COPING WITH REPRESSION:

HOW OPPOSITIONAL CSOS BUILD RESILIENCE UNDER TURKEY'S COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM

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BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2024

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Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Political Science and International Relations

by

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2024

Coping with Repression:

How Oppositional CSOs Build Resilience Under Turkey's

Competitive Authoritarianism

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January 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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ABSTRACT

Coping with Repression:

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Competitive Authoritarianism

This study aims to reveal the strategies employed by oppositional civil society organizations (CSOs) in Turkey to deal with government-imposed repressive elements. Turkey has been undergoing a process of autocratization for about fifteen years, and this process has reached the point where the regime is classified as "competitive authoritarian". In such a regime, where critical voices in civil society are tried to be controlled as much as possible, the field of action of many oppositional CSOs has been limited or completely destroyed. However, there are still CSOs that can survive despite all the pressures, continue their work, defend liberal democratic values, and develop various strategies to achieve this all. To reveal these strategies, a qualitative field research was conducted based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 CSO representatives from eight different fields. As a result of the research, seven focus areas were determined to help building institutional resilience against the pressures that CSOs are exposed to under Turkey's competitive authoritarian regime. These can be listed as building and managing organizational reputation, establishing national and international alliances, taking part in non-violent contentious actions, pursuing continuous resistance with strategic adaptations, building legal competencies in the organization, ensuring financial sustainability, and effective social media management.

ÖZET

Baskıyla Başa Çıkmak:

Muhalif STÖ'ler Türkiye'nin Rekabetçi Otoriterliği Altında Direnci Nasıl İnşa Ediyor

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki muhalif sivil toplum örgütlerinin (STÖ) hükümetin dayattığı baskı unsurları ile başa çıkmak için kullandıkları stratejileri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye, yaklaşık on beş yıldır otoriterleşme sürecine girmiş ve bu süreç, rejimin günümüzde "rekabetçi otoriter" olarak sınıflandırıldığı noktaya varmıştır. Sivil toplumdaki eleştirel seslerin olabildiğince kontrol altına alınmaya çalışıldığı böylesine bir rejimde birçok muhalif STÖ'nün hareket alanı sınırlandırılmış veya tamamen yok edilmiştir. Ancak, tüm baskı unsurlarına rağmen hayatta kalabilen, çalışmalarını sürdürebilen, liberal demokratik değerleri savunmaya devam eden ve tüm bunları başarmak için de çeşitli stratejiler geliştiren STÖ'ler mevcuttur. Bu stratejilerin ortaya çıkarılması için sekiz farklı alandan 16 STÖ temsilcisi ile yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlara dayanan nitel bir saha araştırması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda STÖ'lerin Türkiye'nin rekabetçi otoriter rejimi altında maruz kaldıkları baskılara karşı kurumsal direnç inşa edebilmesine yardımcı olacak yedi odak alanı belirlenmiştir. Bunlar; kurumsal itibar kazanmak ve yönetmek, ulusal ve uluslararası ittifaklar kurmak, şiddet içermeyen çekişmeli eylemlerde yer almak, stratejik adaptasyonlarla beraber sürekli direnişi benimsemek, organizasyondaki hukuki yetkinlikleri güçlendirmek, finansal sürdürülebilirlik sağlamak ve etkili sosyal medya yönetimi yapmak olarak sıralanabilir.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Mert Arslanalp, my thesis advisor, for his endless support and encouraging comments. Without his constructive feedback and the inspiring discussions that we hold, I would not be able to finish this work. Besides, I would like to thank Başak Taraktaş and Berk Esen for agreeing to take part in my thesis committee. It was an honor to present my research to these three esteemed scholars.

Although it is not possible for me to list their names, I am grateful to all the CSO representatives who trusted me, took part in my research, and shared their valuable experience with me. Despite the risks involved in the study, they believed in the importance of this research for democratic civil society in Turkey and wanted to contribute. I hope that I have been able to produce a thesis that will not disappoint their trust.

Also, I want to thank The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for the financial support it provided during my master's degree. Thanks to their support, I was able to focus on my studies without concern.

Finally, I am much obliged to my parents Zülal and Mehmet for their never-ending support and always encouraging me to pursue my dreams. I also thank my aunt Nuray for frequently asking me how my thesis was going, which made me more anxious but also disciplined. And of course, I would like to thank my dear brother, Alican, for his desire to engage in theoretical discussions and his support in structuring my thoughts. His belief that I will be a good academician always keeps me motivated.

For Ömer,

who waited so long for the end of this thesis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Significance of the research 5

1.2 Methodology 7

1.3 Structure of the thesis 12

CHAPTER 2: CIVIL SOCIETY AND AUTHORITARIANISM: FOR OR AGAINST? 15

2.1 Two paradigms of civil society 15

2.2 Beyond the dichotomy: Towards a synthesis 23

2.3 Authoritarianism and repression 30

2.4 Survival and resistance under authoritarianism 40

CHAPTER 3: TURKEY'S COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM AND CSOS 53

3.1 Autocratization in Turkey 54

3.2 Civil society in AKP rule: Flourished or faded? 58

3.3 How AKP is cracking down on oppositional CSOs 62

CHAPTER 4: BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST REPRESSION 68

4.1 Reputation building 70

4.2 Alliance formation 76

4.3 Non-violent contentious action 83

4.4 Continuous resistance with strategic adjustments 89

4.5 Building legal competencies 96

4.6 Ensuring financial sustainability 101

4.7 Effective social media management 107

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 113

5.1 Implications 114

5.2 Limitations and further research 120

APPENDIX A: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 123

APPENDIX B: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL 124

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUOTES IN TURKISH 125

REFERENCES 132

ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GONGO	Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organizations
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RoW	Regimes of the World
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Architects and Engineers
TTB	Turkish Medical Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research will aim at examining the strategies of oppositional Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to build resilience in the context of Turkey's competitive authoritarian regime. The global surge in third wave autocratization poses a great challenge to democracies worldwide. V-dem reports that what was achieved over 35 years have been erased as the overall level of democracy has regressed to that of 1986 (Papada et al., 2023, p.6). As of 2022, 72% of the world's population, which makes 5.7 billion people, live in autocracies. For the first time after 20 years, the number of closed autocracies is higher than liberal democracies in the world. The picture has been getting more alarming in the last 10 years as democracy broke down in seven of the top 10 autocratizing countries, including Turkey[1] (Papada et al., 2023, p.23).

Autocrats put great effort into silencing critical voices. Among the autocratizing countries, "CSO repression" has been the second most observed indicator as it has worsened in more than 25 counties between 2012-2022 (Papada et al., 2023, p.25). CIVICUS Monitor (2022) marked that last year has witnessed serious damage to civic space globally. Two-third of the countries and territories have either a closed, restricted, or obstructed civic space. Strategies aiming at deterring dissent CSOs and independent activists are increasingly adopted by the incumbents. Moreover, these repressive

[1] Other major autocratizers that democracy broke down in the last ten years are El Salvador, Hungary, India, Serbia, Thailand, and Tunisia. Brazil, Mauritius, and Poland remained as democracies.

strategies and tools are diffused as autocrats learn and copy from each other (Hall & Ambrosio, 2017).

Oppositional CSOs deal with various forms of repression including legal restrictions which signify high entry barriers for new CSOs as well as overregulation, close monitoring, and limitations of organizational activities for the existing ones (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020; Robertson, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2000). Due to the autocrats are inclined to transfer funds to pro-government organizations selectively, they also face financial constraints and turn to foreign funds which paves the way for criminalization this time (Morgenbesser, 2020; Bromley et al., 2019; Rutzen, 2015). Not only for financial transactions, CSOs are also criminalized based on charges regarding their activities, statements, and methods. As autocrats have a desire to be the single producers of discourse, they censor different sounds labelling them inaccurate or manipulative. Therefore, they restrict the production and distribution of campaign materials, enforce bans on digital platforms like social media accounts or websites, and marginalize CSOs in the policymaking process through neglect (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020; Simsa, 2019). Harassment and intimidation of members, involving several elements such as police violence during contentious acts, insufficient security for activists in times of attacks by others, and the implementation of extra-legal measures like arbitrary detentions, expulsions, suspended sentences, or removal of citizenship, constitute another serious form of repression (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022; Lewis, 2013; Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020). Connectedly, restrictions on assembly are hardened with disproportionate use of police force, usage of surveillance tools, securitization of public sphere, and many other tactics (CIVICUS, 2023; Amnesty International, 2022; Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2020a).

As successive AKP (Justice and Development Party) governments dragged Turkey in a process of autocratization over the last 15 years, Turkish CSOs increasingly confront these repressive tools as well. Even though the number of CSOs has been in rise in each year, the civic sphere has become gradually discriminative and controlled. Similar to other competitive authoritarian regimes, government prefers to adopt the dual strategy of cooptation and repression, rather than silencing all actors in civil society as a whole (Yabancı, 2019; Doyle, 2017; 2018; Massicard, 2022). Pro-government CSOs are constructed, cooperated, and supported in order to maintain a pseudo civic sphere as the demonstration of government's commitment to democracy, while repressive tools are applied to keep the voices of oppositional CSOs down.

Based on this background, examination of strategies of oppositional CSOs for survival and resistance against state repression requires a theoretical framework to identify what civil society is, what it serves for, and what the value of CSOs is in an authoritarian regime. To provide a formal formulation, drawing upon definitions from other scholars (i.e., Alagappa, 2004; Edwards, 2005; Spires, 2011), I characterize civil society as a dynamic arena where organized forces struggle for power, engaging in both conflict and cooperation. It is a sphere for expression, discussion, and mobilization of competing identities and interests.

For the sake of this thesis, an organizational perspective of civil society is employed since organizations are the main actors in facilitating state-society relations, and they provide an investigatable unit of associate, allied individuals. CSOs, in this sense, are "groups of citizens organized to act in pursuit of common goals and interests" (Bernhard et al., 2015, p. 9). They include advocacy organizations, academia, cultural clubs, community associations, charity organizations, professional organizations, labor

unions among others. Although liberal paradigm identifies civil society as an autonomous entity serving as a check system on the state power, in fact, CSOs are in a constant relationship with the state in both ways: first, as soon as they are established, CSOs become part of a system of bureaucratic practices and regulations which enable the government to monitor and regulate their activities; second, they need to relate to the state to push for policy changes, in other words, "total independence is virtually incompatible with political influence" (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996, p. 1628).

Hall (1995) states that civil society encompasses "as much difference as is compatible with the bare minimum of consensus necessary for settled existence" (p. 6). Thus, the question of what civil society serves does not have a single answer. Contrary to the normative assumptions of liberal scholars, who identifies civil society as the main driver of democratization (e.g., Tocqueville, 2003; Diamond, 1994), a more nuanced understanding necessitates the empirical research of civil society's role within specific subgroups and varied contextual frameworks. Understanding the role of civil society and CSOs under authoritarian regimes is particularly ineffective from a liberal perspective as pro-authoritarian groups are existent, legitimizing the regime rather than functioning as a counterforce (Berman, 1997; Riley, 2019). Accordingly, the relationship between CSO and authoritarian government can be perfectly collaborative either voluntarily or involuntarily. Nevertheless, this does not mean that civil society lacks the capacity for change or confrontation (Dimitrovova, 2010). Even a handful of oppositional CSOs, serving as "islands of resistance" can play a great role in fostering democracy and building a force against autocratization (Hudáková, 2021).

Conceptualizing civil society as a force which can combat autocratization makes it crucial to investigate how oppositional CSOs can survive and maintain their

operations despite the attacks for silencing them. Selecting Turkey as an insightful case for this investigation, the research question of this thesis is formulated as "what kind of strategies do oppositional CSOs adopt to enhance their resilience against government pressures in Turkey?" I argue that organizational resilience requires multidimensional capabilities, reflecting itself not only internally in the CSO offices, but also in courts, streets, and online sphere. As the findings of the research reveal, organizational resilience is largely built on organizational capacity, which may encompass a comprehensive set of elements including human resources, financing, networking, leadership, knowledge, technology, and more. The seven main areas that I analyze (i.e., reputation building, alliance formation, non-violent contentious action, continuous resistance with strategic adjustments, building legal competencies, ensuring financial sustainability, and effective social media management) necessitate acquisition and mobilization of resources effectively with a goal-oriented perspective. Most of the time, a cost-benefit approach supports the decision-making process, pushing leaders to calculate the potential risks and benefits of the planned action.

Before explaining the methodology of the study, next section will explore the contribution of this research to the academic literature and its practical implications for CSOs.

1.1 Significance of the research

Even though the literature on autocratization and competitive authoritarian regimes has been growing, there has been little research on CSOs under authoritarian rule. In the context of Turkey, this lack is even more visible. As Yabancı (2019) states, despite the

interest in Turkey's authoritarian turn among scholars, how civil society is restructured within this new competitive authoritarian context is waiting to be explored. A handful of research focusing on cooptation and repression of CSOs during AKP period provides substantial insights (e.g., Yabancı, 2019; 2021; Doyle, 2017; 2018; Altan-Olcay & Icduygu, 2012; Kazanoğlu & Ketola, 2022; Massicard, 2022). Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, there are not any empirical studies exploring the CSOs' response to the government. Therefore, neglecting the role of CSOs as a counterforce, our existing knowledge leads us to consider as if the government was the only actor which can shape the civic sphere in an authoritarian context.

This study, on the other hand, remarks that where there is repression, there is also resistance. Based on the experience of oppositional CSOs, it contributes to the literature by finding out the strategies, resources, and tools for building resilience against the government cracking down on the civil society. In this sense, it holds critical importance for the body of knowledge regarding competitive authoritarianism. By delving into the responses produced by CSOs to resist repression, the research reveals that CSOs are more than victims of the regime. By presenting field experiences on how competitive authoritarianism affects daily life in organizations, as well as their responses to current and potential dangers, it shows that CSOs might be, in fact, powerful agents against the regime.

Furthermore, the very act of undertaking this field study, despite the potential risks and possible unwillingness of CSOs to participate due to concerns for worsening repression in case of disclosure of their identities, is important to amplify voices that are trying to be silenced. The fact that this project was completed with a significant number of volunteers demonstrates the boldness of civil society in the face of adversity. By

interacting with CSOs that are directly impacted by government repression, it disseminates the stories that could otherwise remain unknown. In short, this study not only offers insightful factual observations, but also challenges the very constraints that it aims to research.

Finally, since this research stands at the intersection of many different themes including authoritarianism, third wave autocratization, democratic resilience, repression, resistance, civil society, third sector, CSO-state relations, it is also open to dialogue with different studies. This kind of constructive dialogue can facilitate the formation of comprehensive frameworks and nuanced perspectives, which can ultimately advance the body of knowledge in these prominent research areas. Surely, more case studies and comparative research are required to reach generalizable conclusions and to build a comprehensive theoretical framework regarding CSO resilience. This work will hopefully be a brick in a large wall that supports pro-democratic civil society against autocratic attacks.

1.2 Methodology

This research is the product of a qualitative case study which is built upon 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews. Case studies are valuable resources to understand phenomena with its complexity and richness. Common misunderstandings about case study research which Flyvbjerg (2006) challenged years ago, such as the practical knowledge that case studies provide is less valuable than theoretical knowledge, or single case studies do not contribute to scientific development as they are not sufficient for generalization still remains among some scholars. In fact, pursuing universal,

predictive theories in social sciences is most of the time unavailing, which makes context-dependent knowledge highly, maybe more important. Also, case studies can contribute to scientific development via falsification and underpinning generalizations. Along with this line, Gerring (2004) defines case study as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (p. 342). The unit might be a specific historical event, a person, or a state, or some other phenomenon. The exploration of the case might bring out hypotheses to test in other units. But even a single case can provide substantial insights to explore causal relationships. According to George and Bennett (2005), case studies provide the greatest -and possibly the only- means of examining causation. They contend that researchers can only determine the precise mechanisms and variables that led to a certain political outcome by closely examining the dynamics and course of particular cases.

This study employs field research within the case unit. The nature of field research enables researchers to examine complex political phenomena, capturing nuances that might be overlooked in more controlled environments (Read et al., 2015; Berg, 2006). This method is especially useful for comprehending the complexities of political dynamics since it offers a practical framework for investigating power relations, governance systems, and the responses of political actors. The ability to engage directly with the environment being studied fosters a holistic comprehension for the researcher, allowing for the consideration of regional perspectives. Field research contributes to the development of theories and makes it easier to produce insights that are supported by empirical evidence, which makes political science studies more applicable in real-world settings.

Turkey has been chosen as the unit of this case study for three reasons. First, Turkey is an explicit example of competitive authoritarianism (Esen & Gümüşcü; 2016). As one of the major autocratizers of third wave autocratization, it is a country where oppositional civil society has been restricted gradually in the last 15 years. Second, the increase in the number of CSOs during autocratization makes it an interesting case to investigate the CSO-state relationship. Dual strategy of cooptation and repression is evident as pro-government CSOs has been trying to capture the civic sphere at the cost of oppositional ones, which makes the struggle among different actors feasible to research. Third, despite the harsh repression on dissent groups, there are still many CSOs which achieve success by actively and effectively maintaining their critical stance against the government. For these reasons, Turkey is seen as a crucial case where we can examine how CSOs survive and develop resistance despite the government pressures.

Participant CSOs of the study were determined by the purposive sampling method (Palys, 2018). At the first step, CSOs were distinguished based on their functions. It is possible to make this distinction based on advocacy and social change on one side, and service provision on the other (Toepler et al., 2020). Mostly, the former is referred to as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whereas the latter is non-profit organizations (NPOs) (Bogdanova et al., 2018). The case selection excludes NPOs as they are "indirect" in their strategies, which Baker et al. (2017) explain that this kind of organizations with a focus on charitable activities, service provision, or artistic expression are not necessarily antiregime. They are not explicitly political either. Although they still provide a space for expression and maybe mobilization, and they might be subject to repression from time to time, they do not directly aim at achieving political voice and change. Therefore, this research focalizes claim-making

organizations involving human rights, women, environmental and other advocacy groups that are political in their stance. Based on global and local reports (e.g., CIVICUS, ICNL, Freedom House, TUSEV, IHD), main domains that are more exposed to pressure and are inherently positioned against the right-wing authoritarian government are examined. This analysis provided a range of domains regarding the cleavages of class, gender, ethnicity, religion and others in Turkey. In the end, eight main domains were determined: human rights, women, LGBT+, Alevi, labor, profession, Kurdish, and environment (see Appendix A).

At the second stage, oppositional CSOs must have been defined within these domains. Even though the areas inherently imply opposition to the government as I mentioned, there are also pro-government, loyal organizations among them. The identification had to be made based on ideological positioning. AKP is a political party that defines itself as conservative democrat and, according to many researchers, is positioned on the Islamist and right-populist axis (Yılmaz & Bashirov, 2018; Kaya, 2015). Therefore, the sample consisted of CSOs that position themselves in the left-liberal line and emphasize concepts of human rights, secularism, democratization and freedom in their corporate texts such as bylaws, vision and mission statements. Offline and online publications of CSOs are screened in order to identify ideological positioning of the organizations and to detect the oppositional ones.

Thirdly, to determine the level of activity, the visibility of CSOs in the media coverage and social media was taken into account. Organizations that were not the subject of any news and did not show any activity on their websites and social media accounts in the last year were excluded. This step was imperative since all oppositional claims-making CSOs are not able to carry out their work actively. These are

organizations that only exist officially but have become dysfunctional in practice. They can no longer continue their basic activities due to government pressure or other reasons. Since the aim of this study was to focus on the resilience strategies of organizations that not only survived but also managed to stand as a powerful actor against the government, it was important to consider their level of activity.

The participants were invited to the research through e-mailing or phone. Nine of the 16 interviews were held face to face -seven of them in the organization's office and two in an outdoor location. Other seven interviews were conducted online, as six of the interviewees were located in other cities, and one was unfortunately too occupied to arrange a face-to-face meeting. The interviews lasted for approximately 60 minutes. They were carried out in accordance with ethical rules, providing necessary/requested documentation, explaining the scope of the research verbally, and telling the rights of the participant during the study (for Ethics Committee Approval, see Appendix B). Due to the sensitivity of the subject, the interviewees were given written and verbal assurance regarding the confidentiality of their identities and statements.

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with these selected 16 CSOs. This method allowed me to guide the conversation based on a set of predetermined questions with a flexible way. I usually started with asking for a brief introduction to the history, mission, and values of the organization. After, I requested them to explain the nature of relation between them and the AKP government, referring times of collaboration and conflict. This phrasing was essential not to be leading the interviewee towards the antagonism only. Slowly going into the details of conflict, they told about the forms of repression that they have been facing during the last 15 years, referring specific experiences. Then, I asked what their main strategies of resilience are, in other

words, what makes them powerful against these restrictive attacks. The rest of the conversation was more tailored, adapting the questions depending on the points that the interviewee highlighted as their major sources of resilience. Still, I asked additional questions to get their opinions on some potential strategies I had come across in my literature review that they had not mentioned. The in-depth approach in interviewing enabled me to reveal their different ideas and experiences, which were substantial to understand the complexities within the subject matter.

The data collected through interviews were supported with documentary analysis of a wide range of published and online materials such as reports, bylaws, blogs, official websites, and social media accounts of CSOs as well as the press coverage about them. It provided me a historical overview of the organization and their struggles with the government. I took advantage of these resources to gain insights about what kind of government restrictions that they have encountered in the past and what kind of responses that they developed. Also, the information that I gained through the documentary analysis helped me to guide the interviews in a better way, referring to these textual data from time to time.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of five main chapters including the introduction. In Chapter 2, I dwell on the literature which supported me to build the theoretical framework of the study. Starting with discussing the two main paradigms in civil society literature, i.e., liberal and critical paradigms, I demonstrate why critical paradigm is more powerful in explaining the dynamics of civil society under authoritarian regimes. However, rather

than choosing a side between the paradigms, I refer to elements from each of them, highlighting the democratizing power of civil society without ignoring its tendency towards government cooptation and collaboration. I argue that the normative perspective that liberal scholars hold towards the anti-authoritarian character of civil society should not be taken for granted. Rather, the relation between different civic groups and the state must be researched empirically integrating contextual factors.

Even under closed autocracies, there are democratic actors which is strong enough to challenge the regime. However, third wave autocratization make it more challenging for oppositional CSOs to survive. Referring to quantitative data underscoring the threat that third wave autocratization poses for the populations around the world, I move on discussing the impact of this trend on oppositional CSOs. Review of the studies conducted in democratic and authoritarian contexts enable the reader to have a snapshot of the struggle that CSOs take part in during autocratization. After outlining the main areas and forms of pressure that CSOs face, I examine studies from numerous countries on how oppositional civic actors seek to survive and resist under authoritarian regimes. The methods reviewed in this chapter served as the basis for creating hypotheses to be tested during the interviews.

In Chapter 3, I provide a contextual background for Turkey, which is the chosen case of the research. With a succinct historical trajectory of Turkey during the AKP period, I point out the cornerstones of ongoing autocratization, taking 2007 as the start point. Based on various statistical data and qualitative information, I examine the situation of CSOs during this period underscoring government's dual strategy of repression and cooptation. Tactics of selective repression on the dissent actors are

investigated through previous research and institutional reports in order to understand what kind of CSOs face what forms of repression in Turkey.

The findings of my research, based on interviews with CSO leaders and documentary analysis of corporate texts, are shared in Chapter 4. In this chapter, the resistance mechanisms that CSOs create against oppression are examined under seven focus areas: reputation building, alliance formation, non-violent contentious action, continuous resistance with strategic adjustments, building legal competencies, ensuring financial sustainability, and effective social media management. For each strategy, referring to interviewees' statements, I clarify what it has to do with organizational resilience, how the mechanism works, how this strategy can be applied by other CSOs, what the potential bottlenecks are, and what might be the tactics for doing it considering the relevant financial, political, bureaucratic, and informational limitations.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I summarize the main findings regarding each of the seven strategies and evaluate them in terms of their interaction with the existing literature. Also, I reveal the limitations of the present study to highlight future research opportunities. I hope that this study will provide both an illuminating reading experience for its readers and a scientific basis that raises their hopes on the possibility of a more resilient civil society under authoritarian regimes.

CHAPTER 2

CIVIL SOCIETY AND AUTHORITARIANISM: FOR OR AGAINST?

2.1 Two paradigms of civil society

Civil society is one of the most debated concepts in political science literature and still there is no consensus on responses to many questions. What is the definition of civil society? What are the functions that it serves? Is it an essential component of strong democracies, or a vague entity having no clear objectives? Does civil society always have to be against the government as a corrective power? Is it possible for pro-government civil societies to exist as well? Even though scholars are extremely divided in their views, it is possible to categorize the literature broadly as the liberal and critical paradigms. The former has a normative approach which takes civil society as inherently good and progressive, which makes it one of the pillars of liberal democracies. The latter, however, has a skeptical understanding of civil society and considers it as a neutral factor in democratization, if not negative.

2.1.1 Liberal paradigm

Throughout the political history, civil society was probably most glorified by Tocqueville after what he had seen in the United States in 1830s. Tocqueville (2003) used the term "associations" to describe what we now refer to as civil society. He defines it as the voluntary organizations operating outside the sphere of government and economy. He observes that Americans form and participate in associations for various purposes from entertainment to constructing churches. Impressed by the Americans'

success in collectively pursuing common goals, he identified associations as the bedrock of American democracy and the bulwarks against any authoritarian inclinations (p. 528-545). Undoubtedly, his admiration has transferred to next generations of liberal scholars. Following him, Diamond (1994) identified civil society as "voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous" (p.5) realm of organized social life. Nevertheless, this autonomy does not imply ignorance or disinterest towards the state. Quite the contrary, civil society is where citizens collectively seek benefits, demand policy changes, and call the state to account (Silliman & Noble, 1998).

This normative view of civil society has raised as a consequence of two major developments in political history: first, the resistance movements against military regimes in 1970s and 1980s, and then the democratic revolutions in post-communist countries by 1989 in Eastern Europe (Altan-Olcay & Icduygu, 2012). As the associational mobilization has been credited with the success stories of democratic transition in these regions, the concept of civil society gained great attention among scholars. Yom (2005) states that comparative social scientists overconfidently embraced the Tocquevillian theory of civil society to explain the ongoing democratization wave, arguing "no civil society, no democratization." Various studies have pointed out the effectiveness of organized civil society groups (e.g., Bunce & Wolchik, 2011; Dimitrovova, 2010; Cohen & Arato, 1992) and particularly NGOs (e.g., Fisher, 2013; Hojman, 1993) in leading successful democratic transitions from Chile to Tajikistan.

But, what is the recipe of such a civil society? Why do not all countries have these powerful civil society organizations to push democratization? For Putnam, who also underscores the significance of a vibrant civil society for the health and vitality of democracy, the formula is high level of "social capital", which is the networks of

relationships and the mutual trust among people for collaboration. In a society where people trust one another and engage in collective action, democracy grows stronger (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1992). For some others, it is not the social capital but the political capital that is associated with higher levels group activism. Booth and Richard (1998) have found that people supporting democratic norms, going to polls, taking part in political campaigns, and contacting public officials are the real driving force behind democracy in Central American context. In that sense, active social-movement organizations, grassroots interest groups and political associations are more likely to generate a vibrant citizenry (Foley & Edwards, 1996) than a casual kind of social club such as bowling leagues (Putnam, 1995).

Whatever the formula of having an activated civil society is, liberal consensus is that it is the necessary condition of democracy. Why? First and foremost, civil society serves as a check system on the state power. It is an instrument to monitor "potential abuses and violations of the law, and subjecting them to public scrutiny" (Diamond, 1994, p. 7). Civil society is there to inhibit any misuse of power and ensure that state does not ignore the demands or grievances of some sectors of the society. In this way, as Diamond argues, democratic states are kept under control and authoritarian ones are forced to democratize. Secondly, participation in CSOs helps developing civic skills and habits, enforces people to promote their individual freedoms, thereby builds a democratic culture within the society. NGOs as the professional entities which are viewed "as the most 'civil' arm of the civil society" (Helliker, 2012, p. 37) pluralize the institutional arena and foster political participation. Thirdly, individual demands are aggregated under particular CSOs, and delivered to state officials through

representatives, which solves collective action problems among citizens (Bernhard et al., 2015).

It should be noted that, considering democratic transition, the roles that civil society play might differ in each stage from pre-transition to consolidation (Bratton, 1994). For instance, it is crucial for CSOs to create a space for free political discourse during the pre-transition period when the authoritarian governments try to repress all critical sounds, whereas it is probably more valuable to instill democratic norms in citizens during consolidation in order to secure the democratic regime. Furthermore, the duty of civil society does not end after the transition. A study based on V-dem data have shown that civil society also insulates democracies from breakdown (Bernhard et al., 2015).

All in all, advocating for liberal democratic principles such as transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, raising awareness about individual rights and freedoms, organizing collective action against authoritarian-leaning policies, supporting free press and finding new channels to disseminate information, CSOs underpin democratic survival in both strong and weak democracies. This neo-Tocquevillian view dominated the civil society literature for decades and still characterizes the approach of policymakers globally (Doyle, 2018). However, a critical paradigm has developed later based on Gramsci's writings on civil society and has caught great attention especially among scholars studying authoritarian regimes.

2.1.2 Critical paradigm

For Gramsci, civil society is nothing but an expression of hegemony, which is a form of "established power relations among various social groups" (Brighenti, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, it is an element of the state power rather than a detached alternative force to challenge it as liberal scholars argue. Incorporating Gramsci's ideas, Tuğal (2022) states that hegemony is indicated by the symbiotic relationship between the regime and particular sections of civil society as states build consent through these collaborative activities. While Gramsci himself was more concerned about the cultural hegemony of the ruling class that uses state power to dominate civil society, neo-Gramscians define civil society as a realm of contestation where organized actors challenge both the state and each other (Lorch, 2021; Toepler et al., 2020). As Brighenti (2019) clarifies, it is both "an outcome of the given configuration of opposing forces" and also "a battlefield" (p. 4) among those groups.

One of the implications of this view is that civil society cannot have a single agenda, such as democratization, since it contains various groups pursuing different, even antithetical goals. Therefore, the nature of the relationship among those groups might vary between cooperation, competition, and conflict depending on their common grounds (Sjögren, 2022). For Bernhard et al. (2017), the reemergence of the concept of civil society in the 1980s to explain the movements against authoritarian regimes was a neo-Gramscian analysis in nature in the sense that civil society can coexist with authoritarian regimes and serve as a realm of contestation with dictatorship. Accordingly, neo-Gramscians mostly agree that civil society hold "the potential to liberalize, if not democratize them" (p. 343). Still, various studies have indicated the

inverse or neutral effect of civil society in democratic transition to criticize the neo-Tocquevillians who praise civil society to the skies.

By the mid-1990s scholars have found growing evidence that CSOs can flourish under autocratic rule and function as a pro-authoritarian force empowering the regime. Berman (1997), in her prominent work on the collapse of the Weimar Republic, stated that unless there are "strong and responsive political institutions", a vibrant civil society may "serve to undermine liberal democracy" (p. 403). The rise of Hitler was not an outcome of inertia among citizens, contrarily, Germans were extremely participative in various CSOs out of the frustration about the Weimar Republic. This view has found support by Riley's (2019) comparative study on the rise of fascist regimes in Italy, Spain, and Romania between 1870–1945. Both studies remarked that fascist regimes, just like democracies, are born out of well-organized civil societies. Furthermore, Putnam's theory of social capital was challenged one more time pointing out the power of Italian fascist party in the northern Italy, which was a model region for widespread civic engagement for Putnam. For Encarnación (2006), social capital is a "double-edged sword" (p. 359), which can be employed not only to build but also to destroy democracy. He underlines that the social trust that the liberals found among democracy-lovers does also exist among gangs, militias, or terrorist organizations. A more recent study from Thailand has also identified the existence of "authoritarian civil society" which uses numerous tactics to dismantle democracy such as "mass mobilization, online surveillance and bullying, and legal threat" (Sombatpoonsiri, 2020, p. 340).

Assuming that a dynamic civil society is the remedy of authoritarian regimes, international donors have engaged in democracy promotion in several regions from the Middle East to Central Asia for decades (Ishkanian, 2007). However, these programs

have not achieved great success, and civil society has transformed to a more ambiguous, nondirectional term in the literature. Yom (2005) stated that two decades after its revival among liberal scholars, CSOs have not achieved any results in democratizing Arab states. They are apparently ineffective in pushing incumbent rulers to embrace democratic institutions. In Iran and Syria, for instance, presence of pro-democracy CSOs was found to have little to no correlation with the democratization of the regimes (Aarts & Cavatorta, 2013).

Stabilized authoritarianism in various countries in the Arab world, Central and East Asia, and Africa, despite the increasing quantity of CSOs, has led scholars to argue that CSOs allow regimes to meet the international community's expectations, de-politicizes public issues, and provides a limited, marginalized space for activists (Cavatorta, 2012). Thus, CSOs may contribute to legitimization of the authoritarian regime when they avoid conflict with the state (Albrecht, 2005; Lorch & Bunk, 2017; Mercer, 2002). Lorch and Bunk (2017) put forward five mechanisms through which CSOs contribute to legitimization of autocratic rule in Algeria and Mozambique. Firstly, the mere presence of CSOs is used as a proof of the existence of pluralism and associational freedom by the government. Secondly, CSOs sometimes prefer to obey the rules of the autocratic game in order to achieve particular policy changes. They pursue specific goals (e.g., increasing schooling rate) at the cost of empowering the regime. Thirdly, CSOs function as a feedback mechanism which channels the information about grassroots social needs to the state. Also, they are utilized by the regime to meet those needs via public service provision and improve the perceived regime performance. Finally, CSOs might embrace and reproduce the historical discourses of the authoritarian regime in order to legitimize themselves.

Another significant implication of the legitimizing function of CSOs is that autocratizing governments usually prefer to uphold a reconfigured civic space rather than closing them altogether (Roggeband & Krizsán, 2021). In this way, they can claim that there is a dynamic civil society which is sustained, promoted, and consulted by the government. Even without resorting to anti-CSO discourse, authoritarian-leaning incumbents can still keep CSOs under control and use the existence of them as a source of domestic and international legitimacy.

Apart from pro-authoritarian civil societies and the legitimizing role of the civil society, there is also a third body of literature which focuses on the collaborative character of CSOs under authoritarian regimes. Refusing the oversimplification of liberal paradigm which considers civil society and the state as opposite spheres, critical scholars attracted attention to examples where the relationship between the two is perfectly cooperative (Chandhoke, 2001; Lewis, 2013). Network of clientelistic transactions and personal linkages between the CSO and the government paves the way for a symbiotic relationship instead of conflict. As Riley (2019) explains in detail, the cooperation might take place totally voluntarily when the CSO shares ideological similarities with the state usually on the basis of nationalist and conservative grounds, when the CSO desires to access state funding and resources for personal or organizational goals, or when CSO leaders agree to get the positions of power within the state apparatus offered by the state in exchange for loyalty.

China is an outstanding example of this case. Spires (2011) claims that there is a contingent agreement between the NGOs and government officials, particularly at the local level. As long as NGOs avoid political representation and advocating democratic reform, officials tolerate their works in other fields, such as social service. As a matter of

fact, Teets (2013) considers decentralization of public goods provision as a strategy of local officials to benefit from the expansion of civil society.

We should bear in mind that the alliance is not always a burden, something CSOs wish to get rid of. They might be willing to build and sustain the symbiotic relationship in order to reach the resources (e.g., funding) that the government provides (Hsu, 2010), sometimes at the cost of transforming to an instrument of service provision. As Hojman (1993) also emphasizes in the Chilean context, when the state is the only feasible channel for financial resources, "some NGOs will inevitably become service providers, either as a result of their own free choice, or because they have no alternative" (p. 17).

2.2 Beyond the dichotomy: Towards a synthesis

While the blessings of civil society have been pointed out by liberal scholars quite confidently, critical paradigm has brought the contextuality in to avoid broad conclusions. Now, it is hard to deny that civil society mostly lacks autonomy from the state: let it be cooperation or conflict, there is a constant interaction between the two. Furthermore, we must admit that civil society is consisted of various organizations aiming at different agendas, which do not have to be necessarily pro-democratic. Does this mean that civil society is a too complex phenomenon with little opportunities for reaching meaningful findings? The following sections will clarify how the deliberate use of contextualization and the focused analysis of specific segments of civil society provide avenues for academic research.

2.2.1 Contextualizing civil society

"Perhaps, therefore, associationism should be considered a politically neutral multiplier neither inherently good nor inherently bad" (p. 428) says Berman (1997). As Mercer (2002) argues, we need a more contextualized and less value-laden approach to predict the outcome of CSOs involvement. However, even though it is not possible to say all CSOs are "good", we have a chance to distinguish between "right" and "wrong" type of CSOs in terms of desirability, she says. Without ignoring the heterogeneity within the civic space, we can focus on a particular section of it and study the merits it brings, the functions it serves, or the problems that it faces. In line with this view, Pearce (1997) suggests using "civil society" as a conceptual tool which might contain normative assumptions, but which should not be confused with empirical reality. The role of CSOs in resisting the authoritarian state, for instance, cannot be assumed, but can be researched and analyzed.

In addition to heterogeneity, there is another contextual dimension that we must take into consideration: degrees of independence. The associations that the neo-Tocquevillian scholars dream of are autonomous in their activities, but in fact, they need to relate to the state to push for policy changes, in other words, "total independence is virtually incompatible with political influence" (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996, p. 1628). However, lack of autonomy undermines the monitoring function of the CSOs. For Lorch (2021), that is why CSOs have been ineffective in countering autocratization in Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Philippines. She claims that when CSOs are captured by political elites, they inevitably fail to act as accountability mechanisms against power abuses.

For Wiktorowicz (2000), “civil society is never autonomous from the state; it has only varying degrees of independence” (p.57). As soon as they are established, CSOs become part of a system of bureaucratic practices and regulations which enable the government to monitor and regulate their activities. Certainly, in a liberal democracy, CSOs are entitled to challenge the state as long as they do so in accordance with the legal boundaries of political action. They can organize peaceful demonstrations, start petitions, or take legal action, to give some examples. “What, however, civil society actors cannot do is to challenge the state in ways that it does not allow” (Chandhoke, 2001, p. 10). Surely, it is also possible to talk about an “uncivic society” which adopts unconventional forms of political engagement such as violent street protests. For Alvarez et al. (2017), even though neither uncivic nor civic forms of political action guarantee success, it is a reductionist perspective to consider only formally organized, nonviolent, and institutionalized groups as part of civil society. However, CSOs have to be formally organized and institutionalized to meet the definition of being a CSO, and since most of their activities are visible to the administrative machinery, their potential is limited in terms of challenging the regime. Nevertheless, it does not mean that CSOs are completely useless, it only means that the optimism about the empowering role of civil society must be moderated by the reality of the political context.

In terms of regime change, we cannot possibly claim a positive correlation between civil society and democratization universally. Even in places where such a correlation is present, it tends to vary significantly. In order to analyze the impact of CSOs particularly on democratization, researchers need to consider other factors such as political institutions, type of CSOs, and the relationship between the CSOs and the government at a given moment. According to Encarnación (2003; 2006), the

consolidation of democratic systems depends more on the effectiveness of political institutions rather than the composition of civil society. The capacity of political institutions to foster social progress, economic stability, and civil and political rights translates into a conducive environment for the advancement of democracy, allowing civil society to collaborate with political institutions and promote democratization. Shortly, the existence of civil society is not a sufficient, but a necessary condition for democracy. It provides the space in which democratic elements challenge undemocratic ones and struggle for prevailing over the sphere itself.

There are also internal factors determining the effect of CSOs in democratic change. Some of them lack popular support as they are single-issue oriented, some have undemocratic governance inside, some lack the ability to build cooperation with other CSOs and become inevitably isolated (Yom, 2005). Moreover, the settings in a specific region might encourage CSOs to concentrate on other issues instead of democratic advocacy. In Bangladesh, for example, NGO sector mostly focuses on poverty reduction programs rather than democracy promotion (Quadir, 2003). Just to note, it is also possible for CSOs to use welfare programs as a camouflage for more political activities (Fowler, 1993).

After all, many scholars have tried to formulate the criteria required for a pro-democratic civil society. For Hadenius and Uggla (1996), these are "organizational plurality and autonomy, a democratic structure, a broad popular base, and an open recruitment of members" (p. 1623). For Şimşek (2004), there are six categories of conditions including existence of an individualistic culture, and separation of the economic sphere from the bureaucracy. Maybe, the most succinct formulation is Hawthorne's (2004). She argues, in order for civil society to play a role in promoting

democratic change, it is essential that a significant number of CSOs possess three key qualities: (a level of) autonomy from regimes, a pro-democracy agenda, and the ability to build coalitions. All these contextual factors must be analyzed by civil society students to understand the functionality of CSOs.

2.2.2 "Islands of resistance"

Can we talk about the "power" of civil society if its power depends on so many internal qualifications and contextual factors? What is the point in studying CSOs under authoritarian regimes which are obviously reluctant to provide those conditions for CSOs? This section provides the perspective of this thesis focusing on the functions of oppositional CSOs in autocracies and autocratizing democracies based on previous literature. Going beyond the reductionism in sticking to either liberal of critical paradigms, this section will try to answer the question of "why should we care whether oppositional CSOs can build resilience or not in authoritarian context?"

The answers lie in the concept of "repression". If all civil society actors have been built or transformed into ineffective or undemocratic tools of the state, why do some sections of CSOs are exposed to violent and soft methods of repression? It seems that "the assumption that civil society is integral to the state and therefore lacking the potential for change or confrontation is analytically reductive." (Dimitrovova, 2010, p. 536). The restriction mechanisms that the governments make use of prove that civil society is a real force that can shape the destiny of the regime. Even if the broad picture of civil society does not seem to oppose the authoritarian state, a handful of critical CSOs, the "islands of resistance", can play great roles in dissolving the autocracy.

Hudáková (2021), whom I borrowed the title of this section, provides a nice illustration from Tunisia:

> … before the revolution, only a handful of CSOs served as islands of political resistance, while the majority functioned as vehicles of regime resilience, helping to strengthen authoritarian rule in the country. During the revolution, members of more critical CSOs played an important supporting role in the spread, organisation, and continuation of protests. Finally, in the post-revolutionary period, former oppositional CSOs, together with a plethora of newly created CSOs, were crucial not only in successfully steering the country towards a democratic transition but also in strengthening the nascent democracy. (p. 498)

Hudáková argues that it was possible for some CSOs -consisting of a few human rights and women's organizations, general unions, and professional associations- to main a "certain margin of autonomy vis-à-vis the state" (p. 508). Based on this relative independence, they could serve as islands of resistance and provided people the space and resources to challenge the regime.

This perspective is also embraced by many researchers of "democratic resilience", which can be shortly defined as "the avoidance of autocratization" (Boese et al., 2021, p. 887). Following Waldner and Lust (2018), I consider autocratization as a consequence of shifts in the balance of power between pro-democratic and anti-democratic coalitions. Accordingly, CSOs may align themselves with one of those fronts, either empowering or weakening the resilience. Democratic resilience is "the ability of a political regime to prevent or react to challenges without losing its democratic character" (Merkel & Lührmann, 2021, p. 872). It is the capacity of institutions and the civil society to confront the attempts of populist leaders who erode accountability (Guasti, 2020). Yet, can CSOs be functional once democratic resilience is undermined and autocratization begins? Autocratization is not inevitable, on the contrary, even in the advanced stages of autocratization, creative opposition strategies

can be helpful to keep up breakdown resilience (Lührmann, 2021). The literature review conducted by Holloway and Manwaring (2023) indicated that civil society has been identified as one of the main sources of democratic resilience in many publications. It constitutes an essential defense -which may halt autocratization entirely- against the autocratic rule as it has the capacity to mobilize people (Papada et al., 2023). Conversely, when civil society cannot mobilize against the state, political power can be easily monopolized by the autocrats (Way, 2014). Organized collective action makes it possible for civil society actors to protect their interests vis-à-vis other groups and the state organs (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996).

Even in closed autocracies, such as China, Burma, and Vietnam, there are oppositional CSOs, often illegal and underground, challenging the regime and pushing for democratization (Perinova, 2005). Those organizations use the available space to pursue their goals and foster gradual liberalization of the countries. For instance, as Fu (2017) reveals, underground labor organizations in China lower the cost of organizing contention through "disguised collective action" which implies atomized performances (e.g., "suicide show") targeting the bureaucratic mandate. In competitive authoritarian regimes, the space is even more enabling to shake the regime. Civic actors can carve out pockets of civic associationism (Giersdorf & Croissant, 2011; Robertson, 2010) and of resistance (Yabancı, 2019) despite the restrictions on civic engagement.

Incorporating with this perspective, civil society is conceptualized as a force which can combat autocratization in this study. That is why it is crucial for oppositional CSOs to build resilience against autocrats. This conceptualization does not deny the diversity of actors in the civic space and the existence of various agendas. Oppositional CSOs have to survive not only in teeth of the autocrats, but also of the pro-government

civic actors. However, it is not that simple when there is the fact that a global wave of autocratization, which aggravated the conditions for dissent CSOs, hit the world especially in the last decade.

2.3 Authoritarianism and repression

"When civil society is allowed some space, countermobilization [against autocratization] can occur" (Bermeo, 2016, p. 17). Therefore, autocrats such as Putin, Orban, and Erdoğan put great effort into repressing critical sounds. As V-Dem report demonstrated (Papada et al., 2023), between 2012-2022, "CSO repression" has been the second most observed indicator among autocratizing countries, while "CSO entry and exit" is the fourth. Unsettlingly, the resurgence of autocratic regimes is "quickened by the diffusion of common tools and approaches" (Diamond, 2015, p. 152) as autocrats learn from each other (Hall & Ambrosio, 2017). All in all, the repressive mechanisms that CSOs face should be understood as a part of the autocratization trend (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020; Glasius et al., 2020).

2.3.1 Third wave autocratization

Cassani and Tomini (2020) defines autocratization as "a process of regime change towards autocracy that makes politics increasingly exclusive and monopolistic, and political power increasingly repressive and arbitrary" (p. 277). If we think political systems on a spectrum, autocratization implies "any move away from democracy towards autocracy" (Papada et al., 2023, p. 12). Although there have been various efforts

to conceptualize this phenomenon in different terms[2], the most common expression is "democratic backsliding", which is reductionist in a way, for taking democracy as the only point of departure with an ambiguous destination. Following Lührmann and Lindberg (2019), I prefer to use the term "autocratization" as it implies the opposite of "democratization", regardless of the start and arrival points in the regime spectrum.

From Brazil, Hungary, and Thailand to Serbia, India, and Russia, many countries are in the grip of autocratization. Last V-Dem Democracy Report (Papada et al., 2023) demonstrates the threat: 5.7 billion people -which makes the 72% of the world population- live in autocracies by 2022. Not only the population but also a growing share of economic power is at the hands of autocracies with 46% of the global GDP (Gross domestic product). For the first time in the last 20 years, closed autocracies outnumber liberal democracies, and the picture has been getting more alarming in the last 10 years as democracy broke down in seven of the top 10 autocratizing countries, including Turkey.

Even though it is possible to face autocratization suddenly (e.g., military coups), main contemporary challenge to democracies is the gradual decline of democratic qualities without executive replacement (Merkel & Lührmann, 2021; Bermeo, 2016). In other words, what is special about the third wave is that while most instances of autocratization involved an illegal seizure of power in the previous waves, contemporary autocratization episodes are typically initiated by elected officials who took power legally through democratic elections (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019).

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[2] For an overview of conceptual discussions on autocratization, see Daly (2019) and Cassani and Tomini (2020).

Where “political power becomes increasingly repressive and arbitrary” (Cassani & Tomini, 2020, p. 277), one of the first targets of autocratizing incumbents are oppositional CSOs. The strategies that the autocrats use to silence them varies in each step of autocratization as Simsa (2019) describes. It starts with discourses trying to delegitimize the dissent CSOs by polarizing, labelling and creating a factionary narrative of “us” versus “them”. Then, they are excluded from political debates and legislative processes. Thirdly, the resources of oppositional CSOs are restricted and the flow of public funds are channeled to pro-government CSOs. And finally, civil society is captured via the changes in legal frameworks which restricts or totally ceases the CSO activities.

The regression towards autocracy involves risks to rights, freedoms, and physical safety of the members of oppositional CSOs. The restrictions on the rights to assembly, organization, and speech are implemented by the regime to increase the power of the executive branch against the judiciary and legislature. In this process, civil society actors try to provide a platform for effective resistance at the cost of becoming targets of repression.

Next section will provide a review on the spread, methods, and targets of CSO repression globally, the phenomenon usually referred to as “shrinking civic space”.

2.3.2 Faces of repression

“If there was a global associational revolution in 1994, by 2004 the global associational counterrevolution had begun” (p.29) Rutzen (2015) had said. Counterrevolution, or in

most common terms, closing/shrinking civic space[3], refers to a variety of threats and restrictions imposed on CSOs by governments to limit their space of maneuver (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). It is a phenomenon not only seen in autocracies, but in all regime types across the world -regardless of geographical location, GDP, development status- including democratic states such as the United States and Austria (Swiney, 2019; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014).

CIVICUS Monitor (2022) marked that last year has witnessed serious damage to civic space globally. 28% of the world population is affected by extreme levels of repression. 117 of 197 countries and territories have either a closed, restricted, or obstructed civic space. Strategies aiming at deterring dissent activists and CSOs are increasingly adopted by incumbents in the last five years: while activists faced harassment in 65 countries in 2018, the number rose to 106 in 2022.

Repression has many faces ranging including softer and harder methods. I will try to examine them under six main categories: legal restrictions, financial constraints, criminalization, censorship, harassment and intimidation, and restrictions on assembly.

Legal restrictions are an inclusive category which may encompass financial constraints and restrictions on assembly -which are to be analyzed in a minute. However, ICNL (2018) demonstrated that almost half of the legal restrictive initiatives between 2012-2018 targeted the formation, registration, or operation of CSOs. Legal

[3] There are two main problems with the term "shrinking civic space". Firstly, it implies that the civic space -defined as the respect for freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022), is a passive domain which is shaped at the hands of the state. As Alscher et al. (2017) argue, this perspective overlooks the autonomy of the civil society as an agent. Secondly, studies on the shrinking civic space typically focus on the restrictions on the foreign funding (e.g., ICNL, 2018; Bromley et al., 2019). Because I conceptualize civil society as a force that is able to "extend" the space, and because repression on civic society can take various forms, I prefer not to use this term.

restrictions put high barriers to entry in the CSO ecosystem. To obtain a legal status, authoritarian regimes require many conditions from new CSOs and create bureaucratic hurdles for them (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020; Robertson, 2010). The domestic law is further configured to overregulate CSO activity, by making all operations permit-required. Meetings and public events especially require official authorization. Moreover, the legislative regulations "narrow the range of activities to a specific subset within the broader field of interest" (Wiktorowicz, 2000, p. 52). That is to say, CSOs face serious restrictions when they want to engage in activities that are out of the scope of their registered field. The legal restrictions are usually combined with tactics of bureaucratic surveillance. Government uses its disciplinary power through frequent audits and reporting requirements by the hand of different state agencies. State officials usually pressure CSOs to share internal information and they search for any mistakes, so to say, to impose fines or more serious penalties (Doyle, 2017).

Financial constraints are another form of threat to the survival of oppositional CSOs. In closed autocracies, state is usually the primary source of income, which makes it risky for oppositional CSOs to challenge the regime (Hudáková, 2021). Nonetheless, receiving foreign funding is considered as a serious problem in closed and electoral autocracies. By the mid-1990s, autocratic governments began enacting legislations to restrict foreign funding (Morgenbesser, 2020). Between 1994-2015, over 60 countries passed laws in this concern (Bromley et al., 2019). Governments use other measures to rarify foreign support as well: requiring prior government approval, limiting the amount of funding, interfering with how the funding will be used, taxing the receiver organization, just to name a few (Rutzen, 2015). These problems lead CSOs to look for

alternative funding strategies such as crowdfunding or membership dues despite limited success (Brechenmacher, 2017).

Financial constraints go hand in hand with criminalization of CSOs. Maintenance of any relations with foreign institutions is vilified in the name of national sovereignty, and CSOs are labelled as "foreign agents" or "undesirable organizations" (Skibo, 2017; Lipman, 2016). Governments try to delegitimize the CSOs accepting external support and also to deter the aid providers by threatening or expelling (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). Building conspiracy theories, such as Orban's campaign against George Soros (Witte, 2018), is a supporting tactic in this sense. Some dissent CSOs, may or may not receive foreign funding, are criminalized on the grounds of "counterterrorism". Autocrats refer to terrorism threat to excuse their repressive actions in the eyes of the public (Lagon & Puddington, 2015). Certain CSO members are targeted as having alleged connections with terrorist organizations. Sometimes, CSOs are labelled as the secret nests of specific terrorist groups.

Censorship is another method of repression utilized in various ways. In order to be the single producer of public discourse, autocrats put great effort to ban on any critical narratives. The advent of "fake news" laws serves this purpose (Morgenbesser, 2020). To give a recent example, Russian CSOs and media agencies are threatened by long jail sentences for spreading "false information" about the war in Ukraine (CIVICUS, 2023). Furthermore, handing out the campaign materials of CSOs is prohibited, or extremely limited by the governments. Authoritarian regimes interfere with the digital space as well by blocking the websites of dissent CSOs. They also black out social media platforms especially in times of protests (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020). Another form of censorship can be named as neglection. Oppositional CSOs are

excluded from legislative processes and any dialogue is hardly established between the government and the organization. Lack of contact persons in politics results in further marginalization of oppositional CSOs (Simsa, 2019).

In 2022, the most common violation recorded by the CIVICUS Monitor (2022) was the harassment of activists and journalists. Use of coercive force is indispensable for autocrats to silence alternative voices (Lewis, 2013). Members of CSOs face physical violence usually through disproportionate force of the police officers. From time to time, members or NGO offices may be attacked by other people, in which case they often lack the protection of security forces. Autocratic governments hesitate to prosecute violent attacks, letting the perpetrators to go unpunished. CSO representatives are intimidated by extra-legal strategies such as arbitrary detentions, expulsions, suspended sentences, removal of citizenship, and so on (Keutgen & Dodsworth, 2020). Moreover, they are sentenced harshly on the basis of charges such as "spreading false information, disturbing the public order, defaming the authorities, belonging to an unauthorized or criminal organization, and holding unauthorized meetings" (Hudáková, 2021, p. 506).

Restrictions on assembly is also a very common form of repression even in long-standing democracies. Restrictions which were peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic left its mark and resulted in ongoing limitations (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022). The disproportional violence is coupled with more sophisticated tools of surveillance such as facial recognition technologies (CIVICUS, 2023). Amnesty International (2022) indicated three main trends in repression of the protests: securitization, militarization, and use of force including less-lethal weapons. Securitization refers to the "public security" discourse that governments use to curtail peaceful protests. "Emergency-like" suspensions of rights is a method which governments favor especially in local and

temporary forms (Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2020a). Militarization is the deployment of armed forces to repress the protest or dressing police officers like military officers and providing them military equipment. Use of force is coupled with less-lethal weapons such as baton, tear gas, and rubber bullets.

We should keep in mind that repression is a strategy that autocrats use selectively, targeting specific groups of CSOs. Usually, governments make use of a dual strategy to control the civic space: repression and cooptation (Heurlin, 2010; Toepler et al., 2020; Ziegler, 2010; Gerschewski, 2014; Roggeband & Krizsán, 2021; Yabancı, 2019). This division is usually made on the basis of the type and function of the CSO: claims-making CSOs which aim at advocacy and policy change are subject to repression whereas nonprofit organizations (NPOs) focusing on service provision are collaborated and coopted. To put it differently, authoritarian rule differentiates between apolitical and politically oriented organizations and use the former as a source of legitimization and social innovation. However, despite their apolitical appearance, coopted CSOs often produce pro-government narratives. This is because cooptation takes place through either by replacing the leaders of existing organizations with individuals who support the government or by appointing current leaders to government agencies. These personal networks feed the symbiotic relationship between the CSO and the government. In addition to cooptation of the existing CSOs, creating new government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) is also an option. GONGOs aim to take over the civic space so that oppositional CSOs look like representing only a small portion of the public voice. They also attract domestic and foreign funding leaving limited opportunity for the other CSOs.

Which advocacy areas are considered as more threatening to the oppressive regimes? What kind of oppositional CSOs become target of repression the most? At a glance, organizations engaging in women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) rights, ethnic and religious minorities, labor organizations, and environmental organizations are more likely to be exposed to repression throughout the world[4]. Among them, women and LGBT+ groups are the most common targets of contemporary governments globally based on recent reports (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022; CIVICUS, 2023; ICNL 2018; Amnesty International, 2019; Baker et al., 2017). Since these groups challenge traditional gender roles, advocate for women's empowerment and for LGBT+ rights, they are considered as a major threat to the patriarchal and conservative values upheld by the autocrats. LGBT+ associations are often labelled as foreign-supported agencies which try to undermine cultural and religious norms. Baker et al. (2017) states that "women's and LGBT issues are often the first to be abandoned" (p. 23) when backsliding begins in the context of third wave autocratization. One of the reasons is that women and LGBT+ rights are usually seen as an extension of fundamental civil rights, such as freedom of expression. When civic space is begun to be restricted, those groups often take the lead to defend these fundamental rights. Therefore, autocratizing regimes have to silence or coopt women and LGBT+ CSOs at first to take the control of the critical civil society.

[4] These four groups do not make an all-inclusive list of repressed CSOs. Some organizations working on humanitarian aid, youth empowerment, or people with disabilities, may encounter several restrictions as well. Nevertheless, these four groups are distinctive since they are "inherently" oppositional to the autocracies and authoritarian-leaning regimes in terms of their goals, methods, and visions.

Ethnic and religious minorities are another group that is commonly targeted by the governments (Ferstman, 2019; Tekmen, 2017; ICNL, 2018; Amnesty International, 2019). Local ethnic minorities and refugees are defined as dangerous communities who might harm national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and cultural heritage of the country. Religious minorities are defamed as being impious outcasts and are discriminated. Consequently, CSOs working for the rights of these communities are silenced, or severely restricted.

Unions and other professional organizations also face harsh repression (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022; OBS & İHD, 2021). When unionized workers mobilize to increase their bargaining power via strikes, blockades, or marches, they face the risk of police violence. The power of professional organizations such as chambers or bar associations are restrained through law amendments, harassment of their leaders, or exclusion from policymaking. In order to take the control of the sphere of labor, authoritarian regimes often build pro-government unions and associations, or they coopt the existing ones.

Environmental CSOs are among the main targets (CIVICUS Monitor, 2022; Scheidel et al., 2020; ICNL, 2016). Most of the time, the goals of environmental CSOs conflict with the states' material interests, industrial goals, and clientelistic relations. When CSOs criticize and protest the government anti-environmental policies and projects, they face high rates of criminalization, stigmatization, and physical attacks.

Next chapter will analyze the response of oppositional civil society to repressive tools of the regime. Before moving to the Turkish case, which is the focus of this study, it reviews how civil society actors manage to survive in other authoritarian regimes,

what strategies they use to make themselves more resilient, and points out the shortcomings of this literature.

2.4 Survival and resistance under authoritarianism

As the methods of regimes to repress critical sounds are diverse, so are the strategies of the resisters. Although it is hard to provide a complete list of strategies of survival and resistance under authoritarian and competitive authoritarian regimes, since those strategies are subject to change in different contexts, it is still necessary to review the most common ways that CSOs take advantage of. In this chapter I will examine the power of building alliances, financial self-sufficiency, unconventional political participation, open web platforms, temporary avoidance, and organizational reconfiguration.

Alliance formation is one of the most effective ways to build resilience for civil society organizations. Various scholars have studied the conditions, drivers, and process of building alliances. Just to name a few, Van Dyke (2003) explored the conditions under which American college students build alliances in cross-movement and within-movement coalition events in 60 years; Moshtari and Gonçalves (2017) categorized the factors influencing collaboration among humanitarian organizations; Dong et al. (2019) demonstrated the key process factors, especially resource distribution and trust building, are critical for success of the alliances among nonprofit organizations.

The studies focusing on the effectiveness of alliances in resisting the regimes' repressive tools and confronting autocratization are of special importance for this thesis. V-dem's latest report reveals that "unified opposition coalescing with civil society" is

one of the key elements in cases bouncing back, i.e. eight countries which experienced U-turns to democracy after a period of autocratization over the last 20 years (Papada et al., 2023, p. 31). Without a healthy horizontal communication among various civil society groups, challenging the authoritarian regime is doomed to failure. As Lewis (2013) alarms, "instead of forming the basis of an emergent public sphere, isolated dissenting groups threaten to become monologic counterimages of the authoritarian state, disconnected from each other and from the society around them" (p.336). This is what Lorch (2021) presents empirically as one of the main reasons why CSOs were incapable of countering autocratization in Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines even though these countries possess vibrant civil societies. The fragmentation of civil society has impeded the emergence of a widespread opposition against those regimes.

Baker et al. (2017) define alliance formation not only one of the strategies that CSOs can utilize under backsliding regimes but also the most important among them: "Were we to speculate about … which of the strategies is the most likely to be successful, we would begin with domestic alliance formation." (p. 35). They list various motivations such as increasing the pool of resources, gaining more legitimacy, articulating a clear and common message, and experiencing democratic governance internally. The resources to be shared might be informational in addition to financial and human resources. For instance, Hinfelaar and Kaaba (2019) argue that CSOs adjust by learning from one another and from partner organizations in neighboring countries which have had experience with dealing with political repression.

Hudáková (2021) emphasizes the power of domestic and international alliances as well. CSOs sometimes manage to build a strong domestic network via institutional memberships, such as unions and federations. In that case, the joint institution provides

legal assistance to victims, record their cases, and expose them to the public in order to unveil the regime's undemocratic actions. Moreover, building strong ties with international civic actors usually strengthen CSOs' hand to mount pressure on the regime and also to obtain a certain amount of protection from the regime's repressive mechanisms. International networks are also crucial to hold down fragmentation and to coordinate activities (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996).

However, alliance formation is not easy most of the time. Falkenhein (2020) illustrates how Armenian government sent ambiguous signals to NGOs to foster fragmentation among them and how NGOs themselves amplify this process by avoiding confrontation with the government, abstaining from sharing their achievements with other organizations, and distancing themselves from other NGOs. Furthermore, CSOs need to engage in a cost and benefit analysis before being a part of the alliance. "Collaboration is particularly useful when resources are rare, but a social objective is commonly held" (Witesman & Heiss, 2017, p. 1500). Therefore, they need to calculate the collaboration costs which may include loss of autonomy, cooptation of actors and goals, and financial instability to name a few.

Resistance requires survival. And in order to survive, organizations need resources including financial ones. Most of the time, they need to pay their employees, rent an office, buy necessary equipment, and fund the activities that they are founded for. When CSOs manage to be self-sufficient and financially stable, they might endure state pressure better. The main financial resources of CSOs are membership dues that they periodically get from the members, donations from individual or institutional donors, and grants that they take from the government or other institutions by presenting specific projects or programs. Considering the limited and competitive character of these

resources, financial sustainability is a challenge for many CSOs, especially for small and local ones.

Ideally, CSOs should be financially self-sufficient so that they can pursue their goals independently from the government and other organizations. For LeVan (2011), autonomy and goal-orientation are the two parameters that determine the attitude of CSOs to confront the government. When organizations are less autonomous, they are more vulnerable to state control through co-optation, and more inclined to patronage and clientelism. Therefore, taking grants from the government is not an acceptable option for many CSOs. When it comes to oppositional CSOs which are exposed to continuous repression by the authoritarian governments, it is not even an option on the table.

The decision point for dissent CSOs is usually receiving foreign funding or not. On the one hand, getting financial support from abroad might ensure the receiving CSO to be fully independent from the government, both financially and programmatically (Hojman, 1993). On the other hand, affiliation with international actors might overshadow the message and goals of the organization (Baker et al., 2017). When the CSO becomes self-sufficient, forgoing foreign funding is one strategy that CSOs can adopt at the cost of reducing their public profile, confining themselves to limited resources, and risking their domestic institutional funders which are under state pressures as well (Toepler et al., 2020).

As Brechenmacher (2017) illustrates, in countries where governments restrict the associational life such as Russia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, CSOs look for alternative funding sources including crowdfunding and income-generating activities though with limited success. Some civic actors are relatively more resilient to financial difficulties because they have a business outside the civil society sphere (OBS & İHD, 2021). Using

subsidiary businesses to fund the main program work is one of three strategies that Hailey and Salway (2016) suggest for achieving financial stability. The other two are accessing social investment and developing new social enterprises. Social investments involve obtaining repayable finance to fund initiatives, projects, or ventures. Unlike traditional grants or donations, social investment involves the obligation to repay the invested capital, making it a distinct form of funding. CSOs considering social investment must adapt their business models to incorporate revenue-generating elements. Developing new social enterprises is also a new trend that CSOs might consider. Social enterprises operate with a dual mission: achieving social objectives while also generating income or profits. They are different from the for-profit businesses in that their success is not only evaluated through financial returns, but also the social impact they have achieved in the field they work.

Unconventional political participation is another tool that CSOs can address to oppose repression and build organizational resilience. It includes protests, strikes, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and more. Clarke (2006) has studied how NGOs have been involved in unconventional activities in the Philippines. He highlights that NGOs use protests as a strategic tool to advance their agendas and bring attention to several issues. It is an effective way to force the government to take action. Also, NGOs are instrumental in mobilizing citizens and communities to participate in protests and demonstrations. They use their networks and resources to mobilize support for their causes. In this sense, CSOs can spark off large social movements with their pioneering acts. Moreover, Clarke discusses how NGOs build alliances with other civil society groups to amplify their voices, revealing how alliance building and unconventional participation are two strategies often used in tandem.

Especially in the developing countries, CSOs have a critical effect on political participation. Boulding (2014) argues that promotion of conventional or unconventional participation depends on the power of democratic institutions in a country. Where democratic institutions are working well, NGOs encourage formal mechanisms such as voting. If they are not, two things may happen:

> First, political NGOs are more likely to turn to unconventional tactics to gain attention and press for political change. Second, at the level of individual citizens, if contact with an NGO encourages them to participate, they are more likely to engage in protest and demonstrations if voting is seen as ineffective. (Boulding, 2010, p. 460)

In autocratizing regimes, unconventional participation such as protest and unrest may prevent or stop the autocratic passions of the incumbents as they are afraid to fall from power (Merkel & Lührmann, 2011). CSOs can increase the cost of repression for the government when they build a capacity to mobilize oppositional forces (Levitsky & Way, 2010). During the third wave autocratization, non-violent contentious action is considered more likely to be successful than violent action since non-violent actions can build legitimacy for the movement as well as influence popular opinion to put pressure on repressive govenments. (Baker et al., 2017). Even though it is hardly an option for CSOs to engage in violent actions due to its higher costs, there are studies which highlight the power of violent methods for the sake of democratization: Kadivar and Ketchley (2018), to give an example, argues that disruptive nature of unarmed collective violence could potentially improve the chances of democratization.

As Robertson (2009) explains through the case of Russia, autocrats have to build an image of political invincibility in competitive authoritarian regimes. For this reason, they need to deal with challenges not only in elections but also in the streets, just like Putin inhibits the protests of the oppositional actors and promote pro-government rallies

to secure his position. As we discussed in the previous section, freedom of assembly is often restricted by governments. Participants usually face legal actions and harassment during protests even if they resort to non-violent forms of action. Therefore, unconventional political participation can be considered as a potentially effective but risky tool for CSOs. Still, as Simsa (2019) reports from one of the interviewees in Austria "The most important thing is not to remain silent, the most important thing is to continue ... this civil disobedience" (p. 7). Only through continuous resistance CSOs can prevent the authoritarian regimes to wipe them off.

A fourth source of power for CSOs to build resilience is open web platforms such as social media, communication, and content-sharing platforms and official websites of the organizations. Autocratic incumbents typically aspire to dominate media so that they can control the flow of information, suppress dissent, and manipulate public opinion (Giersdorf & Croissant, 2011). Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook challenge this aspiration as they foster public debate, and they are harder to be controlled than the traditional media. In backsliding regimes, social media has the potential to shake autocrats as these leaders lack absolute control over information channels and the news agenda (Baker et al., 2017).

Howard and Hussain (2011) demonstrated that the Internet has played a significant role in the evolution of social protests in the Middle East and North Africa. As of 2011, protests in the Arab world have spread from one country to another, primarily due to the enabling power of digital media. These platforms have allowed communities to come together over shared grievances and develop adaptable strategies for mobilizing against authoritarian regimes. The power of the Internet against autocrats has been revealed in many other regions. It has changed CSOs' ability to influence

policy making in Singapore by both providing an alternative to mainstream media and forcing mainstream media to report more on issues that it ignored previously (Ortmann, 2012). Social networks also help CSOs to mobilize people and resources when they want to take an action against the government. In Zimbabwe, digital media has been an arena of informational battles between the state and the dissenting groups (Moyo, 2009). Since conventional media excludes oppositional voices, use of social media is considered as an effective tool for Zambian CSOs as well (Hinfelaar & Kaaba, 2019).

Web platforms can also support CSOs in terms of financial resources. CSOs can access funding by reaching a wider audience with a lower cost through crowdsourcing initiatives (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). Moreover, they may accept donations through their official websites integrating a payment system. It is also possible for CSOs to build an e-commerce platform within the website to sell organization-related items for fundraising.

Chu and Tang (2005) argue that even though the Interned has helped CSOs in many ways from extending the repertoires of collective action (e.g., e-mail petitions, online signature campaigns) to develop a sense of community, CSOs usually have limited resources and low level of e-readiness to effectively make use of digital tools. For this reason, they abstain to praise web platforms as revolutionary tools. “Instead, it is through interactions between the online and offline discourses and actions that the new technology has exerted the greatest impact on civil society.” (p. 850). Harrison (2014) reaches a similar point with Chu and Tang. Although Web 2.0 has changed how people engage in civic activism, she is skeptical about the global effectiveness of it as she says, “believing that such transformations allow all actors within global civil society to improve their influence in world politics regardless of location in the global system of

states is wishful thinking" (p. 764). One striking study about this concern is conducted among the groups in European Union lobbying. Van der Graaf et al. (2016) has proved that social media is not "the weapon of the weak". It does not compensate for the inequalities among interest groups as social media usage is predicted by the level of resources possessed by the interest groups.

All in all, open web platforms can help CSOs build resilience by enabling them by-passing government-led conventional media, accessing, and mobilizing resources, creating alternative forms of political participation, solving coordination problems, and more. However, we must remember that it is a resource-demanding strategy due to the need of technological infrastructure and employed staff. Even if CSOs afford those expenses, it is hard to say that web platforms could be sufficient to influence politics. For Scaramuzzino and Scaramuzzino (2017), there is no trade-off between social media, traditional media, and street protests for Swedish CSOs. Social media might not be a replacement in this sense. It is mostly an extra strategy in addition to others.

As case selection of this research reflects, CSOs that face state pressure are mostly advocacy CSOs (Toepler et al., 2019), and this is the reason why we excluded CSOs focusing on service provision or humanitarian aid from this study. Nevertheless, even claims-making CSOs may resort to avoidance of political issues from time to time. Temporary avoidance can be one of the strategies for dissent CSOs to survive through hard times. For instance, "cautious advocacy and the avoidance of confrontation with the state" (Falkenhain, 2020, p. 668) is one of the strategies that Armenian NGOs respond to the mixed signals of the state. In order to prevent the state to destroy them, strategic avoidance is a tactic used by Chinese NGOs, as well (Hsu, 2015). Simsa (2019) explains this strategy in the context of Austria. When CSOs see state repression as a phase that

needs to be survived through, they might resort to defensive strategies like avoidance to preserve what they have. They prefer to wait and see, refrain from unconventional political participation, and engage in less criticism against government. This behavior may ensure the CSOs to survive through repressive episodes with the least damage possible.

Avoidance is not only addressed by domestic CSOs. Advocacy CSOs having European headquarters adjust to local demands by using apolitical language, abstaining from risky practices, and having a toned-down approach in advocacy (Fransen et al., 2019). International NGOs employ strategic adaptations to operate within authoritarian contexts as they focus on policymakers instead of citizens, collaborate with local governments, and work with NGOs that are recognized by the state authorities (Noakes & Teets, 2020).

When organizational survival is the priority, reorienting activities might be an option, too. In order not to attract much attention of the government, CSOs can engage in less-sensitive issues, such as environment, children, disabled, or animals (Yabancı, 2019). In that way, we can speculate, they can still stay in the political sphere without turning into a mere service provider and might return to their main issue when the cost of advocacy decreases. Another similar strategy might be engaging in service provision as a cover-up, which implies entering areas such as accountability or service delivery instead of working solely on politically sensitive topics (Hinfelaar & Kaaba, 2019).

However, temporary avoidance always carries the risk of becoming permanent. Drawing the line to decide whether to attack or defend is not an easy job. Especially under authoritarian regimes, when the good times will arrive is uncertain. Accordingly, it might not be very meaningful to define CSOs based on their intentions instead of their

practices. If a CSO wants to be politically active and engage in advocacy, but refrain to do that, can we still name it as a claims-making CSO? Baker et al. (2017) warns the civil society actors in this sense: “By focusing on apolitical agendas, organizations may be less likely to be repressed since they are seen as non-threatening. … The tradeoff, however, lies in the risk of becoming politically irrelevant, an outcome many groups may find distasteful” (p.35).

One last strategy that worth discussing is organizational reconfiguration which implies modifying the legal status or geographical structuring of the organization to navigate regulatory environment and build resilience against state repression. Shifting to new organizational models can be considered as a global trend emerged as a response to strict regulations and legal threats in terms of registration, reporting, and auditing (Brechenmacher, 2017). One form of organizational reconfiguration is moving abroad. As Moser and Skripchenko (2018) reports, after declaring their formal closure and abandoning their official status in Russia, some CSOs move their office in other countries. In this way, they are able to continue their operations running their advocacy-related work only through online channels.

Another form of organizational reconfiguration is registering as commercial businesses instead of NGOs. In Egypt, some human rights organizations prefer to register as law firms or for-profit companies, which enable them to avoid harsh restrictions imposed on NGOs (Herrold, 2016). Establishment of social enterprises is also an option (Herrold & Atia, 2016). It is kind of a midway between NGO and for-profit models as it expects both profit and social impact. Reshaping the organization as a business might smooth the way for receiving foreign funding. Zambian NGOs register themselves as social entrepreneurs to gain more flexibility in this sense. A different

practice is registering as independent consultants who are not affiliated to a CSO, and then signing commercial agreements with funders from abroad (Fransen et al., 2021).

CSOs might remain unregistered as well. As a practice common in China (Shieh & Deng, 2011; Spires, 2011), CSOs can follow this strategy to survive in a complex regulatory environment. They may adopt several forms such as platform, initiative, or advocacy groups.

Organizational reconfiguration potentially enhances organizational resilience by providing more security for members and operations, offering flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances, facilitating international engagement and funding opportunities as well as reducing bureaucratic hurdles. However, operating as an unregistered entity or a for-profit organization may create legal ambiguities. CSOs might face challenges related to property ownership, contract enforcement, and fundraising. Furthermore, organizational reconfiguration might raise concerns about accountability of the organization and erode trust among stakeholders. Also, relocating in abroad might detach the organization from the field that it is working on, which can reduce the relevance of the studies that the CSO conducts.

This subchapter was an overview of the strategies that CSOs pursue to build resilience under repressive regimes. Surely, it is possible to extend the list if one focuses on contextualized strategies specific to organizations or localities. We discussed the six main strategies which have been indicated by several scholars in the context of different geographies.

One of the problems in the existing research is that they usually do not provide a full spectrum of tactics in a given context. Since their main focus is not resilience strategies, they usually mention limited number of tactics overlooking the complexity

and interconnectedness of various strategies, potentially missing out on critical insights. Moreover, because these studies do not provide an encompassing list of useful strategies, it is not possible for CSOs to prioritize them considering their scarcity of resources. What is useful and what is not in what context must be examined through more case studies. To serve this purpose, in this thesis, we will be offering a comprehensive overview on the CSO toolkit against the state repression during third wave autocratization in Turkey. We are going to discuss the pearls and pitfalls for each strategy and discuss the intersections between different strategies. We are going to return to the points that the literature highlights from time to time with counter or pro-arguments but will not be limited with them. Before moving to the findings, next chapter will give a background of the autocratization process in Turkey, analyze the approach of AKP in controlling Turkish civil society, and then summarize the strategies which AKP has been using to silence oppositional CSOs.

CHAPTER 3

TURKEY'S COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM AND CSOS

Turkey is classified as an "electoral autocracy" by V-dem's Regimes of the World (RoW) framework (Lührmann et al., 2018). Electoral autocracies have de-jure multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature. However, elections are usually not free and fair, or de-facto multiparty. Political institutions and electoral accountability are undermined. "Electoral autocracy" is built on two other conceptualizations: "electoral authoritarianism" (Schedler, 2015) and "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky & Way, 2010). As Esen and Gümüşcü (2016) explains, Turkey can be identified as a competitive authoritarian regime in the sense that AKP uses its electoral power "to dominate political institutions and exploit state resources in a partisan manner to block the opposition's chances of winning an election" (p. 1585). Competitive authoritarianism is identified as a subset of electoral authoritarianism in the sense that the outcome of the elections is uncertain in the former. Accordingly, Diamond (2002) remarks significant parliamentary opposition as one of the defining features of competitive authoritarian regimes. Considering the competitive character of the 2019 local elections which caused AKP to lose major cities, and the 2023 presidential election, in which the candidate of the oppositional alliance, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, has lost by a short head, it seems still valid to describe the regime in Turkey as competitive authoritarian.

This chapter will give a brief background on how Turkish regime has become competitive authoritarian in the last two decades and how autocratization process has shaped the relations with CSOs.

3.1 Autocratization in Turkey

When AKP came to power in 2022, the founders announced the party's political ideology as "conservative democracy". It was defined as a different approach than National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) in the sense that conservative democracy is compatible with secularism, neoliberal policies, and Western institutions (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, 2004). In fact, the early years of AKP were quite promising in terms of Turkey's democratization adventure and many scholars were really optimistic about AKP's pro-democracy agenda (e.g., Öniş, 2006).

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, military had been a strong force which intervened in politics either directly with coups and memorandums, or indirectly by signaling its duty as the guardian of the Kemalist state. The AKP government strongly opposed the military's intervention in politics and emphasized its civilian authority. This attitude not only shaped public perception but also influenced the stance of other political parties, leading them to view military's political role as unacceptable. (Gürsoy, 2012). Along with that, scholars such as Ozbudun and Hale (2009) had underscored that while many prominent party members had Islamic roots, the AKP had displayed its full dedication to democracy, a free-market economy, and Turkey's accession to the European Union in those years. In later studies, this positive perspective has been left gradually. For Sözen (2020), the hegemonic perspective in the first wave of studies misidentified sprouting autocratization as democratization just like Hale and Ozbudun did. Only after Gezi Uprisings in 2013, scholars shifted their opinion and defined the regime as a diminished form of authoritarianism, Sözen argues.

On the other hand, as early as the heyday of AKP rule, there were also scholars such as Tepe (2005), who identified "the paradox of centralizing the AKP in order to decentralize the state" (p. 69). As Erdoğan, the leader of AKP and the prime president then, getting stronger in consecutive elections, AKP has gradually extended its control over the judiciary and the legislature, suppressed critical voices such as journalists and academics, and threatened private sector if they support opposition parties (Diamond, 2015). Even though AKP began with drawing a clear line between their conservative democracy and Islamism by predicating their rule on human rights rather than Islam, Erdogan has also returned to his Islamist origins in the course of time.

It is not an easy job to pinpoint the starting date of autocratization. In 2007 referendum, election of the president by popular vote instead of by parliament was accepted. For Arat (2022), however, it was around 2010 when the regime initiated its move steadily to authoritarian and conservative direction. The 2010 referendum entitled the president to appoint fourteen of the seventeen judges of the Constitutional Court. After AKP's third victory in June 2011 elections, the attacks on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly have gained momentum (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Öktem & Akkoyunlu, 2016). 2013 Gezi Park protests, during which at least five protesters were killed and thousands were injured, made the ongoing autocratization visible for international media and caused Turkey's rankings drop dramatically in global democracy indices. Based on V-dem's assessments, as of 2013, Turkey has been classified as an "electoral autocracy". After the Gezi, which was probably the most challenging anti-regime civil mobilization episode during Erdogan's rule, the regime has further increased its crackdown on its critics to demonstrate about almost any issue. The regime developed a strong intolerance towards protests, and police violence has become

a habit in any dissent gathering (Atak & Della Porta, 2017; Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2020b, Gümrükçü, 2022). After the repeat elections in 2015, AKP made obvious that suppressing the opposition parties and organizations is part of the election campaign from then on.

The 2016 coup attempt was a turning point which resulted in consequent periods of emergency rule in the name of national security and fighting against counterterrorism (Atalay, 2022; Arslanalp & Erkmen, 2020b). De-facto emergency practices, which Arslanalp and Erkmen call "mobile emergency rule" had already been present in localized and temporary forms even before the coup attempt. With the coup attempt, thousands of civic actors including journalists, academics, and activists were crushed. At least 1410 associations, 109 foundations, 19 unions, and 149 media organs were shut down by executive decrees signed by Erdoğan (OBS & İHD, 2021).

Another referendum in 2017 switched the form of government to a presidential system, which allows the president to maintain his duties as the leader of the political party. This was a system that "centralized power in the hands of the president and facilitated the encroachment on rights" (Arat, 2022, p. 913). It entitled the president, Erdogan, to rule the state with presidency decrees with almost no control mechanisms. According to Freedom House (2018) report, Turkey's status declined to "Not Free" countries in 2018.

Intervening the institutions which are supposed to be independent from political interference has become a habit of the regime. Erdoğan's determination to decrease the interest rates and his frequent interferences in the governance of the Central Bank led to the ongoing currency crisis. Meanwhile, government has taken refuge behind the conspiracy theories referring foreign operations against Turkey to evade responsibility

(e.g., Ahval, 2018; Hürriyet Daily News, 2018). In addition to economic institutions, the government has also been interfering with courts. Devlet Bahçeli, the ally of Erdoğan, urged the Constitutional Court for the closure of the second-largest opposition party in parliament, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) (T24, 2021). Politically motivated imprisonments, particularly of Selahattin Demirtaş and of Osman Kavala have been continued despite the calls from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for their immediate releases (Freedom House, 2021; 2022). In 2022, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, who is considered as one the key challengers of Erdoğan, was sentenced to jail along with the political ban -which must be confirmed by appeals court before the execution (France 24, 2022b).

Ahead of the May 2023 elections, the tension was quite high. Just 16 days before the elections, the Minister of Interior tweeted "July 15 was their actual coup attempt. May 14 is, on the other hand, a political coup attempt which can be formed by bringing together all preparations to eliminate Turkey"[5] (Soylu, 2023). Right after that, one of the principal consultants of Erdoğan and Deputy Chairman of the Presidency's Legal Policies Board claimed that "a change of government in 2023 would be a blow to Turkey's full independence"[6] (T24, 2023). In contrary to the several surveys which predicted Kılıçdaroğlu's victory in presidential elections (Euronews, 2023), Erdoğan won in the run-off with 52.18% of the vote. In parliamentary, the alliance which AKP leads have taken 323 of the 600 seats, which means they lost only 13 seats in spite of the

[5] In Turkish: "15 Temmuz, fiili bir darbe girişimiydi. 14 Mayıs ise Türkiye'yi tasfiye etmeye yönelik hazırlıkların her birini bir araya getirerek oluşturabilecek siyasi bir darbe girişimidir."

[6] In Turkish: "2023 seçimlerinde iktidar değişikliği Türkiye'nin tam bağımsızlığına darbe olur."

economic crisis cracking down on people in the last five years. It is not hard to assess that Erdoğan's mandate has bolstered his confidence and solidified the legitimacy of his rule once more based on the ballot box. The electoral success raises concerns about a potential escalation in the suppression of the dissenting voices, which means oppositional CSOs have no other chance than building resilience and developing their strategy to counter repression.

3.2 Civil society in AKP rule: Flourished or faded?

The 1980 coup in Turkey stroke at CSO participatory environment seriously. After the coup, there were around only 18,000 NGOs left as Şimşek (2004) reports. Nevertheless, in 1990s, thousands of NGOs were founded, and the number continued to grow steadily afterwards. Unfortunately, a holistic dataset including all types of CSOs do not exist in Turkey since there are diverse public institutions responsible for some subset of CSOs. The most comprehensive statistics are to be found about associations thanks to the General Directorate of Civil Society Relations which shares annual data about Turkey's associational sphere. According to that, in 2000, the number of active associations already rose to 72,380, and it reached 120,732 in 2022 (DERBİS, 2023).

However, this abundance does not reflect a balance among associations' field of activities. Professional and solidary associations make up 38% of all associations today. Then it comes to the associations for religious services which makes 18%. Each of other field of activities (General Directorate of Civil Society Relations uses a categorization consisting of 21 field of activities) compromises 0.02%-6% of all associations. To name a few, humanitarian associations are 6.25%, environmental/wild-life/animal protection

associations are 2.66%, rights and advocacy associations are only 1.52%. Although the sample of this study is not fully matched with the rights and advocacy associations category, the comparison between those and whole associational sphere might make a good understanding of the position of advocacy CSOs. The increase in the numbers of rights and advocacy associations and associations in general (exhibited in Figure 1) indicating a similar upward trend, suggests that the government does not resort to outright closure of advocacy organizations as a means of repression. Instead, it seems to support the argument government prefers different strategies such as exclusion or cooptation. The parallel growth trajectories observed in the numbers of members for both advocacy associations and associations in general indicate a congruent overall trend (exhibited in Figure 2). Furthermore, the persistent growth rate of membership for advocacy associations compared to the decline in the growth rate of all associations as of 2019 suggests that factors constraining the expansion of general association memberships do not exert a similar influence on advocacy associations.

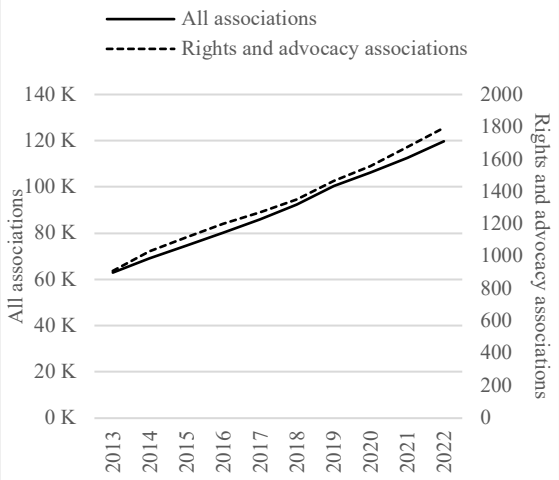


Figure 1. Number of associations

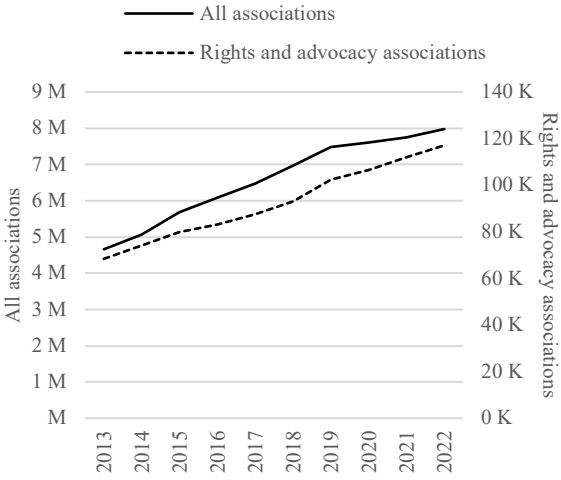


Figure 2. Number of members

Even though we do not have detailed data about how the numbers have changed for different field of activities, we know that Turkey also witnessed a notable increase in the number of foundations, reaching 5,754 in 2022 while the count was 4,398 in 2007 (VGM, 2023). Moreover, there are 697 unions as of July 2023 encompassing 310 labor unions, 89 employer's unions, and 298 public unions. Despite the abundance of unions, the level of unionization remains relatively modest in Turkey, with only 2.4 million employees, constituting 14.76% of the total workers (ÇSGB, 2023).

Historically, Turkish civil society has been a passive sphere, shaped by the military and the state, and used as a source of democratic legitimization by governments (Doyle, 2018; Kazanoğlu & Ketola, 2022). When AKP rose to power in 2002, the whole picture of CSO ecosystem has changed. In the first term of the party, Turkey witnessed "a conservative NGO boom" (Atalay, 2022, p. 340). However, the quantitative expansion of NGOs did not translate to a strong pro-democratic civil society. Many Islamist organizations (networks, charities, communities etc.) which were previously informal, have gained a formal status. As Atalay (2022) further explains, in the next terms of AKP, those Islamist-conservative CSOs have gradually gained greater access to state resources (e.g., funds, subsidies, offices). Moreover, those organizations obtained various privileges such as tax exemptions. They have become an organic part of the AKP governments in welfare management, policymaking, and electoral mobilization[7]. It

[7] The mutually constitutive relationship between AKP and Islamists CSOs is somewhat beyond the dual strategy of "cooptation or repression" that we discussed in the previous chapter. For Atalay (2022), those CSOs were neither GONGOs nor coopted NGOs. "They are constituent elements of a social movement tradition that has produced the ruling party" (p. 342).

was not a surprise because AKP and those CSOs are originated from the same political Islamist movement: the National Outlook, which had been building social solidarity networks for decades (Yavuz, 2005). Therefore, AKP has always had a strong civil society behind it (Tuğal, 2009). This cooperative relationship provided Erdoğan and his party the support that they need during autocratization.

Yabancı (2019) conceptualizes the symbiotic relationship between the government and civil society as "appropriation", which involves creation of the new government dependent CSOs and cooptation of the existing ones. The new ones are usually associated with family members of Erdoğan or high-level AKP figures, whereas the coopted ones are taken into control by replacing leaders with pro-government figures or appointing them to government agencies. Appropriation strategy is probably most observable among the women CSOs. Arat (2022) states that, beginning around 2011, AKP started to displace the old women institutions and replace them with new pro-government CSOs to impose its own gender framework and to mobilize conservative women. For Arat, it was the last step in the long-term agenda of AKP to instrumentalize women's rights for the sake of autocracy. Previously, the pro-democratic liberal reforms in women's rights at the first term of AKP ensured the legitimization of their rule in a secular context. Next, in the process of autocratization, they used those reforms to promote conservative goals at the expense of secularism. And finally, by creating new institutions and marginalizing the others, they expected the support of conservative women CSOs for the new autocratic regime. Another function of those CSOs has been welfare delivery. Those conservative women CSOs have increasingly taken part in social provision, especially in education and care services, eliminating the other secular CSOs in the ecosystem (Kazanoğlu & Ketola, 2022).

To keep civil society under control, AKP uses the dual strategy of cooptation and repression (Yabancı, 2019; Doyle, 2017; 2018; Massicard, 2022). While pro-government CSOs are constructed, cooperated, and supported, dissent ones are exposed to various forms of repression. AKP only recognizes the civil society that is willing to agree. Alternative elements are silenced and marginalized.

Recent reports demonstrate that the target groups of repression resemble the trends in other autocracies (European Commission, 2022; OBS & İHD, 2021; Freedom House, 2023). AKP's increasingly conservative agenda severely restricts organizations engaging in women's rights advocacy. LGBT+ people face widespread discrimination, and their organizations are under constant threat. Pro-Kurdish CSOs are criminalized in the name of counterterrorism. Alevi community is subject to hate speech of government officials which encourage attacks to Alevi CSOs. Unions and professional associations struggle with government interference and restrictions on their activities by law. Environmental organizations and grassroots protests are silenced for the sake of continuity of the construction projects at the cost of habitat destruction. In the next section, we will elaborate on various methods and forms of repression that oppositional CSOs face in Turkey.

3.3 How AKP is cracking down on oppositional CSOs

The legal framework for CSOs in Turkey is highly regulative. Even though the changes in the Civil Code (2001), Law of Assocations (2004), and the Law of Foundations (2008) in the first terms of AKP provided some room for CSOs due to EU membership plans, these laws restricted CSOs in many concerns such as internal management,

membership procedures, fundraising, and activities of CSOs (ICNL, 2023). According to the Law of Associations, it is forbidden for CSOs to participate in politics and cooperate with political parties. This restricts the space of maneuver for members since it is open to discussion which activity is "political" for the government. Also, the Civil Code prohibits CSOs ambiguously if they are "contrary to the laws and morality", "the Republic's principles", "Turkish family", "public order", "ethics", "national integrity and national interest" (Yabancı, 2019). Moreover, the new legislations made government approval necessary for each step of lifecycle of CSOs. Heavy bureaucratic requirements slow CSOs down and make them vulnerable for arbitrary rejections.

Frequent and arbitrary audits are also a part of the legal repression tactics in Turkey. The interviews made by OBS and İHD (2021) demonstrates that CSOs are subject to audits by a variety of institutions which use the duration and procedure of the audit process itself to repress the CSOs. CSO representatives state that auditors examine all documents overcarefully, ask questions about internal activities, and sometimes spend weeks in the organization office. Consequently, they impose fines or worse penalties even for negligible mistakes.

In terms of financial constraints, Turkish CSOs have great difficulties. However, it is interesting that it should not be the case according to the legal framework. CSOs in Turkey are free to accept "donations and assistance from corporations, individuals and other sources to realize the purposes set out in their bylaws/charters." (TUSEV, 2017, p. 12). They can also benefit from the tax-free donations from abroad as long as they notify the related public institution before expending the fund. However, CSOs are still having serious difficulties in accessing funding. The fundraising activities are rejected by local administrative bodies (such as district governorates and prefectures) on the pretext that

the rationale for the fundraising is weak, the CSO staff is incompetent, or the proposed activity is not likely to reach the projected goals (Atalay, 2022). Receiving public funds, on the other hand, is usually not an option for oppositional CSOs. Those funds are channeled through pro-government CSOs in exchange for their collaboration. When oppositional CSOs are too open in their criticisms, they face not only the lack of public funds, but also losing the resources that they already have. For instance, during Gezi protests, AKP passed a bill to deprive Union of Chambers of Turkish Architects and Engineers (TMMOB) of its financial resources (TMMOB, 2013).

Receiving foreign funding is an issue which is increasingly becoming a matter of criminalization. CSOs that are funded by foreign donors are targeted by government officials and pro-government media agencies. The clearest example is the criminalization of CSOs receiving funding from Open Society Foundations founded by George Soros. One of the founders of the Turkish branch, Osman Kavala, is arrested since 2017 based on the charges related to Gezi protests in 2013 and the coup attempt in 2016 (BBC, 2022). Many oppositional CSOs are blacklisted in newspapers such as Takvim (2020) and Milli Gazete (Öksüz, 2016) blaming Kavala for channeling Soros's funds to LGBT+, Kurdish, and Roman CSOs.

Criminalization targets LGBT+ organizations also for undermining morality, poisoning "Turkish family structure", and being a project of the Western enemies (Kaplan, 2020; Yeni Şafak, 2022). Erdoğan personally intimidates LGBT+ organizations and accuse opposition parties of being LGBT+ supporters (Bianet, 2023b). Accordingly, withdrawal from Istanbul Convention is largely based upon "protecting the family" and "preventing LGBT ideology" (Çelik, 2021). Criminalization also targets pro-Kurdish CSOs which are associated with PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) by government

officials and pro-government media. Based on the Anti-terror Law, pro-Kurdish CSOs are accused of propagating for terrorist organizations, being a member of them, or public incitement to hatred and enmity (OBS & İHD, 2021).

Censorship is far from being a new tactic of repression for AKP, but recent enactments expanded its scope even more. Last year the parliament passed a new law publicly known as "censorship law" (Sözcü, 2022). According to this, anyone who publicly disseminates false information about the country's internal and external security, public order and general health, with the aim of creating anxiety, fear or panic among the public will be sentenced to imprisonment from one year to three years. Moreover, government extended its control over online news websites and social media platforms. Social media companies are forced to take down the online content that is problematic according to the law and to share the user data with the government officials. This law together with the other censorship efforts, limits CSOs abilities to share information and announce abuse of rights.

Besides, CSOs are also ignored through exclusion from policymaking. Oppositional CSOs mention that they are not consulted on the matters that they are professionalized (OBS & İHD, 2021). Even when they request for appointments, governmental bodies do not respond. To give a significant example, Turkish Medical Association (TTB) was not invited to the science committee organized by the Ministry of Health during COVID-19 pandemic. TTB representatives had to explain their disagreements to the decisions of the committee via press conferences (Gazete Duvar, 2022).

Harassment and intimidation through physical attacks, police raids, arbitrary detentions and arrests threaten the members of dissent CSOs. Many CSO

representatives, members, activists faced charges related to terrorism. President of Amnesty International Turkey, Taner Kılıç, was detained on unfounded charges of membership in the Gulen movement, which was accused of organizing the failed coup attempt in 2016 (Amnesty International, 2017). He endured a prolonged legal ordeal spending more than a year in prison. According to Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV, 2022), in 2021, at least 281 people who were members and managers of associations, foundations, unions, professional organizations, initiatives and platforms were detained, 74 people were arrested, 88 people were released on the condition of judicial control, and 10 people were released under house arrest. Recently, Şebnem Korur Fincancı, the chair of TTB, has been sentenced to imprisonment for "terror propaganda" because of her comments about chemical warfare allegations (Bianet, 2023a). In April 2023, 110 members of different CSOs were detained over alleged militant ties with PKK in 21 cities, being Diyarbakır the center (Reuters, 2023). Not to mention, during Istanbul Parade, hundreds of LGBT+ activists are detained each year, being nearly 400 in 2002 (France 24, 2022a). Physical attacks to CSO offices by common people also a reality, particularly targeting LGBT+, Alevi, Kurdish organizations. Last year, a number of Alevi organizations are attacked simultaneously in Ankara, the capital of Turkey (Cumhuriyet, 2022).

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted especially after the failed coup in 2016. As Freedom House (2023) indicates in its country report, Turkish authorities routinely ban gatherings organized by oppositional groups while pro-government rallies are allowed and protected with security forces. As Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (ESHİD, 2021) reports; various events and celebrations, such as International Women's Day, Newroz Celebrations, International Labor and Solidarity Day, Pride

Week, International Day of Peace, and International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women are frequently subject to prohibitions in Turkey. Where they do not prohibit, or participants defy the ban, police intervention is likely. In 2021, law enforcement carried out 303 interventions against various groups, including NGOs, political parties, human rights defenders, women, LGBT+ individuals, prisoners' relatives, environmental and urban rights advocates, workers, and students (TİHV, 2022). They also prevented 91 meetings and demonstrations. These actions resulted in the detention of 3,701 people, including 28 children, using physical violence, and at least 55 people were injured. Police forces use several tactics to disperse the protestors such as armored water cannon vehicles, pepper spray, and rubber bullets. The Law Amending the Law on Powers and Duties of the Police, Other Laws and Decrees, passed in 2015, had widened the powers of police officers by enabling them conducting searches, using several weapons, detaining without a warrant. In addition to demonstrations and protests, concerts, festivals, and university events are also banned by local administrative bodies. These bans are usually based upon conservative “sensitivities” such as sale of alcohol, participants camping together, or dressings of the singer (Euronews, 2022).

Nevertheless, despite their small number, there are oppositional CSOs who continue to criticize the regime and pursue their internal activities even under various forms of repression. Next chapter will reveal how oppositional CSOs resist and build resilience in the context of Turkey’s competitive authoritarianism based on data collected through interviews with CSO representatives.

CHAPTER 4

BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST REPRESSION

Having illustrated the autocratization episode of Turkey during Erdoğan's regime, AKP's dual strategy of cooptation and repression of CSOs depending on their political stance, and the forms of repression that dissent CSOs face, now, it is time to explore the resistance strategies employed by oppositional CSOs in their enduring struggle for survival and efficacy. Through a series of 16 in-depth interviews with CSO leaders, I was able to gain significant insights into the numerous challenges they confront, and yet, their remarkable capacity to navigate through restrictive mechanisms.

The most prevalent form of repression mentioned by the interviewees is censorship (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16), which is generally identified as exclusion from policy making and neglection by the mass-media:

> We had contacts with the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution (TİHEK) and with ministries in the past. Especially with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, and the Ministry of Family and Social Services. However, communication channels are now closed. (Interview 4, see Appendix C, 1)

> [The union confederation] is under serious censorship in the conventional media. You cannot see [the confederation] on television channels. We can only find coverage in the opposition media. Even May 1st [International Workers' Day] news is being made without us. (Interview 9, see Appendix C, 2)

Legal restrictions (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16) manifested by politically motivated lawsuits, limitations on room of maneuver with new legislations, and extraordinary audits; and restrictions on assembly (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) which are evident by frequent bans on protests and police interventions, are also common forms of repression among interviewed CSOs:

> Audits come, lasting for 10 days. [Ministry of] Finance comes, [Ministry of] Interior goes. After one leaves, others come from somewhere else. They make it impossible for us to operate. It happened last in late 2020. There are instances where they come 3-4 times within three months. They raise issues about things done inadvertently. (Interview 3, see Appendix C, 3)

> They try to prevent press statements. They ask, “Did you get permission?" There is no need to get permission for a press release though. [Let’s say] 20 people will make a statement; 50 police officers arrive. They say, “No marching!” We won't be marching anyway. (Interview 16, see Appendix C, 4)

The prevalence order of types of repression is followed by financial restrictions (Interviews 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15), exemplified by a participant with these sentences:

> Associations are required to have a bank account, but no bank opens an account for us. We were fined [because of this]. They impose fines because we do not have a bank account. But we cannot open an account either. (Interview 13, see Appendix C, 5)

It is followed by criminalization (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) as another interviewee stated clearly:

> For instance, in the 90s, as Kurds started migrating to metropolitan areas and studies on this topic increased, headlines dubbed us as the “Association of Kurds”. Later, when our work in [LGBT studies] intensified, we were labeled as the “Association of f*gs”. Then, for a while, there were allegations of us supporting Ergenekon. We are constantly stigmatized for work that goes against the government's direction. (Interview 1, see Appendix C, 6)

Harassment and intimidation are the least common forms of repression, but still half of the participants have relevant experience (Interviews 1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15). For instance, a representative told how the investigation process for their organization’s head was led forcibly:

> An investigation has been opened. Even though we informed them that she would go to the prosecutor's office herself, she was detained by the police officers. She was brought to Ankara with great difficulty, even though she had health problems. (Interview 12, see Appendix C, 7)

Following sections will delve into a comprehensive examination of the strategies, techniques, and approaches that enable the organizations to persist and sustain their operations despite these multifaceted restrictions. During examination of these methods, I aim to shed light not only on their usefulness but also on their potential limitations and side-effects.

4.1 Reputation building

Reputation is probably the most valuable intangible asset that a CSO could have. It was the most occurring theme during the interviews, as 14 respondents emphasized the significance of their organization's strong image for their resilience (Interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). Surprisingly, the political science literature focusing on CSO repression and resistance misses out this crucial dimension, although there are abundant studies regarding organizational reputation within the management field (e.g., Lange et al., 2011; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This section starts with discussing the factors contributing CSO reputation and forms of public support that reputable CSOs get. Then, it will try to explain how this power could interrupt repressive mechanisms of the regime. Lastly, it shares related potential challenges that CSOs encounter while building reputation.

Reputation is sometimes a gift of historicity. Respondents suggested that being a long-established organization whose image is not limited with the evaluations during the AKP period ensures a deeper reservoir of credibility (Interviews 9, 11, 12). Their extended existence enables them to solidify their standing and gain legitimacy in the public eye. Mostly, they had opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to their

mission regardless of daily politics and changing governments. This significant advantage is well-illustrated by one interviewee from a professional organization:

> There is a great favor towards us. We are always at the top in the public surveys of Turkey's most reliable institutions. We are even ahead of the President and the Parliament in reputation. … I think people have some historical awareness. People know some things. They know the importance of our profession during the foundation of the Republic. They know the combative character of students of this profession. … We have a reputation in society. No matter how much they try to discredit us. (Interview 12, see Appendix C, 8)

Another factor enhancing reputation is having a profile of competence in the field. When people know "that CSO" is the key contact for a specific issue, it ensures some credibility for the organization. One interviewee reported that even people supporting the government come and ask for help when they have a problem within the CSO's domain (Interview 1). Another representative, from a union confederation, said that even though their membership base is not very large, workers know that they are the address to demand justice when there is a violation of rights in the workplace (Interview 9). Furthermore, this competence may even force the government to stop negligence and cooperate with the CSO:

> I need to knock on the government's door. The door either opens or it doesn't. … We have achieved this in many provinces. For example, government does not have any work on monitoring violence [in southeastern Anatolia]. They invite us to the meetings because they know that we conduct related research in the field. (Interview 5, see Appendix C, 9)

Organizational reputation sometimes results from persons' reputation as well. Respondents suggested that the image of either their leaders, founders, or some prominent members serve as a shield for their organization (Interviews 5, 11, 12, 14). The significance of those people arises from several grounds such as their international prestige in the field, or their strong network reaching out other organizations and the media. Interestingly, among the founders of one interviewed CSO, there are a few AKP

bureaucrats, which interviewees identify as the reason why they are not closed down by the government so far -as those AKP names will be in trouble too in that case.

When the CSO has a respectful image, it is easier to get public support. It does not have to be reputable for all people, as it is not possible for any organization. But if it achieves to manage its reputation among some part of the population at least, it can mobilize those people when in need. This ability empowers the CSO and builds confidence against the government. When I ask an interviewee whether they are afraid of a physical attack to their base, he said no one dares to do it: "As long as we make a call in the social media, hundreds of thousands people will gather here"[8] (Interview 8).

Moreover, a strong and positive reputation attracts public support in the form of volunteering. When a CSO is a well-regarded in the eyes of the public, people are more likely to trust and align with its mission. Most visible and rewarding indicator of this is volunteer professionals working for the CSOs with no payment. Out of 16 participants, 12 mentioned that there are volunteer professionals in their organization, as senior managers, lawyers, psychologists, or social media coordinators (Interviews 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16). For example, an interviewee stated that they have got a team of 20-25 lawyers, and all of them are volunteers except for one (Interview 3).

One another form of support that a CSO could get thanks to its strong reputation is donations and fundings. When the CSO ensures credibility, potential donors are more likely to trust that their money will be used effectively. Since oppositional CSOs usually have difficulties in financial sustainability, donations significantly contribute to their presence (Interviews 6, 7, 8, 15, 16). A representative from an Alevi organization

[8] In Turkish: "Yeter ki sanal ortamdan bir çağrı yapalım yüzbinlerce insan buraya yığılır."

illustrated this point with these words: “We cannot receive any aid from the state. This place survives on donations from the public…. There are also volunteers. This foundation would not survive without volunteers.”[9] (Interview 8). Positive reputation arising from competency in the field also signals institutional funders that the organization is a successful one making a difference in their arena. Therefore, regardless of their political stance, they might choose to support them financially ignoring government attitude towards the organization. This is usually valid for foreign funders.

How does the prestige of the CSO enable its survival through repression? Why does the government care about whether the organization has a reputable image in the public eye or not? CSOs representatives underscore the cost of repression for the government. From a rational choice perspective, government needs to calculate what it gets out of silencing an oppositional CSO (by severely restricting its operations or completely closing down) and its related risks. If the CSO has a strong reputation, thanks to its historical presence, competencies, internal prominent figures, or other reasons, repression might set off a public backlash. Therefore, government usually proceeds step by step, with trial-and-error method. One of the interviewed CSOs had just faced a restriction regarding the participants of their planned annual festival during the times of our interview. The representative said that they were asked to exclude LGBT+ organizations from their festival program:

> I guess we are building trust in society because we believe what we are doing is right. For example, they [the government] do not ban the entire festival. They do not say "We banned the festival". They negotiate. They say, for example, remove LGBTI people. Our number of members is high. Our prestige in society is high. They do not want to risk public reaction. (Interview 15, Appendix C, 10)

[9] In Turkish: “Biz devletten hiçbir yardım alamıyoruz. Burası halkın bağışlarıyla ayakta duruyor. … Gönüllü insanlar da var. Gönüllüler olmasa bu vakıf dönmez.”

Another CSO which contend with a closure case at present illustrated how the case resulted in an increase in their members: “Our struggle is based on such a legitimate basis that it is very difficult to stop it. When we announce the closure case, this increases the reaction and the desire to participate us”[10] (Interview 6).

Nevertheless, building reputation is a challenging job, especially for the newly-founded CSOs. Those organizations often operate with tight budgets, minimal staffing, and scarce financial resources. As a result, they may find it difficult to invest in activities that boost their visibility, engage the public, and build a positive image. Additionally, they may struggle to attract and retain talented professionals and publicly known figures who can dedicate themselves to enhancing the organization's image. The scarcity of resources places oppositional CSOs at a disadvantage compared to better-funded counterparts, making reputation-building a resource-intensive endeavor.

Furthermore, in order to harm the reputation of dissent CSOs, government authorities routinely use defamatory narratives and tactics. Government officials frequently portray these groups as risks to national security, destabilizers, or foreign agents by using state-controlled media, propaganda, and misinformation campaigns. Such unfavorable stories harm public perception by undermining credibility and trust in the eyes of the general public. This hostile environment further intensifies the challenges of reputation-building for oppositional CSO, illustrated by interviewees which stated that their organization face ongoing criminalization by the government authorities (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). A representative of an environmental

[10] In Turkish: “Bizim mücadelemiz o kadar meşru bir zemine bağlı ki bunu durdurmak çok zor. Kapatma davasını duyurduğumuzda bu tepkiyi ve katılım isteğini de artırıyor.”

organization which struggles against unlawful mineral explorations revealed the accusations they faced:

> There have been accusations of being German spies from the very beginning. This is something that is often done to environmental organizations. They publish provocative news in the conventional media. We apply for EU funds, we publish them transparently, but they still make accusations saying, "they are funded", "their roots are outside", "the Germans feed them. They do not want the countries' resources to be extracted." (Interview 15, see Appendix C, 11)

Building reputation is particularly challenging for two issue domains: LGBT+ and Kurdish organizations. However, the former does not seem to target achieving credibility on a broad base in the near term. They aim to build reputation among LGBT+ people, and measure their credibility based on their number of members/volunteers. Kurdish organizations, on the other hand, aspire to build reputation in general, but they usually face accusations of being PKK allies. Still, one representative was confident about their visibility in the eyes of the government and the judiciary:

> Our monitoring of an event can be a deterrent. They have an attitude towards terrorizing our work. We publish a lot about torture in prisons. They make a press statement in response to us. But they don't mention our name. They are actually stalking us. They follow our accounts. Prosecutors are following our statements. (Interview 13, see Appendix C, 12)

In fact, similar to LGBT+ and Kurdish organizations, Alevi CSOs might be expected to face similar difficulties in gaining credibility. However, it appears that the AKP is implementing a strategy of assimilation rather than criminalization against Alevi organizations. Representatives state that the government frequently invites them to meet, but they argue that this is not in good faith: “They want to bring Alevism under state control as a sect. They want to tie the leaders to the state, and use them as civil servants, as slaves. They will take away the *dede*s [Alevi sect leaders]’ freedom of independent

thought."[11] (Interview 7). These sentences constitute an example showing that Alevi organizations do not accept to compromise their identity in order to gain wider reputation in society.

4.2 Alliance formation

Dissent advocacy CSOs turn to strategic partnerships and collaborative works as a potent strategy of survival and prosperity in the face of adversity. The findings of this study support the literature which remarks the value of alliances in CSO survival and resistance (see Chapter 2.4). All of the interviewed CSOs stated that they have strategic partnerships with some other local CSOs and 11 of them illustrated they are also collaborating with a few international ones. Whether domestically or internationally, these partnerships provide a lifeline of assistance, allowing CSOs to get over the storm of repression and carry on their vital job. This section examines the complex role that alliances play in helping oppositional CSOs become more resilient. It explores what kind of benefits that alliances provide for CSOs, the manner in which these alliances halt government repression, and the difficulties involved in building and maintaining these crucial networks of solidarity.

One of the most vital advantages of building alliances for oppositional CSOs is the ability to exponentially expand their reach, and mobilize a larger population in support of their cause (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16). A women CSO's representative illustrated such experience:

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[11] Aleviliği tarikat olarak devlet kontrolü altına getirmek istiyorlar. Başkanları devlete bağlayarak memur şeklinde, köle şeklinde kullanmak istiyorlar. Dedelerin bağımsız düşünce özgürlüğünü elinden alacaklar.

> We held the protest together with the Women's Platform on March 8. We are open to all alliance grounds. We think it is important to fight together. A rally was held in Maltepe, all women's organizations held the rally there together. We took action together after withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention. (Interview 6, see Appendix C, 13)

When CSOs form strategic alliances, they utilize the network of like-minded organizations, which collectively possess a far-reaching influence. Allied CSOs usually participate in protests, rallies, and demonstrations together. When one of them face an attack such as detention of members, a new adjudication against the CSO, or a defamation campaign in the main-stream media, they generate an environment of solidarity. A representative from a local environmental CSO which was dedicated to protection of a green field in Istanbul appreciated how their thin struggle was empowered by means of allied groups: "hundreds of people came here with a few phone calls"[12] he said (Interview 16).

Alliances also decreases the cost of resistance for each CSO in the partnership. Four respondents illustrated that they strategically organize protests together with other CSOs to share the risks (Interviews 4, 6, 7, 8).

> Associations are reluctant to organize protests directly. That's why we create common platforms. We establish civil initiatives and platforms. For example, we are proceeding in a platform in the case of Esat-Eryaman. We organize the masses on the streets through this platform. This is also how we call for pride marches. No association is a direct street organizer. Thus, responsibility is distributed. Each association simply becomes a mere signatory of the platform. (Interview 4, see Appendix C, 14)

If there is a roof organization such as federation, CSOs seem to become more confident. Alevi CSOs in Turkey are usually organized under large federations incorporating tens

[12] In Turkish: "Birkaç telefonla buraya yüzlerce insan geldi."

of associations/foundations. When it is time to make a press release, for instance, federations take the responsibility as one interviewee explained clearly:

> We are affiliated with the Alevi Foundations Federation. The Federation brings [us] together. Decisions are made together. A *cemevi* does not engage in any street protests on its own. … Federations have lawyers. They have scientists. They are preparing the press release text very well. If a word comes out wrong, there is no turning back. We do not decide ourselves. Federations are coming together and decide. (Interview 8, see Appendix C, 15)

Another benefit of forming alliances is getting legal support in the process of lawsuits against CSOs. This is especially influential if there is an international organization which follows the lawsuit (Interviews 1, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15). International partners sometimes physically participate in the trials, issue press releases regarding the lawsuit, send lawyers or provide legal support remotely, and write reports on the lawsuit as an observer:

> We are a member of the European Trade Union Confederation and the World Trade Union Confederation. International Labor Organization (ILO) is among the organizations we work with. Sometimes we forward our reports on rights violations to these organizations. Our business lines are also members of common unions. Very recently, an international delegation came, watched and reported on the case against our friends in a union. They shape public opinion in countries. They are trying to put pressure on Turkey if they can. (Interview 10, see Appendix C, 16)

Domestically allied CSOs provide invaluable support by physically mobilizing their members to attend court hearings, organizing demonstrations on the appearance day, and closely monitoring the legal proceedings, as one participant from a professional organization explained, “Our domestic allies are countless. We established a platform. We also call on others, [saying] let's unite. We cooperate with other professional

organizations. ... These organizations come to our courts. They support us with press releases."[13] (Interview 11).

There is also an informational aspect of alliances. CSOs learn from each other in commonly organized events such as trainings, workshops, or symposiums. They find out best practices and imitate them if possible (Interviews 2, 3, 15). "For example, two friends go and explain our Sunday chat format in different provinces of Turkey. We are trying to transfer experiences there. Thus, for example, conversations similar to ours are being held in Diyarbakır."[14] (Interview 3). In this sense, advocacy CSOs are like schools of resistance, which create and convey valuable knowledge in building resilience, as well-illustrated by the same respondent:

> Even though local LGBTI+ organizations had problems among themselves, they never stopped coming together. In 2017, all LGBTI+ events were banned in Ankara. If this can happen in Ankara, it may happen anywhere. We sat down and thought together how we could deal with this. (Interview 3, Appendix C, 17)

Alliances among CSOs are instrumental in bolstering resilience also through practical resource-sharing. In times of need, allied CSOs may exhibit an extraordinary spirit of solidarity by lending human resources from one to another. To ensure continuity in the face of political repression or operational difficulties, they might, for example, assign their employees to assist in filling crucial roles within the partner organization in times of staffing shortages. One interviewee mentioned that they ask allied associations for help during audit processes by sending them extra personnel to support them (Interview

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[13] In Turkish: "Yurtiçindeki ittifaklarımız sayarak bitmez. Bir platform kurduk. Diğerlerine de çağrımız var, [diyoruz ki] gelin birleşelim. Diğer meslek örgütleriyle iş birliği halindeyiz. ... Bu örgütler bizim mahkemelerimize geliyor. Basın açıklamalarıyla yanımızda oluyorlar."

[14] In Turkish: "Bazen beraber etkinlikler yapıyoruz. Mesela buradan iki arkadaş gidiyor bizim Pazar sohbetleri formatımızı anlatıyor Türkiye'nin farklı illerinde. Deneyimleri oraya aktarmaya çalışıyoruz. Böylece örneğin Diyarbakır'da da bizimkine benzer sohbetler yapılıyor."

3). Additionally, if possible, the financial support provided by the allied CSOs might be worthwhile in preserving organizational stability. To relieve financial pressures and assist partner CSOs with funding gaps, CSOs can lend money to one another (Interview 15).

Similar to strong reputation, alliances increase the cost of repression as well. CSOs can access an extended network through alliances, which increases their ability to rally support and form public opinion in their favor. Accordingly, this expanded reach raises public attention and participation when a CSO encounters a repressive attack. Repression becomes far more costly when there are numerous allied CSOs, each with a distinct constituency and a separate network. When a large front of CSOs is involved, government runs the risk of not only facing domestic backlash but also being subject to international scrutiny. As a result, coalitions make repression riskier for the government.

Having the support of international civic actors are particularly effective through diplomatic pressure. Global solidarity can attract attention by raising concerns about human rights violations and government actions on the international stage. Government is more likely to think twice before employing repressive measures because they run the danger of harming their reputations abroad by suppressing CSOs with international backing. By extending their influence into global diplomacy, international alliances can significantly increase the resilience of CSOs and offer an extra line of defense against government repression.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, CSOs are better able to face problems and carry out their vital work when they combine their resources. The mechanism does not work through deterring government repression, but directly empowering the CSO in the face of operational, legal, financial, and informational scarcity. Furthermore, by pooling their

resources, affiliated CSOs can achieve economies of scale and streamline their operational procedures. CSOs can prevent duplication of effort, cut down on administrative costs, and allocate their energies more effectively toward furthering their shared objective by combining their efforts and resources.

Alliances are not built only with other CSOs. Even though it is rare, two representatives mentioned that they have contacts in the parliament, in the opposition parties (Interview 4, 12). The participant from a professional CSO shared an instance of achievement:

> We have relations with the parliament. We sometimes take part in legislative committees. We are partially successful. Sometimes we stop some issues, situations that are detrimental to society or our colleagues. For example, in the parliament, just before the elections, changes to two articles were brought to the agenda. Normally it should have been postponed until after the election. These articles offered to reduce penalties for ships that discharge dirty waste into the sea. We objected to this. The seas are already garbage dumps. This was stopped in committee. Even though the chairman of the commission was from AKP, he agreed with us. They withdrew the decision. (Interview 12, see Appendix C, 18)

There are also alliances among the CSOs and the local people. This type of alliance seems effective particularly among environmental CSOs:

> [When a project that poses a threat to the environment comes up], we immediately form a group of villagers. We weave that process together. Intertwined with the public. We fight together with the people. The local people and villagers put a lot of effort into it. (Interview 15, see Appendix C, 19)

> One of our most important features is that we all live here. We are from the neighborhood. That's why we can react quickly. We arrived half an hour before the fire department and extinguished the fire twice. The fire department doesn't even make an emergency plan here. We pushed for a plan to be made. We showed the doors [of the grove]. We have a strong ability to intervene immediately. (Interview 16, see Appendix C, 20)

Nevertheless, the narratives of CSO leaders reflect that forming strong alliances are not free from challenges. Establishing trust and efficient coordination among alliance members is one of the biggest obstacles CSOs can confront while building partnerships.

Organizations usually come from different backgrounds and have different purposes, goals, and operating styles, which makes alliances difficult to maintain. Finding common grounds and creating a shared vision that respects the individuality and distinctiveness of each CSO while still working cooperatively toward shared goals is a real challenge. Out of this concern, a representative warned me arguing "We do not prefer the concept of 'cooperation' but there are places that we are in 'solidarity'"[15] (Interview 13).

A second bottleneck of alliances is that individual CSOs may perceive a loss of independence. Some organizations could be worried that joining forces with others will undermine their sovereignty and erode their distinctive character. They might worry that the alliance's collective agenda will override their interests and initiatives. In each project they want to pursue, or a study they want to conduct, they have to receive others' consent. Especially, if there is a power imbalance among the member of alliance, it is likely for the most powerful CSO (most of the time it is an international one) to dominate the group.

Thirdly, alliances can draw government scrutiny. Government officials frequently claim that such partnerships, particularly when they involve foreign friends, could be a danger to national interests (see Chapter 3.3). Just the act of creating an alliance may lead to increased government repression. Kurdish CSOs are particularly careful about their domestic allies:

> We support all of them [CSOs]. But we do not collaborate with them. Since our founders come from different backgrounds, we try not to do things that will make us appear partisan. ... We occasionally do business with rights-based organizations. … For instance, it is more comfortable to work with [an Islamic-

[15] In Turkish: "'İş birliği' terimini tercih etmeyiz ama 'dayanışma' içinde olduğumuz yerler var"

> oriented human rights organization], it is easier to explain it to the public. Interview 14, see Appendix C, 21)

Moreover, government may view international coalitions as foreign threats and accuse the local CSO of spying (a mechanism that will be explained in Chapter 4.6). When a CSO face a political lawsuit, for instance, showing one's solidarity is usually a dareful job. Even though alliances may have a two-sided effect both triggering and pushing down repression, the latter effect seems to be stronger empirically based on the narratives of the leaders.

4.3 Non-violent contentious action

Non-violent contentious acts stand as an important bulwark in strengthening CSO resilience. Beyond the literature which identifies unconventional political action as an alternative tool when conventional methods do not work, participants emphasized engaging in contentious action as a fundamental part of their existence. In this section, I will be focusing on demonstrations and protests which are the most prevalent forms of action among the participants of this study. 13 out of 16 CSOs stated that they frequently participate in demonstrations hold on special days such as May 1 or March 8, and/or protests organized reactively in response to a government policy, politically-motivated adjudication, or a restrictive attempt from state authorities (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16). Firstly, this section will illustrate the characteristics of the contentious actions that interviewed CSOs engage in. Then, it will try to uncover the reasons why CSOs bear such a burden and how contentious acts could build resilience against government repression. It will also discuss the potential risks and the participants' approaches to eliminate them as far as possible.

The most critical characteristic of contentious acts that participants illustrated is peacefulness. The way that they organize and participate in demonstrations and protests is actually risk-free in legal base. They explain that they try to do everything according to the book; they take their chance to get permission from the state institutions before the demonstrations, they use a nonproblematic, insult-free language in their statements, they avoid violent acts such as attacking the police officers or vandalism. One interviewee underscored their position in the street with these sentences: "[What we are doing is] peaceful demonstrations. We are not agitating, either. We are not getting into a fight. This is not our language. There is nothing to step back from here"[16] (Interview 1). Another interviewee from an environmental CSO told how their non-violent approach left a top-level state officer helpless, even though it did not abstain him from filing a lawsuit in vain:

> A lawsuit was filed against me and a friend of mine on the grounds of insult and attempted assault. We did not insult. [A state officer] filed the lawsuit. They were chopping trees … "We are cleaning" they said. … Cleaning is done by collecting garbage, right? The garbage was sitting there and they were cutting down trees as thick as my leg in the name of cleaning. While the conversation continued in this vein, we raised our voices. The officer arrived, started shouting and tried to provoke the people around. We did not insult, though. There was absolutely no assault. We have never resorted to violence. The case lasted for two years, then nothing came of it. (Interview 16, Appendix C, 22)

A second characteristic of these demonstrations and protests is that they are organized through a collective effort. As we already discussed in the previous section, alliances are critical in terms of risk-sharing. Organizing and attending the protests together with other CSOs prevent the government to detect the "troubler one" and target it

[16] In Turkish: "[Bizim yaptığımız] barışçıl gösteriler. Ajitatif de değiliz. Restleşmiyoruz. Dilimiz bu değil. Buradan geri adım atacak bir şey yok."

individually. In addition to this aspect, the domains of CSOs make them natural partners of others regarding specific issues. For instance, an Alevi CSO mentioned that they cooperated with educational unions when they organize a protest against compulsory religion classes which excludes Alevis from Islamic tradition (Interview 7).

Why is it important to be in the street if it is already clear that security forces will intervene? How does contentious action contribute to the resilience of CSOs? The well-known answer is that it is the way to mold public opinion and raise awareness. Many interviewees identified being in the street as a core element of advocacy in addition to legal action and propaganda (Interview 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15).

> [Two areas are critical] one is action, the second is legal struggle. These two have to go head-to-head. We cannot say let's forget about the law, nor can we say let's forget about action. These two support each other. [Otherwise] you'll be left with a piece of paper in your hand. … Thirdly, we can add social media. There are 3 legs: action, law and social media. (Interview 16, see Appendix C, 23)

> We look at it holistically. Taking action on important agendas is a very important tool. Making a TT [Trending topic on Twitter], making a press release, protest, all of these are tools. ... For us, the action side, the propaganda side, the data side, and the litigation side work separately. (Interview 6, see Appendix C, 24)

Even though police intervention is common, it does not directly translate into the failure of the protest. (On the contrary, it sometimes provokes backlash and causes mass-media to devote more coverage regarding the issue). Besides, when oppositional CSOs demand a policy change, being in the street might be the only way to be heard:

> We attend October 10 solidarity commemorations. We attend May 1st. We participate with our allies. We march and make our statement. We do not think that being in the street makes us a target. On the contrary, it has an advantage. That's how we were able to gain some of our rights. We protested for eight months. We held a march with the contribution of more than 20 unions. Then, an adjustment was made to the salaries. Actions on the field are gaining favor. We get our rights. … In Turkey, we have to take action because we are invisible and unheard by the government. We have no option other than demonstrating. (Interview 12, see Appendix C, 25)

CSOs are in the street as a form of "self-marketing" as well. Their presence in the street signals existing and potential supporters that they are alive and strong. "Our visibility in the street increases our visibility in the eye of the working class" a union confederation leader said, "our visibility makes us different from other federations. It makes us target of the political authority, but also increases unionization"[17] (Interview 9). That is to say, power-signaling through contentious actions is likely to influence and attract people who identify with the cause and wish to be a part of a strong and influential movement.

Last but not least, CSOs participate in demonstrations and protests for the sake of being able to do that. As freedom of assembly is severely limited by the government, CSOs try to extend the civic space and put a halt to severer limitations. This aspect is perfectly illustrated by an interviewee:

> Being in the street is one of our conditions of existence. Because otherwise it's too bureaucratic. When you speak out on the street, you are expressing your rights more. If you don't use your right, it is not yours. What's the point of me advocating it if I don't use it? Therefore, we use our rights. Rather than talking about someone else's victimization, we demand our own freedom. … If I don't go out there, how will I know that they will restrict me? (Interview 1, see Appendix C, 26)

Consequently, contentious actions contribute to the resilience of oppositional CSOs through mobilizing people, forcing policy changes, attracting potential supporters, opening up the civic space, developing new methods of resistance, calling international media's attention, and more.

There is a reciprocal relationship between repression and contentious actions. Government repression pushes CSOs to raise their voice, but the louder they become,

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[17] In Turkish: "Sokaktaki görünürlüğümüz işçi sınıfı nezdindeki görünürlüğümüzü artırıyor. … Bizim sokaktaki görünürlüğümüz bizi diğer konfederasyonlardan ayırır. Siyasi iktidarın daha fazla hedefi olmasına yol açar. Ama aynı zamanda örgütlülüğü artırır."

the harsher repression they face. Engaging in contentious actions, even if they are non-violent, contain several challenges. All interviewees stated that at least one event they planned to attend was banned. They shared a lot of experience about intervention by unproportionally high number of police officers (Interview 1, 4, 9, 13, 16) and arbitrary detentions and arrests (Interview 1, 2, 6, 10 15).

> We were going to leave carnations at the homeless cemetery, but they even stopped us there. Detentions, lawsuits, went on and on. We had to struggle for months. It turned out that there was no crime, but when you go there you see that the entire courthouse is under blockade. Detention cars, cannons, threats… Sometimes 15 police officers walk behind us. (Interview 1, see Appendix C, 27)

> They did not ban us from entering the area during the Kirazlı resistance. But then they fined those who entered. They banned us from making a press statement on Kirazlı's anniversary. They said "let's announce it to our friends [that you will not make a press statement]". Then, as soon as we took the megaphone, they detained us. (Interview 15, see Appendix C, 28)

One interesting difference appears in terms of Madımak Anniversaries in Sivas. Madımak refers to a name of the Hotel, which was set fire by radical Islamists on July 2, 1993. This act resulted in the killing of 37 people, mostly Alevi intellectuals. The representatives from Alevi CSOs mentioned the annual demonstrations in Sivas is not banned, in fact, facilitated[18]. This is how one representative portrayed the anniversaries:

> When we go to Sivas, [Islamic] reactionism still exist there. When we go with the corteges, there are common people insulting from outside. The government cannot prevent us, because it was a state-sponsored massacre. The police even ensure road safety. They don't want a new incident to happen. (Interview 7, see Appendix C, 29)

Considering this threatful environment, I would like to share two approaches which can be qualified as good practices among the participant CSOs. First of them is about risk

[18] It should be noted that a few commemoration programs planned to be held in other provinces have been banned in recent years. For instance, last year, the commemoration program organized by Alevi CSOs has been prohibited by the Sultangazi district governor's office in Istanbul (Duvar English, 2023).

management. CSOs should make their emergency plan in advance when police intervention seems likely. One participant CSO was very rigorous in this sense (Interview 3). The interviewee explained how they plan the legal base of the protest beforehand. They plan what to do in case of detention, who to call first, and what to say to the police officers. They contact their lawyers beforehand and keep them available. If we add to these points, having legal observers on-site would be of great value to document police interactions and any use of violence. Their presence can help deter police misconduct and provide important evidence if legal action is required. A know-your-rights training is also essential for participators to inform demonstrators of their rights such as the right to an attorney. It is also essential to establish clear criteria for escalating and dissolving the protest based on various scenarios considering the well-being of the protestors.

Another good practice is moderation of the contentious actions based on the political context of the region. In fact, it is also a part of the risk management approach. The benefits and risks of contentious actions change in different parts of the country, depending on the demography of the population, political climate of the region, or the political party that the city/district municipality is affiliated with. A women CSO operating in the southeast region of Turkey told their approach during March 8 demonstrations below. Their stance is important in the sense that the organization is a real survivor considering the closure of countless CSOs in the region in the last 10 years.

> We participate in the 8 March night march, but we do not participate in Diyarbakır on behalf of the organization. In Istanbul, NGOs unite in Taksim. But in other provinces they do not all come together. For example, Kemalist women do it in Izmir. So, it works very differently here. You become a target. 8 March, 25 November... we are active in terms of action. We do not take risks that involve corporate consequences. [Can you think that] I was subjected to violence by the police during the protest, and the next day I will take a woman who is

> subjected to male violence to that police officer. Of course, he won't care. (Interview 5, see Appendix C, 30)

Therefore, even though non-violent contentious actions are valuable to oppose government repression and build organizational resilience, it might lead serious consequences for the CSO when the risks are not truly evaluated. The priority for the CSOs seem to be survival first and carrying on the core activities. Street-level engagement proceeds step by step. As it is case for this women's organization, participating in protests without a second thought may not be the right approach if it will endanger the people who have sought refuge in your organization for help. But, if a CSO chooses to wait or pullback in the face of threat, how can it be effective in its agenda? Does this not imply making compromises with organizational principles? Actually no. Next section will explore this dilemma.

4.4 Continuous resistance with strategic adjustments

If civil society is a sphere of contestation, it is necessary to know when to proceed and when to withdraw strategically just like an army. This does not necessarily mean making compromises with their principles, but it does mean being flexible and tactical in their approach. The literature highlighting temporary avoidance above is partly in line with this view. However, what it lacks is the emphasis on maintaining continuous resistance and not to avoid conflict when the cost of resistance seems moderate. This section will discuss interviewees' perspective on struggle and pullback. When do they take risks and move forward? When and how do they do strategic adjustments in their methods and activities? Lastly, we will address the main bottleneck of this approach.

When I asked interviewees whether they resort to pullback as a strategic movement for the further good of the organization from time to time, half of them replied "absolutely not" (Interview 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). The other half also said "no, generally" but they referred to rare situations where they had to do strategic adjustments during crisis periods or in daily tactics of struggle (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16). Interestingly, this divide points out a differentiation between the fields that CSOs work. Alevi CSOs, union confederations, and professional organizations seem more assertive. Below, there are two responses from an Alevi CSO and a union respectively:

> We always talk openly about the responsibility of the state in press statements. We don't think there will be any harm if we do this. … There was no retraction in any of our statements. We do not make unfair accusations against anyone, but we also say that they deserve it. We even use the phrase "the descendants of Yazid." (Interview 7, see Appendix C, 31)

> We do not give up telling the truth due to our oppositional position. We stand up against all kinds of injustice, including the periods when the government is at its strongest…. In times when the pressure is very high, governments want to paralyze organizations like ours. We never want to remain silent. This is the meaning of the union. (Interview 9, see Appendix C, 32)

On the other hand, LGBT+, and Kurdish CSOs seems more inclined to pullback. There are two responses from a LGBT+ and a Kurdish CSO representatives:

> Ankara governorship had banned all LGBTI-related activities throughout Ankara province. This decision was overturned around 2020. We tried to create alternative organizations. We held the events indoors. We did not make the announcement publicly. We moved some events to the online platform. We censored some words (LGBTI, queer, etc.). We tried to organize events through other NGOs. ... We try not to make too radical statements. We try not to make our opposition from an aggressive point of view. We are trying to ensure our security. (Interview 4, see Appendix C, 33)

> We discussed the latest election position document among ourselves. For example, friends from the conservative side objected to some things. We changed some wording. You have to practice self-censorship. I don't want to go to prison because of a word. You have to change some concepts. But we did not

> self-censor the word "peace" or the expression "democratic solution to the Kurdish issue" (Interview 14, see Appendix C, 34)

This divergence probably stems from the LGBT+ and Kurdish CSOs' lack of a strong base among the public. They are not confident enough to push forward considering their image within the Turkish society, which has been shaped by the ongoing criminalization strategy of the state against these groups. Nevertheless, CSOs share the common approach that they must and do push forward as far as they can do. Continuous resistance is the key for their resilience.

There are some critical moments where oppositional CSOs take all the risks for the sake of their visibility. They refrain from pulling back on symbolic days and events critical for their field. For instance, May 1 carries immense weight for labor unions. The risk of staying silent and avoiding conflict during such a pivotal moment is too great, since it could signify a loss of presence and influence. CSOs are aware that these are the times that shape their public image, and that any retreating from these positions could give the impression that they have disappeared from the political scene. Thus, it is unimaginable to withdraw on these symbolic times.

Continuous resistance is not only critical on symbolic days, but always essential to maintain control over the space. Emptying a space leaves it vulnerable to be captured by government or pro-governmental CSOs. When oppositional CSOs step aside on a matter, they are aware that the government, with its own institutions or coopted CSOs often seizes the opportunity to occupy the field with their own discourse and practices. For instance, when liberal women CSOs pullback, conservative ones establish the field's approach with the support of the government. By continuously asserting their presence

and advocating their approaches, advocacy CSOs prevent the government from silencing or redefining the narrative in the field.

On what ground do they push forward taking the risks? Interviewed CSOs remain steadfast in their efforts as they believe in the legitimacy of their actions. They believe that the solid legal basis of their methods and statements limits the government's ability to suppress their activities. CSOs leverage their commitment to legal and transparent actions as a shield, believing that the government's attempts to obstruct them are mostly empty threats with no consequences. In other words, even though a legal basis does not guarantee a fully free space, it usually prevents penalization. One of the participant CSOs explained their attitude towards a sensitive issue which might lead trouble with those sentences:

> There are some points that the government is sensitive about from time to time. For example, we call cross-border operations "war". They take us into custody because we say "war". Defending peace is a right. I am not committing a crime. The prosecutor [naturally] decides to move for a nonsuit. (Interview 1, Appendix C, 35)

Another interviewee told how their non-avoidance resulted in no restrictions at all, highlighting that CSOs should not fall in learned helplessness:

> We never stepped back. We held conferences even in 2019. We will try the things we can do. We will not be upset if it is banned. We will continue. We held a civil society festival and a conference in July. Many festivals and concerts were banned at that time. We were not afraid. We could have retreated, but we didn't. And it was not banned. We did not encounter any restrictions. … We act with a rights-based language. We did not censor ourselves in that sense. (Interview 2, Appendix C, 36)

One other interviewee underscored their assertiveness in the face of long-term legal struggles:

> Sometimes we face restrictions that exceed our rights. The Decree Law [dismissing public employees] was also a part of this. Our friends were later extradited by the courts. But then they open another investigation. … But we

> continue to insist on our actual legitimate struggle. (Interview 10, Appendix C, 37)

Nevertheless, the assertiveness in resistance does not impede CSOs to analyze the risks and make strategic adjustments in their approaches from time to time. For instance, a LGBT+ CSO told an incident of a person called their call-center and introduced himself as a part of the LGBT+ community and asked for help. But later, it turned out that the person was a journalist from an Islamist newspaper. He had recorded the conversation and posted it on YouTube, in order to "disclose" the CSOs. The representative explained that they decided not to open a case as a strategic decision. They did not even try to ban the video on the internet. If they had done it, the representative argued, it would have attracted more attention of anti-LGBT+ community.

There are three main forms of strategic adjustments that interviewees mentioned: changes in time and/or place of the planned action, careful wording in statements, and temporary pullbacks during times of crises (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 14, 15). Revising the date or value of the planned activity is a method that CSOs sometimes apply for. However, places might have symbolic meanings. To give an example, it is more meaningful to protest a political murder on the site of the murder. CSOs evaluate the benefit and risks of the revision and act accordingly. A representative argued that the district of Beyoglu is specifically restricted even for small-scale actions such as reading a public statement. She stated that it does not always make sense to insist on doing it in Beyoglu, so they march to Şişli, the neighboring district (Interview 1). Time is also a factor to be assessed. As we stated above, pulling back on symbolic days is not favorable. However, if the planned date does not specifically signify the content, it

might not do any harm to delay it for a few days in case of a restriction regarding the date.

Careful wording in all speeches and written statements are of great importance. Careful wording in this sense does not imply self-censor. It is clearly explained by a participant who argued that they do not refrain to say what they want to say, but they say it rationally:

> Of course, we pay more attention to the words we choose. It's not like "we can't say it, so let's not say it". We are trying to explain it in an alternative way. There are a thousand ways to express something. We are trying to develop rational methods. (Interview 3, Appendix C, 38)

Careful wording signifies the deliberate articulation of ideas conveying the message effectively while minimizing the risk of triggering unnecessary backlash or government crackdowns.

Thirdly, temporary pullback during crisis periods emerges as a pragmatic strategy for CSOs facing heightened risks. These exceptional circumstances are marked by potential threats to the safety of CSO members and supporting communities. The risk of direct confrontation may lead to government crackdowns and risk the wellbeing of the organization. Therefore, CSOs opt for a temporary pullback, which is not a sign of surrender, but as a strategic maneuver which allows them to assess the evolving situation, plan their next move, and maintain their resilience. This helps CSOs to re-emerge with renewed vigor and effective tactics when the crisis is over. The state of emergency in Turkey between 2016-2018 seems to have served this purpose for CSOs. Some of the leaders who participated in the study stated that they realized their shortcomings in developing reflexes against the harsh pressure during this period, that they examined the weak points of the organization, and that they turned within

themselves and worked on how to increase their resistance (Interviews 1, 3, 10). A LGBT+ CSO representative illustrated this period from their point of view:

> This happened for many NGOs after the coup attempt. The state of emergency period was frightening. There was a huge pressure coming and institutions had no experience on how to handle it. It was a period when institutions turned inward to think. That was the case for us in 2016-17. The pressure was so intense that he didn't know what reflex to develop. Since 2018, the best way to survive oppression is to be on the offensive. As we retreat, we lose that space. It is necessary to say that "I am here, I exist, I still continue to do my job in the best way possible." (Interview 3, see Appendix C, 39)

There is no doubt that there is a fine line between strategic adjustments and adaptation. It is a challenge to decide until what point to go forward and step back. The benefits and threats are not possible to be calculated like a math equation. Still, CSOs follow a structured flow to guide their actions. First and foremost, knowing their rights and the boundaries of legitimate action seem paramount. Armed with this knowledge, they are more confident and proceed without worrying about consequences. As they advance, a solid risk planning strategy becomes indispensable, to prepare themselves for potential complications. Yet, when the risks seem too high, even when operating on legitimate grounds, CSOs fine-tune the details of their methods to maintain the integrity of their purpose and safeguard their members. Especially for Women and LGBT+ organizations, which have service provision side in addition to advocacy work (since they support disadvantaged members with shelters, psychological support services, emergency hotlines, call centers, and more), pullback is sometimes imperative. This was explained by a Women's CSO representative below:

> We could not launch a project for a long time. We couldn't say we had a local action plan. We didn't want to provoke. We are trying to protect the interests of the foundation. Some women have their safety thanks to this place. We can't risk their lives. We try not to make too sensitive statements. (Interview 5, see Appendix C, 40)

4.5 Building legal competencies

The struggle between the dissent CSOs and the Turkish government take place not only in the street but also within the legal framework. As we reviewed in previous chapters (2.3.2 and 3.3) legal restrictions intervening in every aspect of organizational activities shrink the space for CSOs. In fact, almost all faces of repression have a legal part. Harassment and intimidation of members through arbitrary detentions and arrests, politically motivated closure cases against oppositional CSOs, frequent audits to detect a flaw to be exploited, restrictions on assembly with so-called lawful basis, criminalization due to financial transactions or foreign partnerships, all of them call for a legal combat with tens of petitions, courts, adjudications, and objections lasting for months, even years. Dealing with this legal struggle requires strong competencies. This section will reveal how to do this and the advantages of having these competencies. Then, it will point out the tactics that participant CSOs seize on to cope with this resource-demanding strategy.

The legal resilience of CSOs is dependent upon two main factors: developing legal knowledge and abilities among the members; and employing lawyers as either volunteers or paid professionals. For developing legal knowledge and abilities, CSOs remark their investments in training programs. It is possible to structure the flow of information from law professionals to members by training and improving the capacity of lawyers, who then mentor the member base on legal matters (Interview 3). Lawyers develop their capacity through trainings as well as experience. They gain great competence in administrative law thanks to their practices in the CSOs (Interview 11). CSOs also utilize the power of alliances to build legal competencies. Consulting lawyers

of CSOs are part of a network which serves as a hub of legal information and experience (Interview 16).

Employing legal professionals, i.e. lawyers, is an invaluable asset for organizations to build resilience. Lawyers offer legal counsel that guides CSO leaders and members in navigating complex legal issues that demand sophisticated legal language and methodology. They carry out the paperwork, represent the CSO in court, negotiate with authorities, and follow-up the long-lasting legal processes. Many interviewees underscored how their lawyers successfully absolve the organization from numerous lawsuits (Interview 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16).

> The federations formed a legal commission. We also have lawyers. Volunteer lawyers they are. Many lawsuits have been filed against us. They [government institutions] usually file regarding our press releases. But nothing much comes of it. There is no crime present. (Interview 7, Appendix C, 41)

> We have lawyers. We are trying to follow up the cases massively. And we've gotten used to it now. So many lawsuits were filed. But all the cases are dropped. It falls after a few trials. Let's say we will make a call on May 1. We do not worry that we will be detained. We are being detained. A lawsuit is being opened. But it falls after the trial. All lawsuits filed regarding 2911 [Law on Meetings and Demonstrations] are dropped. We keep being on the street again. (Interview 10, see Appendix C, 42)

All in all, having lawyers working for the organization increases the confidence of members substantially. Having someone who can provide assurance that what is being done does not constitute a crime and who is certain to provide legal representation in case of a lawsuit allows members to act more comfortably. A representative also mentioned the ties of their lawyers with the oppositional party. This alliance seems to be a facilitating factor for their lawsuits:

> We have a strong legal group. It consists of two people. Another 3-4 people support them. They definitely have a big share in the success achieved. One of them is from CHP (Republican People's Party) anyway. The other one is a former lawyer of the Chamber of Architects. Their relations are also good. They

> have a strong network. This makes it easier to overcome some obstacles. (Interview 16, see Appendix C, 43)

Building legal competencies of the organization through legal education and employed professionals provide further advantages in addition to handling lawsuits opened against. Legal competencies can be utilized for advocacy effectiveness proactively. One aspect was risk management which includes preparing the legal base in advance of the contentious actions, as we have already highlighted. Another aspect is opening files against the government institutions for a policy change or remedial action. Environmental CSOs apply for this method frequently since protecting a green field always require struggles with Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, local governments, construction companies, hotels, and more.

> We fulfill all 3 stages properly: being in the field, legal struggle, and action. We also invite people to the field. We get opinions from scientists and examine the documents. Let's say we couldn't cope and the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) decision was approved, then we file a lawsuit. We are filing with the support of a larger number of people. We are opening it together with the local people, those directly affected. When discovery is to be made in a case, we carry out discovery together with local plaintiffs. (Interview 15, Appendix C, 44)

Another respondent who is herself a lawyer in a human rights organization told about an incident where their legal statement drove the prosecution to panic, indicating the power of legal competencies in advocacy:

> We made a statement about the incident where a police officer killed a person. The statement reached the Ministry of Justice. The police arrested him, but we had not thought it was related to our statement. "We were going to arrest him anyway," they said later, "as you made a statement, we got stuck in a difficult situation." So, it looks like they heard us. (Interview 1, Appendix C, 45)

Another vital advantage of building legal capacity is successfully passing audits which are exercised as a method of intimidation by the authorities. It provides CSOs with a heightened awareness of reporting requirements of their operations. Their rigor in

reporting reduces the risk of legal pitfalls and safeguards members against potential attempts to discredit or penalize CSOs through audits. Ten interviewees mentioned that they are highly confident about audits because they are pretty attentive to transparency and accurateness in their reporting efforts (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16). "Inspectors turn up for the audit. They come and look at your safe, examine the files. Well, you need to keep them well. Our team is very professional. We have not had any problems so far"[19] (Interview 8), a participant stated. Ultimately, auditing process itself is weaponized as a form of repression, but adherence to legal regulations should shield CSOs from negative consequences.

Adherence to legal regulations invalidate most of the criminalization efforts of the authorities as well. Participants claim that many issues which they are accused of on the mass media are already registered and audited operations.

> We receive funds from consulates, etc. If we receive even a donation of 3 Euros, we report it before using it. Since we are subject to inspection, everything is transparent anyway. … There is nothing illegal here. We are being targeted in Yeni Akit which made news reporting "the funds the organization has received in the last 5 years!" as if they have found something very secret. However, it is already obvious. (Interview 3, Appendix C, 46)

Another interviewee underscored the significance of having a clean criminal record in terms of defeating the empty accusations:

> The records of our members are clean. How can someone with a clean record for 30 years suddenly become a terrorist? The courts do not believe this anyway. If you haven't committed a crime, you will be at peace. We do not break down because we are not guilty. (Interview 12, Appendix C, 47)

[19] In Turkish: "Denetim için müfettişler gelir. Kasana gelir bakar, dosyaları inceler. E senin de onu iyi tutman lazım. Bizim ekip çok profesyonel. Hiçbir sorun yaşamadık şimdiye kadar."

It seems that despite the extreme preciseness of the auditors, CSOs get over these processes successfully thanks to their empowered legal competencies and qualified professionals who mentor them in reporting matters.

The fundamental problem is that significant financial resources are required for keeping a staff of legal professionals. The choice to allocate resources on hiring professionals may divert funds from other crucial initiatives like project execution, outreach, and advocacy. CSOs have to carefully consider where to spend their limited resources, and it is likely for CSOs to give priority to more pressing needs rather than hiring lawyers. Moreover, lawyers have a competitive job market in Turkey, with numerous opportunities in both public and private sector, as well as through freelance work, where salaries are typically more satisfying compared to positions within CSOs. Consequently, attracting legal professionals to work for CSOs is challenging unless they reach out idealistic people who prefer to renounce higher compensation for the sake of meaningful work.

Nevertheless, there are promising methods for CSOs to build legal competencies on a limited budget. First and foremost, it is not a rare case that CSOs adopt volunteer lawyers (Interviews 3, 4, 6, 7, 15, 16). Also, many law firms offer pro bono services for CSOs. Secondly, collaborating with allies to establish a shared pool of lawyers available as needed is a smart approach to ensure legal support without the need for permanent hires requiring high costs.

4.6 Ensuring financial sustainability

One of the prerequisites of survival for all CSOs is financial sustainability. It plays a pivotal role in fortifying the resilience of the organization. As we have discussed before, competitive authoritarian regimes like Turkey channel public resources selectively towards pro-government CSOs and restrict the resources of oppositional ones. Since self-sufficiency is an unattainable goal for many CSOs, they receive foreign funding, which results in their criminalization and further restrictions by the government. This section will focus on three main revenue sources of advocacy CSOs -membership dues, donations, and project-based funds- elaborating on participants' approach towards these sources and their inherent challenges. Delving into these conventional funding channels, we will also explore the developing landscape of alternative methods that CSOs increasingly employ in order to ensure their financial sustainability.

How CSOs in Turkey can generate income is regulated in the legislation in detail. They can collect membership dues whose amount is determined by the organization. It is supposed to be a regular contribution from members usually on a monthly basis. Secondly, they can get donations which are voluntary financial contributions from individuals, corporations, or government entities. Donations cannot be demanded by the receiving CSO and the amount is up to the donor. Also, they can receive assistance or grants. This kind of support is usually given for specific projects or needs. CSOs can demand such a support by applying for project calls opened by local and foreign institutions. According to a recent report (STGM, 2022) as of end-2021, it is estimated that a significant portion of the total funding of CSOs -approximately 28 million USD- is in the form of grants provided by donor organizations. In fact, with an

only 16% membership due collection rate which the same report indicates, it is inevitable for organizations to seek grant opportunities.

Membership due is the fundamental source of income for CSOs since it is supposedly regular and predictable. All members are required to pay a predetermined amount to the organization, which utilizes this budget for covering operational expenses and maintaining the core activities of the CSO. All participants of the study stated that dues were expected from their members according to their organization's charter, but only seven of them said that they are able to collect regular dues (Interviews 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15). As a matter of fact, four out of these seven CSOs are entitled to collect dues through automatic salary deductions for they are unions and professional associations, which make them comfortable in terms of collecting dues regularly (Interviews 9, 10, 11, 12). Another one collecting regular dues, remarked that the amount of the membership due is so small that it is impossible for the organization to survive only with dues (Interview 15).

The rest of the participants, on the other hand, highlighted how collecting membership dues from members poses a real challenge (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16). The main paradox is that a substantial portion of the constituents consists of disadvantaged people who are unable to afford such contributions. Since CSO leaders know this reality very well, they hesitate to press the members to pay their dues. Another challenge for oppositional CSOs to collect dues may stem from members' peculiar concerns about transferring money to the institution through registered channels. One interviewee regrettably said that even some of their founders -whose names are obvious in their charters- abstain from transferring money to the CSO's bank account through cash points, but they prefer hand-deliver instead (Interview 14). It seems that when the

government repression is so threatful, the perceived risk of engaging in transaction with the CSO might be aversively high for members.

Donations from individuals and institutions are also vital sources of income. Ten interviewees remarked donations as one of their main revenue items (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16). While the significance is undeniable, the inherent uncertainty and irregularity in donation flows pose a risk for financial sustainability of the CSOs. This indicates the need for these organizations to consider alternative revenue streams in addition to donations. Moreover, attracting donations usually requires a strong public image. A favorable reputation enhances the likelihood of collecting donations as it signals organizational credibility and efficacy (see Chapter 4.1). Nevertheless, because they have to invest in public relations, networking, and community engagement to attract donations, it implies that CSOs inevitably need to spend money to attract more money.

Compared to other sources of income, project-based funds/grants tend to be higher in amount, which usually relieve the receiving CSO for a while. Since these funds are provided by institutions for specific initiatives, it encourages CSOs to develop projects and strive for advocacy efforts. This targeted funding helps the CSO to address a specific issue and contribute to its solution through a planned roadmap. Because project-based grants often require particular deliverables such as project reviews or impact assessments, it also fosters accountability and transparency.

Interestingly, interviewed CSOs' approaches to receiving funding show great divergence. Six of them look kindly on project-based funds and they take advantage of them without uneasiness (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15). Other eight of the participants are definitely against receiving funds (Interviews 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16). The remaining

two are not against it but they are not competent enough to apply for this kind of funds (Interviews 7, 8). This divergence is mostly parallel with the fields of work. While LGBT+ and Women CSOs are using local and foreign project-based funds/grants; unions, professional associations, and Kurdish CSOs are against it. The approaches of human rights organizations and environmental organizations are inconsistent. Alevi CSOs seem not competent enough -and do not prefer- to develop projects to receive institutional funds. Below, there are narratives of interviewees who take a favorable approach:

> We are targeted every day because of the funds we receive. Receiving funds from the EU can make you a target even if it is a small amount. But it doesn't matter for us. Since a transparent process is carried out, there is no problem. If someone would give us funds to transfer to transsexual people, we would be happy to take it. We benefit from the incoming money. We don't run away from it. (Interview 4, Appendix C, 48)

"In fact, all ministries receive funding from Europe. This foundation is a place that take advantage of international funds as well. If it can benefit even one woman, why not take it? We cannot take a conservative attitude and miss opportunities"[20] (Interview 5). And here are two quotes from the other side:

> There is no budget entry, no funding from abroad or domestically. It is out of the question, never happens. We stand firm on financial autonomy, a decision made in the general assembly dating back to the 90s. Once, a chamber had received funding, which led to significant trouble. It was reimbursed. Actually, many proposals come in. There have been offers for specific projects. We did not accept them. (Interview 11, Appendix C, 49)

> We received funding once from the European Union. … I wish we hadn't taken it. Because of that money, we were accused of misuse, by the very people who claimed to support us. We asked them to investigate, but they didn't. Secondly,

[20] In Turkish: "Tüm bakanlıklar Avrupa'dan fon alıyor aslında bakarsanız. Bu vakıf da uluslararası fonlardan faydalanan bir yer. Bir kadına bile fayda sağlayacaksak neden almayalım. Tutucu bir tavır takınıp da fırsatları kaçıramayız."

> they criticized us a lot from the government side, saying, 'You are devoted to the European Union.' They still say that. I wish we hadn't taken it. (Interview 16, Appendix C, 50)

The divergence among the responds can partly be explained by the field of work and ideological positioning of the organization. In fact, it is not surprising for unions and professional associations to reject external funds as their fundamental source of income stems from salary deductions of the members. Since they have a regular income, they are on the safe side. Kurdish CSOs, on the other hand, lack of this privilege but still reject external funding to protect autonomy. However, the representative of one Kurdish CSO made a self-criticism on this issue:

> We discussed a lot about receiving funding from the European Union. There were those who said we should not take it in the name of preserving independence. We decided not to receive funding in order to avoid dispersion. But we made a mistake. The friends who objected to this later joined other foundations and received huge amounts of funding. (Interview 14, see Appendix C, 51)

These contradictory perspectives remarks how challenging it is to give such a decision. On the one hand, these project-based funds might really facilitate advocacy efforts of the CSOs and positively impact the target groups in a measurable way. However, it contains the risk of criminalization by both supporters and antagonists, boundedness within a specific issue, and weakened organizational autonomy, exemplified by the narrative of a representative:

> The membership profile of the Istanbul branch does not favor receiving external funds. ... It's a matter of being influenced by the guidance of the funder. ...It shifts where you really need to focus. It forces you to work in certain areas. Sometimes, when the funding runs out, the study ends. Therefore, we reject it to avoid mutilation. (Interview 1, see Appendix C, 52)

There is not a single truth to follow for all CSOs. Surely, self-sufficiency is the dream of every organization, and it prerequisites collection of sufficient amounts of membership

dues on a regular basis. Project-based funds should be examined individually with their potential contributions to the organization and the trouble that it might cause. On any account, the decision must be made by reaching a consensus within the organization.

Fortunately, CSOs have the opportunity to diversify their fundraising strategies through alternative ways. One option is the establishment of commercial enterprises, where CSOs can sell items to raise funding:

> Associations obtain commercial business registration in order to sell commercial items such as t-shirts, glasses, etc. We consider it, too. It can make some activities easier. For example, let's say you are having a party, you can easily sell tickets for that party. Otherwise, you have to collect a donation receipt. You can also produce visibility materials. Thus, an equity resource is created for the association. (Interview 4, see Appendix C, 53)

It does not only create a consistent stream of revenue but also strengthens the sense of community through the promotion of these items. This method is also embraced by another CSO without commercial business registration:

> Over time, we learned ways to make money. For example, we issue badges. We don't say we sell it; we give it away in exchange for donations. For example, an environmental festival was held recently. Me and a few of my friends sold flowers from the garden. We sold them at whatever the takers pay. We print calendars. Calendars have been in high demand since the beginning of 2015. What we do is not something that requires commercial enterprise. We sell at a little more than the cost, in exchange for a donation. (Interview 16, see Appendix C, 54)

Another strategy might be launching online crowdfunding campaigns, which enable CSOs to use the community's combined strength for certain projects or issues. For instance, one interviewee told that they had paid a fine imposed by the state through crowdfunding (Interview 15). Additionally, long-term preservation of the financial worth of the savings, especially in inflationary countries like Turkey, can be only achieved by wise financial management, including investments. An interviewee, who is a retired bank employee said that he is doing it for the organization (Interview 16),

indicating that different talents and capabilities within the community might be of great help when utilized effectively.

As a distinct method, an Alevi CSO representative mentioned that they occasionally get some support from the municipalities controlled by CHP: “The dialogue we establish with CHP municipalities makes a contribution. Sometimes they allocate a hall for events. They employ few of our staff, if possible”[21] (Interview 7). This practice indicates an instance where opposition-party municipality hires the staff, pays his salary, and let the employee work for the CSO. It is very similar to the government’s strategy of channeling municipality resources to loyal CSOs.

4.7 Effective social media management

The advent of open web platforms has completely changed the way people communicate and connect, and its profound impact extends to the sphere of CSOs. Especially social media platforms are powerful tools that amplify the voice of organizations, enabling them to reach a vast audience instantaneously, which helps building organizational resilience indirectly. Among participant CSOs, 14 mentioned that they are actively using social media platforms (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16), but five of them were unsatisfied about the level of activity and they identified social media management as an area of development for their organization (Interviews 1, 9, 10, 11, 13). This section starts with examining internal and external purposes of social media

[21] In Turkish: “CHP’li belediyelerle kurduğumuz diyaloğun bir katkısı oluyor. Bazen etkinliklerde salon tahsis ediyorlar. Mümkünse birkaç personelimizi istihdam ediyorlar.”

usage. Then it elaborates on the main challenges of social media management and why some CSOs might not prefer to focus on this area as much as the others.

First of all, social media platforms play a critical role in enhancing CSOs' internal communication efforts. Instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram have become indispensable tools for both routine and urgent communications. To give examples of routine issues; members disseminate information, announce meeting schedules, share important notes, and conduct day-to-day communication through these platforms. On the other hand, in times of emergencies which require quick actions, these instant messaging platforms serve as vital channels for notification and mobilization of the members. The representative of one of the environmental CSOs told that they have a WhatsApp group which they use to notify members when there is an attack to the green field that they protect, with messages such as "bulldozers entered the area". In this way, people who are close to the location burst on the scene and try to prevent potential hazards (Interview 16). Even though there are concerns about data privacy, usage of these messaging applications is prevalent among participant CSOs.

In terms of external communications, CSOs rely on social media for community development and broad mobilization. Through active engagement on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, CSOs encourage participation and dialogue among not only members but also among their wider community. Additionally, social media is an effective outreach tool that CSOs use to reach a larger audience and draw in new members who share their goals. When challenged with repressive actions, social media becomes the main channel to spread information quickly, mobilize supporters, and organize collective action.

> We use social media in press releases. We use it to announce and mobilize the public. We utilize it as a force to communicate certain things. When we conducted a hashtag campaign [on Twitter] for patients in critical conditions who cannot stay in prison, we also saw its effectiveness. (Interview 13, see Appendix C, 55)

Social media is emerging as a potent catalyst for raising the visibility of CSOs in an era where traditional channels for disseminating information are becoming less effective, particularly with regard to policy demands, organizational objectives, and criticisms that are frequently ignored. In contrast to traditional techniques, such as publishing reports, which could find it difficult to draw readers, social media platforms provide a lively and easily accessible environment for information sharing. This becomes almost imperative as government control over the mass media, which restricts the reach of critical viewpoints. CSOs are able to get over these limitations by using social media to interact directly with their audience and tell their stories without the filter of the mainstream media bias. Furthermore, CSOs provide engaging content, such as infographics, charts, videos, and succinct messages that connect with a variety of audiences in a more interactive way.

Because of ongoing criminalization by the government authorities and mainstream media, social media becomes a substantial tool as a means of fostering a positive public image. CSOs use social media to effectively communicate their message, clarify their goals, and refute inaccurate representations. They share success stories, their community impact, and the faces behind their efforts which enable them to humanize their work. In addition to clearing up misconceptions, CSOs can actively build and maintain their reputation among potential collaborators, donors, and the broader public through social media.

While social media undeniably offers various advantages for CSO, certain organizations may be reluctant to fully leverage its potential. One reason is the lack of digital literacy within their target demographics. In regions where people have limited access to technology, CSOs prefer sticking to traditional outreach methods rather than social media. The interviewee located in Diyarbakır reflected on their approach towards traditional and digital channels:

> This is not a region with digital literacy. We're talking about women who don't even have phones. We know that the woman doesn't have a phone to conduct interviews, so we invite her to the foundation, for instance. But we also have a target audience - international and local institutions. We've had a website for many years. However, we realized it was insufficient. We also need to support women in Istanbul. We've been aware of this deficiency for five years. For the last two years, a friend has been working with us for social media. Digital visibility is important, of course … Previously, each city [branches] had a Twitter account. But, will we tweet or work? Who will follow in Iğdır anyway? There are only 3 public institutions there. Women can't follow anyway. We closed branch accounts. Therefore, the foundation has only one single account now. (Interview 5, Appendix C, 56)

Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that social media is a tool that meets all kinds of communication needs of organizations and that every CSO should adopt this tool as soon as possible. Organizations need to know the audience they are addressing, create profiles of the people in the region, and design their communication methods accordingly. Additionally, if digital literacy is low among members as well, this may result in limited use of social media applications in internal communication. Although messaging applications such as WhatsApp or Telegram are free and accessible, especially older people may not have the digital skills to use such applications. In this case, the first thing that can be done is to train members and popularize the use of technology:

> We use social media. But we are not effective enough. It may be because of the incompetence of the people who manage social media account. We are trying to

> provide special trainings to those people. We are trying to improve ourselves. (Interview 1, see Appendix C, 57)

Another main challenge, similar to that of building legal competencies, is the budget constraints, as portrayed by a participant:

> We use it. But we receive criticism that it is inadequate in almost every assembly. Not enough. We especially receive criticism that we need to use social media more actively. We are discussing the issue of creating infrastructure. This is a budget problem. (Interview 10, see Appendix C, 58)

The literature criticizing social media being not the weapon of the weak (Van der Graaf et al., 2016) is right in this sense. Social media management can be misidentified as a simple task that can be given to a member or volunteer. However, this position should be expected to fulfill multifaceted responsibilities such as preparing engaging content, responding to comments and complaints received on the platforms, analyzing digital metrics and taking the necessary actions. Therefore, when it is not handed over to an expert, a social media specialist, the efficiency obtained from social media is likely to remain low. If social media is seen as an important channel in CSO's examination of its audience, then the return on investment is probably worth the budget spent. If there is any hesitation about returning, priority may not be given, and the resource may be transferred to more urgent matters.

All in all, these seven main areas point out the elements of organizational capacity including human resources, financing, networking, leadership, knowledge, technology, and more. Acquisition and mobilization of resources effectively is the key for building resilience against government repression. Organizations harness their resources, whether in the form of people, funding, or expertise, to demonstrate power. This demonstration serves a dual purpose: it signals strength to the public, garnering

their support, while simultaneously sending a message to the government to dissuade the use of repressive measures.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was exploring the response of oppositional civil society to government repression in a competitive authoritarian context. Civil society is addressed as a dynamic arena where organized forces struggle for power, engaging in both conflict and cooperation. It is a sphere where opposing forces having numerous different agendas. It involves pro-authoritarian actors as well as democratizers, which suggests that researchers should not expect democracy to flourish or be preserved simply thanks to having a vibrant civil society or the numerical abundance of CSOs. Yet, the enduring existence and functionality of pro-democracy CSOs, acting as "islands of resistance" amidst governmental pressures, offer valuable lessons. These entities might serve as potent forces capable of countering autocratization, which urges for conducting studies exploring their strategies to build resilience.

Starting out from the question of "What kind of strategies do oppositional CSOs adopt to enhance their resilience against government pressures in Turkey?", I conducted 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with CSO leaders. The findings illustrate seven main areas to focus in order to fortify organizational resilience: reputation building, alliance formation, non-violent contentious action, continuous resistance, building legal competencies, ensuring financial sustainability, and effective social media management. Before moving to key points for each one, it is imperative to emphasize that none of them are sufficient by its own. Resilience requires multidimensional capabilities, reflecting itself not only in the CSO offices, but also in the courts, streets, and even online sphere. If an advocacy CSO focuses only on back-office work, it may conduct

excellent research and publish reports, but since its visibility will be limited, it can be easily silenced by the government. If it focuses on street activism and do not develop other capabilities, it will be portrayed as a destabilizing actor and will probably be destroyed through legal cases. If it only carries out a legal struggle, it will not be able to go beyond the boundaries drawn by the government, which currently has legislative authority, and will perish on its own in an autocratizing regime. If it maintains its presence online and does not pay attention to physical visibility and effectiveness, silencing it will be as easy as banning a social media account. Thus, all these pillars support each other, and their functioning requires tangible and intangible assets like funding, people, reputation, and know-how. This research aims at identifying these necessities and the tactics to meet them, which may light the way for other researchers studying democratic resilience, and for dissent CSOs struggling for survival under authoritarian regimes.

5.1 Implications

Among the seven areas that the research points out, reputation building can be described as one of the most solid contributions to the existing literature. Even though the significance of public image is well-recognized for for-profit organizations as the business administration field has abundant research on public relations and corporate communication (e.g., Lange et al., 2011; Deephouse & Carter, 2005; Whetten & Mackey, 2002), political science lacks the studies highlighting the importance of reputation for non-profit organizations. Based on the interviewed CSOs' experience, reputation, which can be possessed naturally thanks to historicity of the organization, or

acquired through proved competency in the working field, or personal reputations of the members, provide great advantages for CSOs. It helps the organization to reach resources more easily since a strong public image catalyzes mobilization for the sake of organizational goals. Moreover, reputable CSOs attract volunteers who perform professional services, which enable them to save the budget that would normally be required to hire these roles. Reputation also converts into direct financing through donations and grants. A strong public image signals trustworthiness and accountability, which people and institutions look for when they transfer resources. Despite the budget constraints and criminalization efforts obstructing the development of a strong public image, CSOs can employ budget-friendly tactics such as social media campaigns, they can prioritize transparency and ethical conducts, and build strategic partnerships to leverage their public image.

Prior research (e.g., Papada et al., 2023; Baker et al., 2017; Hudáková, 2021; Hadenius & Uggla, 1996) has underscored the significance of alliances in fostering democratic resilience. This study supports these insights within the Turkish context and delves into the mechanisms behind. Forming alliances enable CSOs to expand their reach and mobilize a larger population. When they organize a collective event, alliances decrease the cost of resistance as the responsibility is shared between the partners. During legal processes, domestic and foreign allies support each other by participating in trials, sending their lawyers, and propagating against the government. They share know-how and experience as well as human and financial resources when in need. Domestic alliances deter the public authorities to augment repression due to the risk of reaction from this larger base, and international allies put diplomatic pressure on the government to call a halt to repressive practices. Despite the challenges such as establishing trust and

coordination among allies, losing organizational independence, and increased government scrutiny; strong alliances can be formed by careful evaluation of possible allies. Through a step-by-step approach, issue-based temporary alliances may form the infrastructure of long-term alliances with selected partners. Also, effective implementation of conflict resolution techniques might help solving problems among organizations.

The effect of non-violent contentious action on autocratizing regimes is well-studied by many researchers as well (e.g., Merkel & Lührmann, 2011; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Baker et al., 2017). Despite the Boulding's (2014) study which considers unconventional participation as an alternative method where conventional methods do not work due to weak democratic institutions, the participants of this study emphasized unconventional acts such as protesting as a fundamental part of their existence. They engage in peaceful protests, which are usually organized though collective effort of several CSOs. These contentious acts are practiced for molding public opinion and raising awareness on painful issues. Visibility in the street is identified as a self-marketing tool as well, since visibility signals supporters that they are still alive and well. Furthermore, engaging in contentious politics is crucial for the sake of defending the right of assembly itself. Against a regime aspiring to shrink the space for oppositional voices, being in the street is a means of resistance by itself. Doing this by eliminating potential hazards as much as possible requires a solid risk-management strategy involving alternative scenarios and action plans. It is also indispensable to take the demographic and political context of the region into account while planning the contentious acts.

Temporary avoidance highlighted in previous studies (e.g., Fransen et al., 2019; Noakes & Teets, 2020; Hinfelaar & Kaaba, 2019) has also gained a different perspective in this study. Reorienting activities to less sensitive issues or to service provision as the literature revealed, were not observed among participant CSOs. Instead, they underscore the significance of continuous resistance, yet they do strategic adjustments in daily tactics of resistance such as revising the time or place of the action, or paying attention to careful wording in their statements. In times of crises, there might be temporary pullbacks which are utilized not to divert activities towards different areas but evaluate the crisis situation and looking for new strategies to pursue main activities. Nevertheless, it is clear that when the action has a legitimate ground, CSOs do not worry about the consequences, as repression does not turn into penalization. Knowing their individual and organizational rights, and the boundaries of legal action, CSOs become more confident in maintaining resistance.

Building legal competencies is another strategy that is mostly missed by the CSO literature similar to reputation building. Because CSOs members face arbitrary detentions and arrests, deal with files opened against them, and try to handle countless regulative requirements, they have to build an organizational capacity to defend themselves before the law. It can be done through developing legal knowledge and abilities of the community. However, professional assistance will be essential inevitably at some point. Employing lawyers who offer counsel and carry out the legal processes on behalf of the organization is vital. Furthermore, legal competencies bring about increased advocacy effectiveness as this power can be used proactively by filing suits against state institutions or pro-government stakeholders. A robust legal know-how within the organization also secures successful audits as members become aware of the

regulatory requirements. This strategy necessitates financing, but it is possible to work with volunteer lawyers, even which can be shared by allied CSOs. Pro-bono services of law offices are also a good opportunity to take advantage of. In terms of developing the general know-how of the members, CSOs can organize structured trainings and establish offline and online libraries offering need-to-know information.

Findings regarding financial sustainability of CSOs diverge from prior research in the sense that participant CSOs seem more hesitant to commercialize their work compared to foreign counterparts (Hailey & Salway, 2016; Brechenmacher, 2017). They mostly stick to traditional revenue sources (i.e., membership dues, donations, grants), yet there are few examples which established commercial enterprises to fund their main work. Membership dues are the fundamental source of income, but collection is challenging due to the limited affordability of the members, who are typically disadvantaged people. Donations are inherently uncertain and irregular in terms of the amount and the timing which leads organizational vulnerability. Project-based funds are favorable since they encourage CSOs to address specific issues and monitor their impact. However, foreign grants/funds pave the way for government to criminalize receiving CSOs, labelling them threats to national security. Participants' approach towards foreign funds are divided between the ones who consider it unproblematic as far as they perform necessary documentation, and the ones who sees foreign funding unacceptable because of potential risks to organizational sovereignty. This divide reflects the differentiation between domains as women and LGBT+ CSOs are more inclined to receive foreign funds. In addition to these methods, there are alternative ways to bolster financial sustainability, such as online crowdfunding, e-commerce sale of

community items (if a commercial enterprise is established) or engaging in active fund management through investments.

The benefits of technology and open web platforms are among popular topics in the literature recently (e.g., Baker et al., 2017; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Ortmann, 2012; Hinfelaar & Kaaba, 2019). The findings of this study are in line with the previous research in terms of highlighting the value of these platforms as well as pointing out the budget constraints as the main bottleneck. Nevertheless, this study refuses to adopt a pessimistic view against social media. Even though CSO websites are usually out of date and their design reflects limited professionalism, social media accounts are commonly vivid. Therefore, in our talk, interviewees usually focused on social media management rather than official websites or other open web platforms. They take advantage of instant messaging applications to facilitate regular and emergency communications, while they use social network platforms for community development, visibility stimulation, and reputation building. Also, when monitored properly, social media metrics (e.g., likes, comments) can provide great insights for improvement of the organization. For budget-friendly solutions; strategic alliances with technology partners, pursuing digitalization-focused grant opportunities, and working with experienced volunteers until collecting the fund for hiring professional assistance might be considerable options. Lack of digital literacy among members and within the broader community, which is another big challenge, might be overcome by training and development programs.

Organizational reconfiguration was another strategy revealed in prior research (Moser & Skripchenko, 2018; Herrold, 2016; Herrold & Atia, 2016; Shieh & Deng, 2011). However, sample size of this study does not allow for reaching reliable conclusions in terms of different legal entities (e.g., association, foundation), which is

the reason why this part was not included in the findings chapter (for an overview of legal entities of CSOs in Turkey, see Altıntaş, 2012). Yet, interviewees shared insights about being a registered versus unregistered entity, which are worth referring here. On the one hand, maintaining unregistered status seems to lower government scrutiny as most of the regulations and requirements do not apply to them. Also, it blurs the target for government since personal information is not recorded. On the other hand, due to the absence of an official entity, it is not possible to open legal cases on behalf of the organization, which limits advocacy capabilities. Moreover, financial transactions become problematic since there is no official account, which raises concerns about accountability. Therefore, many organizations which started as unregistered entities such as initiatives established registered associations/foundations at some point. A few interviewees mentioned that, in order to be taken seriously by the government, it is almost imperative to be a registered organization.

5.2 Limitations and further research

A noteworthy limitation arises from that the fact that present study sought to gain insights into the strategies of CSO resilience across diverse fields. Thus, it refrains from reaching field-specific conclusions, recognizing that there may be complex dynamics within each domain that cannot be fully captured by the sample. Only when there was a clear divergence among the interviewees based on their domains, I underscored the distinction and speculated on possible factors behind it. Yet, future research must investigate the forms of repression prevalent in each domain and field-specific resilience strategies with larger and targeted samples. In this way, they may contribute not only to

the academic understanding of organizational resilience but also to the development of focused tactics that improve the capacities of CSOs in a variety of fields.

A second limitation of this research lies in its inability to establish causal relationships due to the approach employed in sample selection. Because the sample consists of survivor CSOs, which implies selection on the dependent variable, it would be an assertive attitude to identify these resilience strategies as the reason behind survival (Geddes, 1990). It is possible that some of these strategies might have been adopted by closed CSOs as well. More robust research would analyze the approaches of both survivors and non-survivors and compare them to identify what former ones did that the latter did not. This method would enable an in-depth analysis of resilience tactics by focusing on the elements that distinguish the results of these two groups. However, such research design would pave the way for other problems. Reaching out to representatives of closed CSOs is a challenge when conducting a study involving both groups. When an organization perishes, contact information is frequently lost or inaccessible, which makes it difficult to communicate with prominent stakeholders in the past. Furthermore, even if communication is established, former members or spokespeople could be reluctant to talk about sensitive subjects like government repression and their methods of resistance (which did not work apparently), due to concern for possible consequences. I have to say that even representatives of survivor CSOs were hesitant to participate in this research. Because they experienced unfortunate cases where despiteful people tried to dig out information in the guise of researchers, some interviewees were meticulous in ensuring that I am a real one. Demonstrating relevant documentation (student identity card, participant information and consent form, ethics committee approval for the research) was vital at those points to comfort the

participants. Still, it would be much more challenging to convince those whose organizations have been subjected to serious pressures by the state and have closed or been closed down as a result.

Another opportunity for future research is replicating this study in other competitive authoritarian regimes so that CSO resilience tactics may be compared in different socio-political circumstances. Examining the ways in which contextual elements, like the political atmosphere, societal norms, and legal and regulatory framework, influence CSOs' resilience strategies can yield insightful information. Researchers can discover how organizational resilience appears in response to particular challenges and governmental dynamics by investigating CSOs across different countries. Moreover, this cross-cultural analysis may reveal universal resilience principles, adding to a more generalizable and internationally applicable body of knowledge on organizational resilience. An array of research involving case studies as well as comparative ones, will light the way for building a solid theoretical framework for discussing CSO resilience in the context of authoritarianism.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Interview ID	Interviewee	Format	Date
1	Human Rights Association Representative	Face-to-face	31 May 2023
2	Human Rights Association Representative	Face-to-face	26 May 2023
3	LGBT+ Association Representative	Face-to-face	13 June 2023
4	LGBT+ Association Representative	Online	24 May 2023
5	Women's Foundation Representative	Online	5 June 2023
6	Women's Association Representative	Online	28 June 2023
7	Alevi Association Representative	Face-to-face	14 June 2023
8	Alevi Foundation Representative	Face-to-face	3 August 2023
9	Labor Union Confederation Representative	Face-to-face	29 May 2023
10	Labor Union Confederation Representative	Online	8 June 2023
11	Professional Organization Representative	Online	26 May 2023
12	Professional Organization Representative	Online	13 June 2023
13	Kurdish Association Representative	Face-to-face	15 July 2023
14	Kurdish Foundation Representative	Face-to-face	9 June 2023
15	Environmental Association Representative	Online	15 June 2023
16	Environmental Association Representative	Face-to-face	12 June 2023

APPENDIX B

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 20.01.2023-108948

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ
ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı: 39
Toplantı Tarihi: 18.01.2023
Toplantı Saati: 16:00
Toplantı Yeri: Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar: Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşegül Metindoğan
Bulunmayanlar: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Harun Muratoğulları, Doç. Dr. Arhan S. Ertan, Doç. Dr. Senem Yıldız

Sultan Güvenilir
Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler

Sayın Araştırmacı,

"Baskıyla başa çıkmak: Muhalif STK'lar Türkiye'nin seçimli otokrasisi altında direnci nasıl inşa ediyor?" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığınız SBB-EAK 2023/04 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 18 Ocak 2023 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oy birliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen tarafından toplantıya katılan bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi
Yasemin SOHTORİK İLKMEN
Öğretim Üyesi

e-imzalıdır
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen
Öğretim Üyesi
Raportör

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır. SOBETİK 39 18.01.2023

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUOTES IN TURKISH

1. Türkiye İnsan Hakları ve Eşitlik Kurumu (TİHEK) ve bakanlıklarla geçmişte kontaktlarımız vardı. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı ile özellikle. Ancak artık iletişim kanalları kapandı.

2. Konvansiyonel medyada ciddi bir sansür altında [bu sendika konfederasyonu]. Televizyon kanallarında [konfederasyonu] göremezsiniz. Ancak muhalif medyada yer bulabiliyoruz. [Biz] olmadan 1 Mayıs [İşçi Bayramı] haberi yapılıyor.

3. Denetimler geliyor, 10 gün sürüyor. Maliye [Bakanlığı] gidiyor, İçişleri [Bakanlığı] geliyor. O gidiyor başka bir yerden geliyorlar. Bizi çalışamaz hale getiriyorlar. 2020 sonlarında oldu en son. Üç ay içinde 3-4 kere geldikleri oluyor. Sehven yapılan şeylere takılıyorlar.

4. Basın açıklamalarını engellemeye çalışıyorlar. "İzin aldınız mı?" diyorlar. Basın açıklaması için izin almaya gerek yok ki. [Diyelim] 20 kişi açıklama yapacağız, 50 polis geliyor. "Yürüyüş yok!" diyorlar. Zaten yürüyüş yapmayacağız.

5. Derneklerin banka hesabı olması zorunlu ama hiçbir banka bize hesap açmıyor. Para cezası verildi [bu yüzden]. Banka hesabımız olmadığı için ceza veriyorlar. Ama hesap da açamıyoruz.

6. Mesela 90'larda Kürtlerin de metropollere gelmesiyle bu konuda çalışmalar artınca sonrasında "Kürtlerin derneği" olarak manşet atıldı hakkımızda. Sonra [LGBT çalışmalarımız artınca] "i*nelerin derneği" dendi. Sonra bir ara, bunlar Ergenekoncuları destekliyor dendi. İktidarın yönelimine ters gelen çalışmalar yüzünden sürekli yaftalanma altındayız

7. Soruşturma açıldı. Savcılığa gidecek olduğunu bildirmemize rağmen emniyet mensupları tarafından gözaltına alındı. Eziyetle Ankara'ya getirildi kendisinin sağlık sorunları olmasına rağmen.

8. Bize karşı büyük bir teveccüh var. Türkiye'nin en güvenilir kurumları anketlerinde her zaman en üstlerdeyiz. Cumhurbaşkanı ve parlamentonun bile önündeyiz saygınlıkta. … İnsanların biraz tarih bilinci vardır bence. İnsanlar bazı şeyleri bilirler. Cumhuriyetin kuruluşunda bizim mesleğin önemini bilirler. Bizim öğrencilerin mücadeleci karakterini bilirler. Toplumda bir saygınlığımız var. Ne kadar itibarsızlaştırmaya çalışsalar da.

9. Benim hükümetin kapısını çalmam gerekiyor. Kapı ya açılır ya açılmaz. … Biz bunu birçok ilde sağladık. Şiddeti izlemeye dair bir çalışması yok örneğin hükümetin [Güneydoğu Anadoluda]. Toplantılara bizi çağırırlar. Çünkü bilirler ki biz bölgede ilgili çalışmaları yapıyoruz.

10. Herhalde yaptığımız şeyin doğru olduğuna inandığımız için toplumda bir güven oluşturuyoruz. Mesela komple festivali yasaklamıyorlar. "Yasakladık festivali" demiyorlar. Pazarlık ediyorlar. LGBTİ'leri çıkarın, diyorlar mesela. Üye sayımız yüksek. Toplumdaki prestijimiz yüksek. Kamuoyu tepkisini göze almak istemezler.

11. En baştan bu yana Alman ajanlığı suçlaması var. Çevre örgütlerine çokça yapılan bir şey bu. Genel medyada kışkırtıcı haberler yayınlıyorlar. Biz AB fonlarına başvuruyoruz, bunları şeffaf olarak yayınlıyoruz ama yine de "bunlar foncu", "kökü dışarda" diye suçlamalar yapıyorlar. "Almanlar bunları besliyor. Ülkelerin kaynaklarını çıkarılmasını istemiyorlar." deniyor.

12. Bir olayı bizim de takip ediyor olmamızın caydırıcılığı olabiliyor. Bizim çalışmalarımızı terörize etmeye yönelik bir tutumları var. Hapishanelerdeki işkencelerle ilgili çok fazla yayın çıkarıyoruz. Bize cevap niteliğinde basın açıklaması yapıyorlar. Ama adımızı geçirmiyorlar. Bizi aslında stalklıyorlar. Bizim hesaplarımızı takip ediyorlar. Savcılar bizim açıklamaları takip ediyor.

13. En son 8 martta kadın platformuyla beraber yaptık eylemi. Biz tüm ittifak zeminlerine açığız. Birlikte mücadele etmenin önemli olduğunu düşünüyoruz. Maltepe'de bir miting yapılmıştı orada tüm kadın örgütleri beraber mitingi yaptık. İstanbul Sözleşmesinden çekildikten sonra birlikte eylemler yaptık.

14. Dernekler protestoları doğrudan organize etme konusunda çekingen davranıyorlar. Bu yüzden de ortak platformlar oluşturuyoruz. Sivil inisiyatifler, platformlar kuruyoruz. Örneğin Esat-Eryaman davasında platform şeklinde ilerliyoruz. Buralardan kitleyi sokakta örgütlüyoruz. Onur yürüyüşlerine bu şekilde çağırıyoruz. Doğrudan sokaktaki örgütleyicisi olmuyor hiçbir dernek. Böylece sorumluluk dağılmış oluyor. Sadece platformun imzacısı olmuş oluyor her bir dernek.

15. Biz Alevi Vakıflar Federasyonuna bağlıyız. Federasyon bir araya getiriyor. Beraber karar veriliyor. Bir cemevi kendi başına girmez herhangi bir sokak eylemine. … Federasyonların avukatları var. Bilim insanları var. Oradaki basın açıklaması metni iyi hazırlanıyor. Bir kelime yanlış çıkarsa bunun dönüşü yok. Kendimiz karar vermiyoruz. Federasyonlar bir araya geliyor.

16. Biz Avrupa Sendikalar Konfederasyonu ve Dünya Sendikalar Konfederasyonu üyesiyiz. ILO da beraber çalışma yürüttüğümüz örgütler arasında. Bazen hak ihlallerine dair raporlarımızı bu kuruluşlara iletiyoruz. İş kollarımız da ortak sendikalara üyeler. Çok yakın zamanda bir sendikadan arkadaşlarımıza karşı yürütülen davada uluslararası heyet geliyor, izliyor, raporluyor. Ülkelerde kamuoyu oluşturuyorlar. Yapabiliyorlarsa Türkiye'de baskı oluşturmaya çalışıyorlar.

17. Yerelde LGBTİ+ örgütleri kendi aralarında problemler yaşasalar bile yan yana gelmeyi hiç bırakmadılar. 2017'de Ankara'da tüm LGBTİ+ etkinlikleri yasaklandı. Bu Ankara'da oluyorsa her yerde olabilir. Bununla nasıl başa çıkabileceğimizi oturduk beraber düşündük.

18. Parlamentoyla ilişkilerimiz var. Yasama komisyonlarında bazen yer alıyoruz. Kısmen başarılı oluyoruz. Bazen bazı konuları durduruyoruz, toplum veya meslektaşların aleyhine olan durumları. Örneğin seçime giden bir parlamentoda iki maddede değişiklik gündeme geldi. Normalde seçimden sonraya bırakılması gerekirdi. Bu maddeler kirli atıklarını denize boşaltan gemilere cezayı azaltmayı teklif ediyordu. Biz buna itiraz ettik. Zaten denizler çöplük halinde. Bu, komisyonda durduruldu. Komisyon başkanı AKP'li olmasına rağmen bize hak verdi. Kararı geri çektiler.

19. [Çevreye tehdit teşkil eden bir proje çıktığında] köylülerden hemen bir grup oluşturuyoruz. O süreci birlikte örüyoruz. Halkla iç içe. Halkla beraber mücadele ediyoruz. Yerel halkın, köylünün emeği çok.

20. Bizim en büyük özelliklerimizden biri de hepimiz burada oturuyoruz. Mahalleliyiz. O yüzden hızlı reaksiyon verebiliyoruz. İtfaiyeden yarım saat önce gelip yangın söndürdük iki defa. Burada bir acil durum planı bile yapmıyor itfaiye. Biz zorladık plan yapılması için. [Korunun] kapıları biz gösterdik. Anında müdahale imkanımız güçlü.

21. Biz hepsine destek oluyoruz. Ama STK'larla beraber ortak çalışma yapmıyoruz. Kurucularımız farklı mecralardan geldiği için bizi taraf gösterecek şeyler yapmamaya çalışıyoruz. … Hak bazlı örgütlerle zaman zaman iş yapıyoruz. … [Islami odaklı bir insan hakları örgütü] ile beraber çalışma yapmak daha rahat, kamuoyuna anlatmak daha rahat.

22. Benim hakkımda ve bir arkadaşım hakkında hakaret ve darp girişimi gerekçesiyle dava açıldı. Hakaret etmemiştik. [Bir devlet memuru] davayı açmış. Ağaç kesiyorlardı, onları yakaladık. … "Temizlik yapıyoruz" dediler. … Temizlik dediğin çöp toplayarak olur. Çöpler orada duruyor. Bacağım kalınlığındaki ağaçları kesiyorlar temizlik adı altında. Konuşma bu minvalde giderken biz sesimizi yükselttik. [Devlet memuru] geldi, bağırmaya başladı, etrafı kışkırtmaya çalıştı. [Bizde] hakaret yok ama. Darp kesinlikle yok. Biz hiçbir zaman şiddete başvurmadık. İki sene sürdü dava, sonra bir şey çıkmadı.

23. [İki alan kritik] bir eylemsellik, iki hukuki mücadele. Bu ikisi atbaşı gitmek zorunda. Hukuk ne olacak diyemeyiz, eylemselliği boşverelim de diyemeyiz. Bu ikisi birbirini destekler. Elinizde kağıt parçasıyla kalıverirsiniz [yoksa]. Üçüncü olarak da sosyal medya. 3 ayak var: eylemsellik, hukuk ve sosyal medya.

24. Biz bütünlüklü olarak bakıyoruz. Önemli gündemlerde eylem yapmak çok önemli bir araçtır. TT yapmak, basın açıklaması yapmak, eylem, bunların hepsi birer araç. … Bizim için eylemlilik bir yanı, propaganda ayağı, veri ayağı, dava ayağı ayrı ayrı çalışıyor.

25. On Ekim anmalarına gideriz. 1 Mayıs'a gideriz. Dayanışma halinde gideriz. Yürüyüşlerimizi ve açıklamamızı yaparız. Burada bir hedef olduğumuzu düşünmüyoruz. Aksine avantajı var. Bazı haklarımızı öyle alabildik. 8 aylık

eylemlerimiz oldu. Yirmiden fazla sendikanın katkısıyla yürüyüş yaptık. Gelirlerde bir düzeltme yapıldı. Sahadaki eylemler teveccüh buluyor. Haklarımızı alıyoruz. … Türkiye'de ise eylem yapmak zorundayız çünkü hükümet tarafından görünmez, dinlenmez durumdayız. Biz mecburen eylemliliğe dökmek zorundayız.

26. Sokakta olmak bizim varlık koşullarımızdan biri. Diğer türlü çok bürokratik çünkü. Sokakta söylediğiniz zaman haklarınızı daha fazla söylemiş oluyorsunuz. Kullanmadığınız hak sizin değildir. Kullanmıyorsam bunu savunuyor olmamın ne anlamı var. Dolayısıyla biz haklarımızı kullanıyoruz. Başkasının mağduriyeti üzerinden söz kurmaktansa, kendi özgürlüğümüzü talep ediyoruz. … Ben oraya gitmesem nerden bileceğim kısıtlanacağımı."

27. Oradaki kimsesizler mezarlığına karanfil bırakacaktık orada bile bizi engellediler. Gözaltı, dava, sürüp surdu. Aylarca uğraşmak zorunda kaldık. Suçun olmadığı anlaşıldı ama gittiğinizde görüyorsunuz tüm adliye abluka altında. Gözaltı araçları, tomalar, tehditler. Arkamızda 15 polis yürüyor bazen.

28. Kirazlı direnişinde alana girmemizi yasaklamadılar. Girenlere ceza kestiler. Kirazlının yıl dönümünde basın açıklamamızı yasakladılar. Arkadaşlarımıza [basın açıklaması olmayacağını] duyuralım dediler. Sonra megafonu alır almaz gözaltına aldılar.

29. Sivas'a gittiğimizde orda gericilik hala sürüyor. Kortejlerle gittiğimizde hala dışardan laf atanlar oluyor. Devlet destekli bir katliam olduğu için bizi engelleyemezler. Hatta polisler yol güvenliğini sağlıyorlar. Yeni bir olayın yaşanmasını istemiyorlar.

30. 8 Mart gece yürüyüşüne katılıyoruz ama kurumu temsilen Diyarbakır'da katılmıyoruz. İstanbul'da STK'lar birleşir Taksim'de. Ama başka illerde hepsi bir araya gelmez. Örneğin İzmir'de Atatürkçü kadınlar yapar. Dolayısıyla burada çok farklı işliyor. Çok hedef haline geliyorsunuz. 8 Mart, 25 Kasım… Eylemsellik noktasında aktifiz. Kurumsal sonuçlar içeren riskler almıyoruz. Ben burada emniyetten şiddet görmüşüm, ertesi gün şiddet gören kadını o polise götüreceğim. Tabii ki ilgilenmeyecek.

31. Basın açıklamalarında biz hep devletin sorumluluğunu açık açık konuşuruz. Şunu yaparsak bir zeval gelir noktasında değiliz. … Hiçbir açıklamamamızda bir geri çekilme olmadı. Kimseye haksız ithamlarda bulunmayız ama hak ettiklerini de söylüyoruz. "Yezid soylu iktidar" ifadesini bile kullanıyoruz.

32. Biz muhalif pozisyonumuz gereği doğruları söylemekten vazgeçmeyiz. İktidarın en güçlü olduğu dönemler dahil her türlü haksızlığa karşı ayaktayız…Baskının çok arttığı dönemlerde bizim gibi örgütleri paralize etmeyi istiyor hükümetler. Biz sessiz kalmayı hiçbir zaman istemeyiz. Sendikanın anlamı bu.

33. Ankara valiliği Ankara il genelinde LGBTİ geneli tüm faaliyetleri yasakladı. Bu karar 2020 gibi bozuldu. Alternatif örgütlenmeler oluşturmaya çalıştık. Etkinlikleri kapalı olarak yaptık. Duyurusunu açıktan yapmadık. Bazı etkinlikleri online platforma taşıdık. Bazı kelimeleri sansürledik (LGBTİ, queer vb.). Etkinlikleri diğer STK'lar üzerinden

yapmaya çalıştık. … Çok radikal söylemlerde bulunmamaya çalışıyoruz. Karşıtlığımızı agresif bir yerden yapmamaya çalışıyoruz. Güvenliğimizi sağlamaya çalışıyoruz.

34. En son seçim tutum belgesini tartıştık kendi içimizde. Örneğin muhafazakar taraftan gelen arkadaşlar bazı şeylere itiraz ettiler. Bazı ifadeleri değiştirdik. Otosansür uygulamak zorundasınız. Ben bir kelimeden dolayı cezaevine girmek istemem. Bazı kavramları değiştirmek zorundasınız. Ama "barış" kelimesinde, "Kürt sorununa demokratik çözüm" ifadesinde otosansür uygulamadık.

35. Dönem dönem hükümetin hassas olduğu bazı noktalar var. Sınır ötesi operasyonlara mesela "savaş" diyoruz biz. "Savaş" dediğimiz için gözaltına alıyorlar. Barışı savunmak bir hak. Ben suç işlemiyorum. Savcı sonra takipsizlik kararı veriyor [doğal olarak].

36. Biz hiçbir zaman geri adım atmadık. 2019'da bile konferanslar yaptık. Yapabileceğimiz şeyleri deneyeceğiz. Yasaklanırsa üzülmeyeceğiz. Devam edeceğiz. Sivil toplum festivali yaptık, temmuz ayında bir konferans yaptık. O dönem birçok festival konser yasaklandı. Biz korkmadık. Biz geri çekilebilirdik ama yapmadık. Ve yasaklanmadı. Bir kısıtlamayla karşılaşmadık. … Biz hak temelli bir dille hareket ediyoruz. Biz kendimizi sansürlemedik o anlamda.

37. Bazen haklarımızı aşan sınırlamalarla karşı karşıya kalıyoruz. [Devlet memurlarını ihraç eden] KHK'lar da bunun bir parçasıydı. Arkadaşlarımız sonradan mahkemelerce iade edildi. Ama sonra bir daha soruşturma açıyorlar. … Ama biz fiili meşru mücadele konusunda ısrarımızı sürdürüyoruz.

38. Seçtiğimiz kelimelere daha fazla özen gösteriyoruz tabii. Bunu söyleyemiyoruz o yüzden söylemeyelim gibi değil. Alternatif şekilde anlatmaya çalışıyoruz. Bir şeyi anlatmanın bin bir yolu var. Rasyonel yöntemler geliştirmeye çalışıyoruz.

39. Darbe girişimi sonrası pek çok STÖ için böyle oldu. OHAL dönemi korkutucuydu. Çok büyük bir baskı geliyor ve bunu nasıl karşılayacağına dair kurumların tecrübesi yok. Kurumların düşünmek için kendi içine döndüğü bir dönem oldu. 2016-17'de bizim için böyleydi. Baskı o kadar yoğundu ki nasıl bir refleks geliştireceğini bilemedi. 2018'den beri baskıda hayatta kalmanın en iyi yöntemi atakta olmak. Geri çekildikçe o alanı kaybediyoruz. "Buradayım, varım, hala işimi en iyi şekilde yapmaya devam ediyorum" demek gerekiyor.

40. Biz bu projenin lansmanını çok yapamadık. Yerel eylem planımız var diyemedik. Kışkırtmak istemedik. Vakfın çıkarlarını korumaya çalışıyoruz. Bazı kadınların güvenliği burası sayesinde var. Onların hayatını tehlikeye atamayız. Çok hassas çıkışlar yapmamaya çalışıyoruz.

41. Federasyonlar bir hukuk komisyonu oluşturdu. Bizim de hukukçularımız var. Gönüllü avukatlar. Bizim hakkımızda birçok dava açıldı [kamu kurumları tarafından]. Basın açıklamalarıyla ilgili açıyorlar genelde. Ama pek bir şey çıkmıyor. Ortada bir suç yok.

42. Avukatlarımız var. Dava takibini kitlesel yapmaya çalışıyoruz. Bir de alıştık artık. O kadar çok dava açıldı ki. Ama davaların tamamı düşüyor. Birkaç mahkeme sonrası düşüyor. 1 mayısa çağrı yapacağız diyelim. Gözaltına alınacağız kaygısını yaşamıyoruz. Göz altına alınıyoruz. Dava açılıyor. Ama mahkeme sonrası düşüyor. 2911'le ilgili açılan tüm davalar düşüyor. Sokakta yeniden olmaya devam ediyoruz.

43. Kuvvetli bir hukuk grubumuz var. 2 kişiden oluşuyor. 3-4 kişi de onlara destek oluyor. Kazanılan başarılarda mutlaka büyük payları var. Bir tanesi CHP'den zaten. Diğeri de eski mimarlar odası avukatı. Onların ilişkileri de iyi. Kuvvetli bir ağa sahipler. Bu da bazı engellerin kolay aşılmasını sağlıyor.

44. Biz 3 aşamayı da layıkıyla yerine getiriyoruz. Alanda olmak, hukuki mücadele, eylemlilik. Alana da çağırıyoruz. Bilim insanlarından görüş alıp dokümanları da inceliyoruz. Diyelim baş edemedik ÇED kararı onaylandı o zaman da dava açıyoruz. Daha geniş sayıda dava açıyoruz. Yereldekilerle, doğrudan etkilenenlerle beraber açıyoruz. Bir davada keşif yapılacağı zaman yereldeki davacılarla birlikte keşifleri gerçekleştiriyoruz.

45. Polisin birini öldürdüğü olayda açıklama yapmıştık. Açıklama Adalet Bakanlığına ulaşmış. Polis tutuklanmış ama bizimle alakalı değil aslında tutuklanması sanıyorduk. "Biz tutuklayacaktık zaten" dediler "siz açıklama yapınca biz zor durumda kaldık." Demek ki bizi duyuyorlarmış.

46. Konsolosluklardan vs. fonlar alıyoruz. Bize 3 Euro bile bağış gelse biz onu kullanmadan önce bildiriyoruz. Denetime tabii olduğumuz için zaten her şey şeffaf. Legal olmayan hiçbir şey yok ortada. "Son 5 yılda aldığı fon" diye Yeni Akit'te falan hedef gösteriliyoruz. Sanki çok gizli bir şey bulmuşlar gibi. Halbuki zaten ortada.

47. Bizim üyelerimizin adli sicilleri temizdir. 30 yıldır tertemiz sicili olan biri nasıl bir anda terörist olabilir. Mahkemeler de buna itibar etmiyor zaten. Eğer suç işlememişseniz rahat olursunuz. Yıkılmıyoruz çünkü suçumuz yok.

48. Her gün aldığımız fonlar dolayısıyla hedef gösteriliyoruz. EU üzerinden fon almak küçük miktarlarda bile olsa hedef haline getirebiliyor. Ama bu önemli değil. Şeffaf bir süreç yürütüldüğü için sorun olmuyor. Eğer birileri bize translara aktarılması için bir fon verecekse biz seve seve alırız. Gelen paradan faydalanıyoruz. Kaçmıyoruz.

49. Yurtdışı veya yurtiçi kaynaklı herhangi bir bütçe girişi, fon girişi olmaz. Asla söz konusu değil. Mali özerklik konusunda başı diktir. Genel kurul kararı vardır ta 90'lardan. Bir oda bir keresinde bir fon almıştı, büyük sıkıntı oldu. Rücu ettirildi. Birçok teklif geliyor aslında. Belli bir proje kapsamında teklifler oldu. Kabul etmedik.

50. Avrupa Birliğinden bir kez fon aldık. … Keşke almaz olaydık. O para yüzünden suistimalle suçlandık. Bizi desteklediklerini söyleyen kişiler tarafından. Gelin inceleyin dedik, incelemediler. İkincisi de siz Avrupa Birliğinin adamısınız diye hükümet kanadından çok söylediler. Hala da söylenir. Keşke almasaydık.

51. Avrupa Birliğinden fon alma konusunu çok tartıştık. Bağımsızlığı koruma adına almayalım diyenler oldu. Dağılmama adına fon almamaya karar verdik. Ama yanlış yapmışız. Buna itiraz eden arkadaşlar sonradan başka vakıflara girip çatır çatır fon aldılar.

52. İstanbul şubenin üye profili dışarıdan fon almaya sıcak bakmaz. ... Fonlayanın yönlendirmesinin etkisinde kalma meselesi. ... Asıl odaklanman gereken yer kaymış oluyor. Belli alanlarda çalışmaya zorluyor. Fon bitince çalışma da bitiyor bazen. Dolayısıyla sakatlanma haline girmemek için istemiyoruz.

53. Tişört, bardak vb. ticari itemler satmak için dernekler ticari işletme kaydı alıyorlar. Biz de bunu düşünüyoruz. Bazı faaliyetleri kolaylaştırabilir. Örneğin parti yapıyorsunuz diyelim, o partinin bilet satışını rahat bir şekilde yapabilirsiniz. Diğer türlü bağış makbuzu toplamak zorundasınız. Görünürlük materyalleri üretebilirsiniz. Böylece derneğe bir öz kaynak da oluşmuş oluyor.

54. Zamanla para kazanmanın yollarını öğrendik. Örneğin rozet çıkarıyoruz. Satıyoruz demiyoruz, bağış karşılığında veriyoruz. Çevre festivali yapıldı örneğin geçenlerde. Ben ve birkaç arkadaşım bahçedeki çiçeklerden satıyoruz. Alanların gönlünden ne koparsa ona veriyoruz. Takvim basıyoruz. 2015 yılı başından beri çok talep görüyor takvimler. Ticari işletme konusu olacak bir şey değil yaptıklarımız. Bağış karşılığı, maliyetinin biraz üstünde veriyoruz.

55. Sosyal medyayı basın açıklamalarında kullanıyoruz. Duyurma ve kamuoyunu harekete geçirme için kullanıyoruz. Bir şeyleri duyurma noktasına bir güç olarak kullanıyoruz. Hapishanede kalamayacak durumdaki hastalar için [Twitter'da] hashtag çalışması yaptığımızda etkili olduğunu da gördük.

56. Burası dijital okur yazarlığı olan bir yer değil. Telefonu bile olmayan kadınlardan bahsediyoruz. O kadının görüşme yapabilmesi için telefonu olmadığını biliriz, vakfa çağırırız mesela. Ama hitap ettiğimiz de bir kitle var. Uluslararası ve yereldeki kurumlar. Uzun yıllardır bir websitesi var. Ama yetersiz olduğunu fark ettik. İstanbul'daki kadına da destek olmamız lazım. Son 5 yıldır bu eksikliğin farkındayız. Son 2 yıldır bir arkadaşımız bizimle birlikte sosyal medya konusunda çalışıyoruz. Dijital görünürlük önemli. … Tüm illerin Twitter hesabı vardı önceden. Ama yani tweet mi atacağız çalışma mı yapacağız? Iğdırda örneğin kim takip edecek ki? Zaten 3 tane kamu kurumu var. Kadınlar zaten takip edemiyor. Şube hesaplarını kapattık. Dolayısıyla vakfın tek hesabı var artık.

57. Sosyal medyayı kullanıyoruz. Ama yeterince etkin değiliz. Belki sosyal medyayı kullanan kişilerin yetkinsizliğinden dolayı olabilir. O kişilere özel eğitimler vermeye çalışıyoruz. Kendimizi geliştirmeye çalışıyoruz.

58. Kullanıyoruz. Ama hemen hemen her meclisimizde yetersiz olduğuna dair eleştiriler alıyoruz. Yeterli değil. Özellikle sosyal medyayı daha aktif kullanmamız konusunda eleştiriler alıyoruz. Altyapı oluşturma konusunda tartışıyoruz. Bütçesel olarak zorluyor.

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