

FROM MOTHERHOOD TO ACTIVISM: A HISTORY OF WOMEN IN
TRANSFORMATION

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FROM MOTHERHOOD TO ACTIVISM: A HISTORY OF WOMEN IN
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Title: From Motherhood to Activism: A History of Women in Transformation

This study scrutinizes the mobilization of mothers in Turkey whose children were subjected to state violence or to abuse of rights for a variety of reasons, relying on the “natural” legitimacy rooted in being a mother, and their entrance into the political sphere with which they had not been familiar. How individual attempts having the aim of saving / finding a child evolved towards collective action, how the pain experienced brought women a collective identity, and how the struggle process transformed the mentality of the mothers are the basic questions of this study. Considering clear and hidden forms of resistance special to motherhood, how the title of “mother,” which serves to confine women in the home and which is shown as the reason for woman’s oppression by some feminists was used as the “weapon of the weak” by the mothers and how it led to reverse their disadvantageous position in the public sphere are analyzed. The study, which examines the way of organization, the demands, and the dynamics of the motherist movements in Turkey by classifying those in four periods, highlights the contribution of the motherist movements to the struggle of human rights.

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Başlık: Annelikten Aktivizme: Değişen Kadınların Tarihi

Bu çalışma, çocukları çeşitli nedenlerle devlet şiddetine maruz kalmış ya da hak ihlaline uğramış olan Türkiyeli annelerin, anne olmanın verdiği “doğal” meşruiyete dayanarak mobilize olmalarını ve daha önce tanışık olmadıkları bir alana, kamusal alana girişlerini incelemektedir. Başlangıçta amacı yalnızca kendi çocuğunu bulmak / kurtarmak olan bireysel kalkışmaların nasıl kolektif bir harekete evrildiği, deneyimlenen acının kadınlara nasıl kolektif bir kimlik kazandırdığı ve mücadele sürecinin annelerin zihniyet dünyalarını nasıl dönüştürdüğü bu çalışmanın temel sorularıdır. Anneliğe özgü açık ve gizli direniş formlarından yola çıkarak, kadını eve bağlayan ve kimi feministlerce kadının ezilmesinin bir nedeni olarak gösterilen “annelik” sıfatının, anneler tarafından nasıl “ezilenlerin silahı” olarak kullanıldığı ve kadınların kamusal alandaki dezavantajlı konumlarını tersine çevirmelerinde etkili olduğu incelenmektedir. Türkiye'deki anne hareketlerinin örgütlenme biçimini, taleplerini ve dinamiklerini dört ana dönem altında değerlendiren bu çalışma, anne hareketlerinin insan hakları mücadelesine katkılarına da dikkat çekmektedir.

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*to my mother
and all mothers in struggle*

...
*Analar, onlar ayakta
Buğday içindeler, onlar,
Yücelerden yüce dururlar:
Dünyayı doruktan seyreden,
Bir öğle güneşi gibi.
Bir çan darbeleri gibi,
Onlar*
...

*(Oğulları Ölen Analara Türkü /
Pablo Neruda)*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the 2000s, a new discourse appeared in discussions of the Kurdish question. This was an approach wishing that “any mother, both Turkish and Kurdish mothers, would not have teary eyes.”¹ The discourse was adopted by various politicians from the left and right wings (such as Aysel Tuğluk, Osman Baydemir, Mehmet Ağar, and Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu²) and society was faced with “invisible victims” of the problem, the mothers of militants.

The mentioned discourse can be conceived as an attempt at “adding” mothers in the daily politics, especially in electoral periods. However, throughout recent history, women have often gathered spontaneously as agents on the basis of their mother identities to challenge the power threatening the security of their children. Beginning with a contemporary question, “Is it possible to establish peace via mothers’ attempts?” this thesis examines *mothers* fighting for democratic demands by some means or other, in the recent history of Turkey, from 1975 to the present. By so doing, it studies the mobilization stories of groups of mothers founded under different social and political conditions, and scrutinizes these women’s entrance into the political sphere from which they have mostly been excluded, via their maternal roles.

¹ Ertan Altan, “Böyle Olur Anaların Yasası,” *Yeni Şafak*, 28 September 2007.

² For Mehmet Ağar’s speech see *Bugün*, 29 October 2006; for Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu’s speech see *Zaman*, 5 January 2008; for Osman Baydemir’s speech see, *Hürriyet*, 5 February 2008.

The rise of mothers' movements in Turkey is examined under four headings in this study. The common feature they share is that all were established with the intention of "saving the life that they gave," which can be defined as a "maternal challenge." The claim of this thesis is that contrary to general belief, mothers who spilled into streets in order to publicize the grievances with which their children were confronted, are not simple followers of their children's ideological "heritor." It asserts that although the first attempt of these women was rooted in practical concerns, the struggle process shaped and transformed these women in terms of political and gender consciousness in challenging the power and patriarchy. In this regard, this study introduces mothers' political stances independently of those of their children and focuses on the uniqueness of these movements as far as the transformation of the construction of the traditional motherhood is concerned.

The aim of establishing a link between motherhood and mothers' resistance practices lays out the relation established between mothers and the power. In this research, this unequal struggle is described as a confrontation between mothers' *tactics* and power's *strategies*, referring to Michel de Certeau. Mothers' struggle devices threatening the power and their specific methods providing solutions for coping with state's embracing strategies composed the main focus of the thesis.

The study also asks how women reversed their oppressed position into an advantageous status while they took part in political sphere, bringing the motherhood theme to the foreground. The story of the transformation of the title of mother from a traditional social construction identified with womanhood to political agency is investigated thoroughly. This transformation is handled as an interaction altering both activist women and ordinary people who received these movements via eye-witnessing or the media.

The basic question about mothers' politicization is whether these women are naturally or unnaturally opposed to violence and for peace or not. While the people who mobilized against an injustice encountered by their relatives are mothers, an obvious patriarchal social structure exists in Turkey. The research seeks to find out why mothers instead of fathers led these movements and what the motivation was triggering mothers who were generally simple housewives. Examining stereotypes attributing the peacekeeper role to mothers, this study tries to position women associated with their gender roles.

This thesis does not claim to introduce an overall evaluation of mothers' movements. This is rather an analysis of the human rights-based attempts of mothers whose children suffered from state violence or powers associated with state forces. Needless to say, other types of organizations such as group of soldiers' mothers also existed; however, those are not included in this research for two reasons. Initially, although they could not be handled as a homogenous group, soldiers' mothers are established organizationally against the "enemies" who killed their sons; therefore, their focus is not directly seen as associated with the state. On contrary, the state is perceived as a defender construction which provides families with a "martyr pension." Second, methodologically adding soldiers' mothers to this study would necessitate a different framework and this would overstep the bounds of the research drastically. All in all, concerning these hesitations, I prefer to limit the contents of the study.

As far as the content is concerned, the introduction of the thesis states the main question and method of this research.

The second chapter seeks the theoretical roots of the conceptualization of mother's movements. First, feminist approaches to the concept of the "public sphere"

are stressed in order to perceive mothers' participation in this arena and a new multiple public sphere understanding is determined. Second, "resistance" is reexamined referring to Scott, Certeau and Molyneux. Hidden resistance forms are also elaborated to perceive women's escape routes against the pressure of male-dominated power. A third element, the motherhood concept is challenged and instead of an essentialist /"natural" emphasis, "multiple identities," "separate personhood" and "agency" are emphasized in order to investigate mothers' movements. Last, motherist movement examples from different countries are given.

In the third chapter, a description of the motherist movements in Turkey is presented. I classified movements under four periods according to specific political agendas stimulating mothers to act outside of the private sphere. These periods are: from the middle of the 70s until the military coup of September 12, 1980 characterized as "mothers' movements against ultra-nationalist attacks and state violence;" from the 1980s to the present, "mothers' reaction against September 12 regime and unfavorable prison conditions;" from 1995 to 1999, the most well-known motherist movement, the Saturday Mothers (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) gathering as "the mothers of the disappeared;" and, from 1995 to the present, the Peace Mothers (*Barış Anneleri*), calling for the peace between Turkish and Kurdish people. These movements are investigated in terms of the organization process, their main aims and the results of movements.

The last and the most significant part of this thesis will be the modes of resistance of mothers. How women were able to organize using their "mother" titles and how they were able to build a political identity transforming their traditional woman and mother identities will be discussed. The way and rules the mothers used in organizing their activities and their instruments of civil disobedience will be

scrutinized. The study will follow hints of the movements' "womanly" characteristics via the placards and banners the mothers carried, clothes, headscarves, and other accessories they wore. In this way, not only participating in the political sphere, but also transforming this sphere by "giving woman's color to politics" will be stated in this thesis.

Because motherhood is a debated construction according to the feminist literature and approaches to motherhood have changed from period to period, scholarship was largely eschewed and acted with deliberation to the mother activism. Although one can find many academic researches on the motherist movements in Latin American countries, there are very few studies on Turkey cases. The meetings of *Evlât Acısına Son* are mentioned a bit in *Kızıl Feministler* by Emel Akal³ and in *Ve Hep Birlikte Koştuk*⁴ published by ancient activists of the İKD. However, the main purpose of these researches is to narrate the history of the İKD. The second period of the motherist movements, the mothers of the 1980s, is an area in need of research. There is not any written source about the mobilizations of the mothers in this period.

The studies about the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers are mostly based on life stories of children narrated by the mothers. For example, Berat Günçikan's book *Cumartesi Anneleri*⁵ and Orhan Miroğlu's book *Herşey Bitti Anaya Söyleyin*⁶ consist of interviews with the mothers about the painful stories of their children. The organization or struggle processes of the mothers do not appear in these sources. As far as academic studies are concerned, the movements are mostly

³ Emel Akal, *Kızıl Feministler: Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması* (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2003).

⁴ Saadet Arıkan et al., *Ve Hep Birlikte Koştuk İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (1975-1980)* (İstanbul: Açı, 1996).

⁵ Berat Günçikan, *Cumartesi Anneleri* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996).

⁶ Orhan Miroğlu, *Her Şey Bitti Ana'ya Söyleyin* (İstanbul: Evrensel Basın Yayın, 2007).

investigated in terms of the usage of the space. Berfin İvegen's master thesis *Gendering Urban Space: "Saturday Mothers"* submitted to the department of interior architecture, handles the case of the Saturday Mothers within the framework of gender and space.⁷ Her study is about the use of İstiklal Street by the women and the manifestation of gender difference in the urban and domestic realms.

Different from others, the present study discusses the motherist movements in a historical perspective and classifies them according to their political agendas. It is aimed to emphasize the transformation in mothers' lives and ideas as the product of the struggle process. The new mother who emerged with the turning point shaped by the painful story of her child composes the main axis of this study.

Methodology

The primary source of the research is in-depth interviews with mothers who participated in movements in different periods. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in the interviewees' houses. In this way, I was able to obtain a general opinion about these women's living and the economic-cultural conditions determining them to a large extent. Many of these women were living in *gecekondu*.

Because of the sensitivity of the subject, I preferred to visit mothers with a "common friend" that they trusted. I preferred tape recording method; this was more effective for long conversations. In addition, certain unexpected contributions could be recorded thanks to the presence of tape; for example, a mother sung an elegy that she had written for her son.

⁷ Berfin İvegen, *Gendering Urban Space: "Saturday Mothers,"* (master's thesis, Bilkent University, 2004)

Another important point is that establishing a relation as a 25 year old woman with mothers who were between fifty and seventy years old provided an informal atmosphere in interviews. Their approach was affectionate and they behaved warmly, like mothers. In this regard, establishing a familiar relationship became easier. In her book *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Shulamit Reinharz argues that woman-to-woman talk provides the self-revealing and consciousness-raising potential.⁸ “A woman listening with care and caution enables another woman to develop ideas, construe meaning, and use words that say what she means.”⁹

During conversations, instead of questioning I sought to let them spontaneously talk. This was an “interviewee-guided research” which means focusing more on understanding the interviewee.¹⁰ In this way, they talked about their family, their migration story (if any), relations with their children, the politization of their children, their own approach to policy, their reactions in crisis times, their feelings when they learned sad news about their children, their confrontations with state forces and the bureaucracy, and lastly their own politization process after the breaking point, shaped by the trauma of losing their children and changing their lives drastically.

As far as the marginal situation of these women are concerned, it can be said that oral history have the potential of bringing the mothers into history and making the female experience part of the written record. Previously published accounts of events about the mothers, which characterize these women as “dummies” guided by other agents, may be modified via oral history. This form of research thereby

⁸ Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 23.

⁹ Ibid. p. 24.

¹⁰ Ibid.

increases the awareness of the mothers' lives and forces us to modify historical records that did not take women's experience seriously.¹¹

As one may guess, "pain" gave direction to the interviews. Mothers often cried while they spoke of painful memories; however, they were pretty eager to make mention of their children, especially if they had died. They insisted on the importance of remembering these children and their struggle for children; therefore, they sought to contribute to the study. In so doing, they did not hesitate to give their real names or have their photos taken, emphasizing they had nothing to keep secret and they were proud of everything that they and their children had done.

During the interviews, mothers frequently narrated how their sons or daughters were successful and brilliant people. For example, a mother stated that her daughter had started school early and she had been the best in the class. Another one denoted how her son had succeeded at the university exam although he had taken the test in prison. In brief, the interviewees interpreted their children emphasizing their uniqueness and they underlined the legitimacy of fighting for these excellent daughters and sons.

The mothers were very disappointed that the mothers' movement in which they had taken part had ceased. Although all of mothers I met were too old to attend public meetings, they usually repeated that if one organized a similar event at the present time, they would participate again.

Apart from interviews, I examined woman's journals. Women's Voice (*Kadınların Sesi*) and News Bulletin of Progressive Women Organization (*İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*) provided a great deal of information about the first wave of mothers' movements. For the second wave, finding information was more

¹¹ Ibid., p. 134.

limited because of the oppression on the press applied by the September 12 regime during the 1980s. Thanks to the legitimacy of the Saturday Mothers movement, it was possible to find information about them in national journals such as *Milliyet*, *Hürriyet*, and *Sabah*. Bulletin of Proletarian Women Union (*Emekçi Kadınlar Birliđi Bülteni*) offered a variety of information about the period. However, the last mother's group characterized by the Kurdish movement was highly expurgated; therefore, I preferred to follow information in the leftist journal *Evrensel* where I was able to find records of their meetings, press statements, and official visits. *Jiyan*, Mother (*Ana*), and *Kaktüs* are some of other journals I used during the study.

CHAPTER II

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is, above all, about the entrance of women via their maternal roles in the public sphere, from which they had been excluded previously to a large extent. The main concern is to delineate mother's movements as both a woman's attempt against the male-dominated political arena and as a resistance practice against the embracing power networks; therefore, two basic theoretical concerns, gendered public sphere and resistance discourse guide this study.

Women and the Public Sphere

The public sphere is one of the most common notions in contemporary historical analyses. However, its current usage is to a large extent detached from the original version described by Habermas in his early book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

Habermas depicts the bourgeois public sphere as the sphere of private people coming together as a public and forming a debate area about the common good. In this area, practical reason is institutionalized through norms of reasoned discourse; that is to say, instead of statuses, classes, or social backgrounds of participants, their arguments are to be a determining factor.¹²

¹² Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), p.2.

In the 1990s, critical voices of Habermas' theory appeared. Needless to say, many different points of the framework such as the questions of conflict, disputation, pluralization, or rational critical debate were problematicized; however, responses to Habermas concerning gender relations in the public sphere became one of the most significant dimensions of the contemporary discussion.

First, Joan Landes's 1988 book, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, accelerated feminist contributions to Habermas's conceptualization; she used Habermas's analytical tool to reveal the possibilities of women's participation in politics. Attempting a reconstruction of public sphere theory through women and feminism is proposed by this study. According to Landes, the collapse of the older patriarchy gave way to a more expansive gendering of the public sphere.¹³ The paradoxical relationship between republicanism and woman, and the emerging feminist struggle requires the analysis of the Old Regime. She states that the eighteenth century was a turning point for women in the construction of modern gender identity: women's earlier independence in the street, in the marketplace, and, for elite women, in the public spaces of the court and aristocratic household was foreclosed; in other words, the public-private oppositions became clearer.¹⁴

Subsequently, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's work, *Family Fortunes*, highlighted the problematic of the public-private distinction in the English middle class.¹⁵ Feminist critiques roughly deliberate that both in theory and politics

¹³ Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p.2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 22. For a critique to Landes' claim about women's exclusion from the public sphere after the French Revolution, see Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory*, 31, no. 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 1-20.

¹⁵ Geoff Eley, "Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere," *Positions*, 10(1) (2002), p.222.

the public sphere was constructed around a system of gendered meanings, whether in the discourse of politics, citizenship, and rights, in the civic engagement and sociality, or in the family.¹⁶

Feminists rejected the Habermasian ideal vision of the liberal bourgeois political sphere, which would institutionally and philosophically marginalize women.¹⁷ The bourgeois public sphere based on universal franchise and citizenship is strictly related to the bourgeois family providing the reproductive function. In the bourgeois family, the reproductive function is ascribed to women; therefore, the significance of the struggle in a sphere with fixed gender relations is controversial.

The problem of the paradigm is not only the idealization of the bourgeois public sphere, but also the negligence of other spheres, nonliberal and nonbourgeois.¹⁸ As far as the access routes to political spheres of women from different classes in reformative studies are concerned, it can be said that the bourgeois public sphere was never the public.¹⁹ In her well-known article, Nancy Fraser defends the proliferation of multiple competing spheres instead of a single, comprehensive sphere. In both stratified and egalitarian societies, the presence of subaltern counter-publics provides the contribution of different identities, interests, values, rhetorics and needs.²⁰

Feminists, as a subaltern counter-public formed under the conditions of dominance and subordination, came together for their private interests; however,

¹⁶ Ibid., p.230.

¹⁷ Belinda Davis, "Reconsidering Habermas, Gender, and the Public Sphere: The Case of Wilhelmine Germany," In *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany 1870-1930*, ed. by Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.401.

¹⁸ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.), p.115.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.116.

²⁰ Ibid., pp.123-126.

Habermas's characterization of the bourgeois public sphere restricted to the "common good" limits these "private interests" representation. In other words, under unequal social conditions of participants, a consensus with the claim of the common good will have been affected by the dominant component of society. Similarly, the classification of the public/private, delegitimizing some interests, views and topics, will have been also decided by the most powerful. Domestic or personal life labeled as the private under the pretext of "domestic privacy" excludes some issues and deliberations from the public sphere by personalizing and/or familializing them; it categorizes these as private or familial matters in contradistinction to public, political matters.²¹ In brief, because of its masculinist and unifying structure, the official bourgeois public sphere is not fully accessible for everyone.

As far as the public/private distinction's results are concerned, it can be said that it has served to confine women, and typically female spheres of activity like housework, reproduction, nurturance, and care of the young, the sick, and the elderly, to the private domain, and to keep them off the public and political agenda.²² First of all, the distinction is rooted in the universal sexual asymmetry connecting women with the private/ natural/ nonsensical and men with the cultural and rational. This convention continued to be part of the problem; the public/ private divide played a dual role as both an explanation of women's subordinate position and as a ideology that constructed that position.²³ This crucial distinction is a part of the discourse of the sovereign power which reconstructs women's oppression and exploitation. On

²¹ Ibid., pp.129-131.

²² Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas," In *Feminism, The Public and The Private*, ed. by Joan B. Landes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.85. See also Aksu Bora, "Kamusal Alan / Özel Alan: Mahrumiyet-Özgürleşme İkileminin Ötesi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 75 (Winter 1997): 85-94.

²³ Leonore Davidoff, "Regarding Some 'Old Husbands' Tales': Public and Private in Feminist History," In *Feminism, The Public and The Private*, ed. by Joan B. Landes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 165.

the other hand, in spite of its disabilities, feminist theory itself needs a model of public sphere in order to represent itself. Seyla Benhabib, contemporary philosopher, states that feminists should not only criticize Habermas's social theory, but enter into a dialectical alliance with it. A critical model of public space is crucial to enable women making "public" and conveying them to debate, reflection, action, and moral-political transformation.²⁴ Instead of discounting, joining to democratize and feminize the public sphere is necessary.²⁵

All in all, a non-egalitarian political and societal formation would need not only to be bracketed but to be removed entirely. Similarly, gendered construction and gender policies would need to be challenged in an ideal public.²⁶ In this context, Nancy Fraser's suggestion highlighting the intersecting and multiple media of representation enables comprehending and deploying all means of representation in a counter-hegemonic strategy against existing power relations.

Women and Resistance

As long as there have been power and pressure, there has also been resistance against power. Power and resistance are distinct but interdependent aspects of power relations. Power relations are always two-way; however subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, this actor has also a certain amount of power over the other.²⁷ The influence on social relationships exerted by powerless agents derives from their

²⁴ Benhabib, p.91.

²⁵ Joan B. Landes, "The Public and The Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration," In *Feminism, The Public and The Private*, ed. by Joan B. Landes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.156.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.6.

resistance to power. In other words, resistance restricts actions of power and in doing so materially affects the “conditions of reproduction of those social systems” in which those resisting power have subordinate positions.²⁸

On the other side, a new conceptualization of resistance, everyday forms of resistance, offers a crucial tool to depict power-resistance relationship. James Scott presents everyday resistance as such techniques which are relatively safe and which promise vital material gains while requiring little or no formal coordination let alone formal organization.²⁹ He investigates how the hidden transcripts of various actors are formed and the conditions under which they do or do not find public expression.³⁰ That hidden transcript consists not only of speech acts, but also includes a whole range of practices; therefore, for many subordinates, activities such as poaching, pilfering, clandestine tax evasion, and intentional shabby work for dominants are part of the hidden transcript.³¹ Michel de Certeau, French philosopher and writer of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, evaluates these kinds of activities as “tactics” utilized by ordinary people to create space for themselves in environments defined by “strategies” of power structures. By means of tactics, people manipulate events to turn them into opportunities. Certeau emphasizes the presence of certain rules and logic in the multitude of tactics articulated in the details of everyday life of people.³² In other words, the clandestine and temporary methods of groups or

²⁸ J. M. Barbalet, “Power and Resistance,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 36, no. 4 (Dec., 1985), p. 542.

²⁹ James C. Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance,” In *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, ed. by Forrest D. Colburn (Armonk New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989), p.6.

³⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 14.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 14.

individuals against the discipline of the power compose an antidiscipline pattern rooted in the victories of the weak over the strong.³³

As far as women's struggle is concerned, both active and hidden resistance to power is significant because women's direct intervention as a resistance group is limited or unrecorded to a large extent. Thus, women's routes of escape from the pressure of male-dominated power became important in order to obtain hints about their resistance forms.

The participation of women in political activity was part of the wider process of popular mobilization. Political revival periods have affected women significantly throughout history; however, the sexual division of labor and the general belief that policy making is a distinctive social position peculiar to men has retarded women's participation.³⁴ Another important point is that for different classes and groups of women, the meaning of political participation also has differed. For example, the politicization and resistance of students, young middle-class women or poor women has taken on different characters. Apart from class categories, other social roles attributed to women also determine the course of struggle. In brief, the representation of women has acquired new connotations; on the one hand, the politicization of the social roles with which women are traditionally associated. On the other hand, the permanence of these roles without dissolution, embodied the movement.³⁵ It can be said that during the struggle, women tend to conserve their specific identities or peculiarities.

In order to perceive women's attempt at resistance, it is necessary to state the difference between "women's interests" and "gender interests." Maxine Molyneux

³³ Ibid., pp. 15-19.

³⁴ Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies*, 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1985), p. 228.

³⁵ Ibid.

assesses that it is difficult to generalize about the interests of women. However, there are some common concerns (strategic or practical) among women which can be called “gender interests” that women may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes.³⁶ Strategic gender interests are the sum of formulations and demands arranged to remove women’s subordination, such as the abolition of the sexual division of labor or institutionalized forms of discrimination and inequalities. These are rather constructed on the basis of feminist approaches. Women’s emancipation and gender equality demands are examples of strategic gender interests. On the other side, practical gender interests are those that derive from women’s concrete requirements related to their living conditions and formulated by their own agencies.

Women improve certain responses to requirements for participation in social action. For instance, when their children’s means of subsistence are threatened, it is women who are organized via bread riots or demonstrations.³⁷ The long wartime queues for food formed by women in Wilhelmine Germany were described and recorded by journalists and policemen. These were interpreted by the German police as an “assembly” created with a common identity, interest, and purpose; and it is believed that women had found community in standing together before the shops.³⁸ In other words, the livelihood of their families and practical necessities determined women’s struggle to a large extent. Therefore, it can be said that instead of feminist demands, practical interests trigger women’s mobilization firstly.

On the other hand, the strategic-versus-practical dichotomy is challenged by many theorists. It is suggested that although women’s organizing projects may focus

³⁶ Ibid., p. 232.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 233.

³⁸ Davis, p. 408.

on procuring basic needs, these are not tied solely to survival, but rather to constructions of identity and relations of power.³⁹ This dichotomy's rejection is based on two reasons; firstly, the sharply determined strategic/pragmatic categories are rooted in post-Enlightenment evolutionary perspective that situates a hierarchical relationship between feminine and feminist movements. According to this approach, progress is made when a women's organization evolves from practical to strategic interests. Similarly, public/private, personal/political dichotomies put barriers in front of understanding women as political subjects who have multiple strategic and pragmatic interests which change over time.⁴⁰ Secondly, case studies show that women include various issues and experiences into their struggles so that it is not possible to claim the presence of a dichotomy of strategic/practical interests in daily-life.⁴¹ In other words, women's interests mobilizing them are strictly interrelated; during a struggle, demands of various types trigger and feed each other.

Interests and identities shaped by structural, political, and cultural contexts form preconditions to women's mobilization which can be structural and universal or historically and locationally specific, with local variations obstructing or facilitating the specific forms of women's resistance. It is a general belief that an increase in the level of capitalism, urbanization, industrialization, and consequently high level of education and women's rights with modernization supports the women's movement; however, this approach neglects political, local, and historically contingent processes.⁴² Thus, instead of a woman's movement, the multiplicity of women's

³⁹ Lynn Stephen, *Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), p. 272.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁴² R. Ray; A. C. Korteweg, "Women's Movements in the Third World: Identity, Mobilization, and Autonomy," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25 (1999), pp. 52-53.

movements in different geographies leads to facilitate the analysis. In their article, Ray and Korteweg highlight that women's movements are fundamentally shaped by political processes, particularly crises of the state, and the outcomes of these processes transforming women's identities and interests vary significantly from one region to another.

Women's movements rely on four historically contingent regime types: anticolonial and nationalist struggles, socialist, religious/ fundamentalist movements and democratization.⁴³ In the present study, the main emphasis will be on women's resistance against authoritarian regimes; therefore, it will be focused on women's democratization experience.

In this case, the debate about women's concern with democratization and human rights issues is strictly related to their identities as mothers. Therefore, it is acceptable in this study that while the state valorized conventional notions of motherhood and family, women tended to use this status to obtain their demands from the authority.⁴⁴ Concerning this point, this thesis will analyze various tactics invented by mothers as a woman group in order to participate in politics, without making rough categorizations of public/private spheres or practical/feminist interests.

Women, Motherhood, and Policy

Literature on women's activism has shown that women are mobilized not only through their womanhood but also through their various identifications. Their identities as mothers are one of the most crucial roles providing their politicization and resistance via both active and passive forms of practice.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

Firstly, it is necessary to define and conceptualize “motherhood.”

Motherhood as a social construction and mothering as the sum of maternal practices are crucial debates in feminist literature. Mothering is the nets of relations and dynamic activities, including rearing and caring for dependent human beings. In other words, all caring labor; from procreating to all kinds of teaching and taking care of the disabled and elderly can be included in the practice of mothering. It is also the most important medium through which people first form their identities and learn their position in community.⁴⁵ However, because mothering is legitimized as the work of women universally, this is associated with womanhood and it reinforces women’s gender identities.⁴⁶

In many cultures, females are reared for motherhood, which is defined as the central occupation for women. Motherhood is the main component of the feminine gender role. Sociologist Ann Oakley argues that from the beginning of their lives, women are trained with three principles: all women need to be mothers, children need mothers, and mothers need their children. These assertions are strictly related to Freudian theory explaining maternity as the key matter on feminine psychosexual development.⁴⁷ That is to say, not wanting children is an abnormal and unfeminine behavior. Rejecting motherhood means rejecting womanhood. In addition, this kind of choice is often seen as being selfish as far as social and cultural beliefs interpreting maternal practice as a virtue are concerned.

⁴⁵ Linda Rennie Forcey, “Feminist Perspectives on Mothering and Peace,” In *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 357.

⁴⁶ Terry Arendell, “Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade’s Scholarship,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, no. 4 (Nov., 2000), p. 1192.

⁴⁷ Ann Oakley, *Women’s Work: The Housewife, Past, and Present* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 186-190.

Motherhood is often perceived as a symbol of the subjugation of the self to the needs of others. For example, mothering is linked to an ethic of caring, consisting of knowing, feeling, and acting in the interest of others. According to certain authors, this image has been used to incarcerate women with their children in the domestic domain; therefore, the motherhood role perpetuates women's dependence on men.⁴⁸ Leading feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan highlight that the deification of mothering both strengthens and stabilizes women's oppression.⁴⁹

In order to depict the relationship between woman and mothering, Linda Rennie Forcey states three feminist approaches. The first approach argues that women's differences from men are negligible and for reaching equal education, employment, and law, differences should be minimized. Until the early 1970s, this viewpoint maintained a central position in the feminist literature. By the mid-1970s, the equality perspective was challenged by a second wave, the essentialist standpoint, suggesting that women are essentially more sensitive, gracious, and lovely thanks to their nurturing and mothering roles and this difference should be honored. Finally, the third approach emerging as a response to the second trend, which can be called social constructionist or poststructuralist, assesses that because language is also socially constructed, it is impossible to claim that categories of women are natural.⁵⁰ This approach rejected the previous assumptions accepting mothering natural and unchangeable and seeks to rescue feminism from the equality/difference dichotomy.

The essentialist standpoint has made many contributions to gender and peace studies. Sociologist Nancy Chodorow infers that gendered meanings are

⁴⁸ Katherine Gieve, "Rethinking Feminist Attitudes towards Motherhood," *Feminist Review*, 25 (March, 1987), p. 38.

⁴⁹ See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Random House, 1974).

⁵⁰ Forcey, p. 356.

undefined and ambiguous not only culturally and politically but also they are formed and reformed by an emotional self. According to her, gender identity, gender fantasy, and the sense of gender are shaped and reshaped throughout the life cycle. Individual emotions, senses of self, and unconscious sentiments are as crucial as language or culture in terms of gender.⁵¹ On the basis of the psychoanalytic theory and clinical practices, she emphasizes the consideration of psychology including individual feelings, characteristics, and emotional tonality. In this context, mothers, as people more caring and more nurturing than men essentially, live fulfilling their maternal roles perfectly and reproduce daughters who do the same without question.⁵²

(...) typically, mothers unconsciously as well as consciously experienced sons and daughters differently, because of their gender similarity or otherness. As many infant researchers have shown, (...) unconscious fantasies and feelings are often communicated to the child, but the child herself creates, perhaps in typical ways, the meaning of these communications. My discovery was that these processes contributed to the reproduction of mothering and to other aspects of the ideology and organization of gender.⁵³

In her famous article *Maternal Thinking*, Sara Ruddick, a philosopher at New York University and feminist close to the essentialist standpoint, defines mothering as a poignant conjunction of power and powerlessness. Mothers are powerless because they have to foster their children in conditions such as wars, massacres, and economic depressions, determined by men; on the other hand, they are powerful, because, for a child, a mother is the principal and miraculous source of the world's goods and she has a serious influence on him or her, rooted in her bearing and

⁵¹ Nancy J. Chodorow, "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction," *Signs*, 20, no. 3 (Spring, 1995), p. 519.

⁵² Nancy J. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 101.

⁵³ Chodorow, "Gender as a Personal and Cultural Construction," p. 522.

nursing capacity.⁵⁴ On the other hand, she is seen as person who hold the power over the future of her children and accordingly the fate of society; but who is powerless because of her subordination to the rules of nature and her instinct.⁵⁵ Actually, it must be said that in most communities, women are socially powerless in spite of their reproductive roles that might make them powerful.⁵⁶

As far as democracy and human rights fields are concerned, the essentialist approach emphasizing women's "essentially" peacekeeping role in terms of caring, nurturing, feeling, and intuiting, which provide women a consciousness-rising and unifying tool.⁵⁷ In so doing, it attributes to them a superior position in society and induces them to act with solidarity and collectivity. Indeed, this kind of understanding ascribing women life-giving and life-saving roles, should awaken mothers to move for a conciliatory system and encourage them to create new peaceful generations. There is a clear disequilibrium between modern societies' principles formed by male and female male aptitudes. Male aspects are associated with destructive activities such as wars and invasions. Female ones are seen as creative actions in terms of bearing and rearing practices. In other words, according to essentialists, the world is under the attack of male thinking and women should work for world protection by virtue of the "natural" extension of maternal roles.⁵⁸ At the same time, it must be said that this kind of perception neglects women's contribution to history; although this history is full of brutality.

⁵⁴ For another perspective interpreting maternal practice as power rather than weakness, see also Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁵⁵ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview," In *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

⁵⁶ Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," *Feminist Studies*, 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1980), p. 343.

⁵⁷ Forcey, p. 356.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 362. See for example, Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York: Ballentine Boks, 1989); Robin Morgan, *The Anatomy of Freedom: Feminism, Physics, and Global Politics* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982)

(...) women who advocate feminism often structure their arguments in such a way as to suggest that to be male is synonymous with strength, aggression, and the will to dominate and do violence to others; to be female is synonymous with weakness, passivity, and the will to nourish and affirm the lives of others. Such dualistic thinking is basic to all forms of social domination in Western society. Even when inverted and employed for a meaningful purpose such as nuclear disarmament, it is nevertheless dangerous because it reinforces the cultural basis of sexism and other forms of group oppression. It promotes a stereotypical notion of inherent differences between men and women, implying that women by virtue of their sex have played no crucial role in supporting and upholding (...) systems of domination. (...) Rather than clarifying the power we exert in the maintenance of systems of domination and setting forth strategies for resistance and change, most current discussion of feminism and militarism further mystifies women's role.⁵⁹

Activism-passivism, mind-body, nature-culture, or public-private dichotomies defining mothering on the basis of oppositions reduces woman to her biological role in reproduction: pregnancy and childbirth. This is strongly related to the fact mentioned above that woman is identified with nature, as opposed to man, who is symbolically associated with culture; thereby, man legitimizes subordination of woman, who is "a part of nature," relying on the culture's project to enclose and transcend nature.⁶⁰ This biological conception affecting woman's social movement situates woman in certain social contexts which lock her into biological reproduction and repress in her identities and belongings different from mothering. However, motherhood is one of many roles of women. According to Adrienne Rich, women are not simply "by nature;" "passive," "clement," and "irrational" representations of humanity; institutions and culture determine to a large extent the "nature" of woman.⁶¹

The desire for a clearly confirmed past, the search for a tradition of female power, also springs from an intense need for validation. If women were

⁵⁹ Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 127.

⁶⁰ Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *Feminist Studies*, 1, no. 2 (Autumn, 1972), p. 12.

⁶¹ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 85.

powerful once, a precedent exists; if female biology was ever once a source of power, it need not remain what it has since become: a root of powerlessness. For many women, the inconclusiveness of any historical argument, the fact that history has been written by and for men, and the belief that we need not turn to the past in order to justify the future, are reasons enough to discount past theories of matriarchy and to concentrate on the present and the future.⁶²

Rich highlights not only the equal contribution of women to history that previously was disregarded, but also the presence of earlier civilizations in which mother-right predominated and mothers are universally important actors of societies; therefore, she disclaims a maternal nature inclined to submit or sacrifice.

The poststructuralist approach abstains from general theories based on psychic or biological exclamations of femininity and its extensions regarding motherhood. It means that women are not naturally against war and for peace,⁶³ and that these two concepts must be assessed as all of a piece, rather than negotiations of each other.⁶⁴ Evelyn Nakano Glenn rightly points out that mothering is a historically and culturally variable relationship consisting of one person's nurturing and caring activities for another but that this relationship is also constructed through the actions of the genders. In other words, mothering is explained with the concept of gender, referring to socially constructed roles and practices, independent of biological basis. The main emphasize of her analysis is the "agency" providing an understanding of mothering as a social construct which is continually reproduced, changed, and contested.⁶⁵

Another important point that previous waves neglected is that there is no a single general and idealized type of motherhood. According to Glenn, the white,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Gülnur Savran, "Kadınların Görevi Barış Türküleri Söylemek mi?" *Kaktüs*, no. 4 (November 1988), p. 13.

⁶⁴ Forcey, pp. 369-370.

⁶⁵ Glenn, p. 3.

American, middle class woman has been seen as the prototype of the “mother” and constructionists challenge this by claiming the existence of different constructions of mothering. In so doing, they highlight various cultural contexts based on diverse historical experiences and differing material conditions which affect mothering. For example, African-American or Asian-American mothers who generally belong to lower classes, are employed as domestic workers and are forced to disregard their own families in order to care for others’ children; therefore, mothering for their own children is shared among different family members. In some cultures, young women are encouraged to bear children by giving rearing responsibility to grandmothers.⁶⁶ On the other hand, in Western individualistic family structures, motherhood usually makes women isolates and excludes women from society.

In the Third World, the exact opposite of isolation, bearing children can be seen as the only source of happiness for women.⁶⁷ In other words, motherhood is strictly related to cultural codes and the community’s perception of the “child.” Needless to say, this assumption, which rejects a universal thinking of mothering, is coherent to the new historiography embracing multicultural forms and multiple constructions instead of universal norms. Moreover, accepting various forms of mothering rooted in different cultures, is necessary in order to conceptualize mother movements emerging with different agendas in many geographies throughout the world.

All in all, in order to reconceptualize mothering, it is necessary to rupture traditional stereotypes generalized in terms of oppositions rooted in biological dichotomies between male and female. The perception relying on woman’s fertility

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Rohini Hensman, “The Role of Women in the Resistance to Political Authoritarianism in Latin America and South Asia,” In *Women and Politics in the Third World*, ed. by Haleh Afshar (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 67.

to nature, rejects the existence of the independent personalities of woman and child; therefore, a mother's different interests or activities out of caring and nurturing are often imbedded in her maternal identity. In other words, as Evelyn Nakano Glenn argues, one should deconstruct mothering and rescue it from ideological enclosure by breaking it down into components. This is a double process consisting of the reversal and displacement of binary oppositions; it means displaying these terms and their meanings as constructed oppositions rather than natural issues. In this way, it is possible to enable mothers multiple identities, separate personhood and agency.⁶⁸

On the other hand, the other face of mothering, the representation of the feminine quality of altruism and selflessness encouraged by the patriarchal, as mentioned above, causes a paradox. Woman seeks a special position in community on the basis of her maternal function; however, these claims focusing on "difference" in respect to man reinforce the ideology that legitimizes women's subordination. The perception assuming women are different from men at the same time justifies different behaviors, the division of labor, and specific functions oriented to women in society.⁶⁹

As far as the motherist movements are concerned, it is obvious that there are many dynamics determining women's activism. Because of the maternal thinking which endows mother and child entities with a dependence relation and which introduces the woman as a person who acts via instincts or mystical powers, mothers' movements are often seen as a "natural" attempt to ensure the safety of their own children. Thus, under conditions of violence and authoritarianism threatening the future of sons and daughters, mothers awaken by virtue of being mothers, throughout the world. Although the first factor triggering them is the

⁶⁸ Glenn, p. 13.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

concern for their relatives' lives to a large extent, the process of struggle evolves towards demanding democratic rights, identities, and eventually feminist claims. Therefore, this work seeks to deal with the motherist movements without making the distinction of practical/strategic (feminist) interests and approaches the task as a way of women's politicization rather than glorifying maternal virtues.

Examples of the Motherist Movements

Other studies have focused on motherhood as the motivating identity for women's social action. Women participate in collective action in defense of their children on the basis of their roles as mothers. In conditions under which they can not provide their children's safety, women take action. Latin American women, for example, insist upon distinct forms of incorporation, differing from the U.S. and Western European experiences, which focus on gender-neutral participation in the public sphere. These women highlight their identities as women and particularly as wives and mothers because they are exposed to the loss of the ability to carry out these identities on the ground of military regimes. In this way, they redefine and transform their domestic role from private to collective public protest.⁷⁰

In the 1980s, the general interpretation of the "motherist" movements was to perceive them as using "traditional" expectations about mothers to gain the advantage of political protest in times and places where no one else could. Hegemonic gender constructions no doubt sometimes facilitate women's ability to access political terrain. Such hegemonic constructions of motherhood, however, also

⁷⁰ Helen Icken Safa, "Women's Social Movements in Latin America," *Gender and Society*, 4, no. 3, Special Issue: Women and Development in the Third World (Sep., 1990), p. 355.

have internal contradictions.⁷¹ Anthropologist Lynn Stephen rejects the viewpoint that the motherist movements transfer mothering from the private to the public sphere as mothering has always been both public and private.

As seen among the women of the CO-MADRES [Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Disappeared and Assassinated Political Prisoners of El Salvador], for example, mothering can mean bringing four children with you to a stall in a marketplace, staying there all day, walking home with them after dark, and stopping to visit relatives on the way. Among the upper classes in El Salvador, mothering can mean having a live-in domestic serve your children lunch while you supervise a gardener's arrangement of flowers in the patio... There are, however, alternative cultural discourses of motherhood continually spun out of the different daily lives of women in Latin America. Should we thus label women's political participation on the basis of being mothers as being limited to "practical ends"? If women such as the CO-MADRES repeatedly question male military authority and in the process lead other sectors of society in protest marches against repressive regimes, are they still merely shifting their "mothering" from the private to the public realm?⁷²

Indeed, interpreting mother movements as an attempt only directed at these mothers' aggrieved children, trivializes the struggle and reduces it to a maternal motivation. However, it must be assessed in light of contexts such as human rights and resistance to authoritarian regimes.

Latin American women viewed their motherhood as a source of strength. Joann Martin gives the example that when women complained to the local president that they had been searched by the judicial police, they said "you don't touch women like that; we are all wives and mothers."⁷³ In brief, the status of mother is a significantly respected title⁷⁴ that encouraged women to enter into political activity. Mothers were also aware of the status attributed to them by society. The military

⁷¹ Stephen, *Women and Social Movements in Latin America: Power from Below*, p. 273.

⁷² Ibid., p. 274.

⁷³ Joann Martin, "Motherhood and Power: The Production of a Women's Culture of Politics in a Mexican Community," *American Ethnologist*, 17, no. 3 (Aug., 1990), p. 479.

⁷⁴ Şirin Tekeli, *Kadınlar İçin* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1988), p. 131.

regime appeared less threatened by women (mobilized as mothers) than by men, therefore, was less repressive toward them.⁷⁵

In order to perceive mothers' mobilization against the authority, different examples from various countries, and especially Latin American practices where these were well-known facts in national and daily history, need to be observed.⁷⁶

CO-MADRES (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Disappeared and Assassinated Political Prisoners of El Salvador), founded in 1977 in El Salvador, was one of the mother groups organized against the massacres perpetrated by the government and the military during the civil war from 1979 until 1992. Although initially its principal aim was only to receive information and locate their relatives who were activists in labor unions, peasant organizations, student groups, human right organizations, or political parties the group grew to several hundred and gained public support in a few years, protecting its heterogeneous structure in terms of class, ethnic identities and occupation (including teachers, workers, peasants, housewives; Indians, part-Indians, mestizos; etc.).⁷⁷ Subsequently, CO-MADRES extended its mission toward human rights activism the rights of political prisoners and the families of victims of human rights abuses. They continued to make public demonstrations, daily visits to body dumps, clandestine cemeteries, and morgues to search for new victims and publicize their activities to draw the attention of the public.⁷⁸ Hunger strikes, meetings in parks and plazas were also common activities in which mothers participated in order to propagandize their matter.

⁷⁵ Kevin Neuhouser, " 'Worse Than Men': Gendered Mobilization in an Urban Brazilian Squatter Settlement, 1971-91," *Gender and Society*, 9, no. 1 (Feb., 1995), p.41.

⁷⁶ Yıldız Ecevit, "Kadın Dayanışması ve Kadın Örgütlenmeleri," *11. Tez, Marksizm ve Feminizm*, no. 9 (February 1989), p. 64.

⁷⁷ Lynn Stephen, "Gender, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity," *Latin American Perspectives*, 28, no. 6, Power, Policy, and Neoliberalism (Nov., 2001), p. 56.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

During the struggle, El Salvadoran mothers struggled against both the authority and the negative impression about themselves. The religious image of femininity was always associated with the idealized mother Virgin Mary, who was obedient, passive, suffering, and dedicated herself to domestic works with many virtues such as purity and virginity. This image was used to control women by repressive states.⁷⁹ The state demanded from Latin American women an absolute obedience, like their fathers or husbands demanded; thus, they deviated from the Virgin Mary ideal by disobeying authority and taking active roles in social life. This was also departing from the “protection” of the state; thereby, they lost their sacred place in society. Another image, that of Mary Magdalene, the prostitute who was counseled by Christ, was invented to refer to these women who were “incapable” of ensuring that their family members did not become threats to national security.⁸⁰

When the Salvadoran government forged an ideology of national security and left its interpretation to various military and police units, an ideological contradiction was created in the state’s discourse on gender. When in the 1970s large numbers of Salvadoran women _ many of them mothers _ began to move into the streets and actively confront state authorities as a part of grassroots movements, they invoked the images of mother, virgin, and whore simultaneously. The predominant imagery of women as self-sacrificing mothers and wives was shattered. After women established the streets as their territory through participation in marches, sit-ins, hunger strikes, and public meetings, the members of El Salvador’s security forces began to view all women in public places with suspicion and to treat them accordingly... If a woman has been reclassified by a male in the military or police from wife, mother, or daughter equivalent to subversive, then her femaleness is read as “ ‘tainted,’ soiled, and by definition sexually aggressive and active - she becomes a whore.”⁸¹

Indeed, most of the CO-MADRES’ active mothers were detained, tortured, and raped; five of them were assassinated. Some disappeared like their daughters and

⁷⁹ Lynn Stephen, “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights: The Merging of Feminine and Feminist Interests among El Salvador’s Mothers of the Disappeared (CO-MADRES),” *American Ethnologist*, 22, no. 4 (Nov., 1995), p. 811.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 811-812.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

sons. These tortures and abuses at the hands of national security forces encouraged mothers to look into human rights, and especially women's rights issues. However, this new orientation was not a change from a motherist focus to a feminist agenda; this was rather a combination of attempts of mothers who had been raped or tortured by state officers, self-identified feminists, and other human rights organizations, with the intention of giving human rights a new meaning for women.⁸² Lynn Stephen's interviews with CO-MADRES members give a hint about their struggle's structure.

In El Salvador, we don't run around calling ourselves feminists, but we are feminists because we are fighting for our rights. The difference for us in El Salvador is that our struggle as women comes together with our struggle for change in El Salvador. Our feminism doesn't just involve fighting for ourselves, but for a change for all of us.⁸³

In brief, in the CO-MADRES' case, it is clear that mothers did not suddenly become conscious of their gendered position. Their practical trajectories about their children went hand in hand with their feminist consciousness; therefore, it is not accurate to categorize women's activities as feminine (practical) or feminist (strategic).

Another important example of the motherist movements is the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo of Argentina, who worked to find their disappeared children and who sought in the cause of justice during the violations of the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983.⁸⁴ The armed forces taking power through a junta repressed opposition and leftist groups using harsh illegal measures which went down in history as the "Dirty War." During the regime, approximately 30,000 "subversives" "disappeared" or in other words, were killed in 340 concentration camps.

⁸² Ibid., p. 817.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 821.

⁸⁴ Sibel Özbudun, *Arjantin: Dün, Bugün, Yarın*. Available [online]: <http://www.mavidefter.org/> [18 June 2008].

In an interview in 1975, General Jorge Rafael Videla proclaimed, “in order to guarantee the security of the state, all the necessary people will die.”⁸⁵ The terror campaign applied by the authority was so indiscriminate that to visit the parents of a kidnapped victim often resulted in the disappearing of the visitor. Because many dissident people were “disappeared”⁸⁶ or surrendered to intimidation, all media channels were censored, and all activities of victims were presented as illegal and “against the national interests” to obtain popular support, the society became completely terrorized and daunted. Leaders of political parties, civil and labor organizations kept silent. Under these desperate conditions, a small organization of women, mothers of disappeared children of Argentina, emerged as a sign of hope.

In a short time, mothers discovered that they were not alone; there were many mothers who worried about their daughters or sons and the only people who could understand and cooperate with them to pursue their demands were again mothers. An increasing number of mothers asked for their children in military headquarters, law courts, prisons, and civil offices where they met other women with faces filled with the same desperation.⁸⁷ Jo Fisher’s interviews with mothers display how mothers came together.

My son was kidnapped from our house on May 10, 1976. I went to headquarters in Palermo on the next day. I met with two mothers there, whose children were disappeared two months ago. We decided to come to headquarters one more time, all together. In every place we went, we met with other women who sought to receive information about relatives. (Maria del Rosario)

In the middle of 1976 the ministry of internal affairs localized an office in order to accept applications about the disappeared...I met with many women belonging to different classes and from different ages who came from various

⁸⁵ Jerry W. Knudson, “Veil of Silence: The Argentine Press and the Dirty War, 1976-1983,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 24, no. 6, Argentina Under Menem (Nov., 1997), p. 107.

⁸⁶ The term “disappeared” directly incriminates the state and describes its responsibility for disappearances.

⁸⁷ Jo Fisher, *Kayıp Anneleri Desaparecidos* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 1998), p. 63.

regions of Argentina. Sometimes certain people entered in the room and said not to talk with each other. (Beatriz de Rubinstein) ⁸⁸

On April 30, 1977 a few mothers gathered at the Plaza de Mayo, the main square in Buenos Aires in order to bring attention to their families' plight and every Thursday, the Mothers continued to gather, displaying the names and photographs of their relatives and shouting slogans: "Let them appear alive and let the guilty be punished!" "They took them away alive; we want them back alive!" Labeled *Las Locas de Plaza de Mayo* (the crazies of the Plaza de Mayo), they broke the conspiracy of silence encompassing all the country and they transformed their desolation and disappointment into action. ⁸⁹ In so doing, the mothers form a new style of political participation outside the traditional party structures and rooted in the values of love and caring. ⁹⁰ Motherhood provided them the ability to move politically without men; however, this meant the intensity of responsibilities for women. They had to plan peculiar tactics under paralyzed social conditions. Spontaneous direct collective action was often more successful than formal and organized action when the participants were women. ⁹¹

First problem was the coordination among mothers; we did not know each other. There were number of polices; therefore, we could not easily contact with each other. It was very dangerous. So that, we used different methods in order to connect. For example... we carried some things special to motherhood such as wallet... We were sitting on bench seat, knitting, looking round, and talking in whispers. Sometimes we gathered in churches. Most of us were quite religious... We were forwarding small papers each other like

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 63-64. *Oğlum 10 Mayıs 1976'da evimizden kaçırıldı. Ertesi gün Palermo'daki ordu karargâhına gittim... Orada çocukları iki ay önce kaybedilmiş iki anneyle karşılaştım. Tekrar görüşüp karargâha birlikte gitmeye karar verdik. Gittiğimiz her yerde, çocukları hakkında bilgi edinmeye çalışan kadınlarla karşılaştık. (Maria del Rosario), 1976 ortalarında İçişleri Bakanlığı kaybedilenler konusundaki başvuruları almak için bir büro açtı... Orada Arjantin'in her yerinden gelmiş olan, her yaştan ve kesimden kadınlarla karşılaştım. Zaman zaman birileri içeri girerek birbirimizle konuşmamamızı söylüyordu. (Beatriz de Rubinstein)*

⁸⁹ Rita Arditti, *Searching for Life: The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Disappeared Children of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 35.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

⁹¹ Neuhausser, p. 41.

students cheating in school. Subsequently, we were fixing these papers into our skirts as a precaution. Only small churches in far zones allowed us to enter, others ejected when they understood that we were Mothers... We prepared stickers written “Where are our children?” or “Soldiers missed our children” and we posted up in bus and subways. In order to make visible to everyone, we wrote messages on paper moneys. (Dora de Bазze)⁹²

The Mothers adjusted many techniques to recover the disappeared from obliteration in the public memory. For example, they produced paper silhouettes representing every missing child and they fixed them on the walls of buildings around Buenos Aires. In another campaign, they distributed paper cutouts fashioned like human hands to denote the hands of their missing children. They dispatched balloons on which had been written the names of missing loved ones. Subsequently, they demonstrated wearing uniform masks in order to symbolize the common pain and rage that all mothers felt.⁹³ In other words, mothers used various forms of symbolism, from personal representations such as photographs to impersonal ones like the masks; thereby, the individual structure of their situations was transformed into a collective thing.⁹⁴

The most well known symbol of the Argentinean Mothers was the white kerchief, which would also inspire other motherist movements. This uniform cloth symbolized both the organized style of the movement, the group appeared

⁹² Fisher, p. 107. *İlk sorunumuz, birbirimizi tanımadığımız halde nasıl miting düzenleyeceğimiz konusuydu. Her tarafta o kadar çok polis ve güvenlik görevlileri vardı ki, yanbaşımızdaki insanın kim olduğunu bilmek mümkün değildi. Çok tehlikeliydi. Bu yüzden birbirimizi tanımak için değişik şeyler yaptık. Örneğin... Çanta yerine cüzdan taşıyabilir, bir kişinin anne olduğunu anlamamızı sağlayacak herhangi bir şey [yapardık]... Banklara oturarak örgümüzü örer, gezinir ve fısıldayarak birbirimize mesajlar iletirdik... Bazen kiliselerde buluşurduk. Çoğumuz epeyce dindardık... Okulda kopya çeker gibi birbirimize dürülmüş küçük kâğıt parçaları iletirdik. Daha sonra aranma ihtimaline karşı bu kâğıtları eteklerimizin kenarında saklardık. Yalnızca çok uzak yerlerdeki, yeri bile bilinmeyen küçük kiliseler içeri girmemize izin veriyorlardı. Diğerleri, Anneler olduğumuzu anlayınca kapılarını yüzümüze kapatıyorlardı... “Kaybedilen çocuklarımız nerede?” veya “Çocuklarımızı askerler götürdü” yazılı pullar hazırladık... Bunları otobüslere ve metro trenlerine yapıştırıyorduk. Ve olabildiğince çok kişi görebilsin diye, paraların üzerine mesajlar yazıyorduk. (Dora de Bазze)*

⁹³ Nora Amalia Femenia, “Argentina’s Mothers of Plaza de Mayo: The Mourning Process from Junta to Democracy,” *Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 1 (Spring, 1987), p. 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

homogeneous and powerful, and emphasized motherhood as a socially legitimate, respected and sacred constitution. Symbolism's frequently utilization in mother movements will be discussed again in following chapters.

Latin American women were bound up in religion.⁹⁵ One of the first institutions that they appealed for help was the church. However, the result of their contacts with clergymen was the emergence of a suspicion about religion. Influential members of the Catholic Church avoided giving information or interpreting the violence; they only advised to pray. Mothers mailed letters to Pope Paul VI but they remained unanswered. Finally, they went to Italy to visit the Pope and ask the fate of their kidnapped children. It was difficult for mothers to see him and complain their demands. They used special methods and tactics one more time. With the help of an Argentinean clergyman, three mothers reached the Pope in a public meeting where he was offering his hand to believers and accepting kisses or gifts. People were making him presents of small crosses or religious cards. When it was the Mothers' turn, they gave him Azucena Villaflor's photograph, one of the founders of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Human Rights Association, who had disappeared in 1977; but he did not accept it.⁹⁶ In another case, they went to Brazil to see the Pope and they learned from which avenue he would pass. The Mothers prepared a huge pancarte of 35 meters wide and fixed it on the most observable building of the square.⁹⁷

These examples present two crucial arguments about the motherist movements. The first one is that mothers forced all channels, including most traditional ones, religious institutions, even highly placed members of the church

⁹⁵ Sibel Özbudun, 4 March 2008. "Öteki" Kadın(ların) Hareketi: Latin Amerika. Available [online]: <http://www.mavidefter.org/> [11 May 2008].

⁹⁶ Fisher, p. 153.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 154.

hierarchy, in order to make their plights visible. Secondly, during these painful experiences, they interrogated habitual understandings such as sanctity, the “almighty” and other spiritual concepts which previously had been internalized without question; therefore, this process also became a rupture in their personal life experiences.

The Mothers’ attempts to gather in churches, visit Pope, and fulfill rituals of Christianity can be read as these women’s inversion of daily routines for the good of their agenda. Similar to the utilization of religious institutions and sacred values, national values also sometimes rescued mothers. For example, in a Thursday gathering in Plaza de Mayo, when the women were attacked by police, they started to sing the national anthem. Women noticed that police officers stopped when they sang; therefore, they sang again and again.⁹⁸

Apart from Latin American countries, similar politicizations of motherhood have occurred in other geographies of the world, such as Sri Lanka. Civil war, militarization, and state repression directed against the Tamil minority under the pretext of terrorist threat, evoked the *Mothers’ Front* in 1985. These courageous women sent a letter to the president in order to draw attention to the emergency regulations encouraging human rights abuses directed against the Tamil civilians by the security forces and to demand an end to these uncontrolled implementations. Under conditions in which their children were being kidnapped, tortured or murdered, the mothers’ first attempt can be interpreted as their desire to protect them; however, they generalized their behavior, protesting the authoritarian rule and

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 171.

the total corruption of economic and social life.⁹⁹ Sri Lankan mothers stated their attitude about ethnic warfare and human rights in terms of motherhood.

As women we identify with life-giving processes; we can never support death-dealing systems. The killing of other human beings is alien to us as women. We give birth, care for, nurture and protect life. Every human being is the child of a mother. There is something in our very nature that rebels against the taking of human life, the driving of people from their homes and the wanton destruction of people's means of livelihood.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, this does not mean that women are by nature against authoritarian regimes or that they could not be a part of right-wing movements. Attributing to women this kind of humanistic mission because of their bearing and rearing role is of course both essentialist and homogenizing approach excluding their diversities of class, ethnicity, religion, and political orientation. It is also clear that these different identities may situate them against each other more than womanhood brings them together.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Hensman, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 60.

CHAPTER III

MOTHERIST MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY

*...mothers are the ones to make a man
they are the lights guiding us
is it not a mother who gave birth to you?
spare the mothers sirs...¹⁰²*

Like other social actions, the motherist movements emerged due to certain societal concerns related to contemporary political circumstances, class or identity struggles. In other words, these activities were closely shaped by current debates, social changes, and troubles encountered between state and society. This thesis investigates mothers' movements in Turkey under four periods referring to specific political agendas stimulating mothers to act outside of the private sphere. These periods are: from the middle of the 70s until the military coup of September 12, 1980, characterized as "mothers' movements against ultra-nationalist attacks and the state violence;" from the 1980s to the present, "mothers' intervention against the September 12 regime and unfavorable prison conditions;" from 1995 to 1999, the most well-known motherist movement, Saturday Mothers (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) gathering as "the mothers of the disappeared;" and lastly from 1995 to the present, Peace Mothers (*Barış Anneleri*), calling for the peace between Turkish and Kurdish people.

It is obvious that political developments determining mothers' movements in Turkey first and foremost affected the lives of these women's children. People who

¹⁰² ...analardır adam eden adamı/ aydınlıklardır önümüzde giden/ sizi de bir ana doğurmadı mı?/ analara kıymayın efendiler... (Nazım Hikmet / Bulutlar Adam Öldürmesin)

experienced the violation of human rights by state forces were young people or students. That is to say, the first thing which triggered women to act was the story of their children. As far as Maxine Molyneux's decomposition about women's mobilization as strategic and practical gender interests is concerned, it can be said that the history of mothers' movements in Turkey consists of "practical attempts" to a large extent. However, this doesn't mean that women are unable to take to the streets for feminist concerns. As discussed above, it is not possible to separate these two concerns from each other. It must be confirmed, however, that the first step which has evoked women has been their concerns about the safety and the peace of children.

The motherist movements in Turkey differ from each other in terms of class structure, urbanization level, and the ethnic composition of participants. For example, the first phase of the motherist movements which ended with the coup of September 12 was class-based, pioneered by middle-class, urban women. On the other hand, the mothers of the 1990s were actually affected by the Kurdish movement; therefore, provincial, lower-class women from diverse backgrounds participated in motherist activities. The change in the composition of the mothers makes up the respective movements related to the political activities of their children during these periods. In the postmodern era, it can be argued that multiple identities have been emphasized in terms of race, gender, sexual preference, and so on, instead of political economic categories.¹⁰³ In this context, social movements also have acquired on identity basis; and it can be said that issues gathering mothers of Turkey as a social group, have also evolved towards a identity agenda.

¹⁰³ Sezai Sarıoğlu, "Değişmek De Değişmemek De Yordu Beni," *Birikim*, no. 152-153 (December 2001-January 2002), p. 65.

This chapter seeks to provide a chronology of motherist activities in Turkey from the 1970s. The social, political, and historical conditions engendering these movements go well as converging and diverging topics of mothers' activities in different periods will be discussed in this section.

Mothers against "Fascism": *Evlât Acısına Son!*

...even if losing them hurts like fire
mothers dont die
even if death harvests the flowers
seeds dont die...¹⁰⁴

The first motherist movements established for the sake of children's safety was organized by *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği-İKD* (Progressive Women's Organization) in Turkey.

The İKD, founded in 1975 and abolished with the military coup, was the women's branch of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi-TKP*). Although it was ideologically related to the TKP, the İKD reached many people and thereby, women from politically diverse backgrounds gathered under the same roof.¹⁰⁵ The majority of founders of the İKD were from Labor Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi-TİP*) which was abolished with the coup d'état of March 12, 1971. It can be said that these women who dared to establish a women's organization which would be a first for Turkey, were educated and intellectual to a large extent. However, they were inexperienced about organizing women. They insisted that the women's question was related to the class question and they imagined a women's movement focusing on worker women and their problems.¹⁰⁶ However, women's

¹⁰⁴ ... bir ateş olup yaksa da gidişiniz/ analar biter mi?/ ölüm toplasa da çiçekleri/ çiçekte tohum biter mi?... (Grup Yorum / Bir Görüş Kabininde)

¹⁰⁵ Akal, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰⁶ Arıkan et al., p. 16.

agenda altered in conjunction with the unforeseen sociopolitical developments of the country.

In order to depict the politicization of women in these days, the historical background of the decade needs to be considered. The 1960s was a significant period coming into being with the new constitution of 1961 when the society saw the emergence of socialist approaches both in the political sphere and in the street. For the first time, Turkey witnessed the entrance of a leftist opposition party to the parliament. However, the libertarian atmosphere changed drastically in the beginning of the 1970s when a military coup on March 12, 1971 which intended to eliminate the opposition in the army led to martial law. Extensive torture and persistent pressure on leftists was the main characteristic of the March 12 regime. The coup can be interpreted as the rigorous intervention of the state into the social and intellectual “bloom” of the 1960s. This attitude was distinguished with the use of force as state violence was officialized and legitimized on the basis of the military coup.¹⁰⁷ As the new regime removed any opposition groups in a short period of time, socialist struggle took the shape of guerilla activities. With the amnesty of 1974, a recovery of the leftist movement was revitalized via legal approaches. Many leftist parties such as Socialist Labor Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi-TSİP*) (1974), Workers Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi-TİP*) (1975), Laborer Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Emekçi Partisi-TEP*) (1975), Socialist Revolution Party (*Sosyalist Devrim Partisi-SDP*) (1975), Homeland Party (*Vatan Partisi-VP*) (1975) were established in these years.¹⁰⁸ However, the left tended to disintegrate and fragmentize after the coup while Turkey entered a new period of rightist attacks and severe ideological

¹⁰⁷ Murat Belge, “12 Mart Romanı,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1988), 7th ed., s.v. “12 Mart.”

¹⁰⁸ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1988), 7th ed., s.v. “12 Mart.”

confrontation affecting the whole society, which would last until the coup of September 12, 1980.

An ultra-nationalist right movement existed before the 1970s. From the middle of the 1960s, this movement (called the *ülküciü* movement) organized under a political party and its youth organization and rose in order to fight “the threat of communism” and to dissolve any organized socialist opposition. This was consistent with the Cold War policies of the USA. Although Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP*) was the continuation of the Republican Peasants and Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi-CKMP*) and the name “MHP” was given to this organization in 1969, the “MHP Movement” actually corresponded to the process which began with 1965 when Alparslan Türkeş was elected president of the CKMP.¹⁰⁹ With the military coup of March 12, the discourse of the MHP evolved toward the glorification of the army and the emphasis of reorganization among businessmen and investors. The military coup provided a convenient atmosphere by eliminating the leftist movement; on the other hand, thanks to the party’s softening attitude in its radical anti-capitalist discourse, the national capitalist circles supported it economically.¹¹⁰

Moreover, with the rise of class consciousness which was achieved in the 1960s as a result of the development of the socialist movement, the *ülküciü* movement conceived the necessity of being organized in labor organizations and syndicates. This kind of an anti-communist, ultra-nationalist agitative discourse based on fear and anxiety, did not need a strong ideological or economic program; therefore, they were organized via meetings under the leadership of rightist unions.

¹⁰⁹ Mustafa Çalık, *MHP Hareketi'nin Kaynakları ve Gelişimi* (1965-1980) (Ankara: Cedit, 1995), p. 93.

¹¹⁰ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Faşist Hareket ve MC İktidarı.”

¹¹¹ However, these efforts could not be sufficient since the leftist wave was considerably strong in all around the world and under such conditions.¹¹²

Concrete results of the ultra-nationalist action appeared in the middle of the 1970s. The military coup had already eliminated armed revolutionist groups, syndical rights, and political parties. With the recovery of the left in 1974, the ultra-nationalist powers that emerged as a reaction to leftist resurgence also strengthened. According to Tanıl Bora, this was strictly related to the reactionary characteristic of the ultra-nationalist movement; counter revolutionary attack was a response to the rise of a revolutionist attempt. Its main anxiety was that the socialist / revolutionist wave would corrupt the existing order; therefore, the ultra-nationalist right set to defend the existing system via “plebian” energy and vandalism.¹¹³ In other words, the violence was the sole method as far as the ideological deficiencies of the MHP were concerned.

In the area of labor, for example, in 11 August 1975, 800 of workers of the Sungurlar General Machine Factory left the union they had previously belonged and decided to affiliate with Maden-İş; whereupon, supporters of the MHP who were working at the same factory attacked these 800 workers. On December, 1975, in lieu of Tariş workers thrown out of work, members of the MHP were employed. Similar implementations were also seen in other cities. Attacks oriented to workers by the MHP’s “commandos” appeared frequently in Konya, Seydişehir, where the population of workers was actually high. In addition, MİSK established new branch

¹¹¹ Yüksel Akkaya, “‘Milliyetçi/Ülkücü’ İşçi Hareketi,” In *Milliyetçilik, Faşizm ve MHP*, ed. by Seyfi Öngider (İstanbul: Aykırı, 2002), pp. 132-133.

¹¹² In order to be widely disseminated throughout workers, ultra-nationalists established adherent unions such as Confederation of National Labor Organizations of Turkey (*Türkiye Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonları –MİSK*) (1970) and Union of *Ülkücü* Workers (*Ülkücü İşçiler Birliği*) (ÜİB).

¹¹³ Tanıl Bora, *Medeniyet Kaybı: Milliyetçilik ve Faşizm Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: Birikim, 2006), p. 155.

offices in cities where the MHP could not be organized during the 1970s.¹¹⁴ These examples are important because, on the one hand, they demonstrate how political violence penetrated the lower classes of society, on the other hand they uncover the new relationships and social coalitions after the March 12, based on a consensus between the ultra-rightist movement, the state, and the capitalist forces on the basis of using ultra-nationalists both as a threat to employees and manpower reserve in strike periods.

Together with labor unions and factories, other public spaces were also under attack. Ultra-nationalist right sought to take power on three platforms, “state, street, and parliament.”¹¹⁵ The parliamentary aspect of the project was realized with the government of the Nationalist Front (*Milliyetçi Cephe-MC*) in 1975 with a coalition of rightist parties, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi-AP*), the National Welfare Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi- MSP*), the MHP, and the Republican Confidence Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi-CGP*). However, the crucial arena was the street, where violence became uncontrollable, continuous, and institutionalized.

The MHP movement’s main discourse was “to help the state’s police force” and that is why, “commando camps” where militants were ideologically and physically educated against progressive / socialist groups formed at the end of the 1960s. Consequently, the phenomenon which came to be known as the “right-left conflict” spread like a wild fire. Socialist / revolutionary youth organizations also took arms against rightist powers and armed conflicts became daily events.¹¹⁶ This period witnessed the legitimization and institutionalization of the everydayness of political violence. The coalition partners of the MC other than the MHP also

¹¹⁴ Akkaya, p. 147.

¹¹⁵ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Faşist Hareket ve MC İktidarı.”

¹¹⁶ Merdan Yanardağ, *MHP Değişti mi? Ülkücü Hareketin Analitik Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gendaş, 2002) p. 42.

sustained the general belief perceiving the *Ülkücü* movement as the assurance of state authority.¹¹⁷

The trust in governmental agencies such as parliament and the police was lost, a chaotic atmosphere spread throughout the country. In the middle of the 1970s, the number of political crimes such as murder, torture, homicide by unknown agents increased significantly. In the first two months of 1976, 22 people; from February to May, 25 people; from June to September, 42 people were murdered. Totally, 116 people died because of political conflicts and assassinations in 1976. An overwhelming majority were from leftist groups.¹¹⁸ With the second MC government established in 1977, antidemocratic applications raised and during the CHP government operations continued. Between April and August 1978, 153 people were killed by ultra-nationalist forces. The Bahçelievler Incident, where 7 university students were assassinated by A. Çatlı and H. Kırıcı, the March 16 Beyazıt Massacre causing the death of 7 students, Kahramanmaraş Massacre that 111 Alevi were killed according to official figures, assassinations of Cavit Orhan Tütengil, Bedri Karafakioğlu, Bedrettin Cömert, Kemal Türkler were well-known murders of the period.¹¹⁹

At the end of the 1970s, society was in a big chaos. Political murders were incessant and almost none of killers was captured. Discreditable events of the period such as May 1 Massacre, Maraş Events also occurred during the government of the CHP. However, gigantic arenas were crowded. For example, people who gathered for the funeral ceremony of Kemal Türkler overflowed into the street.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Faşist Hareket ve MC İktidarı.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Sevim Belli, *Boşuna mı Çiğnedik?* (İstanbul: Belge, 1994), p. 587. *70’li yılların sonlarına doğru, toplum artık büyük bir keşmekeş içinde kıvranıyordu. Siyasi cinayetlerin ardı arkası kesilmiyordu. Hemen hemen katillerin hiçbiri ele geçiril-e-miyordu. Toplum tarihimize kapkara sayfalarla geçen 1 Mayıs katliamları, Maraş olayları hem de CHP’nin iktidarı sırasında gerçekleşiyordu. Öte yandan ise 1 Mayıs’larda koskoca alanlar hıncahınç dolduruluyor, örneğin vurularak öldürülen Kemal Türkler’in cenazesini izleyenler alanlardan caddelere taşıyordu.*

In these politically active years, large sections of society participated in the political sphere in order to show dissatisfaction with the socio-political economies of the state and state violence. Workers and syndicates organizing strikes, students demanding freedom via university occupations and meetings, peasants uprising by reason of base prices and subventions, ordinary people protesting the increased cost of living, displayed the vigorous character of the 1970s. In other words, instead of the “politicization of society”, “socialization of the politics”¹²¹ was achieved during the 1970s. One of these social powers, women, entered the political sphere as well. Questioning gender roles, their attempt was similar to their European and American sisters’ uprising, which focused on gender roles and the secondary position of women from the 1960s. The origin of this second wave of feminism characterized as “women’s liberation movement,” was strictly related to socio-economical conditions and political agendas of the 1960s and 1970s, associated with political and philosophical atmosphere of the period. For example, the civil rights struggle, anti-Vietnam and the student movements of the 1960s formed a blooming atmosphere for various left-wing movements and feminists.¹²² As far as the experiences of women from Turkey are concerned, it is clear that they were affected by global mass movements; however, local agendas also determined the specific features of the process. Without rejecting the importance of international influences, the present work seeks to highlight local dynamics motivating women to participate in politics with their mother roles.

For the first period of the motherist movements, from 1975 to 1980, the most crucial motivation triggering women was increasing nationalism and violence.

¹²¹ Tanıl Bora, “68 Ruhu Nedir?” *Birikim*, 109 (May 1998), p.94.

¹²² Sue Thornham, “Second Wave Feminism,” In *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, ed. by Sarah Gamble (London; New York: Routledge, 2001) p. 30.

Mothers who had never been interested in politics resisted the unfamiliar patterns of oppression and defied their oppressed status of womanhood. These women, worrying about the safety of their children in daily forms of political conflicts, became an inevitably party in this struggle. Consequently, this thesis proposes that a new struggle form emerging from maternal kindness, courage, and outspokenness appeared in these years.

A series of meetings called “Stop Mothers’ Pain” (*Evlât Acısına Son Mitingleri*) was not only ad hoc gatherings of mothers against anti-democratic measures and pressure but also a campaign mounted by way of the press and media. The most important medium gathering women was the publication of the İKD, Women’s Voice (*Kadınların Sesi*), which the rest of this section will dwell upon. It is not possible to claim that the İKD was an independent women’s organization. In her book, Emel Akal argues that although the İKD disclaimed on the basis of written proofs, it rectified women who were members of different political parties in 1977 and from this date, it worked as the women’s branch of the TKP.¹²³ However, apparently, the women did not receive any orientation or ideological steering from the center. The party both tended to neglect the women’s sphere and / or it had not enough capacity to organize and consider the women’s agenda.¹²⁴

On the other hand, ordinary women quickly embraced the İKD and *Evlât Acısına Son* campaign, because, they did not have other channels for organizing. In addition, in such conditions where children’s lives were in danger, they wanted to expedite the organizing process as soon as possible.

Sedat and Adem had been shot. When Adem’s mother exclaimed “I will take revenge!” holding his bloody shirt in her hands, she was beaten by the police. In Adem’s *mevlut*, fascists fired the house. There were at least 50 women

¹²³ Akal, p. 133.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 107.

inside, no one left, because their own district was under fire. Where could they go? The neighborhood embraced the İKD... After this phase, women started to take back revolutionists who had been detained by invading police stations. When Adem's brother was detained by police, the oldest woman of district, an 80 year old woman, was pounding at the door of the Police Department with other neighbors. At least 25 women brought him and they returned...¹²⁵

After a short time, the İKD decided to bring to its agenda the subject of ultra-rightist terror together with women's concrete problems. In general, women were not the main target of fascist terror; however, they experienced the violence applied to their relatives. Therefore, they attempted to resist everyday forms of brutality and they sought to enlighten the public opinion about the developments. The first of meetings known as *Evlât Acısına Son* was held by the İKD members in Ankara in February 1976 with the contribution of 5000 women. The second one, also supported by the CHP women's branch was prepared in İstanbul on February 26, 1977.¹²⁶ These meetings were so crowded that even official press, television and radio channels could not be indifferent to the contribution of around 10000 women.¹²⁷ In following years, meetings expanded to other cities. In February 1978 in Trabzon, in December 1978 in İzmir, and in March 1979 in Balıkesir crowded meetings were prepared. A lot of women from different cities and villages, (there were also women wearing black chador) participated in demonstrations for their children.¹²⁸ A mother, Yıldız İnanç, describes her contribution to these meetings.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 187. *Sedat, Adem vuruldu. Adem'in annesi çocuğunun kanlı gömlekleleriyle ortaya çıkıp "bunun hesabını soracağım" diye bağıncı polis tarafından coplandı, dayak yedi. Adem'in mevlitinde faşistler evi taradı, en az 50 kadın vardı içerde, hiçbiri kalkıp gitmedi. Çünkü kendi mahallesi kurşunlanıyordu, nereye çıkıp gidecekti ki? Mahalleliler İKD'lileri bağrına bastı... O aşamadan sonra kadınlar, tutuklanan devrimcileri karakolları basıp geri almaya başladı. Öldürülen Adem'in ağabeyi Mehmet Ali polisler tarafından tutuklandığında mahallenin en yaşlısı 80 yaşında bir kadın tüm mahalleliyi peşine katıp Emmiyet'in kapısına dayandı. En az 25 kadın Mehmet Ali'yi alıp döndüler...*

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 182.

¹²⁷ Arıkan, p. 209. The number of demonstrators is 20000 according to *Kadınların Sesi*. See *Kadınların Sesi*, March 1977, no. 20.

¹²⁸ *Kadınların Sesi*, April 1979, no. 45.

It was 1977, February. Turkey was living the most obscure days of its history. People in the street, the youth in schools, and workers in factories were shot. The safety of life became the most crucial problem of country. Those days, like every person sensitive to the country's problems, I was thinking what I could do individually and then I saw an announcement in *Cumhuriyet*. The İKD and women's branch of the CHP would organize a meeting named *Evlata Acısına Son* in February, 26. Because I think that individual activities can not solve problems and only organized movements reap benefits, I wanted to contribute to this meeting as a woman and mother...¹²⁹

The mothers' approach to political murders can be read from the placards of meetings. Emphasis on motherhood was the main characteristic of these practices and the enemy was defined with the concept of fascism. Slogans such as "We are mothers, sisters, we are against fascism," "Mothers bear, fascists kill," "Our children haven't born to get killed," "We are both mothers and workers, we produce life twice"¹³⁰ reflecting maternal sensibility to political events introduced their "natural" demands. The contradiction between "motherhood" defined as creating, bringing into the world, embracing, rearing features; and "fascism" characterized by destroying, eradicating, and killing acts was stated via these meetings.

The other root of the campaign was the press. *Kadınların Sesi*, published between 1975 and September 12, 1980, brought up murders almost every month. It started the *Evlata Acısına Son* campaign with this headline: "Mothers: Let's Get Started to Duty!"¹³¹ This was both a call for the Ankara meeting and the announcement of the campaign which would continue until 1980. In this first proclamation, the Nationalist Front (MC) was shown as the body responsible for the

¹²⁹ Arıkan, p. 214. *Yıl 1977, aylardan Şubat'ta. Türkiye tarihinin en karanlık günlerini yaşıyordu. Sokaklarda insanlar, okullarda gençler, fabrikalarda işçiler kurşunlanıyordu. Ülkede can güvenliği en yakıcı sorun haline gelmişti. İşte bu günlerde ülke sorunlarına duyarlı her insan gibi bireysel olarak ne yapabileceğimi düşünürken Cumhuriyet gazetesinde bir ilan çarptı gözüme. İlerici Kadınlar Derneği ve CHP Kadın Kolları birlikte "Evlata Acısına Son" adı altında bir yürüyüş düzenliyorlardı 26 Şubat'ta. Bireysel hareketlerin çözüm getirmeyeceğine, ancak örgütlü hareketlerin yarar sağlayacağına inandığımdan, bir kadın ve bir ana olarak bu yürüyüşe katılmak istedim...*

¹³⁰ *Kadınların Sesi*, April 1979, no. 45. "Anayız, bacıyız, faşizme karşıyız," "Analar doğurur, faşistler öldürür," "Hem anayız hem emekçiyiz, hayatı iki kere üretiriz."

¹³¹ "Analar: Görev Başına!", *Kadınların Sesi*, March 1976, no. 8.

homicides and mothers were warned about the significance of meetings. They demanded the dismissal of the MC government and abolition of the *Ülkü Ocakları* associations.¹³²

Mothers grasped every possibility to their target in this process. Mothers' day, children's day, women's day, youth day were important dates on which they could elevate their voice. On Mothers' day, *Kadınların Sesi* wrote these headlines: "The Gift of Fascism to Mothers: Children Pain. Mothers' Demand: Safety of Life," "The Best Gift to Mothers: Their Children's Safety of Life."¹³³

As far as the journal's approach to mothers' day is concerned, it is obvious that they adopted this day as their holiday. For example, the journal often described other mothers' struggles around the world, they remembered other women from Chili, Portugal, Vietnam and Spain who were in similar conditions and they celebrated their mothers' day. However, they were feeling indisposed about the commercialization of day. They especially use the term "*ana*" instead of "*anne*" in order to specify the difference between them and bourgeois mothers.¹³⁴ The journal criticized rich women's philanthropic activities organized to the advantage of deprived children and highlighted these women's indifference to murdered or tortured children.¹³⁵ Another important date, 19 May, became a significant date for mothers' struggle. They emphasized that youth would celebrate 19 May only after the violent attacks had stopped and *Ülkü Ocakları* were closed.¹³⁶

¹³² *Kadınların Sesi*, May 1976, no. 10.

¹³³ "Faşizmin Analara Hediyesi: Evlat Acısı, Anaların İstedığı: Can Güvenliği," *Kadınların Sesi*, June 1976, no. 11; "8 Mayıs Anneler Günü Analara En Güzel Hediye: Evlatlarına Can Güvenliği," *Kadınların Sesi*, June 1977, no. 1-22.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *Kadınların Sesi*, March 1977, no. 20.

¹³⁶ *Kadınların Sesi*, May 1978, no. 34-13.

Mothers followed children ideologically. Interviews gave hints about the change in ideological viewpoints of aggrieved mothers. The elegy of Yeter Bulut for her son Nevzat Bulut (19 year old, killed while he making graffiti), became the symbol of mothers' pain.¹³⁷ In *Kadınların Sesi*, she expresses her feeling with following sentences:

My son was working for society; he struggled for workers', poor and repressed people's good. I know his ideas are correct. He collected money for workers on strike. Everyone love him, he was humanist. Mothers! Join! Mothers must become conscious and move with their children.¹³⁸

Another mother, Sinan Hepşen's (1957-1977), Zehra Hepşen gave voice to the mothers' demand: the MC government must be removed in order to put an end to the political violence. Vesile Özen, a 47 year-old housewife, states her political transformation with this speech:

I did not take part in 1 May last year, my children did. I did not know that 1 May was Labor Day but, now I know. I will participate next year.¹³⁹

Hamdiye Yıldırım, mother of Barış Yıldırım who was killed by rightist aggressors, asks: a mother gave birth to them, did she not?

I have 5 children. They brought one of them... My son has just finished school... They killed him cruelly... I will pursue the killers of my son until I die. I know the murderers. I know that they are fascists of Ülkü Ocakları. These associations must be closed... I took

¹³⁷ "Bıçak Kemiğe Dayandı," *Kadınların Sesi*, March 1978, no. 32-11. *Yeter Bulut's elegy: Nevzatıma Ağıt / Hayınlar sana pusu kurdular / Seni yol üstünde hazır buldular / Acımadan seni çekip vurdular / Vurulur mu Nevzat gibi yiğitler?/ Talihsiz anana haber verdiler/ Bu acı haberi aldım Aslanım / Başımı taşlara vurdum Aslanım / Hemen hastaneye geldim yiğidim / Seni sedyede yatarken gördüm / Kızıl kanların akarken gördüm / Kızıl kanlar saçlarında kurudu / Yiğit Nevzat beyninden vuruldu / Söyleyin herkese gelsin görsünler / Eli kanlı katillerden hesap sorsunlar*

¹³⁸ "Gözyaşlarımızı Kocamızın, Çocuğumuzun Boynuna Zincir Yapmayacağız," *Kadınların Sesi*, January 1978, no. 30-9. *Oğlum milleti için, işçiler, yoksullar, ezilenler için uğraşıyordum. Onların iyiliği için uğraşıyordum. Düşüncelerinin doğru olduğunu biliyordum. Grevdekiler için para toplardı... Büyük küçük herkes severdi onu. İnsancıldı. Analar, birleşin derim! Analar da bilinçlenmeli, evlatlarının yanında olmalı.*

¹³⁹ "Haydi, 1 Mayıs 1978'e," *Kadınların Sesi*, April 1978, no.33-12. *Geçen 1 Mayıs'a katılmadım. Çocuklarım katıldı. Şimdiye kadar 1 Mayıs'ın işçi bayramı olduğunu bilmiyordum, şimdi biliyorum. Gelecek 1 Mayıs'a çocuklarımla katılacağım.*

part on the 1 May for this purpose. I wanted people to hear my voice. I will go to the minister if I can. I am injured but I am also resolute.¹⁴⁰

Ahmet Sakarbaş was murdered in a coffeehouse in Bayrampaşa. His mother could not give meaning to his death:

My son was not involved in politics. He was merely a worker. His crime was being a worker? Why do such things always happen in poor people's neighborhoods where workers live? Why can they not catch the murderers? Will fascists walk freely?¹⁴¹

The mothers recognized their children's ideological viewpoints and they approached with questions in order to conceive the reason for the murders. Mostly, they evaluated the political atmosphere in terms of a dichotomy of the killers' side and the victims' side.

One of the most concrete practical interventions of mothers was the project of "mother committees" formed in order to protect children from violent attacks. Mothers were uneasy about their children's health; therefore, they were reluctant to send them to school. However, children had to go to school in accordance with compulsory attendance. The idea of setting up committees emerged not only to guard children during arrival and departure times but also to announce political crimes to wider public opinion.

For our children not to be killed, let's get started! We want our children to stop going to school in fear and for their safety of lives to be guaranteed... Thus, we must constitute mother committees in every school of the country like these which were formed in certain colleges in Ankara and we must seek to accompany them on the way to school. We are mothers who create life...¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ "Onları da Bir Ana Doğurmadı mı?" *Kadınların Sesi*, July 1978, no.35-15. *5 çocuğum vardı. Birini aldılar benden... Oğlum, yavrum daha okulunu yeni bitirmişti... Acımadan vurdular onu... Oğlumun katilini ölünceye dek arayıp bulacağım. Aslında katilleri biliyorum. MHP'li ülkü ocaklı faşistler olduğunu biliyorum. Buralar kapatılmalı... Bunun için 1 Mayıs'ta yürüdüm. Sesimi duyurmak istedim. Gerekirse Başbakan'a bile gideceğim. Yüreğim acılı ama kararlıyım.*

¹⁴¹ *Kadınların Sesi*, December 1979, no. 53. *Benim oğlum siyasetle uğraşmazdı, işçiydi. Yoksa suçu işçi olmasımıydı? Neden hep fakir ve işçilerin oturduğu semtlerde oluyor böyle şeyler? Neden yakalamıyorlar katilleri? Faşistler ellerini kollarını sallayarak gezecekler mi?*

¹⁴² *Kadınların Sesi*, May 1976, no. 10. *Çocuklarımızın öldürülmemesi için birlikte mücadele edelim! Evlatlarımızın okula korku içinde giderek okuyamaz durumdan kurtarılmasını, can*

Mothers continued their political activities in the official organs of the state. They visited the İstanbul governorship and demanded the governor shed light on the political crimes oriented towards their children. They requested protection for students who had lost the freedom of education because of hard conditions.¹⁴³ In addition, they arranged a conference in 1980 with the contribution of the mothers, sisters, daughters of murdered, tortured, disabled, or exiled people.¹⁴⁴

All these activities were continued by mothers until the military coup of September 12, 1980. This was the first motherist movement and it was unique as a mass movement as public support, its expansion, and its diverse methods of mobilization are concerned. Mothers insisted on safety of life under such conditions where the violence became an everyday form of political struggle. Emphasizing “the right to life” and the relationship between mother and child, the “mothers’ revolutionary struggle” was established. In other words, the movement relied on its own potential rooted in the “natural” demands of mothers; therefore, the women’s uprising became legitimized in respect of the public opinion. All in all, the first period of the motherist movements can be interpreted as a well-organized, planned, publicly-supported, general and expansive oppositional movement.

güvenliklerinin sağlanmasını istiyoruz... Bunun için Ankara’da bazı yüksek okullarda olduğu gibi ülkenin her okulunda veli komiteleri kurulmasını sağlayarak, çocuklarımızı kendimiz okula götürüp getirmeye çalışmalıyız. Bizler yaşama can veren analar olarak...

¹⁴³ *Kadınların Sesi*, June 1978, no. 34-14.

¹⁴⁴ *Kadınların Sesi*, March 1980, no. 56.

Mothers Organize Against the Military Regime

mothers could not dream, out of the terror of death...
mothers' eyes got weary, out of shedding tears...
they knew each other from their pain...
they were mothers...
they were the first home of their children...¹⁴⁵

On Friday, September 12, 1980, shortly after midnight, the military takeover began. Throughout the early hours of the morning tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled into Istanbul, Ankara, and other major cities. Troops set up barricades at major intersections, while military police searched for persons marked for arrest. Shortly before dawn, the state radio broadcast Military Communication No. 1, announcing that the armed forces of Turkey had assumed power to rescue the country from the paralysis of its civilian government.¹⁴⁶

The coup d'état of September 12 marked a turning point in Turkey's history in the fields of economy, policy, and ideology. This date signifies many big transformations; however, it must be said that the coup was not a surprise. Turkey had been in a deep political and economical crisis for many months. In addition to internal bottlenecks, external repression imposing a liberal economy and consequently the January 24 Economic Measures taken to satisfy IMF's demands determined the process lasting until the army coup.

The following section will focus on the transformation in people's lives, especially in mothers' lives after the September, 12 instead of a political-economic analysis of the coup. In other words, the story of mothers who experienced the painful memory of the decade will be emphasized.

This second wave of motherist movement can be defined as mothers' opposition to the regime of September 12 and inhuman prison conditions. Firstly, the balance of the military regime's executions needs to be stated. After the date of

¹⁴⁵ ... *düş kuramıyordu analar, ölümün dehşetinden.../ yıkanmaktan eskimişti anaların gözleri.../ birbirlerini acılarından tanyorlardı.../ anaydılar.../ çocuklarının ilk evleri onlardı... (Grup Yorum / Tutsak Anaları)*

¹⁴⁶ Jim Paul, "The Coup," *MERIP Reports, Turkey: The Generals Take Over*, no. 93 (Jan., 1981), p. 3.

September 12 almost 650,000 people were taken into custody; they were interrogated and tortured. 1,683,000 people were “indexed on cards.” 230,000 people were tried in 210,000 law cases; the death penalty was demanded for 7000 people.¹⁴⁷ The demands for the death penalty for political law suits continuing to September 1983 exceeded 5000.¹⁴⁸ The executions of 49 of 517 people who received death sentences were carried out. 30,000 people were dismissed from their jobs for political reasons. 927 publications were prohibited; 39 tons of newspaper and magazine were destroyed on the grounds they were “unfavorable.” 937 films were burned. 400 press members were tried; they were punished with 3115 years of imprisonment in total. 3854 teachers and 120 academics lost their jobs. It is documented that 171 people died under torture. 14 people who went on hunger strike to protest the inhuman conditions of prisons lost their lives in the following years. The number of people who committed suicide and who were killed under the pretext that they had attempted to escape or had come into conflict with the police was indefinite.¹⁴⁹

Human rights violations rose with September 12 and continued during the following governments. The Human rights issue is mostly seen as a “bourgeois ideology” by the left throughout the Cold War; however after September 12 characterized by torture and unfavorable prison conditions, this paradigm was challenged to a large extent.¹⁵⁰ For the first time, torture became such a systematic

¹⁴⁷ *12 Eylül Halka Neler Getirdi*. Available [online]: <http://www.ozgurluk.org> [20 March 2008]. It must be said that these data are differing according to every source; because, on the one hand, many cases still unrecorded, on the other hand, innumerable “disappearance” facts are not included in these data.

¹⁴⁸ *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, February 1983, n. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *12 Eylül Halka Neler Getirdi*. Available [online]: <http://www.ozgurluk.org> [20 March 2008].

¹⁵⁰ Emir Ali Türkmen, “İHD’nin Son Genel Kurulu: ‘Bizim Sol’ ve İnsan Hakları,” *Birikim*, no 165 (January 2003), p. 6.

and expansive style that the rate of mortality by reason of torture increased significantly. The legal length of the custodial interrogation was augmented to 90 days; in other words, the law enabled state officers the period of time necessary to torture people charged with certain offences and to make them confess these claims.

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After the military coup of September 1980 thousands of people were taken into custody by the security forces. According to the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* of 21 September 1984, 178,565 people had been taken into custody by the security forces for preliminary investigation since the coup. The length of the incommunicado detention period was immediately increased to 30 days and then, in November 1980, to 90 days, which it remained until September 1981 when it was reduced to 45 days.¹⁵²

Families of inmates applied to government officers for information after the coup; however, they were unable to obtain news about their children. They waited in anxious suspense for days.¹⁵³ For mothers, fathers, and other relatives, there were some places from which they hoped to obtain information about their children; therefore, places near police offices, judicial courts, quarters, and the Interior Ministry functioned as gathering stations for people who had similar stories. At the gates of prisons and court houses, mothers uneasy about their relatives' health met each other and they took cognizance of the importance of acting together. They were consoled and they promoted relations of solidarity which would shape a new struggle rooted in their maternal identities.¹⁵⁴ Şükriye Nazari, one of mothers whose son was imprisoned at the beginning of the 1980s, states the story of meeting with other mothers:

¹⁵¹ Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, *İşkence Dosyası: Gözaltında ya da Cezaevinde Ölenler, (12 Eylül 1980- 12 Eylül 1995)* (Ankara: Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, 1996), p. 21.

¹⁵² Amnesty International, *Turkey: Testimony on Torture* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1985), p. 2.

¹⁵³ "Neye Karşı, Hangi Koşullarda Direniyorlar," *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, February 1984, no. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Meltem Ahiska, "Kayıp Annelerinin Şiddete Tanıklığı," *Amargi Feminist Teori ve Politika Dergisi*, no. 2 (2006), p. 22.

They brought my son on 19 or 20 January 1980... He was in prison for 11.5 years... My son was put in prison, I was creeping, my blood pressure decreased to 6... Then, we searched for him, looked for him, finally we found him. It was said that he was in Selimiye, we went to Selimiye; it was said that he had been transported to Sağmalcılar, we went to Sağmalcılar. That day, we could not see him but a day to visit was arranged. When I went to prison to visit that day, I was shocked. The door of the prison was over crowded, thousands of mothers like me, thousands of sisters, spouses. Thereafter, we waited our turn. I was crying ceaselessly. The mother of my son's friend said: "don't cry." "Our sons are lion-hearted," she said. "Why are you crying, don't depress your child," she said. She was older than me; she was a pasha's wife. Deceased now, she was a very good woman.¹⁵⁵

In these days, the inmates of prisons in different cities across the country went on hunger strikes in order to protest torture and inhuman conditions. With crucial legal changes made to the *Türk Ceza Kanunu- TCK* (Turkish Criminal Code) and Prison Regulations in 1982 and 1983, living in Turkey's prisons as a political inmate became more and more difficult. In July 1983, approximately 2000 people in Metris, Sultanahmet, Sağmalcılar, and Kabakoz prisons began a hunger strike protesting problems. Similar protests took place in Diyarbakır Military Prison, Mamak Military Prison, and Mersin Military Prison during 1984 and 1985 against alleged torture and ill-treatment.¹⁵⁶

In July, 2500 political prisoners went on hunger strike in four military prisons in Istanbul. Inmates demanded the amelioration of the unfavorable prison conditions, the removal of torture, stopping the oppression exerted on families, and the abrogation of death sentences. The hunger strike, lasting more than a month, became the biggest resistance that has ever been made in military prisons. At the expense of the death of at least five people and going into comas of more than thirty prisoners, the hunger strike had repercussions

¹⁵⁵ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *1980'in Ocak ayının 19'u 20'si gibi çocuğumu aldılar... Tam 11.5 yıl içerdeydi... Çocuğum içeri alındı, tabi ben yerlerde sürünüyorum, tansiyonum 6'ya düşmüş, çok üzüldüm... Derken aradık, sorduk, bulduk. Selimiye'de dediler, Selimiye'ye gittik; Sağmalcılar'a gitti dediler, Sağmalcılar'a gittik. O gün görüş olmadı, görüş günü belirlendi... Görüş günü gittim ki, Allahım, ne göreyim, cezaevinin kapısı ana baba günü, benim gibi binlerce anne, binlerce bunun gibi abla, eşler. Ondan sonra işte, sıramızı bekledik. Ağlıyorum ben, sürekli ağlıyorum. [Oğlumun] bir arkadaşının annesi, "ağlama" dedi. "Çocuklarımız aslan" dedi. "Ne ağlıyorsun" dedi. "Oraya gidip çocuğun da moralini bozacaksın" dedi. Benden de yaşlı kadın, paşa karısıydı. Allah rahmet eylesin, çok iyi bir kadındı.*

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International, pp. 4-5.

in both the domestic and international arenas and provided the opportunity to show the true aspect of the junta.¹⁵⁷

The most important implementation triggering the decision of following hunger strikes was the imposition of uniform clothing in 1983.¹⁵⁸ This first attempt of uniformity was repelled via protests; however, uniform clothing remains an issue.

With hunger strikes, the struggle of families took on a new meaning; they supported their children's resistance in spite of the mortal danger and at the same time, they became more eager and determined to save the lives of their children.¹⁵⁹ They became organized in order to give each other everlasting support. Firstly, families charged a group of 350 people with the duty of visiting the generals of the junta in Ankara to transmit the prisoners' requests. However, some of these people were also arrested. The parents' organized mobilization loomed large in the reports of the prisoners' struggle to public.¹⁶⁰

We, parents, were not aware of the meaning of the hunger strike. Prisoners had gone on hunger strikes thus far, but, this was the first time that I confronted such a long-term hunger strike. Hence, we, as mothers and fathers, had a fear of death. We applied to certain offices; meanwhile, we were seeking to receive information from the administration everyday, at the door of the prison. One day, we began gathering at the door at seven o'clock in the morning as usual. It was said that we were not permitted to see our children, but, we were awfully anxious about them. For what it is worth, we wanted to obtain information and know how they were. When mothers and fathers insisted, the captain who talked with us previously said: "You can not see them; but write short notes. We will give these writings to your children and

¹⁵⁷ "Cunta Zindanlarında Direniş," *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, August 1983, n. 8. Temmuz ayında İstanbul'daki 4 askeri hapisanede 2500 politik tutuklu açlık grevine başladı. Tutuklular, son derece kötü hapisane koşullarının iyileştirilmesini, işkencelerin sona erdirilmesini, ailelerine yapılan baskıların durdurulmasını ve idamlara son verilmesini istiyorlardı. Bir aydan fazla süren açlık grevi, şimdiye dek askeri hapisanelerde sürdürülen direnişlerin en büyüğü oldu. En az 5 kişinin ölümü ve 30'un üstünde tutuklunun koma haline girmesi pahasına sürdürülen açlık grevi, ülke içinde ve dışında büyük yankılara yol açtı ve cuntanın gerçek yüzünün sergilenmesinde çok önemli bir işlev gördü.

¹⁵⁸ "Cezaevlerinde Direniş ve Katliam," *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, February 1984, no. 2.

¹⁵⁹ "Analarımız Direngen Çılgınlıktı," *Sosyalist Kadın*, October 1996, no. 1.

¹⁶⁰ "Cunta Zindanlarında Direniş," *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, August 1983, no. 8.

let them respond.” Immediately, everybody found a pencil and paper, and they wrote notes asking for the safety of children. ¹⁶¹

Through these simple measures, urgent protests against the army, military prisons and inhuman implementations of government were raised. While social opposition was significantly eradicated via the coup, making opposition was fulfilled by relatives. The families of prisoners, especially women, became pioneers of these attempts because only parents persisted in elevating their voices against injustices. Şükriye Nazari depicts the atmosphere of the 1980s with these sentences: “There was nobody except mothers. There was nothing, everybody crept into his or her own skin. Even the CHP was closed; even the Turkish Language Association was closed.” ¹⁶²

The concrete action of mothers began when they were frustrated by seeing their children during the hunger strike process. They started to move in coordination; with an obstinate resistance to attacks, they continued to come for prison visits, they discussed with officers in charge of their children, they blocked the highway in Istanbul in order to protest tortures, they stormed the prison in Diyarbakır, they marched to the parliament in Ankara, they forced the governorship of Adana to demand a visit with the hunger strikers, and they applied to Istanbul Tabibler Odası concerning tortures and penalty of death. ¹⁶³ In this way, mothers who were

¹⁶¹ Neyyire Özkan, *Cezaevi Cezaevi: 1980-1986 Cezaevlerinden Kesitler* (İstanbul: Onur Yayınları, 1986), p. 251. *Çoğu veli açlık grevi nedir bilmiyoruz, o güne kadar da cezaevlerinde açlık grevleri olmuştu ama şahsen ben bu kadar uzun süren bir açlık greviyle ilk kez karşı karşıyaydım. Bunun için de ana baba olarak hepimizde bir ölüm korkusu var. Çeşitli makamlara başvuruyoruz ama bu arada da her gün cezaevi kapısına gelip yönetimden çocuklarımız hakkında bilgi almak istiyoruz. İşte o sabah da sabah saatin yedisinde aileler yine kapıda birikmeye başlamıştı. Deniyor ki, çocuklarımızla görüşmeniz mümkün değil. Ama aileler olarak artık iyice merak içindeyiz, ne olursa olsun bir haber almak, nasıl olduklarını öğrenmek istiyoruz. Israr edince analar, babalar; bizimle konuşan yüzbaşı, 'görüşemezsiniz ama kısa notlar yazın çocuklarınıza verelim, cevaplarını da versinler' dedi. Hemen herkes bir kağıt, kalem bulup sağlık durumlarını soran notlar yazdı.*

¹⁶² Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Annelerden başka kimse yoktu. Hiçbir şey yoktu. Herkes kabuğuna çekilmişti. CHP bile kapatılmıştı, Türk Dil Kurumu bile kapatıldı.*

¹⁶³ “Nereye Baksam Oğlumun Gözbebeklerini Görüyorum,” *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, April 1986, no. 2.

recognized as “relatives of prisoners,” devoted themselves to ameliorate their children’s conditions or call offenders to account for having committed crimes against their children, by representing them outside of the barriers. In other words, during the imprisonment policy of the junta, mothers increasingly participated in the democratic sphere while seeking legal remedy; thereby, they actually fulfilled the role of the leftist opposition.

During the 1980s, mothers frequently held spontaneous sit-down strikes across from prisons.¹⁶⁴ However, they followed up the legal developments regarding the prisons, which became their principal agenda after the coup. They gathered not only on regular visiting days, but also on special days when there was the possibility of reaching the state bureaucracy or politicians.

... Decisions of 25 August will be executed. We protest the decisions of 25 August. Mehmet Topaç has just been made minister. He visits prisons. We came to know, we stood up across Metris. All mothers, wives, and so on. We thought we would let him in, and then catch him on his way... We waited very long time; it was summer, very hot. On August 25, decisions would become final; children would be exposed to uniform clothing, books demanded would not be given... Anyway, the minister came, a rush began. We stopped him. The police surrounded the car [of the minister], they prevented us. I hang on to the car... Finally, Mehmet Topaç got out of car... He promised to receive us in his office... We arrived to the Ministry of Justice, all together. The riot police came immediately... Hues and cries, and so on... It was said that only two people could come in. I and the deceased Gülizar went; we entered the Minister’s room. It was said that the Minister was in parliament. We said we could also go to the Parliament... When we were walking to the Parliament, it was said that we could not walk together, etc. We did not care. We entered the Parliament; half of us could enter, others could not. Others were being gathered by the police. We run to Parliament and found Hikmet Çetin [a minister]. We said: “Come on! The police are bringing our friends, do something!”... They delivered all our friends. There were a heap of people [who had children] from all prisons; Çanakkale, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Bursa, Eskişehir... When they also came, we filled a huge salon... Finally, the Minister accepted only one person... I went... I

¹⁶⁴ Saide Çekmeci, “Açlık Grevleri 88 ve Cezaevleri,” *Dünün ve Bugünün Defterleri, Türkiye Sorunları*, no. 2 (January 1989), p. 129.

said that we would not abide by decisions of 25 August and uniform clothing implementation, when he asked me why we had come.¹⁶⁵

In these days following the coup d'état, the bulletin of the İKD published developments about prisons and mothers, although the association and its publication *Kadınların Sesi* were abolished like many leftist organizations. However, the İKD continued its activities from abroad; therefore, it is possible to obtain information about the process of mothers' mobilization in the 1980s through the medium of the publication *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*.

In prisons and jails under inhuman conditions, resistance practices precipitated themselves. Any oppression or torture could overcome the inmates' resistances. The relatives of prisoners increasingly organized solidarity campaigns for them. (...) Dungeons of junta must be evacuated. This inhuman junta must be subverted. This is only possible via our struggle.¹⁶⁶

Many deaths related to torture happened during the military regime. Families could not receive information about their relatives and could not find any trace or record about the period of time that they spent in custody. Another tragic mobilization emerged for these people: mothers visited morgues in order to find

¹⁶⁵ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *25 Ağustos kararları uygulanacak. Biz de 25 Ağustos kararlarına karşı çıkıyoruz. Bu da yeni bakan olmuş, Mehmet Topaç (...) cezaevlerini dolaşiyor. Duyumu aldık, biz de gittik Metris'in önüne oturduk. Bütün anneler, eşler, bilmemneler. İçeriye girsin dedik, dönüşte önünü keseriz. (...) Epey bir bekledik ama. Yaz, sıcak. 25 Ağustos'ta kararlar kesinleşecek, çocuklar yeniden tek tip elbise giyecek, istenen kitaplar verilmeyecek. (...) Baktık geliyor, hareketlilik başladı. Biz önünü kestik, polis çeviriyor arabanın etrafını. Bizi yaklaştırmıyor falan. Ben arabanın tutmuşum böyle. (...) Ondan sonra arabadan çıktı Mehmet Topaç. (...) "Ben sizi makamımda kabul ederim," dedi. (...) Adalet Bakanlığı'nın önüne dayandık biz, cumhur cemaat. Anında Çevik Kuvvet geldi. (...) Bağırış çağırış... "İki kişi girsin, hüviyetini versin, iki kişi girsin" dendi. Birisi ben birisi de rahmetli Gülizar. Gittik bakanın odasına girdik. Bakan mecliste dediler. (...) Biz meclise de gideriz dedik. (...) Toplu yürüyemezsiniz, bilmemne yapamazsınız. Hiç iplemedik biz yani takmadık. Biz meclise gittik, yarımız içerde, yarımız dışarıda kaldı. Artık toplanıyor polis tarafından o geri kalanlar. Biz girdik, koşa koşa koşa koşa meclise çıktık. Hikmet Çetin'i bulduk. "Çabuk! Bizim arkadaşlarımızı polis topluyor, ne yapıyorsanız yapın çabuk gelin!" dedik. Öyle emrediyoruz ki Hikmet Çetin'e... (...) Toparladılar bütün arkadaşlarımızı, getirdiler. Bütün cezaevlerinden var: Çanakkale, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Bursa, Eskişehir... Onlar da yanımıza gelince, arkadaşlar, koca bir salona biz dolduk. (...) Bakan bir tek kişiyi kabul ediyor, sonunda. (...) Ben gittim. (...) Ha ben dedim, ne istiyorsunuz deyince, "o tek tip elbiseyi, o 25 Ağustos kararlarını biz uygulamayacağız, uygulatmayacağız çocuklarımıza" dedim. "Siz çocuklarımıza onları yaptıracağımıza günlük istihkaklarını arttırın," dedim.*

¹⁶⁶ *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, January 1984, no. 1. *Yaşanmaz koşullardaki ceza ve tutukevlerinde direnişler birbirini izledi. Hiçbir baskı ve işkence tutukluları yıldıramadı. Tutuklu aileleri artan biçimde zindanlardaki yakınlarıyla dayanışma eylemleri düzenlediler (...) Cuntanın zindanları boşaltılmalı. Bu insanlık düşmanı cunta yıkılmalı. Bu da ancak bizim savaşımlarımızın gücüyle olanaklıdır.*

evidence about their children. One of these mothers, Fevziye Hayrullohoğlu, the pioneer of this research, found her son's picture in a morgue archive five months after his death. She searched and finally found his grave. She did not give up the legal fight.¹⁶⁷

...My son, Mustafa Hayrullohoğlu was killed at Security [Directorate]... My tears will gush out until my son's killers will be punished. I'm living for this. We filed a claim. We will call to account for this... I saw the people who tortured my son at one of court days; they could not look at my face. Firstly I collapsed, I crumbled. Then, I told myself that I must straighten up. I was sitting; I stood up. Can you imagine? Near his mother, they were talking about the torture that they applied to a son... All these things will come to light; we will call them to account for they. I am living with that hope.¹⁶⁸

Although some mothers lost their children, some of these mourning women continued to struggle for other sons and daughters imprisoned. It can be said that to be a mother was the common denominator and they perceived the importance of struggle not for their "own" children, but for "all" children. Şükriye Nazari describes this solidarity: "We never said 'my child,' we said 'our children,' even my grandchild was calling [them] as 'my uncles.'"¹⁶⁹ That is why they decided to hold an event for both acting with solidarity and announcing people their intentions and demands about their children.

We organized an activity for first time after September 12. In 1985, at Şan, Şan Theater. We hold an event named "The Straw Drops off When It Completes Itself" (*Damla Kendini Tamamlayınca Damlar*). That means it will be a "rose" drop by drop and we will help these children. We made a deal with Ahmet Kaya. He was quite agreeable to doing it, he came without charge... I read the poetry written by my son. The deceased Gülizar sang an

¹⁶⁷ *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, February 1983, no. 4.

¹⁶⁸ "Nereye Baksam Oğlumun Gözbebeklerini Görüyorum," *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, April 1986, no. 2. ...*Oğlum Mustafa Hayrullohoğlu emniyette öldürüldü... Gözümün yaşı durmadan seller gibi akacak, ancak oğlumun katilleri cezalandırıldığında dincek. Bunun için yaşıyorum. Mahkeme açtık. Hesabını soracağız... Mahkemede bir keresinde oğluma işkence edenleri gördüm, yüzüme bakamadılar. Önce yıkıldım, çöktüm. Sonra dedim ki kendi kendime, dimdik durmalıyım. Oturuyordum, ayağa kalktım. Düşünebiliyor musunuz? Bir annenin yanında oğluna yapılan işkenceler anlatılıyor... Bunlar ortaya çıkacak, hesabını soracağız. Bu umutla yaşıyorum.*

¹⁶⁹ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Hiç 'çocuğum' demedik hiçbirimiz. 'Çocuklarımız' dedik. Torunum bile [onlara] 'dayılarım' dedi.*

elegy... Needless to say, the police was listening to us, at his table. Some days after the event, the police came to our home. However, we had previously obtained permission from the governorship.¹⁷⁰

Mothers' opposition can be interpreted an obvious act of disobedience to the mentality of the martial law. They dared to resist and protest the oppressions and the system of intimidation that the army coup had created from the beginning of the 1980s. However, this time, they were confronted with difficulties oriented to themselves in addition to the violence destined for their children. Families were subjected to inquiries and arrests only because of their support of their children.

A 66 year old Kurdish woman got locked up by the police for 10 days in September 1988, after she had gone to the Parliament to protest Diyarbakır prison's condition where his son and other Kurdish inmates were imprisoned. The first day, she was put in a room where there were 22 women and men including very old ones, without food or chairs. "It was very cold. We huddled together, we were shivering." On the following day, they were carried to a bigger and warmer room; however, it was still cold. There also were no beds or chairs therein, there were only some pillows for old women. Their sole food was a piece of bread and some olives which were given at midday and evening; sometimes some officers on duty bought some food for them. They could go to the toilet twice a day with their eyes tied. The floor was made of concrete and it could not be cleaned because there was not a broom or something like this. On the other hand, if the police saw someone walking, he ordered him / her to stand up by looking at the wall without talking. Some messages were sent to inmates from outside but these were not forwarded until the prisoners left the police station. In 10 days, the old people became ill, but they could not get treatment.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *12 Eylül'den sonra ilk defa bir etkinlik yaptık. 1985'te Şan'da. Şan Tiyatrosu'nda... Biz "Damla Kendini Tamamlayınca Damlar" diye bir gece yaptık. Yani damla damla gül olacak, biz o çocuklara yardımcı olacağız falan. Ahmet Kaya'yı tuttuk. Ahmet Kaya da seve seve geldi yani, ücretsiz geldi... Ben çocuğumdan gelen şiiri okudum. Rahmetli Gülizar ağıt okudu... Tabi polisimiz de orada bizi dinliyor, masasında. Aradan bir gün mü geçti, iki gün mü geçti... Bizim kapıya polis gelmiş. İznimizi almıştık valilikten falan.*

¹⁷¹ *Türkiye'de Cezaevleri: Helsinki Gözlem Komitesi Raporu* (İstanbul: İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi Yayınları, 1991), p. 14. *66 yaşındaki bir Kürt köylü kadın, oğlumun ve diğer Kürt tutuklu ve hükümlülerin olduğu Diyarbakır'daki cezaevi koşullarını protesto etmek için Parlamento'ya gittikten sonra 1988 yılının Eylül ayında karakolda 10 gün geçirmişti. İlk gün, içlerinde oldukça yaşlı insanların da bulunduğu, kadın erkek 22 kişi yatak, sandalye ve yiyecek verilmeden küçük bir odaya konulmuştu. "Çok soğuktu. Birbirimize sokulduk, titriyorduk". Ertesi gün birazcık daha sıcak olan daha geniş bir odaya alındılar, ama orası da soğuktu. Orada da yatak ya da sandalye yoktu, yalnızca yaşlı kadınlar için bir kaç yer minder vardı. Tek yemekleri öğlen ve akşam verilen, bir parça ekme ve birkaç zeytindi; ara sıra nöbet tutanlardan, daha dostça davranan bir polis memuru onlar için biraz yiyecek satın alıyordu. Günde iki defa gözleri bağlı olarak tuvalete gitmelerine izin vardı. Zemin betonu ve temizlenemiyordu çünkü süpürge ya da temizlenebilecek herhangi bir şey yoktu, bunun dışında biri yürürken yakalanacak olursa polis duvara dönüp*

Mothers were often exposed to psychological suffering which hurt them more than beatings or detentions. Hearsay about “disappearing” facts, which would be come to light eventually after the middle of the 1990s and create another mobilization, troubled mothers considerably. They learned to live in jeopardy of losing their sons and daughters. In a press conference organized in Adana by the relatives of inmates imprisoned in the Adana Closed Prison, a speaker described this trouble was “worse than death.”¹⁷²

Everyday was death for us. We could not see our children, our relatives for many months. We can not sleep because of thinking of the bad conditions of our children and the torture applied to them. If they had died, we would visit their graves. This situation was worse than death for us.¹⁷³

From the beginning of the mothers’ struggle after the coup, the most crucial demand was the general pardon for political prisoners. They believed that all tortures, murders, and violence that their children faced could only be removed via an amnesty; therefore, “general pardon” became the concrete slogan of the mothers. For example, on April 23, Children’s Day, the mothers focused on the importance of the general pardon and they stated that for the children to really celebrate this day dedicated to them, they must becoming free.¹⁷⁴ In 1985, around 25,000 political offenders were still in prisons; the demand for a general pardon was expanded to all the country.

konuşmadan ayakta urmasını emrediyordu. Dışardan tutuklulara bazı mesajlar gönderiliyordu, ama karakoldan ayrılana kadar bunlar iletilmiyordu. Bu 10 gün içinde yaşlılar hastalandılar ama tedavi görmediler.

¹⁷² “Tutuklu Ailelerin Basın Toplantısı,” *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, June 1986, no. 4.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* *Bizim için her gün artık ölüm oldu. Aylardır cezaevlerindeki çocuklarımızla, yakınlarımızla görüştürülmüyoruz. Hangi koşullarda, hangi işkenceler altında bulduklarını düşünmekten gözlerimize uyku girmiyor. Ölselerdi her gün mezarlarını ziyaret ederdik, bu durum bizim için ölümden de acı.*

¹⁷⁴ *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, April-May 1984, no. 4-5.

When I asked to Şükriye Nazari which slogans they shouted during the process, she answered that the most crucial was “General Pardon!” In another example, mothers participated in the meeting of the Social Democracy Party (*Sosyal Demokrasi Partisi-SODEP*) organized in 1985, in Istanbul in order to elevate their voices. They carried placards highlighting the prison issue: “Vacate the prisons! General pardon!”¹⁷⁵ Although the main characteristic of the mentioned meeting was not prison conditions and mothers were only a little part of protestors, these women succeeded in attracting people’s attention and they left an impression on the overall activity.

On March 8, 1986, almost 100 relatives of prisoners gave a collective petition for “calling off tortures and the implementation of a general pardon. This demand must be the main will of all mothers, women, and all people who disagree with the Execution Law which was sought to be pulled as “amnesty,” who oppose all continuing oppressions, and the entire world that is not indifferent to the future of the country. General, unlimited, unconditional political amnesty!”¹⁷⁶

In the 1980s, the most popular figure of the mothers’ movement was Didar Şensoy.¹⁷⁷ She had been only a housewife until the military coup changed her life. She started to struggle against the junta’s prison policies after the age of forty and she became a human rights advocate.¹⁷⁸ There was news about her in the national newspapers. She did not settle for prison resistances, she, for example, took part in the Netaş Strike; she went on hunger strike in order to support university students

¹⁷⁵ *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, May- June 1985.

¹⁷⁶ “Nereye Baksam Oğlumun Gözbebeklerini Görüyorum,” *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği Haber Bülteni*, April 1986, no. 2. 8 Mart 1986 günü, 100 kadar tutuklu yakını, “işkencelerin durdurulması ve genel politik af” istemiyle ortak bir dilekçe verdiler. Bu istem bugün yalnız onların değil, sözümona “af” diye yutturılmaya çalışılan infaz yasasına, sürüp giden baskılara karşı olan tüm çileli anaların, kadınlarımızın, ülkesinin geleceğine kaygısız kalmayan herkesin ana istemi olmalıdır. Genel, sınırsız ve koşulsuz politik af!

¹⁷⁷ “Didar Abla Bizimle,” *Sosyalist Kadın*, October 1995, no. 4.

¹⁷⁸ John Mephram, “Turkey: Reading the Small Print,” *MERIP Middle East Report*, no. 149, Human Rights in the Middle East (Nov. – Dec., 1987), p. 21.

who had been on hunger strike to protest YÖK.¹⁷⁹ She died dramatically in the course of a meeting across from the parliament on September 1, 1987, on Peace Day; therefore, she became the symbol of mothers of the 1980s with her struggle that continued until death.¹⁸⁰

Lastly, Eskişehir [Prison] had become a coffin (*tabutluk*). In 1987, we were holding protests, sit-down strikes, we are making something continuously. There were some days to the International Day of Peace. We planned to go to Ankara by visiting all prisons. Mothers wearing white headscarves... [Mothers] visited prisons. At the entrance of Ankara, the police began to beat children, journalists, all people. [Mothers], creeping went to the gate of parliament. In the course of the Sultanahmet Protest, it was already apparent that [Didar Şensoy] had been diabetic. The doctor asked her how she could walk around like that, and he said she must rest. She did not care about all these things. She walked up roads. She was so respectable. How can we commemorate her, how can I describe her to you? That day, [mothers] forced the gate of the parliament again. [Didar] failed into the arms of one of her friends... She got worse. She went into diabetic coma; she died while being carried to hospital... She was in the morgue of Esnaf Hospital, we went there. We prevented [officers] from covering her face in order to say farewell. I kissed her on the forehead. I said: "My *omuzdaş*, my friend, I will continue from the point that you left, like we always did together."¹⁸¹

All in all, in spite of these painful experiences, as far as consequences of the whole struggle of mothers of the 1980s are concerned, it must be said that they reaped the harvest of their hard work. A fruit of this struggle was the establishment of *İnsan Hakları Derneği- İHD* (Human Rights Association) in 1986. Şükriye

¹⁷⁹ *Didar Abla*. Available [online]: <http://www.barikat-lar.de/> [31 March 2008]. Also see, Ayşe Hülya Özzümrüt and Ümit Efe, *Didar Abla- Yaşayacaksınız Yaşanacaksınız* (İstanbul: Barikat Dergi Yayıncılık, 1993).

¹⁸⁰ Alper Turgut, *Sessizliğe Karşı* (İstanbul: Ant Kitap, 2007), p. 148

¹⁸¹ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *En son bu Eskişehir artık tabutluk oldu. 87 yılında işte artık bu eylemleri falan yapıyoruz biz, oturma eylemlerini falan, arka arkaya bir şeyler yapıyoruz. Dünya Barış gününe birkaç gün var. Bütün cezaevlerini dolaşa dolaşa Ankara'ya gidilecek. Beyaz başörtülü anneler... [Anneler] dolaşıyorlar, ediyorlar. Ankara'ya girişte pata küte polis çocukları, gazetecileri, herkesi, Allah ne veriyse geçiriyor. Bunlar [anneler] sürüne mürüne meclisin kapısına gidiyorlar. Kadın [Didar Şensoy] zaten O, Sultanahmet oturma eyleminde kadının şeker hastalığı olduğu ortaya çıktı. Sen nasıl dolaşıyorsun böyle demiş doktor, senin istirahatla olman gerekir demiş. Ve bunları hiç takmadı O, yollara yürüdü O. O hatırı sayılır, onu nasıl ansak, nasıl böyle anlatabilsem size yetmez yani o kadar. Şimdi orada [anneler] meclisin kapısını yine zorlamışlar. [Didar] yatmış bir arkadaşımın kucağına... Çok fenalaşmış, orada şeker komasına girmiş. Hastaneye kaldırmışlar mı, kaldırmamışlar mı, kaldırıırken yolda ölmüş... Esnaf Hastanesi'nde morgdaydı, oraya gittik. Orda işte yüzünü kapattırmadık, hepimiz vedalaşıcak diye arkadaşları. Gittim onu alınından öptüm. "Benim omuzdaşım, arkadaşım" dedim. "Bıraktığın gibi devam edicem" dedim, "senle beraber ne yapıyorsak."*

Nazari, Didar Şensoy, and many mothers contributed to this attempt of institutionalization.

We formed the Human Rights Association under such difficult conditions, under martial law conditions. I am one of founding members... The symbol of the association was especially “families of prisoners.” Definitely, it [İHD] was not attached to a political organization... It was recommended that we organize under the roof of an association, from abroad, in order to be more accessible and more coordinated. Considering this suggestion, İHD was founded.¹⁸²

With the association of the İHD,¹⁸³ mothers created their own public sphere.

They organized various activities focusing on the prison question. In addition, they both continued to struggle in the streets and legitimated their situation by receiving the support of intellectuals and the leftist wing which had been interrupted from longtime.

On the other hand, the mothers’ most crucial demand, “a general pardon” has never been realized. In 1991, “release on probation” became a law; that is to say, political prisoners would be set free according to 17th article of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCK). However, when they committed an offence, they would receive all punishments. Indeed, when these political prisoners were released, they were confronted with many proscriptions: they could not establish an association, labor union, or foundation; participate in political parties; get a bank loan; or open a

¹⁸² Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Ve biz o zor şartlar altında, o dönemde, daha sıkıyönetim devam ederken İHD’yi kurduk. Kurucu üyesiyim ben... Simgesi tutuklu aileleriydi özellikle. Kesinlikle hiçbir örgüt, herhangi bir yaptırımında olmadı... Yurtdışından öneri gelmişti ailelere, örgütlenin, kurum olun, daha rahat size ulaşırız falan, çok dağınık kalmayın diye. O öneri dikkate alınarak İHD kuruldu.*

¹⁸³ 17 July 2001. *Human Rights Association a Fifteen Years Full of Glorious Struggle*. Available [online]: <http://www.ihd.org.tr> [1 April 2008]. It was necessary to redress the extensive destruction caused by the September 12, 1980 military coup. During the process which started in the wake of military coup, the torture carried out in police custody and prisons intensified; deaths were increasingly common, political parties, associations and trade unions were banned and their executives were jailed. All of the laws relating to fundamental rights and freedoms, in particular the Constitution, were altered. The constitutional and legal framework of Turkey was formed by the 12 September administration and this framework was anti-democratic in nature. The attempt to set up a human rights organization which was initiated by relatives of the detainees and convicted prisoners was concluded on 17 July 1986 after nearly a year of discussions. A total of 98 people, including writers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, architects and engineers signed the foundation petition of the Human Rights Association.

business. Even their rights regarding their families and children were limited.¹⁸⁴ In addition, in the middle of 1991 the Anti-Terror Law, tightening up measures against the establishment of leftist organizations, publications, and movements, became valid. In other words, all these people who had been given their liberty were prevented from being engaged in politics.

In the same year, a new type of prison, named the F-type which had been already constructed but could not be used by reason of resistance in the prisons, was opened. This brought new waves of death fasts in 1996, 12 people, between 2000 and 2007, 122 people died in protest of F- types. On December 12, 2000, prisons were burnt down under the pretext of stopping death fasts via a police operation named “Return to Life.”¹⁸⁵ During these death fasts, the mothers’ movement continued with acceleration; however, it must be said that their struggle also became divided, like the division of leftist groups. Protests and movements were now organized under the roofs of associations such as the Association of Solidarity with the Families of Arrested and Convicted People (*Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri Yardımlaşma Derneği – TAYAD*), the Union of Relatives of the Arrested and Convicted People (*Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Yakınları Birliği – TUYAB*), the Association of Solidarity with the Families of Convicted People (*Tutuklu Aileleri ile Dayanışma Derneği – TUAD*). Mother movements against the dictatorship of the September 12 and its prison policies after the coup did not terminate but became more institutionalized and somewhat more diffused.

¹⁸⁴ Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, “12 Eylül’ün Müebbet Kefareti,” *Radikal*, 8 December 2002.

¹⁸⁵ *Documentation on the death fast in Turkey*. Available [online]: <http://prisonsenturquie.free.fr> [4 April 2008].

The Saturday Mothers (*Cumartesi Anneleri*)

*days went by waiting
the day is deaf, nightingales are quiet
my flesh, my bone at the doorsteps
life is lost, life is lost
my god, what kind of world is it
what kind of shame is it
I am a mother, I dont feel pain
I won't lose hope if you set me on fire
my curse will cloud history when I'm dead...¹⁸⁶*

Chronologically the third mother group that this study includes is the most famous one, known as the Saturday Mothers. This period from 1995 to 1999 is characterized as “mothers’ struggle against the disappeared” and the parallel action developed in terms of methods and demands with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina presented in the previous chapter. Saturday Mothers demonstrated for years every Saturday, in Galatasaray Square, demanding to know the fates of their children; in this way, they became the famous symbol of a genre of civil disobedience¹⁸⁷ in Turkey.

It must be said that disappearances in Turkey did not begin in the 1990s; the disappearances started with the military coup. However, the number of these cases was only 10, from September 1980 to 1991. From the beginning of 1991, disappearances increased drastically: 4 people in 1991, 8 people in 1992, 36 people in 1993, 229 people in 1994, 121 people in 1995, 68 people in 1996, 45 people in 1997, and 9 people in 1998¹⁸⁸ had been “disappeared.”¹⁸⁹ The real numbers of the

¹⁸⁶ *Bekleye bekleye geçiyor günler/ gün sağır, dilsiz, sustu bülbüller/ kemiğim etim kapı önlerinde/ can kayıp, can kayıp/ allah'ım bu nasıl bir dünya/ bu nasıl bir ayıp/ ah ben anayım, yanmaz canım dışarıdan/ kora koysalar ümidimi kaybedemezsiniz/ ölsem de ahım tarihi karalar...* (Sezen Aksu / *Cumartesi Türküsü*)

¹⁸⁷ Civil disobedience practices are strictly related to the regime of the state; therefore, the conceptualization of civil disobedience must be handled according to the regime. This will be stated in following pages.

¹⁸⁸ 17 May 2002. *Cumartesi Anneleri'nden “Cumartesi.”* Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [20 March 2008].

disappeared must be higher¹⁹⁰ as in most of these cases neither the police nor the prosecutor kept any record of the arrest due to the possibility that at a later time the records could be used against them. In addition, these statistics were prepared according to families' applications to a large extent; but relatives of some of the disappeared feared reprisals.¹⁹¹ Thus, the number of victims must be greater than the data officially indicated.

It is clear that disappearances rose in the 1990s when the Kurdish movement gained ground and accordingly, political sanctions oriented at the Kurdish people by the state such as forced evictions and destructions of villages appeared. Most disappearances were seen in the region under State of Emergency (OHAL) where the majority of the inhabitants were Kurds.¹⁹² However, it doesn't mean that only Kurds were subjected to kidnapping or that these offences were committed on the grounds of ethnicity; the disappeared were mostly people who stood out with their political identities more than their ethnicities.

As far as relatives of the disappeared are concerned, it must be said that their claims about cases were not taken seriously; the competent authorities never gave satisfactory reply to the applications of parents who insisted on disappearances having happened after their children had been taken into custody. Responses from official quarters were generally superficial: "The person mentioned has not been taken into custody" or "We are also searching for this person" were said to anxious families who pressed for answers. Even the parliament made no serious queries about

¹⁸⁹ Because these cases are forced disappearance, the word "disappear" is used in a transitive form. Kidnapped people are said to "have been disappeared," rather than the more usual "have disappeared." In other words, certain people "have disappeared" them, rather than "made them disappear."

¹⁹⁰ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, September-October 1998, no. 15. The number of the known disappeared is 563 according to the journal.

¹⁹¹ *Disappearances*. Available [online]: <http://home.swipnet.se/> [1 April 2008].

¹⁹² Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, pp. 78-80.

hundreds of claims. For example, *Gerçek* journal produced concrete documents in support of the allegation about the disappearance of one victim, a young man named Hüseyin Toraman, which claimed that he had been buried in Eskişehir. However, the office of the public prosecutor did not heed and finally it decided not to search for him under the pretext that “the region of Eskişehir was too large to scan.”¹⁹³

Parents started to search for their children; they applied to police stations, the office of the public prosecutor, hospitals, and morgues. However, they were unable to obtain any information. Similar to other examples, their individual attempts would ultimately converge on a common destiny; however, they first sought their own, independently. The mother of Hayrettin Eren, Elmas Eren, for example, experienced the same difficulties in Istanbul. When she went to the police station *Birinci Şube*, she saw her son’s car chained in the courtyard. Elmas Eren asked the police officer to look for documentations about her son, but was told that he was not there. When she insisted, a police officer manhandled her and threatened her with imprisonment.¹⁹⁴

Another mother in Bingöl, Fatma Morsümbül, also got a raw deal when she looked for her son Hüseyin, who had been taken from home by the police. When she understood that the police would not give information about him, she visited many governmental units in Elazığ, Diyarbakır, and Ankara; she got in touch with public prosecutors, she begged them to find Hüseyin.¹⁹⁵ When her son, Rıdvan, disappeared, Asiye Karakoç moved into action to find him as other mothers; she inquired about the arrest, she petitioned various police authorities, administrative districts and other government agencies in Ümraniye, Gayrettepe, Kartal, and İkitelli,

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

¹⁹⁴ Günçkan, p. 25.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

but she could not find a trace.¹⁹⁶ A peasant woman, Elif Tekin, learned of the disappearance of her son Düzgün when she had arrived in Istanbul and she searched for him in the big city where she had never been previously. She presented petitions to all of the police stations; she left her telephone numbers to be called, finally she went to Ankara, and she wrote petitions again and again. Eventually, she was able to see the parliamentarian of her own district, Tunceli, and asked for help. However, the responses of official channels were the same: “The person you are searching for is not here.”¹⁹⁷

Many mothers were confronted with these difficulties; however, they were able only to gather with the discovery of the corpse of Hasan Ocak, who became the symbol of “the disappeared.” His mother, Emine Ocak, looked for Hasan from the date of his disappearance; she also applied to all of the official authorities. She was beaten by the police when she went to the office of the governor; but, she did not give up.¹⁹⁸ She brought bunches of flower to parliamentarians and ministers in order to make them interested in the disappearances; however, she was refused. Because in the hearing of Akın Birdal, one of the administrators of the İHD, Emine Ocak asked the judge the location of her son, she was imprisoned for nineteen days on the grounds that she had disturbed the peace of the court. On May 15, 1995 Hasan’s tortured corpse was found in a pauper’s grave.¹⁹⁹ The death of Hasan Ocak became the straw that broke the camel’s back.²⁰⁰ For the first time, the public became

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 56

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.68.

¹⁹⁸ Emine Ocak, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 26 October 2007.

¹⁹⁹ Günçikan, p. 133.

²⁰⁰ “Devler Kayıpların Hesabını Vermekten Kurtulamayacak,” *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, February - March 1996, no. 8.

sensitive to disappearances thanks to the struggle of Hasan Ocak's parents and other relatives.²⁰¹

The mothers met each other during this process and they understood the uselessness of their individual attempts. They decided to do something all together to both find children and acquaint ordinary people with the question of disappearances. Thus, the movement of Saturday Mothers emerged.

It was planned as a different style of protest, something like “a mosquito deranging a person who tries to sleep.”²⁰² Firstly, as a very small group, it was started as a “sit down” without any preparation or arrangement. People with circles of acquaintances invited the press to announce the protest. It was given a great buildup in the press; therefore, it was possible to reach more people. On the other hand, there were fears about the behavior of the police. The first gathering was ended after half an hour of sitting although it had been planned to last an hour. After this first experience, the participants held a meeting in a coffeehouse to arrange following gatherings. The most crucial issue was the legal difficulties which gave rise to punitive sanction on the grounds of “Offence against Public Order” and “Offence against the Law on Gatherings and Demonstrations;” however, making a press statement was legitimate and this could constitute the legal basis of the protests. In addition, the idea of adding victims in action via their photos emerged in these coffeehouse gatherings.²⁰³ Consequently, a silent, repetitive, impulsive and feminine resistance practice made its mark on the 1990s.

The protest consisted of a perpetual sit down strike of mothers, every Saturday in Galatasaray Square, the busiest plaza of Istanbul, holding pictures of

²⁰¹ *Radikal*, 31 June 2004.

²⁰² Erkan Kayılı, “‘Çıplak’ İtaatsizlik Olarak ‘Cumartesi Anneleri’ ” In *Kamusal Alan*, ed. by Meral Özbek (İstanbul: Hil Yayınları, 2004) p. 351.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

children in their hands. Although only twenty or twenty five people participated in the earlier meetings, many mothers joined them in the plaza in the following weeks. Gülşah Tağaç, mother of Enver Tağaç, contributed to both the 1980s mothers with her son's imprisonment in 1984 and Saturday Mothers when Enver was killed in the Gazi Events, which took place on March 12-13, 1995, ending in the deaths of seventeen people.²⁰⁴ Gülşah Tağaç has six children and five of them participated in active political life. She states her impressions about the process and the mobilization of mothers:

The Gazi Events took place. In these days, Hasan Ocak was taken [on March 25, 1995]. I did not know him as Hasan Ocak. He was a very innocent, honest, and gentle person. We didn't know his ideology... In those days, they took my daughter and my son. Then, they took my other daughter from the syndicate. They took my three children at the same time. I went to the police station (*Şube*), I asked about my son. "He is not here," they said. I understood the meaning of "disappearance" at this moment. My world was overwhelmed. How can a person disappear? [For example] when you drop a needle or coin, you search for it. Thereafter, we formed *Cumartesi Anaları*, with photos in our hands; we went to several places, Kadıköy, Bakırköy, etc. Then, we moved to Galatasaray, Taksim. We used to sit there silently, every Saturday. We used to say: "End to disappearances!" "the Disappeared shall be found, those responsible shall be questioned." We did not say anything else. They did not let us.²⁰⁵

Another mother, Gülten Kahraman, influenced by the disappearance of her neighbor's son, Murat Yıldız, contributed to Saturday Mothers. In the following years, she learned that her son had died in guerilla fighting. She could not find his

²⁰⁴ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, 10 December 2000, no. 20.

²⁰⁵ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Gazi Olayı oldu zaten, ondan sonra Hasan Ocak işte o ara alındı, tabi ben Hasan Ocak'ı Hasan Ocak olarak tanıımıyordum ki... Çok temiz, dürüst, dünyalar tatlısı birisiydi. Tabi biz ne biliriz, onun neyin, düşüncesi ne, neyi ne... Ondan sonra kızımı aldılar, oğlumu aldılar. Sonra öbür kızımı aldılar sendikadan. Üç kişiyi birden aldılar. Şubeye gittim, oğlanı sordum. "Yok burada" diyor... Kayıp o zaman, "kayıp" ne demek o zaman anladım. O zaman benim dünyam altüst oldu... Bir insan nasıl kaybolur? İnsanın elinde bir iğnesi düşüyor da arıyorsun, ya da parası düşüyor arıyorsun. Ondan sonra, Cumartesi Analarına elimizde fotoğraflarla çeşitli bölgelerde her gün, Kadıköy'de, çeşitli yerlerde, Bakırköy'de, ondan sonra oralara gidiyorduk... Ondan sonra taşındık Taksim'e, Galatasaray'a. Ondan sonra orada her cumartesi sessizce oturuyorduk, bir "Kayıplar Son" diyorduk. "Kayıplar bulunsun, hesap sorulsun" diyorduk. Bir şey demiyorduk. Oraya da koymadılar bizi.*

corpse, and she continued to participate in mothers' movement in order to find her son's body.

I started to attend Saturday Mothers. I was living in İzmir but every weekend I came here [İstanbul] to participate in Saturday Mothers because my neighbor's son, his name is Murat Yıldız, disappeared under arrest. He could not be found, he's still disappeared... Murat's case impressed me deeply. Then, in 1997, [my son] Cüneyt... [was dead]. After Cüneyt's event, I moved here [in İstanbul]. I gathered families. We were gathering monthly at least... Hasan Ocak's mother, Metin Göktepe's mother, their screams, their sufferings... When I saw them, I endured great suffering. I lived the same thing. Child (*evlat*)... my child also had gone, their children also had gone. To be with these mothers, to hear their voices and screams... We were taken into custody every time, we were beaten every time... but we were not demoralized, we were seeking to go more.²⁰⁶

Saturday Mothers continued to struggle until 1999; they gathered 200 times approximately within four years.²⁰⁷ The mothers gained a crucial public support; some intellectuals and artists also participated in mothers' activity. However, from the 170th week, they were confronted with excessive violence from the police. Hundreds of police attended the gatherings and they surrounded the group of protestors, whose number was generally forty or fifty. On the earlier Saturdays, the police solely informed them of the illegality of the event, prevented them by parking their cars in the meeting space, or created public opinion against mothers via public announcement. In the summer of 1996, the police changed strategy; they coerced disappeared people's relatives to leave the street under the pretext of the summit

²⁰⁶ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October 2007. *Cumartesi Anneleri'ne başladım. Ben İzmir'de oturuyordum, ama her hafta Cumartesi Anneleri'ne geliyordum buraya. Çünkü komşumun çocuğunu _ adı Murat Yıldız _ onu da gözaltında kaybettiler, bulunmadı, hala bulunmadı... Murat'ın etkisi benim üzerimde çok oldu. Ondan sonra 1997'de Cüneyt'in böyle olması... [ölmesi]. Cüneyt'ten sonra ben buraya taşındım. Ben hep aileleri topladım. Aileler olarak biz ayda bir kez dahi olsa toplanıyorduk... Hasan Ocak'ın annesi, Metin Göktepe'nin annesi, onların o çığlıkları, o acıları... Hala onlar bulunmadı. Bunları görünce içim eriyordu. Ben de aynı şeyi yaşadım... Evlat, benim için de o evlat gitmiş, onlar için de evlat, evlat acısı... O annelerle olmak, o annelerin çığlığını, sesini duymak... Her seferinde gözaltına alınıyorduk, her seferinde dövülüyorduk... Ama bıkmıyorduk, daha çok gitmeye çalışıyorduk.*

²⁰⁷ Protests took place during three years and ten months.

meeting of Habitat.²⁰⁸ In June 8, 1996 while İstanbul was entertaining 20,000 people at the summit of Habitat, more than 600 people were taken into custody in Galatasaray.²⁰⁹ From August 1998, mothers were tugged and beaten wildly; police dragged mothers by the hair towards police car and threw pepper gas into the crowd, hoping these would encourage them to disperse.²¹⁰ In other words, the police behavior intensified at sit-down protests; the hesitation about applying brutality to old aged women was left and the police's approach evolved towards an interfering manner, the disproportionate use of power and massive arrests appeared.

The Saturday Mothers had already accepted the risk of being taken into custody. Increasing violence applied by the police could not bring down the resistance; however, even overcoming police obstacles and arriving at square became very difficult in the following weeks. In order to prevent arrests, the mothers decided to leave carnation on a corner of the square instead of sitting; but this attempt was also met with sheer force. Inevitably, the number of participants decreased; the mothers, especially the old ones, could not swallow beatings. They were compelled to give up the gatherings for the time being.

Finally, our number decreased. We were thirty or twenty people. I was very upset, I cried for hours, there. "Will we vacate here, will this place become empty?" I said. I sought to dissuade them from leaving [the square]...; but we could not persuade them, I could not, so I am very sorry.²¹¹

We were putting flowers in a corner, that's all... They grudge us even when putting flowers. We received consolation in putting flower; it was just like

²⁰⁸ Kayılı, pp. 353-354.

²⁰⁹ Nadire Mater. 19 February 2001. *Galatasaray Devam Etseydi*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [21 April 2008].

²¹⁰ 17 May 2002. *Cumartesi Anneleri'nden "Cumartesi."* Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [20 March 2008].

²¹¹ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October 2007. *En son çok azalmıştık. Otuz kişiydik, yirmi kişiydik. Çok üzülmişim, çok ağlamışım saatlerce orada. "Biz burayı boşaltıcaz mı, bura boş mu kalacak" dedim. Çok çırpınmışım bırakmayalım, gene biz burayı devam ettirelim... Ama anneleri bir türlü ikna edemedik, başaramadım yani, ona çok üzüldüm.*

disappeared children were there, we felt like we could find them. It was alleviation for us... We were seeing these mothers, we were talking, and we were pouring out our grievances. Finally, we were taken [into custody] as three mothers.²¹²

Although the Saturday Mothers attempt ended practically on March 13, 1999, it achieved many concrete results. First of all, the number of disappearance cases declined from the beginning of Galatasaray protests. As mentioned above, the number of disappeared was 229 in 1994, 121 in 1995, 68 in 1996, 45 in 1997, and 9 in 1998.²¹³ It is clear that the inception of the Galatasaray gatherings acted as a breaking point that offenders of kidnapping events could not easily execute subsequent facts in fear of public reaction.

Moreover, important public support was created. Even the average person learned about the problem of the disappearances via the press and the television which could not be indifferent to these meetings. The police's brutal intervention and mass arrests revealing the intolerance of power were met negatively by the public and these attitudes consolidated the legitimation of the mothers' protest. That is to say, the Saturday Mothers induced people to reconsider the functions of power and human rights issues emphasizing their claims rooted in their common grievance and suffering.

Another reason enabling us to interpret the process positively is that the mothers succeeded at representing their children as "individuals" instead of numbers in data records through these sitting protests. Although the victims shared the same fortune, everyone had a different identity, personality, and history; therefore, their

²¹² Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Şöyle şuraya bir çiçek koyuyorduk, başka bir şey yoktu... Adamlar oraya bir çiçek koymamızı çok gördüler bize. Yani onu biz kendimize sanki bir teselli yapmıştık, sanki kayıplar oradalar, sanki kayıpları bulacağız gibi. Bize bir teselliydi... Hani o anaları görüyorduk, konuşuyorduk, dertleşiyorduk. En son üç kişiyle alındık.*

²¹³ 17 May 2002. *Cumartesi Anneleri'nden "Cumartesi."* Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [20 March 2008].

personal stories mattered a lot to this study. Mothers saw all of these children as “human beings” first of all, and they had to be rescued from being only statistical numbers.²¹⁴ Referring to this perception, the Saturday Mothers broke the alienation between people and victims via photos and the personal histories of the disappeared and they warned that all these painful experiences could happen again. Thus, mothers added a crucial detail to the gatherings, which provided a reciprocal sincerity, understanding and common sense relying on the feelings for their loved ones.

As previously mentioned intellectuals, artists and other members of NGOs and syndicates supported the mothers while participating in sittings or dedicating their productions to the mothers’ struggle. For example, the popular singer Sezen Aksu wrote a song for the Saturday Mothers,²¹⁵ Ahmet Kaya also published an album named *Beni Bul* for them in 1995. The then-minister of human rights Algan Hacaloğlu, and public figures like Ercan Karakaş, Akın Birdal, Rıdvan Budak, Ufuk Uras participated in one of Saturday gatherings.²¹⁶ The mothers’ protest also spread to other countries such as Japan, Italy, Argentina, and France, thanks to foreign journalists who came to Istanbul to attend the Habitat congress. In this way, an international solidarity was gained. The Irish rock band U2 indicated disappearances in its album named *Pop* (1997), it published the note “don’t forget Fehmi Tosun,²¹⁷ who was disappeared under arrest in Turkey” in the cover of the album.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Nadire Mater. 19 February 2001. *Galatasaray Devam Etseydi*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [21 April 2008].

²¹⁵ Filiz Koçali, ““Cumartesi Anneleri’nin İnadı,” In *Kamusal Alan*, ed. by Meral Özbek (İstanbul: Hil Yayınları, 2004) p. 359.

²¹⁶ Kayılı, p. 354.

²¹⁷ Günçikan, p. 85. Fehmi Tosun was kidnapped in October 19, 1995 from the front of his house, in Avcılar, İstanbul.

²¹⁸ Kayılı, p. 356.

The Saturday Mothers campaign is often described as an example of civil disobedience. As far as main characteristics of the concept are concerned, this interpretation is reasonable. Above all, civil disobedience is illegal; that is to say, after resorting to all legal channels, it resorted to informal methods to obtain legitimate demands in accordance with constitutional rights.²¹⁹ The Saturday Mothers set out to sit-down strike only when they had tried all other courses to find their children. However, they could not obtain any information and they felt that a public act was necessary. Therefore, their struggle can be perceived illegal, but it is legitimate in this context.

Secondly, civil disobedience is an open action; it is perceptible by the public. Therefore, its course and consequences are also predictable.²²⁰ In other words, the protestor assumes the legal and punitive responsibilities of the activity. In the case of the Saturday Mothers, the mothers were frequently taken into custody and they got used to dealing with the police. For example, some mothers brought clothes taking into account that they might pass a few days in prison. It is clear that they acted expecting all manners of conduct and took whatever they faced.

Another important point is that civil disobedience rejects violence; the main goal of the protest is to arrive at compromise with the opposing side instead of intensifying hostilities. While doing so, it also seeks a common understanding of justice among people. The disobedience appears against the interruption of the general sense of justice by a partial breach and the protest is oriented to only singular infringement. In other words, the opposition emerges against a particular injustice instead of the defiance of the whole system because it is supposed that the system is

²¹⁹ Yakup Coşar, trans. “Önsöz: Sivil İtaatsizlik,” *Kamu Vicdanına Çağrı: Sivil İtaatsizlik* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 1997) p. 10.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

generally equitable.²²¹ This is necessary in order to gather ideologically different people under a common roof; in this case, a spontaneous and practical alliance was sufficient rather than a comprehensive intellectual agreement.

Accordingly, in the Saturday Mothers example, different women from different classes and different social backgrounds came together and engaged in a unique problem, the disappearances. They did not let people who offered to put other political questions onto their agenda; they decided to focus on the kidnapping events. However, it doesn't mean that the mothers confined themselves to their individual disappearance experiences; on the contrary, they transformed their "individual" stories into a political question of common concern. As the main aim of protests was to call attention to the large scale disappearances, they did not want to depart from the essential target.

On the other hand, after the process of the Saturday Mothers, the participant mothers were not as before, they changed dramatically as both women and political agents. With these four years of struggle, they started to question many concepts such as power relations, family, and womanhood. Most importantly, mothers met the streets and they became a part of the public sphere thanks to the Galatasaray gatherings; therefore, in addition to the inclusion of disappearances in the political agenda of the country via mothers' struggle, the Saturday Mothers movement should also be read as women's active participation in politics in the streets.

Finally, the state's strategy against the Saturday Mothers needs to be considered. While the Saturday Mothers were legitimized in respect of the public opinion, the Friday Mothers,²²² consisting of dying soldiers' and polices' mothers,

²²¹ Coşar, p. 13.

²²² For an example of book written about Friday Mothers, see Şadımın Şenbalkan, *Şehit Analarımızın Çiğlıkları Gözü Yaşlı Cuma Anneleri Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Yakamoz Yayıncılık, 2007).

were organized with state support. These women also started to gather in Galatasaray Square on Fridays, like the Saturday Mothers, and publicized their demand for revenge. Obviously, the Friday Mothers were interpreted as a state manoeuvre in order to replace the Saturday Mothers and weaken its public support by emphasizing the presence of another injured mothers' group characterized by the legitimacy of "serving the country."²²³ In other words, a dilemma was created between the two mother groups and society was compelled to choose one of them. However, the Friday Mothers project was unable to endure like the Saturday Mothers.

The Peace Mothers (*Bariş Anneleri*)

With the rise of the Kurdish movement in the 1990s, the Kurdish woman became an important subject for both the political struggle and academic studies. Researcher Handan Çağlayan argues that Kurdish women were symbolized in two manners: the "fighter woman" and the mother as the carrier of the authentic substance of Kurdishness.²²⁴

In the 1990s, scores of women participated in the Kurdish movement as fighters; one-third of the PKK's mountain cadre consisted of women in 1993.²²⁵ This political mobilization of women transformed the image of the Kurdish woman; she was no longer the "miserable person waiting for her emancipation day" as before. She came to be seen an agent who "will emancipate society while she

²²³ For similar comments see Can Dündar, "Muhatap," *Yeni Yüzyıl*, 31 August 1996; Mine Koçak, "Kadınların Bariş Politikası," *Özgür Gündem*, 1 September 2003.

²²⁴ Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007) p. 25.

²²⁵ Ali Nahit Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi, Yöntemi* (Ankara: ASAM, 1999) p. 160.

emancipates herself.”²²⁶ This emphasis is apparent in Kurdish women journals such as the Free Woman in Life (*Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*) and *Jin û Jiyan*.²²⁷

The second image of the Kurdish woman, motherhood, is strictly related to Kurdish historiography based on the matriarchal discourse. According to the Kurdish nation’s construction myth, there was a matriarchal social structure in ancient Mesopotamia. There, woman had great knowledge about life’s secrets thanks to her close relationships with bearing angles, soil, and nature. These qualities provided her a crucial status in society. However, woman lost the power and so, the patriarchal period began.²²⁸ Making an analogy between women losing their power and the Kurds losing their consciousness, Kurdish mothers were called to struggle to regain both their social status based on motherhood and national identities.

As mothers or potential mothers, women were expected to take on the responsibility, like educating children according to national values. In this way, it is assumed that specific moral and ideological understandings would be installed in new generations and certain attitudes would be encouraged. In this context, the Kurdish movement exalts the role of mothers in the national construction, emphasizing their functions in cultural heritage; they are the first people teaching the native language,²²⁹ or passing on the traditional cuisine. However, it doesn’t mean that mothers are described only as passive culture-carriers; they are also agents as

²²⁶ Çağlayan, pp. 101, 107, 109.

²²⁷ Necla Açıık, “Ulusal Mücadele, Kadın Mitosu ve Kadınların Harekete Geçirilmesi: Türkiye’de Çağdaş Kürt Kadın Dergilerinin Bir Analizi,” In *90’larda Türkiye’de Feminizm*, ed. by Aksu Bora and Asena Günel (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002) pp. 280-283.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 283.

²²⁹ Many terms in different languages meaning native language include the word meaning mother; for example, the “mother tongue” in english, “langue mère” or “langue maternelle” in french, and “anadili” in turkish.

culture-producers.²³⁰ Apart from carrying traditions, they can raise children according to their own values, wills, ideologies and consciousness; therefore, their contribution can be read as the “creation” of culture. While “mother” identity makes political and social sense, via historical myths and traditional motifs; it also gives women the occasion of shaping later generations consistent with their own stances.

Considering the Kurdish movement’s relation with motherhood, the last mother group that this study dwells on is the “Peace Mothers Initiative,” which was constructed in 1995 by fifteen mothers whose children had died in conflict with state forces or had been imprisoned on the basis of their activities related to the Kurdish nationalist movement.²³¹ Mothers gathered in search of a dialog to end the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement continuing from the late 1970s. The Peace Mothers organized many demonstrations in Ankara and Istanbul; in addition, they gave petitions to parliament calling for peace.²³²

Highlighting that over decades many young people, both soldiers and militants had died, the Peace Mothers put the armed conflict lasting in Eastern provinces on the agenda of the country. Mothers gathered to demonstrate that their children were more than “terrorists who were captured dead” and they demanded that all that had been experienced in the past would not be repeated.²³³ Müyesser Güneş, the founder of the Peace Mothers Initiative, a Kurdish woman whose son, Mehmet, was killed in conflict in 1992, narrates the idea of the institutionalization of mothers:

One day, I saw Ali Kırca on TV. He said, “Families of Soldiers Association will be officially formed, families will defend their own children.” I said to

²³⁰ Açık, p. 289. See also Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds. *Woman-Nation-State* (Londra: Macmillan, 1989), Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Londra: Thousands Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1997), and Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 20, no. 3 (1991), pp. 429-443.

²³¹ *Milliyet*, 31 December 2004.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Evrensel*, 19 February 2007.

myself against whom they would resort to court. If a war has existed between Kurds and Turks for many years in Turkey, this is reciprocal. I told, “I am going.” I lost Mehmet (her son) in vain; whom can I hold accountable? I said my daughter I would look for a lawyer. I visited many lawyers but I did not have the chance to participate in hearings, you know, we were under fire. After some months, we decided to form the Peace Mothers. Then, I became speaker. We worked day and night, deprived of food and water, for our children’s struggle not to fall through; in order to show that Turks and Kurds were deceived by the system, to make our voice heard, and to provide that neither Turks nor Kurds die.²³⁴

The mothers’ individual stories of participation in the Peace Mothers

Initiative are particularly enlightening. Güler Buğday, whose son Fırat died in the mountains in 1993, joined the group after his death. Shortly after she had lost him, she was threatened in her village; therefore, she was obliged to leave her homeland, Diyarbakır. The family migrated to Istanbul but arrests, oppressions, and danger of life drastically affected her like all people who had experienced similar things because of political reasons.

I was seeking a solution to how we could establish peace. Mothers endure great suffering. The feelings of Turkish, Arabian, Laz or Circassian mothers are the same. I saw the Peace Mothers, I saw their struggle, and this is what touched me. You see the system, you keep abreast of current events; how you can announce your wailing for the establishment of peace... We asked for appointment for peace. We lived negative things, we were insulted. We were making a peace offering on Wednesdays in Taksim, we were shouting for peace. We were taken into custody, we stood trial. They said to us: “You are mothers, what are you doing here, why don’t you stay home?” We were confronted with such behavior as if nothing had happened in this country and nobody had died.²³⁵

²³⁴ Ibid., *Bir gün Atv’de Ali Kırca çıktı televizyona. ‘Resmi olarak asker aileleri dernekleri kurulacak, kendi çocuklarının savunmalarını yapacaklar’ dedi. Peki, kime karşı mahkeme yapacaklar, dedim kendime. Eğer Türkiye’de Kürtlerle Türklerin arasında yıllardır savaş varsa, bu iki taraftır. Ben, dedim gidiyorum. Ben Mehmet’i günahsız yere kaybetmişim, bunun hesabını kimden sorayım; ben bir avukat peşine gidiyorum dedim kızıma. Birçok avukatlarla görüştim ama o dönemlerde benim mahkemelere girme şansım yoktu, biliyorsunuz ateş yağıyordu. Üç-beş ay sonra biz Barış Anneleri’ni kurmaya karar verdik. O zaman sözcü oldum. Gece gündüz, aç susuz çalıştık, ölen çocuklarımızın kanı yerde kalmasın; Türklerle Kürtler boşu boşuna sistemin oyununa geliyor, sesimizi Türkiye’ye duyuralım, ne Kürdün ne Türkün kanı akmasın diye.*

²³⁵ Evrensel, 19 February 2007. *Bir arayış içindeyim; barışı nasıl sağlayabiliriz diye. Annelerin yüreği yanıyor. Türk annelerinin de Arap, Laz, Çerkes olanın da ayndır duyguları. Barış Anneleri gördüm, çabalarını gördüm, beni etkileyen odur. Sistemi takip ediyorsun, gündemi takip ediyorsun, feryadını figanını nasıl duyurabilirsin barışın sağlanması için... Barış için randevu taleplerinde bulunduk. Olumsuz yanları da oldu, hakaretlere de uğradık. Taksim’de çarşamba günleri barış eylemimizi yapıyorduk, barışı haykırıyorduk. Gözaltına alınıyorduk. Mahkemelere çıkıyorduk.*

Another woman Fatma Bıkım, whose daughter was imprisoned in 1995 for her relation with the Kurdish movement, narrates the story of participation in the Peace Mothers:

In 1996, there was a Peace Train organized by the Human Rights Association (İHD) Istanbul Branch, Musa Anter Peace Train. I went this day. I was living in Bostancı, I went there because Haydarpaşa was very close to my [house] and I was very touched. I saw people's happiness and enthusiasm. I was very touched [by this remark]... We came as twelve women...²³⁶

According to Lütfiye Gürbüz, a political prisoner's mother, mothers must struggle in order that other children and mothers won't cry in the future. Her decision for contribution emerged from this motivation making her feel responsible.

I understood that I must absolutely take part in this struggle. I thought I must do my best. Then, I started to work in the women's branch, in the mothers' movement, and with the relatives of prisoners at various times. I think this is the way of creating ourselves and standing behind our children. Because our children did not make a mistake according to us - although they made big mistakes according to state - [we support them]... We have suffered a lot; we have got very tired... However, our burden is reduced thanks to the belief in our children and the struggle that they perpetuate. If we struggle, maybe the following generations will not live what our children have lived. We took action thinking that maybe another mother would not feel the pain that we have felt. By so doing, this [belief] relieved our grief a little more.²³⁷

Diyorlardı "Annesiniz ne işiniz var buralarda, niye evinizde oturmuyorsunuz?" Sanki bu ülkede hiçbir şey olmuyormuş, kan dökülmüyormuş gibi tutumlarla karşılaşıyorduk.

²³⁶Sevgül Uludağ. 18 February 2003. *Fatma Bıkım: Mezopotamyanın Barış Tülbenti*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [2 May 2008]. *1996 yılında İnsan Hakları Derneği'nin (İHD) İstanbul şubesinin hazırladığı bir Barış Treni vardı, Musa Anter Barış Treni... O gün gittim, Bostancı'da oturuyordum, Haydarpaşa bana çok yakın olduğu için oraya gittim ve çok duygulandım. İnsanların o sevincini, coşkusunu gördüm, çok duygulandım... Geldik biz, kendi aramızda 12 tane kadın...*

²³⁷Lütfiye Gürbüz, interview by Seçkin Kazak, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 16 December 2007. *Anladım ki, kesinlikle ben de bu mücadelede yer almalıyım. Elimden geleni yapmalıyım diye düşündüm. Ve ben bu çalışmalara, belli dönemde kadın çalışması olsun, annelerin çalışması olsun, tutuklu aileleri olsun, bu yerlerde çalışmaya başladım. Yani biz de kendimizi var etmenin, çocuklarımızın arkasında durabilmenin yolunun bu olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çocuklarımız yanlış yapmadığı için bize göre, belki devlete göre çok büyük yanlışlar yaptılar ama bize göre yapmadılar... Biz çocuğumuzun arkasında kaldık. Çok acı çekmedik mi, çektik; çok yorulmadık mı, yorulduk... Biz çocuğumuza inandığımız için, yaptığı davaya inandığımız için bu yükümüzü biraz hafifletmiş oldu. Biz bu mücadeleyi verirsek, bizim çocuklarımızın yaşadığını belki ilerdeki bir çocuk yaşamayacak. Belki bizim yaşadığımız acıyı, bizden sonraki bir anne yaşamayacak diye yola çıktık aslında biz. Ve bunu yaparken, bu bizi biraz daha rahatlattı.*

From the date of formation as a civil initiative, the Peace Mothers, impressed by the Saturday Mothers to a large extent, started to protest. Celebrated for the press statement demanding the emancipation of Abdullah Öcalan on February 22, 2006, twenty-four mothers were arrested on charge of “propagandizing terrorist organization.”²³⁸ Because of this protest, mothers who were between forty and seventy years old were sentenced to one year in prison.²³⁹ Until this mentioned event, they did not appear on the public agenda, although they made many sit down strikes and protests in different cities.

The Peace Mothers sought to make contact with official authorities and visit influential public figures in order to convey their call for peace, from the beginning of their institutionalization. They came to Ankara to see Hilmi Özkök, then Chief of General Staff. Although they could not reach him, they sent him white flowers, a CD containing videos of militants’ and soldiers’ burials, and a white headscarf symbolizing peace.²⁴⁰ The white headscarf, the traditional kerchief of Kurdish women, had a special place in the Peace Mothers’ struggle. Müyesser Güneş argues that according to Kurdish tradition, when a mother throws her headscarf in the course of two people’s fighting, these people have to cease the dispute.²⁴¹ That is why the mothers often employed this symbol to emphasize their peacekeeper role and they usually wore white headscarf during meetings and conversations with officers. These kinds of symbols will be dwelled on in detail in the following chapter.

Previous to this visit, they went also to Northern Iraq to look for peace and reconciliation. They met with the Kurdish leader Celal Talabani in 2000 and they

²³⁸ *Evrensel*, 27 March 2006.

²³⁹ *Evrensel*, 19 July 2006.

²⁴⁰ *Sabah*, 31 December 2004.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

also presented him a white headscarf. However, when they returned to Turkey, the mothers were arrested and subjected to violence.²⁴²

Finally, on February 21, 2007 they decided to sit ten minutes, once a week, on Wednesdays in Galatasaray Square in order to draw attention to deaths of Kurdish and Turkish children in armed combat.²⁴³ On May 10, 2007, Mothers' Day, they ended the Galatasaray gatherings which they had continued for ten weeks, with a press conference. In this conference, it was stated that the best gift which could be given to mothers for Mothers' Day was peace and they insisted on a reciprocal ceasefire between the Kurdish powers and the Turkish government.²⁴⁴ During this period of ten weeks, sixteen Peace Mothers were taken into custody.²⁴⁵

The Peace Mothers consisted of Kurdish women. However, the main aim of the group was to ally with other mothers who suffered from the armed conflict and whose tears were not different from those of the Kurdish mothers: soldiers' mothers.²⁴⁶ The initiative's basic principle was to create a peace bridge between soldiers' and militants' mothers.²⁴⁷ Although it used a discourse emphasizing the sisterhood and solidarity of all mothers, they were not able to include other mothers in the gatherings; only a few soldiers' mothers supported the Peace Mothers and participated in the sit down protests. However, they sought to meet with soldiers' mothers to underline that the common point converging Turkish and Kurdish women is to be mother: A mother very well knows another woman's pain of burying her

²⁴² Sevgül Uludağ. 18 February 2003. *Fatma Bıkım: Mezopotamyanın Barış Tülbenti*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/> [2 May 2008].

²⁴³ *Evrensel*, 22 February 2007.

²⁴⁴ *Evrensel*, 10 May 2007.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Evrensel*, 12 April 2007; *Jin û Jiyan*, June 1999.

²⁴⁷ *Evrensel*, 27 March 2002.

child.²⁴⁸ One Peace Mothers representative, who tried to meet with soldiers' mothers, Sultan Koyun, conveys her feelings about the resemblance of mothers' pain from two sides of the conflict:

Don't let mothers feel this pain. The state must hear mothers' cries. Don't let mothers cry anymore. Don't let guerillas' or soldiers' mothers feel pain. We wish that Turkish mothers hold the peace hand that we offer. We will visit soldiers' mothers wailing with pain even if they beat us.²⁴⁹

Dilşah Özgenç was also a member of the initiative. She interprets her own situation similar to that of soldiers' mothers. She also bases her viewpoint on the consociation of motherhood.

I am stricken with grief. I know a soldier's mother who is also stricken with grief. I am so disconsolate. I remember his [her son's] childhood days, his birth, his growing. His youth; the pain, the affront, the persecution they suffered. These must not continue any longer.²⁵⁰

The Peace Mothers' approach was based on sharing pains and struggling together in order to remove the conflict between two societies. To convince soldiers' mothers, they sought to discuss the reasons of the conflict and the challenges through which both mothers lived. The main argument is that politicians' or bureaucrats' sons never do military service in the Eastern cities, where armed conflict has continued for decades. They advised soldiers' mothers to consider this inequality again. They often stated that young Turkish and Kurdish people who died in conflict generally belonged to the lower classes and all mothers should think about the reasons for this conflict between the communities as they risked their children's lives.²⁵¹ Even though they did not find sufficient support among soldiers' mothers the Peace

²⁴⁸ *Evrensel*, 8 September 2006.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* *Hiçbir anne acı yaşamasin. Devlet annelerin yüreklerini dinlesin. Artık anneler ağlamasin. Gerilla, asker anneleri acı çekmesin. Biz istiyoruz Türk anneleri uzattığımız barış elini tutsun. Bizi dövseler de acı feryatlar eden asker annelerinin ziyaretine gideceğiz.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* *Benim yüreğim çok yandı. Ben biliyorum o asker annesinin de yüreği benimkisi gibi yanıyor. Ateş düşüyor yüreğime. Çocuklukları, doğumları, büyümeleri gözlerimin önüne geliyor. Gençleşmesi, gördükleri acı, hakaret, zulüm hep gözlerimin önünde. Artık bunlar bitsin.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Mothers' resistance, strong minded and solidarity-based, embracing discourse challenged the status quo and the hatred to some extent.

For example, on September 3, 2006, seven soldiers died in conflict in Hakkari.²⁵² This kind of news was ordinary; however, after this case for the first time, different critical voices began to be heard; soldiers' mothers declared that they won't say "*vatan sağolsun*," an expression emphasizing the importance of the state's survivability instead of dying soldiers. Some mothers rejected the martyr title (*şehadet*) rewarded to those dying in the interests of country. The expostulation of soldiers' mothers was perceived as a "revolt" against the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and state's military policy. The state's organs were alarmed at this antimilitarist discourse; it was inferred that "this discourse helped terror organization inadvertently." A columnist of the national daily *Hürriyet* described developments as "sneak plan of terrorists."

According to recent information, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has developed a new strategy: "generating a joint sentimental illusion with the martyrs' relatives." In other words, to support a martyr's mother if she says "I don't say *vatan sağolsun*" and to promote these voices. Systematically elevate such statements reflected as antimilitarism. The Peace Mothers should come together with martyrs' antimilitarist relatives under "only suffering mothers could understand each other" rational. Thus, the moral connection between security forces and the public could be broken. The aim is to implement such concerns into the heads of mothers whose sons are conscripted, and to escalate these reactions at the most sensitive moments, funerals. In the end, to break off the patriotic link between the armed forces, the public, the state and the government. To implement the idea that "our sons die in vain," to implement antimilitarism and opposition to conscription.²⁵³

²⁵² *Radikal*, 3 September 2006.

²⁵³ Fatih Çekirge, "Erdoğan Tepkileri Bile Bile Çekmiş," *Hürriyet*, 11 September 2006. *Bir süre önce gelen bilgilere göre PKK yeni bir strateji geliştireyordu. "Şehit yakınlarıyla ortak duygu illüzyonu sağlanması." Yani: Bir şehit annesi "Vatan sağ olsun demiyorum" diyorsa bunu desteklemek. Bu sesleri artırmak. Savaş karşıtlığı adı altındaki bu tür çıkışları sistemli olarak yükseltmek. Barış anneleri savaş karşıtı olan şehit yakınlarıyla "Ancak acılı anneler birbirini anlar" yaklaşımıyla bir araya gelmeli. Böylece halkla güvenlik güçleri arasındaki moral bağ çökertilebilir. Evladını askere gönderen annenin kafasına bu endişeyi koymak. Sonra da en duygulu anı olan cenaze sırasında bu tepkileri yükseltmek. Böylece devletle, hükümetle, TSK ile vatandaşlar arasındaki "vatanseverlik bağı" nı kopartmak. Oğullarımız boşuna ölüyor fikri yerleştirilmeli. Askere göndermeme ve savaş karşıtlığı duygusu körüklenmeli.*

Apparently, the power interpreted the Peace Mothers' activities as a "terrorists' plan" and worried about this attempt; therefore, although the Peace Mothers consisted of only a limited number of women, the organization and its activities were not generally tolerated by state.

CHAPTER IV

DIFFERENT MODES OF RESISTANCE: MOTHERHOOD AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE

This chapter will examine the transformation of the title of “mother” during the struggle process of the motherist movements I described in the previous chapter. Considering the perception of “mother” and its different kinds of representations in the public sphere, women’s resistance based on motherhood and the tactics they devised against strategies of power compose the bone of this study. In this regard, the chapter will look for common points peculiar to the women among the four motherist movements in Turkey, in terms of organization structure, protest modes, and political approaches; and make some deductions about mother movements in accordance with the participant women’s experiences.

In the four motherist movements under study, women tried various resistance practices in their own ways. Although the political agendas triggering movements were different, the mothers’ main demand was the safety of children, and the women responded to the state violence committed against their daughters and sons using direct or hidden resistance forms. In this chapter, I seek to examine these resistance examples in order to depict their roles in the construction of the new title of “mother” and the new political sphere established by the mothers’ themselves. In other words, this chapter will look for an answer to how these women transformed the classical understandings of public and private spheres while they transformed themselves from being identified with traditional motherhood.

Establishing Solidarity Networks and Motherhood as the Common Denominator

Like most of the motherist movements emerging in different geographies, protests taking place in Turkey on the basis of motherhood produced new forms of mobilization. These were different from the traditional, male-dominated, class- or ethnicity-centered legal remedy activities; since being a mother was considered sufficient reason to participate in protests. Passionate love for their children and the maternal motivation brought women with feeling similar pains together and developed a solidarity network based on motherhood among them. It can be simply stated that the primary aim converging these different women was the all-out defense of the most basic principles of the defense of life and the right to love.

Because the organizational structure of these motherist movements was shaped by women, “womanly” methods and thinking determined the struggle form to a large extent. Outside formal protest movements, mothers emphasized their sentiments and highlighted the specificity of the status of mother. According to them, being a mother was the most critical reason legitimizing their resistance. People exposed to state violence could be defined as “anarchists,” “terrorist,” “separatists” by the security forces, but in the mothers’ eyes, they were only sons and daughters who had a right to live as all human beings. From this viewpoint, the mothers did not determine their activities as “political” because the mothers’ relation to their children was not embedded in the political discourse of the state. In other words, to demand the safety of children was a “natural” reaction and it was an attempt rooted in maternal thinking; therefore, while they spoke to public opinion they actually appealed to other mothers (people who could understand the pain of losing their child) for help.

The new relationship with society established by women via these various activities must be examined as a unique pattern of protest. Independently of male leadership, women came together although they were not formerly involved in politics.

All of the motherist movements were formed in a disorganized and dispersed manner in the first phases. This disorganized structure is related to two factors. Firstly, all of the motherist movements emerged instantaneously as reaction to an act of violence. Under such emergency conditions, urgent action was needed in order to protect the child and/or to find public support about the abuse of rights. Because of the lack of time required to put the action in order, well-organized groups could not be achieved.

Secondly, mothers as a traditional group of women were inexperienced in contributing to politics. Most of these people had never been in the streets for political purposes previously. As far as the short history of feminist struggles in Turkey is concerned, these women's ignorance about acting in the political sphere is comprehensible.²⁵⁴ For motherist movements' mothers, unfamiliarity with politics is even more frequently observed. The interviewees of this study emphasized that being a mother, caring for children and doing housework, and "devoting their life to child" constrained their livings and cut their ties with the outside world.²⁵⁵ The mothers' mentioned that objective conditions shaped their organizational structures and political stances. They were not aware of institutional or legal procedures; they had

²⁵⁴ Şirin Tekeli, "Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi Üzerine Bir Deneme," In *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), p. 337. Tekeli argues that Turkey experienced two periods of feminism: the first is between 1910 and 1920, the second one is from 1980s to present. From 1920 to 1980s is defined as "barren years" by author.

²⁵⁵ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007, Emine Ocak, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 26 October 2007, Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008, Fatma Karagöz, , interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 October 2007.

no information about political practices such as making statements to the press or mass meetings. However, the struggle process matured them. According to the mothers, the motherist movements in which they took part marked a reciprocal transformation period for both the participants and society acknowledging this movement.²⁵⁶

Actually, the disorganized situation of activists and their inexperience in politics were perceived as “naturalness” and “sincerity” by society.²⁵⁷ The people who received the injured mothers’ stories by mass media or other communication channels sympathized with them. Identifying one’s own mother with these protestor mothers, one could take the issue in a moral perspective. Indeed, the activist mothers’ primary target was to address the human consciences of ordinary people and to show them “every human being is the child of a mother.” The mothers implied that conscientious issues could not be determined by legal judgments²⁵⁸ and introduced the priority of the affinity between mother and child. In this regard, a type of politization was established without leaving “natural” and “sincere” components of the mother identity, providing activist mothers social bonds with other people, who were unaware of the violations of rights for which they struggled.

On the other hand, during the first phases of the movements, the mothers acted against the violence of which they did not know the roots. The perception of “state violence” was highly fragmented; the political aspects of crimes and offenders were ambiguous for mothers. It is clear that they did not react against a construction

²⁵⁶ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007, Emine Ocak, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 26 October 2007, Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008, Fatma Karagöz, , interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 October 2007.

²⁵⁷ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October 2007.

²⁵⁸ José Bové and Gilles Luneau, *Sivil İtaatsizliğe Çağrı* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), p. 63.

for political reasons; they reacted to the limitations of the political sphere because they got involved in a political issue with their children's stories. In other words, one can make observe a "semi-conscious" attempt of the mothers under emergency conditions.

The mothers' confusion affected the course of the movements. During political activities, instead of uncovering the underlying structures of crimes, mothers tended to express their pain and victimhood. Although they were identified with different political parties or organizations by media and press, they abstained from asserting direct institutional relations with other political formations. This can be interpreted as a method to reach wider people or it might be related to the mothers' priorities: in the first place, they aimed to ameliorate their children's conditions or provide the punishment of the responsible people. Criticizing the whole system and determining a political way were not seen by the mothers as their primary issue during the first phases. In the course of events, they changed through the struggle process and acquired a political consciousness.

These movements are peculiar in their success in spite of the inexperience of the participants, and their "sincerity" in spite of the political ambiguity of organizations. Fast politization was the result of the spontaneity of the motherist movements.

Spontaneousness of Movements

There is neither feminism nor socialism at the prison entrance.²⁵⁹

Mothers' visit to Plaza del Mayo every week was not a planned act of resistance; it was only a spontaneous activity stemming from their despair. This was the result of a kind of despair which made women think that they could only share sorrow with other women who had lost their children.²⁶⁰

Women's entrance in the political sphere via their maternal roles emerged as a spontaneous act. Their first attempts were to apply individually to state offices such as police stations and departments, prosecution office, or prisons where their children stayed. While waiting at the gates of these institutions, many women who had experienced similar traumas on account of acts of violence committed against their children communicated with each other.

I used to go to *Şube*'s entrance. I used to ask people - there were old and young people - "For whom are you here?" Some used to say "for my son," another used to say "for my daughter," "for my brother/sister," "for my husband." I used to ask: "When did they bring him/her?" "On what day?" "How they were brought?" We became acquainted by asking each other questions.²⁶¹

In this way, mothers conceived that they were not alone and that by acting with solidarity, they could be taken seriously by the authorities. Via regular gatherings in front of governmental agencies, small groups enlarged step by step. Mothers started to question what they could do for children and decided to move on behalf of groups they established informally.

²⁵⁹ Muazzez Pervan, "Cezaevinde Çocukları Bulunan Annelerin Politikleşmesi Üzerine," *Kaktüs*, no. 12 (September 1990), p. 45. A sentence from a mother's speech, who participated in the First Woman Congress (*Birinci Kadın Kurultayı*).

²⁶⁰ Fisher, p. 106. *Plaza de Mayo'ya aralıksız her hafta gitmeleri, hesaplanmış politik bir direniş değil, çaresizlikleri nedeniyle kendiliğinden oluşmuş bir eylemdi. Kadınların, yalnızca çocuklarını kaybetmiş olan diğer kadınlarla paylaşabileceklerini düşündükleri bir çaresizliğin sonucuydu bu.*

²⁶¹ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Şubenin önüne gidiyorum. Soruyorum hani, genç var, yaşlı var. "Senin neyin var burada?" Biri diyor benim oğlum var, biri diyor kızım var, biri diyor kardeşim var, biri diyor eşim var. "Ne zaman alındı, ayın kaçında alındı, nasıl alındı?" Öyle sora sora [tanıştık] Ondan sonra öyle öğrendik, tanıştık.*

I used to run into other mothers in front of the main entrance of the prison's barracks during visits. The sole subject was our children. We talked about our children and shared our grief. We became friend. We were striving for the sake of children. When we understood that our individual efforts did not make any difference, we decided to choose representatives.²⁶²

We used to gather to think about what we could do for our children. We used to gather in front of the prison. There was a coffeehouse in front of the prison, we used to gather there. We used to determine relatives we would inform. We were all mothers.²⁶³

Hatice Toraman, an activist of the Saturday Mothers, expresses that she felt a deep loneliness after her son's disappearance. However, when she noticed the presence of other women under the same conditions, she went into the movement wholeheartedly.

I was the first to go on the hunger strike that was initiated after Hasan Ocak went missing; because, I was alone while looking for Hüseyin. I needed people's support in that period. So, I understood that Hasan Ocak's mother also needed people like me... I understood that when I was sitting at home crying, nobody heard my voice.²⁶⁴

Generally even before establishing association, mother groups organized many protests and meetings. Most of these activities were also spontaneous. For example, when mothers received information about the prison visit of a bureaucrat, they would organize sudden protests.²⁶⁵

Similarly, in the Saturday Mothers case, mothers started out to "make something" for their children and they did not plan anything. "We only agreed on

²⁶² Pervan, p. 45. *Görüş için gittiğim nizamiye kapısında diğer annelerle de bir araya geliyorduk. Tek konumuz çocuklarımızdı. Sürekli çocuklarımızı anlatıyor, dertleşiyorduk. Dost olmuştuk. Hepimiz çocuklarımız için çaba harcıyorduk. Baktık değişen bir şey yok, tek çözüm bulamıyoruz o zaman aramızdan temsilciler seçelim dedik.*

²⁶³ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Çocuklarımız için ne yapabiliriz diye toplanırdık. Cezaevi önünde toplanırdık. Cezaevi önünde bir kahve vardı, o kahvede toplanırdık. Orda işte, sen kendi çevrendeki ailelere haber ver, falan kendi çevresindekilere, kararlaştırırdık. Hep anayız.*

²⁶⁴ Jiyan, December 1996. *Hasan Ocak kaybolduktan sonra başlatılan açlık grevine ilk giden ben oldum. Çünkü ben Hüseyin'i ararken yalnız kalmıştım. O dönemde bana destek verecek insanlara ihtiyacım vardı. Anlamıştım ki, Hasan Ocak'ın annesinin de benim gibi insanlara ihtiyacı var... Evde oturup kendi kendime ağladığımda kimsenin sesimi duymadığını anladım.*

²⁶⁵ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007.

sitting at Galatasaray, other things became clear in the course of time. We were a few women at first, and then other relatives joined.”²⁶⁶

Gülşah Tağaç, who participated in Mothers of the 1980s, argues that mothers were alone during the struggle process, there were no organizations helping them and they coped with several difficulties standing shoulder to shoulder.

There was no body to organize; we were on our own. There were no such organizations in that period anyway. September 12 destroyed them all like a rolling pin. There were neither associations nor labor unions left. We even had no place to stay, or to gather. We used to go to the CHP office. When that did not work, we decided to hire a place for ourselves. We acted for our children’s sake. I would give my life for my child.²⁶⁷

Spontaneity must be interpreted with the issue woman’s agency.²⁶⁸ While mothers mobilized, some claimed that these women were manipulated by other political organizations.²⁶⁹ For the *Evlat Acısına Son* campaign and the anti-authoritarian movement of the 1980s, socialist/leftist groups were described as the initiators. As regards the Saturday Mothers and Peace Mothers, they were generally associated with the Kurdish movement. When the actors of the movements are mothers who are generally uneducated and traditional, these assumptions find support. All of these arguments reflect the general belief about the perception of the “activist woman.” This sort of reasoning presupposes that mothers do not have the capacity of acting independently of established institutions; therefore, different formations are perceived as being the true organizer of the motherist movements.

²⁶⁶ Koçali, p. 359.

²⁶⁷ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Bizi örgütleyen kurum filan yoktu. Biz kendimizdik. Kurum filan, zaten bizim dönemimizde hiçbir yer yoktu. 12 Eylül silindir gibi geçti hepsinin üzerinden. Ne dernek kalmıştı, ne sendika kalmıştı. Bizim kalacak yerimiz bile yoktu. Toplanacak yerimiz yoktu. CHP’ye gidiyorduk. Baktık olmuyor, ne yapalım ne yapalım, kendimize dernek yeri tutalım dedik. Çocuğumuzun şeyiyle çıkıyoruz yola. Canımı kordum çocuğumun uğruna.*

²⁶⁸ The concept of “agency” is used as the capacity of women to make choices and act as agents involving acts of gendered identity, affiliation, and differentiation.

²⁶⁹ See for example, Ahmet Taşgetiren, “Anneler...” *Yeni Şafak*, 1 January 2005.

Indeed, the motherist movements may have organic or inorganic relations with different political entities. However, introducing these links as grounds for the trivialization of movements leads to the underestimation of women's initiative. As far as women's agency is concerned, it is obvious that if feminist theorists are to advocate women's dignity and if they are to defend women's capacity to emancipate themselves and transform the society in which they live, it seems they must evaluate the motherist movements as the product of women's own labor.

Emirbayer and Mische argue that actors who find themselves positioned at a turning point, spontaneously or by deliberating with others, gain in the capacity to make considered decisions that may challenge received patterns of action. In the time, by increasing their capacity for practice, they strengthen their ability to exercise agency, enabling them to pursue their targets in ways that may challenge and transform the situational contexts.²⁷⁰ In this regard, mothers' attempt to provide the formation of counter hegemonic public spheres is a "collective action" of women. The "collective action" is simply defined by Alex Callinicos as any attempt by persons to co-ordinate their action so as to achieve some goal or goals.²⁷¹ At a turning point, mothers set out to work as agents relying on their own capacities, abilities, and the collective action of mothers feeling the same pain. All in all, the support or encouragement of different subjects do not preclude the agency of the real actors of the motherist movements, who started out individually to defend their children and who reached a collective identity shaped by commitment and a sense of agency among themselves.

²⁷⁰ Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What is Agency?" *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103, no. 4 (January 1998), p. 994.

²⁷¹ Alex Callinicos, *Making History: Agency, Structure, and Change in Social Theory* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 153.

Gathering under the Roof of Motherhood

One of the most significant characteristics of the motherist movements examined in this study is their structure, which transcended social and economic differences such as class, ethnicity, political view or other status. During the movements, women living in different regions, belonging to different social and economic conditions were allied on the basis of motherhood. Jennifer G. Schirmer elaborates on this argument by giving the example of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo. Schirmer argues that the number of mothers reached twenty in the second appointment and in December 1977. It reached 300 people composed of mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters belonging to different social positions. Two women who would become the chairwoman and vice chairwoman of the organization later symbolize an extraordinary interclass alliance constructed by historical conditions. Hebe Bonafini was the wife of a factory laborer; her husband and two sons had disappeared. Adela Antokaletz was the wife of a diplomat, her son who was the advocate of political prisoners had also disappeared.²⁷² These mothers sharing a common fate were organized with the intention of finding children, without caring about those mentioned differences. Being a mother was sufficient to participate in mothers' counter-hegemonic public sphere.

In the motherist movements occurring in Turkey, one can claim the presence of a similar structure independent of class, identity or education level categories. A sentimental collective identity was created through maternal thinking. As is true with all oppressed groups, the feeling of difference is a powerful consciousness-rising tool

²⁷² Jennifer G. Schirmer, “‘Yaşam İçin Ölenler Ölmüş Sayılmazlar’: Latin Amerika’da Kadınlar ve İnsan Hakları Protestosu,” In *Latin Amerika’da Askeri Diktatörlükler ve Kadın*, ed. by Ümit Cizre and Serpil Üşür, (İstanbul: Belge, 1989), p. 49.

to promote solidarity for collective action.²⁷³ For the motherist movements, the source of the feeling of difference was only motherhood; it was the sole common point among women mobilizing for their children.

As far as the social and economic structures of movements are concerned, it can be generally said that the “anti-fascist” movement pursued by mothers before the coup of September 12 was mostly pioneered by urban, educated, middle class leftist/socialist women. This was strongly related to the origin of the movements. *Evlât Acısına Son* meetings were firstly organized in big cities; Ankara and Istanbul. By the time of progress, the campaign expanded to other cities such as Trabzon, izmir, and Balıkesir. In this way, the socio-economic composition of women became more homogeneous. In the case of the mothers of the 1980s, it can be said that the composition of mothers was highly mixed concerning the subversive effect of September 12 and the number of people who suffered from the coup. Many students, workers, leaders of labor unions, and intellectuals were imprisoned; therefore, their mothers, belonging to different identities and class structures, participated in the motherist movements. For example, Didar Şensoy, who became the symbol of the motherist struggle against the authoritarian regime of the 1980s, was of an Albanian-origin and had been living in Soviet Yugoslavia. She had been a teacher and broadcaster, and her husband was the governor of province in this country. On the other hand, there were also many mothers who came from eastern provinces since their daughters and sons had been transferred to prisons in different provinces.²⁷⁴

With the rise of identity-centered politics and a new opposition in Turkey, the composition of class and ethnicity among the activist mothers changed. The Children

²⁷³ Forcey, *Feminist Perspectives on Mothering and Peace*, p. 356.

²⁷⁴ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007.

of the Saturday Mothers generally consisted of people of Kurdish-origin who were interested in active politics.²⁷⁵ Similarly, the Peace Mothers composed of the mothers of militants of the Kurdish movement, were mostly uneducated rural Kurdish women. In other words, the motherist movements in Turkey seem to have shifted from the participation of middle-class urban women towards that of lower-class rural women, in accordance with the transformation of the political agenda towards identity-centered opposition from class-centered opposition.

Although some class-identity patterns are more obvious than others in certain movements, it is clear that the factor unifying women was not an allegiance based on ethnicity or class. The organization of the motherist movements is intended to reach mothers from different environments; therefore, class differences or ethnic diversities were not obstacles. In every movement, mothers sought to convince other women emphasizing that the reason for their presence in the public sphere was not a “political” concern, it was only about the pain they felt because of the oppression of their children. That is to say, the sole unifying factor among activist mothers was the sentimental link based on “being a mother,” a caring, nurturing and intuiting role. This common identity made women feel the sense of difference necessary to encourage solidarity for the collective action of an oppressed group.

The women who gathered under the roof of motherhood during the motherist movements established a new kind of relationship rooted in their common fate. While they were excluded from and criticized by their social environment and family because of the “failure” to bring up *persona grata*s, they noticed that their only allies were again mothers. Gülten Kahraman, whose son died in guerilla warfare, argues

²⁷⁵ Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, pp. 78-80.

that she was seen as responsible of her son Cüneyt's death and she was accused of not raising her son correctly.

I grieved for my son and felt the oppression at the same time; they insulted us, called us as “dishonest,” “terrorist.” My own neighbors looked down on me. They said “she could not control her child, she destroyed her child and husband, if she was a real woman, she would take care of her family, she would manage her family.” So they blamed me... ²⁷⁶

In Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother* (1907), for example, the tendency to blaming the mother of the opponent can be seen clearly. The story is about the mother of a revolutionist imprisoned on the eve of the 1905 Russian Revolution. With the detention of her son Pavel, the life of Pelageya (mother) changes drastically; she participates in the revolutionist struggle. When she is arrested in her house, the commissioned officer says her: “it is your fault not to be able to instill the respect for the Czar and God into your son.” ²⁷⁷

As far as the activists of the motherist movements are concerned, one can say that two kinds of motherhood are defined in terms of legitimacy. The first group of mothers did their duties by training children loyal to the state and its laws. These women were seen as “good mothers” and their situations were legitimate according to state. On the other hand, women whose sons or daughters diverged and revolted against the mainstream opinion in some way were described as “incapable, ignorant mothers;” and they lost their legitimate mother status in the public eye. In order to remove this dichotomy of the perception of motherhood, activist mothers invited all mothers to struggle together and they used a discourse embracing all mothers.

²⁷⁶ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October 2007. *Hem acıyı yaşıyorsun, hem evlat kaybetmişsin, bu acı var, bir de baskı var. Küfürler, “şerefsizler, teröristler” diye... Kendi insanlarımız bize hor bakıyor. “İşte bak, annedir, bir çocuğuna sahip çıkamadı. İşte bak, götürdü çocuğunu, kocasını o hale soktu. Kadın değil, kadın olsaydı çeker çevirirdi, çocuğunu yetiştirirdi, işte eşini çekerdi kendine.” Bir de böyle suçluyorlardı.*

²⁷⁷ Maxim Gorky, *Ana* (İstanbul: Sosyal Yay., 1993), p. 212.

All in all, mothers were alienated from their environments because of the transformation of their lives with the trauma their children experienced and the exclusionary reactions of social circles. They established intimacy with other women going through similar things.

These people were mothers like me; they grieved for their children like me. We became close. We loved each other. I became sister and mother to people I did not know. As women in similar conditions, we loved each other and cared for each other. We went to meetings, newspapers, and television channels together...²⁷⁸

Imagine, after that our friends became family. I did not care about my relatives; I only cared about my friends. We loved our friends, they were our comrades. We shared our food, we shared our beds; and we shared everything besides our honor.²⁷⁹

To see these other mothers makes me very happy. I have a better dialog with them. They encourage me, I feel loved around them. I can feel them. I do not know how to talk to normal people, I fail at it. Our link transcended everything; it was a very different affiliation.²⁸⁰

With the development of solidarity networks among mothers, the language and perception of “child” also transformed: “my child” became “our children.” Before the movements, a child had an individual meaning; he /she belonged to a parent; however, while the struggle process was changing the agents of the movements, it also changed the concept of “son” and “daughter.” The victim of state violence became socialized; she/he was no longer only the daughter or son of her/his

²⁷⁸ Fatma Karagöz, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 October 2007. *O insanlar da ben nasıl evladına actyorsam, benim gibi anneler gerçekten. Biz birbirimize yapıştık. İnsanlar birbirini çok sevdi. Tanımadığım insanlarla kardeş gibi oldum. Tanımadığım annelerle anne gibi oldum. Benim durumumda olan kadınlarla biz birbirimizi çok sevdik, birbirimize çok bağlandık. Eyleme gittik beraber gittik, gazeteciye gittik beraber gittik, televizyonlara gittik beraber gittik.*

²⁷⁹ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Ondan sonra düşün ki arkadaşlarımız bizim ailemiz gibi oldu. Ben hiç bilmem, akrabaları bilmem, ben arkadaşlarımı severim. Yani yoldaşlarımızı, arkadaşlarımızı severiz. Ekmeğimizi paylaşıyoruz, yatağımızı paylaşıyoruz, biz namusumuzdan ayrı arkadaşlarımızla her şeyimizi paylaşıyoruz.*

²⁸⁰ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October. *O anneleri görünce böyle dünyalar benim olur. Onlarla daha diyalogum iyi oluyor. Onlardan cesaret alıyorum, sevgi alıyorum. Onların kokusunu alıyorum. Ben böyle normal insanlarla oturup hiç konuşmasını bilmiyorum, beceremem. Bağımız her şeyin ötesine geçmişti, çok farklı bir yakınlıktı.*

own mother. They became children of the collective identity mothers constructed during the struggle process.

...But without forgetting what has already happened, I keep on looking for my children and everybody else's children, because to me your daughter is my daughter, she's a little bit mine. My children are a little bit yours, because I hope yours will appear so that she can tell me, so I can find some consolation, know, know what happened to some of them...because the children belong to everyone, to every person in those circles we walk in...²⁸¹

The interviewees of this study also use the term "our children" while they told their stories:

I forgot about my home, my family. I forgot everything. We transcended kinship at the prison gates. I did not want to save my child, "we" wanted save "our children." I never said I had a "child," I said we had "children."²⁸²

All in all, the motherist movements were instances of women's mobilization constructed on the mentality of "being a mother" and that understanding transcended all other identities and differences among the participants. Motherhood or maternal thinking became sufficient to construct the collective identity required in order to resist and act in the public sphere.

The Transformation of the Title of "Mother"

The motherist movements throughout the world played an important part in the transformation of mother title and its reception. As mentioned previously, religious images (especially that of the Virgin Mary) are frequently ascribed to mothers. Virtues such as purity, virginity, dutifulness, and sufferance form characteristic components of this mother image. Sara Ahmed notes the words

²⁸¹ Matilde Mellibovsky, *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997) p. 68.

²⁸² Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Ben evi barkı unuttum. Cezaevi kapılarında biz çok, akrabadan ileri olduk. Herkesi, her şeyi unuttum, soyumu sopumu unuttum. Ben çocuğumu kurtarmak istemedim, çocuklarımızı kurtarmak istedik. Ben hiç "çocuğum var" demedim. "Çocuklarımız var" dedim.*

“passion” and “passive” are rooted in the same Latin word for “suffering” (*passio*).²⁸³ These qualities offered by everyday language provide women a “protected area” in exchange for their subjection; by so doing, a control mechanism over women is operated and this limits women’s action. For women who reject these virtues and seek to exceed the limits of the protected zone previously fixed by mass society, another image is given: Mary Magdalene, the prostitute who is counseled by Christ.²⁸⁴ This image refers to mothers who are both “incapable” of ensuring that their family members do not become threats to national security and “impudent” because of showing dissatisfaction with the state.

As far as the mother figures of Turkey are concerned, national models instead of religious ones manifest themselves. On the one hand, the “Anatolian mother” (or the village mother) is strong, wise, powerful, and confident; on the other hand, she is undervalued, ignorant, and submissive.²⁸⁵ Kemalism emphasized the powerful image of the mother according to İncirlioğlu:

Kemalism has portrayed a “powerful” image: although Turkish village women were somewhat influenced by Islam, they still carried the pre-Islamic spirit of “authentic Turkic” culture. While upper-class Ottoman women were secluded after the fifteenth century and confined to the “private domain,” peasant women... continued to be a part of the “public.” Kemalist authors have highlighted the public participation of village women, not only in economic activities “shoulder to shoulder” with their men, but also in the political arena.²⁸⁶

Although Kemalists defended the idea that women should participate in social life and take on social responsibilities and roles as professional women, motherhood

²⁸³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 2.

²⁸⁴ Stephen, “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights: The Merging of Feminine and Feminist Interests among El Salvador’s Mothers of the Disappeared (CO-MADRES),” p. 811.

²⁸⁵ Emine Onaran İncirlioğlu, “Images of Village Women in Turkey: Models and Anomalies,” In *Deconstructing Images of “The Turkish Woman,”* Ed. by Zehra F. Arat (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), p. 200.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

was still stressed as a woman's traditional role.²⁸⁷ The mothers were people who "are going to bring up the healthy generations of tomorrow."²⁸⁸

One of the most popular figures identified with the national values is Zübeyde Hanım, the mother of Mustafa Kemal. She is described as a saintly woman who devoted her life to her son.²⁸⁹ As is also observed from the journal, *Ana*,²⁹⁰ published in 1938, her virtue is rooted in her superior ability in bringing up the national leader of Turkey.²⁹¹ She became the mother of the public by being the mother of the nation's leader.²⁹² According to that discourse, for example, Zübeyde Hanım was so altruistic that she served the members of the Union and Progress Movement during long meetings held at her home.²⁹³ In another case, she refused to leave her son although she was ill and doctors advised her to go to a seashore resort in İzmir.²⁹⁴ Mustafa Kemal responded to his mother's love and self-devotion with respect.²⁹⁵ In a well-known photograph, Zübeyde Hanım is seen wearing a white kerchief (which gives her a pure and honorable appearance), sitting on chair, and Mustafa Kemal is kissing her hand in reverence.

²⁸⁷ Ayşe Durakbaşa, "Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey," In *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman,"* Ed. by Zehra F. Arat, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) , p. 144.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁸⁹ See for example, Süleyman Yeşilyurt, *Zübeyde Hanımın İkinci Evliliği ve Kemalizm* (Ankara: Merhaba Yayıncılık, 1995)

²⁹⁰ Aslı Davaz Mardin, *Hanımlar Alemi'nden Roza'ya: Kadın Süreli Yayınları Bibliyografyası: 1928-1996* (İstanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1998), p. 39. Three journals named "Ana" were published in different periods. The first was published between 1938 and 1942 by the Society for The Protection of Children (*Çocuk Esergeme Kurumu*), the second was published between 1964 and 1971 by the Ordu Branch of the Turkish Women's Union (*Türk Kadınlar Birliği Ordu Şubesi*), and the third was published in 1971 by the İstanbul Branch of the Turkish Mothers' Association (*Türk Anneler Derneği İstanbul Şubesi*).

²⁹¹ *Ana*, 1938, no. 11.

²⁹² "Zübeyde Ana," *Ana*, 1938, no. 11. See Appendix D.

²⁹³ Yeşilyurt, p. 30.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 254.

²⁹⁵ "Atatürk'ün Hayatında Annesinin Yeri," "Hakkımı Helal Et Ana," *Ana*, 1977, no. 19.

Another important figure is that of the mother who transported cannon balls with ox carts during the National Struggle, carrying her child on back.²⁹⁶ This mother image is superhuman and sacred; she can lift a heavy ball that can not be moved by man. Her physical strength reflects her ability, conviction and resistance; on the other hand, this is also the evidence of her honesty, for which she risks death.

Concerning these two historical mother figures, one can say that the most distinctive common feature is the tendency of self devotion; they give themselves up for the future of their children and the country in which their children live.²⁹⁷ The figures are deeply loyal to country, they comply with orders. Secondly, they contributed to the National Struggle with the intention of “living an upright life;” protection of maternal purity and honesty is situated at the center of these descriptions. Both figures are defined as the “Anatolian Mother” who suffers greatly but conceals her distress. In spite of all difficulties and misery, the “Anatolian Mother” endures the pain and never rebels according to such narratives. Mustafa Kemal’s speeches give a hint about how the Anatolian mother must be.

According to Atatürk, woman meant “mother” before anything else: “Motherhood duties are the primary duties among general and private duties of women... Great successes were achieved thanks to excellent children trained by glorious mothers”²⁹⁸

The Anatolian Mother differs from the Western mother type with her humbleness and pliable nature. She takes trouble to look after her family.²⁹⁹ Cemal

²⁹⁶ İsmail Bilgin, *Kurtuluşta Koşanlar: Kurtuluş Savaşı Hikâyeleri* (İstanbul: Erdem Yayınları, 2004), p. 83.

²⁹⁷ Firdevs Gümüsoğlu, “Cumhuriyet Döneminin Ders Kitaplarında Cinsiyet Rollerini,” In *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), p. 121.

²⁹⁸ Peyami Safa, “Atatürk ve Kadınlık,” *Ana*, 1938, no. 11. *Atatürk için kadın her şeyden evvel ana demektir. “Kadınların umumi ve hususi vazifelerinin başında valdelik vazifeleri vardır... Büyük muvaffakiyetler, kıymetli anaların yetiştirdikleri güzide evlatlar sayesinde olmuştur.”*

²⁹⁹ For an analyse of the silenced, victimized, and subaltern figure of the “Anatolian woman” see Asuman Suner, “Yılmaz Güney, Yol ve Kadın Bedeni Üzerine Yazılmış Tutsaklık Öyküleri,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 75 (Winter 1997): 120-133.

Kutay idealizes the Anatolian mother, emphasizing the courage shaping her character. On the other hand, these qualities are not attributed to the Western mother; she represents the opposition of the strong Anatolian woman with her fastidious and delicate behavior.

In spite of the effects of the outside world, the Turkish woman has never lost two characteristics: being housewife and mother! In the first place, the Turkish girl is an affectionate mother. Maternal instinct is unlimited and infinite into her existence of love and affection. Why do we refrain from talking about the situation? In the present day, there is no obstetrician in ninety percent of more than forty thousand Turkish villages where thirteen million citizens live. Millions of Turkish women give birth to children by themselves without doctors, obstetricians, or medication, excluding villages which are the centers of sub-districts. Does not this prove that the maternal love and maternal affection exist inside as a common sense? On the other hand, see this case: The wife of an American engineer who works in a rural area, has an abortion and when the law asks her how she could destroy an intended American citizen, she answers: “The state does not enable doctor, maternity hospital or healthcare organization in my hometown. In these conditions, how can you ask me such question?” Compare these cases.³⁰⁰

All in all, mothers are surrounded by these traditional images identified with maternal self-devotion, humility, and submission. Although these attributions conduce toward the passivity of women, they also provide them a sacred and protected area, similar to the reception of Christian mothers referring to the Virgin Mary.

In the motherist movements, by rebelling against the state violence directed at their children and creating a counter-hegemonic public sphere, mothers went beyond the ordinary mother type in the eye of the power. They were no longer passive or

³⁰⁰ Cemal Kutay, “Anneler! Kızlarınızı ‘Ev Kadını’ Olarak Yetiştiriniz ve Şu Atalar Sözüünü Hiç Unutmayınız: Yuvayı Dişi Kuş Yapar!” *Ana*, September 1938, no. 9. *Dış hayatın bütün tecellilerine rağmen Türk kadını, iki vasfını hiç kaybetmemiştir: ev kadınlığı ve analık!... Türk kızı evvela müşfik bir anadır. Anelik hissi, onun sevgi ve muhabbet varlığında hududsuz ve sonsuzdur. Vaziyeti konuşmaktan niçin çekinelim? Bugün üzerinde on üç milyon vatandaşın yaşadığı kırk küsur bin Türk köyünün yüzde doksanında ebe yoktur. Nahiye merkezi olan köyler müstesna, milyonlarca Türk kadını ebesiz, doktorsuz, ilaçsız kendi kendine doğurur. Bu onda analık sevgisinin ve evlad muhabbetinin, bir hissi selim halinde yaşadığını isbat etmezmi? Bir de şu hadiseye bakınız: Şehirden uzak bir yerde çalışan Amerikalı bir mühendisin karısı, çocuğunu aldırması ve kanun kendisinden müstakbel bir Amerikalı vatandaşı ne hak ve salahiyetle yok ettiğini sorunca, şu cevabı vermiş: “Devlet benim bulunduğum yerde ne doktor, ne doğumevi, ne sıhhi teşkilat kurmuştur. Bu vaziyette bana sual sormaya sizin ne hakkınız var?” Mukayeseyi siz yapınız!*

submissive; they rejected to bear the sorrow without complaining. However, they kept the self-devotion theme of the tradition motherhood. The basis legitimating their attempts was the maternal self-devotion and altruism to a large extent. In this regard, it seems that the motherist movements used the safe fields of the traditional motherhood while transforming its “resigned mother” model to “rebellious mother” type. Motherhood which usually excludes women from the public sphere and is shown as the reason for women’s oppression by some feminists, became the weapon of women in the motherist movements.

As far as the reception of the new mother type shaped by the mobilization is concerned, the sacred mother stereotype is generally embraced by society. The mothers of *Evlat Acısına Son*, the Mothers of the 1980s, and the Saturday Mothers attracted great attention from the public, as mentioned previously. However the social receptions of movements are not homogeneous. In the course of time, with the rise of the Kurdish movement, the motherist movements came to be regarded with suspicion. The mothers were subjected to a categorization according to whose mothers they were. In this way, the mother of “traitors,” incapable of raising patriotic children, was perceived as not having fulfilled her maternal duty by permitting her child to revolt against the power. In addition, a mother’s attempt to protest and her entrance in the political sphere like a man via the motherist movements made her less sacred in the eye of the public, especially if these women were militant’s mothers.

In the 1980s, I was taken into custody in Çemişgezek. I was the first who was taken into custody in my environment. There was a big downtown where coffeehouses were situated in rows. When I was released from the custodial prison, men were sitting at the center. “The whore has come, who knows what the police made her.” I heard these sentences. Even my father-in-law did not accept me. “I do not want this kind of daughter-in-law who fell into the hands of the police” he said.³⁰¹

³⁰¹ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October. *Gözaltına alınmışım hiç unutmuyorum, Çemişgezek’te 80’lerde, ilk gözaltına alınan benim bizimcivarda. Ben gözaltından çıkıp gittiğimde böyle oturuyorlar çarşının ortasında karşılıklı, böyle*

In addition, the reception of the state also changed. Emel Akal, an academic and an activist of İKD organizing the *Evlât Acısına Son* campaign in the 1970s, reports that she was never exposed to state violence until the military coup, although she had participated in many meetings in Anatolia and was taken into custody several times.³⁰² However, the claims of human rights abuses directed at the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers³⁰³ prove that the behavior of the state and its security forces towards mothers became more aggressive after the 1980s.

In brief, a new mother title was constructed during the motherist movements without rejecting certain items of the traditional motherhood, such as self-devotion and self-sacrifice. On the other hand, different from traditional images, the new mother type made claims to and opposed the power. Above all, via the motherist movements while the mother identity was transformed in this way, women experiencing the struggle process also changed.

From Traditional Mother to Political Mother,
From Practical Interest to Feminist Interest

*First we defended our children, and now we defend their ideas.*³⁰⁴

Most agents of the motherist movements were traditional women who had never been in the political sphere previously. They had not had conflicts about the system, they had not considered it necessary to oppose or they could not oppose until

uzun, geniş çarşı, kahveler var karşılıklı. "Orospu geldi, kim bilir polisler bunu yapmıştır." Böyle duyuyorum bunları. Kayımpederim bile istemedi. "Ben böyle gelin istemem, polislerin eline düşmüş" dedi.

³⁰² Emel Akal, interview by the author, note taking, İstanbul, Turkey, 21 July 2008.

³⁰³ For claims of human rights abuses directed to activist mothers, see Miroğlu, p. 99.

³⁰⁴ Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Önce çocuklarımızı savunuyorduk, şimdi onların düşüncelerini.*

the upsetting event their children lived. The mothers' main target was to remove the conditions from which their children suffered. Obviously, they sought to relieve their children at first; in this regard, the attempt can be seen as a "pragmatic" action on the basis of maternal thinking.

We acted for the sake of our children, without knowing anything about their dispute. How could we know? But still we mobilized for our children; because we loved them. Most of us even did not know on what grounds their children were put on trial. However, afterwards we became extremely conscious...³⁰⁵

The painful incident was committed by the state, in which the mothers previously believed/trusted, or at least to which they had been indifferent; therefore, the situation of their children made women question certain constructions that had been adopted previously without hesitation. Fisher argues that in the case of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, women questioned the church and the religion when they understood that those traditional structures were unconcerned with the massacre.³⁰⁶ Similarly, considering the stories of their sons and daughters, mothers reconsidered the police, army, and justice situated as representatives of the power.

My first confrontation with the police was the time they came to take my son. Previously, I had never met the police; I had not needed it. My second confrontation was at the main entrance of barracks. I, previously taking a stand by the state, thinking that it always protected us, came to believe that I had to do something for my son for the first time. I wanted to help him; because I am mother, because my heart is full of child love.³⁰⁷

The political progress of women participating in the motherist movements can be appraised in different phases as far as interviews of this study are concerned.

³⁰⁵ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Çocuğın için gidiyorsun. Davası neyin, ne anlamışsın sen onun davasından? Bilemezsin ki. Ama evladın için gidiyorsun, çocuğunu sevdiğin için gidiyorsun. Birçoğumuz çocuğumuzun hangi davadan yargılandığını bile bilmiyorduk. Ama sonra öyle bir bilinçlendik ki...*

³⁰⁶ Fisher, p. 154.

³⁰⁷ Pervan, p. 43. *"Polisle ilk karşılaşmam oğlumu almaya geldikleri zaman oldu. Daha önce polisle bir kez olsun karşılaşmamış, işim düşmemişti. İkinci karşılaşmam ise nizamiye kapısıdır. O güne kadar devletin hep bizi koruduğunu düşünen, devletten yana tavır almış olan ben, gene ilk kez burada, oğlum için bir şeyler yapmam gerektiğini düşündüm. Ona yardımcı olmak istiyordum. Çünkü anyardım. Çünkü yüreğim evlat sevgisiyle dolup taşıyordu."*

Firstly, the mothers mobilized individually in order to receive information about their children. They applied to governments agencies and generally their individual attempts come to nothing. When they met with other people going through similar suffering, they acted together in order to raise the issue and the attract public's attention to the event. According to the interviewees, the collective action and the struggle process transformed the mothers to a large extent. While they had been ordinary housewives interested in child care and housework, they became political figures participating in meetings, writing petitions, talking to public officers, making statements to the press, and sometimes being taken into custody. For example, Müyesser Güneş, an activist of the Peace Mothers, asserts that while she had been a simple Kurdish woman leading a standard life, she started a different life after forty with the death of her son; she went to Europe, saw European parliamentarians and became a part of democratic struggle.³⁰⁸ Another mother, Bahar İldan, also highlights that her life had been bounded by the walls of house before her son's detention:

I was not used to going out; but the imprisonment of my son and my prison visits changed a lot. My son was behind the bars, could maternal drive bear this? I had to encourage him in spite of all difficulties, at any cost. I participated in hunger strikes as much as I could. I was on the streets everyday. I was subjected to police harassment, contempt and detentions, but I did not leave my son alone. Actually, I do not understand too much; but my son is clever. He did not make mistake. He was imprisoned because he stood up for people's rights.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Miroğlu, p. 104.

³⁰⁹ "Cezaevi Direnişlerinin Motor Gücü: Analar, Dört Duvar Arasından Alanlara," *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, August 1996. no. 10. *Ben kapının eşiğinden dışarı çıkmış değildim. Fakat oğlumun cezaevine girmesi ve benim onun görüşüne gidip gelmemiz çok şeyi değiştirdi. Çünkü benim evladım içerdeydi. Ana yüreği dayanır mı buna. Bütün zorluklara karşın ne olursa olsun oğlumun yanında olmalıydım. Bende gücümün yettiğince açlık grevine katıldım. Her gün sokaklardaydım, polislin coplarna, hakaretlerine ve gözaltlarına maruz kaldım. Ama oğlumu yalnız bırakmadım. Aslında pek bir şey anlamıyorum ama oğlum akıllıdır. Hata yapmaz. Oğlum insanların haklarını savunmak için cezaevine düştü.*

The collective action and struggle improved a mother's consciousness; she was no longer the follower of an individual case of human right abuse, she became the activist of a social issue. This viewpoint broadens the content of the motherist movements towards the whole of human rights. That is to say, considering their own situation, mothers developed reactions towards other injustices as well. For example in the case of the mothers of the 1980s, women became interested in different agendas in progress of time, such as the rights of tenants, the resistance of shopkeepers of Karaköy (PERPA) who would be displaced, or the problems of university students.³¹⁰ Similarly, the Peace Mothers protested against the American occupation of Iraq in 2003 and they called American mothers to go into action against the war.³¹¹ In other words, the politization of mothers both changed the public sphere in which they participated and transformed their point of view from an individual perception to a wider social one.

The motherist movements also serve as a model of the intersection of different interests. It is argued that the first attempt of the mothers was rooted in a pragmatic interest (defending the child) and this evolved towards a social consciousness. On the other hand, the struggle process and the transformation the mothers experienced led women to think about their gender roles. Indeed, making a distinction between pragmatic and feminist interests is a debated estimation. Women converged on various issues and channelized their common experiences into their struggles that it is not possible to claim the presence of a dichotomy of strategic/practical interests in daily-life. In other words, women's interests mobilizing them are so strictly interrelated that during the struggle, demands of

³¹⁰ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007.

³¹¹ "Evlatlarımızı Öldürtmeyeceğiz," *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, April-May 2003, no. 31.

various types trigger and feed into each other. In the motherist movements a feminist awareness also emerged during the struggle without conceptualizing: by interfering in the political sphere or creating their own political sphere, mothers also sought to gain independence of other elements of oppression via these mobilizations. The maternal status emphasized during the motherist movements was the source of oppression in family relations to some extent. While women reconsidered traditional constructions, they also evaluate their position in the family construction.

In the past, we depended on our husbands. We could not do anything by ourselves. Prison gates, court houses, and torture rooms made us leave our houses. In the beginning, I did not agree with my children's ideas, but now I share the same ideas. Now, I am present in this honorable fight. I have been in this fight since the September 12, and I will continue to do so.³¹²

I was oppressed as a woman. I was oppressed both by my husband and my mother-in-law. So, I thought that I should gain consciousness... My husband used to beat me. One day, he tried to beat me again. This time I clutched his throat, I punched him on the chest. "Touch me again and I will kill you" I said. "The old Gülşah is dead." He stopped.³¹³

All in all, the motherist movements should be examined by taking into account the interaction of both practical and feminist concerns. The struggle emanating from practical interests not only became an opposition of the weak to authority, but also increased women's power in front of men. In other words, while the mothers accomplished results against the state and acted as agents in the public sphere, they took courage and eluded the traditional patterns of male domination. As

³¹² "Dünün Köleleri, Bugünün Militan Anaları," *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, August 1996, no. 10. *Dün kocalarımıza bağımlıydık. Kendi kendimize iş yapamazdık. Cezaevi kapıları, mahkeme, işkencehaneler bizleri dört duvar arasından çıkardı. Önceleri evlatlarımızın düşüncelerine karşıydım, bugün onların düşüncelerini paylaşıyorum. Ben de bu kavgada varım. 12 Eylül'den itibaren bu onurlu kavgada oldum, olacağım.*

³¹³ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Kendim ezilmiştim, bir bayan olarak kendim ezildim, eşimin tarafından olsun, kaynana tarafından olsun. Bunun için diyordum ki biraz bilinçli olayım. Kocam beni dövmeğe alışmış. Bir gün kalktı gene, çullandı dövmeğe. Ben onun yakasına bir yapıştım burdan, bir yumruk göğsüne... "Bir vur, seni öldürürüm" dedim. "O eski Gülşah öldü" dedim. Bu durdu.*

far as mechanisms of coping of the women are concerned, mothers perceive movements also as a tool to achieve feminist interests.

Mothers on the Street

“Since we lived in the slum, I rarely went out, dreading people’s remarks; but when my son was imprisoned I barely went home...”

“Previously, when I went out, I used to panic when it was five o’clock, thinking that I should be home by now. Now, some days I stay out until 12 pm and some days I do not go home at all. I do not care what my husband says or thinks anymore.”

“I understood that housework was not so important when my son was imprisoned. I understood that there were much more important things in the world. Indeed, I am still making housework like cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, and laundering but, I am not as careful as I used to. Sometimes, I do not make housework at all.”³¹⁴

Women attempting to search for or defend their children met with the streets for the first time. Some of them moved from their homeland to different cities.

Gülten Kahraman says that she used to go to Istanbul from Izmir every weekend in order to participate in the meeting of Saturday Mothers.³¹⁵ Şükriye Nazari, whose son was imprisoned in the 1980s, narrates how they used to visit several bureaucrats, parliamentarians, and ministers in Ankara, by taking buses from various cities.³¹⁶

Rahime İnce states that from the 1990s, they made contact with intellectuals, political parties and associations; they participated in the European Social Forum and

³¹⁴ Pervan, p. 45. “Gecekondu semtinde oturduğumuzdan, dedikodu olur diye dışarı çıkmazken, oğlumun içeri girmesiyle tam tersine, bu sefer eve girmez oldum.” “Eskiden gittiğim yerde saat beş oldu mu yüzüm al al olurdu. Eve geç kaldım, gitmeliyim diye. Oysa şimdi bazen gece on iki, bazen de hiç gitmediğim günler oluyor. Kocamın ne düşündüğü, ne dediği açıkçası umurumda değil.” “Ev işlerinin öyle çok da önemli olmadığını, hayatta çok daha önemli şeyler olduğunu oğlum içeri girince anladım. Gerçi şimdi de yemek, bulaşık, temizlik, çamaşır gibi işler yapmıyor değilim. Fakat eski titizliğim yok. Hatta bazen yapmadığım da oluyor.”

³¹⁵ Gülten Kahraman, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 October 2007.

³¹⁶ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007

visited the Turkish Grand National Assembly.³¹⁷ They also went to Iraq to see Talabani and call for peace.³¹⁸ In the case of the Saturday Mothers, for example, many women left their villages to search for their disappeared children and they migrated from the country to big cities. If their children were imprisoned and they were transferred to other cities, mothers followed them. Moreover, they met with public institutions such as prison, hospital, morgue, police station, and court house. They faced the bureaucracy and its representatives during the legal process.

On the other hand, the mobilization was embodied in meetings and protests: mothers met the streets. The Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers chose the Galatasaray Square, İstiklal Street, the most crowded centers of İstanbul to get together. Some of them had never been to İstanbul until the day of a sit-down strike and some Kurdish women were not able to speak in Turkish.³¹⁹ The mothers' first attempts at making protests or sit-down strikes reflect their unfamiliarity with the political sphere. In her study focusing on the importance of the use of İstiklal Street in terms of location and architectural area in Saturday Mothers' protests, İvegen argues that certain mothers were ashamed and they tended to conceal themselves with the photos of their children they held.³²⁰ However, they gained the habit of going out and expressing themselves to the public opinion after the movements became continuous.

All these examples show that the motherist movements gave women an apparent mobilization. The painful events they had lived took them out of the house and gave them the courage of acting in an unfamiliar sphere. On the other hand,

³¹⁷ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, "Evlatlarımızı Öldürtmeyeceğiz," April-May 2003, no. 31.

³¹⁸ *Evrensel*, 27 October 2000.

³¹⁹ Emine Ocak, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 26 October 2007

³²⁰ İvegen, p. 43.

another reason making women leave their houses to participate in the public was economic problems. Women whose children were imprisoned, disappeared or killed suffered from bad straits because mostly their children used to cover the expenses. Under such difficult conditions, mothers faced the need to earn money to contribute to the family budget.³²¹

“...Besides, we were in financial difficulty. I started a job in confection. I continued two months. Then, they transferred my son to another city. I had to leave my job because I was visiting him regularly. My other children got to work.”³²²

We followed our children. Hundreds of mothers... For example, I know mothers who were working secretly. They were working at house cleaning in order to satisfy their children’s needs. How can one remunerate these people’s efforts?³²³

Consequently, mothers’ entrance to the public sphere as activists and their inclusion in the market as labor power became crucial changes in the mothers’ lives in terms of overcoming the walls of home. They became visible in the streets, found the chance to explain their suffering via their own appearance and they made themselves understood in the streets. Sakine Sürücü argues that being on the streets added a richness to the mothers’ lives.³²⁴ They learnt the politics in practice and they matured via the struggle process.

³²¹ Serpil Sancar, “Türkler / Kürtler, Anneler ve Siyaset: Savaşta Çocuklarını Kaybetmiş Türk ve Kürt Anneler Üzerine Bir Yorum,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 90 (Autumn 2001), p. 31.

³²² Pervan, p. 45. “Üstelik ekonomik olarak da zor durumda kalmıştık. Konfeksiyon işine girip çalışmaya başladım. İki ay sürdü. Sonra oğlumu başka şehre sevk ettiler. Düzenli olarak görüşlerine gittiğimden işimi bırakmak zorunda kaldım. Diğer çocuklarım çalışmaya başladılar.”

³²³ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Öyle bir şeylen çıkmıştık ki çocuklarımızın peşine, yüzlerlen analar... Mesela benim tanıdığım analar vardı, kadınlar işe gidiyorlardı. Gizliden işe gidiyorlardı, merdiven siliyorlardı, çocuklarına para yetiştirsin diye. Yani bu insanların emekleri ödenir mi?*

³²⁴ Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008.

Using Motherhood as a Form of Resistance

The fact differentiating the above-mentioned movements from other social movements is not only the identity of their agents but also their methods.

Motherhood as a construction became the basis of the mothers' movements. The grounds legitimating all activities and mobilization of women were the pain of their children they had experienced.

Pain is often represented as a solitary thing which is "naturally private and remains unobserved by others unless actively unveiled by the sufferer."³²⁵ That is to say, because pain is a private and personal experience, it is not possible to know accurately what someone else's pain feels like.³²⁶ In the motherist movements, the women assumed that nobody could notice their suffering if they remained at home without disclosing it; therefore, they sought to share their pain with the public. In this way, pain generally determined as "personal," was transformed to a public issue.

Pain experienced and transformed by women led to a form of resistance characterized by the emphasis on the peacekeeper role of the mothers. Women adopted that role rapidly because it facilitated their mobilization and the legitimation of the movements in the eyes of the public. So that, it can be said whether the movements are rooted in the maternal instinct or not, women acted relying on this status and took the advantage of this perception.

³²⁵ Ahmed, p. 29.

³²⁶ Ibid.

The “Catalyst” Effect of Motherhood

The starting point of this study was the question of how mothers instead of fathers were organized in order to defend their children’s lives. In a society that regards the male as the dominant figure, the sole participant in public life and the undisputed head of the home, one supposes that men mobilize for children subjected to violations of rights; however, it was the mothers who took on the responsibility. This situation can be connected to various factors.

First of all, the varying historical experiences, different cultural contexts and material conditions under which mothering has been carried out construct motherhood in a society.³²⁷ In this context, a universal type of mother does not exist; it is not undifferentiated or unchanging structure. As far as the perception of motherhood in Anatolian culture is concerned, the sacred status attributed to mothers can be seen in this saying: “Heaven lies under mothers’ feet.” Although the woman is “weak,” “psychologically volatile,” “professionally unfit” and is “in need of protection” according to gender roles,³²⁸ being a mother empowers a woman to become a highly regarded figure in the patriarchal social structure. This sacred status is rooted in her life giving (or creator) role. In the motherist movements, women acted in accordance with this role; as mothers, they had to mobilize because they had to defend the lives that they had given. Since it is the woman who gives birth to the man –whether husband or child- she is the one who feels the pain of loss in the first hand.³²⁹ It is obvious that the discourse highlighting the defense of the life that

³²⁷ Glenn, p. 5.

³²⁸ Sara Ruddick, “Pacifying the Forces: Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace,” *Signs*, 8, no. 3, Women and Violence (Spring, 1983), p. 472.

³²⁹ *Jiyan*, June 1995.

mothers created shaped all of the motherist movements. Hebe de Bonafini, a member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo says:

It seems like a mother is more prepared to take risks, although the threat is no less for women. We feared less. Whenever we went out, my husband shook with fear. Women's will is much stronger. Men get tired easily and they give up. I guess men are more individualistic. When a woman gives birth, she gives life; when the navel cord is cut she gives freedom. We fought for life and yearned freedom. It was our insistence that made us powerful. As women, we will defend life again and again, because we are stronger and because we give life.³³⁰

Indeed, the "maternal love" plays a crucial role in the mobilization of women instead of men. I use the concept of maternal love as child-caring practices and labor which are generally fulfilled by women and which provide ties of affection between mother and child. Ties of affection making a woman closer to a child transform the mother to a courageous agent. The feature differentiating her from man and making her the pioneer of movement is the diligence and persistence arising from the struggle of child rearing that determines woman's life. An Argentinean mother, Laura de Rivelli rightly pointed out:

A mother who had lost her child is capable of anything. That's why it was women who fought. Some husbands supported the women's fight, some did not. Every woman had a distinct situation... If a person truly believes in something, she or he can always find a way.³³¹

I did not eat, I fed my child. I gave him my food. If I had little money, I tightened my belt and delivered my son thinking that he would need there [in prison]. Yes, they might be their fathers, but no one can be like mothers.³³²

³³⁰ Fisher, p. 119. *Kadınlar için tehlike daha az değildi ama galiba bir anne daha fazla riske girmeye hazır oluyor. Biz daha az korkuyorduk. Biz her dışarı çıktığımızda, kocam korkudan ölürdü. Kadınların iradeleri de daha güçlü. Erkekler çabuk yoruluyor ve vazgeçiyorlar. Erkekler galiba daha bireyciler. Bir kadın, çocuk doğurduğunda yaşam verir ve kordon kesildiğinde de özgürlük verir. Bizler yaşam ve özgürlük için mücadele ediyorduk. Bizi etkili kılan ısrarımız ve vazgeçemeyişimizdi. Biz kadınlar daha güçlü olduğumuz ve yaşam verdiğimiz için, gerektiğinde yaşamı daha çok kereler savunacağız.*

³³¹ Ibid., p. 183. *Bir anne çocuğunu kaybederse, her şeyi göze alır. İşte bu yüzdendir ki, mücadele eden kadınlardı. Bazılarımızın kocaları bizi destekledi, bazıları ise desteklemedi. Herkesin durumu farklıydı... Eğer insan bir şeye yeterince sağlam bir şekilde inanırsa, her zaman bir yolu bulur.*

³³² Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Ben yemedim, ekmeğimi verdim. Yemeğimi eyledim oğluma. Beş kuruş param varsa sıkladım ona*

Apart from the strong relationship between mother and child, other factors became effective in mothers' resistance. Relying on the sacred place of motherhood in society, women manipulated the traditional mother title in order to reach their goal. They were courageous because they trusted their maternal power; on the other hand, they anticipated that they would be well received by the public thanks to the mother identity.³³³ Being mothers simplified their work; they had a tacit "immunity" in the eyes of society. If fathers instead of mothers had been organized, they would have met more difficulties than women. I call the situation of manipulating the mother title the "catalyst effect of motherhood." The sacred status of mothers, the boundaries of which are determined by the strong, both introduces women into a safe area and prevents them from participating in politics by encumbering them with responsibilities. The mother gains advantage of this status if she can reach the political sphere. In other words, she reverses the delimited sacred status (which can be perceived as an element of oppression) and transforms this source of pressure into an opportunity.

When policemen insulted them [fathers], they responded the same way, so they were taken into custody. When we insulted them, they thought "what these old women can do us?" They were unaware of our strength... Disappearances affected men in a different way. Men think too much before doing something. I think a mother does not think if her child is in danger.³³⁴

The catalyst effect of motherhood can be observed in the relationship of women to the state officers. The mothers of the *Evlât Acısına Son* campaign were not attacked

verdim oralarda oğluma bir şey olur diye. Evet, belki onlar da babadır ama analar gibi hiçbiri olamaz.

³³³ Gloria Bonder, "Kadınlar Açısından Siyasal Süreç," In *Toplumsal, Ekonomik, Siyasal Yaşamda Kadın: Ülkelerden Örnekler*, trans. by Filiz Demirci, no. 3 (1986), p. 12.

³³⁴ Fisher, p. 117, 118. *Polisler kendilerine hakaret edince erkekler de onlara hakaret eder, sonuçta da götürülürlerdi. Biz onlara hakaret ettiğimizde ise, bu yaşlı kadınlar ne yapabilirler ki, diye düşünürlerdi. Ne kadar güçlü olduğumuzun farkında değillerdi... Kaçırılma olayları erkekleri farklı bir biçimde etkiliyordu. Erkekler bir şeyi yapmadan önce daha fazla düşünüyorlar. Bence bir anne, eğer çocuğu tehlikedeysse düşünmez.*

by the police or exposed to any cruel treatment.³³⁵ The mothers of the 1980s were under the threat of the military regime; sometimes they were manhandled during protests, however, they were not subjected to tortures that men experienced.³³⁶

Another important point is the economic aspect of the issue. One of the family members had to work in order to take care of the family. If the child was in prison, the economic burden on the family increased. Because generally the person who is responsible for the household maintenance is the father and mothers are housewives, it was the mothers who assumed the leadership.

There were fathers too [in protests]. There were great fathers. However, women were always on the front. Meanwhile the father had been working and taking care of both the family and the child in prison. How would that family manage itself if something had happen to the father? But in the end, the police did not treat women and the men the same way.³³⁷

All in all, women instead of fathers came to the fore after the painful event their children had lived. Women were anxious about their husbands, because they thought that men could be subjected to the same violence as their children. Thus, they rushed forward on the strength of their mother title in the hope of being protected by this shield. However, the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers were subjected to police violence again and again.³³⁸ This proves that the tactic of mothers focusing on the sacredness of motherhood can be repulsed by the power with the time of progress. The Saturday Mothers, for example, were able to stage sit-ins without the

³³⁵ Emel Akal, interview by the author, note taking, İstanbul, Turkey, 21 July 2008.

³³⁶ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007.

³³⁷ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Babalar da vardı [eylemlerde]. Çok iyi babalar da vardı. Ama hep kadınlar öndeydi. Bu arada babalar da para kazanıyor, hem evlerine hem cezaevindeki çocuğuna bakıyor. Babaların da başına bir iş gelirse o aile ne olacak, o çocuk orada ne olacak? Ama sonuçta [polis] kadına vurduğu gibi vurmuyor erkeğe, o da bir gerçek.*

³³⁸ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, 10 December 2000, no. 20.

intervention of the police until the August 1998.³³⁹ The authority refrained from a reaction of the society keeping traditional values about motherhood until this date. However, its brutal intervention from 1998 shows that mothers' tactic was eroded against the state's strategy.

“Womanly” Methods and Tactics Devised by Mothers

Michel de Certeau emphasizes the importance of the everyday forms of resistance which can be defined as the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already included by the nets of “discipline” in order to compose the network of an antidiscipline.³⁴⁰ According to Certeau, two sides of the force-relationships have different logics of action, *tactics* and *strategies*. The strategy, the logic of action of the “strong,” isolates a subject of power from an environment and dominates on a place which can be surrounded as proper. Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on the basis of this strategic model. On the other hand, tactic is many “ways of operating” of the weak who can not get involved in the proper defined by the strong, insinuating itself into the other's place fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety and.³⁴¹ Because a tactic is makeshift and it does not have a space (the space of a tactic is the space of the other), it depends on time and is always on the lookout for suitable opportunities. It must perpetually manipulate events to turn

³³⁹ Koçali, p. 357.

³⁴⁰ Certeau, p. xv.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. xix.

them into “opportunities.”³⁴² While strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose the spaces; tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert them.³⁴³

Mothers’ resistance forms show similarity to the “ways of operating” characterized by Certeau. Indeed, women develop various tactics in order to introduce themselves into a field and turn it to their advantage. The mothers as a “weak” group challenged the “proper” shaped by the power with changing tactics. The power quells the motherist movements considering these tactics; however, mothers reappear with other tactics taking lessons from the past. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, for example, used to gather in order to attract public attention; however, when the police started to follow them, they started to mingle with the Marist Priests and as the police moved in they used to begin to pray as a tactic.³⁴⁴ One of the clearest examples of the ways of operating of the mothers in Turkey can be observed in the Saturday Mothers experience. The Saturday Mothers were holding a sit-down strike every Saturday; but the behavior of the police became severe in the course of events and it restrained women from gathering. It used to disperse the crowd as soon as possible; therefore, mothers sought to find different routes in order to reach Galatasaray Square. They could not use the main street; in addition, because the police also began to blockade the İHD’s gate, they could not meet in the İHD. Every Saturday, they used to mislead the police by using various back streets, sometimes by walking as small groups, sometimes by taking taxis to the Square.³⁴⁵

I remember; one day we found a free space in the square and we walked in with flowers. We climbed the ladders in Hamam Street near Galatasaray. We

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 30.

³⁴⁴ Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, Del. : Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994), p. 74.

³⁴⁵ Koçali, p. 358.

were just like actresses in the movies or plays. When we climbed up, we found an opening and left the flowers at once.³⁴⁶

Moreover, women devise tactics concerning motherhood's sacred feature.

Although the sacredness of mothers has eroded a little with their entrance in the public sphere, the public respect tent to continue to a large extent. Relying on this public respect for the mother, women seek to challenge the “proper” and find tactics special to motherhood. In this way, women discover how a source of oppression (being confined to the private sphere because of motherhood) is transformed into an opportunity thanks to these tactics. For example, a mother narrates how they confused the police while they were waiting at the gate of prison in order to visit their children.

They did not let us visit our children. We went there [to prison]. We challenged them; we said that we would not back off. We held the waiting room of Sağmalcılar Prison. Night came down and we stayed. It was 10 p.m. and we stayed. We bothered them. Some mothers lay on the ground, some fainted and so on. “Get out already,” they said. We kicked garbage cans, knocked on windows with keys; we lost it completely. What else could we do? We were mothers; we had to behave like that. Then, a military officer arrived, he ordered his soldiers to kick us out. We wrapped our arms together and we stood like one. We refused to leave, we did not move. A soldier held me. I told him: “Do not touch us! If you touch us, you might as well sleep with your mother!” The soldier took his hand back. Then he tried to grab me once more, so I yelled again. All the mothers, sometimes crying sometimes laughing, became very happy since they could not touch us. (...) Finally, they attempted to drag us. The chief ordered the soldiers to drag us; he would be punished if he did not comply. I pretended to be injured, I screamed “my foot, my foot.” My daughter was worried “mother, mother!” I said, “Shut up! I am not serious.” We tried to distract them.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Bir gün hiç unutmam, orada bir boşluk bulduk, elimizde çiçeklerle gittik. Nerden çıktık, o Hamam Sokağı var Galatasaray'ın orada, merdivenlerden çıktık. Hani böyle sinema, tiyatro çeviriyorsun ya, artistler, aynen o şeylere döndük. Merdivenlerle yukarı çıktık, hemen orada bir boşluk bulduk, çiçekleri atıverdik.*

³⁴⁷ Şükriye Nazari, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 18 October 2007. *Çocuklarımızla görüş yaptırıyorlar bizi. Oraya gittik, görüşemezsiniz, görüşürsünüz, görüşemezsiniz, görüşürsünüz... Biz bunlarla bir iddialaştık, gitmiyoruz dedik. Bekleme salonunu işgal ettik Sağmalcılar'da. Akşam oldu, biz çıkıyoruz. Gecenin 10'u oldu, biz gitmiyoruz. Başlarına bela olduk. Kimi ana yatıyor, bayılıyor, bir şeyler oluyor falan filan. “Çıkan gidin artık” diyorlar. Biz oradaki çöp tenekelerine tekme atıyoruz, anahtarlarla camlara şak şak şak vuruyoruz, bilmemnapıyoruz, bir edepsizliktir gidiyor bizde. Ama n'apalım, biz anneydik, öyle yapmak zorundaydık. Ondan sonra bir subay getirdi askerleri, “çıkar bunları” dedi. Kenetlendik biz, kol kola*

This example also shows how mothers used dissimulation as a form of everyday resistance in the motherist movements. Different resistance mechanisms were put into effect by activist women against the strategies of the power. Apart from clear resistance practices like organizing meetings, protests, sit-down strikes, and making press statements, certain resistance forms which can be defined as “hidden resistance,” referring to James C. Scott, also appear. Scott argues that most subordinate groups throughout most of history have ordinary weapons such as foot dragging, dissimulation, and so on. “They require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms.”³⁴⁸

As far as activist women as a relatively powerless group against the state are concerned, one may claim that they also used such everyday resistance forms, especially dissimulation. They emphasized their pain and sought to “socialize” the pain by sharing it with the public via the motherist movements; on the other hand, they acted with deliberation against the state and government bodies. Sakine Sürücü, whose daughter Sibel had died in hunger strike in 2001, explains that she concealed her pain from police officers when she went to the morgue to take her child’s corpse. She says that because she perceives the police as the “enemy” and calls them like that, she composed herself and did not cry under the morgue officers’ eyes.³⁴⁹ Hiding

girdik. Gitmiyoruz, çıkmıyoruz. Asker beni tuttu. “Dokunma bize” diyorum. “bize dokunursan ananla zina etmiş ol” diyorum. Asker elini çekiyor. Asker gene hamle yapıyor, ben gene böyle bağıriyorum. Benim bütün yandaşlarım, yarı gülme yarı ağlama, bizi elleyemiyorlar ya, dört köşe oluyoruz... Ondan sonra artık bizi sürüklemeye başladılar. “Sür diyorum sana” dedi artık askere, amiri. Çocuk artık dayak yiyecek yapmazsa. Tabi bizi çekiyorlar falan. Ben yalandan başladım “ah ayağım, ayağım.” Ben öyle diyince kızım “anne, anne” diye haykırdı. “Sus kız, mahsus yapıyorum” dedim. Onları oyalamak, uğraştırmak için yaptım.

³⁴⁸ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 29.

³⁴⁹ Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008.

true sentiments and powerlessness from the enemy was her unique weapon according to this mother.

In response to events their children experienced, women developed a reaction to state organs. Not obeying the orders of state organs, disorienting officers or not receiving help from state institutions are some of these hidden and unplanned resistance manners women used. Sürücü states that when Sibel died, the police proposed she bury her daughter with state support in order to prevent a crowded ceremony. In order not to give her child to the “enemy” and not to accept help from the enemy, she misled the police.

They [officers] suggested holding Sibel’s funeral themselves. “I won’t give my child to the enemy,” I said. “Her friends may show up, they may hold a demonstration, this and that,” they said... We will provide the car and everything, let’s take her to her home town and bury her there,” they said. “No,” I said. “She will be buried to İkitelli [İstanbul]”. Then, they told me to pick up her body that night. “No, I will take it tomorrow,” I said... If we had picked her that night, they would have rushed us to the cemetery to hold the funeral right that moment... We returned there in the morning and took Sibel’s body... We somehow managed to avoid the men in the directorate of cemeteries. We took the corpse from the Forensics after fulfilling out the necessary forms. They had earlier said we could not bring the corpse back home. We changed our route and covered our tracks to bring her home... The police got shocked when they saw the body in front of the house.³⁵⁰

Bringing the corpse of the hunger strike activist to a place different from the order of the police is a form of non-criminal resistance challenging the authority of the strong. In addition, this stance also contains an understanding disdaining to receive aid from the strong. Similarly, Fatma Karagöz argues that she developed a grudge against the

³⁵⁰ Sakine Sürücü, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008. *Sibel’in cenazesini biz kaldıralım dediler. “Ben düşmana çocuğumu vermem” dedim. “Arkadaşları gelir, eylem yaparlar, işte şöyle olur böyle olur” dediler... Onlar dediler ki, araba bizden, her şey bizden, memlekete götürüp defnedek dediler, sana yardımcı olak dediler. “Hayır,” dedim, “İkitelli’ye gömülecek” dedim. “O zaman akşamdan al” dediler. “Hayır, ben yarın alırım” dedim... O gece alsaydık, apar topar, oldubittiye getirip doğru mezarlığa götürceklerdi yani... Sabahleyin tekrar gittik, Sibel’in cenazesini aldık... Mezarlıklar Müdürlüğü’nden bir yolunu bulduk, bunlardan kaçtık. Geldik, Adli Tıp’tan işlemler bittikten sonra cenazemizi aldık. Cenaze arabası eve gitmeyecek dediydiler. Yolu saptırdık, onları şaşırtıp evin önüne getirdik cenazeyi... Direk cenaze evin önüne gelince polisler neye uğradıklarını şaşırdılar.*

state after the pain she experienced. She describes how the police interfered in a meeting in which she participated and she was beaten severely. She had serious injury; however, she refused to see a doctor. “I did not go to a doctor, I resisted the state. From that day to this, I have not gone to a doctor.”³⁵¹ In the eyes of that mother, the hospital or doctor was identified with the power that had injured her daughter and attracted her own. By refusing to go to hospital, she exerted a form of individual self-help and kept away from a confrontation with authority or its norms.

All in all, mothers devise changing, makeshift and unplanned tactics against stable and well-organized strategies of the power in order to insinuate into the public space that which was under the sway of the authority. During their activities in the political sphere, they used different resistance forms (both clear and hidden) special to womanhood. In this way, they aimed to reverse their oppression into an advantageous situation.

Transformation of Protest Modes: Symbols and Making Children Visible

...One of the Mothers suggested that they wear something distinctive so that they could recognize each other from a distance. “A shawl on our heads or a mantilla,” one woman proposed. But not everyone had a mantilla. Then one Mother chimed in, “How about a gauze shawl, a diaper? It will make us feel closer to our children.”³⁵²

One of the most important common traits of the motherist movements is the utilization of symbols. Mothers prefer to use certain womanly symbols in order to highlight the presence of their identity as woman in the public sphere. Using a white headscarf was the device of the Argentinean mothers and it was influentially internalized by women in different geographies.

³⁵¹ Fatma Karagöz, , interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 October 2007.

³⁵² Bouvard, p. 74.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina preferred a powerful symbol that would not only identify them but that would also represent a reality in contrast to the cruelty of the authoritarian regime. The white headscarf signifying peace, life, and maternal ties was an ideal mark which contributed to the peaceful image of the mother in the public arena.³⁵³ In addition, this evokes the white flag, internationally recognized as a protective sign or ceasefire. The white flag signifies to all that an approaching negotiator is unarmed and she or he is disposed to negotiate with the other side. Since it is often the weaker military party which requests negotiation, the white flag can be perceived as the tool of the weak over the strong. That is to say, mothers wearing white headscarf, just like the white flag, get the message across to the state that they are unarmed and they only want a solution.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo emerged in 1977 and the story of their struggle spread throughout the world. The motherist movements of Turkey were also impressed by this struggle.³⁵⁴ The *Evlât Acısına Son* campaign was almost contemporary with the Argentinean Mothers' activities and women organizing the campaign might imitate their Latin American sisters. They used white headscarves in meetings like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Emel Akal argues that in the 1970s, the activists of the İKD used to wear red headscarves symbolizing communism at meetings; however, they wore white headscarves for the first time in motherist meetings. On the one hand, the *Evlât Acısına Son* meetings were massive and also included mothers independent of the İKD; on the other hand, because the CHP supported the meetings, one had to find a common denominator between two different political organizations.³⁵⁵ This common denominator became the white

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁵⁴ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, May-June 1998, no. 14.

³⁵⁵ Emel Akal, interview by the author, note taking, İstanbul, Turkey, 21 July 2008.

color linking the relationship of mother with peace. Akal remarks that the white headscarf could have been preferred in conjunction with the Argentinean mothers' struggle. As far as the class composition and education level of the İKD activists is concerned, they were very likely aware of the developments experienced in Argentina; therefore, they may have been inspired in terms of symbols.

The clearest example of symbol usage can be seen in the case of the Saturday Mothers. They kept in touch with the Argentinean mothers and received international support.³⁵⁶ Emine Ocak, one of the best-known activists of the Saturday Mothers, says that Argentinean women visited them in 1995 and they held a sit-down strike all together.³⁵⁷ The Saturday Mothers imitating the model of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to a large extent, also wore white headscarves. They were identified with this fabric in the eyes of the public. This successful symbol usage affected the Peace Mothers; they continued to wear white headscarves in meetings and at protests.

Apart from deriving inspiration from the Argentinean example, the white headscarf also was chosen by mothers of Turkey on the basis of cultural patterns. As mentioned before, both the Saturday Mothers and the Peace Mothers whose children had been kidnapped in eastern regions or participated in the Kurdish movement generally were Kurdish women. They generally were countrywomen living according to Kurdish traditions and the white headscarf was their usual clothing. This clothing had a special place in Kurds' lives; according to Kurdish customs the throwing of a white kerchief by a woman means a peace settlement. When a mother throws her kerchief at the time of fighting, the two sides of the fight have to cease the dispute. A member of the Peace Mother, Sosun Koç, explains the meaning of the white headscarf:

³⁵⁶ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, May-June 1998, no. 14.

³⁵⁷ Emine Ocak, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 26 October 2007

Mothers are against fighting and bloodshed; they will be the ones to stop this war. We will do all we can. Throwing the headscarf, which is an ancient tradition, belongs to us, to the women of the East. The headscarf means trust, honor, and virtue. It stops feuds between tribes. A fight between two tribes comes to an end when the women throw down the headscarf, despite the deaths and the urge to kill. It leads to peace. Claiming this tradition, we make every effort as women and mothers to end the war and to bring peace. So that mothers stop the suffering.³⁵⁸

Mothers adopted this symbol rapidly; in this way, the white kerchief became an inseparable component of the movements. By wearing same colored accessories, mothers appeared homogeneous and powerful. This kind of symbols both reinforced the collective identity by representing the uniformity and attracted the public's attention by creating a visual perception in the presence of the public.

Wearing a uniform cloth or accessory could not be evaluated as a "criminal subversion" by the law; therefore, the police and other state organs were tied hand and foot. However, the uniformity of women in the public sphere implying that they resembled each other because they shared a common fate and pain, can be interpreted as a form of resistance against the source of this pain. That is to say, a traditional cloth was transformed into a part of resistance and became a "threat" in the eye of the strong.

Another protest tool devised by the mothers to address their grievances was photographs. The Argentinean Mothers adopted various visual materials such as paper silhouettes, balloons and uniform masks; but the most important one was the exhibition of photographs of aggrieved children. In their sit-down strikes, the

³⁵⁸ *Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni*, October 1999, no. 17. *Hiçbir ana kavga istemez, kan dökülmesini istemez, bu savaşı durduran analar ve kadınlar olacaktır. Elimizden ne geliyorsa yapacağız. Eski bir gelenek olan tülbent atma, biz doğulu kadınların bir değeridir. Tülbent namus demek, güven demektir, onur demektir. Aşiretler arası büyük kavgaların durmasına neden olur. İki aşiretin kavgaları kadınların tülbenti ortaya atması ile biter. Üstelik ölümler ve öldürtme güdülleri olsa bile, tülbentin atılmasıyla kavga biter ve barış olurdu. Bu geleneğe sahip çıkarak analar ve kadınlar barışın olması, savaşın bitmesi için elimizden geleni yapıyoruz. Biz anaların acıları dinsin diye.*

Saturday Mothers also used to hold their children's photographs. This new method represents how the mothers got the hang of the motherist struggle.

Firstly, the photographs of the child (or other symbols that are reminder of childhood, like the gauze drape purlled with the victims' names) belong to a family room or bedroom. These symbolize childhood memories and sections from their lives.³⁵⁹ In other words, these familiar things strongly related to the private sphere became part of the public sphere via maternal resistance forms. Such effective representations of the love appertaining to apolitical world led women to transform their pain into a political stance.

Secondly, adding photograph to the resistance emancipate victims from being only a number of statistics, according to the mothers.³⁶⁰ Different from the usual political activities, individual elements of agents were protected in the motherist movements. In the Saturday Mothers' protests, every mother used to hold her own child's photograph and narrate the story of her son or daughter to other participants. Mothers of the "anti-fascist" struggle in the 1970s had a similar perception; during the campaign, suffering mothers used to give interview to *Kadınların Sesi* about the qualities of their children and focused on their uniqueness. Although the mothers reacted within the identity of the group and made a common cause with other mothers, they sought to emphasize that every victim had a story, which meant a lot to a mother and which could not be demoted to a statistical category. Hence, a photograph meant more than a visual aid attracting public attention; this was the representation of the child subjected to state violence. In other words, mothers sought

³⁵⁹ Sara Ruddick. " 'Barış Kadını': Feminist Bir Yorum." *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar*. no. 5 (June 2008). Available [online]: <http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/> [8 July 2008].

³⁶⁰ Gülşah Tağaç, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 22 January 2008.

to make their children “visible” by adding their photos to the movement and telling their stories to the public.

With these forms and tools, women changed the classical protest modes and broke new ground. The pain mothers felt was similar and this pain equated them on the basis of being mothers. Wearing a uniform kerchief was the symbol of the common pain bringing the mothers together. On the other hand, the photos of children that became a liaison between mother and child signified the uniqueness of every individual and pointed to different meanings of the “child” in the eyes of mothers. In so doing, women expressed that their children, who had been introduced as “anarchist” or “terrorist,” had also “histories” and they called on people to think about these life stories. Because bringing up a child means a life-long endeavor for mothers and photos are evidence of this maternal labor, they acted a part in defending children’s right to live.

The Intermingling of Spheres: The Feminization of Public Sphere and Politization of the Private Sphere

The classical perception of the public and private spheres is based on a clear distinction. Mothers are defined as belonging to the private sphere, which is a protected area because of their child bearing and rearing roles. The motherist movements converged these two “opposed” spheres.

On the one hand, mothers met with the male-dominated public sphere and penetrated it without abandoning their maternal roles. They established a dialectical relation with the politics emerging from the dilemma of the public sphere and motherhood appertaining to the domestic. In this way, accessories and photos identified with home, womanhood, and childhood became the instruments of politics.

The public sphere was feminized, in other words, mothers gave their “color” to a male-dominated area.

On the other hand, the private sphere also changed in the wake of the motherist resistance. The domestic place had previously been removed from politics for mothers. They used to decorate their homes with flowers or other beautiful objects giving people a pleasant impression. With the painful events they confronted and the struggle process transforming them into agents, the meaning of the private sphere changed.³⁶¹ Photos of the daughter or son were hung out in order to express the affectionate love of the mother. The fact making the domestic field political is the exhibition by one mother of photos of other children sharing the common fate with her child. Hanging photos of people they did not know meant that mothers tended to adopt or at least felt intimacy with the ideas of these people.

Moreover, women who had lost their children, whose children had been imprisoned or participated in the Kurdish movement, prepared a “corner” in their domestic sphere. There was this kind of souvenir corner in the houses of the interviewees of this study. Different from classical mourning homes, these women chose political photos and symbols about their children. The child’s photos taken in the course of political activities (for example photos taken in hunger strike or in the mountain) and her / his personal accessories evocative of the child’s political aspect such as *poşu* (silk head scarf) or red band symbolizing the hunger strike were the new decorations of these houses. Gülten Kahraman had a big corner (a quarter of the room) in her salon where she entertained her guests. Mothers also added their own photos taken at meetings and protests in this corner. Emine Ocak’s had a buffet in her salon where she had exhibited awards she received from international non-

³⁶¹ See Appendix B.

governmental organizations. These things belonging to the public sphere penetrated the domestic life of women with the process of struggle. I call this the “politization of the public sphere,” providing women an atmosphere which kept their story of political experience and memories alive.

In short, one may claim that the political experience women received via the motherist movements removed the boundaries between the public and private spheres. Women both feminized the public sphere and politicized the private sphere by keeping their maternal identities in public and instilling public figures into their domestic areas. Women did not abstain from representing themselves as political figures; on the contrary, they carried the political identity they received via the motherist movements into their houses.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the organizations and resistance forms of mothers, as a special group of women, mobilizing with the painful story of their children were examined. The study explored how and under which conditions these women who had been quite apolitical previously were transformed into agents in the public sphere.

The motherist movements in Turkey were handled in four periods and this periodization states that the agendas of mothers was strictly related to their children's political activities; accordingly, these were strictly related to the agenda of Turkey's left. While the youth was rising against the rightist movement in the 1970s, mothers followed their children. When the coup of the September 12 sealed the youth's fate, women resisted the authority, while young people were made to disappear by "unknown" powers, mothers mobilized in order to find them. When a continuous conflict kill indefinite number of people in the East, mothers went out to call for peace. Although the political agendas triggering movements were different from each other, the mothers' main demand consisted of the safety of children and women responded to state violence committed against their daughters and sons. It is obvious that the motivation triggering women was anxiety about their children at the first sight. However, a common identity was established with the gathering of many women sharing a common fate and the struggle process under the roof of motherhood transformed that traditional woman group to agents. The attempt aiming

to make something to defend the child expanded through interesting ways in different political issues and then, raised their consciousness about their gender roles.

The motherist movements were constructed on the mentality of “being a mother” and that understanding transcended all other identities and differences among the participants in the counter hegemonic public sphere created against the focus, which had damaged the children of the activists. Motherhood or maternal thinking became sufficient to construct the collective identity required in order to resist and act in the public sphere.

Participants of all motherist movements mobilized with the intention of “defending the life that they gave.” This perception legitimated their stance in the eyes of the public. Because women “created” these children, they were entitled to demand the safety of them. Their attempt was seen “natural” and women also adopted the emphasis of maternal instinct that provide the movements a public support.

Mothers devised changing, makeshift and unplanned tactics against stable and well-organized strategies of power in order to insinuate into the public space that was under the sway of the authority. During their activities in the political sphere, they used different resistance forms (both clear and hidden) special to womanhood. In this way, they aimed to reverse their oppression into an advantageous situation. They developed different tactics in order to introduce into the public field and turn it to their advantage. Mothers as a “weak” group challenged the “proper.” The power quelled the motherist movements considering these tactics; however, the mothers reappeared with other tactics taking lessons from the past. These genuine tools differed the motherist movements from other social protest modes.

Via the motherist movements, the public and private spheres defined as opposing spheres were intermingled by the mothers. Women both feminized the public sphere and politicized the private sphere by keeping their maternal identities in public and adding public figures into their domestic areas.

In conclusion, it can be said that the method emphasizing motherhood and maternal virtues played a crucial role in social support to state violence or other violations of rights. However, this method and patterns of tactics also dissolved with time. As far as the well organized structure of the strong and makeshift nature of tactics of the weak are concerned, the intervention of the power against the mothers can be understood.

From what has been discussed above, we may draw the conclusion that the mothers are not simple followers of their children; they gained a different identity during the motherist movements. They kept their maternal features while acting in the political sphere and this made them more powerful against power.

APPENDIX A

EVLAT ACISINA SON!

An Azerbaijani song that was sung in the meetings of the İKD:

Silahları yandırın, arşa çıksın tütsüsü
Her ovada, her bir evde kanat açsın sulh sözü

Ben anayam, bu sesimde yerin göğün derdi var
Sulha gelin ey insanlar yoksa dünya mahv olur

Yeryüzünde dostu olsun, yine insan insanın
Kalbimdeki bu arzular arzusudur zamanın

Ben anayam, bu sesimde yerin göğün derdi var
Sulha gelin ey insanlar yoksa dünya mahv olur
(Source: Emel Akal)

Another popular song of the meetings:

Eledim eledim, höllük eledim
Aynalı beşikte bebek beledim
Büyüttüm besledim, asker eyledim
Gitti de gelmedi canan buna ne çare
(Kaynak: Emel Akal)



Women in May 1
1 May 1979, (photo: Kemal Cengizkan)



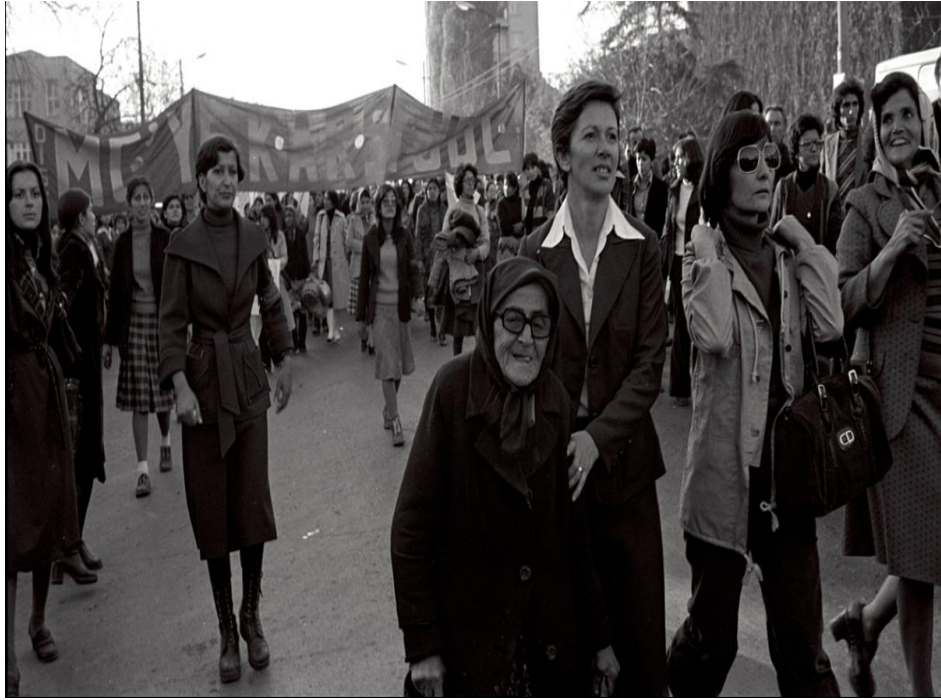
“Analar Doğurur, Faşistler Öldürür”
5 November 1977, Ankara, (photo: Kemal Cengizkan)



(source: www.aleviweb.com)



“Analığa Saygı”
5 November 1977, Ankara, (photo: Kemal Cengizkan)



5 November 1977, Ankara, (photo: Kemal Cengizkan)

APPENDIX B
INTERMINGLING OF SPHERES



The Mothers of the 1980s
(source: www.barikat-lar.de)



Didar Şensoy who died in the course of a meeting across from the parliament on
September 1, 1987, on Peace Day.
(source: www.barikat-lar.de)



The Saturday Mothers
Cumhuriyet, 1998, (photo: Alper Turgut)



(photo: Alper Turgut)



(photos: Alper Turgut)



The Peace Mothers Wearing White Headscarves
(source: www.zeryam.com)



Mothers Wearing White Headscarves
8 March 2008, Kadıköy (photo: Mehmet Burak Şahin)

HOUSES



Emine Ocak's "Corner" in Her Salon





Emine Ocak's "Corner" in Her Salon



Emine Ocak exhibits the award she had received from ICAD (International Committee against Disappearances) in her buffet.

"A valiant mother to a fearless and equally valiant son who has disappeared in the course of the struggle against exploitation and state repression. ICAD salutes this mother for her commitment and great contribution to our international struggle against Disappearances." (ICAD)



The award of Gülşah Tağaç



Gülşah Tağaç's "Corner" in her salon.

APPENDIX C

THE MOTHERIST MOVEMENTS IN WOMEN JOURNALS



“Kavga Etmeyi Evlatlarından Öğrenip Zaferi Birlikte Kucakladılar”
Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, August 1996, no. 10.



Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, August 1996, no. 10.



Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, August 1996, no. 10.



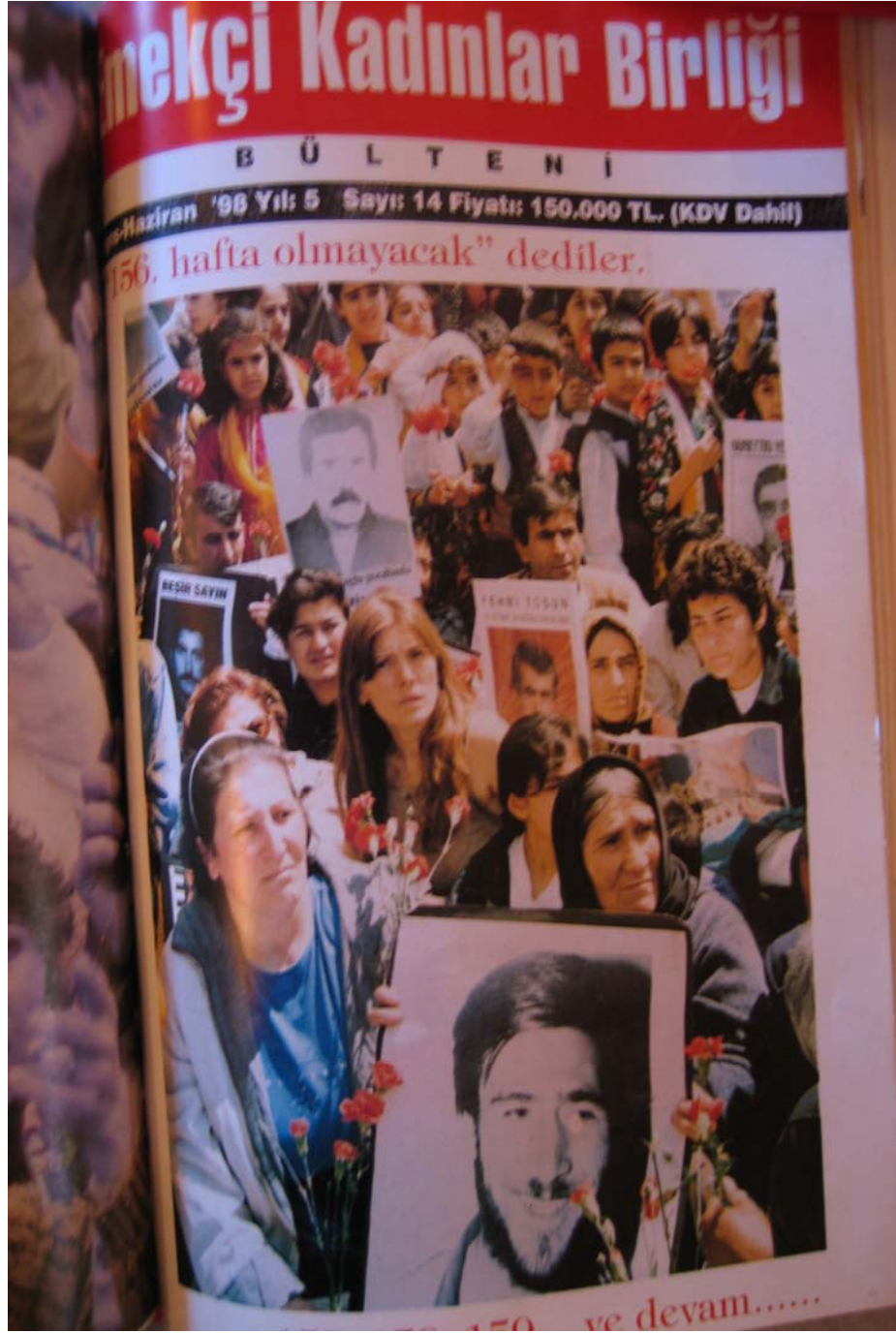
The Saturday Mothers
Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, August 1996, no. 10.



“Zindanlar Boşalsın, Tutsaklara Özgürlük”
Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, August 1996, no. 10.



Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği Bülteni, May- June 1998, no. 14.



The Saturday Mothers
Emekçi kadınlar Birliđi, May – June 1998, no. 14.



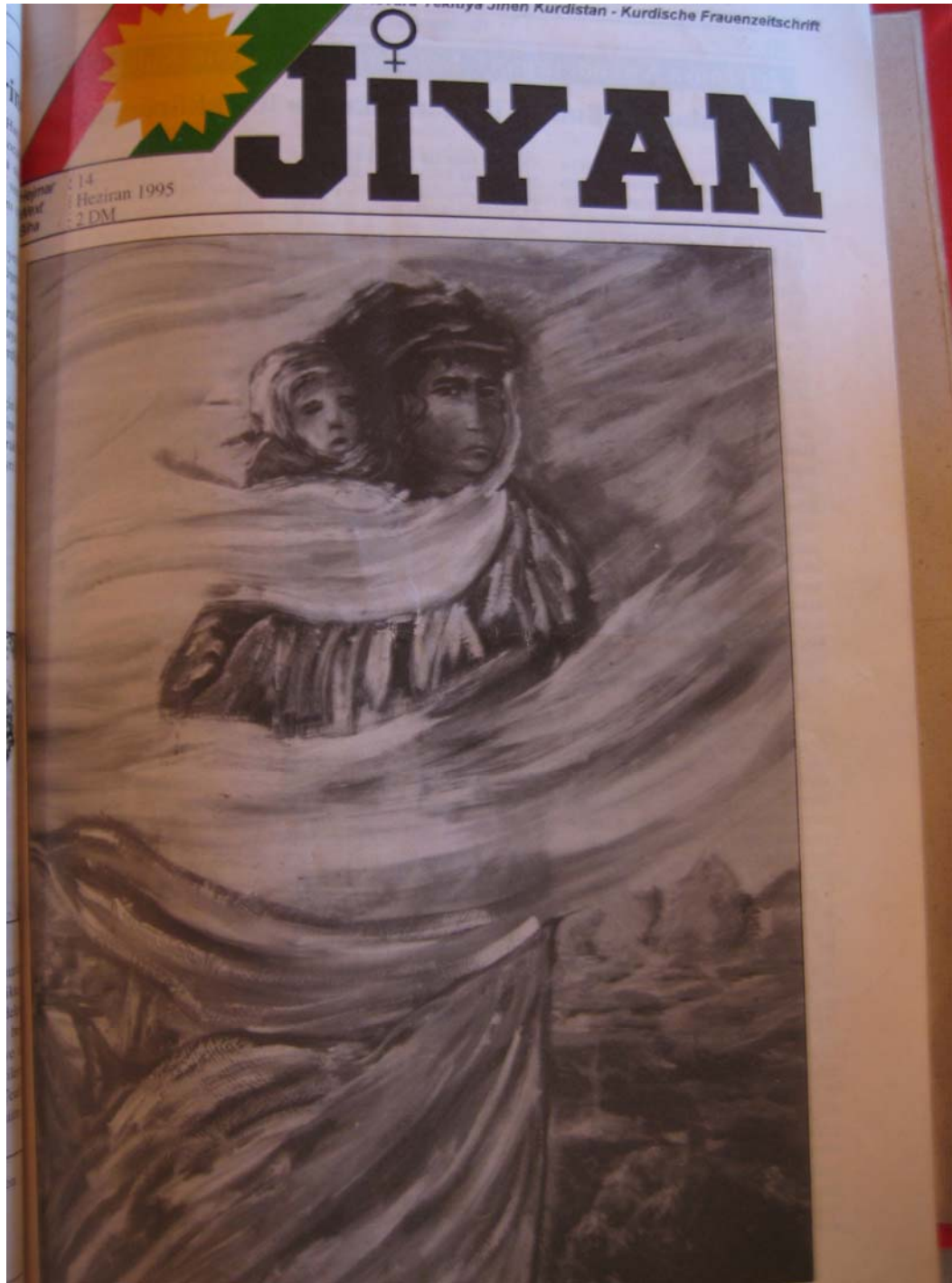
The Saturday Mothers
Sosyalist Kadın, June 1995.

APPENDIX D

MOTHER FIGURES IN WOMEN JOURNALS



A Mother Figure in *Jiyan*
Jiyan, February 1993.



Jiyan, 14 June 1995.



Mother Figures in *Ana*
Ana, September 1938, no. 9; 1939, no. 12.

Kırklareli Sayfayı
Dr. Fual Umay
NESRİYAT MÜDÜRÜ

Çığır Bleda
BASILDIĞI YER
TAN Matbaası
İSTANBUL

ANA

AYLIK AYLE DERGİSİ

15 KURUŞ

Aboneli :
Seneliği : 220
6 Aylığı : 110
İdare ve Nesriyat için
Ankara - Çocuk Esirgeme
Kurumu Cene' Merkezine
müracaat edilir.

30 İKİNCİ TEŞRİN 1938

ÇARŞAMBA

SAYI : 11

Zübeyde Ana

Yüce evlâdının ona ve milletine
İzmiri kurtarıverdiği gün elbette se-
vimme gözyaşları dökmüştür; fakat,
Kendisi hayata gözlerini kapadığı za-
man kahraman oğlu kimbilir ne ka-
dar ağlamıştı? Ben zavallı bugün her
ikisi için inliyorum...

Yarım asrı epeyce asan hayatımın
kırk senesinde görüp geçirdiğim ka-
ra ve zalim acılar ile son yirmi yı-
lında duyduğum kurtuluş ve hürri-
yet zevki bir araya gelmiş, kat-
reler halinde göz pınarlarımdan
fışkırıyor. Aaaah ne olurda... son
senelerimin sonsuz zevkini birlikte
tatığımız bu günün gençliğine, be-
nim gençliğimi kaplıyan yurt acılarını
şuracıkta sayıp dökebilseydim..
Hiç şüphe etmem ki onlar da benim
neslim gibi daha içten ve daha çok
ağlarlardı...

Bilmem... ben mi çok ağlıyan bir
adamım; yoksa ağlatan hâdiseleri
mi çok gördüm? Düşünüyorum da
artık hiç siyahı kalmıyan ak saçlarımın
her telinde birkaç yurt acısı vak-
aları asılmış, ağırlıkları sırtımda, be-
limi büküyor!...

Fakat bu acıların en acıklısını iş-
te bir bugün duyuyorum, bir de bü-
yük Atamın, büyük milletimin anası
"Zübeyde", nin mezarı başında duy-
muştum.

Yücelerden yüce cân Atamı İzmirde
gelmiş anacığımın kabrini ziyaret
edeceklerdi; o güne kadar ben de A-
tamın yüzünü hiç görmemiş, sesini
hiç duymamıştım. Ve pek iyi biliyor-
dum ki o, dünyalara karşı kayan çok



Zübeyde Ana

metin bir adamdı; işte ben bu metin
adamı büyük anacığımın kabri başına
ilk defa geldiği zaman görmek, en za-
yif yerinden yakalamak istiyordum.

Herkes te benim gibi onu görebil-
mek için Karşıyakada gömülü bulun-
duğu camie giden geniş caddenin iki
tarafını doldurmustu; ben kabrin
başucunda bir kisi onu bekliyordum.

Atam, yeryüzünde görebildiğim
insanların hiçbirinde görülebilmesin-
de imkân olmıyan bir vekar ile cami
avlusundan içeri girdi; yirmi, yirmi
beş metre kadar ilerdeki toprak yü-
ğünne gözleri ilişir, ilişmez daha
dün... evet daha dün dünyaları sar-
san o büyük adamın omuzlarının sar-
sıldığını görünce yine ve hem pek
çok ağlamıştım.

Ulu mezarın başında dört, beş ki-
şiydik; Atam bir kere mezarın dört
tarafını doladıktan sonra başucuna
isabet eden kösele durdu; bürülmüş
bir halde ve arkalarında kaldığımız
farkına varınca bir adım sola çekil-
di....

Birkaç dakika devam eden ilâhî
bir sükûttan sonra okuduğum ve duy-
duğum nutuklarımdan en güzel ve
en kuvvetlilerinden birini söylerken
ben de hayretten ve teessürden a-
vuçlarımdan arasında buruşturmış ol-
duğum kâğıt parçasına bir şeyler yaz-
mıştım; aziz Atamın aziz nasını ana-
sının kucağına ve kolları arasına ver-
mek üzere olduğumuz acı günleri-
mizde o satırları bir kere daha mil-
letimle beraber okumak istedim!

Güneşle, ay ile, yıldızların da üstünde
Yatırmadık seni ey muhterem "Zü-
beyde.. kadın;
Sebepl su ki daha yüksek cihana
İlkim
Yanar, yatar ve yaşar bağrımda
şanlı adm.
Sen öyle büyük bir evlât doğurdun
ey anne
Gömlüdü ruhuna Türkün senin güzel
yadın.
O rütbe yükeğe çıktım ki millet'in anası
Göğüs kabartmadalar hep kabirde
ecdadın.
Kabir dedimse de haşa o kibledir
Türke;
Yarattı, hem de yaşattı bu mülkü
İzşahın
Yoksa da şu felek başka bir cihan
doğsa
Muharek lamini tekrar edesler ahîdân
Tavaf eder dururum başucunda
gönlüme;
"Zübeyde, yi unuttur mu bu sair
evlâdın?..
Hüseynî Reşik

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