



# Translators are on the firing line of expression issue

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**Translators, who can be tried according to the second article of the press code, decided to take action. The aim of the campaign called 'Translators cannot be blamed for their mission' is to change the relevant article.**

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While Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) is forcing authors such as Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak to stand trial, the second article of another law – the press code – threatens translators. Translators can be tried for translating articles that are "illegal," according to the press code. Organizations of authors, publishers and translators spoke to Referans this week in support of a Turkish campaign begun in November called "Translators cannot be blamed for their mission."

Hasan Anamur, the head of the Translators' Organization and a member of the executive board of the International Translators Federation, emphasized that book censures and the punishment of authors and translators happened all the time.

## **Translators should be loyal to the reader:**

Stating that recent history of military coups in Turkey has been damaging, Hasan Anamur said similar attitudes towards books in Turkey existed in the past too. He said his group The Translators' Organization was founded in 1999 to pursue more rights for translators along with The Union of Publishers and other organizations. Radical right wing and Islamist publishing houses re-published 100 literary classics without any supervision from the Education Ministry, Anamur pointed out.

## **Negotiations with the ministry continue:**

Anamur said they are still negotiating with the Justice Commission and relevant ministries, emphasizing that they would apply to the European Court of Human Rights if they did not see results. Stating that even though many translators were tried in the past and even some of the great translators like Sabahattin Eyübođlu and Vedat Günyol were sentenced to prison, Anamur said they would continue to fight for their rights. He also said that while people are showing more interest in the cases involving famous authors, others have suffered in anonymity.

### **Our primary job is to transfer information:**

Meanwhile, novelist and translator Yiđit Bener emphasized that it is meaningless to judge the translator as if he is the author. "The professional organizations should correct this. What we shouldn't forget is that the translator is the transmitter," added Bener, drawing attention to the possible consequences of practices like self-censuring or not translating certain texts.

Tuncay Birkan, the head of ÇEVBİR and the editor of METİS Publishing, pointed out that they held a press conference for The Day of Translators and drew attention to the problem. "The source of the problem is the incompatibility between the press code and the code of opinion and art works. We are trying to make an appointment with the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Commission in Parliament," said Birkan.

The Union of Authors (YAZBİR), the Union of Publishers, the Trade Union of Publishers, The Organization of Translation, Turkey's PEN United Conference Translators Organization and the Professional Union of Book Translators (ÇEVBİR) have shown support for the campaign.