

Statement of the Ecology Collective Turkey

Why does the Homeland Security Package of Turkey Interest Urban and Ecological Campaigns?

It will accelerate expropriation, neutralize the defense of the cities and the nature

The Homeland Security Package draft law, which was presented to the General Assembly of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, sparks reaction of the public with the new powers it will grant to the police, more precisely in that it will obscure the powers of the police force and increase the pressure of security on the society. The consequences of the package, however, will not be limited to this. Once the Package is adopted it will also radically undermine the movements fighting to preserve ecology and the cities. It is imperative to bring to view the connection between the ever intensifying wave of expropriation and the Homeland Security Package and to speak up against the package also in this context.

The rising fight for cities and nature

Campaigns to prevent executions that turn Turkey's natural assets into the commodities of the neoliberal market have been gradually intensifying in the past 20 years. These campaigns are also profoundly suffering the consequences of disregarded court rulings. Therefore, citizens in effort of protecting their land, their trees, their water and the historical living environment put up resistance tents and keep watch in effort to prevent infringement of the law. These resistances that emerged in Bergama for the living environments inspired new resistances in new areas such as Yuvarlakçay, Gerze, Loç, Fatsa, Ulukışla, Solaklı, Arhavi and Fındıklı. This gave rise to many fights for space from Gezi to Hevsel, from Kısırkaya to the Validebağ Grove. All together we witnessed the fights in rural and urban areas act in connection with the fundamentals of equality, freedom, justice and ecology against exploitation of nature and labor.

The effort to "criminalize" people's struggle for life

We are aware that the corporations which have set their eyes on the olive groves, meadows and vineyards for building energy, mining, infrastructure or housing projects are not happy with the ever strengthening rural and urban resistance. We know that these resistances are, precisely for this reason, subjected to the violence of the police, gendarmerie and private security forces. The wounds which this violence has inflicted on the conscience of the society in futile effort for legitimacy have led these projects into a deep crisis both economically and politically. We have no doubt that the Homeland Security Package will be used to overcome this crisis in front of commoditization and expropriation, and target rural and urban resistances.

A blow to local campaigns

We can say that the fights for living spaces, which cannot find a place in the mainstream media, constitute the most vigorous social protests in terms of number, diversity and extent. In this regard, it is not difficult to predict that the Homeland Security Package will directly target these fights. With this package, especially the execution of investment projects that do not comply with environmental regulations will be facilitated, resistance will be weakened, resistance methods will be criminalized and prevented by use of force. In case the bill is adopted, the Investment Monitoring and Coordination Department whose budget will be increased and organization strengthened, is thought to take more center-to-local investment decisions and increase the pressure on living conditions. To give more concrete examples to the connection between the Package and local resistances:

- **Resisters will be dispersed by the police force without an authorization from the Attorney General:** With the amendment of Article 13 of the Law on Duties and Powers of Police (PVSK), the police force can take measures by putting under protection or by suspending—both of which are

not defined in the municipal law—“depending on the nature of the protest or the incident.” These measures can also be taken against “those who endanger their own or others' safety of life” as added to the same article. With arrangements to be made in the Code of Criminal Procedure, the police can take individuals into custody up to 48 hours in collective crimes and do not require an authorization from the Attorney General. And the clauses added to Article 11 of the Law for Provincial Administration will entitle governors to give direct order to the police force “for clarifying the crime in case of need.” When the governor identifies that a local resistance constitutes a crime, the governor will be able to spontaneously get involved in the investigation and give orders to end the resistance.

- **Imprisonment to environmental and urban resisters:** Amendments to the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations number 2911 will further give rise to restrictive practices against legitimate local protests. Citizens will be put on trial with a request for imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years for chanting slogans. On the other hand, any damages caused during a protest, whether or not caused by police intervention, can be charged to the citizens. The sentence will be increased if meeting and protests are identified to turn into “terror propaganda.” If demonstrators resist to disperse in illegal protests, the amendments to be made to the Code of Criminal Procedure permits their arrest. Inclusion of heavier imprisonment requests and opening the way to arrests through a series of arrangements against charges which local resisters most frequently face; i.e., charges such as resistance for preventing officers from performing their duties, opposition to Law on Meetings and Demonstrations number 2911 and causing damage to property will have an impact on local resistances for the right to live.
- **Execution of court rulings will be obstructed:** Investments in coastal areas and in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of the gendarmerie, both where plunder is most extensively seen, will highly benefit from the consolidation between the police force and the administrative chief should the bill be adopted. With the amendments to be made to the Law on the Organization, Duties and Powers of the Gendarmerie, the Coast Guard Command Law, the Law for Provincial Administration, and the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law, any staff other than the generals will be appointed directly by the Minister of Internal Affairs. The staff can also be suspended by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Local reports by governors and district governors will constitute the basis for assigning and promoting the gendarmerie and coast guard personnel. This procedure is predicted to help to obstructing the fulfillment of stay-of-execution and annulment decisions about projects planned without the consent of the local residents. When corporations did not adhere to court rulings illegal buildings would be occasionally red-tagged as a result of complaints filed with the gendarmerie. On the other hand, the gendarmerie could pose an obstacle in front of private security violence which is another means that corporations have recently turned to for breaking local resistance.

Let's defend nature in peace and order!

For all these reasons, we are reading the Internal Security Law as a series of measures that will render the society's rights to life, to property and to legal remedies impossible. These legal arrangements that are claimed to be introduced to ensure peace and security do not bear any purpose other than saying “keep silent” to those who want to reestablish the peace, rest and safety which have been damaged by corporations in context of their urban and environmental actions. Their desire is to be able to seize any land, to be able to pollute any place, and sell any type of food as they wish to. Their desire is turn people into tenants by expropriating their properties, make people seek their aid without earning their life with labor and live in need of water, air and land. Representatives of the legislative power that are ready to nurture these arrangements that cater to the interests of capital, however, will be disappointed if they fancy of wearing their tailor-made suits for long. As long as we live under the sky and stand on the ground, enemies of the people and nature will definitely be accountable for their deeds.

How would the recent struggles turn out, had the package been in force?

- **Andon:** The people of Rize who have won their lawsuit against the hydroelectric power plant projects could have been expelled from the area, kept in custody for 48 hours on grounds of "endangering their own and others' life safety" with their protests against the corporation and local administration that are refusing to adhere to the court ruling, and the construction of the power plant could be illegally resumed.
- **Loç Valley:** Residents of Loç Valley in Cide-Kastamonu who have been for years resisting the hydroelectric power plant projects planned by Orya Energy, could be subjected to intensely heavy imprisonment had they started their resistance while the Package is in force. Having many times confronted the authorities of the hydroelectric power plant corporation in the area where work is being conducted, residents of Loç Valley stand trial for charges such as causing damage to property and minor bodily harms, infringement of the freedom to work and labor, defamation and threat because they have been defending the water, their source of living. Had the Package be in force, many citizens could have stood trial and be sentenced to heavy imprisonment, even many could have been arrested "in act" by the police force and the hydroelectric power plant projects which won't leave even a drop of water in the Loç Valley could have been brought into force.
- **Gerze:** The people of Gerze and Yaykıl that have resisted the gendarmerie and the police who have practically applied State of Emergency conditions for the thermal power plant project could have been faced with heavy fines and arrests. The strength of the resistance could thereby be worn out, the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) could have decided in its favor despite the reaction in the society and the project could have been implemented.
- **İztuzu:** Following the privatization of the operation of İztuzu Beach in Dalyan-Ortaca-Muğla, the company which was granted the operation rights got into action to enter the beach with dozers and arrange it as it suits themselves. The pressure on the beach has been relieved for the time being as a result of weeks-long resistance of the citizens and court rulings decreed that the beach must be protected. Had the Package be in force, the citizens who insisted on staying on the beach and demonstrated against the dozers, could have been easily cleared from the area, the resistance would not have grown to an extent that compelled the company and the Minister to take a step back, and İztuzu Beach would have been redesigned by the dozers.
- **Yırca:** Citizens who were unable to prevent thousands of olive trees from being chopped down despite the court rulings and their sit-ins, could have been cleared from the area on the very first day by orders of the governor and district governor, and the illegal thermal power plant project could not have been thwarted.

The Ecology Collective

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