

İki Kardeşin Hikayesi

CANAN ve ZEHRA

Ahmet Kulaksız



TAVIR
YAYINLARI

memories, documents, photographs

CANAN
and
ZEHRA

By Ahmet Kulaksız

özgürlük

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*to the heroes
of the sacrifice generation*

Publisher's introduction

The book which you are about to read tells of a period in our country known as a test of humanity. It reveals only one page of this test, and also has the special characteristic of being an important historical document.

The number of deaths in resistance due to Death Fasts (*note: hunger strikes until death, of a kind common among political prisoners in Turkey*) over approximately one year will have increased by the time this book is published. But history will continue to record in its pages every moment that passes.

Surely neither the pages of a novel nor the frames of a motion picture could sufficiently describe this historic resistance to fascism which started in our country's prisons and continues to emanate from them.

Everyone in the resistance had to pay a price. Some paid the price with their lives, others lost their freedom. And then there are others who have had to live with the grief of losing a child, which is perhaps one of the greatest losses. One of the men who lives with this grief is Ahmet Kulaksız. Showing great respect for his children's beliefs and continuing to stand up under the weight of this loss, he has earned his place in our memory as a man who made all humanity reconsider what it means to be a father.

Ahmet Kulaksiz was a father. His only wealth was his young daughters. He lost them in this resistance. He stood by them until the end, respecting their struggle and beliefs. He was beside his daughters, always holding their hands, as they fearlessly went to their deaths. He did not let go until they breathed their last. With great fortitude he shouldered the coffins of his daughters. Whatever came to him, he endured. He never

made a distinction between his daughters and the other resisters, who are someone else's children. He has considered each one to be his own child, and when they died, once again acted as a father and comrade and faithfully carried out his last duty to them.

During the period of resistance he never told the media what they wanted to hear when they thrust a microphone in his face. He would only talk about the F-Type Cell Prisons. He spoke of the tyranny. He told why his daughters entered the Death Fast and what they wanted. He became the voice of his daughters and of the prisoners who died but who would not submit.

While Ahmet Kulaksi/ was writing this book, people continued to die and the widespread resistance was still continuing. His hopes in life and connection to life went on without decreasing. His eyes watched the events as they took place, one after the other, and he continued to testify to the reality of these historic events.

In this book you will find the feelings, memories and the story of a father who became one with his daughters during the last 140 days of their lives. Perhaps, from time to time, you will put yourself in Ahmet Kulaksiz's situation and feel sad. You might feel respect for this great man who, with fortitude and patience, has borne a level of grief which no other person could possibly endure.

Perhaps you will experience none of these, and you will blame him for not preventing his daughters' deaths. Do as you will, I leave you to your own conscience to ask yourself, *"what did I do to keep Zehra and Canan alive? "*

The Death Fast Resistance was at the one year mark as we we-

re preparing to publish this book. We feel honoured to be able to inform you via Ahmet Kulaksiz's own pen, of a picture that reflects the historical process of this time.

We would like to thank all our friends who have made an effort to prepare this book and those who helped us by giving us their writings, poems and documents...

TAVIR

The Author's Preface

This story aims to relate a historical process which has taken place. There are many things that can be said about this period. I am not a historian, and definitely not a writer. When this book is considered, there will undoubtedly be points subject to criticism. It will be seen that some people and organisations have not been given the proper attention which they deserve. I know that I am sometimes prone to exaggerate regarding some of my friends, while not doing justice to the others. This was not done with any hidden intent, but is completely based on my own incompetence. I wanted to write a more extensive and detailed story, but because of the state of my emotions, I could do no better. And this fact should be kept in mind by those who would criticise it.

This story relates the very short lives of ZEHRA and CANAN and at the same time tells of those who fought for the resistance on the one hand and on the other, of those who sold their honour and integrity for a bowl of soup by leaving their comrades in the lurch.

Events like this existed before my daughters, and will continue to exist after them too. The treachery which ZEHRA and CANAN witnessed never destroyed their morale. They always trusted in the people and friends for whom they gave their lives. They knew that they would never be forgotten. And this devotion is, and will always continue to be, a source of strength for them.

Another objective of this story is to express to the general public the feelings and thoughts of not only myself and my daughters, but also the others who participate as Death Fast Resisters and their relatives. Even though there are those who would want to stop our voices, I know that there will always be a

way.... I believe that I have fulfilled my duty to my daughters by defending the inheritance they left me in the form of a story. As long as I live I will put their hearts into mine and will continue to be their voice and breath. I know that is a lot to claim, but I cannot repay them in any other way. I have always felt honoured. And my only aim is to be a father of whom they can be proud.

Lastly, I give my love to all those who supported me through the resistance and after my daughters' deaths, to those whose writings did not appear in this book, and especially to the employees at TAVIR who helped my book become published. I will never forget any of their efforts...

AHMET KULAKSIZ

INTRODUCTION

Why Did I Write?

It was the thirteenth day of the month of July. Almost every day for about four and a half months I had been visiting the Death Fast Resisters in the Kucuk Armutlu resistance houses where they lived. Towards evening, our friend Dilek, the director, arrived and asked us whether or not we were going to go to the resistance house where Sevgi Erdoğan was staying. *(Note: Sevgi Erdoğan was a released DHKP-Cprisoner.)*

That same day was to be my second visit to Sevgi. The first thing we did when we got there was to go into the room Sevgi was in. After a short greeting, she asked me what I had been doing and if I had started writing yet. When I said, "No, I haven't started yet. " These words came quietly and slowly out of her mouth:

"You have to write, you have to definitely write about this widespread and awesome resistance. You are the best one to do this, because you paid the highest price. You have lost your two outstandingly beautiful daughters in this resistance. You must write for Canan and Zehra. Yes, write of Canan and Zehra, write of us, and also write of the resistance. You have to tell the world about your daughters and their struggle. I am sure that you can do this the best way. We, the Death Fast Resisters, expect this from you. "

"AH right Sevgi, I promise, " I said, and left her. The following day was Saturday and for the first time in months I thought of staying home and reading.

It was afternoon and the voice on the telephone was Dilek's.

She was telling me that Sevgi Erdoğan had passed away a short while ago. To speak honestly, I expected this news. But not so soon. I immediately got up and set out for Kucuk Armutlu. The following day we buried Sevgi with a torchlit ceremony and it was the ninth anniversary of Ibrahim Erdogan's, her husband's, burial at Karacaahmet graveyard after he was murdered in battle.

I had to write in order to fulfil my promise to Sevgi and the Death Fast Resisters. I knew that this wouldn't be easy. Before that day I had never attempted such a thing. To write about a major resistance was above and beyond my capabilities. My aim in writing this is to tell the story of my martyred daughters Canan and Zehra, and at the same time document the events and acts of heroism which I have witnessed during the resistance.

Yes, during the resistance I witnessed an infinite number of heroic acts. I have been together with people who carry the affections of the world in their hearts, I have had the honour of breathing the same air that they have breathed and feeling the same emotions that they have felt. In a world of which it is said, "It is not worth it to do anything for this people", I have seen souls who are willing to pay the price of their lives for the sake of humanity. The families and friends of any of the resisters whose names appear in this book will undoubtedly have something to say regarding this extraordinary period in time. There is one thing I know: Do whatever I may, what I write will prove insufficient to relate what happened in this resistance. For this reason I intend to give preference to Canan and Zehra's story and follow the resistance through their tale. The stories of the martyrs, heroes and heroines who were subjected to this test of humanity need to be known just as much as my daughters.

CHAPTER I

*Two girl siblings
two hearts
two comrades
two monuments of affection two
unbending symbols of resistance...*

"CANAN and ZEHRA"

In a part of the world, at some point in time, there lived two sisters. Each was the fairest of the fair whose faces reflected the beauty of their hearts. Those who looked at them were warmed by it. You always wanted to look at them. As you looked at them you saw the affection, the hope. You saw the devotion and the solidarity.

You saw the honour of sisterhood. You saw the endless self-sacrifice of love, the devotion to their people, their great love for their free motherland.

This flame of love which spread from their faces and hearts reminded people of their humanity. It shone a light into hearts in the very corners of their country. Nothing could impede this

light. It burrowed through mountains, spread light in dark forests and blasted through thick walls without stopping. It reached their comrades behind the prison walls. It reached the pure and free minds who have fallen captive with their comrades. As this light reached these minds it budded and flowered in the souls of the free captives.

The carnations, snowdrops and lilacs are increasing, the free captives in the cells behind the thick walls are beginning to feel the light of hope and freedom once again.

They are embracing life with a new and firm courage. People far away are wondering what sort of courage, what kind of determination, affection and sisterhood they have. Two little hearts joined together and collected in themselves all the affection and hope in the world. That is what people think. But they are very humble. "No," they say. We are two sisters. We, Canan and Zehra, have not done much at all. We have shouldered a resistance which anyone else could easily shoulder.

People don't believe them; they don't want to believe. They consider them to be too young to defy death, to disgrace death and immortality. "Wo," they say, but they make no move to save their lives. Now Canan and Zehra, understand. "These people don't care about us," they say. "Their affections are fake. If they truly loved us, they would do something in order to save our lives."

This light which makes a hole through the thick walls and illuminates the hearts of the free captives bounced right back from the thick walls of the hearts of the people who were near them. It could not warm these hardened hearts. "Not even our deaths" Canan says. "If not even our deaths will soften your hearts, why don't you go take another look in the mirror?" "Look," Zehra says. "Look in the mirror, but look at a

time when you are alone. What will you see there? Truthfully confess to yourselves what you see there. You will see the hypocrisy, the lovelessness. You will not see warmth and friendship. " You did not even see yourselves fit to be present at our funerals. You have become strangers to each other.

Remember we were defending the same things, had the same aims, had a common hope for establishing a new world. Remember how we were going to make equality, sorority and fraternity the sovereign of the world. And remember how we were going to increase our love and share it. Remember how we were going to always be together. You have lied to us and have also deceived yourselves. See us two sisters; two hearts, declaring your lies to your faces.

We, Canan and Zehra, are sharing everything, we shared life in this world where you do not share even three kuruş (a tiny amount of Turkish money) without a fight, we shared pain, we shared resistance, shared hope, shared affection and finally we shared death. We cannot hope for anything worse than this! And we shared without keeping an account.

Yes, we shared everything which makes humanity beautiful and will become the hope of tomorrow. We were so young, perhaps we would have shared more things. For example we would have shared the same prison with our comrades in cells side by side and shared the same tortures. Unfortunately, you did not share with us, Canan and Zehra, our funeral ceremonies. You didn't share our father's pain. You didn't say, *"You gave up Zehra, then Canan as martyrs, you lost all of your children, but we are your friends, and they were our daughters too, and from now on, we will be with you, don't worry..."* You didn't share even this with our father. Why didn't you?

This question is asked of history. You have to find an approp-

riate answer to give those who will ask you in our name. If you cannot find a response, you will not believe your own answer, no matter what the consequences. For this reason, you have to break the thick walls that surround your hearts and let love into your hearts before long. You have to give just one chance for your hearts to be warmed by affection. You will not regret it. You will see and realise that we were in the right.

If it is necessary to start again to establish the sovereignty of human affection eternally, there must be no reluctance. Canan and Zehra, two sisters, two hearts, two comrades, two monuments of affection, two unbending symbols of resistance. Two stubborn girls from the Black Sea, as tempestuous as the Black Sea, as beautiful and warm as the Black Sea and bountiful as the Black Sea's rain. However, the rain makes the land bountiful, so they spread hope everywhere in the boundless region of Anatolia. Two hearts who bring back to Anatolia the love which they have taken from the Black Sea and used to enrich the suburbs of Istanbul. Two amiable human beings, two sisters whose suburb-grown affections they share with others, and the more they share the more beautiful their faces and souls become. Even when they cannot see each other, their hearts beat together; two flowers which were worried and felt happy at the same time, Canan and Zehra. My daughters... My hearts. How can I tell of you, how can I speak and where do I begin. You cannot imagine how difficult and impossible it is to express you in writing...

I never would have wanted this responsibility to fall upon my shoulders. It was not my preference. But you lived such perfect and honourable lives and left your friends, so now the meaning of my duty has increased. This legacy which has been left in the hands of history and myself must be told. Your love and heroism must be transmitted to future generations. Do you realise what you accomplished in the short span of your lives...

Do you know how you shook the world with your tiny hearts... You, Canan, do you remember, when we came to Istanbul, you were only just a child often years. Our economic situation was so bad! Because we could not buy firewood and coal, you went to bed with your sister to try to get warm.

Your older sister, Zehra, would kindly take you in and snuggle up with you. Even in those days we would try to tell both of you why we could not buy firewood and coal and why we would have to bear these hardships. You would listen to me like an older person. I don't know if you always understood what I said, but I am sure that you understood most of the time. It was like that then, and it continued to be that way. We always discussed all our troubles with each other like friends and adults. Sometimes we said different things but we always kept the connection of love and confidence.

I remember how you wept when we were too late to enrol you in middle school. As your tears were falling like pearls I regretted my tardiness and at once set out and enrolled you at school. In middle and high school you always were a successful student, you never brought home a bad grade. You generally did the things you set your mind to. You also wanted to study in Izmir. Your first choice was to study in Izmir and you achieved your goal. You succeeded but you also did me in! After this we rarely saw each other, and only talked on the phone. Don't think that I have forgotten that we sent you along with your older sister to register in Izmir. You were still our little Canan. You had an older sister. It was best for her to go with you.

Do you remember, my sweet child, it was a day in winter, your older sister had been put under arrest and had been brought to the court? When I said to you: *"It is too cold, don't come, I will go alone?"* You cried, *"No, father, I want to come with*

you. If I don't go to my sister's trial, how could she be any sister of mine? " On a rainy, windy day in winter we waited at the door of the court of law until the weather darkened. When the lawyer appeared at the door, I understood the situation.

When the lawyer said: "*ZEHRA KULAKSIZ has been arrested, "* you embraced me. "*Father, my elder sister has been arrested, "* you said and cried, and I can never forget how your hiccups tightened my chest. I knew that as a father, I needed to be strong. But you were sobbing so exceedingly sincerely that I could not stand it. Without letting you know, I let tears pour down my face. You did not see them. Perhaps you felt them, but you did not see them. I did not show you. Oh, nevertheless, I was a father. And fathers were not to cry. But now I wonder at how the tears that I poured out that day are nothing compared to what tears I poured out after you... Yes, my daughter with a huge heart filled with love, this big man cried much over you. I poured out my tears secretly. Sometimes I could not hold them back, and I cried in front of people. Unfortunately, you did not see it. Or did you see it? But forgive me, daughter! People do not lose their dear ones and loves every day! Be reasonable; even the best things have these sorts of flaws! Is that not so, my Canan...

When we went to visit your older sister Zehra at Ümraniye Prison, you openly, and I also in secret, poured out tears. Just look! You do not know, either. I did not know what you said, how you had a heart-to-heart talk with your older sister, I never knew. I could not gather up the courage to ask you. Anyway, not just only there, neither before nor after, did you tell to me what you said to your older sister. I would hear compassionate discussions between you from time to time and try to understand what had been said. But to no avail! I also usually could not understand the communication and the feeling of relations. Really daughter, how did you establish a dialogue and

how did you blend your hearts? I hear you now saying: *"Forgive me, father, but this emotion cannot be told, it must be experienced."* I understand, honey, I can understand better now than I could then. Isn't it that which gives life meaning... Some write pages and pages, but cannot express anything.

But it is so simple and clear that there is meaning in life. It gives more meaning to life, love and devotion. You gathered into your own personality all that which makes human beings and humanity beautiful.

My daughter, my Canan, you know you had uncle Mehmet. When you were a baby, he took you on a tour and shared everything with you. Remember the savages who raided our house late at night, looking for your uncle to take him into custody. He is still in the cell-type prison. You did not tell me, but I knew. Before you went to Izmir, you used to visit him often in Bayrampaşa Prison. You know how it is said that he is half your father. They told me that in your absence. You loved them and they loved you. You had other older sisters and older brothers there. Many of them lost their lives during the massacre, the others lost their lives later in the Death Fast. Of course, when I speak of you, I must also speak of your friends, I must include the people who you loved. If I do not, I will be doing an injustice to them and you will be sad. I have no intention whatsoever to make you sad.

Do you remember, one of the best times for our friends in Bayrampaşa Prison was when they would get a letter from you. I don't know all of what you shared and wrote to them, but when your letters reached them, all the free captives, including your uncle, would get excited and wait impatiently to read your letter. Especially ASUR KORKMAZ... (*Note: one of those prisoners who died later in the resistance.*)

In your little heart you held such love for them, that the inside of the prison would become a flower garden, the conversations warm and the talks more pleasant.

Your older sisters and older brothers were proud of you, and they would grow impatient to embrace you. You were always little Canan to them. But after you left, many things happened. The situation changed.

Suddenly you grew up and became a big girl. The little Canan who belonged to the resisters and our people was now an example, a heroine and guide. Your older sisters and older brothers would say, *"There are many things we have yet to learn from Canan; we promise to defend the legacy which she left us, as long as humanity exists, Canan will live as our teacher."*

Yes, with your youth and tiny heart, you continue to teach everybody from the oldest to the youngest. People praise me for bringing up such a child. Time and time again people ask me what she was like. They expect me to tell them abnormal things and want to hear things like fables. *"No, my Canan was a normal human, she just had a loving heart and a personality that loved her land,"* I told them. But surely that is not all.

After the spring of the year 2000, the weather began to warm up. As we entered the hot months, a certain question became a current issue. The media began to tell the public about the F-Type Cell Prisons and how they were so comfortable and that they were the ideal places for arrested and sentenced prisoners. They continually propagandised the lie that the system of prison dormitories was very unhealthy and that opposition to the organisation was intimidated, but that when F-Type Prison cells were put into use, this opposition would be removed, and the inmates would be very contented. As the close relatives of

an arrested person, our family would not stay out of these events, we could not have imagined the magnitude of this resistance, and we could not guess the role which our family would play in this resistance.

At first, the government and Ministry of Justice said that no matter what, F-Type Cell Prisons would be put into service and this procedure could not be hindered for any reason. They also said that the prisons would conform to European standards and that the prisons would be even more modern than the European ones. The propaganda which was established with this lie did not take long in finding important support from the media, both on TV and in the newspapers. Then, the Ministry and the media, with one voice, started to say that F-Type Cell Prisons were necessary and that Turkey could not get into the European Union if it didn't solve this problem. The prison problem was not at all unfamiliar to the people of our country, both from today and from the past. Above all, at this time, it is not hard to recognise that a comprehensive attack would become a reality. During these periods in our country, the ruling class anticipated these conditions, because those in our country applied for IMF programmes whose institution has brought poverty and destitution for our people, and the ruling classes have surely calculated that the most dynamic power was the revolutionaries inside and outside the prisons, who would oppose the political status quo. Because of this they had calculated that the revolutionaries' power would have to be reduced so as to stop other sections of society from turning to them. This would mean that they would be silenced and without an identity. If they could fill the F-Type Cell Prisons with the revolutionaries, then they could make other sections of society do what they wanted. They started selling all the government-owned businesses in our country and instituted a system of robbery according to the IMF's prescription, under the vileness they call privatisation. Starting with the free

captives, our country was on the brink of an attack. Both the captives inside and those outside prison, along with their close relatives, started to discuss how we could resist this storm which was increasing day by day.

The inmates did not have too many alternatives. But there were many things which we could do as relatives of the prisoners. Even with our limited resources, we began to do everything we could. On the one hand we made statements to the intellectuals and media writers that the F-Type Cell Prison system was an attack on human life, and on the other hand we tried to rally public opinion with street demonstrations. The relatives of prisoners and our intellectual friends used all their resources to cover distances heretofore unattainable. Meanwhile, the Ministry was restating and underlining the fact that it was impossible to turn back from the project of F-Type Cell Prisons and it was preparing the ground for massacres in the future. While we were explaining that the isolation in the cell prisons was an attack on humanity with our brochures, handouts and books, the prisoners completed their discussions and made a statement about their decisions.

Death Fasts are not uncommon in our country. In these acts of resistance, dozens of human beings have lost their lives or become physically disabled. But this time, the situation was much different. This time the Ministry used all its force against the resistance and the price to be paid would be much higher than before. At that moment, we had no idea that the biggest price to be paid would be by our own family in this resistance. But the mercilessness of the period and greatness of the resistance was so exceedingly magnificent that the history of humanity has not yet recorded this kind of resistance. Then, on the 20th of October 2000, one strong voice from the prisons was heard:

'Wow it is our turn to speak. Until now, everybody has talked and written, but it has not been possible to stop this attack aimed at our identity and our honour. "

"Now it is our turn to speak and we are starting the Death Fast Resistance until our demands are accepted. "

When the decision to initiate a Death Fast was declared to the public, something else has been done that no former resistance did at any time or in any place in the world. For the first time, to support Death Fast Resisters in the prisons, those on the outside also began hunger strikes. Therefore, from both inside and outside of the prisons, a period of Death Fasting began.

People of our country were accustomed to the Death Fasts in prisons, but could not understand these actions started by those not in prison. The activists outside prison walls defended their position and stated that their aim was to demonstrate to the public that which they could not see and to announce that which they could not hear. They said that the attack was very comprehensive and that it would require those outside the prisons to join the resistance as well.

After a short time, when my eldest daughter Zehra said that she made an important decision and when she talked to me, I understood at once what she wanted to say. Yes, my elder daughter ZEHRA KULAKSIZ was involved in the team of Death Fasters which would start outside.

I could not explain completely what I felt that day when I think about it now. *"Listen, daughter, you are shouldering too much responsibility with this decision. Your life belongs to you, I know this. Everything that I will say is meaningless! You decided, but as your father, I suggest that you should think once more. "* When I said this, she said to me; *"You are right! I*

know the weight of responsibility and the difficulty of the mission which I have taken on. I have considered everything. I could not be just a bystander in this resistance that is so close to me. Don't ask this of me! I want you to respect my decision. I love you so much and I hope that you can understand me, " she said and kissed me on both cheeks. "I love you too, daughter and do respect your decision, " I said to her. I kissed her eyes and then her forehead and finally I embraced her. I parted from her without letting her feel the two tear drops that fell from my eyes.

I cannot remember how many days passed after that, but one night my telephone rang. The voice on the telephone belonged to my younger daughter Canan. The voice belonged to her but I had a hard time understanding what she was saying. Actually Canan was speaking normally, but I had lost the ability to comprehend. I felt that I became weak in the knees. I could not speak because of the lump in my throat. After a while I began to understand the things she was saying and I wanted to believe that it was a joke. Unfortunately, it was not. When my younger daughter Canan told me that she had volunteered to join the Death Fast in Izmir, I lost all my strength and collapsed on the floor.

For a long time, I tried to convince myself that this telephone conversation was a mistake. But, alas, I had two daughters. I had no other children. Both of them joined as volunteers in the Death Fast which started outside the prisons and they starved themselves. One of them was in Istanbul, the other, in Izmir....

My daughters, as always, have done what they wanted. Even if they were separated from each other, their very warm hearts somehow still beat together. So even though they were separated by time and distance, together they made the most difficult and honourable decision of their lives. I have always won-

dered at this. I could not understand how two hearts could beat and feel as one.

I don't think anybody could understand it.

Oh history, have you ever witnessed anything like this? Authors, cartoonists, the well-educated, the illiterate, scientists, the ignorant, city dwellers, villagers, lovers, beloved, youth, old people, please explain to me what kind of love bond is this? Let those who have heard tell those who haven't, let those who have seen it demonstrate to those who have not, send out a town crier to walk all over Anatolia and declare it. Let the media channels all over the world inform everyone. There are two martyrs.

There are two sisters living in these two cities, one is Canan and the other is Zehra, and they shared everything they had during their short lives. They have tasted the flavour of sharing so fully that they now share even death. Have you ever heard of such a thing? If you have not heard and have not seen, here they are! One is in Istanbul and the other, in Izmir. These beauties, these flowers, are laying down their own bodies to starve. Then they will share death.

After this, these two sisters with hearts full of love will be remembered in the pages of history as heroines who defied death and set up a barricade to repel this savage attack that has been inflicted on all of humanity.

Remember, people! People of our country.... Remember the great love, the magnificent feeling and look at the two sisters... Think of them, think thousands of times.

You, oh tyrants, you, oh brigands, those who steal, who betray their homeland and tread on the honour of their people for a

handful of dollars. Those who auction off our national honour by going to the doors of foreigners. And those who condemn to death the innocent children of the country, those who tear our children from us by force with execution devoid of proper judgement, who drink blood, just look at those reptiles! In the name of the humanity which you are trying to destroy, two tiny hearts embellished with love say, "No. "

No, we will hinder your attempts to poison us. We will not let you tread under foot the honour of our humanity. You will not destroy the honour of Anatolia; we will never give you permission. And we will not abandon our tradition of sharing with each other. Perhaps we will die once with our honour, but you, machines of tyranny, will die every day drenched in your dishonour. Your campaigns that try to give us a bad name among our people will one day turn back on you, and sooner or later our people will see your real faces and you will understand that your tyranny will not last forever.

You represent torture, oppression and massacre. We two sisters, Canan and Zehra, represent love, devotion and self-sacrifice.

This is the way history writes it. Even they appear unimportant to some people, these two people, two sisters, two hearts, who had understood the mission they shouldered, and understood that the responsibility was just as heavy as it was honourable. They knew that henceforth they would be remembered alongside the Death Fast resistance, and that there would not be a period of this resistance where their names were not remembered.

The days began to pass slowly. The days since the beginning of the Death Fast Resistance against F-Type Cell Prisons were steadily increasing. 45, 46, 47, until the resistance came to

the sixtieth day, while the discussions were continuing among the prison inmates, the Ministry was continually making one manoeuvre after another, and concocting story after story. Instead of replying to the inmates' demands, they were attempting to destroy the resistance and mislead public opinion with the support of the media. When that day came, humanity witnessed the biggest massacre in the form of a cruel army who sold their souls and pens to the Devil, and raised their lies to the highest level.

On the morning of December 19, 2000, the machines of tyranny and massacre began to act. They attacked thousands of defenceless, unarmed people who were locked up in the prisons, and came at them with guns and incendiary bombs. Even as people were being burned alive and murdered, all the newspapers and media were tricked and joined in the lies.

When we reached Bayrampaşa Prison on the morning of December 19, the view that we saw was enough to turn the blood cold in our veins. Thousands of soldiers, policemen, bulldozers and armoured vehicles were coming in and out of the prison and we could hear the sound of intense gunfire going on inside the prison. Even though we were approximately 700 metres from the prison, our eyes began to water with the effects of the tear-gas bombs which were even then being thrown at inmates.

It was as if there was a war, and the military force which we saw was the army of occupation. Although we saw the dreadfulness of this view outside, to imagine the dreadfulness of the savagery inside was too disgusting for the human mind to bear.

When the act of massacre was initiated, the media lie machine had already been given the duty of trying to persuade pub-

lie opinion of the massacre's legitimacy.

The same day that the massacre took place, an event which took place in front of Ümraniye Prison is a good example.

One TV reporter, broadcasting live at a distance of 1.5 kilometres from the prison, said, "*Dear audience, at this very moment terrorists have opened fire on the security forces.*" As he said this, an elderly woman approached him and said, "*My child, I want to ask you something. Right now we are one and a half kilometres from the prison and we cannot see behind the walls. How can you lie to people and say that terrorists are opening fire and that they have long-barreled guns? Have you no fear of God? You should be ashamed!*" The reporter responded, "*There is nothing that can be done. We obey orders. The orders come from higher up. We must obey or we will lose our jobs.*"

Those who were instrumental in publishing these lies and acted out of fear of losing their jobs are losing their jobs anyway. After so many betrayals, they could not avoid losing their jobs. After a short time, under the pretext of the existing crisis, hundreds of these people lost their jobs. I don't know, but I really wonder whether today when they turn and look back at the massacres, how can they not feel guilt in their conscience? How could they compromise the ethics of journalism by participating in what the tyrants did out of fear of losing their jobs?

The massacre operation lasted four full days. During these four days, tens of thousands of gas bombs were thrown among defenceless people. Bullets were fired at specific targets. During the massacres there was one part which the human mind cannot comprehend, which makes people shudder and be ashamed at what took place at the women's section in Bayram-

pasa Prison. Savagery which the author of these lines could not possibly express. Imagine a bomb, a fire bomb which only injures people. It does not harm clothing or furniture, but burns and scorches flesh. This is what must be considered here. All humanity must consider it. What sort of mind must have invented such a bomb? How could it invent a weapon which would only destroy people? How could it be so tyrannical... Oh God, what has humanity come to!

If we, the entire world of humanity, do not become ashamed of our situation, how are we going to be saved from this audacity? Yes, they threw these bombs directly at the women in the women's section from holes drilled in the ceiling. They throw one down, and one is not enough, so they throw down another, and another, and innumerable bombs are thrown down to damage and destroy the bodies of defenceless people. And the women are being BURNED ALIVE. They are being burned, and those who carried out the massacre are watching. These robots who could not even be called human were watching these events with pleasure. It would have been understandable if only they were watching. Because these creatures who have been programmed for murdering were only doing their jobs. But, no, they were not the only ones watching. The people of the country, whose minds had been twisted by erroneous information were also watching. Our well-educated glorious professors, our lecturers and our teachers also watched. Glorious politicians who were very standoffish and superior watched. This human drama was being witnessed by the trade union chiefs, who said they were protecting the rights of the working class and were fighting for class unification, and who watched without embarrassment or shame. The environmentalists who rush out into the streets when two acres of forest land have been burned and these swindlers who parade around and say they protect nature while the people inside were burning furiously... They also watched. Who knows, maybe they were

secretly saying, *"it serves them right, you cannot struggle against the state, in this human tragedy."* Even some progressive, leftist party leaders did not notice that their honour was burnt up together with the women who were burned in the dormitory, for these party leaders also watched and did nothing.

On the one hand, there was a very small number of people burning under the bombs inside and their relatives outside and on the other hand, there was a powerful, tyrannical device to convince society to remain passive by telling it lies.

All this is reminiscent of ancient times, when tyrants gathered their people while sacrifices were being made to their war gods, and the people just played the role of onlookers. They became partners in crime. They dulled their hearts and consciences and then became blind. In order not to hear the screams of the people who were burning, they made more and more noise and brought out all their machinery so that no one could hear these screams, except a very small of number of people.

The rulers denied it, the TV stations, the newspapers, Ministers and the President - they all denied it. They claimed that they did not burn anybody, but that the prisoners burned themselves. When has the state ever burned its own citizens? And they say: we would never do something like this. Rather than show the massacre, they put to work the powerful pens and commentators of the media. The tables were turned, the murderers have become innocent, and the innocent have become guilty.

History has wanted to repeat itself once again. Just as in previous times, the oppressed have been found guilty and judged right in front of history.

Bu this time, the falsehood was obvious. It would not be long

before all their lies and the documentation of this operation would be made public and the purpose of the massacre would be clear to the entire world.

The days were passing and we, the relatives of the prisoners, were not able to receive any news from our daughters and sons... we were living with the misery of not knowing whether they were dead or alive. Meanwhile, the Ministry displayed its hypocrisy once again by opening the F-Type Cell Prisons that it previously said would be delayed for an indefinite period of time. The prisoners after being tortured were thrown into these very cold cells. From now on, the resistance was transformed into something with quite a different character, it became an honourable struggle extending across the seasons, and lasting in spite of all barriers created inside or outside the prisons.

We, the relatives of the prisoners, may have been small in number but we were determined and hopeful. We would not leave our children at the mercy of these bastards and began to voice their pleas outside the prisons.

I was unable to obtain any news from my brother for five days. We waited in front of a morgue. The relatives of the people who lost their lives in the massacre were waiting anxiously in front of the morgue, wondering whether or not the corpse in the black plastic bag was a sister, brother or spouse.

The people of the entire country were silenced as they watched these events on their televisions, as if it was happening somewhere else in the universe. We were only a handful of people. Can you imagine what it was like to see this attack on humanity and only be a handful of people? Most of your friends do not come to your side because they are afraid and then you feel isolated from the world. The government forces who isolated prisoners in the F-Type Cell Prisons were now trying

to isolate us on the outside. Finally, on the fifth day, we heard that my brother was injured and was in the hospital.

It was a cold and rainy Saturday.... Seven beautiful people were murdered in the massacre, and seven carnations...

When the heroes of the hope were brought from the morgue to Gazi neighborhood, there were no tears in anybody's eyes. There was wrath on faces. Yes, nobody was crying and yet as the rain poured down, it was as if they were buckets of tears. Even the sky could not tolerate this massacre. The sky was crying, the tears were becoming torrents in the streets of Istanbul. The sky could not resist. It was as if to say to the tyrants, *"What kind of massacre is this? What kind of humanity is this? After so many young people had been murdered, why were the people not screaming out for justice?"*

The sky was crying humanity. The sky, not people, was crying because of what had become of humanity. After two days and nights of crying, the eye ducts of the sky dried up. We were burying our martyrs in ones and twos.

As the month of Ramadan was coming to a close, people of our country were preparing for the Ramadan feast (a three-day feast at the end of the fast of Ramadan). We would not reveal our grief to these tyrants who ruined the feast for us. We buried our grief in our hearts.

We knew that this resistance will be a long-lasting one and we therefore needed to prepare our stamina for the long march ahead.

At this point, another important subject needs to be addressed. In the period before the operation began, some circles considered the explanation presented by the Ministry to be suffi-

ent. However, because the inmates resisted compromise during the post-massacre period, the Ministry had to place the blame for the incident on the inmates, seeing that there was decreasing public support for the accusations. This whole scenario is a perfect example of the situation our country is in regarding human rights and democracy, and the lack of principle and willpower of the government. Yes, public support before the massacre decreased after December 19. What happened to cause such a change? Before all else, one thing needs to be understood. Since most people assumed that the Death Fast Resistance would be concluded in a short time, they figured they should be involved in the situation. But after December 19, they were met by something unexpected. The wrath of the state was horrifying and was no laughing matter. People were being murdered without mercy, and the government would not permit any opposition.

Frankly speaking, it was a dangerous situation. When those who were expecting an easy victory were met with an unexpected attack, they realised that things were not going well and at once they began to look for a responsible party. But for some reason or other they did not include those mainly responsible for the massacre. Can you imagine? You are supporting the resistance which has been initiated with some specific demands. Thirty people then lost their lives because of an attack. None of the demands have been accepted. The Minister of Internal Affairs says *"We have been planning this operation for a year."* One of the mediators (*note: in talks that took place earlier between the authorities and the prisoners*) says, *"We were used by the state."* In summary, the picture painted by the government, everyone understood to be a kind of election tactic... Except our friends who were not able to understand this. In the end, there were 30 dead, countless injured people and the Minister of Justice failed to keep his word. He decided to begin filling the F-Type Cell Prisons with people who were

to be tortured. They ever asked themselves the reason for the loss in public support. They do not ask, because it will be too difficult to give defensible answers. It is much easier to dump the responsibility on the prisoners and the ones who lost their lives... And then abandon the area. By doing this, they are both separating themselves from a dangerous situation and proving that they are clever politicians.

To speak honestly, as the resistance continued, there will be many more such tragedies occurring. The ideals of the resistance were forced into submission and compromise by the government because of the world view defended by politicians. With the government's negative propaganda and the beginning of a new period for the resistance, the issue of the Death Fast Resistance was erased from the daily agenda of public opinion.

Presently, the government is continuing to attack any kind of democratic struggle in the most brazen manner. In Istanbul where TAYAD (Solidarity Committees for the Relatives of Prisoners) have been opened to support the Death Fast, the government raided and sealed up its doors. Now, there was no longer a place for the resisters on the outside. In order to continue the resistance on the outside, requests were made to various democratic organisations, trade unions and political parties... But all were rejected for different reasons. Meanwhile, my elder daughter ZEHRA KULAKSIZ who was among the resisters, moved to SENAY HANOGLU's house in Kucuk Armutlu. SENAY was also a member of the Death Fast Resistance and her house became the centre of the resistance outside the prisons.

Prior to the opening of TAYAD, the Death Fast Resisters made their start in the apartment of that wonderful person and our friend with a warm heart, BILGESU ERENUS. That is to say,

the resistance on the outside started in our lovely elder sister Bilgesu's house and went on to today. There are many more things which could be told about our elder sister Bilgesu, who has always been present at our side and has shared all her experience. I hope that I will be able to share that in the future.

While the resisters in Istanbul moved to Kucuk Armutlu, another group of resisters that included my younger daughter CANAN KULAKSIZ had been in the building of the OOP (Freedom and Solidarity Party) in the Konak neighbourhood of Izmir. The state forced them to move, and they stayed in the NAKLIYAT-IS (a transport workers' trade union) building before moving to a squatter's house in Yamanlar, Izmir.

So, older sister Zehra in Kucuk Armutlu, and little Canan in Yamanlar... Two sisters, two resisters, two comrades, who continued along the path that their struggle had drawn for them.

Actually, I spoke many times throughout the resistance. I tried to share my opinions with people on TV, in the newspapers and at meetings.

But Canan and Zehra did not have such opportunities. Yet in spite of everything they must speak and leave their thoughts, lives and resistance for future generations. Therefore, as their father, I will try to help them as much as I can.

CHAPTER II

Canan tells her story

I'm CANAN KULAKSIZ. I was born in November 1981. I don't remember what day it was. But I know that during those years, the nightmare of September 12 came upon us. (*Note: in 1980, this was the date of the military coup in Turkey.*) The police and gendarmes came down upon the prisons of our country in a savage way, bringing in their wake torture and massacres.

Whatever is good and worthy in my country, that is what the directors of the September 12 incident attacked. People were put under surveillance at a whim and while there, were interrogated for 90 days.

My older brother Remzi gave me my name. He was in Erzincan Prison at the time I was born. Everyone suggested names, but my father said no, Remzi was to give me my name. They sent news to Erzincan Prison and waited one whole month until they received a reply. As you see, I was nameless for one month. Older brother Remzi said Canan, and everyone liked the name. I also liked it. My older sister Zehra was two and a half at the time.

We were a low-income family. My mother was a housewife and my father had no regular work. He worked in tea factori-

es when the season was in, and during the winter he tried to earn a living by being a peddler in the city. Before we moved to Istanbul he tried to make a living by opening a little shop or two.

Meanwhile, we owned a few small tea fields, but our family was so large that we never managed to escape destitution.

When I think back over our childhood, I see nothing much worth noting. My older sister and I, like the other children who lived in Anatolia, tried to grow up half hungry, half full. During this time, we lived through one important experience: the divorce of my parents. I think I was five years old. I could never find out the reason why they divorced. In all probability, they could not love each other. We stayed with our father. But as I look back, there is something which I vividly remember. At no time and in no place did my father ever speak one word about my mother. He never said anything when we went to visit her and stayed with her for a while. We didn't fuss over the subject, but simply tried to understand it with our minds of children. I started primary school. I was educated in the primary school in our neighbourhood until third grade. After the first semester we moved to Istanbul and I continued my education at Esenyurt Primary School. During this time I realised the difference between Istanbul and Rize (note: the town on Turkey's eastern Black Sea coast where the family came from). In Rize, we had 15-20 students per class, but in Istanbul we had 90-95 students per classroom. Here you realise that life is hard on the poor no matter where they may live.

Istanbul was quite a different city. There was nobody you could approach for help, because everyone was too busy saving themselves. There was a tradition of sharing in our family. Our poverty did not reduce the warmth of our affections. We would discuss the reasons of our poverty, and decide what we

must do.

My grandmother and grandfather would stay with us during the winter, then return to Rize in the summer. I loved them so much. They dearly loved us, too. Now I try to comprehend how they can bear the absence of me and my older sister. I miss them already. We lived in the same house with my uncles Ismail and Mehmet. Sometimes we had disputes in the house.

On such occasions, my father would interfere in the dispute, calmly state his opinion about what should be done, and so the dispute would be settled amicably. I cannot understand how he did it but he had the extraordinary talent of persuasion.

And so the days came and past. Uncle Mehmet went into the army and uncle Ismail moved into his own house. So my father, older sister and I passed the summer together. That year we went to Rize for the semester holiday. After we got back my father said that he wanted to talk to us. He said, *"Now, children, I met a woman and we love each other. I want to live with her. But if you say no, we won't get along with her, we don't want her, we will break up."* We immediately embraced our father. We said, your happiness is our happiness, too. Therefore the matter was amicably settled and my father's fear never became reality.

When we met Sengul, we loved her. We called her older sister. We didn't know why. She did not want us to call her *"mother"*. We liked calling her older sister. Anyway, with a simple marriage ceremony for my father, a new member joined our family.

The days passed. Uncle Mehmet returned from military service. After approximately one year, an important event affected

our lives. The arrest of my uncle Mehmet began the period of prison involvement for us. Yes, my uncle was in prison, and at a young age I became acquainted with the doors of prisons...

During high school I both studied and helped my father in our stationery shop during the summer holidays. Yes, I became a high school pupil and this showed that I had grown up. I fell in love! I could not understand how it happened, but I fell in love with a young man. And we loved each other.

I have had other loves since then, but this one was different. We were so young and our hearts beat like the wings of a bird. We were so happy. My friend and I continued to be together until I went to Izmir for university. During that time, this love held an important place in my life.

The same year that I completed high school I failed the entrance exam for university and was forced to continue going to private prep classes. From time to time I would visit the prisons, and I met men and women there who became dear to me. Gradually, I began to change my opinions and conception of my world by the influence of my friends there. When I talked to those people, I felt that my horizons were broadening. My opinions became mature, and I began to realise that it was necessary that solutions be found to the problems of our country. I thought of the improprieties which were to be found everywhere in the country, the violations of human rights and the solutions to the academic and democratic problems in the universities. And so my pondering the problems of my country comes into the rest of my life. At last I was producing my own opinions about the events that were taking place in our country and discussing them with my friends and becoming rich in knowledge. At the same time I entered the university examinations, earned a place in the biology department of Aegean University and said hello to Izmir, which was to be the third

city I lived in during my short life. Izmir was a city about which I knew absolutely nothing. I did not know anyone in the city. It took me a long time to establish a dialogue with the friends whom I met in the dormitory and relationships with others. Meanwhile, I wrote to and received letters from my friends at Bayrampaşa Prison. At the same time I developed friendships with some people that I knew from Aegean TAYAD (*The Committee of Solidarity with the Families of the Prisoners*) and began to discuss opinions for determining our attitude to the political period which I would in the future meet face to face.

After I completed the preparatory year, I spent the summer months in Istanbul, then returned to Izmir. When I returned there, discussions concerning the F-Type Prisons had already begun. Uncle Mehmet was a prisoner. I had to do something. While trying to figure out what I could do, a second piece of information reached me which dragged me into an emotional storm. The Death Fast Resistance had spread outside the prisons, and my sister had joined.

When I discussed the situation with my friends, and I told them that my older sister Zehra had joined, they said that it was enough to have one person in a family join the Death Fast. I told them that I could not leave my older sister on her own, and that I must join the resistance also. My decision was definite and I would not forsake Zehra. I had never left my sister to stand by herself before, and I wasn't going to now. The most difficult side of the issue was how I was going to tell my father. How could he bear to hear that I had joined before he had even got a chance to get over the shock of his other daughter joining? I knew that my father was strong and would be able bear it. He had learned a lot about life by then.

My heart was pounding as I wondered what response my fat-

her would give me when I called him. When he answered the phone, I told him about my voluntary decision to join the Death Fast Resistance. There was silence on the other end. I tried to imagine what was happening there. After some time he said, *"You too, daughter? You too, my Canan? Did you also begin the Death Fast after your sister did... Didn't either of you ever think of me? Didn't you wonder how your father would ever be able to bear such a serious responsibility?"* I said *"Yes, we did, father."* I continued, *"My father is powerful and sturdy. He can bear this."* I don't know what he heard and what he didn't, because the conversation was cut off and I hung up the phone.

My dear father, I thought and tried to understand your spiritual position at the time. You had two daughters and both of them had entered the Death Fast. God, what kind of power can bear such a condition. But as I said, our father is filled with love. He would bear these difficulties and not shame us. The days passed, and I remember when my father came to visit me for the first time. When you saw me you pressed me to yourself and smelled me. What about me, father? When I embraced you I felt as light as a bird. But for some reason you never talked about our conversation on the phone. I can never forget how proud I was when I introduced you to my friends and how you kissed them and chatted with them as if you had known them all your life.

Then we wished you farewell and we soon heard of the massacres that had taken place in the prisons. Many of the people we loved died. The friends that we had made in Bayrampaşa Prison were taken from us. Actually, they did not leave at all. They were always with us. They laughed with us and breathed with us. We never forgot them and always kept them alive in our hearts.

Later on the police made a surprise raid on us and as a result we were forced to move to a different Izmir branch of NAK-LIYAT-IS. I remember that you came there twice and we had a heart-to-heart talk.

But my dear father, I must say one thing: When you came for the last time, you couldn't hide your anxiety anymore. I was trying to understand you and do you justice.

We could not stay there for long, and when we moved to a squatter's house in Yamanlar, my grandmother came to visit before you did. I understood why my rose-faced grandmother came. She wanted to persuade me to abandon the resistance and take me back to Rize. In the short time that she stayed with me, I tried to explain the scale of the resistance to my dear grandmother and make her understand that this struggle was a matter of honour. But because her reasoning and feelings were so different, I don't think that she was able to understand. When she returned to Istanbul and then went to Rize, I felt that they were not ready for the end which was coming upon us.

I cannot explain what my feelings were when I found out that you wanted to take me from Izmir and bring me to Kucuk Armutlu. It was like a dream. I would finally be reunited with my older sister and we would continue the resistance side by side. I will never forget the day that you came to take me. On the one hand there was the sadness of separation from my friends with whom I had put my body to starvation, and on the other hand was the excitement of being together with my dear sister whom I missed so much. I was tossed to and fro between these two emotions.

There are some times when we have different emotions at the same time. You cannot decide which ones make you feel glad and which ones make you feel sad. I went through something

like this. But in the end the decision of going to Istanbul and the joy of continuing the resistance together with my older sister dominated. You and Ahmet and I set off for Istanbul.

After a long journey, we approached the Resistance House and knocked at the door. I was holding the flower which I had asked you to buy. When I saw my older sister among the other resisters who greeted us, I realised how much I had missed her. I realized that Zehra was more than just my older sister. She was a mother, a comrade. A human that carried half of my heart. She was an oasis for me in a rainless desert.

My dear sister, how I had missed your smile, your smile with pearly white teeth. I had missed your fragrance, your embraces, your kissing me. I used to think of how our bond and my love for you would grow when I could not see you. I used to think of how that love spreads through the world.

After we began the resistance together at the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu, we heard reports of deaths from prisons. I was in Istanbul, finally together with my father and older sister, and we became closer. The days passed more quickly and my health was getting worse day by day. When we were leaving Izmir my father had said that I had to quit the Death Fast, no matter what happened. He thought that one member of the family was enough, that he couldn't bear to lose both of us. To this day, my father always speaks openly. Whatever he wanted to say something he would say it clearly and intelligibly. He said to me, *"My daughter, my Canan; look, your older sister is continuing, at least you quit! Everyone will understand. Nobody will be offended or say that you were afraid."* I said to him, *"Father, I understand that it is difficult for you, but I have a responsibility to fulfil. While countless others are exposing their bodies to hunger and are awaiting their deaths, I cannot leave the resistance and pretend to not see."*

Do not ask me to lose my self-respect, I cannot do it. I know how difficult it is for you, but you must bear it. You are different, you 're not like other fathers, you are my father, my beloved but I cannot do this. "

At that moment, you could read on his face the storm that broke loose in his heart. The huge man, the lovable friend Who had enough love for the whole world... The love in his heart would be enough for the whole world. When he thought of the probability of losing his daughters, you could see the lines of his face and see that he was writhing in pain. It was not easy; his two daughters, both of them were coming and going across the thin line between life and death.

My-'dear father, I know we worried you and left you in a difficult position. Like the other fathers, you wanted to educate us and give us the means for living. You imagined taking your daughters by the arm and strutting around, proudly introducing us. You would say, this is my daughter, a teacher; this is my other daughter, an economist. My dear father, life does not always present to people the world they have their hearts set upon. This is your situation. How are you going to bear the difficult days which await you? Oh, if only I could help you! But you must bear these alone. I don't know what you will do, but you must find a solution for this. I believe that you can do it. I'm sure that huge heart of yours will find a way.

When I think of my last days with my older sister, my dear comrade, I realise that I didn't see you, my dear father. I know that despite your desire to be with me during the end, you were afraid that you wouldn't b"e able to bear it.

I understand and am not offended. What father could display such fortitude as you? I don't think that there is such a person in the world. In any case, I could not be offended; I always tri-

ed to understand you. Although I tried to warn that you should be strong, I knew that the situation you would be up against was very difficult. When the inevitable finally came, I still continued to observe what you did.

It was a Sunday morning, April 15th, 9:30. I was leaving you in the physical sense. I was saying "*Farewell!*" to everybody, who understood the meaning to my very short life and tried to remember that CANAN was really a person in history. But I was still watching you and trying to understand what happened after I died.

The last two weeks that I spent with my sister in the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu were very full. That is to say; the people that I knew and the time I spent with them made me happy. When I came to Kucuk Armutlu, after my sister and I got caught up on how things were going, I spent the excellent days with our resister friends and with the beautiful faces of people who wanted to give support to us.

On our walk toward death, we never cut our ties to life. We always remained tied to life. We protected its worth and tried to represent it. I know that some people will say that we were passionately in love with death. They will wonder why we did not choose some struggle other than death. We loved life enough to die for its sake. Surely this is difficult to understand. There is nothing except life in this world which is worth dying for. It was to explain and demonstrate this that we exposed our very young bodies to starvation. Do they think it is easy to pay such a price while we were studying at university and planning a good future?

Do they believe that we didn't think about finishing university and living our lives, like millions of other people, that we didn't plan our futures and take into consideration the profits

we could make in life? During my very short life, I had hoped for a good job and an easy life. I had also often thought of saving myself while society was destitute. While my uncle and his friends were enduring torture in the F-Type Prison Cells, and were commanded to give up their identities and political opinions, how could I imagine it all away and think only of myself?

While the people near me were being murdered, how could I deny it and say that it has nothing to do with me? The decision was not easy to make. It wasn't very easy to expose my body to starvation. It was a thousand times harder to not quit and face death. Just imagine: You expose your body to starvation for people, but many of the people you are suffering for oppose you. And they do everything they can to convince you to give it up. We are the only ones who can know how difficult it was.

I was not able to share much with Gulsuman, who died before I did. When I arrived her case began to get worse. How interesting. Gulsuman was leaving her son motherless, and I was leaving my father. The resistance sheltered such beauties as well as tragedies.

Senay was also in the resistance, and her husband was also fasting on his own in prison. They had two children. One daughter and one son. She loved her children very much and there was nothing she would not sacrifice for them. What an interesting situation. As Senay was leaving her children she would explain to them the reasons for the resistance. I wonder what answer she would give her children if they said, "*Mother, what right do you have to go off and leave us!*"

I don't know if her children asked her that question, but if they did, I don't think that the answer persuaded them. I think it

was too difficult for them to comprehend this with their minds of children.

It is a difficult period. That is what makes the resistance meaningful and difficult to explain. To struggle for life by dying, so that other children shouldn't be forced to leave their parents, that there should not be any more longing. That the young ones might fall asleep in the lap of the old ones and feel their warmth and tenderness and the old ones can embrace and caress the young ones. This is part of the essence of our resistance. Perhaps more can be said, but I don't have much time.

There was also Hulya, but it is difficult to describe her. She didn't speak much, argued with nobody, and tried to live inoffensively. Although she didn't show it, I knew that she had a warm heart. It was as if she tried to hide the fact. When I first came to the Resistance House in K. Armutlu, she told my father that it was as if a divine light had descended on the home. She had likened me to an angel. She said I was as innocent and beautiful as an angel. Later, she told my father that she had sometimes seen me in her dreams, and stroked my hair as we had long chats together. For the cause of the resistance, she collected donations from her friends and distributed food to the poor in her neighbourhood. Surely this action was a sign of her love and loyalty to her people. In short, Hulya was a different sort of person.

Naturally, my experiences in the Armutlu Resistance House are not restricted to these. Our friends came to visit us. And what friends! Each of them was like a lion. Their hearts were pure and warm.

Friends whose eyes shone with joy, and warmed others with their glance and made our lives pleasant. My compassionate friends would have been pleased to present us with their hearts

on a golden tray, if it were possible. Even when I was at my worst, you have no idea how calming it was for me to even speak just a few words to them. Besides ordinary people, I became acquainted with famous authors and musicians. You would think that I had lived in Armutlu for two centuries, not two weeks. Suavi would visit us. He was a tall man with long, unkempt hair and beard, who would make you feel warm whenever he spoke to you. I loved this compassionate and humble man who worked very hard for the success of the resistance and became an enemy to smoking.

There was Edip Akbayram. You know, Father; the Edip you described as a musician who would never adulterate the quality of music. But you should know that he never adulterated the quality of his life, either. Whenever he came to our house, our mood grew happy and the atmosphere was one of a concert. Edip would sing and we would be his accompaniment. The warmth and emotion of his voice was greatly pleasing and we were merry. My dear father, do not forget Edip. There must be many things that you can share with each other. I am sure that you will be good friends. I will never forget dear Edip with his artistic personality and humanism.

May he never think that I have forgotten her; how could I ever forget her? Ayten, Edip's wife. I don't know how I can describe her. Ayten has a special place in my heart. As I wonder why I love her so much, I remember that she is from the Black Sea. So she is my fellow countrywoman. Perhaps that is the reason why I loved her so much. Not only is she from the Black Sea,

but also for the love she expressed and the attention she showed me. It was fortunate that she is older brother Edip's wife and my friend. During that short time, she attended to all my needs and was right beside me. When I was doing well she was pleased, and her gladness radiated from her face. When I

was not doing well, she made an extraordinary effort to conceal her fear and anxiety. She tried to cheer me up to live one more minute, one more hour. She kissed and caressed me. I felt her warmth. When I put my head on her chest, I felt better. I am indebted to her. I loved her so much. Thank you, Ayten. Take care of Edip. Do not let your unity and happiness be broken. I send you lots and lots of kisses.

Then there was Dilek. She was dark, tall and thin. The dark beauty, my dear friend Dilek who always felt, and tried to conceal, a damnable grief in her heart for not being able to do anything. She strove too hard for us, disregarded her own work, ran here and there and gave all of her energy, that the resistance could be finished and so that these young bodies shouldn't have to be buried. She never lost hope and spent a large part of her life so that we could resist a little bit more. But what can we do? Dilek, your efforts produced results only to a certain degree. In spite of all your efforts, your hopes were never completed. That is life; it is often cruel and doesn't turn out as we want it to.

There was Ferhat. Ferhat Tunç who had a tall and slender build. He is a folk poet, who tries to make known the love, hope and voice of the people in the world through his doleful voice. That is why he was tyrannised. I became acquainted with him and liked him very much. He liked me very much, too.

The warmth of his voice has penetrated his heart. It is as if he sings his folk songs with his heart, not his voice. He brought us the voice of Anatolia during his short visits. In those short hours we relived the centuries-long history of Anatolia. We enjoyed Sheikh Bedreddin and Borkluce. Pir Sultan came to our home through his songs and became our guest. We heard innumerable tales of people who died in resistance and struggle in Anatolia. He brought us freedom's prisoners, who were

in the prisons, bordered with four walls and separated from their loved ones. We sang folk-songs for them and they sang them for us, together with Ferhat Tunç. Don't forget us, Ferhat. Don't forget us and don't let us be forgotten. I know you liked me and my older sister very much. I heard that you were thinking of writing a folk song for us. You have done well; we expected this from you. I can imagine it will be a very nice folk song. Besides, you are our Ferhat! It can't be bad if you are singing it! Well done! But don't leave off there. Be the voice of other resisters, too. They deserve it, too. Don't let any of us be forgotten. Don't silence your voice and instrument for our sake! Be sure that even if we are not with you, we are listening to you. We will hear you, no matter where you sing. I like you a lot too.

I became acquainted with the other people, too, but I can't manage to tell about them all. That's why I want them to pardon me. For example, there was Bilgesu. Bilgesu Erenus. I wanted to tell about her, too. But I'm afraid that I can't tell about her well enough. I want my older sister Zehra to tell about her. They have been together since the beginning of the resistance. They spent many meaningful days together. She deserves much praise, but I think I will let my older sister explain, because it will be more meaningful.

There were also the people who stayed and took care of us. When we would weep, they wept and laughed whenever we laughed. They put their whole hearts into the effort to help us and take care of our needs. They lived for us by forgetting themselves and were ready to sacrifice everything... they were nameless heroes. You all made such an effort for us... I am taking your love with me. We will always be together. We will breathe and laugh together. If you ever need cheering when you are sad, you can be sure that I will be there to tell you a few anecdotes from the Black Sea. Our hearts will join toget-

her and your breath will be mine and we will breathe together. I will never forget any of you, and we will be together for eternity.

When I completed my time in Kucuk Armutlu, it was time for separation. Of course this separation is not a real separation. But in the end I was leaving people that I loved: my older sister and my resisting friends. Finally, the departure time came. The ones whose time had come left one by one. I was also joining this departing caravan. I was leaving my short life on this earth with all the things I had done as well as all the things I had not done. I was leaving without knowing how to tell others about the things I was leaving behind. I was leaving with the sadness of not having seen my imprisoned uncle Mehmet for a long time. He longed to see me. We wrote to each other, but it is not enough. What I wouldn't have given to see him face to face! Who knows how grieved he will be at my departure. How would he bear it in the helplessness of being walled-in? What could be done; he got his share. Even now he should prepare himself for the things which he will endure after I leave. Surely it is not easy. Hold on, uncle. No matter what happens, I will never leave you alone; I will always be with you. Even if you are behind thick concrete walls, I will add my voice to yours.

And I will join in your folk songs and slogans. I will enter the cells of your other friends. We will sing folk songs together. We will sip our well-steeped tea, accompanied by deep conversations. My dear uncle, how could I leave you and my friends? We exposed our bodies to hunger so that you might be free and not stay in isolation. We accepted the risk of paying such a price. I will carry freedom from the Black Sea to your cells. From the Black Sea mountains I will bring you, not flowers, but armloads of hope. Whenever your hope begins to die, I will be with you. We will never part. No matter how

thick the tyrants make your walls, our bond of unity will become stronger. Every shovelful of cement that they put onto the thick concrete will mix and knead our love together. Each iron door will defy the tyrants by letting us pass. When I come they will open spontaneously and will guide me. I am going, leaving behind the dreams I desired to realise, but never could. And I am leaving without speaking to the authors whose articles and books I so loved to read. I am leaving without knowing Cezmi Ersoz and talking with him about the articles that flowed like honey from his pen and blossomed inside people. I had read Cezmi's books and articles, yet I never got a chance to meet him. Oh, if only I had had the chance to tell him that I loved him to his face. I know that he would have been very happy to meet me. But what is to be done? It is just like all the other dreams which were never realised. But I have heard that he has written articles about me, and told my story to his readers. Doesn't sharing make love bigger anyway? Of course it does. Cezmi knows this best. If only I had been able to read that he wrote about me.

If only I could have thanked him for the things that he has done. My dear father, you will thank him for me, won't you? You know it is not easy to find such a friend. That is why, when we find such a one we must hold on to them very tightly. We must hold on to them as ivy embraces trees and we must let love dominate.

When the time for my departure finally came around, my older sister Zehra was the first to come to my side. My dear older sister, sometimes she was like a mother to me and sometimes she was like a friend, but she was always a part of me. We always confused which things belonged to her and which belonged to me. We shared many things. We shared our poverty, grief, joy and happiness. My dear older sister kissed my headband and stood at attention in order to show respect. She is

trying to be strong and not show me her tears by letting them flow inside of her. She thinks I don't understand how hard she is struggling. But I understand. How could I not understand, when half, probably the whole, of her heart is leaving. Perhaps part of the reason is because she knows that she will not leave me alone for very long. How could she leave her Canan. She had never left me before, that she should leave me now. You know how, during the months of separation, you feel that you will be reunited with your loved one soon? That is when happiness comes and brings a smile to your face, and that is how my dear older sister's face is. In spite of all her grief, her face is not deprived of a smile. I am not saying "*Farewell*", my dear older sister. I am only saying "*Good-bye*". You are leaving my side with the feeling that we will see each other again. From the moment you went out the door, I realised that I missed you. I know that if longing had a voice, it would be very difficult for it to speak of me.

After that, our friends come one by one. I am still watching them from where I am lying down. The people who I know and I do not know, workers and poor people who live in squatter's houses, come. One after another they are standing at attention in order to show respect. It's as if it enters all of a sudden. I know this face. I know this man. Of course I know. He is part of me, he is my father. He is entering as if trying to understand what is happening. He is looking around him. Then he comes to my side and for a moment is confused as to what he should do. I try to smile so that he will be strong. He understands. Of course he understands, how couldn't he, he's my father. He bends down with that large body of his and first strokes my hair, then traces my face with his large fingers. He still has a strange expression of confusion on his face. What nice hands you have. As he strokes my face I am thinking once more of my father's heart. What if he didn't stay only for a while, but stayed here? What if he says no, my heart cannot

bear this grief on its own? What will I do if he asks me for my heart? But none of my thoughts come true. After kissing my headband and my eyes, he slowly straightens. He stands at attention. Canan's father stands at attention to show respect to her. I want to say no, you are the one who deserves that sign of respect from others. But he does not hear me and continues. There is a sudden pain in his heart, and his face becomes taut. A few tears roll down his cheeks. I know and see that he is crying torrents of tears inside himself. I know that my father's breast is ready to explode like a volcano. But he is strong. He has to be because I haven't left him any other choice. My father made me endure the longest minute of my short life. I cannot imagine how many years, how many centuries, my father lived for that one minute I endured.

As he slowly left my side, I suddenly remembered my devotion to my father. I wished that he would stay by my side a while longer. Then I saw my uncle Ismail's strong frame at the threshold. He came and stood beside me. I saw my father in his face. However devoted I was to my uncle, that's how hard it was to separate my uncle from my father. I thought of all the pain that we had lived through, but for some reason nothing came to mind. I watch my uncle and wonder what he is going to do. I try to understand the expression on his face, but fail. When he knelt down to kiss my headband and eyelids, I could see inside his heart. It beats very fast and cries, *"My life! What will I do without you? Who will call me 'uncle'? Even if someone calls me 'uncle', no one will say it as warmly or compassionately as you. Who will I hold in my arms? Even if I do hold someone, do you think that they will be as warm as you? Do you think that your uncle will be the same? How will our hearts bear your leaving? How can I tell my heart that you have gone? And say that I did, how could my heart accept it? Where can I find another Canan, if my heart refuses? God, what should I do? How can I familiarise my heart with this? But no*

matter what happens, my daughter with lovely eyes, I will familiarise my heart because I promised you I would. " Then he stood up slowly and stood to attention. A few drops of tears fell from his eyes. My uncle shed his tears inside himself as abundantly as my father had. Then he slowly left the room. Acquaintances and strangers came to my side. But many of the people I expected did not come.

I desired to see them as I set out for my last journey. I had even set my departure for Sunday, a day off, so as not to hinder their business. Regardless of it being a Sunday, many whom I knew as friends did not come.

Remzi, my uncle Mehmet's lawyer, at the same time our relative and friend, was there. He was not doing well. He was trying to complete the procedures for me to be taken to Rize. We would be in the same car on the way to my home district. Then I saw Sengul from far away, and saw that someone was helping her to stand up. She came to my side. Her face was filled with grief and her eye sockets were dry from crying. She did not adhere to my father's warning of "*you must be strong*", but cried continually. Of course she cried; we shared many things together over the years. Of course we had unhappy moments from time to time, but for some reason I always remembered our happy times whenever I saw Sengul. She is a good friend. I shared secrets with her which I never told my father. When I fell in love in high school, she was the first person I told. I loved her and she loved us. I am leaving her behind. This is a kind of journey. You can't take anyone with you. You have to leave behind those who love you and those who don't. But you will go alone. When I look back now, I don't see anyone whose face I remember. Like I said, it was a weekend but many who I wanted to see did not come. If only they could have understood how much I wanted to see them. This must be the thing that those who leave want most.

Yet there were still others. Then my father and uncle put me on the ambulance. My father sat by my side.

We set off for the hospital. I looked at my father again. He said, "*Canan, I have already begun to miss you. It will be difficult to adjust to your absence.*" He strokes my hair again. Now I am lying down in a car. My father, my aunt's son Ser-kan, Remzi and I set off for Rize. My father's eyes often fill with tears, and Remzi was trying to support him. I was returning to the Black Sea. I suddenly realised that I missed the Black Sea terribly. Its mountains, its tea plantations and many other things. I also missed my grandfather and grandmother. Who knows what they are feeling. They cannot accept the reality. My grandmother, my dear grandmother, she tried so hard to make me give up. She came and stayed in Izmir for that reason. When she realised that it was useless, she returned to Rize again. How would they be able to bear my absence? My grandfather, my dear grandfather, you struggled so much to make me give up the Death Fast, you pressured my father. But my dear grandfather, do you think that if my father had the chance to make me stop, he would have waited for you to pressure him to do it? Do you think that he is pleased with the situation? You put all the responsibility on my father. You asked him to do something he could not do. And you usually held him responsible. But my dear grandfather, I made the decision and despite my father's insistence I did not give up. You know that my father tried very hard to get me to give up; why do you still hold him responsible? Of course I know that it is not easy for you. Look at it in this way: Do you think that it was easy for me? You have lost one grandchild and I have lost my life. For heaven's sake, which is the greater price? But I am trying to understand you. I know that it is difficult, but please try to be strong and don't lose your love for me.

My dear grandfather, I know that after my death you couldn't

sleep and were always thinking of me. But what can we do? Life is merciless and you paid a heavy price. Do not blame anyone who was associated with my leaving. It was my own decision and no matter what happened I wanted you to respect to my decision. Grandmother and I talked when we were in Izmir, and she knows everything. I understand that you are face to face with a difficult situation. I paid the price of my responsibility to my uncle and his friends in the prisons. Think about it and decide for yourselves. Do you think that I didn't want to graduate from university and show you my diploma and tell you that I am now a teacher? I wanted to very much. I know that you would have been very happy. You were most worthy of having a grandchild who graduated from university. I know that I should ask you to approach your dilemma with fortitude, you would not be able to do it. I never wanted to bring you grief in the autumn of your lifetimes. But my father was never responsible for this. He didn't want anything but to love me and be together with me for ever. He didn't want to grieve you just as much as I did. For this reason I know that the decision that I made and the price I paid have grieved my father.

When we reached Rize, there were people waiting for us. With curious eyes they were trying to understand what was happening. I saw my mother there and she saw me. There was a bewildered look about her. A mother's heart would of course be bewildered. Her soul's life was going off and leaving her. I also saw my aunts. They seemed like strangers to me. I wonder why. I loved them very much. They had helped raise me and did not treat me differently from their own children.

But today they behaved coldly towards me. I wondered why? Looking back now, I remember that during the resistance period, neither my aunts, uncles nor their children (except Serkan) came to visit me and Zehra. Yet we had grown up with our aunts' children as if we were siblings, them in our home,

we in theirs. We had lived together. They began to act differently after the resistance for some reason. They didn't inquire about us. It is impossible to understand how they could have changed so much. I wonder if they will answer me if I ask them.

You did not visit my older sister Zehra and me. What did we do? Was our crime using our bodies as barricades against the massacres in our country? This position which seems to be a crime in your eyes is an honour in ours.

Can you tell me that while one of your children was in prison my father and us did something like this? We tried to be with you winter and summer. Wasn't this the right thing to do? Do people who love them leave their friends during the hard times? You didn't even express condolences to my father. What did he do to you? Did he tell my sister and I to enter the Death Fast? Is that what you think? Would any father ever want to lose his beloved daughters whom he loves like his own life? Do you think that my father does not suffer? Yes, he is proud of us, but can you imagine how much he suffers? No, you can't. If you could, you would be wanting to share his suffering and would try to support him. But when we were leaving our father neither you nor your husbands came to his side. Yet if this situation makes you happy, and if you feel better by not expressing condolences, there is not much more to be said.

We did not ask you to think the way we did. Yet for the sake of days gone by you should not have acted the way you did. To the same father whom you and your husbands did not console, an imam (Muslim religious cleric) from Bolu gave support. He brought my older sister Zehra a gift and had his picture taken with her and prayed for strength for my father. It was a very meaningful visit, don't you think? My grandmother saw this too. Many people called my father to help ease his

suffering. Only you and your children were not there.

The undergraduates with head scarves came with their friends. They talked with my father very warmly. They had their own opinions as well. They prayed for me and for my older sister. They warmed our hearts. The resistance became more meaningful to us. My father expressed his gratitude to all these people. If only you had been more tolerant and understanding. You couldn't bear even the carnations that my father and his friends put on my tomb. How could you be so merciless? What did you want from my carnations? And how could you suppose that my father did not do anything for me. Why did you think that he was helpless when confronted with my decision and that he didn't try to do anything? Yet he loved you so much. You and his nephews and nieces. Didn't he always come to you when you called? What did you want from my father? How did you chill his warm heart towards you? Weren't you his nephews and nieces? How could you leave the uncle you so loved? Did you ever think of what your uncle would do for you if you were in his position?

But hate and rancour were never able to establish sovereignty in my father's heart. Every time his love overcame the hate.

This time my dear father with again love people and he will represent our love to them and show them the love in our hearts. By doing this, his love will increase and I will be proud of him.

My dear father, of the people who came to see me off, many of your friends were also not present. Whereas I knew that you had a lot of friends. For example, there were few of your friends from adolescence. It would have been so nice for them if they had been there, though. For a while you had all shared a common fate. You shared the warmth of being comrades in a

time of danger, where violence and fighting walked arm in arm. Together you had shouted slogans for the comrades who were leaving your side. Many of them left you alone when you saw me off. Then there were your working friends, with whom you sweated, ate from the same pot, and shared the factory work with gladness. Many of them were also not to be seen. They didn't come to your side to try to ease your suffering or give you strength. I wonder, why oh why did they act this way? Was it so difficult to offer condolences? I was still very young, and had a hard time trying to understand these things. I guess there is no easy explanation for these things. You did not treat my friends from Istanbul who came to say a final goodbye well. You were hostile towards them and insulted them. Yet they had no responsibility in my decision. Still you spent all your anger on them. At the end of the farewells I saw my grandmother. She was in unbearable grief. My father came to her side, and soon they were embracing each other. They were shedding their tears on their hopes. My father said, *"How did you do it, my daughter, how did you do it, my Canan. God, what a big heart and what affection! Such a thing has not come to pass since the world was established. How will I bear your absence, my rose-faced daughter?"* I know, father. Even though I may be young, I know that I did everything for my people and for the happiness of my people. I did it so that those who shared the same fate as I did would have a beautiful and loving world to live in. I couldn't be silent while the machine of tyranny was running, attacking the values of my people and killing them. Perhaps there are few people who understand me today, but there will be more and I will live for ever in their hearts.

I saw my grandfather. His eyes were also filled with tears. I wanted to comprehend the expression of his face, but I couldn't. He prayed for me. My dear grandfather, I have heard all your prayers and have remembered how much I love you.

I know that I was not able to realise everything that you expected from me. I was not able to be your well-educated Canan who got her diploma. When you thought of me you were jealous of other girls. But you shouldn't be. I am very happy and do not at all regret what I have done. I did not do anything bad, grandfather. I lived what I believed and I am paying the price. Look around you. How many people do you see who truly live what they believe and are prepared to pay its price? In a way, I threw their unbelief in their faces. I shouted that they were hypocrites. They cannot admit it themselves, but that is the truth. That is why your head must be held high, my dear grandfather. High and honoured. I know that I did nothing to make you ashamed. The last thing I ask of you is that you would not let others act unjustly toward my father, because he loves you very much.

I think the time has finally come to say farewell.

Farewell to those who love me. As I slip from

among you like a star, farewell sky. Farewell my

dear father, Sengul...

Farewell my mother...

Farewell to my student friends who dream of getting their diplomas without me.

To my dear people who I have always loved and for whose happiness I risked everything, FAREWELL...

To everyone who I leave, taking with me what I have and have not done, my losses, my longings in my very short life, FAREWELL..

CHAPTER III

Zehra tells her story

When I was born the pages of calendars were at the month of August of the year 1979. So I began my life on a warm June day in the humid Black Sea region.

I, ZEHRA KULAKSIZ, was born in Rize. The country in which I was born was at the time undergoing a bloodbath. There were young people who represented struggle, pride, labour and freedom. They used their own bodies to shield their people from bullets. As soon as one was buried, another stepped up to take his or her place.

But the enemy was tyrannical and had not had its fill of blood. What nice people they were, departing from us in their youth of life, not thinking of the people they were leaving behind. As I said hello to life, they were leaving us. Some made a big fuss and others were silent, leaving us in the middle of this fight. I didn't meet any of them, but I have become acquainted with them from their pictures and life stories. I wish I could see them and drink my tea with them, and who knows how happy I would be. I wish I could hear the tales of the resistance from their own lips.

I came into the world late and they were in a hurry. As if departing from us as soon as possible and leaving us behind had meaning for them. I truly think that it must have held some

meaning for them, otherwise why would they be in such a hurry to leave all they had behind and join those who had gone on before?

A long time later I would understand that their departure was not an easy one. Often it was a reunion. When they went, they left behind the things that they did as examples for the people who stayed. They are always in the hearts of the people and are near them whenever they are remembered. That is why they smiled as they departed. It is known that people smile at meetings, not at departures. People smile when they take the sun in their hands and present it to the ones they love. We watched them leave with the excitement of seeing a shooting star fall from the sky. Sometimes it was as if we were looking at them through a misty glass and couldn't understand their sadness or hopes. From time to time we felt their glances in our hearts.

One by one they departed from their loved ones, leaving behind an honoured legacy which was hard to fulfil. During this time, I was just beginning to recognise and walk down hard paths.

Then I remember those difficult years that descended on our country like a nightmare. I remember September 12.1 vaguely remember the wild attacks that were made on people during that period. I also remember that young people were being sent to the gallows when they were just 17 years old. So I came into the world in a very bad place.

The rulers made a dark cloud hang over our people and country. They tried to make fathers enemies to their own sons and daughters.

They injected tiny hearts with hatred, so that they wouldn't lo-

ve their elders. They tried to remove the loving little hearts and in their place put their own unfeeling and icy hearts. They did all that they could to remove anything beautiful from minds and instead leave them as a rough heap of flesh.

For a long time people waited for pleasant news in the name of humanity. For a very long time.

In those days, people managed to be happy with small things. Sometimes an unplanned event would bring you undescribable peace. I also have been in such a position. I was young, but I remember that I was to have a sibling. At that time that darkness was reigning, Canan joined us, and I was to have a sister from then on. At the time she was my little sister. Later on she was often my friend and confidante. Such friendships are not ordinary. As we grew up, we shared more and more with each other. We loved each other and as time went on our loves blended together. At first it covered our hearts, and then spread into our entire being. No one but us knew that the bond of comradeship that we shared had never been lived before and would never be lived after us. When the time came, the whole world would strive to understand it, but would be unable to. It would wonder at the situation it was up against and would not be able to resolve it.

Canan's arrival was most beneficial to me. I now had a confidante, and we could go to sleep in the same bed in the cold winter nights and I could share my feelings. I don't remember the exact time, but I think I was 5-6 years old when my parents divorced. I could not understand the meaning of this with my young mind. I wish things hadn't been that way. Even though we could see our mother whenever we wanted, the situation put a strangeness in our hearts.

When I became of age, I began primary school. My childhood

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friends and I tried to understand our world with our childish minds and make the most of our childhood.

It's not normal for a girl in our region, but since first grade I was nominated the class president. Even then I realised that serving people and taking an interest in their problems was important to me. When I look back, I realise that there is nothing worth noting of the first five years of my studying. My relationships with my aunts and cousins were ordinary. Then, I started middle school. During my first year in middle school, my family decided to move to Istanbul during the semester holiday. This decision was both important in itself and was the starting point of important events.

The more my sister and I thought about the city and the more we heard about its magnitude the more we were disquieted. We had never been outside of Rize before. Istanbul was a big city and sheltered everything in itself. It sheltered poverty, for instance, and we endured the poverty. Perhaps it was then that I understood the most meaningful love. During our first years living in Istanbul as a crowded family, I tried to observe the world through a new window. I saw my classmates who came to school without pencils or books. We were also poor, but the conditions of some of my classmates were heartrending. They were clinging to life and trying to keep their hopes alive.

After middle school, in my high school years, I was able to easily explain events and saw that I could not remain insensitive to the events which took place around me.

But think what I might, people were exposing their bodies to starvation and were meeting their death with smiles.

When the Death Fast of 1996 ended, it left 12 dead. It would later become apparent that even though people gave their li-

ves, they could not prevent the massacres that followed. The powers that be designed the lifestyle on the outside and continuously replayed the scenario of massacres inside the prisons. Ten prisoners in Diyarbakir Prison were beaten to death. When there was very little reaction, they attacked Ulucanlar Prison, killing 12.

The gods of war were not satisfied with attacking and murdering defenceless people.

During that time we, the young people of the university, had begun to act in relation to academic and democratic problems. The forces that attacked the prison inmates with bulldozers were attacking us with armoured vehicles and batons. Even our legal demonstrations and press statements claiming our rights were attacked by the police. On our fourth demonstration, I was put under house arrest and there became acquainted with the torture centres. At a young age I was a potential customer of those places whose names no one wants to hear. It's a shame that there was a price to pay in order to demand democracy in my country.

I was once more put under house arrest when I wanted to join the protest demonstrations on the first anniversary of the massacre that took place in the Gazi neighbourhood (note: many people in the Istanbul Gazi neighbourhood were killed in March 1995 when local people rioted following a fascist provocation). Besides joining the demonstration, even intending to join is reason enough to be put under house arrest in my country. During the four days I spent at the police station, I refused to make a statement despite the tortures and oppressions to which I was exposed.

I think that my attitude was not pleasing to the executioners because despite the fact that they had no evidence, they arres-

ted me and put me in Ümraniye Prison. I stayed there for a short time and was released at the first court hearing. I experienced many things during my short time in prison. Firstly, I experienced the honour of living and sharing together. The inmates there shared everything. No one did anything for themselves, but everyone made a decision together and they carried it out in a corporate way.

We had visitors. One day Canan came along with my father. When she saw me, her eyes filled with tears. For a moment we looked at each other without saying anything. We spoke with our hearts. We lived the damnable grief of not being able to touch each other. Then I noticed my father. He was one of the countless fathers who underwent the suffering of having family members in prison. As I looked at them I suddenly realised how much I loved them. We deserved to be happy. But as long as we want to turn darkness into light and want to share a little bread so that children won't cry, there must be separation. When I went to court, I saw my grandmother. My father was not there. The previous day he had injured his back, and he couldn't even move.

Then I saw Remzi, our faithful friend and relative. He was a lawyer who did much for us. For years he had been struggling to defend my uncle, and now I was in his hands, too. He gave a good defence and I was released.

When I came back home I saw my father lying on a bed in the middle of the living room as if he were dead. When he summoned all his strength to embrace me, I saw the pain he was in. I hugged him and showered him with kisses.

While we were drinking tea later on, we began a deep conversation. I told them about the things that I experienced in prison and they told me the events that had taken place while I

was gone. Many things had not changed. Almost everything was the same. After four months of separation I spent the whole night talking with CANAN. I did not talk about the prisons. We talked about the past and our dreams for the future. We examined the state of the youth according to our store of knowledge.

That year CANAN had gained entrance to Aegean University. We went to Izmir together for her registration. It was apparent that from now on we would see less of each other. We would need time to understand that our longing for each other bonded us closer together.

When I was living in Istanbul and Canan was living in Izmir we called each other from time to time but would rarely meet. When my sister came to Istanbul for the summer holiday, I felt the enjoyment of being together with her. When school started again the time for separation had come once more. We sent her off and I tried to get used to her absence. It was not easy. That year, in the spring, the issue of F-Type Prison Cells became a current issue in Turkey's press. This matter was being discussed everywhere and suggestions on how to solve it came up. The discussions that had begun by a small group were now moving into a larger section of society. By announcements, panel discussions and demonstrations on the streets, we were trying to explain that F-Type Cells meant isolation. It was said that if the government did not give up this project, disasters would await our country. But the effect and power of this campaign was not enough to move the Ministry of Justice. It was as if the stubborn attitude of the Ministry was a sign of the massacres and deaths that were to come.

The news fell into Turkey's daily news like a bomb. The Death Fast simultaneously started in twenty prisons. At the same time the relatives of the prisoners had decided to bring the re-

sistance outside the prisons. This action which would support the resistance got me excited, and I determined that no matter what, I wanted to be in it. Yes, I had made my decision. I was going to join the resistance and be shoulder to shoulder with my uncle and his friends. They were inside the prison and we were outside, but we were going to strive together until we achieved victory. We would stand up for the rights of our loved ones. My decision was final, but how was I going to tell my family and explain it to them? I decided to talk to my father before anyone else. Before I had even begun to talk he had understood what I was going to say. He said, "*You have made a very difficult decision and I know that even if I wanted to make you change your mind, I could not.*" When he said that despite the fact he wanted me to rethink it, I told him that I had already thought about it a lot and there was not much left to consider. He embraced and kissed me. I hugged him back. I didn't notice that at that moment two teardrops fell from my father's eyes.

The first group had started the fast. The second group, in which I was included, started the fast in another place. The fast, which had previously been conducted in houses, was going to continue in the TAYAD (Association of Families and Friends of Political Prisoners) building which was established in the area of Taksim. After two weeks, all the resisters were in the same place and started out on a long journey, conscious of our responsibility. Then a report reached us. The Death Fast had begun in Izmir, also. When I heard the news, my feelings were confused. My younger sister Canan was in the fast, too.

What could I say? My dear sister who had never left me alone before was now preparing to share her future with me.

Canan's joining the fast greatly affected our family and it was difficult for them to understand it. People we knew and stran-

gers visited us to support the resistance and tried to make the public listen.

The negotiations between the Ministry and the captive representatives were continuing but because of the two-facedness of the Ministry, no progress could be seen. So we could feel that major trouble was brewing. Finally, on the morning of December 19, we were shaken by the news of a massacre of an unimaginable magnitude. The State was attacking every prison; tearing through walls and raining bullets at defenceless prisoners. Then they burned them alive. The forces of the state attacked the women's section of Bayrampaşa Prison with fire bombs and then burned six women alive. Then they used the media to spread throughout the country the lie that the prisoners had set themselves on fire. Unfortunately, this lie took effect and many of our people believed it. The resistance that we had started against the F-Type isolation cells was, as a result of the merciless attack by the state, brought face to face with isolation itself. For a while we couldn't get any news from my uncle. Then we found out that he was hurt and in the hospital. Later, the state forgot the promises it had made and started to throw prisoners into cells, even in the middle of the icy winter. As if they were bags of bones.

The massacre lasted four whole days. At the end of this period, the media put aside the stories of the people who had been burned alive and who had lost their lives in the massacre, and instead began showing the gas masks made out of plastic bottles and the so-called weapons which were used by the prisoners, and saying how successfully the difficult job had been carried out.

It would be enough for the media to wait for a short time, then they would have been able to understand the reality of the massacres. Later on the state would officially declare that it

was a massacre. But those who had published the lies neither blushed in shame, nor apologised.

The Ramadan feast was near at hand. While I was there, police attacked the TAYAD building. They threw us out and beat us, then sealed up the door of the building. The same rulers who thought to cut the prisoners off from the world in the same way wanted to isolate us and leave us on our own.

After our association had suddenly been attacked and sealed up, we had to find a new location and continue our resistance there. Our applications to political parties, associations and trade unions for various reasons fell on deaf ears. So we, a handful of resisters, decided to go to the squatter's house of Senay in K. Armutlu. We welcomed the simple way of life there. So began our time in Armutlu, which would later come to be known as the resistance neighbourhood, and of which even the foreign media often spoke.

When the Armutlu period began, it was as if there was still a relatively tranquil atmosphere in my country.

The state made the prison cells a reality and thought that it had solved the problem. But the prisoners weren't of the same opinion. They were inside, we were on the outside but we all thought that the resistance would continue and become widespread. After the attack on December 19, the media thought that if it pretended not to see and didn't write anything about the resistance, that it would be forgotten and fall apart.

But they did not have to wait long to see that it was not like that at all.

On March 21, the news of the first death in the prisons was heard. When, during the following days, the news of deaths be-

gan to increase, everyone began talking about Death Fasts once more. It was during this time, at Resistance House in Armutlu, that my father mentioned that he wanted to bring Canan here. I told him that it would be nice and that I wanted it too.

From my father's point of view, the situation at this time was very difficult. Although he could see me as often as he liked, the same could not be said for Canan. Soon afterwards, when my sister appeared on my father's arm at the threshold of the house, I would be blown sky-high in my elation. It was the first time I had seen Canan in a long time. I missed her very much. I embraced her, and drank in her fragrance. I had almost forgotten her fragrance. From my father's warnings I understood that she was tired and needed to rest. My dear Canan was beside me and we two sisters would continue the resistance in separate beds, yet in the same room.

The time that Canan and I were together, I am sorry to say, was very short. When she had arrived she was not doing well. Every day she was getting worse. Yet she still looked at life through eyes of hope. This was a view that was partly what made the Death Fast Resistance meaningful. You open your body to death, but you always keep your will for life alive. You struggle to live for just one more second. There is no capitulation. This Laz girl who was first my sister, then my comrade, was preparing to leave us and say farewell to us with the tranquillity of doing her duty. Yet my father desired for her to quit the Death Fast. (Note: the Laz are an ethnic group related to the Georgians, found along Turkey's eastern Black Sea coast.)

He had two daughters and he wanted at least one of us to stay. We talked about this a lot. But we had made our decision. We couldn't leave our job half finished, and how many times did

we tell him not to expect such a thing from us. We told him so, and even though he appeared to have accepted it, we could tell from the look on his face that he did not want to understand it. The thick lines of helplessness did not disappear from his face.

It was the fifteenth day of April, at nine o'clock in the morning, when my dear younger sister left us and joined the procession that had gone on before. I came to her side and kissed the band on her forehead as well as her eyelids. Then I stood at attention for a minute. I would have wanted to stand at attention for her for months and years. I noticed that all of the sudden it was as if she was smiling at me as she was lying down. It was as if she was saying, "I beat you". Yes, she began the fast after I did, yet she set off before me. As she left she probably thought that I would be able to bear it more easily.

One of the resistance's peculiarities was that there was no right time for people to go. For a while I thought of being separated from Canan, and suddenly wondering how the days would pass without her. From time to time we had been separated from each other. But this time it was different. As I looked at my sister's angelic face, even then I realised that I missed her very much. I thought of the days that I would face without her. It would be difficult, because I was accustomed to having her by me. She had become a part of me. Just as people are disabled when any organ is taken out of their bodies, so I was disabled. I had to continue the resistance in this disabled manner.

After that day, I had to keep Canan alive as if she was my second identity. From now on I was two persons. I had to carry two souls and two hearts in one body. It was a heavy load. From my point of view, it was just as honourable as it was he-

avy. The time for separation had come and my younger sister was setting out on her last journey. I didn't cry.

Even crying was not very meaningful to me. My younger sister set out on her journey to the Black Sea mountains which were waiting for her with open arms. Soon she would be reunited with her Black Sea and the Black Sea would be reunited with its Canan. The Black Sea mountains would fold her into its bosom for ever.

I thought about our short lives. We were not extraordinary people. But our love and bond could not fit into this world. From time to time we would cause grief to one other. Yet even at those times we became as one.

She is going. In a little while my father and uncle will come and take my dear Canan to my home district. As always, a traveller must be on the road. We saw Canan off the way you do a bride. Then I came back to my room. As I was lying down in bed I remembered that I did not say farewell to Canan. Why hadn't I? Had I forgotten? Perhaps it was because I thought that I would soon be reunited with her. I cannot completely explain it. If there is one thing I knew, it was that I hadn't said farewell to Canan. Afterwards, I noticed that I was doing better healthwise. Her departure had given me strength. After Canan left, I pulled myself together and my feeling better bewildered everyone.

When I came to my room it was empty. I had wanted to accompany Canan all the way to the ambulance in order to fulfill my last duty. Now we were just two people in the same room. Fatma and me.

My father left Canan in the bosom of the Black Sea region and returned. What a difficult situation. You bury one daughter and

you cannot mourn her death. You immediately rush back to the other daughter and try to hide your feelings from her so that she does not lose her morale.

My dear father, do you think that I didn't understand? Of course I understood. I understood the moment you returned from Rize and opened the door to my room. The effect of the storm within you could be read on your face. Who could understand this better than me? I was your daughter and I loved you very much. I wish I could have said something to give you hope, but the resistance was a Death Fast Resistance, and it was still continuing.

In those days the news of deaths in the prisons began to come one after another. Despite the medical intervention that the state enforced, they could not prevent the deaths. The Ministry of Justice, instead of accepting our demands, just changed the laws to suit itself. During that time journalists and TV reporters were constantly visiting us. We were interviewed almost all day. I am sorry to say that they either twisted what we said or chose not to publish it at all. By doing this, they thought that they would crush the resistance. The number of people who came to visit us increased more and more. People from all different backgrounds were rushing in and surging together in crowds. They came to the Resistance House in K. Armutlu, and it was not possible to speak with every person there. The house, which was at one time lonely and cold, was now overflowing with people.

At this time, artists and intellectuals began to come often. Ferhat Tune came. Edip Akbayran and his wife and older sister Ayten came also. Ayten often stayed with us. She helped us in many ways and we had a warm and emotional relationship with each other. She loved us very much, and we loved her, too. We would open our souls to her and tell her our secrets.

But then something happened that I didn't understand. Ayten stopped coming. Ah, if only you had not left us, Ayten! We loved you so much and were accustomed to having you with us.

Suavi came with his wife. His conversations were sweet and his speech was warm and when we talked with him, we were warmed inside. Suavi was friendly and had a smiling face.

Then there was Dilek, who they called the dark-skinned beauty. She also tried to be with us all the time. She quit her job and work in order to devote all her time to the Death Fast Resisters. With the agitation of someone who longs to do all she can, she not only took care of us, but she also spoke with her friends and tried to recruit their assistance.

There was also Bilgesu. Bilgesu Erenus. Actually, with respect to her age, we should have called her "*aunt*" instead of "*sister*". She was an older sister to me, my father, and the other resisters also.

She had opened the first Resistance House. Then it became so that you could not think of the resistance without thinking of her. Whenever we called her, and even when we did not call, she immediately came to our sides. Most nights she stayed with us because she could not bear to leave us. Nevertheless, she was our sister Bilgesu. Just like her name, she had gained much intelligence and possessed a spotlessly clean heart (note: her name is related to Turkish words like *bilmek* "to know" and *bilge* "learned, wise".)

I shared many things with Bilgesu during the resistance. She brought us presents. One time she had brought a doll for me. It was very meaningful to me. I kept it by my side at all times.

Even when she left us for a short time, we felt her presence

with us. I knew that although she wasn't here, she was thinking about us in her pure heart. First she opened up her heart to us, then accepted us into her home. We were her guests. We wanted to make her our guest, but she wouldn't allow it. She said, "*Is a person ever a guest in the house she calls her own?*"

I was a silent witness to the anxious hours she spent throughout the nights. She never complained. She did not make a big deal out of some of the negative situations she came face to face with.

How she could tolerate so much is still a mystery to me. Even during the most stressful times, she didn't lose her cool-headedness and even managed to find hope in hopeless incidents. She rarely sang folk songs, but I liked her voice very much. Her different interpretations always made me excited. My dear Bilgesu, I could never forget those days I shared with you... please don't forget me.

Once, toward evening, Cezmi Ersoz visited us. We talked together and he tried to understand. He said that it was difficult to understand. He said, "It is hard to understand and explain this resistance, but I promise that I will write about it next week." Cezmi writes for the weekly LEMAN magazine. (Note: this is a satirical magazine in Turkey, with cartoons and also some serious articles.) Afterwards he spoke with my father outside. I did not know what they talked about as day faded into night- at the Resistance House in K. Armutlu. I guessed that they were talking about the enlightenment of our country. We experienced many things during the resistance period. At the resistance house we discussed the problem of enlightenment. Cezmi was a kindred spirit and a man of his word. He kept his promise and his article was published in the LEMAN magazine the following week. The headline read, "*Canan, Zehra and*

Kucuk Armutlu." He mostly tried to write about me and Canan, and a little about my father. It was a nice and pleasant article. The pen of the writer affects the human being. In the same article he published our telephone numbers. It was very effective. Henceforth we were continuously receiving phone calls and letters from many people both in our country and from abroad. Hundreds of calls and messages were things that we hadn't noticed before. The world was watching the resistance, and a great many hearts were beating for the sake of our victory. We became stronger as we felt the voice of friendly hearts and our belief in victory was increasing manifold. After the article was published, many people with various opinions came and gave us their support. This made things more meaningful.

Ahmet never left me. My father's dear friend, Ahmet Paktan, was always with us. I know that he especially helped my father.

There was Burhan. He was a faithful friend to me. He carried out all our wishes efficiently and he volunteered whenever we had new requests. He had a book composed of his essays. From time to time my father would read a section to me. I was very happy, Burhan...

Then there was Yakup. He was from Of (a district in Trabzon, a city on the Black Sea coast). He helped us a lot. He was one of the unchanged visitors. We always counted them as one of us. They shared our sorrow and our joy. When we were happy, they got so excited they didn't know what to do. They were what is beautiful in people.

There was also someone whom it is necessary to remember by name: Remzi Kazmaz. He was our lawyer. Besides that he was our relative and dear friend. I called him "*Actor-Lawyer*".

This title seemed very interesting to me, I don't know why. He never left us, even when he was busy. He was active in both my hearing and my uncle Mehmet's. My "*Actor-Lawyer*" liked practical jokes and displayed his joy of life. He had a younger brother, Cengiz, who also tried to stay with us as much as possible and supported us.

I met many people during this time. We made memories with each one. We arranged entertainment. It seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? We were exposing our bodies to starvation and yet some nights we had fun. Besides, it gave meaning to the resistance. When your turn comes to join the departing caravan you must take your place. But until then you will live. You will always try to live and make life meaningful.

On one such night we sang a folk song from the Black Sea region to the accompaniment of a lute. A friend from Greece played the kemence (a small violin with three strings). It was nice entertainment and was completely appropriate and we had as much fun as we wanted that night.

I madly loved life, and I thought about the magnitude of our resistance. While madly loving life how can you not fear death? How can you explain this to people? Think of how we put our bodies to death even though we loved life. Do they think that we, who wanted to live, would have put our bodies to death if we had had another choice? We wanted to walk arm in arm on the sea shore with the ones we loved. Were we happy to make our families suffer and condemn them to a life without us? No. A thousand times no. But how could "stop" be said to the massacres and savagery that took place in our country? There are surely many different opinions in our country. Do not forget this reality. If we did not desire an end to this savagery by our deaths, do you think that the tyrants would take us into consideration? Don't you think that our friends should re-

consider their role in this resistance, since the tyrants do not seem to care?

We spent our days with our families and the people who came to visit us; now laughing, now being sad.

Sengul came often. No matter what we said, she simply could not accept the reality of the Death Fast. How ever much she acted like she understood, we knew she did not. This attitude negatively affected our morale.

For the 200th day of the resistance, we arranged a women's celebration traditionally given on the eve of a wedding (during this celebration the bride's fingers and toes are dyed with henna).

We sang folk songs and they danced traditional dances. Our friend made short skits for us. That night the Resistance House saw one of its amazing nights.

During the following days, three new guests and three new resisters joined us in the Resistance House. Two of them were sisters. They also wanted to travel together the way we did. When I saw them I remembered Canan. They also exposed their bodies to starvation for the sake of being the breath and voice of the prisoners. Until we achieved victory both outside and inside the prisons, we would continue. New resisters would step up to carry on the resistance immediately after the old ones passed away.

During the days that our new friends joined us, my health began to deteriorate bit by bit. I could not go out as frequently as I had before, and I spent more time in my room. We mostly talked about recipes for food. On the one hand we thought about the last time we had had anything to eat, and yet we we-

re still talking about recipes. This is what a resistance is. As you wait for death you can't forget life and you have to love life. In short, you will love life, honourable life, enough to take the risk of dying for its sake. This was the reality of it all. This is what we were teaching people.

"The days slowly come with the news of death." Uncle Veli lost his life in prison. Then I realised that he was the oldest resistor to die, and my sister Canan was the youngest to die. What a strange feeling. In any case, I could make contact with Canan.

My grandmother heard that my health was failing. She had come to visit me from Rize. I was very glad to see her. She expended much effort for me. If I said that she spent a lot of effort on me, it would be no exaggeration.

She was like a mother to me. She had lived in many difficult conditions for our sake and had confronted many things head on. It was going to be very difficult for her. Would she be able to bear our absence? She saw Canan off to eternity and now she was struggling day and night for her Zehra. I knew that she was not eating and drinking properly, even though she tried not to show it. She also did not sleep at night. How could she sleep while the dear Zehra she loved was getting thinner every day and she could not do anything? She damned the day that we came to Istanbul and was bitterly sorry.

For some days before she left, my grandmother lived in a flood of emotion. She was striving to hang on. She prayed and asked God to help me. Yet even all these were not enough to make her calm. When she left me, she cried deeply. She tried not to show me, but I knew.

That night was the night that I lost consciousness. It was abo-

ut 10:00. When my father came into my room with his smile, as always, his smiles were suddenly cut short and an undescrivable anxiety came over his face. I know that he had always tried to prepare himself for this inevitable end, but when he saw me like this he didn't know what to do, and was so overwhelmed that all he could do was sit down beside me. He avoided looking at my face and could not hide the fear he felt. My dear father, how could he bear the same feelings once more? I knew that he was strong, but the situation was different this time. Yes, my condition was very bad and my father was aware of this fact. I tried to tell him something, but without success. I noticed that I had trouble speaking. My father could not understand and left my side. I tried as hard as I could, but human beings have their limits, and I had reached mine. I realised that I was gradually losing consciousness.

By morning I had lost completely lost consciousness. When I was unconscious I saw that I took my place in the caravan of those who were departing and I saw and heard the things that happened after I left. Without being noticed, I have seen all the deeds that were done for my sake. My grandmother did not leave my side during this time. I felt that she kissed and smelled me. Twice she brought a hoca (Muslim cleric) to my side. Before I set off on my final journey, the hoca read the Koran and prayed for me. This blessing made my grandmother feel a little better. The wise old woman became more or less happy.

At that point, my father would not venture to come to me. My grandmother said, "*Come, you must see your daughter one last time, she is waiting for you.*" He then came to me and knelt down beside the couch where I was lying down. He took my hand in his and kissed my forehead, then my cheeks and eyelids. I could hardly see the tears that flowed down his cheeks in a thin line. "*My heroine daughter, I could not rescue you and Canan no matter how much I strove. From now on I*

will represent you. I will join your hearts in mine and you will always live on in me. I don't know how you want the celebration to see you off into eternity to be, but I will provide it. I promise that it will be just as your friends say it should be. I will not allow for you the unjust action that was shown to Canan. " He left my grandmother with me and went out.

My grandmother talked with my father about the ceremony. My father would not interfere with their ceremony and they would not interfere with the ceremony my father and friends would give me.

Suddenly my grandmother noticed that she was unable to breathe properly. She said, *"My dear daughter, so you have also deserted me."* When she went outside wailing, my father came to her.

My uncle Ismail was there. My father and my grandmother cried and embraced each other. Soon they calmed down. They realised what the real situation was and began to come up with ideas about what should be done about it.

When I had breathed my last breath, Canan appeared. It was as if she was saying, *"Welcome, my older sister."* She was smiling with her beautiful teeth and had double eyes from wearing her pretty glasses. She asked me why I had made her wait so long and said that she had missed me very much. She embraced me and we experienced the joy of reunion between younger and older sister. We shed our tears freely. No one saw us any way. We cried freely. We blended together. Henceforth we would always be like this. Two bodies, one heart; so it would be remembered and would be written in history for eternity.

The news was spread into the suburbs of Istanbul. TV broad-

cast it to the entire country...

As the darkness of evening fell over the ridges of K. Armutlu people began to gather in front of the Resistance House.

There were many people there. There were workers, labourers and those who were destitute. They came to see me off. There were many more young people. Our young people with their active hearts, with their warm hearts full of love. My fighting friends from university, the friends who struggled for us. I was happiest when I saw them. Then the crowd became larger and larger. In their angry faces I saw that they did not want to leave me alone. In front of the house there were people from all different classes.

I loved my people very much and I took great risks so that they could be rescued from poverty and would not be under constraint and tyranny. And I would love to take many more risks for our people. Did I carry out my responsibility to them? I thought about this.

Just like all people, I had faults and from time to time did not fully comprehend matters and this lack of comprehension was reflected in my actions. As a revolutionary, is it easy to assimilate the truths of the people and live life according to its demands and requests? On one hand you fight against the system so that its influence of degeneration does not spread. As the system teaches individualism, you must learn to never say "/" or "*me*".

Some of the people around you will advise you to live your life egoistically, yet in spite of this you will feel honoured to make sacrifices in your heart.

Well-known authors and intellectuals will propagandise being

a free individual and the new world's system, but you will push them away with the back of your hand. You will remember the things that took place before, you will remember the sacrifices made by your comrades who have gone on before you, you will remember the torture they were subjected to. You will keep the memories of them alive and try to be worthy of them. During your short life you will try to plan how you can live eternally. As you struggle you will fear making a mistake. However, you will leave the good example of being able to turn from your mistakes as an inheritance for future generations. You will not allow your family to interfere with your struggles. As you explain the situation to them you will treat them kindly and make them feel proud of you. In short, it is difficult to be a revolutionary and live like a revolutionary.

The Death Fast Resistance taught many things. It taught us all. From the oldest to the youngest, the well-educated and the uneducated, the authors and intellectuals... we all received our share. Though some preferred to pretend not to see, most hearts palpitated with ours.

In order to attain goodness and beauty, a price must be paid. Many people had underestimated the price and could not accept the risk, and so they left us. In our most difficult time, unexpected people were by our side. When we saw that they shared their hearts with us, we were bewildered. Our resistance was a school of experimentation, and the period was difficult to understand.

We loved life madly, and yet it was said that we were passionately in love with death. But some people did not even want to recognise us. They would only say a few words to us in passing. Yet if they had come to visit us we would have told them that we were not angry with them and that we considered them to be a part of us. We would have talked about love and affec-

tion with them and told them our feelings, whether sad or happy. In short, we would have shared human things. But unfortunately they did not want to share these with us.

During this time, there was some activity in the crowd in front of the house. I knew that a torch-lit march in the narrow streets of Armutlu had been planned for me. Of the organisers, many were young people. I was one of them, and we shared many joys and much sadness together. We had been detained, and together we took our share of the beatings.

First they opened the placards, then the cortege was formed bit by bit. There was a placard that read "*Heroes are immortal, the people cannot be defeated*" and after that one that read, "Our march continues with Zehra". After the placards came our mothers and youth. The young people were carrying torches in their hands. These burning torches were not simple or meaningless.

When the torches caught fire, they did not brighten up only the narrow streets of Armutlu. The light overflowed into the cells of prisoners and warmed my uncle's face behind the walls in Tekirdağ Prison.

Each torch represented a resister who had gone on before us. The young people believed that they were continuing a legacy as they lifted the torches ever higher. Everyone shouted the slogans together. The march had begun. The enraged, determined crowd began to march with heavy and strong steps in the streets of Armutlu where people lived in poverty.

My father was at the head of the cortege with my uncle at his side. My father seemed very strong. He knew that everybody was watching him. The crowd of people marched enthused from trampling oppression, shouting out their wrath. No one

shed a tear in order to defy the tyrants, but they shed their tears inside.

When the crowd gathered in front of the house once more, one of the youths began to tell my story.

Then my father spoke to the people. He walked up to the microphone with slow and strong steps, taking the microphone in his hand. He knew that I was among the crowd, listening to him. He knew that I was wondering what he would say. Canan also came to my side. Two sisters, two comrades. We stood there by our friends, staring at our father and holding our breaths. There was a deep silence. Who said it would be easy for my father to speak?

"I have lost a second daughter in this resistance which has continued for three seasons. We saw our Zehra off to immortality. For months I have struggled for the success of the resistance. But I see that until now our labours have not given us the results we wanted. Now I am thinking not so much of what I have done as what I have not been able to do. The more I think about it, the more I see that I have not done enough. "

At that moment I shouted, "Wo, father! You acted above and beyond the call of duty!" But he did not hear me and continued to talk.

"I want you to know that this resistance will carry on and we have a lot to do. We know that this resistance will not come to an end until there is no more isolation and the prisoners' demands are accepted. I want to address all my friends who are or aren't here. Let's claim ownership of this resistance without losing more souls. There are some things that everyone can do. Let's show what these are and unite our forces. We cannot wait another second. We have to work together and prevent

saying in the future 'I wish I would have done this or that'. Do not forget that the victory will be won only by accepting the risk of paying a price. We must carry our resistance everywhere; our struggle must continue. I had two daughters, and have lost both of them. You cannot imagine how difficult it was for me. But I know that if this resistance lasts longer, other mothers and fathers will also know my pain. To this very day I have not asked for mercy from anyone, and neither will I. I will continue the struggle as I have so far for those who remain. It is difficult for me to talk of my daughters. They made themselves known in their very short lives. I know that henceforth they will always live on in their people's hearts and from now on the revolutionary struggle will be remembered with them. The tradition of resistance we have left will be transferred to the new generation. They have chiseled into the golden pages of history the meaning of brotherhood and sisterhood and the love of comrades. They were not far from one another and shared everything. They shared their poverty, love and hope before, later they shared the resistance. Their bonds of love and were so great and finally they shared even death. I felt proud and honoured by them, I will continue the same feelings. I love them so much. I will not forget my dear Canan and my dear Zehra at all. May your life be spared!"

After my father has finished his speaking, I saw the people who shed tears in the crowd. Some was trying to hid their tears. And then there was a short silence over the people. Immediately after, the streets of Armutlu echoed with the noise of the slogans. Finally, our friends sang our march - "**THERE IS NO DEATH FOR US**". We had shouted this march for those that had gone before. Whereas I was going now and my comrades were singing for me the same march.

Some never left the house where I had been. Farewell had been said and everyone went to prepare for tomorrow's meeting.

Those that remained there, lit a big fire and formed a circle around it. Early the following day, people began to be gathered in front of the Resistance House. The preparations had been begun for my last journey home. I would be taken on the shoulders of my friends for the last time in Armutlu's streets and would set off on a journey towards the Black Sea.

My older brother Remzi would facilitate the procedures. Anyway, he was my lawyer. At the same time he was our close friend. Towards midday the last preparations had been completed and the marching cortege had been prepared. The banners were opened again and my comrades were carrying my photographs. The marching was begun. When we set off, I saw my father and uncle. They seemed strong and were walking arm in arm. The slogans were shouted even more strongly.

While we were starting the Death Fast in the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu, there was a Death Fast Resister who was continuing the resistance that had been released from the prison. The cortege passed in front of the house where the Death Fast Resister Osman Osmanagaoglu was continuing the resistance from before. And then we reached the house where the other Death Fast Resister Sevgi Erdoğan was continuing her fast. My older sister Sevgi could not stand up any more. She was taken out with a stretcher and made a short speech. She said that the resistance has been continuing and she took an oath that they would continue. I also said farewell to my older sister Sevgi and my comrades and friends put my dead body into the ambulance accompanied by applause and slogans.

While we were going to hospital in the ambulance, my grandmother and my father were next to me. My grandmother wailed incessantly until we reached the hospital. My father has not spoken. He only watched me. From time to time he was

saying something quietly to calm my grandmother. As if he was trying not to disturb me. We could not stay in hospital long. After the required procedures, we set off towards Rize together with our comrades and close friends. It would take us a long time to reach there. I had lots of time to be reunited with my dear Canan. My comrades did not leave me alone on my journey, they were accompanying me with two buses. My grandmother and "*my actor-lawyer*" flew before us. They would go to meet us there.

I was traveling on the way for the last time that I had travelled countless times. I knew that the Black Sea was always rough and the mountains were very green. Was it possible not to fall passionately in love with this beauty? Because of this I always had loved the Black Sea. I even missed its rain. I realised that we came close to our charming village, after passing through the rough roads at the centre of the city and then climbing up the gradient. I noticed that nothing in this area had changed. The roads still had not been repaired.

When we arrived in front of the primary school in our neighbourhood, suddenly the cars stopped and all passengers got out of the vehicles.

I understood that I also had completed my last journey on the shoulders of my comrades and friends. My friends were determined.

Again the banners were opened and we set off. I looked at my primary school where I spent five years of my life and lived a part of my childhood, both pleasantly and painfully. It seemed to me my childhood friends were waving. They did not grow up. They still were 8 or 9 years old. I waved to them, too. There was a sensitive and warm atmosphere and I said farewell to them.

All together we walked towards our old house. There was a crowd in front of the house. Some from our neighbourhood and others were our relatives. My mother was there. Who knows how sad she felt that she had lost me after Canan. But there's nothing that can be done, one needs to survive through these things.

Suddenly I saw my relatives. They were my close relatives , but I did not feel that they were. Why did I feel as if they were strangers? Who knows, perhaps because of none of them expressed condolences to my father after Zehra died and they did not make enquiries about either Canan or me. They could have at least come to visit us and say that we were making mistakes or something. For example, they could say that they were taking a wrong action and say that we must quit the Death Fast. We could understand all these things. We respected their opinions and were tolerant of them. During our Death Fast Resistance in the Resistance House, thousands of people visited us, but we could not understand why they did not visit. In a short time, I noticed they were crying. Were they crying for us or for their own conditions? Because they could not dissuade us, I have heard that they got angry at my father. But they never thought that he would not be able to dissuade us.

They did not think that it was so difficult for my father. They did not take into consideration how his heart was burning with overpowering grief. And they did not want to know that you were showing respect to our decision and always feeling honoured us. Who knows, maybe they thought that my father did not care for us like them. There will be no misunderstanding, everybody knows that our father felt honoured by us and we felt honoured by him. Henceforth it will be the same. Perhaps the people could not understand this condition, the beauty of loving and bonds that will succeed in being established as ti-

me passes.

My father; my dear father, look, all your friends are not here. Today is Sunday, that is to say, it is a holiday. A few of your friends from your youth are here, but unfortunately most of them did not come. As time passes they will understand our being right in this resistance. The force of the resistance would have been understood in time. And our being right would have been proven once more. We made a barricade with our bodies to stop the oppression and the tyranny in the prisons. And that's that! We tried to do mighty things! For some, they did not understand how we could approach such a task, being of such small stature. We tried to put an end to abuse and to say "stop"! They have to know that such a resistance as this needs huge hearts, like the hearts that water buffalos have.

Your heart will be pure and clean and you will believe in your people. You will say that it is worth it to pay a price for this people. Don't you worry about those who come or do not come.

After the religious ceremony, my friends started their private ceremony. One of my friends recited a poem with a high-pitched and sensitive voice. The others told about me and my struggle accompanied by slogans. And finally they have left me one by one and I was left alone with Canan.

Sometime afterwards, we noticed that our father was there. After our friends left, he wanted to stay alone and he wanted to share his feelings and thoughts for the last time. We must say to our father that we felt honoured by him. He must get used this situation and bury his grief in his heart and then he should continue his life. Of course, to say this was easy, but after he has lost two daughters, what could this mean? And how could he continue a normal life?

From the beginning of the resistance, Canan and I had understood that we could meet such a result as this. The things which we did not know, were the things that would happen after we have left. During the resistance period, merry and happy times which we had spent came to life in my imagination. While my father and I were having a good time and were laughing loudly, now I remember that the people were watching us, they could not understand us. It appeared that we were enjoying the events that were taking place. It was difficult to explain this condition, that it was giving meaning to the resistance. It was enough to understand that the resistance was right and humane.

While we were getting ready to pay a price for our decision, it was imperative to continue with our convictions and our love for humanity. We might prove the reality of it by living and that we were not robots and were normal people. It meant to show the spirit and meaning of the resistance.

I thought that we have lived to the full. Easy to say, it was 221 days in total. Each moment was as long as one year, for 221 days. Canan stayed with my father less time. What an unjust world! There is no equality even in this condition. After Canan has gone, we stayed with my father.

We had talked about Canan in our long conversations. About how tall she was, the warmth of her heart, her calming way of life and also the choosing of her clothes and finery. She was always paying attention to her clothes and finery. She always dressed well according to our economic position. She always wore suitable clothes. Moreover, she always looked good in all the clothes she wore.

For example, her relationship with my father was always clo-

se. Nevertheless, she always was his young Canan. If you were to ask him, she never grew up and always remained as young Canan. I also was the older sister and must be older than her. My father was thinking something like this. To protect and look after her always was my job. He did not want to accept that she was growing up and that she could make important decisions. Because of this he wanted us to quit the Death Fast. When she said to my father; *"why do you want me to quit the Death Fast, not my older sister, isn 't she your daughter? "*, he always said *"Daughter, you are still so young. "* He said these things, but it is not possible to persuade Canan. He wanted to speak to us, but the words would not come out because of sorrow or agitation.

I remembered Armutlu and the many meaningful days which we spent together. At that time we always talked and my father had always brought up new subjects for discussion. While we were talking about Canan, he was really affected. Then he would say that he wanted to go out for a smoke. I understood that he was affected deeply and filled with emotion. He was always making up such reasons for not shedding tears in front of me.

One time, I had prepared a present for him. I gave this present to him at same time our friends were here. I had prepared a book of common photographs and put a short footnote. *"Look, daddy! Canan is between us. She is smiling. Daddy, I promise to you and my sister that I will live one day more just to spite the enemy. We will take her and walk from one end of the Black Sea to the other. TO VICTORY. Your daughter ZEHRA "*. I wanted to open and read his present. He could not bear to read this footnote. He stopped in the middle of the note and embraced me. He kissed me as much as he wanted. He did not want to leave me. I was feeling his warmth and hearing his heartbeat. And then suddenly he left my room.

With these emotional moments we had joyous and happy times.

My grandmother came to my father's side. They have embraced each other and silently shed many tears. Later they started to talk. My grandmother tried to console him and said that he must be strong. *"Look my little daughter, my dear Canan. Here is your sister, she has come here. I know that you have missed her very much. Both of you, do not worry! I will be here. Each time you will call out, I will come immediately. If you have something you need, let me know. I will bring it at once. If you want I can stay with you, besides being between you. I will caress your hair and your elder sister's at the same time. Then I will read a tale as I read you when you were children. If you feel cold I will cover you up with a blanket and quilt. But whatever happens, not to be without your smiling faces. I want to see to your pearly teeth shining continuously. Do you remember my dear Canan that we talked to you while you were in the Resistance House in Izmir? When I said you that you must quit the Death Fast, I said to you, 'Listen to words of your grandmother, remember not to leave a job half done'. So, I could not find any words which I could say to you and I had to hang up the telephone."*

My older sister Sengul came to my side. Now the three of them were shedding tears silently. Then the time to go came and we started to leave from our side. First my grandmother, then followed by my older sister Sengul.

My father was unable to leave our side. Again he looked over to us and said, *"my heroine daughters "*. I don't know how I can successfully carry out this responsibility with which you have left me. In the old days, I was living only as Ahmet Kulaksiz but now I will live as the father of Canan and Zehra. When the people look at me, they will see you. Some of them

will damn me eternally because I did not make you give up the Death Fast. Others will try to understand me, who knows?

Some will be curious that I am able to smile and they will be bewildered about how I could manage to have some fun. I will do everything for my children. If I could find some reasons to laugh and feel happy, I could not keep it a secret. I will work hard to earn enough money to get bread. And I would not be embarrassed in the presence of others. If I have joined in a revel, feast or a wedding feast, I will dance the traditional dances of the halay and horon. From time to time I will go to the cinema and I will not reject everything concerning life. I never did anything eternally: I will never permit disrespect toward your memories and your struggles. I will carry your loving in my heart continuously and I always will walk around honourably because I had two daughters like you. Until we would be reunited with you, you will live on in me and become me.

He left our side with heavy steps. Some considerable time after my father left us, I noticed my grandfather there. He is older and has a saintly face, my dear grandfather. He did not join my funeral ceremony for fear he could not withstand it. I didn't care, he came to us now and that was enough. He started praying. I saw while he was praying, his eyes began to fill up with tears. Perhaps he was suffering because he had not to come to us during the resistance period, who knows? But that is a reality that my grandfather always has been loving to us.

Ah, if only he came to visit us like my grandmother, we would have been very happy. We knew that he loved us so much and that was the important thing. My dear grandfather, we noticed that we saddened you very much. We wanted you to show respect to our decision that we made concerning our lives. We wanted you to know that we did not do anything to

hurt your pride. We have taken on ourselves the tyrannical actions which have been carried out against our uncle and his friends. If only we could have found other methods. The victory against tyranny is not earned easily. A price must be paid. Listen to me, grandfather, the Palestinian people have lost a lot of people because they wanted to perform a namaz (*note: Islamic prayer*) in the mosque. To make this decision by us was not easy. We started once and we could not quit halfway. I hope that you can understand these things, my dear grandfather.

He completed his praying and went away with soft footsteps. It was as if he did not want to wake us up by his actions. I stayed alone with Canan. She said, "*I started to think that you would never come.*" Yes, I am late but I will never leave alone again. We have seen and passed through a lot of things until now. Time and time again, we felt happy together and unwillingly sometimes saddened each other. But all of these moments were warm and belonged to us. We never lived only for ourselves. We planned the things that we were both involved with. When our spirits wrapped around its longing to establish a new world, we imagined the joy of our unity during the period of our struggle. While everybody was thinking how can they could obtain more possessions, we shared the poverty between us, as if it were the grandest possession of the world. Time and time again, we separated from each other, and at the same time the excitement of being reunited wrapped around our hearts. We imagined being on a shore or on a mountain top from where we have been crowded together amongst a heap of reinforced concrete. While we were pleasantly sipping warm tea on the balcony, we thought that the inmates in the prisons were not going to be free.

We thought and tried to give a meaning to it. While those at their school desks were deeply preoccupied with getting a diploma, we preferred to receive the certificate from our people

with a distinguished mark of *"very good"*. We waited our turn in line gradually. While the resistance was continuing we did not rush. We said farewell to the ones who had gone before. We had waved with fortitude to the ones we saw off at the train station. While we were struggling for our people, we usually were met with looks of scorn. The most we did was to love. We loved our family. We loved our mother, father and the others without expecting or planning it. For example, we loved nature while it was being killed by wild monsters. And we loved the flowers, trees and the forests as we loved freedom. We also loved the struggle. While they were putting up thick walls and barbed wire, we loved the resistance for destroying them. We loved a lot of things, we loved them and they became beautiful and our world became more meaningful.

We hated treachery, hypocrisy, lies and untruths. We also hated the ones that left their friends halfway. And also we hated those who requested the shipping charges from their friends to be buried. While we were bearing the headbands on our foreheads, we hated those who sold their headbands by submitting to the tyrants. We wanted to live as humans, honoured and inordinately proud, having a clear conscience.

When we heard a scream, we turned our heads to see if we could possibly do something. We tried to be hope for the people against the ones who tried to buy their consciences and hearts. The most important thing is that we have not shamed those who trusted in us.

We became the voices of the heroes or heroines, who they have tried to annihilate inside four walls. Their hopes grew with us and they have been stronger against the tyrants because of it. They felt honoured by us. They said how happy they were to have friends like us. They could now die in peace.

We marched, we always marched. We sometimes made mistakes. We tried to correct our mistakes. And we marched shoulder to shoulder and arm in arm, we marched without looking back. We noticed we became free while we marched and became more human. We marched above the darkness and we tried to be light with our tiny bodies

We never capitulate. We preferred to die with the honour of the resistance, rather than die with the disrespect of submission. We have left you with what we did as well as with the things we were not able to do. We flew to eternity like a white dove. I'm ZEHRA KULAKSIZ and my younger sister CANNAN KULAKSIZ. We did everything because of the great love for our people. All the difficulties we faced up to were because of this love. We paid a price for our part in what we shared. And now we passed the flag on to those that will follow us. We know it is in safe hands....

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LAST WORD

During my whole life the longest thing I ever wrote did not exceed one typewriter page. But this time I must write more to tell the things I have lived through. I had to write concerning the events of the last year, of the Death Fast Resistance in our country and sharing the things that I and my family have experienced and have recorded in history. To write, and in particular to write concerning such an important period, requires both courage as well as being equipped with enough information.

I think that I can only tell a small part of the major resistance if I concentrate enough on it.

I tried to share periods of this resistance that I experienced with my daughters CANAN and ZEHRA. In one way this story will be our daughter's story together with the resistance.

Some people have left important memories in my mind of grief and pleasure that I experienced. For example, I was disappointed. Occasionally, it is difficult to talk about the behaviour of my friends that I had trusted. It is true that this story will be incapable of explaining all the things I did or was not able to do. It is not possible to completely explain the resistance, that story will be told for years to come.

In our story, some people may not have the place that they deserved. Some events could have been researched more thoroughly. Some things that would be considered important by ot-

hers may have been overlooked.

The most important thing is that I have no intention of naming people or organisations in order to criticise them. The aim of this writing is not a political settling of accounts or a political evaluation. Essentially, the story of the Death Fast Resistance is a political resistance, and I will state my opinions concerning the situation of our country. Furthermore, I will try to give preference to the humanistic perspective and will try to act as a spokesman for the resisters. At the same time, this story will be my story and the story of my daughters. The other aim is to share our thoughts and feelings that I have had for public awareness. One of my aims is to emphasise that the resisters are normal human beings and this must be accepted and emphasised.

Instead of telling the complete story of the resistance over ten months, I thought I would describe the events that took place during the four months I spent in Armutlu. In this four-month period, I was not continually in Armutlu. I will refer to these subjects in due course and will not leave out important events.

Another one of my aims in writing is to tell about myself. I know that the existing trend of thought in society is different than mine. I know that according to the opinions of some people, I am a self-sacrificing father, yet to others, I am an inhumane father who sent his daughters to death. Furthermore, it is possible to meet some people who think that I am a cold-blooded murderer. These people are prejudiced regarding their conception of the world and that cannot be changed. My basic aim is to explain the truth to people who try to understand the cause of the resisters and through their understanding, overcome their prejudice.

I will partly have achieved my goal if I could change these pe-

ople's opinions even if they did not once come to the Resistance House and talk to the resisters. Of course, I will hope that they will not think like me but perhaps they will try to understand me. Also I want to challenge their opinions and feelings which are based on insufficient information.

For example, they should know that my daughter Zehra was arrested and taken to court because of joining a protest action regarding the massacre in Jerusalem, only a short time before the Death Fast started. They should try to understand that Zehra wanted to empathise with the Muslim Palestinian people who were murdered in the Mesjid al-Aqsa mosque.

There were many unknown aspects of the resistance and the resisters. First of all, they were humans like the other people. They experienced joy, sadness, feelings and opinions like you and me. Many of them had made mistakes in the past. Sometimes they have hurt their nearest relatives. They have gone to school and become very agitated over their report cards. They loved and were loved. They saddened their parents and they usually felt sad for their parents. For example when they went to the cinema, they talked to their friends about the film. They felt freedom and the love of nature when they had a picnic. They tried to feel for the problems of the country. From time to time when they met with different injustices, they strove to solve the problems. Some recommended that they not strive to solve major problems. For example the adults often said that these were not our problems and that the rulers were supposed to think about and solve these problems. As time passed, they realised that all the events that took place were not as they said. Their parents tried to take them under their wing and protect them from danger.

They grew up by hearing this cry: If you suffer a serious misfortune, commit suicide. They were afraid of these threats and

shuddered. They sometimes noticed the hypocrisy behind love that seemed to be haphazard. As they lay in bed before sleeping, they would think about these things and try to find answers.

They watched the rise of the morning sun, hoping that it would warm the hearts of the people. Their tiny hearts tried to beat the uncertainty and fear of the dark nights. When they saw their contemporaries who set out on the streets at the crack of dawn to try and earn enough money to live, their eyes filled with tears.

Then they grew up, some of them became young girls, the others young boys, some also were mothers and fathers and got married and had children. They had carried the new expectations and hopes to this new generation. In spite of coming from different regions, they understood and felt the same things. They made a decision to oppose the tyranny that they saw and decided that if they did not do this, they would be found responsible before history.

Sometimes they were beaten mercilessly with batons in the middle of the street. And sometimes also they were put in prison. But they never abandoned their cause. They always succeeded in living in accordance with their opinions. They comprehended better from day to day why they held on to these principles. These things were etched into their consciences. Then, the events in the prisons began. The prisoners who did not want to enter the isolation cells proclaimed to the whole world that they had started the Death Fast. They declared that either they would live with their ideals or they would die in the cells one by one. And also other people outside the prisons had discussed amongst themselves and decided to be the voice of the prisoners inside.

They had lain down their bodies in the lap of hunger so that people everywhere could better understand the things that it happened inside. Previously no one understood this state. Their parents objected to their decisions, the heads of the families said no. But they made their own decisions. No, they said. While our people were dying, they could not wait silently and give them the cold shoulder. Some of them started the Death Fast inside and the others outside. Even in different countries, they have given their hands and hearts to each other.

After that day they thought together. They laughed and smiled together. One day they saw off to eternity their relatives and their friends, but they never fell into hopelessness. And they kept their dreams concerning the future.

They knew that if they gave up, they would lose a part of the future world, which would consist of their hopes and dreams.

While the days and nights were turned upside down, the numbers of those that were gone rose continuously. Ancient history testified to the difference of this struggle. While they wailed for those that had gone, the parents never lost the warmth in their hearts. While the very young shoots were buried one by one, the incurable wound in society was increasing more every day. The black soil was rebelling with every flower that fell, and society could not give meaning to it. The wind was blowing meaninglessly in those spring months. The sun was not rising to see the things that would become a reality someday. The flowers did not enjoy their own smell any more. But life was continuing with grief and longing.

"As a tree is the brother of a forest", this was a test for humanity. In those spring months and later on, death and life, affection and detestation, goodness and badness were fighting bitterly. It was not easy to guess when there would be a finish.

They only thought that they would give the good news.

Yes, their loved ones and friends were by their side, yes they said, we were not so many. We must have more friends. Some of them were by our side, but where were the others? They were not seen anywhere. Whereas we desired to be together very much. When they were living with their hopes and love excitedly, they wished to be arm in arm with them. But, it did not happen, will not happen. Is our history like this, we do not know. We are living our excitement, our mourning only half-way, and it is deficient. But they thought these days had passed. And they passed and we would live with the excitement of our unity, just to defy the enemy.

While the resistance was continuing with the same amount of meaning, there were two sisters: ZEHRA and CANAN who felt in their hearts the excitement together with all these things. Two sisters, two undergraduates, two of the Death Fast Resisters. At the same time, this was their story. Who were these two sisters? Why did they have a part in this resistance? For example, what did their father think? Why did he give permission to join the Death Fast Resistance? Or did he not give permission, and Canan and Zehra made the decision by themselves? All things would have been tried in this story. Of course, when the time came, the resistance would tell.

And the other resisters are also subjects of the story. Besides, the visitors, authors, actors/actresses and ordinary people. Zehra and Canan wanted to explain their lives themselves in person.

They said that you listened to us. We want to tell our feelings and thoughts from our own mouths. I tried to complete their requests as much as I could. After that, the other heroes and heroines wanted to speak in my story. They also talked about

themselves as much as was possible. There will be ones who are overlooked and are left out even though they deserved to be included. We hope that this will be excused.

Now it is ten months since the Death Fast Resistance was started on October 20, 2000, and which created earthquakes which shook the country in many ways.

Later, the resistance, along with the Death Fasts which started outside the prisons, passed into different dimensions and testified to a massacre started on December 19, 2000 and which lasted four days. Immediately after, new discussions were started concerning the initiation of the F-Type Cell Prisons that the Minister of Justice said had been postponed for a season. The problem of the prisons has been solved according to the Minister's opinion, but the Death Fast Resisters do not agree and have started a new period too. The problem which the Ministry said has been solved has now become a current issue in the media because of the death of a prisoner in Sincan Prison on March 21, 2001.

In spite of all the hindrances of the Ministry, the news of deaths came from the prisons, and that shocked society. When the same news reached the people outside, just for a moment, all attention was gathered over the Death Fast Resisters outside. The people outside laid down their bodies to hunger in support of the Death Fast inside against the F-Type Cell Prisons. Essentially, the resistance was started in Izmir and Mersin, but the focus of the resistance outside was the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu.

At the same time, this book is the story of the 140 days I spent with my younger daughter CANAN who started the Death Fast in Izmir and while she was continuing her resistance in Kucuk Armutlu. She lost her life on April 15, 2001 and my ol-

der daughter ZEHRA lost her life on June 29, 2001 while she was continuing the Death Fast Resistance in the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu.

Of course, there is the previous history and its resulting in the gigantic resistance. In my opinion the meaning of the days are more important. The historians will write more details and leave more concrete documentation.

The things which I want to tell is the situation of the Resistance House in Kucuk Armutlu where I spent most of my time during this period and the events which I have experienced and the memories which I shared with the resisters.

While I was doing this, at the same time, I wanted to share my feelings, the things which I felt during this period, while people were accusing me of the things which I did or did not do for my daughters.

In this period I talked about my disappointments which I had from time to time. Sometimes one action which I did not expect made my grief lighter and became happy.

We stayed with Canan a short time. After she came from Izmir, she only lived two more weeks, my little daughter. After we took her to Rize and buried her, we shared many things with her older sister Zehra. It appears that I could not mourn my little daughter Canan.

Many people know that no father could bear the fingernails of their children bleeding, let alone their deaths. But the mercilessness of life is sometimes terrible. If you had two daughters, you even might get used to the loss of them. I also wanted my children to finish their education, gain their diplomas and embrace me. And I wanted them to live for a long time,

for example get married and have children.

What could I do in this case when they did not give up their decisions and not quit halfway through the work they started? The problems of the prisons which continued in our country were seen as problems of humanity by my daughters. They said that it was unworthy not to take sides with regard to this problem of humanity. They laid down their bodies in hunger and paid the price.

The basic question here is and must be "*how do we claim ownership of the problems of humanity?*" The answer which we will give to this question will be an indication of our responsibilities. In spite of the fact that they were young, they had understood that people would not become free without accepting the risk of paying a price. What are we defending? What kinds of virtues and morals could we establish?

In the Death Fast Resistance which started in 2000 and continued, Kucuk Armutlu has an important place. Of course, this resistance passed through many important curves in many places. None of these were interesting to public opinion like Kucuk Armutlu. This neighbourhood was famous for the resistance taking place at the squatter's house, which took on a new mission by housing the Death Fast Resisters. And this neighbourhood which did not attract attention before, because of the death news which came from the prisons, was just for a moment the centre of the news. While public opinion was trying to learn the things which happened in the prisons, the media even took to watching the Resistance House. Kucuk Armutlu was playing host to a historical period.

People have been seen off to eternity from the narrow streets of Armutlu. First there was Gulsuman Dönmez. This woman had a son eleven years old, and as the first Death Fast Resis-

ter outside the prisons to die, she has been recorded in history. Gulsuman was a poor woman who lived in Kucuk Armutlu. Her brother was in an F-Type Cell Prison. This woman lost her life with the 147th day of the resistance and was lighting the way for those who would come after her.

After came CANAN KULAKSIZ. My little daughter has been seen off from Armutlu. Every sending off was aching to our hearts, the probability of new deaths increased our grief even more. And then Senay Hanoglu. The owner of the Resistance House where the resistance was still continuing. She left her husband in prison and her children behind, and gave her place in turn.

Meanwhile, ERDOĞAN GÜLER who was continuing the resistance in Izmir, joined from another location the caravan which has gone. This time ZEHRA KULAKSIZ got her turn. My older daughter, Canan's older sister, the resistance flag that her younger sister left her, was passed on to others, she was reunited with her Canan. The resistance did not pay attention to young or old, but was taking those who came forward. SEVGİ ERDOĞAN has joined them, as well. Mrs. Erdoğan, who was continuing in Armutlu the fast she started in prison, has been remembered as elder-sister Sevgi and was not late in joining the caravan of those who had gone before.

Actually, Armutlu has testified to these historical events, and has been the scene of extraordinary resistance by a very small number of people. After Canan died and I returned to Armutlu, I wanted to spend time with my daughter Zehra who was alone. At the same time, I had prepared myself for the events that I would witness in Armutlu. My older daughter *Zehra* would not give up the Death Fast whatever the cost may be. In that case, I decided to do all that I could to support the struggle of the prisoners in the prisons. There were a lot of people

who did this. People from every quarter.... Intellectuals, jurists, artists and many other sensitive people were putting their hearts into trying to stop the deaths and to terminating the Death Fast.

Meanwhile, of course we were meeting with some groups who were not showing sufficiently the solidarity that we had hoped for and were not acting in a manner suitable for this historic mission.

One week after we had lost my little daughter Canan, I got excited when two of my old friends visited me and said that they needed a person as a speaker in the May 1 st celebrations and had suggested that I represent the prisoner families. I accepted and said I would be glad to do it.

On the morning of May 1 st, the person who invited me told me on the telephone that everything was ready and he expected to see me there. When I reached the place, they said that there were no problems and that I could make a speech. But when the public speeches had finished and continued with music, I understood that they did not give permission for me to speak. When I asked what happened, they did not give me a very good answer. This was the first disappointment that I met. My making a speech was not that important. It was a bad sign not to give permission to make a speech for only a few minutes on this meaningful day and in this period by someone who would speak in the name of the prisoners. My pride was hurt. I had been invited but they did not give permission to make a speech. I had lost my one daughter and was about to lose the other one. If they gave me permission to make a speech, would they lose so much? Or what did they gain by not giving permission? I wonder what they were feeling when they did this. Those who prohibit the struggle of workers and labourers, what kind of democracy do they defend? This is the

strangest country!

I have lost my two daughters in this resistance. None of the leaders of political parties, associations or the trade unions expressed condolences to me. One imam from Bolu showed this sensitivity. He came to Armutlu and talked with me and wished blessings on me. Of course this will be recorded in history.

Neither I nor my daughters requested mercy from anyone until now. We both respected the working class and we tried to make a living from our labour.

But we searched for love during our lives. We thought solidarity and working together were a part of our lives. Because of this we always received love with open arms. A few words full of love from a warm heart were very meaningful to our life. Our eyes were always kept open. We considered problems of our friends and our people as our own private problems. Every so often we shared our very little bread with our friends and we put on the table a cup of soup. When we were understood, we were never hurt. Even if we lived in the hypocritical world, we always remained true to our standard of judgement. We embraced our understanding tightly. The warmongers pursued their trade with intensity, but our longing for peace never decreased. We always wanted to win with peace and love. For this, if it were possible, we would have not hesitated to present our hearts on a silver tray.

Now you see how it is. While some of them were interested in small things, they were changing their personality and thoughts as they were growing up. All of this gave even more meaning to the struggle and for the reality in the world.

Our whole days were mostly spent in Kucuk Armutlu, and we talked to the visitors who came and made statements to the fo-

reign press. Time and time again, I joined in the activities happening outside Istanbul.

On June 9, 2001, trade unions and political parties made a decision for a mass meeting organised by some democratic mass organisations. I took part as a speaker in the name of TAYAD and we went as a group from Istanbul to Ankara.

When we arrived at the hippodrome from where the march would start, suddenly I remembered my little daughter Canan. Before she started the Death Fast, I met Canan in a mass meeting like this.

She came from Izmir and I came from Istanbul. We had embraced each other longingly. Both of us were marching shoulder and shoulder and shouting slogans in order to force the closure of the F-Type Cell Prisons. After such a long time, this time I was alone and Canan was not right by my side. I might march without Canan but with my other friends, just the way that we had marched with her.

When my turn came to make a speech, my friends gave me a photograph of Canan and I hung it on my chest. I did not talk alone any more. I was talking after Canan. Sometimes both of our emotions were being poured out from my mouth. In making my speech, I talked about Canan, and talked about the resistance. Time and time again, I was unable to speak. But I might explain and in any case, I had tried to prevent the deaths. Before I spoke, one of my childhood friends, Mehmet Özer, read a poem he wrote in Canan's memory from the podium. It was a very fine and meaningful poem. It was difficult to speak to the people from the podium as I tried to tell forcefully and calmly in normal speech. I tried to tell about the hypocritical behaviour of the Ministry of Justice.

I had demanded that the negotiations conducted before December 19 be resumed, and wanted the subject of isolation to be put to rest immediately. The Ministry was like a wall. Like a wall that was silent and deaf. From the very beginning they had planned the massacre and made a decision for it. They had faked a scenario, but reality turned out to be a massacre. After the mass meeting, we returned again to Istanbul with the other families. I suddenly ran to my daughter in Armutlu. She was waiting for me. I explained to her all about the meeting. I had talked about my small part and the excitement that was in the air.

One of my friends whom I could not forget in Armutlu, was Ali.

Ali was Hülya Simsek's brother, one of the Death Fast Resisters in Kucuk Armutlu. We spent almost our entire days together and felt the same emotions. He was a warm friend who explained his opinions a little timidly but he had a good heart, was industrious, and was not idle but did lots of running around for us all. From time to time his mother used to come and then return to Erzincan. Ali's brother was in the F-Type Prison in Edirne. His mother is acquainted with me. After Canan's death, he wrote a letter and his handwriting was so good. The content of the letter was even grander than the letter itself. When I read it I become full of emotion and I noticed that wherever we have been, the warmth inside was not dying down. As you read, you noticed that you were not alone and enjoyed communion with other hearts.

During this period I took many letters and talked over the telephone many times. There were those from both the prisons and the outside. All of them wanted to share my pain and told me that I was not alone. Really I did not think that just a few lines could be so meaningful. These letters added much me-

aning to those days I lived through.

In these difficult days, they gave me the ability to keep standing. But there is one person who I will not be able to forget during these days. When I think today, I'm seeing the elder sister Bilgesu with the resisters in the same square. From the very beginning she was in the middle of the resistance. As an artist for the first time she opened the doors of her house to the resisters. Mostly we breathed together. She felt glad and sad with us. She was an older sister to all of us with the warm compassion and sensitivity of an artist.

With her experience and knowledge, we witnessed the struggle day and night and took support from her circle of artists.

We were together with older sister Bilgesu in every period of the resistance. She tried to share with us all that she had. She was both interested in the resisters and in their families, one by one and they discussed that what they could do for winning the resistance. Together with older sister Bilgesu we had many artist friends, but none of them could show the continuity like Bilgesu Erenus. She was always with us and finally she became one of us.

The other artist friends tried to present to us all that they had. For example, Dilek Gokcin. She shared many things with us. She visited the Armutlu Resistance House continuously. I guess that they shared with Canan. But in spite of all these things, I must declare that it never adequately amounted to what we hoped for from the artists and intellectuals.

The European authorities were the inventors of the cell system and isolation prisons. I went to the gala premiere for the film by the name of "*Silent Death* " which told about the cells and isolation in the European prisons. The scene I saw there was

so interesting. Almost all of the intellectuals and artists that we wanted to see in Kucuk Armutlu had been there. I wondered why they were so interested. Why did our intellectuals show so much interest in this documentary film created from what European prisoners, their relatives and authorised experts said? It appears that losing people in the massacres and in the Death Fast did not give sufficient information to our people. Later, a panel discussion was arranged to discuss this documentary film.

A law professor who guided the panel discussion made an observation I found interesting:

"There is no age limit to learning, I have learned many things with my work. I thank those of you who prepared this film which has explained so much about the meaning of isolation. "

I felt a strange feeling. This jurist, who had spent time in prison, was trying to understand isolation from this documentary film and from former prisoners who came from foreign countries. Whereas we were trying for a whole year to inform the people about the isolation of the F-Type Prisons and explain that it was not possible to live in them. Books and reports were published and a panel discussion was held in which they were trying to learn the realities of the F-Type Cell Prisons from foreign prisoners. Really, this documentary film was a response to the so-called defence of human rights. It was attractive to believe these European people, not our own intellectuals. The things we stated for months by paying a price were not persuasive, but when the Europeans discussed it, our friends' hearts were aching.

That was an important problem for me while I was trying to find an answer. Why were they unfamiliar with their own people? Why were the statements of the prisoners and their clo-

se relatives not persuasive for most of our intellectuals? There were so many massacres that we were subjected to and so many who died. Why were our friends learning from elsewhere that the isolation cells were inhumane? Have we been telling lies for months? Was there no meaning in the burying of lifeless bodies, with hardly an interval between the funerals? How could we win the trust of our friends to turn their attention to their people? Weren't these people who had lost their lives in the resistance our own people? Who would decide what the will of the people would be?

What did the demands of Canan really mean? Of course this period was not so easy to live in.

Everyone must believe that he or she is in the middle of an important exam and must be conscious of historical responsibility.

Was it like this? And did our intellectual friends act like this while I was losing my daughters, my Canan and my Zehra? I thought they were going to be our eyes and our ears. While we were trusting you with all our hearts, why did they not protect our hearts? Why did they not write about us and at least some of them show courage? While blood was dripping into our hearts, they just passed by and they did not even say hello. But we read about these intellectuals and grew up knowing their songs. They woke us up and added new information to our minds. We used to become sad with their folk songs and set sail to other worlds with their poems. They had created excellent and meaningful reminders. While they were describing a story of love gone wrong, they carried hope and love to the people. But what happened to make those people frightened of finding themselves in our world - this is incomprehensible. While our children were laying their bodies down in hunger, how did they pretend not to see us? In fact our world has been separa-

ted from theirs. Did it make you feel ill at ease that we were breathing from the same air and going around in the same park as you were? My younger daughter Canan used to have an autograph book. If my daughter could get one cassette from your hand, I'm sure she would be very happy.

If you thought that there would be very few things we shared, it was not true. We could find something that we would have shared in our poorest moment and in the loneliest time. We created our standard of judgement in the past. If we shared, you would see that we would get rich. For example, let's share hope, for leaving one proud legacy in history. But we could not do it nor succeed in doing it.

While the history of this resistance was being written, it will be written that the resisters stood alone. The ones who lived after will witness countless examples of faithlessness in the pages.

They would try to understand why the extraordinary contradiction appeared. They would try to find the solution to all the events that took place. They would say that it might not be like this, they were children of this people. In the difficult days they would need to be understood and to be told. Instead of doing this, they remained silent. They thought that it was counted to their grief.

The events which appeared in Armutlu entered a new phase with the decisions of the state concerning to the prisons. The new resisters were taking the place of the former resisters who lost their lives in Armutlu. The Death Fast Resisters who have been conditionally released from prisons were continuing the fast. The Ministry was supposed to arrest those who were on Death Fast in the prisons, they would then be released according to the conditional law and were supposed to put an end to

the resistance. But it did not happen. The resisters who had been released from the prisons decided to continue their resistance in Armutlu, and therefore obstructed what the state envisaged. First, the resistance which began in only one house, was continuing with more than twenty resisters in five houses. This new development seemed to be at the centre of resistance in Kucuk Armutlu.

Among other things, the Death Fasts which had started in many regions, were becoming more widespread every day.

The things that we wanted to become a reality and the things that became reality could not meet our expectations. The events which I met in these last times are events that I could not believe were possible. I had lost two daughters, Canan and Zehra, in the Death Fast Resistance. For example, a short time ago, I could not think anything like this. But life is continuing in spite of us and you can interfere to only a small degree. The events which overcome our willpower and develop in spite of us affect us, and you cannot do too much about it.

You will be forced to explain this state. How could I explain this state to my closest friends?

In spite of so much grief which I experienced, to not express to society or to not have your feelings and emotions understood is a sad state of affairs to be in. The thing that people do who experienced the same grief as me is to try and forget and to stay out of the public eye. Did our children want to do this really? Was the thing to forget the desires of our children? Of course not. If we don't find the resistance and resisters legitimate, we can return to normal if we do not mind being disrespectful to our children.

If we don't want to experience more deaths, we must make

statements with all the details to public opinion and voice concerns about events that have occurred up to now and struggle for the legitimacy of resistance.

On the contrary, the standard of judgement formed in a wide section of society has to comprehend the human condition. It must also explain political responsibilities and the guilt before history of the rulers who pretended not to see and observed passively the deaths of people in this resistance. This suffering of our society lasted for months.

Our children did not pay a price to get bored in their lives. They wanted to live out their thoughts and political identities. But the merciless rulers only observed passively instead of accepting their demands. The rulers of our country who always preferred violence as the regime of government performed excellently in not solving the problems of society and pretended not to see the demands being made. But they must know that they would not succeed with these methods.

We could not forget the grief that they put us through. If they realised their own successes, the existing calm in the society resulting from what the tyrannical system did, they would then understand that they have made a big mistake. And they caused society to forget the laughter of a handful of low-lives. A large section of society has lost their hopes for tomorrow. We buried our young children and they ridiculed them. How did they construct a society like this?

This period started a long time ago. At first they escalated the violence to the maximum levels by terrorising the hearts of people.

The ones who opposed this they silenced with torture and prisons. The next step was to change people's minds. They knew

that the easiest way to persuade society is to take away its mind and heart. To maintain unorganised life in society, on the one hand they introduced many new bans and on the other hand they tried to spread phobia against organisations. They started an attack against our human values. Our people have been reduced to the level of slaves, not thinking or questioning. While constantly talking about freedom of thought, imperialism has propagated the degeneration of culture. Helping one another and solidarity have become shameful acts. It has been written that to oppose the sovereignty of the state is out-of-date behaviour. While our people were eating from rubbish bins, researchers wrote about this and were threatened for doing so. They were told that they were making our country look bad to the outside world. Not the torturers, but the people who wrote about torture were put before the courts. Our young people were dropped into the swamp of drugs and prostitution by those who claimed to be protecting them from danger. And according to their opinion, to defend the blue collar workers was shameful behaviour, but at the same time those who were saying that were the ones who murdered nature. And then, gradually they destroyed the essence and meaning of wholesome values in society. Society was one of these onlookers. Many people were only watching the events which were developing in the country. For years, in a part of our country where blood was flowing in abundance, all anybody did was watch.

For example, they looked on while the intellectuals of this country were burning in Sivas. (Note: a reference to an incident in July 1993 when intellectuals and prominent followers of the Alevi interpretation of Islam, a large but persecuted minority in Turkey, came to the town of Sivas for a conference. A mob whipped up by Sunni Muslim fanatics and fascists burned their hotel down, and there were 37 deaths. Police, soldiers and the Sivas fire brigade did not intervene.) While they were pillaging our underground resources and selling them off, it was

the opponents of privatisation who were considered shameful.

Finally, we became a society of the deaf, the dumb and the insensitive. In this way the tyrannical machines will run easier and their weapons will be easily trained on those who are the conscience of society. And they would show what it means to oppose the state. They would learn this completely by heart and oppositionists could never show courage again.

And then the clever politicians came out onto the stage. According to these clever politicians, it was not the time to make heroes. Famous authors, newspapers and famous politicians will lead the way and others will follow behind. What did the Death Fast mean and why were these young bodies lying down to die. Was it worth dying for? We might find other means of struggle. And then they gave a lot of advice to correct the error. They were not doing anything, they were only speaking a lot. While some of them were feeling sorry and saying, "*What if these children are right and we are the ones who are mistaken?*", others looked at them with meaningless expressions. They thought that they had gone mad.

The experiences of the resisters affected them surely. They said everything but they did not want to understand the Death Fast. Most of them gave great speeches, but would not see any of the resisters. They wrote entire pages about being humanists. While the announcement of deaths was heard, one after the other, they discovered that life was holy.

Meanwhile they had forgotten how to protect the holiness of life. Like the other holy values, the holiness of life had lost its meaning and they should have known how to fight for it.

But, no. What's done is done. Canan said that she was ready to pay the price no matter what. Zehra said that she accepted

the risk of sacrificing her most valued possession, for protecting the holiness of life. They were forced to understand this beforehand. Some said it was suicide, others said that these young people might still live. As they said this, very young people had left us one by one. Following Canan, we saw Zehra off to the Black Sea. Those who must come the nearest were far away. Perhaps they were afraid to settle outstanding accounts with each other. They could not endure the things that Canan would say. But later, they said they felt sad, without thinking whether or not they believed in it....

-THE END-

Hello Zehra,

I have received the second postcard you sent me. I'm writing this one week late because of the holiday. Zehra, together we are marching against death; you outside the prisons and us inside. We hear that you are finally struggling with the angel of death. But we are going to explode in here, and then we will shake the tyrannical system. We will break this depressing silence. These days are the messengers of a storm that will come suddenly. It may break out any day at any time. Zehra, we have come to the final stage in here. Our leaders have already advanced. They may explode at any moment. Mehmet Zincir and Yasar Yağın are racing to the finish line, and we are following them. We are arguing with a doctor who knows nothing. When our health began to deteriorate seriously, they put a man on duty and we don't know if he is a doctor or a spy. I think they sent the previous doctors away. This fascist guard comes once a day, in the morning. He returns empty-handed. We become an examination for him. But we don't sign the request form. He comes insisting, like an aggressive wolf. He is waiting for us to lose consciousness. When we do, he will try to force medical intervention. (Note: force-feeding by the authorities, usually done in hospital.) They don't have enough medical equipment here for forcible intervention. They will send us to the hospital. Until now they have only send Mehmet Zincir to hospital, but because he was still conscious he did not accept treatment, and they brought him back. However, Yasar Yağın is still in hospital.

We have not heard from him. Is he dead or still living? Or perhaps they injected him with needles and he lost conscious-

ness? Is he being made into a living corpse? (Note: a term for those left suffering from severe amnesia and other forms of handicap as a result of forcible medical intervention.) We don't know. Supposedly they don't want us to die! In fact, they want to make us into the living dead; just like our comrade Semra Askeri. We will allow it. We will frighten those who fear our deaths. We will die. We will die one way or another. We will become martyrs. There is no other way. Zehra, my arm is tired. I wonder what to say in the rest of the letter. I'll tell you about life here. I have been exiled to another cell from the one I was writing in. Now we are three people in the same cell. These switches take place once a month. Also, the prison administration treats us arbitrarily. When they so desire, they take someone and put him in another place where there may be three people or no-one else... Now we are together with Kadir and Aydin. But they are not my comrades. We get along well with them. My family comes to visit me. My father came during the holiday. We quarrelled for an hour. He wept and returned to our home town. I think they will try to come again. They don't leave me alone. Zehra, I know that I have written a bad letter. I wish I could write a nice letter, but I can't. I send my greetings and love to everyone. I kiss the bands on their foreheads. Bye. Maybe we will meet again in victory. Maybe...

March 11, 2001
Ali Riza Demir

Oh, victory's children! Those who created the halay (a folk dance performed by holding hands and forming a circle accompanied by drum and flute) by holding the handkerchief on their hands and who sing love songs. Paths melt and barricades end with the steps of your sister. Hunger is hopelessness and hunger is pain in a mother's heart who can't give any food to their children that want to eat something. Hunger is cause of the death of the old beggar near the ruined wall who can't find one price of bread. There is enough food to satisfy the world's people a hundred times over. For this reason our journey is very hard and so is the suffering. But hunger for us is our opponent that we fight as volunteers and have defeated many times. Ours is like a dervish journey in the arms of hunger towards death.

March 26, 2001 Sincan

Dear Zehra, hello,

The spring days are giving us a piece of good news on this sunny Bayram (Muslim holiday) day and brings us nearer on a journey that we set out on by uniting our hearts and voices. We knew that our way was hard. But we knew that we would manage together with solidarity, by removing the difference outside and inside, when we are joining this struggle side by side. We are nearer and stronger with our brother Cengiz on this sunny Bayram day. Inside and outside, the illuminated wreaths are on our foreheads for a guarantee. We believe this. With this belief, we are embracing with longing and excitement with our families and our great family who put on your forehead the illuminated wreath of light and hope.

With our greetings and love

*F-Type Prison of Sincan/Ankara Ali
Sinan CAĞLAR*

Dear Zehra,

I was affected and became happy when I read your lines in your letter which you sent me, the pleasantly warm and fulfilling love from one like you. Before I received your postcard, we received one from Selma. When the other one came from Aysun to Gulden, how pleased we are! I could not write on the same day on which I received your card. For this reason I'm writing urgently so that you can take this letter. In fact, I was thinking to write you about ten pages. My dear friend, they took us to hospital on Sunday, maybe you will read it in the newspapers. Therefore I could not write. Zehra, you asked about our health position, I am cursing B1 (note: a vitamin sometimes taken by those on the Death Fast, or perhaps given at times as part of forcible medical intervention by the prison authorities. It has side effects). Our bodies were not accustomed to unnatural things. Whatever may happen, we act bravely therefore, until the unnaturalness of B1 will come to an end in our bodies, the ground will not take us to its heart. Just as you know, the hungry ground doesn't wait. Surely we will catch death and be reunited with the loyal abundance. You know, we started in October. In October the field had been ploughed and seeds sown and then developed into a field, has shot up in the spring freshly. Our seeds have been sown into the soil and nearly all have crashed back while shooting up out of the ground. These will be victorious with the ground giving its abundance and every sprout will be new. I am embracing you with my belief of victory. My dear *Zehra*, the days which we spent with you were completely different. What does it mean to bear you. I met you everywhere, in every area of the life, for example in sporting activity, and felt proud of you inwardly. Now I open-

I am proud of you. We have learned many things from each other.

You have thought many things. If we teach something we will be very happy. My fellow country girl from the Black Sea, I saw your uncle (the lawyer) in Ümraniye Prison and I liked him very much. He brought the warmth of the Black Sea people. I send many regards to him. Which houses are you continuing the Death Fast? How is my older sister Senay? Embrace her for me. I kiss the forehead of the architects of our resistance outside the prisons. Some minutes ago we talked to Zehra through the door of the cell. Zehra, Yildiz, Umus and Zeynep send you many greetings. We are together, Meryem, Gulden Ergul, Zeynep Ozturk, Fadime Bastug and Elmas Basarir. All of them send many greetings. Today is visiting day. I don't have any visitors, I'm writing you a letter. I'm giving the letters to the newspaper. The time is around 10:30. My dear friend, we will see each other, surely. Place and time is not important, in this world or the next world. I'm embracing you and all of you. I know that we will embrace and hold our heads upright and honourably. Love yours

Gülay Kavak

Hello Zehra,

I have received your card that is worth as much as you. I felt very happy. How are you, are you well? We are good here even if we don't see each other. Our excitement and morale is good. We are singing our songs every night. Even today (the 74th day) we danced the halay in the open corridor. Yes, we want to see you very much, too. The long end will come soon. When we meet, our whole longing will be over. As you said, we will win undoubtedly. I'm sending greetings from everybody here. We love you very much. We will win. Your older brother Murat.

Note: greetings to your father.

***Murat ACAR F-Type
Prison in Edirne***

Dear Zehra,

On March 28, 2011 received your short postcard which warmed our insides in Tekirdağ Prison. I'm not a stranger to the Kulaksiz surname. Are you Mehmet's near relation? If that the case, we esteem our fellow country folk. We are reading about you in the newspapers. We feel the warmth of your hearts, which beat with us. All the people who are watching you feel honoured, bewildered and amazed. Is there any model like this in the world? As far as I know, there is none. It is a great honour to make a self-sacrifice in a world where egoism, individualism and insensitivity are dominant. Many people don't understand or don't want to understand today or perhaps, pretend not to see. But history doesn't forget. No-one could erase the pages of history. How are you? I was continuing without asking this question. I know that your heart and consciousness are giving off light, perhaps you are getting worn out physically. The important thing is the heart, isn't it? Are you curious about us even under these conditions? We are experiencing the same feelings. This bond, this spiritual condition and sharing this belief are the values that make us what we are. Those advancing before us are growing in the virtues of humanity. This is something beautiful continuing during the seasons. Our poet says: "Beauty will rescue the world". What is beauty? For me the greatest beauty is to put your life on the line though no-one is forcing you to, for the sake of people in days when you are not able to see their faces in person. Dear *Zehra*, I'm always thinking about our mothers, our people who are with you side by side.

You are always finding a niche in our minds, and in the war-

mest place of our hearts, our conversations, our dreams, and in our nights. Faithful people are honourable. You are showing fidelity, loyalty and support for others in a world that is filled with shameful things. We are taking energy from you. Your existence is increasing our strength. Dear Zehra, the mountain pasture time is coming, our young girls, young men, mothers and our older people with white-beards are preparing to dance the horon. To climb to the mountain pasture is gladness, freedom, labour, peace of mind, longing and being reunited. Our longing will end soon. And we will be reunited with our loves, hope, beauty, the people, souls, and those things that we value.

Love and very truly yours.

*Ruhi Uzunhasanoglu F-
Type Prison / Tekirdağ*

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Dear Zehra,

Hello! I have received your Bayram postcard. I thank you. At most, I feel glad to get a greeting and news from you. When my parents came to visit me, they happened to pass the place where you have been surely, I asked about you. I will tell them whether you are good and what you are doing. They will see you and I will send you my greetings but you know about my parents, they are forgetting. I'm sure that if you meet them, you will send greetings. Really, my parents are bringing abundant greetings from the outside, but when we asked about your names, they could not say anything. They forgot. So anyhow, I must say I received your greetings. In fact, I said, your Bayram postcard was received by me. You can guess that I felt glad. I think that it not necessary to mention about that here. You can guess. The only thing which I feel is needed inside and outside is my concentrated longing for the friends I love. That longing which is increasing and growing every day. In the side cell are some of our friends, Ayhan Mimitas, Bülent Çoban and Alisan Sanli. We could not see their faces but by shouting loudly we can hear each other. And we are singing folk songs together. We celebrated the Newroz (Kurdish New Year) holiday according to the conditions here. We could not burn the wheels and jump over it, but still we are together with you. While we were meeting on March 21, we heard the news from the TV, which caused unrest here. Slogans were shouted everywhere. The TV announced that Cengiz Soydaş was martyred. We could not know this because we did not have television in my other cell. Later, when we heard the name Cengiz, we understood.

That atmosphere was so different. Suddenly the atmosphere was changed. The peace and quiet took the place of the impatient and tense waiting. We experienced the same excitement, happiness, gladness, wrath. As you see, we lived March 21 like this. In the same atmosphere, you want to share your feelings. Ah, dear *Zehra*, for as long as anyone can remember, I don't like letters. I would rather look into your gleaming eyes and speak and share together. I remember our last conversation. You were happy and joyful so much and full of excitement. Your eyes were shining as always. That flash has had an effect on our confidence for tomorrow. Do you know, when my parents come to visit us, we tell of you, our young people, and praise you to the heavens. On the one hand they say that you are so good and are struggling so much and you are not alone but with us and on the other hand they say that you are beaten down so much and they feel very sad. The existing younger and older people are determined with their hopes and faith growing. Meanwhile, I have received a postcard from Bülent Baris Coşkun and received a letter from Baris Akay. I will write a reply to them in a short time. Is Baris Coşkun still working for "The Youth in Our Country" (note: a journal)? I think he is. Baris Akay should go regularly there. I will be very happy if you will inform them that I have received his letters and postcards. To receive good news and the warm greetings from both made me happy so much. And please inform them that I kiss their eyes and embrace them with a longing heart. Truly we will see each other face to face and we know that we will think the same things. We understand each other. The days will come when we will embrace each other as much as we want. Please inform them of this.

Of course, my same feelings are meaningful for you. My dear sister *Zehra*, your resistance is giving me power and morale. As you said, I'm sending you my greetings and love with my belief in these nice days. I'm embracing you with longing. I

kiss your eyes which are shining brightly. Good-by! And please do not forget to send my greetings to my friends....

"Don't worry! Don't fear or be anxious. We are still talking as we are talking to you, the apple of our eyes, our heartbeats that did not change in the least bit" (Bedii Cengiz) (Note: Cengiz is a DHKP-C martyr who died in 1994)

I want to say good-bye to you with a piece of poetry which describes us... As you see, I don't want to end this letter...

... The days are hard and are coming with the news of deaths. The enemy is cruel, tyrannical and cunning. And our people are dying - however they had a right to live so much. Our people are dying - far too much. As if they are demonstrating with songs and flags on a Bayram day, so exceedingly young...

Sadik Eroglu

Hello Dear Zehra;

Hello Laz girl! How lovely, you sent me your greetings. I have received a lot of letters today. All of them were merry, warm and full of hope. Without delaying I will try to reply to them. I don't know if I could manage this. Your postcard had reached Edirne before anyone else's. Of course we migrated to the land of Tekirdağ in that time. I mean your letter has reached me after 25 days. I sent you a letter through our elder sister Gulsuman while we were staying in Edirne Prison. From Tekirdağ Prison I sent my greetings and flowers, I hope you received them. If you have not received them, don't worry! Come on Zehra, tell me how are you? We have received about your news, but not often. Our mother Şükran, older sister Gulsuman and our sister Senay, how are they? How much you are longing, I could not tell. Fortunately, we made the last conversation... Our last visiting was so much excitement, wasn't it? Some that have been with us there in that day, are not together with us now... They had left by slipping away from us... young and indifferent... As if they were going to a Bayram! "For this reason, we have forgotten to forgive! A place drenched in blood will be reached! And henceforth, victory will be achieved through breaking our fingernails and forgiving nothing!"

Yes, we will not forgive anything anymore. In fact there are many things that will be written and told. We will share all of them some day. I know and believe this. Content yourself with this at all times... Again my words are left half-done. At everyone's request, I sang a song called "September" and I said I had to write a letter and went away from there!

The voices were coming from the depths. Just in time, they are accompanying by applauses and whistles... Then I said I wanted to write a letter, but they did not give me any peace... Once more again hello! I sang a song called "The wind blows again on the Black Sea". I thought you should know.

Just now I am singing a song for the people who continue on the Death Fast... "You have to bring up a child". How are you and the people over there and Canan? I send everybody my greetings and love. Yesterday we heard that your loveable uncle could not stand our longing and came here. Until now we could not hear any news from him. We send our greetings, you from there and I from here. As I finish my letter, we are all embracing you pleasantly and warmly, our families and friends outside. It is very hard here... We will see you on the enormous day... Keep your smile all the time.

With my greetings and love.

Serdar

*Articles about
CANAN and ZEHRA*

*The article of Bilgesu Erenus
which was published in Cumhuriyet newspaper*

Dear President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, In this, my third writing, I am going to tell you about three days of a grandmother who is sixty-seven years old. My words are about a grandmother who changed during these three days and say that this woman had all the traditional and religious ties, along with self-denial and suffering. This is a spontaneous commemoration ceremony of this country; please listen to me without pretending not to see, there are lots of events to learn lessons from in the name of our country.

During the ritual cleansing of Zehra Kulaksiz's body, who lost consciousness on the 218th day in the Death Fast Resistance House in Armutlu, there was a 4th year student of Business Administration at Istanbul University. Her grandmother was waiting to see her and was pounding at the front door saying "*a little humanity, were you expecting the same humanity from the government that you yourselves have?*" Then Zehra's comrades replied saying, "*Grandma, she herself was a volunteer for this Death Fast Resistance*". Grandmother was getting more angry, striking her breast and was saying "*I want to die, kill me*". On the first day she was repeating mostly "*Is this worthwhile for this dishonourable world?*" She also was calling out to God.

She used to pretend not to have heard the words of Zehra's comrades, "*Do you think that we are not sorry Grandma?*" She was accusing Zehra's comrades, saying, "*I never said to*

her, don't do it Zehra, let s go up to Zehra today, but she was reading my face; whenever I came Zehra never turned her face to me and never talked, she preferred to talk with other worthless people.. The government already is saying that 'they are dying one by one, better if they die'. But you are dancing, how can you be happy when somebody dies? You don't have a mind or a brain... "

When ceremonial cleaning was finished and we are taken in to see the body, Grandmother suddenly became quiet. She did not know how to behave or what to say when she saw her granddaughter's motionless body lying there. When I said to her, "you can talk to her, she can hear you, " she became very happy.

Dear Mr. Ahmet Necdet, after she started to wail and that lasted for 3 days and 3 nights. She was also surprised herself at the end of the three days and said, "what did you do to me my child, did you put a generator in my body?"

The words of the Grandmother to Zehra on the first day generally reflected religious ceremony. She was always repenting and saying, "Don't mention it, not at all, Dear God, don't hurt my child when she is dying, Zehra why did you do wrong and betray me"

Zehra's moans were rising. I needed to embrace Grandmother and say, "Don't upset Zehra, talk about good things, tell her how you took pains with her. " Grandmother took herself away from me and took shelter in religious formalities again.

"God sent his angels, the angels are protecting her, my child is an angel, she is not sinful. She is a Muslim. "

Grandmother was right when she was taking me away from her because, when I looked at this body, I was seeing my beloved country which is besieged on all sides. The one who was moaning loudly and continuously was not Zehra according to me, it was us, the intellectuals who are insensitive, unable to cope with their conscience and intelligence. It was mass organisations that are in error, have given up making use of their rights and are inwardly empty; it was human rights defenders; it was trade unions that have been intimidated, it was the political parties with their confused concepts, it was the families that think of their children as real estate and property... We, all of us were moaning.

At the end of the first day, grandmother had only one desire from me, and that was that her grandchild's death happened easily and quickly. Before the hoca (Muslim preacher) came in that she wanted to be brought, while she was closing Zehra's hair with a white head scarf tightly, she was saying to her *"talk to the angels, my child"* and after the hoca came, she read some pages from the Koran and prayed together with the hoca for Zehra.

* * *

Second day... You don't have to believe it but Canan Kulaksiz had substituted for the angels of God. Canan is the sister of Zehra and she was 19 years old, studying at Science Faculty, Biology Department and she had devoted her life to our people. On the second day the grandmother was saying to Zehra the things that she saw. *"Zehra, who do you see, is it Canan?"*

On this second day, the grandmother remembered a telephone conversation with Canan months ago, she started to write an epic instead of wailing for these two sisters. In her voice and body, you could feel musical and a nice rhythm belonging to the region they live. *"These two sisters never left each other,*

they were always together, I said to Canan, don 't follow Zehra, don't be in the Death Fast Resistance and she answered me, 'You teach us always to finish a work, never give up, how can you deny your thoughts?, I love you grandma.' And I said to her 'I do not love you'. This was a secret code between us. Whenever they say 'I love you' I used to say 'I do not love you'. My children, you are very clever and very precious. "

After the epic, the grandmother caressed the silky hair of Zehra and started to sing a lullaby including some jokes belonging to Black Sea people: *"I said, I want to cut your hair, / Said her daddy/ Do not cut off her head!"*

You may believe it or not, but in this second day the reflex motion of Zehra became less, it was as if she was watching all of us, not only her grandmother with her half-open eyes! Grandmother occasionally was crying, but you could not hear reproaches in her words. *"I used to comb your hair although I had to do finish lots of work. Everybody used to say, how clean Zehra and Canan looked when they go to school. "*

This suffering, 67-year-old woman from the Black Sea had suddenly understood that Zehra was not dying, but she was in a waiting process: *"Who are you waiting for, my child, perhaps your father? "*

When she understood this, she sent a message to her son, Ahmet Kulaksiz: Everybody was very surprised when she said, *"If he is my son, he has to be as strong as me. I saw his daughter, he should come and see too. "* Is this grandmother the one who threw away the carnations from Canan's grave in Rize put there by her comrades? She had accused everybody about Zehra too. She was angry at the dances which are what the dead wanted.

I have to make it clear and explain not get me wrong that Ahmet Kulaksiz was a father that could say, *"the families think that their children are their property, my daughters are not my property, they are my comrades, friends, precious and everything to me. Because I don't see my daughters as my property, and instead of saving them as individuals, I struggled in the name of abolishing isolation and reaching that goal by the Death Fast Resistance. "* Before the deaths had started, he called your attention by announcing himself and sending a fax message to you. The message should be filed in your archives, I think finding and reading this message once more is highly important and useful. He always supported his daughter in the period of his daughter's resistance. He is someone that loves his country as much as his daughters but he is also a human being. Following Canan's death, he could not stand to lose Zehra and he could not reply to his mother's invitation when he was crying in secluded places.

If one of the Grandmother's wishes was for her son to come and see Zehra, the other wish was taking Zehra out as quick as possible from this miserable city of Istanbul which is turned into a symbol of evil. The words *"My Zehra, let us run on the roads of Rize, What we are doing in Istanbul, what am I going to do in Istanbul"* was this second desire.

The Grandmother had started to accuse herself instead of accusing her grandchild's comrades. *"God, it is my offence. In my village, the grandchild from a son are very precious. I have 10 grandchildren, I used to caress my daughter's children less than my son's daughters. I used to buy them more than the grandchildren of my daughter. I used to feed them more. They are not guilty, they are not guilty my God. "*

The words of a grandmother accusing herself instead of the regional traditions, as if this made Zehra smile. And you may

ISO

not believe it but this smile will continue on this tender face until she was buried.

The grandmother's third day is more surprising, dear Mr. Ahmet Necdet;

Her face was surrounded by a smile reminding her of Zehra, I noticed the similarity between the nice face of Granny and the girl for the first time on this day. Granny was happy because her son Ahmet Kulaksiz had come because of her invitation and he had greeted saying, "*My heroine daughter*". Grandmother wanted to tell this greeting to everybody. She was determined that she was going to announce to everybody after she went back to her hometown.

The Laz girl who makes the Mona Lisa jealous....

I was not able to refrain from thinking that Zehra waited to change her grandmother's ideas for three days although she was ready to go three days before. This pretty Laz girl has some fine points which make the Mona Lisa jealous. Before she lost consciousness, she had remembered soup and biscuits... And then, she held Ozlem's hands and kissed because they were of the same age and comrades. Because this second group of Death Fast Resisters were not taking the B1 vitamins, they were becoming weaker faster.

Then she called Arzu over and even though she had just met her, she gave her her watch as a present. After she said the names, "*Mahir, Hüseyin and Ulaş,* " she did not speak any more. (Note: three martyrs in Turkey's revolutionary tradition from the 1970s.)

Now I am even more persuasive, Mr. Ahmet Necdet. The de-

ath of Zehra was postponed three days so that the Grandmother could see and be changed from her insensitivity. This is something that even we intellectuals were not able to do. Civil organisations were empty and just went around with fake actions, the labour unions and the political parties were the same. They all see their children as possessions that can be used for their causes, and all need to be changed. Again, we did not take advantage of this opportunity, but this 67-year-old Grandmother, in the eyes of the whole country, became stubborn before us. She was a person and became more of a person.

The state prosecutor who came to Armutlu for the formalities after the death of Zehra, said, "*I have not ever seen such a strong woman as this*". When he said this, the Grandmother was understandably proud and was looking down on each of us. I was a witness to a stubborn

Grandmother who went along with the religious and cultural traditions, who stood against comrades of Zehra and wrapped her head in a white turban. I was wetting Zehra's hair with rose water and as I held her head in my hands to one side, the Grandmother said, "*My dear, before you go to the wedding, don't you go to the hairdressers? Her hair is perfect, just how I wanted it.*"

When God decided, the promise made to Zehra was kept.

The funeral procession went down the small streets to Kucuk Armutlu and I have no doubt that Zehra's friends and comrades would have danced the halay for a whole day if their knees would hold out!

"Now we have won the victory!"

During her last days when Zehra was saying goodbye to her

friends, rose pedals surrounded her and she gave me a picture that was put into a cardboard frame. *"Hello big sister, from the beginning, you have been with us. We gave a lesson to those who said that they were humanists. What more can I say than the fact that we have already won, my dear big sister Bilgesu. "*

Yes, Mr. Ahmet Necdet, all this is written on a small piece of paper, but it is a huge thing.... They have won!

I am also aware that this third writing of mine to you conies at the anniversary of the burning of our artists and intellectuals at Sivas. Just as the government stood by idly and watched, they do the same now with the Death Fast Resisters. While the watch that Zehra gave Arzu moves ahead on her arm, we will be indebted for every young body that lies dead for our beautiful country and for freedom of thought. We are forced to experience the shame and the honour that this brings.

Respectfully yours,

BILGESUERENUS

*The article written by Cezmi Ersoz,
published on May 26th, 2001
in the LEMAN Magazine.*

Little house in Kucuk Armutlu Canan.....

and Zehra

And our story.

Yesterday, when you left, you forgot your cellular phone with me.... It stayed on my desk all day long....

All day, no one called it....

Then, a call came for me from a long distance away in this city.... A call that was bleeding... those who had determined to die for their friends and comrades and their desires.... My insides were rattled as I understood what that meant and felt against the background of a cold cruel city alone, without friends... You think that you are strong and brave until you get some news like this and then realise how weak and vulnerable you are.... It was that kind of shake-up..

I put my phone in my briefcase and set out for that far corner of the city...

In the direction of a squatter's house in Kucuk Armutlu....

It was a poor home, one floor, not finished and there were some people sitting around a wooden table on the balcony... It

was the month of May... Maybe not people, but nature had risen up and was never that beautiful... it was a Saturday night... The first question that came to my mind was, how could you die on a night like this? That question was asked by the many who came by to visit that night and they got their answer...

But now, they were neither asking nor answering that question any longer...

This poor house was the home of Senal Hanoglu who had lost her life last month in the Death Fast Resistance.... I had met Senal Hanoglu at a TAYAD meeting months before. She was holding hands with Gulsuman Dönmez who had started the Death Fast as well and they were not speaking a word to each other. They both cleaned other people's houses and their hands were stained red with henna.... And their eyes were smiling so... they were impossible to separate from each other... It wasn't like they were going to die together, it was more like they were about to begin a mysterious adventure and were hiding bashfully under the secret of it all.

If it were possible to save the prisoners inside from the damned cells, then they would not go to that other country but stay here and be washed from head to toe with soap and water... But it did not happen like that... Those inside were not able to come out of the cells... There were endless days of suffering.... They gave their last breath together with those sad-looking eyes, as they held hands stained red from henna... What I remember is the silence when they were not speaking to each other... I am sure that those who did this would have been ashamed if they could have just once looked into the eyes of these ones and understood what they wanted... I knew them and was sure of their pure hearts... They gave their word, I heard them, if the prisoners were released from the cells, they would clean the house from top to bottom...

Maybe they were poor, maybe they were housekeepers, but they were those who wanted a new way of life and wanted to see a revolution...

The most important thing for them was their relationship that was unlike all the ones in their sphere of influence and the price they paid for that friendship was huge. They would do things without exaggeration and in quietness and gentleness... Leading a great life.

They were living this kind of life in a world that was filled with people who did not care and had lost their identity. They lived the first day in a country of friendship that would never end... They were determined and learned not from books but from the lives of each other...

On a Saturday evening on the balcony of a house in Kucuk Armutlu, I was sitting around a wooden table...the 22-year-old Zehra Kulaksiz was sitting in front of me in her wheelchair. A student at the faculty of economics... she had been on the Death Fast for the last six months... about to end the 180th day... she had lost her 19-year-old sister Canan who was in the strike as well in the same room approximately a month ago... All of a sudden, Canan's heart had stopped on that day in April. I recall what the poet said, "April is the cruellest month"... Canan had taken her last breath in April which is a month in which nature calls out for love, fun and more. She used to be a university student. She had been studying biology at the Aegean University... Zehra took over Canan's hope that she had for her uncle and all her other friends.

Her father Ahmet Kulaksiz is my age... and was near Zehra all the time... my eyes are catching his frequently... he buried one

of his daughters with his own hands.

Now, he is about to see the death of his other daughter... I am having difficulty understanding what kind of pain and the power of resistance this is... How can one ease such pain, and how can you hide it?... Canan could be my daughter, Zehra could be my second dear one who awaits death.

I am ashamed of my age, I'm ashamed of my white beard, of my previous writings and of my intellectual identity...

Zehra is gently fading away day by day, for Canan, for some people who are fighting for their ideals and beliefs.... Though she hadn't seen them before.....Just like her uncle... She is fading away for the letters from the prison full of yearning, for a couple of smiling eyes she had seen during a meeting, for a plain hello pronounced from the heart, yes she is fading away... She didn't get an order, she is wasting away in front of her father's, mother's and friend's eyes. But she is not losing her will to live... As her body gets weaker she is becoming more sensitive to her environment... Her looks are so sensitive that it may be unsettling to those who find her actions nonsensical, unnecessary and illogical.

Zehra is preparing cards, ornamented with flowers, and photo frames to present to her visitors. If her comrades can get out of the isolation cells, she'll stop the fast immediately and wander all through the Black Sea region starting from Rize where she was born. But she is wasting away in spite of all her hopes. As she fades away her smile that hurts us is becoming more clear...

And who knows... Maybe you will be guilty for reading these lines... I do not want to say, I am silenced and feel ashamed...

The proud and gentle man with the bass voice is Resit Sari... 42 years old... He worked on the sea as a captain for many years... He is talking to the journalists and TV reporters from other countries with his Turkish in tune mostly... He has been on the Death Fast for months too... But he doesn't look like a man who is going to die... he is constantly making lanterns from each colour of the rainbow... If the isolation cells get closed, he wants to sail away... But he will not be sorry if they can't stop the cells and his heart stops beating... It's O.K... He imagines his death as a branch of a tree that is broken during a sudden storm on a spring day... He says that *"a few branches may be broken, but that storm throws pollen into the air... new saplings, new flowers blossom up... so nature gets enriched and more beautiful... if a few branches are broken, if I die, that's not much of a price,"* he says.

It has been written and told so many times, so I kept waiting for these people who are waiting for death with red bands on their foreheads to praise death even once... But I did not hear a single word that is praising death from those who will die.... Maybe a few hours later maybe several days, but certainly they will die when they read these lines...

#

Would one who praised death ever think of growing flowers in the garden he or she lives in?

22-year-old philosophy student Fatma Şener kept caressing the earth and planting flowers with her pale and cold fingers without caring that she is at the edge of life... she was pronouncing the word death always with the word live... To die for living freely and to let live.

#

Hülya Simsek had made a promise when Deniz and his friends

were hung on May 6th, 1972. (Note: Deniz Gezmiş of THKO, People's Liberation Army of Turkey, and two comrades were executed on that day by order of a military tribunal.) She was only 9 years old but her promise was very big. She would dedicate her life to provide a paradise on earth from now on. And now, she was doing it. She had committed herself to establishing heaven on earth and was wasting away.

She had such strong belief that she was still preparing with trembling fingers panels of flowers, birds and grapes on it for those who visit her to support the resistance.

It was May. It was a Saturday night out of control... on the balcony of that poor house... around a wooden table talked about flowers, the halay that we will perform on salvation day, about boats which certainly sail away, colourful lanterns, about trips to the green valleys of the Black Sea region, without mentioning death at all...

Their names were; Zehra, Fatma, Resit and Hulya. Believe me I didn't feel sorry for those who sacrifice their lives for their friends, comrades or captives whose face they have never seen... Not even a little.

I felt sorry for you and myself on this Saturday night in May...

I felt sorry for myself, because I've never had such sincere friends in all my life. I didn't have a single friend who would do anything for me, for my organisation or my ideas and put his life on the line. No, I didn't have anyone whom I would die for...

(...)

Life is teaching us: I became deeply jealous of these people who might pass away maybe several days later.... Maybe se-

veral hours later, mostly because of this... they showed me how precious friendship or comradeship could be even as (hey die...

Neither their political thoughts, their ideologies, nor our similarities or differences were important anymore. What affected me most is that they reminded me how isolated I live from real friendships... It shows me what my life lacks...

I am beginning to go over my present friendships which I didn't pay any price for and friendships that I lost, with you...

Please wait for me wherever you are no w...please don't get lost. Don't you lose your hopes... I am coming to you with my lonesome heart in my bag... I come with my friendship... you just watch your back... Those who died in Kucuk Armutlu reminded me.... Love is friendship, and friendship is love...

They are the same... please wait for me...and don't you get lost... wherever you are in the city... wait for me... I am bringing back all the friendships you lost... Eternal and lively loves will come out of it... Don't get lost... Please, wait for me... (The phone number of this house is : 0 212 229 92 59. The cellular phone number of Ahmet Kulaksiz - the father of Canan and Zehra - is 0 532 257 33 48. Only a "hello" or "how are you" would be enough for them... In the name of friendship, love and freedom.)

*Quoted from Cezmi Ersöz's article issued in
LEMAN magazine dated July 14th 2001*

**Believe me Zehra
Your children will overcome**

In memory of Zehra

"I am frozen with my head down on the table. I don't know why I do so. The door was opened with a big noise. Some strange guys took me out, and closed the door... they grabbed me by the arms. I don't know where we were going. It was a long way. My body hurts all over. I feel dizzy. I take breaks along the way. They left me in front of a window. There a. ? some shadows and it was as if they are looking at me. Meanwhile my cellmate came out of the other side. He holds me closer to the window. He gives me the phone and shows me how to handle it. I hear some voices, I don't understand. Are the shadows weeping? We talk about something that I don't know anything about. But the shadows keep on crying. For the first time in my life, I've seen the shadows cry... I think it's funny. I laugh at them.

My friend who has arrived at the place I mentioned with the phones, took me upstairs to my bed and asked why I cried. I'm told that I didn 't cry but I laughed at the weeping shadows in the window. He told me about the shadows.

I understand better now. They were not shadows but real. They were my mother, my sister and my aunt. He talked to them too. He says that I did not laugh at them, I wept with them toget-

her. "

Dursun Ali who lost his memory during the Death Fast was released. He saw the shadows weep for the first time. After a while he found out that they were his mother, sister and aunt who came to visit him in the F-Type Cell Prison...

People are coming in front of the Resistance House.

Those who lost their memory completely and lost their health permanently are being released. Most of them are coming to Kucuk Armutlu to carry on their Death Fasts at their relative's or a friend's home... It's July 8th, Sunday...

I returned from Kucuk Armutlu to my home late at night... I was there almost all day. I was in the poor house where Zehra passed away approximately a week ago. That poor house is called the Resistance House now. It takes courage to visit the Resistance House, it takes patience... In every room you can see resisters from various ages who are coming close to death with each passing day. They have red bands on their foreheads... Some of them are too exhausted to stand up even.... Some are walking by holding on to the walls... Those just newly joining the fast are helping others ...

People keep coming to the Resistance House. They look with respect as if it was a temple. They speak with low voices. Bold grief is appearing on their faces suddenly. Later a man is coming out of the house and reading from a piece of paper in his hand, declaring another martyr died a half an hour ago.

We close our eyes tight. People turn to an echo from far away. A short but very deep silence is falling right into middle of our hearts. One can hear only the sizzling noise of the grasses which the kids burn...

People start to talk, to comment on what has happened. The perception of death is so different around here. People don't regard death as a natural end around here. Nothing stops here. Life, death, childhood everything is running into the same enchanted river continuously. As if everything is drawing a circle. The dead born again... Newborns start to die... Life and death are running into each other at the same time...

The friends are giving a kiss to the resister first on the forehead then all around the face. The resister is proud but blushed as well... I see his wrists and neck. They are thinner than a child's. So fragile... He is embracing his fellows, comrades with his thin hands. It's not possible to see complaint, fear, queasy feeling or belly-aching, and on their face there is no fake expression...

I see the uninterrupted flux between life and death as the resisters and their supporters embrace each other so tightly. Life is kissing death on the forehead... Death is proud and rebellious but also shy and innocent as a child... And everything is running into that enchanted river. And it is running into eternity. This is why they are not afraid of dying one by one. The cause they believe in is eternity. Even my suspicious mind gets persuaded at that very moment.

These kids will overcome someday... Because eternity is eternal...

They are the boldest kids of this country...

Is there any need to remind you how this state is, this big brother mentality, this system that destroyed our souls and bodies in our families, in our factories, in the army and how different methods they used to turn us into silent slaves? Though they

do it secretly, isn't it in fact clear?...

This country is just a huge prison. They get away with all the oppression they do. They close each door in our faces one after another. This country is a huge garrison... They are trying to turn everybody into volunteer slaves of the government, defenders without any conditions...

Why are they turning the prisons into cells, why are they treating those who try to keep their mind independent, why are they so incredibly cruel?...

Because they saw everything... This state fears a lot from those who knew and saw a lot... And it aims to destroy them...

A young girl who survived the operation of December 19 with severe burn injuries, told her story in this way.... *"We woke up with a loud noise... They were opening up holes on our roof of our dorm with drills. We didn 't know what to do, because they kept firing at us. Then they poured something from the holes on the roof onto us... Our hair started to burn first. Then I put my hand on my face to see that the skin on my face was sticking to my hand like plastic melting on a fire. Our friends died in front of our eyes in agony... We saw everything... All of it... "*

Yes, they saw it all. They saw the cruel ones pouring chemicals on them...

I looked for days at a picture printed in one of the newspapers... I saw the scary impression of grief on the face of the female captives who were at the prison court. They are surrounded by soldiers equipped with gas masks and automatic rifles. There were lots of injuries and there were burns on the faces of the captives... It was clear that they could hardly bre-

athe... Their clothes are all wet... We found out that this particular chemical burns the human skin but does not do anything to clothes...

I looked at the faces of the female prisoners and the soldiers. Look at the glances of the soldiers with masks and the captives at random... Soldiers... Soldiers... How could you do such a thing... I did read it from their eyes, they were saying, "*Your people will never forgive you for this deed!*" ...

Where were the people? The soul and mind of the people in the country were deformed by the lies of the media. But what happened to the conscience of the soldiers who took place in this operation? Where were their hearts? Who blocked their sense of pity and mercy? Why were the intellectuals so eager to believe in the official lies like, "*the prisoners are burning each other on orders of their organisations*" ... Why were they immediately credulous towards the officials and the media but not towards those who put their lives at stake so that others would not to go into the cells? Were they afraid of those who knew and saw a lot as well? Why were their hearts so ready for defeat? Why were they so afraid of the uprising and rebellion? Why were they so disgusted by the word death? Why were they ignoring those who die for the living?

Could one live as if death doesn't exist? If slavery is forced on humanity, and if they are forcing people to give up their identities, death runs into the river and waits to be born again. This waiting enlightens seven seas all of a sudden. It heals all the injuries in the sea. And such deaths enlighten our lives. Our captive, injured and choking lives... Those deaths protesting slavery are the most meaningful deaths on earth. These meaningful deaths add eternal and deep meanings to the lives of those who survive. These new meanings open the locked doors of our hearts. Daylight comes through these doors... That

fresh spring coolness comes in... when this new light spills onto our hearts, we reconsider how we should die. In fact our lifestyle shows how we are going to die. We die for what we want most... We die for what we are looking for most. If you are looking for money and power you die for it. If you want freedom and merits, you die on the way towards it... If we accept slavery, we die this way... We die on our way... and the way we die enlightens our life again. If our life doesn't have a particular aim, that means a meaningless death is ahead of us.

It's July 8th, Sunday... I was in Kucuk Armutlu all day long. I've signed books in the garden of the house of the Death Fast strikers. From time to time, I've looked at Zehra's photo again... You could see the nobility and sadness of oncoming death on her face. She was waving at everyone passing by. So long, brothers and sisters, so long. She wore an innocent and fragile smile on her face. *"Good bye, I am running to eternity and you, reconsider your life, once again. The more meaningful and bold you live, the more meaningful and brave a death you find,"* she was saying.

Zehra my daughter... My comrade with beautiful eyes... You've learned so much in that short life of yours... And those who think you are dead are so wrong... You are in the river of eternity... The meaning of life will multiply after your death thousand times... Your bold expression will open up thousands of locked hearts...

Believe me Zehra, believe like you believe in your life and your death... Your children will win this life. Those who have freedom and merit... This life will be won by them who make a victory sign with their thin fingers at the door of heaven... Believe in it just like you believe in those proletarians who have nothing to lose... Believe me Zehra, your children will overcome...

I say to your fellows, because of me and my kind of people who understand and love you, we want to be like you, to embrace you... but, they can't keep up with you to the end, because we have things to lose... we see the river but we stay away. You pay the price of freedom and merit... All we do is be impressed and write about it...

Your blood enlightens our shattered lives as it runs, but our timid and unsatisfied fingers grab secretly at poor and temporary ambitions of the present... But believe me, Zehra you did have more wisdom to teach us with your short but full life, and with your death.

It's July 8th, Sunday... captives who are released were brought here today.

Most of them have lost their memory. It was like doomsday. Some of them had returned to their childhood. Some of them wanted their toys back. One wanted his non-existent ball, another a doll she never had...

A released captive was calling her husband as her father, another was calling his wife *"momma, where were you momma?"*...

They were freed from their memories... But just the opposite my memory was hurting like hell... Because of knowing a lot, and doing nothing... It hurt a lot because of seeing and being incapable of doing anything. Everyone was watching his own life in the mirror of death. Everybody loves his death as much as he loves his life around here...

It's July 8th, Sunday... The circumcision ceremony of the Death Fast striker's children will take place in the Kucuk Armut-

lu cemevi (note: an Alevi house of worship) in the evening... as I mentioned before, life and death run together around here. None waits for the other... maybe, the Death Fast strikers were lying on these beds waiting for their destiny only hours away, several days ago... newcomers and those about to leave were lying on the same bed... I saw those who lived their last days and the children smile at each other and hold hands... Ilkay Akkaya, a singer whom I like most was singing the song, "*bunches and bunches of roses*"... and many hands were waving in the air maybe for the last time, victory, victory...

The shadows were bleeding... Yes, mothers, sisters, fathers, children, aunts were bleeding here...

My country was bleeding at its most fragile point...

The boldest sons and daughters of this country were giving up their lives for freedom, for merit... They were losing their memories that were as valuable as their lives...

And memories were bleeding... Mothers, sisters, fathers, children, aunts were bleeding...

In this country where honour and identity are for sale, these kids were witnessing their most beloved ones bleeding in front of the prison building...

History was being written in this country secretly, the hard way ... Turkey was passing through its most fragile period. Some people were leaving the rooms with gas masks yelling "*yes, sir*" and delivering their comrades to the state. Some people were claiming that they were burning their comrades by order of an organisation... but here there were fingers waving victory, victory...

People die the way they want to live... Some by surrendering, getting on his knees, by licking boots... Some die standing tall, never surrendering, never letting down, in an honourable way... And these deaths enlighten the lives of others...

I saw today... I saw people kissing their friends about to die in a few days on the forehead...

I saw these brave young people with red bands on their foreheads... proud and also shy... I saw those brave youngsters... I saw their hugs, embraces...

Believe me Zehra, nothing stopped there, everything is running as it was...

Believe me those coming after you shall overcome...

These deaths protesting slavery are the most meaningful deaths in the world... These meaningful deaths add deep and endless meaning to our lives. These meanings open the locks of our hearts. Daylight comes through these doors... That refreshing spring odour comes in... When this new light falls upon our heart we reconsider how we should die. In fact how we live shows us how we are going to die.

*Cezmi Ersöz's article in LEMAN magazine
dated September 29, 2001*

**Shame never ends...
neither do those eyes...**

t*

Writing is like accepting the responsibility for all the crimes on earth. Sometimes I feel so guilty because I write... As if I am responsible for all the ill will that happens... Maybe a war will break out when you read this article. We will postpone all our joys, longings, to an unknown date. The shadow of the war will fall on our loved ones, and our hopes. In fact there are always wars. It never ends. The real war is being lived during the peace. Peace never comes... In fact it never came...

Sometimes pain is taking my breath away. I want to quit everything. To write, to read, to produce... if I would isolate myself... if only I would talk to the sea.... If I would live just to live. The sea is my most important passion in life. To sail away. It is an eternal lover. We kiss each other. I inhale it. I want to make love with the sea. Like making love to death... or to eternity... by moaning, blinding, producing wild sounds... I would like to melt in it just to find out what I was before I became a man. I gaze at the twilights of reincarnation.

I want to lose all my limits there... I'd rather refine my heart which is obscure and sinful. I'd rather be lost there.

But I just can't forget that I am human, no matter what I do. It's no use to deny my responsibility for all those wars on

earth. Because I am human. I am a man and there is ill will that just can't be erased from my soul. I have a selfish heart that I can't leave garbage in a dead-end street. Because I am human. I am self-seeking. How far can that endless blue refine me... Can it save me from myself... All the sympathy, all those loves that I have lived, they could not spare me from my selfishness...

I'm not a kid anymore. I am not young. I am at the age to know all the tricks of my imagination. I can't deceive myself anymore. There is no need to cheat each other. This is me. I'm tired of these games. People are falling in love to get rid of their boring, poor lives. That's the truth unfortunately. Our identity is giving agony to us. But it is not poetic, deep or enchanted pain, alas!.. This pain is turning into a depressive, boring self-destroying feeling. Nobody wants to be alone feeling this way. You go out, look for someone to save you. Meet one. Say, this is the one I've been looking for. Cheat yourself. Just another lie in our lives. All those romantic lies coming together and covering the ugly face of this probably never-ending war. And we let these romantic lies deceive us.

I don't want to be part of it. Whenever I feel this way I want to quit everything. Stop writing, reading, producing... I want to be ordinary. I want to walk around with the death lists in my hands. I want my name to be at the top. I want to spit in the face of the responsibilities and ask "how could you turn our world into this? " How embarrassing it is that we still have photographs of ourselves. How embarrassing it is we boast of our successes, satisfied with our lives, ask each other whether we should go somewhere. How embarrassing to pretend we are right in such a world.

The world is tired of documents. The world is tired of art. Choked by lies. But the war did not end. And it will never end.

Because the ill-will in our souls, that endless egoism. How embarrassing to find the strength to write.

Nuclear bombs may explode on some people tomorrow. People may get killed in mass quantities tomorrow. Kids looking at their mothers with bare feet may die all at once. The war may darken our souls that are thirsty for love, tomorrow. Tomorrow, loving by groans may be out of order once more. And we may find ourselves thinking about how this war effected us, without thinking how we lack love. In fact certainly we do. I know it from looking at myself. I don't know if I'm alive or not... Living is so nice that sometimes I feel like weeping...

It's so sad that I got stuck on my own interests. It really hurts when you want to pass the borders and embrace someone and then face the same selfishness. In spite of all those dreams of knowing myself, others still hurts me, really. Knowing is killing all the emotions of my youth. Knowing is taking me to my never changing fears. Knowing is sending me back. Knowing makes me think about what I'm going to do when my benefits are at risk. It reminds me of the place I will return tomorrow...

Knowing reminds me that we will go back to our soap opera lives with a shy happiness while bombs keep dropping onto other people. Because if bombs don't fall on our heads, we can carry on our cheap romance to get rid of our imagination-free and poem-free identities. We will keep getting lost in each other's causes and we couldn't return to our hearts that aren't melancholy. We will keep dying in others' causes if we don't love ourselves...

You will make late your hopelessness so that your beloved does not feel sad, does not know the thing which makes you feel sad. And so that they do not feel sad, you will conceal from them that you died in their arms. This will shame you

more... And you will be ashamed of your hopelessness, not this life.

You will always accuse yourself because you do not share this life. Nobody will be aware that you are surrounded by this. This lie, this unbelief, this living as knowing that all the truth will make me die, if you say all these things, nobody will believe you. They will say that they love you so much, even you will not believe that you will die slowly.

"Come on, get well, don't be like this, " they will say. Even the most hopeless ones will be against me and say "don't talk nonsense, while so many people love you, be aware what you are thinking. " They will evaluate you as you appear to be. They will keep saying "if you say I am not as I seem, nobody will believe you." Everybody will evaluate you according to the things that you never consider important, with the things that you never pay attention to whether they exist or not. They will never care if you behave vulgarly to yourself. If they look at you at one moment and in that moment of enlightenment they will see themselves in you. For that reason they will tell you always about the future. Although you say "I cannot see tomorrow and I don't have a tomorrow ", they will see their non-existent tomorrow through you.

I wish, I wish that, I could let everything go and try to live a life as if I were close to death. I wish I would live as a vagabond who talks to water and shines like the sun. I wish, I could challenge everybody with the death list in my hand. I wish I could shout out, in the words of the poet, that "to live in that kind of world means to fall".

But, I know that I can't. Because my destiny was determined a long time ago. I will live like this and then die in my tragic loneliness.... With inability to live a life, with my words which

become a part of every crime. I will keep on writing while I was dying of hopeless. I will die even while I am making love, I will keep thinking of what to write tomorrow. Even the most lovely people will not understand me.

In spite of myself, I will keep living to live, although I know that I am living. While I am trying to make a fair copy of my crimes, my crimes will be bigger and bigger. I will write as I see that my crimes are getting bigger and bigger. Yes, as seeing my crimes getting bigger and bigger.

My articles are found in the bags and in the books of the two sisters, *Canan & Zehra*. When I went to Kucuk Armutlu, their mother brought them and showed me. They cut out my articles and kept them. Zehra copied some of them into her notebook. Canan was 19 years old when she died. Zehra was 22 when she died three months later. None of them are living now. They died for their friends and their relatives who are captive in the prisons for the reason that this world could be a better world to live in. They both died with the hope of a good heart. Please, no-one should criticise me. I wish that they will never die. Whenever we become mad because of hopelessness, their face should come to our dreams. Their faces that reflected the resistance, those enlightened faces.

They were young. So young that they didn't care for their bodies.

Yes, I wish they could live. Because death is terrible, death is something merciless. But not any more merciless than this life. If somebody is saying that death is terrible, they should look at their hearts. I looked at my heart and I see there an endless graveyard. How long can I stand this big a graveyard in my heart? I don't know.

I asked their father who has given his daughters in these last months. Whenever I see Ahmet Kulaksız

I ask him how he can stand this much sadness. Canan died at an unexpected time. But Zehra resisted till the end. About eight months. At the end of her days, she was becoming wrecked. Her father asked her if she wants to live, if she wants to go to the hospital, and Zehra looked at his father's face with a strange, unknown look and has said "*don't be funny Dad, don't be funny.*" After two days she lost consciousness. And the next day she died. As I tried to gather all my strength and power, I asked Ahmet Kulaksız, "*If Zehra answered you and said 'dad, take me to the hospital, I want to live', what would you do?*"

First he kept his silence then he looked at us with his sad eyes and said "If she wanted me to, I would have taken her to the hospital, she is my daughter but I would not respect her as I did before. She is my daughter, I was always going to love her but I could not respect her after her sister was dead."

At this time, there was a big hole in front of me. All the words in my life lost their meaning. I understand that, this graveyard was going to be bigger and bigger in my heart when I was living this life'. I understood that, all the rude things that hurt others from childhood were going to be added to my childhood.

Who else could I say to "*the others*"? The one who stole my hopes was going to be a lonely call to death in someone. Could childhood finish? Could unborn dreams be ended? The most likely part of us is that we fire our dreams for the sake of another's life. When life is like that, is it so important if I like the sea or not? What happens if I try to clean my guilty conscience in the sea. What happens if I look for another world to live

in after I heard these words?

After I heard and lived through all these things I wanted to resign from living.

And now I understood that to live in this world is worse than to die. Being a human, feeling like a human and remembering in this life is a very difficult and important matter. I understand better now that my articles found in *Zehra* and Canan's bags and notebooks have deprived me of my right to die of hopelessness.

They did not die to die, they died for the afterlife that they looked at during this life. This war makes our skin dark and makes me remember them again. This dirty life from head to foot. This life one more time makes me remember their enlightened faces.

The people who died for us are looking at us from the place they are. I wish to end up this life living like this, but it does not finish. The shame does not finish, neither does the remembrance of the eyes which say "*this shame should finish.*" We are the eyes of the dead bodies who look at all the living people. The eyes that remain are saying "*Let's not lose each other in false hopes.*"

Although the war is going on, these eyes never come to an end.

Canan is more than life

The rain was not effective when the sheen of the carnations was kissed by greens and blues.

Although the mountains are surrounded by a shameless and rebellious spring, who can claim that we will not surround the mountains with our green clothes and with our lives which we carry in our shoulder bags, with our deaths and with our memories...

Canan is more than that! And life is an acrobat which dances on our sharp swords.

These swords are our mother's lovely hands as hot as bread just taken from the bakery. And the sharpness of the sword is the name of our lives.

Life is going on from the point that we begin to walk from where we stopped. All the surroundings are to be destroyed. And all these walls are for being broken down by our hearts.

We will destroy all the stars in the sky that will fall down on our guerrilla berets brightly shining.

We are adult enough and too big to swing, in spite of this we miss swinging.

But in fact the main disaster is to give up our childhood swing when we felt the blowing of the wind. We should never give up our swing nor the reality of swinging on the gallows. This

is life. We are life.

Canan is more than Life! (Note: this is a play on words: the Turkish word for "life" used here is can, pronounced "jan".)
The feet walking on the steep slope and getting tangled under the rain are ours.

What happens? Does not the light of the carnations shine on the blue and the green? Did not the mountain rain colour us bright red because of shame? Did we not get wet under the rain?

We get dry from our folk songs. We get sweaty from our folk dances. We decided to move from here to the place we would like to be.. We could not arrive. But we will arrive.

We will raise our flag to the tower. Perhaps this flag will be the colourful rose-patterned dress of a girl who is going to be ready to marry.

What else could I say?

Canan is more than Life.

And Zehra, she is a mild wind that I met in a summer afternoon on the Galata bridge...

And *Zehra*, for her I missed an appointment this summer at the Galata bridge where the salt porter Communist Yusuf was caught 50 years ago. And she is my comrade and her knife is sharper than mine.

Here, Spring came. I know Summer will come...

BURHANOZTURK

GOODBYE MY PRINCESS, SEE YOU AGAIN.

When the melancholy night had changed the colour of the Bosphorus to dark blue, the moonlight had seemed to come from behind the mountain. Your eyes were shining in my heart under the shadow of young and short trees. Always constant, existing, brave and timid, the glances touchy like an arrow.

My princess that I sacrifice for your hair, my purple violet, my dew drop on young tea shoots that the moonlight tries to woo blue waters were jealous of us on summer nights.... the shadows were very large and was hiding all the privacy.

Everthmg, whatever that is owned regarding humans should be offered like a cup of soup at a friendly dinner table. This is the only thing that I have.

All that we have is this that I can offer. Without asking. The rest of it is a big lie. And you know this. And I know that you know.

My hands, my powerful and poor hands. In every crossword puzzle, from right to left and from up to down. Don't go also. You are about to shout in your silence and my hands are the slave of your left hand.

I never went. You know. You went from me. All the things went from me. Princess, you never know that how many times I wrote this sentence. Who knows how many more times I will write it?

We used to talk about our first meeting often. Brother Ahmet and I, you could not know what kind of troubles we were going through on the Galata bridge, then you suddenly appeared with a boy who looks like you. Then you said to me later "*Why you were so far away from me? Why did you behave like this?*" But before I had said that "*Why is the daughter of our Ahmet so far away?*"

How often we talked and said "*I wish*" for this moment. Do you remember? You, to this side, and I to the other. We separately walked behind life and left each other. What I remembered from this moment were your eyes. And my princess, you were looking different from the others. You were coming in the fires, passing all the narrow passages and were looking for love. Your glance is my sacred trust that I kissed and kept in very high places.

The trust that I put in the gun with the bullets on my waist, I used all the bullets to the enemy but I keep only one for myself. Please don't be sorry or angry but I only keep it for myself, I don't give one to you. My trust in your eyes is for hope and bravery. I will keep this envelope without sealing it. An unfinished letter. Later we can talk. You opened your right eye. And I understand. This means "*OK*" I understand. OK.

As you already know, there is a flower named "*evening fantasy*". They bloom only in the evening, not in the morning. There are many faces that look like this flower. For that reason I don't like this flower but many people like this flower. I don't like the "*evening fantasy*" flower, my princess. I like the "*honeysuckle*" flower for instance. They tell us that every spring that they will bloom for a long time.

I like the Acacia flower for instance. It is white and wild. You have to overcome the thorns to reach to this flower. This is the

hard love I mean.

What is love, any way? Is it not to fight against many troubles? Is it not to pay a price?

You know, I could not recognise Canan as much as you even I could say never recognised except her inheritance.

When Canan died for her beliefs, brother Ahmet came from Bodrum. He is my friend as you know. My comrade. We said, let's go to Rize early. In the dark before the morning, we were on the way to the airport dressed up in our best suits. We took the cab waiting under the flying seagulls on Galata tower. I should be honest and say that we had a loan. We arrived in Rize after we met with some friends in the Trabzon Airport. Than we looked at Canan's grave which later we were going to bury you next to. We talked to your grandfather and the other respectful people of the village. We said let's not be disrespectful to our deceased. We should put Canan in her place. We came back. There were some faces like the Evening Fantasy flower. Whether they were ashamed or not, I don't know.

Your brother Ahmet and I came back by the car of Canan's transported body. We came to you the next day to embrace your faded and exhausted body. I don't understand what happened but you came to life again. Your dimples were seen when you were smiling. Your eyes turned into bullets that shoot the target on 12 marks. This was you, my princess. This was life, powerful and willing.

We danced in front of the door. You wrote something on the frame of the picture you made for me: *"With my warmest wishes to my dear brother, I will promise to you that I probably will not be able to keep. Usually, I do not promise things that I cannot do. I will be your partner - Pad - in the first dance*

after our victory. "

Then the honeysuckle flowers you gave me dried in this frame. I kiss this present that will be mine for ever and put it in a box to keep it as my sacred treasure.

The Evening Fantasy flowers sometimes bloomed and then sometimes wilted. They were very attractive when they bloom but that is all. The difficulties of the honeysuckle and the Acacia flower aren't as great as the Evening Fantasy.

You were a wild rose. Rebellious, red and lovely. You could be the friend of Acacia and honeysuckle. Perhaps the 'donkey's thorn' plant. I had told you, remember? You had been surprised when I bought my article concerning Canan. I had said *"I am like a 'donkey's thorn'."* My surface is hard, thorny and aggressive. We must be so against to the enemy. My inside is soft and white like milk. This is how I am to my friends. *"Donkey's thorn"* is a plant like my princess. Let us be the *"donkey s thorn "*, the acacia, the orange flower and honeysuckle. Let's not be evening fantasy, my rose. Let's not enjoy life only in the evenings.

I came to see you just in the moments before you passed away. I took your left hand in my hand. I kissed it, smelled it and put your hand on my bearded face. Your hand was warm. I kissed it for the last time. I caress your face, your brow and hair.

I again kissed you. You did not wake up. My hands, my lips and my heart are not as before. They are not.

When the night came to our door, you passed away the same date as my sister passed away, July 29, 1989. In fact you did not pass away, you only turned over and said *"make my breath more and more "*. Yes my princess, we will.

My pain is becoming double and multiplying as you explained to the university students in the lesson. I lived the face of death that day. The death came to us more and more for all of our lives.

Perhaps you had never walked on Kucuk Armutlu roads while you were alive but now we are taking you down these roads. Your comrades came. And then my brother Ahmet's comrades.

Then we left. We left you there. The weather was hot... I brought ice cubes so that my princess would not sweat. At midnight I and brother Ahmet and your friends who like acacia and live with thorns set off for Rize.

This time we should not be offended as with Canan. And we had promised you. We were moving ahead in the moonlight. We wanted to welcome our daughter, our *Zehra*, our princess as magnificent.

Nothing was missed. The Evening Fantasy flower welcomed you, Acacia flowers welcomed you in Rize. We gave your throne to secure hands. We walked until we reached your village and your father was in the middle and in front of your comrades and the banners.

We took you to your Grandmother's house. You took rest a little. Then we said "come on your bed is ready princess!". We took you to your bed.

Do you know? You never woke up. But for sure you saw the evening fantasy flower and acacia flowers. Just as you saw them in Kucuk Armutlu. You moved from Kucuk Armutlu, your friends and comrades there entrusted you to us.

Don't be sad but I would like you to know that the evening fantasy flowers we left in Kucuk Armutlu had seen only you one time. We were not surprised. They are still entrusted to us. Know this. You are sure. You know.

What ever they say and whatever they write, the evening fantasy flowers bloom only once and they can mislead you. You, I, brother Ahmet and even your father are not important. We wake up and open the shadows of misleading in the moonlight and we could see the thorns.

It is now history, some people could hallucinate. This is not the fault of history or the living day. This is the fault of humans. And humans create history.

You did what you could.... Write what you think you should write. You gave your lesson and said "*goodbye, I am going*". We can only say "*goodbye*" and we can only wave our hands. So we did. We promise solemnly that we will plant one chestnut tree, one acacia flower and one honeysuckle flower at the head end of your bed.

We are the thorny road of this life, my rose. You were thorned in the side by life. We have this heart and these thorns, while some evening fantasy flowers do not have this faint heart. We will be thorned by many people.

We promise shoulder to shoulder with our friends and comrades in the name of inheritance that, we will not quit our resistance until we choke these evening fantasy flowers and the false sensitivities and fake world. The enemy knows this and our comrades too. We attribute this to the friends who don't know of the Evening Fantasy flowers.

My princess, what else could I say. Writing could end but the words don't. I can not. It will not. I will not say more. In K. Armutlu, you had passed some months by making fun when I found you. Pink and white flowers of cherry, peach and apple trees were just blooming. Do you know, the children are attacking fruit trees at night? The peaches have turned red, the cherry period is finished, apricots are dried on their branches, and the apples are going to turn almost from green to red. Thanks to you all these changes, alterations and motion have happened. Don't ask "how? " I can't tell. But thanks to you that saw what happened. This is the experience of humanity, nature and life. The children in K. Armutlu are breaking off every red peach. Every apple is waiting for you to reach the colour on your forehead.

Me? My hands that you gave your warmness to and your touch is still the language of my heart. I will never forget you and never give up your warmness. Words cannot describe the most beautiful princess in the world. When the melancholy night had changed the colour of the Bosphorus to dark blue, the moonlight had seemed to come from behind the mountain. Your eyes were shining in my heart under the shadow of young and short trees. Always constant, existing, brave and timid, the glances touchy like an arrow.

My princess that I sacrifice for your hair, my purple violet, my dew drop on young tea shoots that the moonlight tries to woo blue waters were jealous of us on summer nights.... The shadows were very large and hiding all privacy.

Goodbye my princess, see you again.

***Burhan Ozturk 3 August
2001 Istanbul***

ZEHRA

It was the night
 Which the rain soaked to my skin
 When I saw you again
 Your eyes were shining with excitement
 on the day of the 8th day.

They were the spark of fire
 Your eyes
 Always bravery remaining Always
 determination with you.

Dear Zehra
 Dear Laz girl

What a heroism
 What a treachery
 Has been lived
 Right beside you
 What a treachery that;
 Throughout humanity
 As yours
 And
 Treacheries that is
 So far away as;
 You cannot
 Mention
 While you were moulding
 Your destroyed body day by day
 With the light of your eyes
 When I was gathering flowers

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On the edge of disaster
You were climbing Kackar mountains
To be able to hold me
With your thin hands

You were so much a friend in these 200 days.

You used to gather hazelnut one day,
One day, on the way to catch the fish
You used to grind knives in Sürmene
When you get tired, you lay down
On your country

Then all the fantasies are lost
Kackar mountains kneel down.
Gathered hazelnuts lost their owner
Caught fishes
Gathered hazelnuts
The sea pitched - dark
Cried after your living
Ground knives cut the ropes
You were leaving with
A smile on your face
To join Senay, Gulsuman and Canan
You said "I'm a step too"
And you joined in with the rest of immortal people.

Dear Laz Girl,
Dear Zehra
While I am saying good by to you
I kissed the headband
I hold your very thin hand
Which held me...

Ender Altinisik

WHOSE COUNTRY

To Zehra...

Poet,

Whose are these lands beyond Giresun
 Whose anchovies are moving constantly
 Whose tobacco,
 hazelnut,
 tea...

Poet,

Where is Ayder?
 These plateaus,
 These flowers, and the honey...
 Poets,

These are all ours
 The people measured their noses with fishbones,
 Pure, suddenly getting angry, the joyful people,
 Anger,
 Storm,
 Cimili... They are all ours...

Poet,

Why does this country get dark?
 Why are there no waves on the Black Sea...
 Why are there so many gaybana nights?
 Why do the pacilar (dancing partners) and uşaklar (young
 boys) not dance the horon?
 Why has the heyiamo yalesa stopped...
 Is the anchovy finished?
 Is corn dried? •

The hazelnut does not become green..
What is going on, poet?

(...)

I am a poet of rebellion,
Like Black Sea
Ziya Hursid
Chest maker Sukru is revived
"Execute me, execute that,
Executioners are under my foot"
The knife I hold is the Sürmene Knife, Poet,
- a very sharp knife-
The yellow butt with 14 bullets he holds is
a very good material

Ten thousand people are on Inali,
Ten thousand people are dancing the horon
Look at her there, she is the leader of the horon.

(...)

This yellowish ,girl
This smiling , ruddy-cheeked girl...
Don't get wrong that she is nicely hot
her heart carries weapons, poet,
The girl next to her is her sister,
One of them is Zehra, the other one Canan..
Her eyes are sharp as a sparrow hawk,
Their hearts are moving constantly...
Now,
It is the time to fight on the mountains...

(...)

Why are you so silent my country,
Come on!

Hey Uşak (young man)
Hey Uşak hey,
Heyyamo Yalessa!
Yalessa! Zehra is
calling.

Canan is calling, Hey
Uşak hey to the
mountain top to the
mountain top.. (Sound
of drum)

(Note: this poem alludes to the Black Sea and Laz culture
from the sisters' home region.)

Halil Acar
30.06.2001

PHOTOGRAPHS

OF

CANAN

AND

ZEHRA