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We Are Being Cornered

Hüseyin Civan, Meydan

5 Jan 2017

Late 2016 the editor of Meydan anarchist newspaper in Istanbul was sentenced to a year and three months in prison for “supporting terror,” the latest in a string of attempts by the Turkish State to shut down dissenting voices against Erdogan’s government. What follows is Freedom Press’ English translation of Meydan’s uncompromising response.

We are being cornered

With the fear and shock that constantly oppresses our lives, with the agendas that change by the day, by the hour, with the constant repetition we see in news articles, debates, newspapers and radios, with the shares and retweets, the media that takes us for idiots and is fed by manipulation, with the gentrification and demolition policies that erase our past, our identity and our memory, with the “illusion of democracy” that weakens and imprisons our freedom, and with the reality that becomes more and more incomprehensible everyday, we are being cornered.

We are being cornered because the rulers require it in order to declare their authority and assert their dominance over our stolen willpower. We are being cornered because the rulers require it to keep their power and to create new objects to use in

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Retrieved on 8th Jan 2017 from <https://freedomnews.org.uk/turkey-meydan-anarchists-we-are-being-cornered/>

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their own wars. We are being cornered because this is the only way the government is able to create space for itself and exist.

We are being cornered by misery

The days that have to keep going through the exhaustion, the bodies that fall powerless, the minds that become unhappy as they weaken...

The rulers submerge the streets that we use to walk to school in the mornings, to go to work and to catch a bus in darkness. They corner us with unhappiness by squeezing us into minibuses and metrobuses that are full to the brim and sending us to work at the crack of dawn. As the government corners us with unhappiness, they drag us towards hopelessness and despair.

We must resist the government that decides when we may sleep and when we must wake, that snatches our morning sun and pushes us towards darkness and despair in order to win back our bodies and minds. We must find the courage to defy those who would turn us into blind and deaf, unknowing and unfeeling individuals and break out of this complacency and cornered-ness.

We are being cornered by panic

The broadcasting prohibitions that follow exploding bombs, the unfounded accusations after suspicious packages are found and bomb threats are made, the people who choose or are forced to choose to stay away from crowded places, the dollars that are exchanged in order to "prevent a crisis," the people who dream of running away from the land that is oppressed by war, death and economic crises...

In the land we live in, the government dominates the individual with fear and panic, it incapacitates, corners and in time, annihilates. As the government enforces this state of fear and panic in all public areas, the individual loses control, becomes vulnerable and is cornered into the annihilation imposed by the rulers.

Our lives are cornered into the grip of crises or death, and our days are spent looking for a way out of fear and panic, out of this cornered-ness.

The only way out of this fear and paranoia that wear down our bodies and minds, and that allow the socio-economic circumstances to slowly consume us, is through creating spaces for ourselves outside of this panic-culture. The way to create a world where we won't be cornered and imprisoned by fear and panic is to expand the spaces where the rulers impose fear on us and eliminate the culture that makes paranoiacs of us all.

We are being cornered by agendas

The attempted coup and the OHAL (regional state of emergency) that was declared in the aftermath, the operations that are conducted against the Kurdish movement and revolutionaries almost everyday with the excuse of FETÖ (Fethullah Terrorist Organisation, which Erdogan claims is linked to Fetullah Gulen and behind the abortive July coup last year), the surveillance and arrests, the people dismissed from their jobs because of new KHK's (rulings by decree) that are announced everyday, the judges that are put under surveillance during trials, the bills that are put forward, amended and passed as we all sleep, the bombs that explode in two different locations in the same week, the assassinations occurring before the effects of the bombs have passed, the images of soldiers burned alive by ISIS...

In the geography we live in, we've greeted each new day of the past six months with "last-minute news." When one day is clouded by news of bombs, the next is greeted by Turkish military tanks entering Syria. Just as the friendship between Russia and the Republic of Turkey starts to settle, the assassination of a Russian ambassador sends us into a panic of "we're going to war with Russia."

We can no longer keep up with news that drops like bombs and headlines that can change multiple times a day. Far from keeping up with the ever, and increasingly swiftly, changing

agendas of our ruler, we are flung from one agenda to the next, we are cornered by them.

In order to escape this current in which we have been swept up and cornered, we must break free of this “agenda traffic” and find a way to create our own agendas to countermand those of the government. Against the government that locks us in our homes for fear of bombs one day, and calls us to “democracy meetings” the next day, against the government that denies the existence of an economic crisis one day and urges us to exchange our dollars as a “preventative” measure the next day, we must come up with our own agendas, discuss and debate them, circulate them.

We are being cornered by repetition

The news that is presents all day long as “breaking news” with the same subtitles, the news programs that broadcast the same reporter, repeating the same deaths with the same expression every hour, the headlines that are debated for hours with no resolution, the repetition that knows no end on TV and other communication channels...

The government uses media, and the unending reiteration of news and debates, to pull us into relentless repetition. The same news of death, in the same sorrowful tone, the same news of rising costs, with the same commentary, the same news of war, with the same dismissal, are transmitted on our TV’s every hour of every day. Through this excessive repetition, we become accustomed to poverty, to starvation, to death and and soon find ourselves desensitized and cornered by the onslaught.

We must have our guards up against this repetition and desensitiation, and especially, we must keep the senses that they are trying to usurp alert and vigilant. We must not become accustomed to that which they want us to accept, and we must not let our will to be usurped in order not to be cornered by these repetitions.

We are being cornered by media

that people are burned alive and beaten with chains for the sake of our governments engaging in a war of interest, the unreal reality, the loneliness, the hopelessness and the chaos. Yes, we will escape these things.

Against those that incarcerate us, that break our will as they corner us, and that in time, make prisoners of us, from the cornered-ness that we have been subjected to, we must break free. We are at the threshold of a socio-economic explosion due to this very cornered-ness that we must step over, we must mold unrestricted lives with our collective hands, that is to say, with our organisations.

Especially after (the coup of) July 15th, the sole purpose of the media became manipulation. From news to debate programs, from sports to TV shows, everything we see, be it on the government's official channel or not, is used as a means of propaganda. Far from relaying information or showing reality, the media becomes a platform where reality is warped and propaganda is delivered through provocation. Social media, for its part, carries the same function in the even more easily controlled medium of the internet.

Media corners us through the ever present manipulation imposed on us in every bit of news, every TV show, every TV program. This manipulation aside, all we can do to protect ourselves against incomplete or regulated information is to create our own platforms on which to communicate and share information.

We are being cornered by gentrification and demolitions. While the rulers use every instrument in their hands as a means of oppressing the individual, they resort to attacks from every angle to sustain their tyranny. Gentrification and demolition are examples of this type of attack.

The government, in an effort to control the individual, firstly controls the spaces in which the individual lives. In areas where the government's own dominant culture does not exist and cannot take root, the use of gentrification and demolition is a way of dislodging and uprooting the individuals living there, but even more so, it is a way of displacing the yesterdays, the to-days, the identity and the cultures of those people.

The rulers that redevelop areas for the purpose of their own existence, of course, wish their identity and presence to take hold in the new spaces they create. Especially in the aftermath of July 15th, the renaming of so many streets, squares, parks and intersections to "democracy" is telling of a government dismantling existing truths and imposing its own culture.

They intend not only to demolish our living spaces through gentrification, but also to recondition our history, our culture, our identity and our memory.

In defence against this assault on our space and “selves” and this attempt by the rulers to corner us into their areas of command we must create new, collectively operated places and communal, unrestricted living-spaces. Against the transformation of these public areas by the government we must create new spaces without government, without capitalism, where the individual cannot be oppressed politically or economically.

We are being cornered by democracy

The term “democracy” that we keep hearing, especially since July 15th, is imposed on us by the current rulers as a means of ascertaining their longevity. In this era where everything is done in the name of “democracy,” where all practices are theorised as benefiting democratization, we experience day to day what is really meant.

Every day they place media organisations under surveillance and arrest, they push people to unlawfulness in the name of their own “democratic” purposes and interests, and it is in this unlawfulness that the people are cornered. The “democracy” they speak of means that all individuals will have their willpower usurped and all will be cornered into place where the rulers are accountable to no one.

Of course it is possible to fight against the “democracy” being forced on us. We must construct politics outside of the politics of the government, we must build a self-organizing, centerless, unrepresented political process, we must create a culture where our lives aren’t cornered, where our will is not usurped by the rulers.

We are being cornered by truth being rendered meaningless. In order to destroy the current reality and create one of their own, the rulers corner us in a construct of their own politics. The most essential tool they have as a means of realising this construct is to “create an illusion that can render the truth

meaningless.” Since the dawn of time, rulers have used a series of constructs to disconnect people from their realities. But the rulers of our time, who have become highly adept at using such tools, with their social media, mainstream media and their crazy politicians, are launching the biggest ever war on reality, specifically, on the reality of the downtrodden.

The easiest way to enslave a person, to seize their sense of self, to corner them into a constructed illusion, is to remove that person’s existing reality. Those who lose touch with reality, in time also lose their ability to think correctly and be productive. They lose their sense of self and are cornered into the illusions produced by the rulers.

The rulers corner the individual with fear and panic, with ever-changing agendas, with unending repetition, with media that only serves to manipulate, with gentrification and demolition, with the illusion of democracy, and with the meaninglessness of truth. Because the more they corner the individual, the more space they have to roam free.

It is when the individual becomes aware that they have been condemned into a corner in every facet of their lives that they begin to struggle against it.

They begin to create a new reality first in a self-organising way, and then through the perspective of organizations and community, and then to experience this collectively created reality, collectively.

The buses, metros and metrobuses of dawn, the hopeless unhappiness, the impotent helplessness, the minimum wage squabbles over tea and simit, morning marriage programs, the evening news programs and the nighttime debate programs, the workplace deaths filed under ‘accident’, that people are uprooted from the neighbourhoods they built with their own hands and placed into 60 metre squared flats, that those without dollars or gold coins to exchange are falling into an economic crisis, that people are destroyed by male dominance and slaughtered by hate policies, the cement walls and iron bars,