his body may have occurred as a result of falling or being pushed to the ground during the crush.

In trying to learn Hüseyin Kırkın’s story, I approached the union he had belonged to, but when they couldn’t provide any information, I called the Revolutionary

Tourism Workers’ Union (Dev-Turizm İş). However, they too, unfortunately, were unable to find any information about him.

Finally, in my quest to learn more about Kırkın, I managed to locate his nephew, Hasret Kırkın. As Hasret was born the year his uncle died, he was able to relate his uncle’s story only through what he had been told by his father. Sadly, Hüseyin Kırkın has no other surviving relatives.

We listen to Hüseyin Kırkın’s story from his nephew, Hasret Kırkın.

Hasret Kırkın, nephew:

My uncle wasn’t married but he was engaged when he died.

I know about him from what my father told me, because I myself was only born in 1977.

According to my father, my uncle was fearless. And he couldn’t tolerate injustice. But I don’t know whether he belonged to a union, or if he was a member of any other group.

“I’m going”

He always went to the First of May rallies. On 1 May 1977, one of his friends said to him, “Don’t go Hüseyin, it’s going to get messy this year.” My uncle got very upset at this and insisted, “I’m going.” And he went.

There were no bruises or scars on his body, someone hit him in the neck with a



club or a baton. That's what my father said. I mean, they hit him from behind. And he died right there.

Like my uncle, my grandfather was a real labourer too. He was handicapped, my grandfather, blind in one eye. And he couldn't hear either. His children were like his eyes and ears to him. In Ankara there's this Social Security Authority [SSK] Building where my grandfather worked as a security guard. My uncle's death really hit him hard. I was six when we lost my grandfather.

My father never recovered

My father said it was chaos there that day. He said, "When we went to get his body, we saw they'd piled people up like sardines." I don't know who it was, but somebody called to say they had the body. When they got there, they saw they'd put all the bodies in a pile.

My father was never the same after my uncle died. He started drinking. Whenever he thought of my uncle, he'd start wailing, "My dear Hüseyin, why did you leave us so soon," and he'd yell out his name, "Hüseyin!" And that's why he named me Hasret [meaning "longing"]. Because he never got to spend enough time with his brother, because his brother passed too early, and so my father longed for him.

Why didn't anyone call us?

It's nice that you want to talk with me about my uncle, but there's something I want to say: Why hasn't anyone wondered until now about these people's lives, about who they were, about what they did? It's been 43 years.

Why hasn't anyone cared about the people who died that day, and stood up for them?

The families of those who died in other tragedies even received pensions.

Why didn't anyone take care of us, of my grandmother, my grandfather?



**Student Ercüment Gürkut
26, died in Taksim**

Author Nedim Gürsel talks of how Ercüment Gürkut, a friend from Galatasaray High School, where they both studied on a scholarship, was interested in football and poetry, was funny and intelligent, was very interested in cinema and of how they planned to carry out a project together.

Ercüment Gürkut was born in 1951, his place of birth was registered as Kadıköy, Istanbul.

He started studying at Galatasaray High School in 1962. Nedim Gürsel, Ferhan Şensoy and İzzet Yaşar were among his peers.

He was a final-year student in the Istanbul University Faculty of Literature when he died in Taksim on 1 May 1977.

Autopsy report

According to the autopsy report, the cause of death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of compression of the chest accompanied by the effects of cerebral oedema. The report states that the external cuts, bruises and lesions on various parts of his body may have been caused by falling or being pushed to the ground.

I tried to find Ercüment Gürkut's family so that I could learn his story, but had no luck. I then tried to reach out to his peers

from Galatasaray High School. Ferhan Şensoy said of Gürkut: "He was my classmate at Galatasaray High School. We studied together for seven years. Ercü wasn't a confrontational person, that's what I remember."

*I then made contact with Nedim Gürsel, after reading his piece *Aldırma 1247!*, and Gürsel told me about his friend who died at the age of 26.*

I would like to thank Ferhan Şensoy and Nedim Gürsel for their contributions to the writing of Gürkut's life story.

Nedim Gürsel, friend:

"Just as you were moving forward with confidence in your step, your life suddenly clouded over. Like so many athletes of our generation, you peaked too early. As children, two boarders studying on a scholarship, fans of football and poetry, we sat together in the prep class of Galatasaray High School, do you remember?"

Hello, I'm 1133 Nedim...

Hello. And I'm Ercü, 1247!

I'm sending you some lines, slightly modified, of an Ece Ayhan poem. I'm doing this so that you won't forget the first day we met, or our friendship upon which a shadow never fell. I won't forget.

Don't you worry, 1247! In the small, free, strict boarding schools of death

Every child's heart holds a bigger child

Every Children's Day, the entire class will send you birds unfettered by envelopes.

1977"[1]

Many years have passed, honouring the memory of Ercü would be a meaningful act.



I graduated from Galatasaray High School in 1970. Ercü was my classmate. We studied in the same class for eight years.

I vaguely remember our time at Galatasaray High School. There's a photo of us that was taken in the yard behind the school. We're next to each other in the photo. Ercü lived in Kadıköy. On weekends he'd go to see his family, stay at home, and return to school on Monday.

Because we were both boarders, we became even closer friends. And for a year we sat in the same row, right next to each other. So I was a close witness to Ercü's teenage years.

Ercü was a very funny kid. He was clever. I would never have expected this, that we would lose Ercü at such a young age.

Our last meeting

His father was our "study supervisor". And he had an older brother in the year above us, or in the final year. He was so proud of his big brother, because he was a very good student; he was always on the honours list. A few years ago I managed to meet up with his brother in Ankara.

One time, before he died, Ercü and I had the chance to meet up in Paris. It was in the early 1970s. We were able to wander the streets of Paris together. But I couldn't have known that this would, unfortunately, be our last meeting.

I came to Paris in 1971. Not out of choice, but out of necessity. After the Military Memorandum of 12 March 1971, I was taken to court for a piece I wrote about Lenin and Gorky that was published in Ataul Behramoğlu and İsmet Özel's

magazine Halkın Dostları [Friends of the People]. I was 20 years old. Years later, when Ecevit came to power in 1973, there was an amnesty and my case was dropped. I started visiting Turkey again.

An unhealable wound

I often asked myself why he was there on 1 May 1977, because from what I remember of our high school years, Ercü wasn't very involved in politics. For example, I don't know enough to tell you what organisation he went with, or whether he went to the First of May rally on his own. [At school] there were three or four of us who were interested in politics, and Ercü wasn't one of them; that much I can tell you.

In those years, I had discovered a poem by Nâzım Hikmet. I would secretly read the Kuvâyi Milliye Destanı [The Epic of the National Forces] in the dorm. Those were the years when the Workers' Party and the workers' movement were on the rise. In the 1965 elections, the Workers'

Party of Turkey [TİP] received a lot of votes, in fact they were even able to form a parliamentary bloc. These were long before the days of the Behice Boran and Mehmet Ali Aybar debate. We were teenagers, around 15 or 16, but we followed what was going on. Ercü wasn't so involved in these discussions.

He was very interested in cinema, he really got into it. In fact we had plans for films we wanted to make together. But unfortunately in the dark climate of the country at that time, it never happened.

And anyway, we lost Ercü in 1977. Since then, his loss has been like an unhealable wound in my heart.

There are people who are responsible for this incident, but nobody was punished. We need to learn the conditions under which this tragedy happened, we need to know the details.

[1] "Aldırma 1247!" in Paris Yazıları, Nedim Gürsel, Doğan Kitap.





**Public order police officer
Nazmi Ari, 26, died in Taksim**

Fahrettin Ari talks about his brother, Nazmi Ari, about the failure to bring those responsible for his death to justice, and about how a village school was named after him but the name was later removed.

Nazmi Ari was born in 1951, in Sandıklı, Afyon. He worked as a public order policeman. Registration number: 48930.

Nazmi Ari lost his life in Taksim Square on 1 May 1977 while serving in the Istanbul Police Headquarters' Directorate of Public Order Police, however, his name wasn't on the list of police officers on duty in Taksim that day.

He was married and had one child.

Autopsy report

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was gunshot injury, with internal bleeding from a punctured lung and aorta as a result of the bullet wound.

The mukhtar

In order to reach the family of Nazmi Ari, I spoke with the mukhtar, or local governing official, of Ari's hometown, Ekinhisar village, in the district of

Sandıklı. Through him I was able to reach Nazmi Ari's older brother Fahrettin Ari.

I spoke with Fahrettin Ari through his wife, conveyed my questions to him, and then communicated his answers to me on the phone.

Fahrettin Ari spoke about his brother, Nazmi Ari, about how his name was removed from the village school that was originally named after him, and how those responsible for his death have yet to be brought to justice.

Fahrettin Ari, older brother:

Nazmi died in 1977. They shot him. We still don't know who did it.

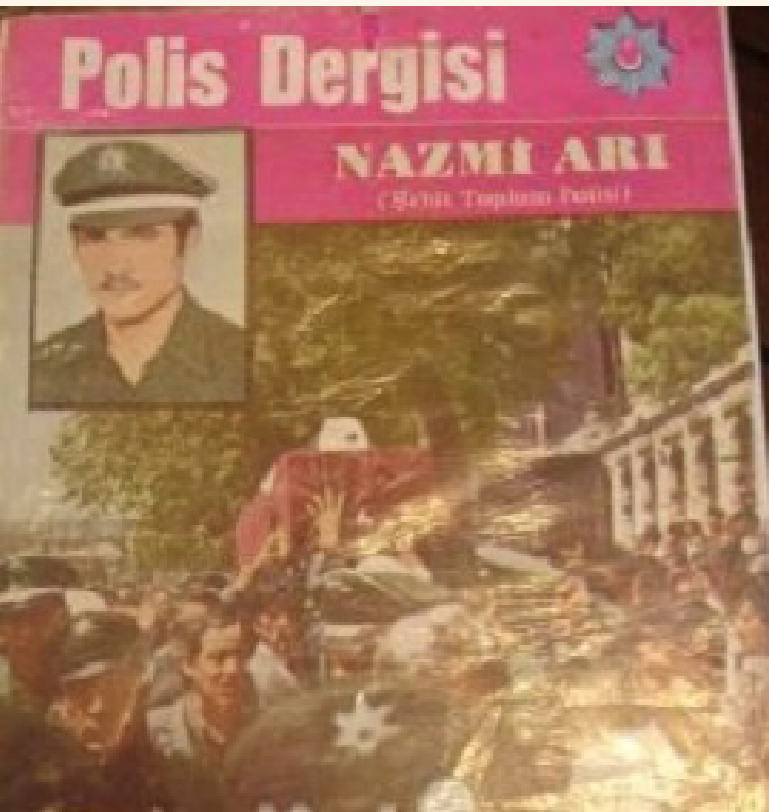
He'd gone to Istanbul for work. Nazmi was a poor, harmless soul.

He was married, had one child. His wife and children went to Germany after he died. He's buried here, in the village of Ekinhisar. On his gravestone it says, "Martyr who fell in the line of duty on 1 May 1977."



Nazmi was a great brother. There was no other like him. He was such an honest, innocent kid. We were never able to wrap our heads around it, what happened, how it happened. We had a school built in Ekinhisar in his name. A primary school.

The provincial governor at the time asked us what we wanted, what our village lacked. And we told him we didn't have a school. He built a school, and on the sign he had written, "Nazmi Arı Primary School".



In 1991 they changed the name of the school. A kid from Europe came and had the school rebuilt, and so they named it after him. That really upset us. We thought Nazmi's name would always be there, on that sign...

Çetin Yetkin, prosecutor:

Çetin Yetkin, the prosecutor for the first hearing of the case regarding 1 May 1977 held in the High Criminal Court in Istanbul, described riot policeman Nazmi Arı in an article published on 3 May 2010 in the newspaper Yeniçağ:

"One of those who died during these events was Nazmi Arı, who worked for what at the time was known as the Public Order Police. Arı was shot as he and a group of his colleagues ran for cover towards the hotel after fire was opened from the hotel and from the top of the Water Administration Building. Nevertheless, the Public Prosecutors responsible for the investigation clearly felt no need to look any further into Arı's death. However, if they had only identified which other police officers were next to him on the side from which the bullet was shot while he and his colleagues were running for cover, something that would have been very easy to ascertain at the time, and if those individuals' weapons had been inspected, then it most likely would have been found that when these fleeing, panicked officers themselves returned fire in the direction from which gunfire had been opened upon them, one of them, without realizing it, accidentally shot his colleague. To think otherwise would mean accepting that there was someone amongst those police officers who was not an officer and who purposefully shot Nazmi Arı from close range, killing him!"

Zehra Şahin talks about her friend, Atilla Özbelen, with whom she worked at the Classroom Tools Manufacturing Centre, part of the Ministry of National Education, about how he was at work, his union activities, and how they went together from Ankara to the First of May rally in Istanbul.

Mahmut Atilla Özbelen was born on 1 May 1951 in Ankara. He was a graduate of the Yıldırım Beyazıt Institute of Art. He lived a life plagued by poverty and hardship. Over time, he joined the ranks of the Revolutionary Path (Devrimci Yol).

Union member

Özbelen began working in the Classroom Tools Manufacturing Centre, part of the Ministry of National Education, in 1972. He played an active role in organizing the other workers at his workplace.

He headed initiatives first for the Modern Metalworkers' Union, and later for the Mineworkers' Union, part of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK). He was elected as the representative for his workplace and as local chairperson.

He was well liked by the other workers and had a reputation for being honest. In the Revolutionary Path bulletin, he described what other unions did to get

him to join their ranks: "They had me treated by two specialist doctors at Hacettepe, to try and cure my slight stutter, and they invited me to fancy dinners at the Marmara Hotel. All of this to try and get me to sign on to their own revisionist politics." [1]

Steward at the First of May Rally

Mahmut Atilla Özbelen was made a steward by DİSK for 1 May 1977. But he marched behind the banner of his own political group.

From 1 May until 5 May, efforts were made to track Özbelen down, as his name was not to be found on the list of those arrested, wounded, or killed at the rally. On 5 May, his family finally found his body at the morgue. According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the chest. According to witnesses, however, there was scarring on his legs, head, and back, and his fingernails and toenails had been removed. His friends therefore believed he had been tortured to death.

Pressure to bury him in Ankara

Despite his family's insistence, Özbelen's identity card and clothes were never handed over to them. Considerable pressure was put on authorities to allow him to be buried in Ankara, and his body was transported to Istanbul's Yeşilköy Airport under police supervision. Özbelen was buried on 6 May 1977.

Labourer Mahmut Atilla Özbelen, 26, died in Taksim

Although I tried to reach his friends and comrades from the Revolutionary Path, I was unsuccessful. I did, however, get to hear about him from Zehra Şahin, who worked at the same factory as him. She told me about what a keen interest Mahmut Atilla Özbelen took in others, how he turned heads wherever he went, and just what kind of a person he truly was.

Zehra Şahin, friend:

I knew Atilla from the factory. We both worked at the Classroom Tools Manufacturing Centre, a workplace that belonged to the Department of National Education.

We shared the same working hours. He was in a different workshop but we saw each other during breaks. We also ran into each other and chatted when clocking in.

Atilla and I went to the rally on 1 May 1977 together. In fact, we went a day early, taking a bus together from Ankara. There were four of us travelling together.

I took my daughter too; she was still a baby so I didn't want to leave her behind. She was just six months old. In the bus on the way there, she started crying and Atilla came over and asked me what we should do, if I needed anything. He was really concerned about it. He asked how many years old she was, and I said not even one year yet, just six months, and we laughed.

Eventually we got off the bus in Istanbul. They dropped me off at my sister's.

Later I spoke with a friend of ours, Selvi, who went to the rally with Atilla. I asked her what she remembered of him. Unfortunately, she didn't recall much.

There was another friend of ours too, Sevinç. She and Atilla had an argument that evening. I don't know what about though.

Atilla wasn't there

Because they were with a different group, I didn't see him on the square on 1 May.

He'd said to me that he had to do his military service, that he was going to quit work to do it, but that he wanted to go to Taksim on 1 May before he quit.

I didn't know we'd lost Atilla that day. We went to work, and Atilla wasn't there. Later we learned he'd passed away. We were terribly upset, and we cried an awful lot.

We had photos printed of him right away.

A handsome, beautiful young man

We tried to get time off work to go to his funeral, but the factory wouldn't let us. We didn't listen to them though, we went to our friend's funeral anyway.

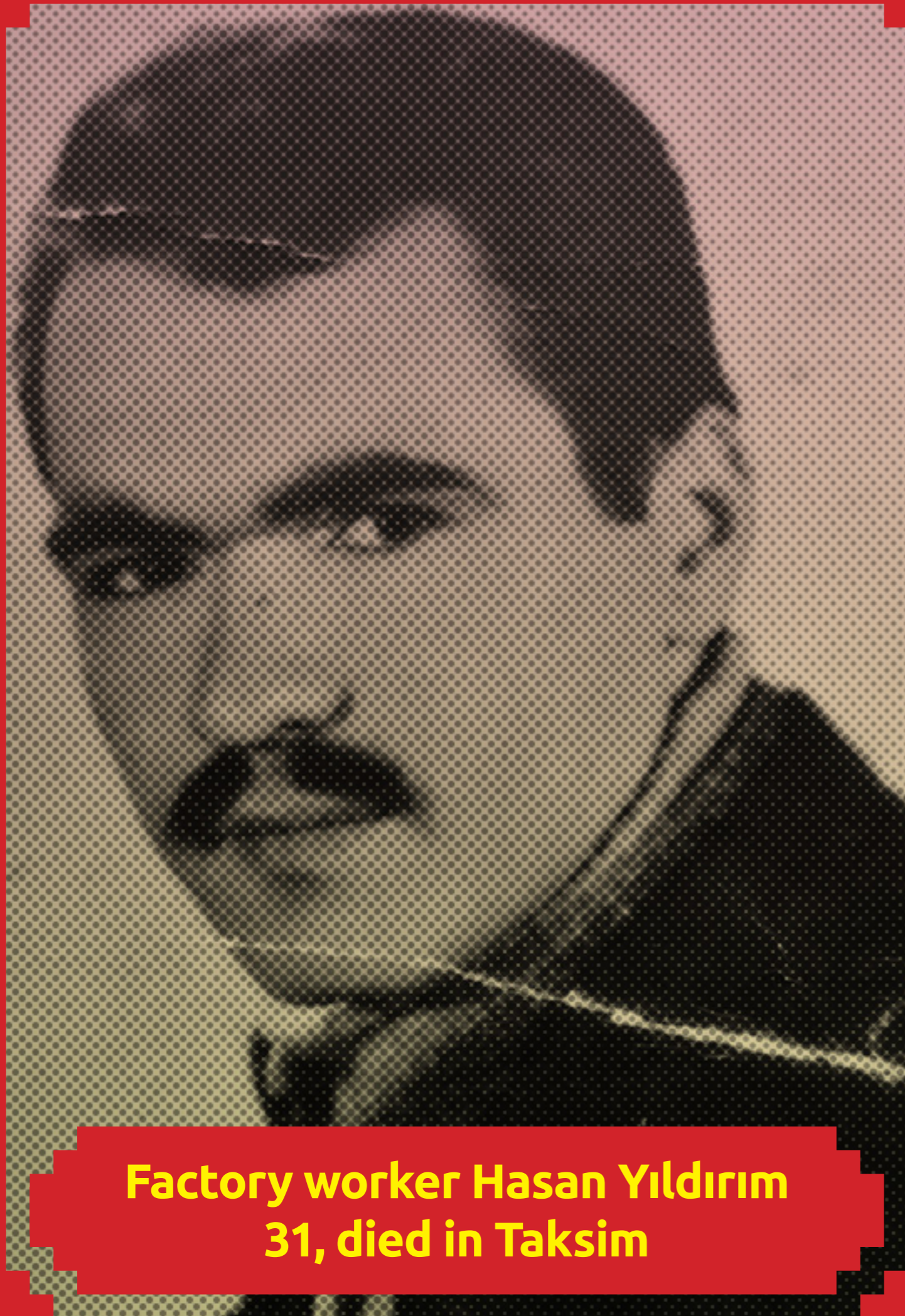
They were two siblings. He had a sister named Mine. He adored Mine, and spoke of her often. Mine wept so much at the funeral. His grave is at the Karşıyaka Cemetery in Ankara.

Atilla was so handsome, such a beautiful young man. He had a slight stutter. And so he was shy about talking with women; but he turned heads wherever he went.

We lost him so young, sadly. He was such a bright, promising person. One can't

help but wonder what he would have accomplished, what he would have become, if he had lived.

[1] <http://www.devrimeciyol.net/Devrimeci%20Yol/dergiler/devrimeciyol3yazi8.htm>



Factory worker Hasan Yıldırım 31, died in Taksim

Hasan Yıldırım's friend from the Uzel Factory spoke of how Hasan, who he describes as a good person, was studying at university while also working at the factory, and how his workmates tried to comfort him after he was shot right beside them.

"Our working class formed their own unions, elected their own representatives. They have our eternal confidence. They will both help [the unions] and keep them in check. No power will break the unity of the UZEL workers and our working class. Let there be no doubt..."[1]

These words were written by Hasan Yıldırım in a piece he wrote for the 83rd issue of the bulletin of the Mineworkers' Union of Turkey (Maden-İş).

Hasan Yıldırım was born in 1946.

He worked at the Uzel Factory in Edirnekapı, Istanbul.

He was 31 years old when he lost his life on 1 May 1977.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was a firearm injury causing internal bleeding as a result of damage to the stomach, liver and heart caused by the bullet wound.

I tried to reach Hasan Yıldırım's family

through the Ayvalık Regional Directorate of the People's Republican Party (CHP). I had seen Hasan Yıldırım mentioned in statements about the First of May shared on their official accounts. Although they put me in touch with his daughter, Ayşe Yıldırım, she was only one year old when her father died, so I was not able to interview her.

Celal Özdoğan, president of the automobile workers' union Otomobil-İş, put me in touch with Rıza Durak, former president of the Topkapı branch of Otomobil-İş and a friend of Hasan Yıldırım from the Uzel Factory, who spoke to me about his friend.

Rıza Durak, friend

Around seven o'clock in the morning we had blocked off the Unkapanı Bridge. We were stewards for DİSK [the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey] and were wearing red DİSK vests with "Mineworkers' Union" on the back. They'd given everyone a baton that day as protection against the outside threats. Because the human chain we'd formed by holding hands was broken, we couldn't protect each other in that crowd.

It's important to mention the reasons for this atmosphere of insecurity. At that time, political fractions in Turkey had launched a full-on attack on DİSK, or at least that's how I interpret the situation. That was how things were when we went to the rally on 1 May 1977. The reason, according to those fractions, was that the Mineworkers' Union's relationship

with the Communist Party of Turkey [TKP] was different from other leftist parties. They thought there was a one-sided collaboration with the TKP, and that's why they were angry. This tension revealed itself on 1 May. The members of Halkın Yolu [People's Path], Halkın Kurtuluşu [People's Liberation] and Halkın Birliği [People's Unity] did us great damage, unfortunately. All this needs to be recorded for history.



Shot right next to us

To get back to that day... By 7pm we still hadn't got beyond Tarlabası. We'd been waiting for 12 hours. During this time, my father came over to me three times and said, "Rıza, warn your friends, it's dangerous up there."

He added, "I saw armed men in front of the Water Administration Building, be very careful."

I warned my friends straight away, and before we even reached the square, during Kemal Türkler's speech, a shot was fired. When the shot was heard, Murat Tokmak, who was then president

of the Topkapı branch of the Mineworkers' Union, and Mehmet Ali Kılıç, the union representative at Uzel, came over to me. While we were discussing what to do, more shots were fired and that's how they dispersed us.

The bullet hit him in the chest

While we were walking to the square, I told Hasan about the buildings along Tarlabası Boulevard. The old buildings, their history. There was a restaurant on that road where we took Hasan when he was injured. The bullet hit him in the chest. We tried to comfort him but he was badly wounded. At that point the police were yelling, "Get the ones in the red vests out the square." We had to get ourselves to a safe place.

Hasan and I spent lots of time together. He was also studying at university. He did quality control at the factory. At the same time he was also taking exams. He was at Istanbul University but I don't remember which department. He was originally from Balıkesir. He was a very good person, but death came and took him at a young age.

We couldn't go to his funeral

Diğer iki Uzel işçisi Kahraman Alsancak ve Ziya Baki yanımızda değildi ama onlar da Maden-İş'te örgütlüydü.

Nejat Alpat bizim fabrikanın personel müdürüydü o zaman. Beni çağırdılar pazartesi günü. "Rıza sen iş kıyafetlerini giyme, Nejat Bey bekliyor" dediler. Saat sabah 8'di. "Sana para, araba ve bir de şoför vereceğiz, üç kaybımız var ve bu

The other two Uzel workers [who died on 1 May 1977], Kahraman Alsancak and Ziya Baki, weren't with us that day but they were also members of the Mineworkers' Union.

Nejat Alpat was the personnel manager of our factory at the time. They called me in on Monday. "Rıza, don't put on your work clothes, Mr Alpat is waiting for you," they said. It was eight in the morning. They said, "We're going to give you money, a car and a driver; we've lost three men, their bodies are at the morgue in Vatan. Go and collect them."

I said that the union would cover the costs but that we might need a vehicle, and we set off. When I say "we" I mean the driver and me. I had to go on my own. When we got there we couldn't get near

the morgue because of the crowds. 15-20 thousand people were waiting in front of the morgue that day. They were shouting, yelling slogans. Families, friends, unionists... Everyone was waiting for someone. There were crowds of people all along Vatan Street.

It was two or three days before the union representatives were able to collect his body. But we couldn't go to Hasan's funeral. They wouldn't let us.

Hasan's family were offered a survivor's pension but they didn't want the money. They were angry. They were sad. We couldn't go to Hasan's funeral; that still hurts.

[1] https://www.birlesikmetal.org/maden_is/madenis_dergi_83.pdf



Itinerant salesman Hamdi Toka, 35, died in Taksim

Hamdi Toka's nephew and cousin spoke of how he died while selling sandwiches in Taksim, of the family's poverty, of how he left the village of Başsökö in Gerze to find work and now lies in the village cemetery.

Hamdi Toka was born in 1942 in the district of Gerze in Sinop.

He was an itinerant salesman who earned his money making and selling sandwiches.

On 1 May 1977, he went to Taksim Square to sell sandwiches, in the hope that the crowds there meant he would sell all the sandwiches in his basket that day.

He was 35 years old when he died.

One-year-old daughter

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of rib fractures from compression of the abdomen and chest.

Hamdi Toka's grave is in the village of Başsökö in Gerze, where he was known as "Tokaoğlu", meaning "Son of Toka".

I was unable to interview Hamdi Toka's daughter, Ayşe Uysal, as she was only one

year old when she lost her father. Thanks to Bülent Aydın, we managed to contact Hamdi Toka's nephew, Nedim Toka, and his paternal cousin, Ali Toka, through the former Mayor of Gerze, Osman Belovacıklı. Hamdi Toka's relatives spoke to us about his work, why he was in Taksim that day, and the difficulties they had even in claiming his body.

Nedim Toka, nephew:

I was seven years old when my uncle died, so I don't remember him very well. But I can tell you what I remember my dad saying about him.

I remember what he looked like. He was blind in one eye. When they were having a snowball fight as kids, someone put a stone in the snowball. The snowball hit my uncle in the eye and he lost sight in that eye.

He went to Istanbul in the 1970s. He worked in the Tophane neighbourhood. He'd take whatever work he could find.

Poverty

My uncle's family had a poor childhood. After my uncle got married he had to go away to earn money, he went to Istanbul.

He had a basket, he'd make sandwiches and put them in his basket to sell. That day he was again going to sell sandwiches but as luck would have it, death found him instead.

His brothers couldn't go to collect the body because of the roads. There were

no roads back then in Gerze. A villager who happened to have the same last name claimed the body and brought it to the village. His grave is now in Başsökö Village.

My uncle was a very honest, kind person. He was nice to everyone, never upset anyone.

My dad died in 2007. He would have been able to tell you more about him. He really loved my uncle. And [after Hamdi's death] my dad's life was never the same as before.

The following months and years were a sad time for the whole family. But we didn't ask for help from anyone. And until today we've never spoken to anyone about it. When Mayor Osman called, I didn't turn you down.

Ali Toka, cousin:

He died in the crush in Taksim. I was in the village at the time, some villagers brought his body. We buried him here.

His daughter, Ayşe, was still in the cradle. He was an itinerant worker. He'd work in

construction, wherever, whatever job he could find. We didn't have any particular trade. In those years he'd gone to Istanbul to find work. He was selling sandwiches that day, he thought there'd be a crowd and business would be good. How could he have known?

He died trying to earn a living

The villagers were really helpful about claiming the body. There were no roads at that time, they brought the body by tractor.

He was poor. Hamdi Abi was someone who minded his own business, just trying to get by.

He was one year older than me.

We didn't grow up together but sometimes we worked together. Once we worked together planting trees, that job took us a long time.

Like I said, we didn't have a trade. We never even went to school. We were workers, we'd take whatever job we could find. And as you know, he died while he was trying to earn a living.



Security guard Mehmet Ali Genç, 60, died in Taksim

Şükrü Genç tells us that his father died on his way home from work after his shift at the Maksim Gazinosu nightclub, that he had moved to Istanbul to find work, and how, as they were claiming his body to take back to their village, they were given the belongings of a child.

Mehmet Ali Genç was born in 1917.

He was from Zara in Sivas. He worked as a night security guard at the Maksim Gazinosu.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia due to severe compression of the chest, with cerebral oedema as a result of head trauma.

Mehmet Ali Genç's story has never been published until now. Unlike others who lost their lives on 1 May 1977, no news reports or photographs of him had appeared on social media channels or news sites. The only things previously known about him were that he was a night security guard and that he was born in 1917.

The Zara connection

From the autopsy reports obtained through the Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (TÜSTAV), we

discovered that Mehmet Ali Genç was from Zara, and with this information we tried to contact his family and friends. That is when Leyla İşbilir, a long-time member of the bianet team, intervened and put us in touch with Mehmet Ali Genç's son, Şükrü Genç, who lives in Zara.

Şükrü Genç is now 63 years old. He is the youngest of three siblings. He had already lost one of his sisters before his father's death.

When his father died in Taksim Square he was doing his compulsory military service. He obtained permission to go and collect his father's body. He then took him to Zara, and buried him there. After his father's death, Şükrü Genç took responsibility for the care of his sick mother, and for the payment of his father's debts.

Photographs from his grandson

Mehmet Ali Genç's grandson, Umut Ali, sent me photographs of his grandfather. They were photographs he had found at his aunt's house a few years earlier and saved on his phone.

When Şükrü Genç told me that his son could send me photographs of Mehmet Ali Genç, I wrote to Umut Ali, who responded with a voice message asking, "Why do you want my grandfather's photos? Which newspaper is it for?"

After learning that his father had already given him some information, I was able to explain our project in greater detail. If it

wasn't for the photographs Umut Ali had taken, we would have been left with no photographs at all of his grandfather Mehmet Ali Genç. We would therefore like to extend our thanks to Umut Ali.

We listen to Mehmet Ali Genç's story, recounted by his son, Şükrü Genç, who says of his father, "We lost him much too early, we didn't have nearly enough time with him."

Şükrü Genç, son:

Previously, my father worked as a farmer in our village. There was a time when he had a small grocery shop. He spent his entire life working to make a living.

That's why he went to Istanbul, to work. In the early 1970's he started work as a security guard at the Maksim Gazinosu nightclub.

He was a labourer by day, and a security guard by night.

On 1 May, he'd finished work at the Maksim Gazinosu and was walking towards Kazancı Slope. He was hit by a bullet in the ear and fell to the ground. As people panicked and rushed to escape, my father was trampled on and crushed in the stampede.

They put him in the back of a truck and rushed him to hospital. They first took him to the Taksim Emergency Hospital. It was packed, there was a long wait, so they moved him to Şişli. After they reached Şişli Etfal, it wasn't ten minutes before my father passed away.

I was twenty

I was doing my military service when my father died. I was twenty.

We were three siblings. We lost my sister before my father. Now there are two of us.

My father was in debt. My mother was sick so she couldn't work. After my father died I started working to pay the 10 thousand lira of debt he had left. I was still taking care of my mother, taking her to hospital for appointments. We lost her in 1992.

I had a grave built for my father in the village. His grave is in Zara now.

No one called

No one called us. When I found out that my father had died, I got permission from the military and brought him to the village. I went back there after I'd completed my military service. I wanted to collect his clothes, his identity card.

It was on the radio. The belongings of the people that had died hadn't been handed over to their families. Their watches, their money. I went to collect my father's clothes, and they gave me the clothes of a child.

I sent them back, explaining they weren't his. They said it was all they had recorded under his name. I said it wasn't possible, told them to take a look themselves. His watch, his ID, the 250 lira he had on him, I never got any of it. I went to the Public

Prosecutor's Office and told them. But nothing ever came of it.

We lost him too early

He was a wonderful person. You should really ask the villagers, not me. They knew my father the best.

Our house was by the side of a road, cars could drive right up to it. The villagers' cars would be parked along that road, and they'd be having a meal at our house. I never remember us having breakfast on our own.

In the mornings and evenings we would always have guests in the house. We

would eat together. He was such a great host, always doing his best to take care of his guests.

My father was a good person, a decent human being.

He never once upset us.

Despite the lack of money, he would buy us whatever we wanted. When we were little, he would buy our shoes and clothes before school even started.

He took me to Ankara once, for example, to see Anıtkabir. He took me around. His goodness was bountiful, but what can I say. We lost him much too early, we didn't have nearly enough time with him.



**Factory worker Ziya Baki
30, died in Taksim**

Workers from the Uzel factory and union leaders Mehmet Ali Kılıç and Rıza Durak tell us about their friend Ziya, how fearless he was, and how they weren't able to attend his funeral. Murat Tokmak had also given information about the three workers from the Uzel factory who lost their lives in an interview with the newspaper Radikal.

It did not take long after its foundation for the Confederation of Mineworkers' Unions of Turkey to become a well-organised body. In 1969 there were 34 unions and seventy thousand workers connected to the confederation. According to Ministry of Labour records, by 1977 the number of workers belonging to the confederation had reached over one hundred thousand.

Ziya Baki was one of those hundred thousand members. He worked in the Uzel factory, doing tractor assembly. Born in 1947, he was a labourer from Bafra, Samsun.

He was 30 years old when he lost his life in Taksim. According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of blunt trauma to the chest and head, and rib fractures.

Murat Tokmak anlatıyor

Murat Tokmak, president of the Turkish

Mineworkers' Union and general secretary of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), whom we lost in 2011, spoke about the death of the three Uzel workers in a 2007 interview with Radikal.

"Once the tank sirens went off, chaos ensued, with people yelling and screaming and running all over the place. I was on the ground when I saw Uzel workers Hasan Yıldırım, Kahraman Alsancak, Ziya Baki, and Hüseyin Turan who were taking care of security at the rear of our contingent.

"I told them to get down. One of them was still standing. When I saw him get shot and fall to the ground, I stretched my leg out to pull him aside. That's when I was shot a second time, which really slowed me down.

"I was trying to pull myself together when I felt the hand around my ankle let go. I understood then that he was dead. He'd already been shot a couple of times. "As I was crawling forward, I saw that Kahraman Alsancak and Ziya Baki were dead too. I'd thought they were on the ground trying to shield themselves, but it turns out they were dead too."

We listen to Ziya Baki's story as told by friends from the union, Ali Kılıç and Rıza Durak.

Mehmet Ali Kılıç, friend:

I was born in Urfa, in 1945. I worked on cotton fields in Adana from a young age. In 1968, I came to Istanbul to work and

shortly afterwards I became a member of the Mineworkers' Union of Turkey, which was connected to DİSK. The Uzel factory was my first and last workplace.



In 1974-1975 I became the worker representative at Uzel. I was Honorary Board Chair of the Mineworkers' Union First District and Head Office Honorary Board member.

On 1 May 1977, three friends from our committee were killed. All three were Uzel workers. Hasan, Ziya, and Kahraman. Hasan and Ziya were unit representatives, Kahraman was a union militant.

Ziya, lived in Bayrampaşa.

They fell beside us

I was on duty at the 1977 rally for the Mineworkers' Union [Maden-İş]. Ziya Baki, Hasan Yıldırım and Kahraman Alsancak were right next to us. They fell beside us. In fact, one of them had his arm in mine. Ziya was a hard worker. He was at every demonstration, and he also

held an important position in the union. He was a little strong headed; he had the rebellious quality of those from the Black Sea region.

Let me put it this way, if there was anything he didn't agree with, he would argue with us, to try and convince us. We'd try to explain, but even if we were right, he'd carry on and do what he thought best.

He was fearless

Because that was his truth. Even if it was wrong, he would defend his opinion to the last. Remembering this now, it brings a smile to my face.

Of course, he was short-tempered when it came to political issues. He would storm off, and then afterwards he would come back to check on us, to see if we



were mad at him. He was sincere like that. Ziya was determined. He was fearless. He would be on the frontlines at every protest, and whatever needed to be done, he'd be the first to volunteer.

43 years later

After 1 May 1977, I went to visit his family. They were extremely pleased to see me, in fact, I stayed the night. But then I had to move abroad because of my own political activities. That's when I lost touch with his family.

Even if it's taken 43 years, I am proud that he is being commemorated outside the union.

I honour and respect the memory of my friends Ziya Baki, Kahraman Alsancak, and Hasan Yıldırım, and all those massacred in Taksim that day.

Rıza Durak, friend:

Ziya and I worked in the same factory and belonged to the same union. He worked in tractor assembly at the Uzel factory. He was newly married, but I don't remember if he had any children. Ziya was shot dead, just like Hasan Yıldırım.

In the process of collecting his body, we had a problem with his family. That's why



we couldn't go to his funeral. In their profound grief, Ziya Baki's family blamed us—which of course I consider a perfectly normal reaction to have. "You're the ones who took our brother to the square that day," that's what they said to us. One of Ziya's brothers was a police officer, and it was particularly hard getting him to calm down. But like I said, we weren't able to attend his burial. His family didn't want any of us there. They took him to Samsun, to Ziya's hometown.

I didn't know Ziya well, but I knew he was a hardworking labourer. I've never heard anyone speak ill of him.

[1] <https://sendika64.org/2007/05/30-yil-sonra-kanli-1-mayis-5-ertugrul-maviogluruhi-sanyerradikal-13496/>

Labourer Mürtezim Oltulu 42, died in Taksim

Mürtezim Oltulu's nephews, Recep Oltulu and Yüksel Oltulu, spoke of how, after completing primary school, their uncle followed his older brother to Halkalı in Istanbul, and of how they struggled to find the 4000 lira needed to claim his body. There are no photographs of Mürtezim Oltulu.

Mürtezim Oltulu was born in 1935. His place of birth is registered as Şavşat, Artvin. He was a labourer.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia with rib fractures from compression of the abdomen and chest.

It was not easy to find Mürtezim Oltulu's family. We first managed to contact his nephew, Yüksel Oltulu, who told us that he was very young when his uncle died, so had few memories of him.

I therefore tried my luck by looking for people on social media with the surname Oltulu living in Şavşat. As a result, I was able to speak with Recep Oltulu, one of Mürtezim's nephews, thanks to his son Şerif Oltulu.

Recep was unfortunately unable to find any photographs of his uncle, but told us about how his uncle had moved from Şavşat to Istanbul, and about claiming his body.

Recep Oltulu, nephew:

My uncle was born in the village of Ciritdüzü in Şavşat. None of his brothers are still alive, unfortunately, so I can only tell you what I remember.



After he finished primary school he migrated to Istanbul, to be with his oldest brother Mulazim Oltulu. They lived together in Halkalı.

In the 1970s, he started to work at a meatball stall in the Gürün Han Commercial Building, in the Istanbul neighbourhood of Sirkeci.

Cenazeyi almak için o dönem devlet hastanesi morgu 4 bin lira istemiş abisinden. Araya birileri girmiş, böyle olmaz demişler ama yine almışlar tabii parayı. Cüzi bir miktarda anlaşılmış, öyle vermişler cenazeyi. Ardından da ikâmet ettiği Halkalı'daki Halkalı Mezarlığı'na gömmüşler.

4000 lira to claim the body

He never married. He was shot to death on 1 May 1977, but the records say he died in the crush. He was very young when he died.

After the incident, his body was handed over to his older brother, Mulazim Oltulu.

At that time, the state hospital morgue asked his brother for 4000 lira to claim the body. Some people tried to intervene, said that was too much, but of course they still took some money. They agreed on a reasonable sum, and that's how they claimed the body. Afterwards, they buried him in the Halkalı Cemetery, in the Halkalı neighbourhood where he lived.

Yüksel Oltulu, nephew:

My uncle was a labourer. He wasn't married, so he never had any children either. I was very young when my uncle died, but I remember clearly how he had such a great love for other people. I know how much he loved animals and nature.

He went to the First of May rally to celebrate. 1 May 1977 was a huge trauma for all of us. None of us, including my father and our other relatives, understood what had happened. We were all very sad and this sadness continued for many years.

Like I said, I was very young when I lost my uncle, so that's all I can tell you.



**Teacher Mustafa Elmas
33, died in Taksim**

Mustafa Elmas's wife, Selme Elmas, says "We were in love when we got married, very much in love." She then adds, "He said he was going out to buy a paper, but he never came back." Journalist Faruk Eren wrote about his middle-school teacher in a book about the political atmosphere of the 1970s.

Mustafa Elmas was born in 1944. His place of birth is registered as Malkara, Tekirdağ.

He was a teacher and member of the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers (TÖB-DER). He worked at two schools to provide for his family: the Hoca İshak Efendi Primary School in Beyoğlu, and the Hasköy Middle School.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of his death was mechanical asphyxia as a result of compression of the chest and abdomen. The report also states that the external scratches on his body may have been caused by falling or being pushed to the ground during the crush.

Reaching his family

We managed to reach Mustafa Elmas's wife thanks to his daughter, Nazlı Bayraktar, who had written to us via the official bianet account when we first started the portraits of those who died on 1 May 1977. However, due to the

pandemic and other reasons, we have only just been able to hold the interview.

We have now published the stories of the six teachers and TÖB-DER members who were killed on 1 May 1977.

Since Nazlı was only six years old when her father died, she only knows her father through the words of her mother. For that reason she put in a great deal of effort to get her mother to talk to us.

Mustafa Elmas's wife, Selme Elmas, tells us about the kind of husband and father Mustafa Elmas was, why he was in Taksim Square on 1 May 1977, and his funeral service...

Selme Elmas, wife:

We were in love when we got married, very much in love. He was studying when we met. We were engaged for four years. We got married in 1967. We had two children: one girl, one boy.



I never remarried. In any case, I could never find someone like him. Even if I could forget him...

Mustafa was a good person, he was wonderful. He really loved his children, and me too.

He loved taking me on trips, taking me places. He would always surprise me. He'd never come home empty-handed. One day he came home carrying a television, he'd bought it because I wanted one.



“I’m going to buy a paper”

We were in Istanbul at the time, we were living in Halıcıoğlu.

That day was a Sunday. There was this place under the bridge, the whole family was going to go there for a picnic. The kids were going to fly kites, we had their kites ready.

The bridge was close to the Hoca İshak school. In the morning, Mustafa left the house, saying he was going to buy a

paper. I’d prepared lots of cakes and biscuits; we waited and waited for Mustafa but he never came.

I asked one of his friends, “Mustafa didn’t come, have you seen him?” He said they hadn’t seen him. They had though. Maybe they didn’t want to tell me.

I sat in front of the window and watched the street. It got to the evening call to prayer and still no sign. When it was almost time for the night-time prayers, I started to call his other teacher friends. They couldn’t tell me anything either. I waited in front of the window until morning, thinking he might come home at any moment.

I flung the radio

After the morning prayer, I picked up the radio, it must have been on the six o’clock news that I heard Mustafa’s name.

I thought it was probably a worker with the same name, what would Mustafa be doing there? I didn’t know he was a member of TÖB-DER. Then they said, “Teacher Mustafa Elmas from the village of Cumhuriyet in Malkara.”

I flung the radio out of my hand.

I started to scream and cry. He was in the Taksim Emergency Hospital. I went and got my neighbour and said let’s go and find Mustafa. When she heard, she broke down too.

Then his friends came; they had a policeman friend from the village with



Faruk Eren, student:

Mustafa Elmas, who taught our Commerce classes at the Hasköy Middle School was among the dead. He also taught at a primary school. His was the first funeral I attended. After that, funerals seemed to become a normal part of our lives, we went to funeral after funeral. (One day, while I was getting my daughter ready for school, I saw the newsflash that Berkin Elvan had died. I ran straight to the Okmeydanı hospital. Decades have passed and we’re still attending the funerals of our people who have been killed.)

I never saw Mustafa Elmas’s photograph in the posters of those who died on 1 May. But I can still picture his face. I remember him as a real Anatolian young man with slightly slanted eyes. He was a member of TÖB-DER. I think he was from the Soviet tradition. After an argument at middle school I remember him asking me, crossly, “Are you a Maoist?”

[From the book *Kayıp Bir Devrimin Hikayesi* (The Story of a Lost Revolution) by journalist Faruk Eren] [1]

[1] Faruk Eren, “*Kayıp Bir Devrimin Hikâyesi*”, 2019, *İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul*.

them. You can’t go to get him, we’ll bring him, they said.

He loved his students

They looked for his body in the morgue. He also taught at the Hasköy School, he worked at two schools to provide for us.

Students from that middle school came when they heard the news of his death, they filled the streets, crying “Mustafa Elmas will live on.”

The next day we took his body and went to the village. His grave is in the village now.

That day, I realised that his students really loved him too.

My late husband was a good person to everyone, of course they loved him.

Student Sibel Açıkalın 18, died in Taksim

Cihat Açıkalın tells us about how his cousin, Sibel Açıkalın, was actively engaged in the struggle for student and labour rights and that she was the one who fostered in him his love of reading. "It still makes our hearts bleed to know that, despite the many years that have passed, the perpetrators have not been held accountable for their crimes," he says.

Sibel Açıkalın was born in 1959.

Her place of birth is registered as Hatay, Reyhanlı. She was a student.

She was studying as a first-year student in the Faculty of Science at Yıldız Technical University.

Açıkalın, a member of the university's student association, lost her life on 1 May 1977 in Taksim, at the age of 18.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of her death was mechanical asphyxia due to severe compression of the chest.

We heard Sibel Açıkalın's story from her cousin, the lawyer Cihat Açıkalın, who we managed to contact thanks to the lawyer Hatice Can. I would like to thank Hatice Can for all her help.

Cihat Açıkalın told us that he thought of

Sibel Açıkalın, seven years his senior, as an older sister, or abla, explaining that she gave him as a gift his first ever book. He reiterated the demand for the perpetrators responsible for her death to be found.

Cihat Açıkalın, cousin:

She was a first-year student at Yıldız Technical University, in the Faculty of Science. She was a member of the university's student association, and played quite an active role in it.

So she was already someone who took on active responsibilities in events like the First of May, someone whose political awareness had already begun developing in high school, and who therefore regularly attended such protests and demonstrations. Also, because we came from a family with a high level of political awareness, I suppose Sibel Abla had started questioning the world and life at an early age.





She was a true humanitarian. She was a member of a group concerned with student rights and issues, but she was also closely concerned with labour rights. She was a sensitive person.

So, I mean, I can say that her presence in Taksim on 1 May had to do with both her active role in the student association and her general outlook on life.

A love of reading

She was the cousin that got us into reading.

Sibel Abla was the one who brought us books, who encouraged us to read and do research, who taught us to question things. She was the one to give me my first book, as a gift. She was an educator and a mentor to us all.

I was 11 years old when we lost her. I witnessed the arrival of her body and the burial. She's buried in the Antakya Asri Cemetery.

We found out afterwards, along with the rest of the country, how she was slaughtered in Taksim.

For us it was a death that shook the whole family deeply and changed all of our lives, because she was a loving, enthusiastic person who got along well with everyone in the family, and who ran to the aid not only of her immediate family but of extended family members as well.

Her death was particularly traumatic for my aunt and Sibel's younger sibling; in fact, the grief it caused changed their lives completely. The entire family still feels her loss in their hearts.

The perpetrators must be held accountable

I was in middle school at the time of the trial. But her father, who was also a lawyer, took the case on himself. He followed it closely, as a man of the law, as

the Republican People's Party (CHP) provincial chair of the time, and as a father who had lost his daughter. I was too young to understand exactly what was happening with the case. But it was discussed in the family all the time, I do remember that.

It still makes our hearts bleed to know that, despite the many years that have passed, the perpetrators have not been

held accountable for their crimes. We hope that a truly democratic constitutional state comes into existence in Turkey one day and that the true perpetrators are held accountable for their actions in the eyes of the law.

This is our greatest wish. We want the perpetrators and those who encouraged them to be held accountable. That's all we want.

Antranik Yontan spoke of how his relative, Diran Nigiz, who he called his 'abi', or big brother, had a limp and was crushed in the panic, that he had a good sense of humour, and that he had migrated from Derik to Istanbul. There are no photographs of Diran.

Diran Nigiz was born in 1943.

His place of birth is registered as Derik, Mardin. He was a labourer.

According to the autopsy report, the cause of Diran's death was rib fractures accompanied by mechanical asphyxia from compression of the abdomen and chest.

This was the only information we had about Diran Nigiz, so reaching his relatives was extremely difficult.

Through the connections we made in Derik, we learned that Diran Nigiz was a man, not a woman as had previously been stated in commemorations of the event, and that he was an Armenian who had migrated to Istanbul.

Our thanks go to Ayşe Karadağ

Since we were unable to find his family, on the advice of Nimet Tanrikulu, founding member of the Human Rights

Association (İHD), we decided to contact Ayşe Karadağ, former Mayor of Derik, in the hope that, because of the uncommon name and surname, she may be able to provide us with some information. Ms. Karadağ did know of Diran Nigiz. She said that he had died in the First of May demonstration, and put us in touch with a relative.

Antranik Yontan is a distant relative of Diran Nigiz: Nigiz was the maternal uncle of Yontan's sister-in-law. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Antranik Yontan for enabling us to record Diran Nigiz's story by taking such a sincere and conscientious interest and for sharing what he knew about Diran.

Antranik Yontan, relative:

Diran had a limp in one leg. He was a labourer. He could do anything from shoe polishing and repairs to plastering. He was both a labourer and a hard worker. He didn't work for any particular organisation. He took on these jobs by himself and that's how he earned his



**Labourer Diran Nigiz
34, died in Taksim**



living. He was a social person. He liked to travel and see places. Whenever his work allowed him, he liked to visit the historical sites and ruins of Istanbul. He went to the First of May rally both to watch the event and because it was a day of celebration.

“Our holiday”

He called 1 May “Our holiday,” and it was with that excitement and enthusiasm that he went to Taksim Square. When the shootings started, like many of our citizens who got stuck on Kazancı Slope, he fell and was crushed in the stampede. That’s how he lost his life. Diran Abi’s family migrated to Istanbul before we did, at the beginning of the 1970s. I was in Derik at the time. I was working as a dental technician. I returned to Derik in 1976 after completing my

military service and then went to Viranşehir in Urfa where I had a dental laboratory.

The sorrow of death

In 1977, we heard about the incident. After studying the newspapers we called Istanbul and learned that this ember had landed and set a fire right in the heart of our family. For many years we felt the sorrow of Diran dying in that panic, and that sadness has continued until today. Just like the relatives of those other 34 people, we also lost a relative that we loved dearly. And those people we loved were there in a celebratory spirit. This made the news even more saddening for us. Because we knew with what great joy they were all there. Diran Abi was older than me. I was born in 1954. Because he was older, we didn’t see each other all that much, but when he came to Derik he would come to visit. During those visits he would talk about the beauties of Istanbul. Of course, he spoke of developments together with their social, health and economic aspects too. He was politically aware in that way.

A good person

He never married. He was a good person; he was friendly, concerned about nature and all other creatures, he would talk about current events in a humorous way. I know that’s how everyone remembers him. I would like to thank you for sharing Diran’s story. I hope that from now on, Diran Abi will be remembered properly, that the correct information will be shared about him.

SECOND PART —

1 May '77 and Impunity



“The state is implicated in this crime, and the perpetrators must be put on trial”

Fehmi Işıklar, one of the organisers and directors of the 1 May 1977 rally, talks first about demonstrators' enthusiasm, then the sounds of gunfire and the stampede that followed. He says that the state must find a way to absolve itself of this shame.

The perpetrators of this massacre, whom the state have deemed “unknown,” must be revealed and brought to justice. Right now, the state remains implicated.

This is one of the most significant cases in Turkey attributed to unknown assailants. If the perpetrators of this massacre had been punished, I wonder if the president of DiSK [Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey], Kemal Türkler, and so many other of our comrades would have been murdered three years later? It's been 43 years. The state must find a way to absolve itself of this shame.

They mustn't forget that so long as the working class exists, an issue will be made of this massacre, and it will be discussed, every year on 1 May. The state should stop avoiding it. The pain of what happened is still fresh for the working class.

These were the first words uttered by Fehmi Işıklar at the mention of 1 May 1977. He is one of the directors of DiSK



who was in Taksim Square that day... One of five people on the DiSK Executive Committee of which Kemal Türkler served as president. His union work, which began in the Metalworkers' Union, saw him become general secretary of DiSK.

He told bianet about what happened on 1 May 1977, which he describes as “a beautiful, sunny Sunday,” about how the workers were later blamed both by the media and political parties, about the emphasis placed on 1 May 1977 in the 12 September Indictment, and about what the members of DiSK were, and were not, able to do.

I was on both the managing and the organizing committee for the rally. Mehmet Karaca was the committee chair. We put a lot of work into the preparations. We began getting ready six months before 1 May 1977. The centre-right media was trying to terrorize the masses about how things would get ugly that day.

We, meanwhile, were doing our best to make sure measures were in place to prevent anything bad from happening.

We put the general secretary of the Mineworkers' Union, Mehmet Ertürk, in charge of the security and safety of those taking part in the rally, and we assigned some 20 thousand DİSK members the task of setting up a security corridor.



We were all so excited and enthusiastic

We didn't get any sleep the night before. Those travelling from Anatolia hadn't got any sleep anyway because of the journey. We were all so excited and enthusiastic that day.

On 1 May 1976 we'd had a wonderful celebration. Neither the unions nor society at large was a stranger to such crowds.

We had decided to march to Taksim Square from three different directions. Each union had its own route. One characteristic of that time was that every union wanted to make itself seen. They were all striving to secure a prominent

spot on the square, to be visible. We discussed where each union would be positioned. NGOs took part too. We'd put so much into the preparations.

And the march began. I was at the front, together with Kemal. Those on the square gave us an enthusiastic welcome.

At the time, leftists were being taken into custody almost every day, and kept in custody for a few days at a time. But no one was worried about what would happen on 1 May 1977. It was a day when everyone felt completely free.

12 in Chicago, 34 in Istanbul

We were not expecting this attack. We'd taken precautions in terms of security, thinking that particular political groups might get rowdy to try and stand out. We hadn't taken any precautions against firearms though.

Can you imagine? In Chicago in 1886, the number of people who died over two days was 12, while we lost 34 people in just one day. We lost nearly three times more people than in the events that started the Labour Day protests. And with there being such a strong workers' movement at the time.

Shortly before the attack, our president, Kemal Türkler, took to the podium to give a speech, but meanwhile there were still groups of people trying to get into the square. It was at some point during that speech that we heard a gunshot.

A single bullet. Later it became clear that

it was just a signal, because it was after that gunshot that the shower of bullets was unleashed from the Water Administration Building and the Intercontinental Hotel.

And then, once the tanks began filling up the square, people started running in a panic towards Kazancı Slope, and unfortunately many lost their lives there too.

Taksim and the aftermath

A few of us got Kemal Türkler out of the square. I went back to the square, I definitely did not want to leave. One of our personnel passed out, and I carried him towards the Atatürk Cultural Centre. Then a wounded man, then a kid who'd collapsed...

There were children on the square that day. They'd climbed up on top of the trucks. They were enjoying the excitement of that day too. I was in a daze. I walked toward Gümüşsuyu like that, in a kind of stupor, and I sat down in front of an apartment building. I sat there as if I lived in that apartment, like I was someone

from that neighbourhood, because the police had gone mad, they were rounding up anyone and everyone they could get their hands on and taking them into custody. Şinasi Kaya was my neighbour, and I called his house. He told me to get straight home. I went. Everyone was there, including Kemal Türkler and Mehmet Karaca.

As for the scene of the crime, we do know this: the bullets shot from the hotel windows clearly did not come from ordinary guns. These bullets were fired using proper artillery. Whoever did this had positioned themselves there beforehand, and planned this attack.

Of course trials were held, and we as DİSK did our part. Our lawyers gathered all of the evidence, they put so much energy and effort into this case. But the perpetrators were never found, and the case somehow kept getting postponed.

And so even though it wasn't officially proven, it became blatantly obvious who was behind it. The case was handed over to the Military Court in 1978 [at a time of martial law].



DİSK Duruşması – Sol baştan: Abdullah Baştürk, Fehmi İşıklar, Tuncer Kocamançoğlu, Demirhan Tuncay, Durmuş Ali Yalnız, Yalçın Talaka, Ahmet Açar, Süleyman Çelebi, Kemal Abay... Arka sıra sol baştan: Mehmet Atay, Nurettin Çavdargül, (...) (...) (...) (...) Celal Açıncı, Ahmet Yıldız (Gözlüklü)

Preparations for 12 September

With the massacre of 1977 and those that followed, the preparations for the military coup of 12 September 1980 were completed.

1 May 1977 is part of the 836-page 12 September Indictment. It is referred to as part of an insurrection against the state with the intent of establishing a Marxist-Leninist government. Those responsible for this coup once again put the blame on us, accusing us of planning a coup ourselves. And they put us on trial for it too. But nothing like that had ever even occurred to us, because the First of May was an international day of struggle.

Because of how everything went, they didn't give us a moment's peace afterwards either, in the time before 12 September. We never even had the chance to just sit down together and make any kind of plans. But then one day a young man came to the union office and said to us, "I lost my father that day, you need to do something, you're responsible for his resting place."

His father had died on 1 May 1977. As I recall, he was buried at the Karşıyaka Cemetery in Ankara. People were defiling his father's grave. And that really got to him. "I can't deal with this anymore, you, as members of DİSK, have to do something," he said. So you see, there was this kind of hatred toward the working class, and towards the First of May...

Fehmi Işıklar —

Unionist, politician, writer. Founding chairperson of the People's Labour Party (HEP). He was removed from office while serving as an MP of Diyarbakır in 1993. He served as MP for Bursa with the Social Democrat People's Party (SHP) (1987-1991). He was a member of the executive committee and served as secretary general of the Metalworkers' Federation. He also served as president of the Modern Metalworkers' Union, and secretary general of Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK). He worked as a machinist at the Ammunition Factory of the Kırıkkale Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation (MKE), and as a technician at the General Directorate of Forestry's Central Repair Workshops for Bolu and Muğla and at the Kırıkkale Brass Factory. Born in Şanlıurfa in 1941, he is a graduate of the Kırıkkale School for Mechanical Technicians, and author of the book DİSK Davasında Savunma (Defence in the DİSK Trial), published in 1986.



**“If you can't find the killers,
you can't remove the stain”**

Kani Beko, former president of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) speaking about the need to put the perpetrators of the 1 May 1977 massacre on trial, saying that the stain of these events needs to be removed and the killers need to be found.

Kani Beko, MP for Izmir with the People's Republican Party (CHP), was president of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) from 2013-2018.

Speaking to bianet about the events of 1 May 1977, he talks of what it means that the killers of the 34 people who he refers to as the “First of May Martyrs” have never been found, and of how every year DİSK commemorates those killed on 1 May 1977. He says that if the state bears no responsibility for the massacre, it must find the perpetrators and put them on trial.

I leave the word to Kani Beko.

1 May in the history of DİSK

DİSK was founded in 1967 and carried out its first mass rally on 1 May 1976 in Taksim Square. Sinister forces turned the celebrations of 1 May 1977 to bloodshed, and 34 people lost their lives. From that day on, workers have called Taksim “The First of May Square” to honour the



memory of the First of May martyrs.

After the celebrations of 1 May 1978, the military regime closed Taksim Square off to First of May celebrations as of 1979. Every year in our speeches to celebrate the First of May we, the presidents of DİSK, have commemorated the dead and declared at the top of our voices that their killers must be found.

“We never lost sight of Taksim”

After the 1980 military coup, the ban [on 1 May celebrations in Taksim] continued at a heightened level. Those who tried to celebrate the day in Taksim met with fierce police violence.

Hundreds of revolutionaries were detained and dozens arrested in operations carried out in the lead-up to the day. Mehmet Akif Dalıcı was murdered in 1989, as were Hasan Albayrak, Dursun Odabaş and Yalçın Levent in 1996. In 1990, Gülay Beceren,



a student at Istanbul Technical University, was paralysed after being hit by a bullet.

After DiSK resumed its activities in 1992, the decision was taken to hold the 1 May celebrations in Taksim and we fought for this. The confederation fought determinedly to ensure the unity of labourers, workers, socialists and revolutionaries. It never lost sight of Taksim as the aim, and continuously raised this demand.

We continued this fight, paying a heavy price, between 2007 and 2009. Finally, the government had no choice but to open the square to workers and labourers. From 2010-2012, there was huge public participation in the celebrations held in Taksim in honour of the First of May martyrs, and it was with great joy that people reclaimed Taksim Square.

European Court of Human Rights judgment

In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Turkey with regard to the unlawful barriers and prohibitions that the state had implemented for

years. The court stated that the justifications provided by the state were not necessary or verifiable, and that the demand for a site for celebrations was covered by the right to hold meetings and demonstrations.

This judgment confirmed the true owners of this site that workers had fought for by tooth and nail. However, despite this legitimate and legal foundation, in 2013, the Justice and Development Party [AKP] government once again closed off Taksim to its true owners in a step that is martial law in all but name.

They showed that they did not recognise this judgment by attacking labourers and workers with water cannons and tear gas. This violence also continued in the Gezi Park protests.

DiSK carried out a great deal of research on the events of 1 May 1977, we held mass marches, we followed the trials, we wrote many articles highlighting the impunity [of the perpetrators]; but despite all our efforts, for 43 years, the perpetrators have not been caught or brought to trial.



“We have pursued this case for 43 years”

Lawyers who are connected with DiSK followed almost every step of the trial. We received support from our friends in Europe. The presidents of DiSK and of the unions connected to DiSK, together with our revolutionary-patriotic friends, have pursued this case for 43 years. However, we are faced with a deep state; and we know that that is why we have not seen any results.

There have been so many massacres in Turkey. Very recently, they murdered our citizens in the heart of Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Turkey. In Sivas they set our people on fire. People like Bahriye Üçok were murdered, people like Uğur Mumcu were murdered, people like Pir Sultan were murdered.

If you will not be the kind of state who investigates these massacres, if you will not bring the murderers of those killed in Ankara, or of the First of May martyrs, to justice, you will never be able to remove the stain that you carry.

What's more, you will be inviting the massacres that will occur in the future.

If Turkey makes any claim of wanting to redeem itself in the eyes of the rest of the world, it will need to catch these killers and bring them to justice.

Because as long as the perpetrators are not found, the first question that comes to mind is, “Did the state protect these people?” So find those killers. And by doing so you will go at least a small way towards easing the pain of the families of those who were murdered.

Kani Beko

Worker, unionist, CHP İzmir MP. He worked as the Chair of the Karşıyaka Culture Solidarity Association (1972) and a workplace representative at the DiSK Textile Workers' Union (1975). He became a member of the DiSK Genel-İş Union in 1977. After the DiSK was closed following the coup on September 12, 1980, he worked as the representative of the Belediye-İş Union at the ESHOT Trolleybus Workshop for seven years. He was the DiSK Genel-İş Secretary-General between 2004-2013. After his terms as the DiSK Ankara Regional Chair and the DiSK Genel-İş Chair, he was elected the DiSK Chair in 2013. He graduated from middle school in Şemikler in Karşıyaka, İzmir. He was born in 1953 in Macedonia.



“The perpetrators of the 1 May 1977 massacre got away with it”

Süleyman Çelebi, president of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), speaks of his attempts to have 1 May 1977 investigated while he was an MP, but says that each of his proposals was rejected.

Süleyman Çelebi is one of the witnesses of 1 May 1977, and a former president of DİSK. He served as Republican People's Party (CHP) MP for Istanbul's third electoral district for 24 cycles.

He talks to bianet about what happened on 1 May 1977 in Taksim, which he calls “a planned and organised incident,” and how DİSK has followed up on the case.

I leave the word to Süleyman Çelebi.

The First of May Square

“Should this be the First of May Square?” Kemal Türkler asked from the platform during his speech on 1 May 1977, and then I remember the sound of gunshots and sirens. Labourers yelled “Yes!” in a thundering voice, and in less than two minutes, the square had become a bloodbath. Hundreds of thousands of people started running in all directions.

Afterwards, we found countless



cartridge cases in the square, and we handed them over to our lawyers. I am one of many witnesses of this. And also of the trial process. The critical point here is this: If you look back at the trials for the case from the martial law period and the 1980 military coup, you can easily mistake us for defendants in the case. This, even though the murderers' identities were obvious. It was organised by state agents and provocateurs, but we who were there to celebrate on 1 May are the ones who were put on trial. Under an annotation referring to our “roles during the communist festival,” all sorts of charges were made against us and we were held responsible for the massacre because we had invited workers and labourers to the



MEİRİS 'D İ' KOGUŞU HATIRASI — DİSK yöneticileri, cezaevindeki yılları da birlikte yaşamış ve bir mücadeleye dönüştürmüştü. Genel başkan Abdullah Bastürk'un (arkada oturanlar soldan üçüncü) ölümüyle boşalan DİSK Genel Başkanlığı'na, şimdi bu fotoğraftakilerden aday. Kemal Nebioğlu (önde tam karşıda oturan), Mukbil Zırtıoğlu (arkada en sağda oturan), Mustafa Aktolga (solda ayakta)... Rıza Güven (arkada soldan ikinci) ve Özcan Kesgeç (arkadan dördüncü) ise adaylıktan çekildi. Mevcut genel sekreter Süleyman Çelebi (önde oturan dan sağ başta) ise yine genel sekreter adayı.



demonstration. We went on putting all our efforts into each stage of the trial process. When I was president of DİSK I set myself a goal to do all I could to uncover the perpetrators of the massacre. Later I also fought for this in parliament.

119 witnesses

I was on the Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Military Memorandums. We included 1 May 1977 in the scope of our work because it was one of the important steps leading up to the coup. Our work covered the incidents at Fatsa, Maraş and Çorum too. We fought for the witnesses to be heard, for the perpetrators to be found. We in the commission presented a list of 119 witnesses, including the witnesses of 1 May 1977. This was a list extending from



the prosecutor leading the investigation to security forces who were on duty in Taksim that day. However, only 15 of them were given a hearing. And that was done just for the sake of it.

The one thing that is blatantly obvious at the present stage is this: The perpetrators of this massacre have got away with what they did. In turn, this fact reveals the sheer magnitude of the incident. I am talking about an incident that was planned and organised. The crime scene was filled with evidence, there were hundreds of eyewitnesses, but for some reason, even though it's been 43 years, those with blood on their hands have yet to be identified. I have expressed numerous times that this massacre was committed by the hand of an organisation within the state, as a counterinsurgency.

Proposals rejected

All our proposals to bring the perpetrators of 1 May 1977 to justice and for those responsible to be made known were also rejected in parliament. The same thing happened in the past; all of this can all be found in parliamentary records. All proposals were turned down or were covered up. But we must not forget that this is a crime against humanity. There is no statute of limitations for crimes against humanity. Therefore, we are all still responsible for uncovering the identities of the perpetrators of this massacre.

One of the most important developments in the process was the

judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. Referring to 1 May 1977, the court emphasised the importance of Taksim Square in the collective memory, the death of the labourers there, and their commemoration, saying that there is something special about this place. With this decision, for the first time, a city square appeared in the European Court of Human Rights system as a subject. It was a decision of great importance. Of course, no one in Turkey abided by the decision. It is the state's responsibility to abide by this decision and find the perpetrators. And it is our responsibility to follow up and make sure they carry out this process.

European Court of Human Rights judgment

On 27 November 2012, the ECtHR announced its judgment in relation to the application to the court filed by DİSK and KESK on the grounds that, on 1 May

2008, their right to freedom of assembly had been violated. The court held the Turkish government responsible for the violation of article 11 of the European Human Rights Convention, "the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of association."

The ECtHR judgment stated that:

- *The choice of venue [...] is part of the right to demonstrate;*
- *[To] commemorate friends of the trade union and its members who had lost their lives during the demonstrations of 1 May 1977 clearly entered into the general mandate of the two trade unions concerned [DİSK and KESK].*
- *[A]lthough a demonstration in a public place may cause some disruption to ordinary life [...] it is important for the public authorities to show a certain degree of tolerance towards peaceful gatherings if [the right to] freedom of assembly [...] is not to be deprived of its substance*

Süleyman Çelebi —

Labourer, unionist, CHP MP for Istanbul for 24 cycles (28 June 2011-23 April 2015). Elected DİSK Executive Board Member in 1980, serving as head of the Department for Organisation and Recruitment. He was DİSK General Secretary from 1992 to 1994, and DİSK President from 2000 to 2011. He held office as board member of the European Trade Union Confederation, and the European Trade Union Federation for Textiles, Clothing and Leather, and was also member and co-president of the Turkey-EU Joint Consultative Committee. He started working in 1966 when he was 13, at the Dinarsu Factory. He was born in Ordu in 1953.



Remembrance as a matter of dignity and the fight against impunity

In 43 years, the parties in power may have changed but the truth behind what happened has still not been brought to light and nothing has changed in terms of the policy of impunity. It is still unclear who opened fire that day. Why?

Hundreds of thousands of people had gathered in Taksim Square to celebrate the First of May. A huge crowd. Entry into the rally area was taking an extremely long time, and the speeches were all starting late. The date was 1 May 1977, a Sunday. A warm and sunny spring day.

In the photographs taken before the incident, the joy of solidarity and elation can be seen in the faces of everyone. It is around 7pm, the speeches have overrun, and it still isn't dark yet. All of a sudden, gunshots are heard. We all know what comes next: Horrendous panic, people shot, toppled over one another, crushed, suffocated.

The cold face of death and numbers. According to official records, 34 people lost their lives. Five of them had been directly targeted and shot dead with a single bullet to the head or neck.

Most of the others were crushed and suffocated. Many were injured. Each of the dead has their own unique story. Students, workers, people of all ages



and occupations who had to bid farewell to life ahead of their time.

A different era

It might be difficult to envisage from where we stand today, but 1977 was a totally different era, both for the world and for this country. The total population of Turkey was around 41 million back then, and most had become familiar with politics at an early age.

For the women and men, but particularly for the youth - with their long hair, long moustaches, pointed-collar shirts and thick-rimmed glasses - politics was a real part of everyday life. Carrying books tucked beneath their arms, and dreaming of a life of justice and equality, these young people planned to change the world.

There were meetings and demonstrations each and every day, in schools, in factories, in cities. Television had only a single, black-and-white channel, and the morning radio programmes concerned themselves with battling foot-and-mouth disease in cows, and wheat bugs in the fields...



Quest for justice

Of that population of 41 million, five-hundred thousand people were in Taksim Square on 1 May 1977 was, according to the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), or one-hundred thousand according to official figures.

Official records show that all the newspapers published at the time proclaimed beforehand that incidents were certain to break out during the celebrations, yet the number attending the rally shows that the media's fearmongering did not keep people away. Such a passionate quest for justice must have been alarming for some.

According to official records, 211 police commanders were present at 41 police points; 2,380 police officers were on duty, and the gendarmerie was positioned by the square to intervene if necessary.

However, for some reason, just as there was a failure to prevent the violence that day, ensuing investigations also failed to reveal the identities of the perpetrators or uncover the motives.

Statute of limitations

In the 43 years that have passed, everything still remains hidden behind a dark curtain of mystery, with the perpetrators still unknown. It should not be that difficult to ascertain who was on duty in what capacity that day, out of which hotels rooms the shootings occurred, and who was staying in those rooms. But there must, you see, be insurmountable obstacles in the way, because none of this has happened, it has proven impossible.

Instead, this is what happens: Not a single security force member is dismissed for their responsibilities in the incident. The lawyers of those killed and wounded spend years filing complaints and

working tirelessly for the truth to be brought to light.

Court cases against a small number of law enforcement officials who were charged are dragged out for years, verdicts of non-jurisdiction result in the cases being sent from one court to the next, administrative leaves put everything on hold time and time again, and finally the cases are closed, having reached the statute of limitations.

Rather than the perpetrators being brought to justice, in the 43 years that have passed, it is the victims who have been put on trial and, although eventually acquitted, who have suffered gratuitous harassment for years.

The real question is this: Though years have passed and the parties in power have changed, the truth behind what happened has still not been brought to light and nothing has changed in terms of the policy of impunity. It is still unclear who opened fire that day. Why?

The 12 September indictment

Decades after the military coup of 1980, a trial was brought against the coup's leaders, with the claim of seeking justice for the severe human rights infringements that happened at the time. The 1 May 1977 massacre appeared in the "12 September Indictment" submitted for this trial, under the heading "Incident Analysis":

"With regard to the incident that took place on 1 May 1977, and resulted in the

deaths of 34 people and the wounding of many others, in light of the course of events surrounding the incident, eyewitness testimonies, and in the knowledge that those who opened fire from the Intercontinental Hotel and the roof of the Water Administration building were clearly seen by many yet escaped security forces entirely, the conclusion has been reached that the incident was a provocation, caused by those wishing to drag society into a state of chaos and conflict, the ultimate goal being the preparation of the grounds leading to a military coup, shaped and plotted by those within the state wishing to seize power, and that these same forces in effect prevented the police from performing their duty."

In his statement for the investigation, the first prosecutor of the case, Çetin Yetkin, explains, "I was the prosecutor in the case regarding the incidents of 1 May 1977. In the first hearing, I asked for the investigation to be extended, for the true perpetrators to be found, and for charges to be pressed against several public officials who were, as could be



ascertained from the file, clearly culpable. As soon as I did so, I was removed from the case. This was not the way the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor of Istanbul wanted this case to be conducted, and therefore I was removed.”

Neither during the prosecution processes following this incident, nor during the trials related to the 1980 military coup were the points highlighted in the testimonials above investigated as they should have been, even though it was stated that “the incident was a provocation, shaped and plotted by those within the state wishing to seize power, and these same forces in effect prevented the police from performing their duty.”

Ecevit's declaration

When he became Prime Minister in June 1977—one month after 1 May 1977—leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Bülent Ecevit said, “From day one

we have faced walls obstructing us. It is obvious who opened fire, who caused panic to arise resulting in the death of more than 30 people. The police must have recorded them on film. Still we have been given no information.”

Parliamentary Report

The same testimonials appeared in the 2012 Parliamentary Research Commission for Coups and Military Memorandums report. This report also makes reference to the murders of prosecutor Doğan Öz and journalists Abdi İpekçi and Uğur Mumcu, who were believed to have been killed because of their investigations into the dark forces that played a role in the 1 May 1977 massacre and other events prior to the coup.

This report also mentioned another special report on counterinsurgency that had been presented by prosecutor Doğan Öz to then-Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, inviting those wishing to solve the cases in question to look at these files. The

report also included Ecevit's words of 26 May, 1973: “The nature and objectives of this seemingly official but actually unofficial organisation called the counterinsurgency has not been uncovered. The counterinsurgency will be called to account.”

1 May 1977 is not the only incident prior to 12 September that has not been brought to light; the Beyazıt massacre of 16 March 1978, the Sivas, Maraş and Çorum incidents, the murders of journalists and academics, and the torture, forced disappearances, extrajudicial and arbitrary executions that took place during this time remain unsolved to this day.

The obstacle of state secrets

The trials in all of these cases share particular characteristics: Suspects or defendants are protected and shielded no matter what, the scope of the investigation and trial is kept narrow, and the cases are dragged out until they are eventually dropped due to the statute of limitations.

The connections between the incidents and the backdrop to those incidents are not investigated, there are always people and institutions with legislative immunity who cannot be investigated, the judiciary is a part of the machinery of impunity and generally adopts an approach that legitimises not the victim but the defendant, and in almost all trials we face the obstacle of state secrets.

The United Nations and Council of Europe

define impunity as the “the impossibility [...] of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account [...] since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims.”

What is underlined here is the responsibility of the state, which yet again fails to find, investigate, try, or sentence the perpetrators of crimes.

The fight against impunity

According to international reference documents, the fight against impunity is related to four fundamental types of rights and obligations.

The first of these is the Right to Justice, for which is important for the victims' suffering to be recognised and acknowledged by official authorities, and which thus requires the existence of punitive and reparatory mechanisms of justice. The second is the Right to the Truth, which refers to the liability of the state to bring to light where and how the violations occurred, who they targeted and why, as well as who carried out the violation, and under whose orders.

The state holds an obligation to open official records and archives, grant access to evidence and documents regarding violations, and to eradicate denialist tendencies, and also to ensure the right to reparation and the guarantee of non-recurrence.



In light of these definitions, impunity in Turkey is a highly alarming tradition that destroys all possibility of democracy, prioritises the protection of public officials over the country's citizens when there has been violation of human rights, and has its roots in a statist mentality.

Resistance and remembrance

There are some wounds that time can heal only if those wounds are made public, if they are made visible, and if they are acknowledged by others.

This is why resistance against the wilful erasure of memory, and remembrance as

a matter of dignity are our debt both to the victims and to our own future. If we are to build a collective future, it is of utmost importance that we, here and now, become part of the struggle to end denial and impunity.

[1] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law] (60/147, A/60/509/Add.1, 21 March, 2006) & Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on eradicating impunity for serious human rights violations] (1110. session, 30 March, 2011

Emel Ataktürk —

Lawyer and human rights advocate. She is one of the founders of the Memory Center and still works as a program manager in the field of law at this organization. She worked as a member and executive at non-governmental organizations such as the Human Rights Association, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly.



1 May 1977: Who is hiding the truth, and why?

Although almost half a century has passed, the truth behind the massacre of 1 May 1977 remains in the dark. Who were the people that committed this crime, and why? We shall see the day when life prevails over death!

There are things from that day that are hidden in my mind and heart. Not experiences, but feelings I carry. Feelings that have merged with my various experiences, and left behind a kind of residue.

From 1 May 1977, up to the most recent mass murders, mass deaths in Suruç and at the Ankara Railway Station... After all these massacres it is the victims who are blamed and put on trial.

Political powers hide this evil, hold the truth locked up, and if voices are raised, those in power retaliate by raising their voices even louder. As if joining forces, all the machines of political power work together to generate fear.

500 thousand people

I picture in my mind the events of 1 May 1977. The rally is much larger than anything we have seen recently. The population is only half that of the current population of Turkey, but the



demonstration is attended by five-hundred thousand people, according to the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), or one-hundred thousand according to official figures.

Labourers, teachers, students, and public workers enter Taksim Square as one great collective body. Emerging from different cocoons, flowing along different riverbeds, hundreds of thousands of workers and labourers from all different segments of the working class fill the square.

All together they are the vessel of a progressive movement in history! In their minds they carry dreams of a free and equal Turkey, and in their hearts the feeling of this idea!

It is sunny, but...

The weather is mild and sunny, a true May Day. Wrapped around the tongues

of many is the tune: “The First of May, the First of May, a workers and labourers festival day.” The speeches overrun, the day turns to night. Then comes the moment when the excitement of hundreds and thousands is reduced to the mourning of 34 lives.

Death pushes life aside. The darkness mentioned in the First of May anthem emerges. “What the day brings today is oppression, tyranny, and blood.” Somewhere, a gun is fired. Five labourers are shot.

The massive body of the working class is shaken; the sudden movement of the collective body leads to the crushing and suffocation of those left behind. We do not know the emotional state in which those who were injured, those who were in a state of profound shock made it home that day. What we do know is the official death toll: 34.

Unanswered questions

We lost 34 from within the hundreds of thousands of living bodies that day.

Although nearly half a century has passed, the truth behind the massacre of 1 May 1977 remains in the dark. Who were the people that committed this crime, and why? Why is the truth being hidden? And by whom?

The families of those who were killed and injured have been searching for answers to these questions for decades. They still haven't found any.

Yet one thing is for certain: Suspects

or defendants are being protected and shielded, cases are being dragged on for years until they reach the statute of limitations and can be dropped.

This reality should drive us, as citizens, to do everything in our power. How can any individual, any group, any social entity be protected in the face of violation of human rights in Turkey?

Pursuing Justice

The answer to this question is to be found in the pursuit of justice, in the fight against impunity, in the encounters of different groups woven purposefully and tightly together, in never ceasing to speak and write, and in being involved, collectively, in the fields of union rights and human rights.

I look at the list of the 34 people who lost their lives; their names, ages and occupations listed one under the next. Falling prey to the union regulations that confine labourers to their own occupational branches, thus isolating them from one another, my eyes seek out the teachers, and then the students. Then I am ashamed of myself for this, and I read all their names, out loud, one by one. Their struggle will light the way for ours! We shall carry the struggles of times past into the future, enriching it with the contributions of the new generation, in the wholehearted belief that the struggles of labour, democracy, peace, and freedom, are struggles to be undertaken together!

We shall see the day when life prevails over death!

Nejla Kurul —

Chairperson of Education and Science Workers' Union (Eğitim-Sen). Member of the Ankara Solidarity Academy. She was dismissed from her post at the university by Statutory Decree No. 686 because of being a peace signatory (February 7, 2017). She graduated from Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Department of Education Management and Planning in 1985. She worked as an academic (Prof. Dr.) at the same university for 30 years. While she was a visiting scholar at Wisconsin University in 2001-2002, she conducted research on the political economy of higher education. She wrote the books “Globalization and Universities” (Küreselleşme ve Üniversiteler, with Adnan Gümüş), What Does the Bologna Process Serve? (Bologna Süreci Neye Hizmet Ediyor?), “Story of Another Education: Inquiries on Individual's Development and Interaction with Society and Nature” (Başka Bir Eğitim Hikâyesi Bireyin Gelişimi Toplum ve Doğa Etkileşimi Üzerine Sorgulamalar), Public Education: Critical Writings (Kamusal Eğitim: Eleştirel Yazılar). Wrote articles for academic journals, education, science and politics magazines, newspapers and news websites. Born in 1963 in Kayseri. She spent her childhood and early youth in Eskişehir, İstanbul, Konya and Germany (Kronach-Nürnberg).

Finding the traces of a 43-year-old massacre

How did I get started on this? How did I manage to contact the friends and relatives of those who lost their lives in Taksim 43 years ago? My connections, 27 lives, my age, knocking on doors... Impunity, lost files, autopsy reports...

“Though I don’t know the exact circumstances under which he fell, I could never shake the image of that crowd, the smoke, and my father’s back being crushed. But for years I felt this pain in my back—because that’s how they killed my father, by trampling on him and crushing his back.”

This is how Birsen Kement, who lost her father on 1 May 1977, expresses her grief. Her father was 41, she was just 17.

Birsen Kement was the first person I interviewed. Although her father’s story had appeared in other platforms, we never knew her own experience in such detail. As I listened to her, I felt the sorrow and the tension inside me grow. These feelings stuck with me throughout the interviews.

Contacting friends and relatives

Of course I knew what happened on 1 May 1977 from my readings about recent



Turkish history. I knew that dozens of people were helplessly crushed, that some were executed, or rather murdered, on the spot.

Before beginning this research, I would regularly scan the websites and archives of leftist organisations. I would read about 1 May 1977. After all, it was something that had happened over forty years ago. How difficult could it really be? Extremely difficult, as I would come to find out.

When beginning the research, I set myself a goal: I was going to contact the friends and relatives of ten of the people who lost their lives that day. Over the 43 years that had passed, five families had been contacted, so ten didn’t seem a particularly challenging goal.

Psychologically, achieving this goal would comfort me, or, at least provide me with a little solace.

Connections

With the connections I had established over the years, I made use of all the relevant associations, unions, and political parties, as well as the people around me. I began investigating the

lives of those who had died by asking for support in my endeavour from the people I knew and trusted.

There were teachers, medical staff, and students who had been massacred. I called my friends who were lawyers, educators, doctors. There was one great source of uncertainty for me: Exactly who were those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977? There was a possibility that I would fail to reach anyone at all, and this possibility frightened me.

Given the political atmosphere of the time, and especially with the propaganda in the centre-right press declaring it dangerous to go out on that particular 1 May, I thought it wouldn't have been possible for people to have been in Taksim Square unless they were with an organisation.

I thought, therefore, that union archives might contain information about the people who were there that day. Maybe their friends, the people they worked

with back then, were still unionists. Most importantly, they had to have relatives who were still alive. This was one of the areas in which I felt the most helpless.

27 lives

Now, on 31 December, we are completing the process I began in March 2020. But it is a process that remains open-ended. I say this because some of the families of the 34 people who were massacred did not wish to speak, and for some I was unable to find any trace of them at all.

The number of those who lost their lives reached 41 in the new list made by Fahrettin Engin Erdoğan from the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey's (DİSK) in 2010. There is still no information about those who were added to the list in 2010, other than their names.

Therefore, in the hope of completing the stories of all who died that day, our call to friends and relatives remains open.

I was able to reach the friends and relatives of 27 of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977. Not on my own, of course.

I would like to express my gratitude to Nadire Mater, who stood by my side throughout the research, encouraged me and reignited my hope each time I fell into despair, who opened up such a plethora of opportunities for me, by activating all her connections, and by coming up with the idea of the project in the first place.



My age

On a personal level, I witnessed the surprise some felt at me conducting research about a time when I hadn't even been yet born. This surprise was expressed by the families of those who died, and I also encountered it on social media.

Let me give you a couple of examples: "You're the same age as my child," "I have grandchildren your age," "You're younger than my daughter." I don't know if such reactions served to motivate me further, but it definitely made me happy that my age wasn't considered a disadvantage.

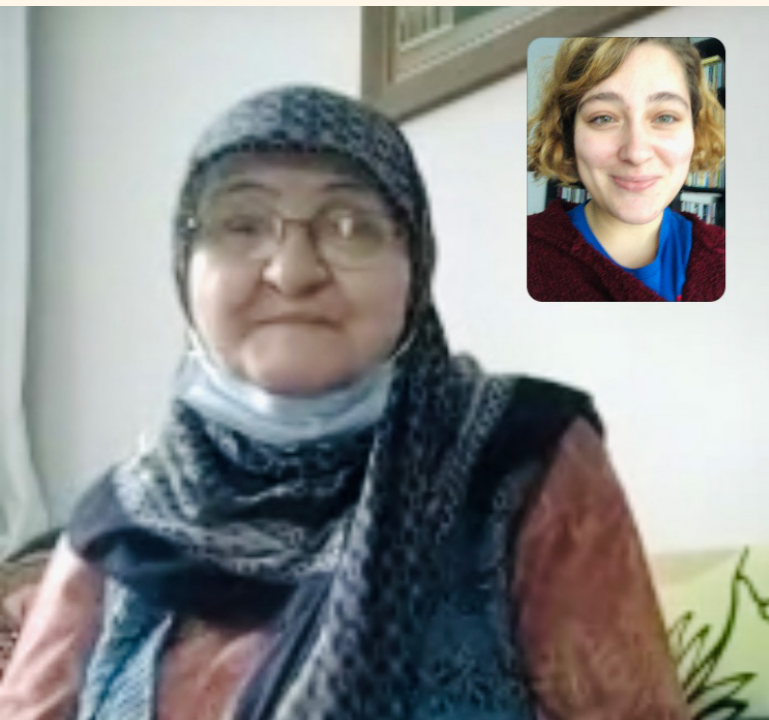
The relatives and friends of those who lost their lives, most of whom were being contacted for the first time, said they were grateful to me for "undertaking

such a task at such a young age." But in fact it is me who would like to express my gratitude to them.

Knocking on doors

While interviewing relatives and friends, my most explicit observation was this: In most cases, no one had ever come knocking on their door, and this had led to a sense of resentment. But despite this resentment, they still wanted to talk.

They wanted to talk because speaking, telling these stories, was therapeutic for them. In the case of families whose loved one had been part of an organisation (particularly those who were with the Alliance and Solidarity Association of All Teachers [TÖB-DER]), the unions and organisations their loved one was affiliated with had taken a keen interest





in them, and done everything within their power to help those left behind to carry on with their lives.

But others had had to bury their loved ones and tackle the hardships they faced alone.

Impunity

Every time I reached a new friend or relative, my excitement grew. Over the course of the project, I also established a real bond with each of them. I now know by heart all their names, ages, occupations, and where they were from.

However, towards the end, I realised that

this process had taken a psychological toll on me too.

The level of impunity in the case of this massacre that dates back 43 years shook me to my core. Just like us, the families were also unaware of the status of the legal proceedings concerning this case. Most didn't even have autopsy reports. The reports either had never been given to them or had at some point been lost.

What's more, even the lawyers who followed the court case couldn't provide me with answers. Some were no longer alive, and some were too unwell to speak.

Lost files

Most unions and organisations lost the files in their archives following the 1980 military coup; therefore, the only sources at my disposal were old newspaper reports. The case file had been handed over to the Martial Law Court in 1978. And you know what happens after that. This report ends here, but it remains



open to new information and new developments. We now know why 27 of the people killed were in Taksim that day, we know about the lives they led, the jobs they did, what brought them joy.

To me, and I know to many others as well, this is invaluable. These individuals, for the most part, will no longer be remembered merely as numbers. Their short lives stand before us, along with their children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren.

Autopsies

These people were not merely the numbers that appeared on the autopsy reports. If I have played some part in

rendering them more than just numbers, if friends and relatives have found some comfort in recounting their loss, then I can find some happiness in this myself.

Now all I want is for those responsible for this massacre, as well as those who have been protecting them, to face justice. Because I know that if the perpetrators of 1 May had been tried, Turkey might have been a different country afterwards.

Had they faced justice, perhaps our friends would not have been killed so easily in Ankara on 10 October 2015, or at least their murderers too would have been put on trial. Because I know that the state of impunity brings nothing but more suffering.

Tuğçe Yılmaz —

Journalist, editor, researcher. "1 May 1977 The Voices of Those Who Lost Their Loved Ones / 1 May 1977 and Impunity" she was engaged in this dossier as a researcher, reporter, editor and writer. Her articles, interviews and reports are published in outlets such as bianet, BirGün Book, K24, 5Harfliler, Gazete Karınca and 1+1 Forum. She graduated from Ege University, Faculty of Literature Department of Philosophy. She was born in Ankara in 1991.

Tracing the facts and history of this massacre 43 years after it happened sheds light upon the tunnel of darkness in which we now find ourselves. It makes it possible for us to remain steadfast on our path as we seek to establish a land of equality, freedom, peace, and fraternity, that is, a land and a world that put labour first.

“We now know why 27 of the people killed were in Taksim that day, we know about the lives they led, the jobs they did, what brought them joy!”

Yes, the First of May, Taksim Square, this city, this country, the working class, they also have a history, a memory. It is a memory under threat of being erased for the benefit of capital and the ruling class.

Because it is possible for those who produce all of the values and the beauty in this country to be socially, politically, and culturally disregarded by depriving them of their memory and their history.

That is why it is absolutely vital that our memory and our history, which are filled with our rage, our traumas, our struggles, our hopes, and our dreams, are kept alive and not forgotten.



Beyond just names and numbers

The efforts of Tuğçe Yılmaz, who meticulously uncovered the history of the massacre that took place 43 years ago, and the stories of those we lost in that massacre, and bianet’s contribution to preserving that memory, are already inscribed in the history of our struggle to uncover and preserve memory...

We now know those we lost on 1 May 1977 as more than just names and numbers, but as actual people: industrial labourers and health workers, teachers and students, itinerant salesman and bakery counterperson alike.

We learned of their lives and their struggles, and saw once again that they worked just like us, that they lived just like us, and that they shared the same hopes and dreams as us...

The same hopes that we work to bring to fruition today, are the hopes that bloomed on the First of May Square in 1977. Those who wished to lead a decent life while themselves producing the values and beauties of this country, those

**It is vital that we remember,
and keep the memory alive**



who were engaged in the struggle for peace and fraternity, and for democracy in the face of fascism, and of course those who believed wholeheartedly that they were engaged in the creation of a new Turkey, a new world, that put labour first, were on the First of May Square that day.

That day

On 1 May 1977, Kemal Türkler made history when he asked, “Do you want the name of this square to be changed to the First of May Square?” and hundreds of thousands of people yelled out in impassioned response, “Yes!” That day, Taksim became the First of May Square.

Present also at this massive referendum were the representatives of the existing system, that is to say, of capital and its components of exploitation, poverty, imperialism, fascism: They were in the rooms of the Intercontinental Hotel, from which the first volley of gunfire was unleashed upon the crowd, on the top floor of the building that housed the Pamuk Apothecary, and on top of the Water Administration Building.

They were in that infamous white Reno that proceeded from Gümüşsuyu down Sıraselviler Boulevard, firing bullets all along the way...

And in the tanks that set off sound bombs to drown out the cries from the podium telling the people, “Don’t panic!” The same tanks that did not hesitate to run straight over the workers, crushing them there that day...

The aftermath

And in the aftermath, we saw the system composed of exploitation, poverty, imperialism, fascism, that is to say, of capital, in the newspaper headlines that blamed the dead, in the speeches of politicians who pointed fingers at Kemal Türkler, at DiSK, and at the CHP mayor Ahmet İsvan, making them into targets. We saw it in the police raids in which those who survived the massacre, and even those injured in it, were taken into custody, and in the courtrooms of the trial for the massacre, where workers were the ones being put on the stand and tried.

The aftermath kept coming...

We saw this system, the perpetrator of the massacre of 1 May 1977, in attacks upon workers’ tents during strikes, at the Maraş massacre, in the bullets fired at Kemal Türkler, and in the coup of September 12 1980. We saw it again when leaders of DiSK, including most prominently DiSK President Abdullah Baştürk, were tried, the sentence sought being that of execution.

Yes, the massacre of 1 May 1977 was the capitalist system’s response to a growing, increasingly powerful worker’s struggle that was organising to protect its rights, and to demand new rights, a struggle that believed wholeheartedly that it could even rebuild this country, and the world, according to the principles of labour.

The main goal of this response was to ravage the working class’s economic, democratic, and political organisations, thereby making it possible for capital to create a world in its own image.

The objective of this response was to pave the way for an openly fascist system, that is, the military coup of 1980, after which the decisions of 24 January 1980 would be passed and implemented, in what is considered a landmark for neoliberal policies.

The massacre of 1 May 1977 became one of the most important stepping stones that brought Turkey closer to becoming the kind of country that organisations such as the CIA and counterinsurgency forces wished to create, and ultimately paving the path to the fascist coup of 1980.

When no one is held accountable...

It is because no one was held accountable for 1 May 1977 that our country, which has endured unbearable pain, has had to, and continues to, bear even more pain, and be subjected to more massacres.

The fact that those who attended the funerals of the victims of the Ankara Massacre of 10 October, one of the largest massacres in the history of the Turkish Republic, were themselves held to blame, that those who survived were arrested, that memorial services for the dead were met with jeers, and that meanwhile, not so much as an inquiry was held about the public officials who, to put it more than lightly, clearly exhibited “negligent behaviour” that helped to facilitate the massacre, are all continuations of the ruthless response to 1 May 1977.

Today this country suffers under the weight of the painful consequences of that salvo of bullets shot from the rooftop during the massacre of 1 May 1977.

The consequences of those bullets, which began right there and then, are still being experienced in the form of poverty, crippling debt, unemployment, and precarity experienced by all segments of society that make a living from their own labour, taking various forms over the last half century to exploit in every way possible the working class, labourers, the unemployed, women, the youth, and white- and blue-collar workers alike.

The working class faces all manner of obstacles that keep it from organising, thanks to which it is marketed to international capital under a banner declaring, “Come, we have the cheapest workers in the world!” This, in a homeland that, together with its labour, its cities, and its nature, is “up for sale at a bargain rate.”

The willpower of the First of May 1977

On the other hand, the willpower that was targeted by the bullets in Taksim Square on 1 May 1977, continues to exist, resisting all manner of massacres, oppression, and restrictions.

We see that willpower in the memory of Abdullah Baştürk, who screamed during his post-coup trial, “The only thing you will hang is my jacket.”

We see it in the struggle put forth by those we lost as they filled the squares of the First May in 1988, 1989 and 1996, in the courage of those who resisted in the face of all manner of oppression in 2007 and 2009, declaring that “Taksim is the

First of May Square”, and in the glory of the hundreds of thousands who filled the First of May Square in Taksim in 2010, 2011 and 2012. We see it in the hope that spread, in 2013, from the Gezi Park protests throughout the rest of the country as the people declared, “Everywhere is Taksim, the resistance is everywhere”. In every workers’ strike, in every act of resistance, in every heart that does not surrender, we see that willpower.

This is why tracing the history of this massacre, 43 years on, sheds light on the past, and illuminates the tunnel in which we presently find ourselves, it helps us to stay on course as we establish a land and a world that put labour first.

This is why, once again, we thank you, bianet...

Arzu Çerkezoğlu —

Chairperson of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) and the Chairperson of the Progressive Health Workers’ Union (Dev Sağlık-İş). Pathologist. She worked as the branch chairperson at the All Health and Social Service Laborers Union (Tüm Sağlık Sen) for three terms. She was the Founder Secretary-General of the İstanbul Students’ Associations Federation while she was studying at İstanbul University Faculty of Medicine. She was born in 1969 in Artvin.



The untried court years of 1 May 1977

The trial of 98 people, including leaders of DiSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey), mentioned in the 1 May 1977 indictment prepared by the Istanbul Public Prosecutor's Office, began at the 2nd High Criminal Court, but...

Eight women, one child, 24 men

Ranging in age from 11 to 60... Average
age: 31.

Teachers (6), labourers (10), students (6),
nurses (2), a caregiver, a security guard,
an itinerant salesman, a counterperson, a
film industry worker, and a police
officer...

From Afyon, Antalya, Antalya, Antakya,
Artvin, Balıkesir, Bursa, Çanakkale,
Çorum, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Erzurum,
Erzurum, Giresun, Iğdır, İstanbul,
İstanbul, İstanbul, İstanbul, İstanbul,
İstanbul, İstanbul, Manisa, Maraş, Mardin,
Rize, Samsun, Sinop, Sinop, Sivas, Sivas,
Tekirdağ, and Urfa...

Kadir Balcı, Niyazi Darı, Nazmi Arı, Hikmet
Özkürkçü, and Hasan Yıldırım were killed
by gunfire, while 29 others, according to
their autopsy reports, died because they
were crushed, or due to injuries incurred
as a result of being crushed...

Ahmet Gözükara (34, teacher, Maraş),

Aleksandros Konteas (57, labourer,
İstanbul), Ali Sidal (18, labourer, Dersim),
Bayram Çıtak (37, teacher, Sivas), Bayram
Eyi (50, construction worker, Erzurum),
Diran Nigiz (34, labourer, Mardin),
Ercüment Gürkut (26, student, İstanbul),
Garabet Akyan (54, labourer, İstanbul),
Hacer İpek Saman (24, student, İstanbul),
Hamdi Toka (35, itinerant salesman,
Sinop), Hasan Yıldırım (31, Uzel factory
worker, Manisa), Hatice Sarı-Altun (21,
İstanbul), Hikmet Özkürkçü (39, student,
Urfa), Hüseyin Kırkın (26, labourer,
Çorum), Jale Yeşilnil (17, student,
İstanbul), Kadir Balcı (35, counterperson,
Rize), Kıymet Kocamış (25, nurse,
Çanakkale), Kahraman Alsancak (29, Uzel
factory worker, Balıkesir), Kenan Çatak
(30, student, Iğdır), Leyla Altıparmak (19,
nurse, Diyarbakır), Mahmut Atilla
Özbelen (26, labourer, Antalya), Mehmet
Ali Genç (60, security guard, Sivas),
Mustafa Elmas (33, teacher, Tekirdağ),
Meral Cebren-Özkol (43, caregiver,
Bursa), Mürtezim Oltulu (42, labourer,
Artvin), Nazan Ünaldı (19, student, Sinop),
Nazmi Arı (26, police officer, Afyon),
Niyazi Darı (24, student & labourer,
Antalya), Ömer Narman (31, teacher,
Erzurum), Ramazan Sarı (11, student,
İstanbul), Rasim Elmas (41, film industry
worker, Giresun), Sibel Açıkalın (18,
student, Antakya), Ziya Baki (29, Uzel
factory worker, Samsun), unidentified 35
year-old man...

They all lost their lives after 7.05pm
on 1 May 1977, in Taksim Square.

The Crimes Against Society Bureau of the
Istanbul Public Prosecutor's Office
presented the indictment to the İstanbul
2nd High Criminal Court on 30 May 1977.

Named in the indictment were 98 people, among them directors of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), who gathered on the square that day. They were ultimately all acquitted.

Not a single public official was amongst those put on trial.

The first name to come to mind at the mention of the 1 May 1977 trial is that of lawyer Rasim Öz. For 14 years he tirelessly pursued the case, calling again and again for those responsible for the massacre to be found.

The 27 people we spoke with as part of our project in which the friends and relatives of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977 tell their stories stated that they were never subpoenaed to testify, and that they themselves had not pursued legal measures seeking justice for their loved ones who had died.

According to the autopsy reports, 34 people lost their lives on 1 May 1977. However, a new list compiled by Fahrettin Ergün Erdoğan of DİSK in 2010 determined this number to be 41.

However, we only reached out to friends and family members of the deceased on the autopsy report, because there is still no information about those added in 2010, other than their names.

Survivors' demand

The last section of the indictment sums up the situation well:

“In this court case regarding the massacre that took place on 1 May, whose perpetrators have already been convicted in the public conscience and the universal sense of justice, and which caused 34 Turkish people to lose their lives, and 126 to be injured, 32 by gunfire and the rest in various ways, only a small portion of the accused have actually been called to stand trial before supreme justice.

“These principal perpetrators, the enemies of country and humanity who organised and carried out this massive, bloody disaster, will eventually be identified and tried and convicted by history and by infallible justice.”

The loved ones of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977, who, with a few exceptions, spoke out for the first time, demand that those responsible for the deaths be found, and that they no longer be able to live in impunity.

From the indictment

Plaintiff

Public Law

Aggrieved

Beyoğlu District Governorship, Istanbul Police Department, Directorate of Hotel Intercontinental, Directorate of Taksim Branch of Osmanlı Bank

Crimes

- 1- Indiscriminate murder of multiple persons using armed weapons
- 2- Setting off explosives in order to incite panic and thereby causing the death of



multiple persons due to recklessness and imprudence.

3- Being in possession of armed weapons and other explosives at a meeting.

4- Bearing arms contrary to law number 6136

5- Possessing explosive substances listed in the article 254 of the Turkish Penal Law

6- Mass damage.

7- Active resistance towards and defamation of on-duty police officers.

8- Provoking and instigating the public to commit crimes.

9- Participation in conflict that led to death.

The case

Based on the indictment drawn up by the Prosecution Office for Social Crimes on 30 May 1977, a case was brought against 98 defendants at the 2nd High Criminal

Court on 1 June 1977. The first hearing took place on 7 July 1977.

Panel of judges: Chief judge Ramiz Emre, members Ahmet Nuri Tanrıverdi and Hayri Tekin.

Council for the prosecution: Dr. İbrahim Çetin Yetkin.

18 lawyers defended the accused on behalf in DİSK.

Lawyers attending the first trial: Müşir Kaya Canpolat, Rasim Öz, Turgut Kazan, Ali Şen, Yalçın Öztürk, Mustafa Bahri Bayram Belen, Mustafa Özkan, Ercan Erdiner, Aykun Ergin, Yücel Top, Faruk Ergöktaş, Bilgin İnanç, Mahmut Sayatekin, İlhan Ongan, Turgay Yalçinyuva, Bozkurt Nuhoğlu, Halil Eraltuğ, Enver Nalbant.

Case handed over to military commission

By 31 October 1978, nine hearings had been held. With the tenth hearing postponed until 20 March 1979, the case was sent to the Martial Law Court, as martial law had been declared following the Maraş Massacre.

The following words were typed by Court Clerk Nurhan Ziyaretçi on the final page of the case file from the 2nd High Criminal Court:

“... It is decreed that:

Pursuant to the Cabinet Council decree regarding the martial law declaration in the province of Istanbul ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) in decree number 518 published on 27 December 1978 in Official Gazette issue number 16502, because it was found that the accused’s action falls within the scope of that which caused the declaration of martial law (certain evidence of widespread violent action intended to eradicate the free democratic system, basic rights and freedoms granted by the Constitution) as stated in article 124 of the Constitution in accordance with article 13 of law 1402 as amended according to law 1728 (...) this case falls outside our jurisdiction and within that of the Martial Law Court, our court therefore in accordance with its standing resigns from this duty and assigns the court case to the Public

Prosecutor’s Office to be sent to the Martial Law Court...”

(Nail Güreli, 1 Mayıs 1977, Türkiye Devrimcilerinin “İki 1 Mayıs” Belgeseli [1 May 1977, The “Two First of Mays”. A Documentary of the Revolutionaries of Turkey], Ozan Yayıncılık, 2006, Istanbul).

14 years

The trials of 98 people from the organising committee as well as several unions and leftist groups, lasted 14 years. No one was sentenced as a result of these trials. The trial, in which no police or state officials were prosecuted, was eventually dismissed due to the statute of limitations.

The case began with 35 defendants - 17 of whom were held in pre-trial detention, 18 of whom had been released pending trial. Three of the 17 detained were released before the first hearing, while nine were released during the first hearing on 7 July 1977. The case concluded on 20 October 1989 with the acquittal of all defendants. 1 May 1977 was part of the DiSK trial opened by the martial law court following the military coup of 1980 and the September 12th Trial, launched in 2015, in which Kenan Evren and Tahsin Şahinkaya, the generals behind the coup, were tried.

Turkey and the loved ones of those who lost their lives on 1 May 1977 are still waiting for the truth to be brought to light.