

THEY DEMAND THAT WE EMPATHIZE!

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By permission of the author **Etyen Mahcupyan**, also published in Today's Zaman (Istanbul, Turkey) on October 21, 2007

The case of the murder of Hrant Dink is becoming more and more psychologically demanding. What would normally be expected would be for the judiciary to take a course of action that alleviates some of the pain of Dink's victimized family and for society to empathize with the family and share their pain. However, the actual course of events in Turkey has been entirely contrary to this natural expectation.

As soon as the murder was committed, some columnists in the media started writing about the necessity of empathizing with the youth gang that committed the murder, but we didn't dwell on this since we knew that those columnists were morally astray. But as we have observed the relevant hearings starting with the second one, we have seen that such people now demand from us empathy for not only the gang of murderers but also for the disregard for law and the covering up of crimes by statesmen.

Both the Trabzon Police Department and the Gendarmerie knew that Hrant Dink would be assassinated, or more precisely, that he would be assassinated within the year, but they did not move a muscle to prevent it. Now we are required to ignore this and to not even mention it. We also know that members of the police department and the Gendarmerie are involved in this tangled web that the leaders of gang that committed the murder established very close relations with state officials, that the crimes committed by them were "softened" by the police and that this is why they were released each time. But what is expected of us is "empathy" and, what's more, empathy for these state officials who perpetuate the current order so they continue to go about their affairs in the usual way. We know from a telephone conversation that an intelligence officer had been informed in advance about the details of the murder. However, we are expected to show empathy and not question these crimes. So much "empathy" has been shown that the judiciary has outdone itself and is preparing to launch an investigation not about that intelligence officer but about the journalist who revealed his crime.

But the need for empathy is never fulfilled. We are asked to believe that the 48-page minutes of the investigation of the suspected organizer of the crime, carried out by Ramazan Akyürek, the chief of the Police Intelligence Department, has to remain secret. Furthermore, the court that has to make a final decision about the case has declined to request the minutes in question. Apparently, the court shows complete empathy toward the desires of the Police Intelligence Department. That it isn't enough, though. We are asked to show the same degree of empathy and stop making such demands ourselves. In addition, we are obliged to show understanding about the fact that the records of some 5,000 telephone calls made by the same suspect are being kept a secret.

If you think that you have now shown the necessary degree of empathy, you are quite mistaken. You should also keep silent about the video recordings of the moment of the murder having been somehow deleted and or going "lost." You even have to agree to the names of the two National Intelligence Organization (MIT) officials who called Dink to the Governor's Office and threatened him being kept a secret. After all, this is what empathy is for. You cannot just go halfway. If you are to empathize, you must go to the bitter end and prove your sincere impartiality.

After seeing all this and reading about the hearings in newspapers, I hope you take a very comfortable approach to the issue, having left behind all your troubles because of your generous empathy, and receive the news that the members of the gang remember almost nothing, providing preposterous answers to the questions put to them. Not to mention the murderer answering, "I probably sensed it," when asked how he had recognized Hrant Dink.

In fact, what is asked from us is that we ignore the fact that this empathy amounts to deliberately giving consent to unlawfulness and immorality, and that the perpetrator of this unlawfulness and immorality is the entire state organization. This is what it means to be a good citizen around here.

