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Speech by Safak Pavey

Our dream of living together is under a big threat. In my country, one of the most prominent pianists of the world, Fazil Say is going to stand trial for atheism. Therefore, we understood that the State's sentence for being an atheist is 1,5 years.

Turkey was expected to contribute to the consensus in-between civilisations and inter-faith peace and dialogue efforts. Instead, Turkey unfortunately chose to increase the tension of its domestic politics and now is turned into a sectarian gunpowder barrel.

In our lands, there is a mismatch between the theory and the practice. When the Copenhagen criteria is praised in theory, even the Syrian issue is discussed with antagonism directed towards Alewites inside Turkey. This hate speech gets spread deep at the bottom of the society domestically. In the meantime, it is also important to note that Alewites in Turkey and Syria stem from two completely different belief systems. But even if they were the same belief, this kind of approach would not be appropriate for a democracy culture. It would only fit into a dark political purpose.

AKP is assuring the West that it will not allow fundamentalist, fanatical religion. But the fanatical vein that it gets its power from will make it surrender to itself one day. It is inevitable that as the last Muslim generation of Kemalism, it will certainly be the victim to the beast it created. Fanaticals are all queued up, waiting impatiently to take its place.

I have an Alewite friend. Her mother used to live in eastern city of Elazig. Every Ramadan, she used to wake up in the middle of the night to switch on the kitchen light only to go back to bed again. This light was for her neighbours to see that she was up for the last meal before the dawn breaks and daily fasting starts. She was tired of pretending to be a Sunni in a small town so much that one day she could not bear it anymore and moved to live with her daughter in Istanbul. She was hoping that she would be invisible in the metropole. But even in the overcrowded shanty towns of Istanbul, she could not manage to pass the test of the last meal "sahuur". The neighbours managed to get a hint of her being a "redhead". The same old story started again when she was identified as an Alewite. Neighbours stopped coming to her house. The ashoores, the religious sweet soup, that she used to cook for them got thrown to the rubbish before her eyes. She planned to go to stay with her relatives in Germany during the following Ramadan to get away from this treatment. She was hoping she would not pretend to be fasting during a Ramadan for the first time in her life. However, we lost her just before she could have a free Ramadan time.

Having the social obligation to pretend to be a Sunni may be surfacing only recently. However, this is a reality that I have witnessed in my country since my childhood. Life was never easy for Alewites. They were burned, slaughtered, their houses and lives destroyed. What they lived through never had any value as it did for headscarf in

eyes of the ruling party of Turkey.

In our geography, the most heart-broken territory is Munzur. More than being a geographical place, it reflects a cultural trauma that has deep roots in the memories with deep social devastation created by political interventions that it was exposed to through its history.

The pains of history can not be seen by the naked eye in this geography of folk sings and sad epics. As the poet said once that these pains gets whispered as an old secret that everyone knows. It goes around as a political ghost that settled under the shadow of the social peace.

No doubt that I am not an expert on Dersim but I believe that I can feel all the communal heart breaks through universal humanity values.

It may be difficult for the European Parliament to understand why our small province Dersim is positioned right in the centre of Turkey's politics. I would like to explain this. Because Dersim is where State and hardliner Sunni public opinion is harmonised one another and became one. In the Middle East, history has more importance than anywhere else. Because we get away from today's responsibilities by believing that history is responsible for every bad thing that happens to us. Therefore, it is hard to believe the apology given by the Prime Minister for Dersim. Because when he was apologising for Dersim, he was actually having Alewites booed in his rallies. By this, he actually reminded his constituents that Alewism is not acceptable.

So, what does this apology include then?

I believe that his main purpose was a political attack against the main opposition CHP. I believe it was to corner the Alewite leader of the party ideologically. How can we talk about living together if you do not do anything to mend the past with things that you can do today while at the top of your power?

The Prime Minister can not get enough of Mosques. While every corner of Turkey is being surrounded with Mosques, the Alewite place of worship; Cemevis are still not permitted. The theological school for Greek Orthodox Church's clergymen is still kept closed. I would like to make a call from here as Deputy of Istanbul. Let us not only build a Mosque on the hill of Camlica in Istanbul as the Prime Minister recently announced the construction of. Instead, along with the Mosque, let us build also Cemevi, Church, Synagogue, Zoroastrian temple. And let us carry the bricks all together on our backs.

Almost a century after Turkish modernism trial, Turkey now stands at another point of representing a "moderate Islam model". And the eyes looking at Turkey from outside can only see this instead of the tremendous Sunni transformation that is going on inside. This is why you can read numerous articles and analysis on how Turkey is a perfect model where you can find Islam and democracy harmonised together.

I wonder whether the belief systems are creating parallel systems to defeat their enemies?

For a Western mind, looking at this question may be an unnecessary detail. But the dynamics of a belief culture is dissolving and eliminating all differences of the society

under its crushing power. All limits and boundaries of secularism is being tested and pushed. Even the most liberal politician can not have the courage to mention that he has weak affiliation with religion. It would be a political suicide. For some, this is social pressure. I rather call it a choice between the divine orders and codes & values of the mortal.

The Western world believed an Islam model through Turkey a lot. However, after sometime, the West may be worrying for those young women of Turkey, who memorised Quran at the age of 5, graduated from primary school at the age of 9, became a child bride at 12 and a mother of five children at the age of 17 years old.

The West currently finds itself in a strange situation by recommending this regime with praises to the seculars of Turkey while they would not tolerate such model in their own countries. It does not even become an issue when the Government of Turkey prioritises the protection of the State that it took over, over the human rights.

Participation of Turkey-origin populations in Europe into the society is an issue. However, the transformation of such layers of society in Turkey does not seem to be an issue. Because, international community's human rights expectations is very low indeed. As a deadly mistake, it is presumed that we have deep roots of secularism. However, the truth is that secular life in a hard Islamic culture is like reeds in a sedge which are rootless and shallow.

And the only experiment of this on earth; the Turkey-type Muslim society is transforming speedily into a hardline Sunni society. AKP's contradictory stand by which it tolerates the non-Muslims who are not a determining factor in the society anymore with their numbers dropped down to the insignificant 80+thousand amongst Turkey's population of 74 million whereas it insults Alewites is the serious milestone of this very transformation.

It may sound strange to you but since 30 years, the makers and supporters of the coup determines the laws in Turkey. The AKP government of 10 years is included in this. As you may understand from this reality, Political Islamists and the Military have their enemies in common, not their friends.

In our country, everyone finds consolation in conspiracy theories as there is no culture of facing the mistakes. Everything that comes from outside is looked at with suspicious poise and anxiety. Therefore, this creates a very strange situation.

Those people who lives like Westerners whom Islamists detest, also is irritated by the West as much as Islamists.

If we leave the alcoholic beverages issue aside, the military has not been less of a conservative than AKP. In fact, the military gained its authority with Islam's unquestionable power. This mini detail that seems to be forgotten today drew the route to this whole process. Therefore, the secularism of the military was only on the paper.

For instance, amongst the 724 martyrs of the Korean war, you can not find the name of Armenian Jak Arad who also lost his life as a soldier of Turkey's army. In an unspoken and invisible way the Alewites and in an open way Greek, Armenian, Assyrian and Jewish citizens of Turkey are not accepted to register at military

colleges.

Because both in the previous Kemalist model and in today's Wahabi model, sectarian differences are seen as a heavier crime than difference of religions.

Because Alewites are preserving secularism in their daily lives as a culture.

Alewites would have had a chance to live their culture in this century when cultural values gained such importance globally. However, instead, Alewism is being named as deviant, an unacceptable sect as it is perceived almost like dissidents of Islam while differing from its hardline ways. So, Alewites are exposed to cultural genocide by the Islamists. Because they are not let live as they are, they are about to lose their culture.

Institute of Religious Affairs of the State of Turkey "Diyanet", does not approve or share any budget to be allocated to anything other than Sunni Islam. Diyanet's hardline Sunnism is making the cliff between us official and legitimate. Before these old habits are changed, the laws of military coup such as election system, political parties legislation are reformed, us facing the history would not be in the aim to prepare ourselves for a better future.

I find it very important that the European Parliament holds such a meeting on Dersim. As you well know the same Government did not find it abnormal neither apologised for the incident where State killed 34 smuggling children in Uludere in our near past. I do not want to get into a big discussion on this now. However, I do hope that there will not be a conference on Uludere for the generations to come after us.

Thank you.

Safak Pavey