

A Case Study on the Discourse  
of  
Women's Conscientious Objection  
In Turkey

By  
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A Thesis Submitted to  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Canada**

**For the Memory of my grandmother, Sabriye Karaçim (1924-2008)**

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By Eda Acara

**Abstract**

This study explores militarism, nationalism and gender within the scope of the discourse of women's conscientious objection. I engage in a post-structuralist feminist analysis of the discourse of women conscientious objectors, in formal declarations and everyday practices, as a response to Turkish militarism and militarization processes in the post 1980 era. My analysis draws on the data I gathered from in depth interviews with nine women conscientious objectors as well as examination of women's and men's published declarations.

September 1, 2010



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

One of my friends became a conscientious objector in 2004. I thought that conscientious objection was limited to men who refuse to serve in the army, as in Turkey only men are obliged to serve in the military<sup>1</sup> and conscientious objection has long been associated with men refusing to serve in the army (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993). A year passed before I discovered women conscientious objectors while we organized a campaign in Halifax for Mehmet Tarhan, a gay conscientious objector imprisoned for eleven months between 2005 and 2006. Their declarations were inspiring for me as they underline the militarization of gender in a multiplicity of spheres and challenge the common definition of conscientious objection. To me, women conscientious objectors point at our blindness with regard to militarism and patriarchy and raise feminist curiosity about how these two intertwine in our daily experiences.

According to the online list of Conscientious Objectors (2010), published by the only formal Turkish conscientious objectors' group *Savaşkarşıtları* [War Resisters] (Vicdani Retçiler Listesi 2010), currently there are a hundred and twenty conscientious objectors in Turkey: twenty-four of them are women.<sup>2</sup> These women's conscientious objection declarations criticize militarized gender roles in Turkish society by refusing to be a part of militarization processes. In this project, I engage in a post-structuralist feminist analysis of the discourse of women conscientious objectors, in formal declarations and everyday practices, as a response to Turkish militarism and militarization processes in the post 1980 era. My analysis draws on the data I gathered from in depth interviews with nine women conscientious objectors as well as examination of women's and men's published declarations.

In Turkey, there have been three full military coups, in addition to several military interventions to withdraw conservative governments since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 (Sinclair-Webb 2000). As noted by Sinclair-Webb (2000), “25 years, nine months and 18 days of martial law; in other words, 30 percent of the life of the Republic has seen military governance imposed in one part of the country or another or sometimes throughout” (66). The military interventions of March 12, 1971 and February 28, 1997 were not direct military interventions (in the sense that a group of military generals took governmental control); rather, the military intervened through conservative politics in order to save the state regime by pressuring the government to adopt certain rules for the sake of the country. The military interventions of May 27, 1960 and September 12, 1980 involved a direct take over of the governmental power (Altınay 2004). The Turkish military’s presence in politics is the strongest indication of prolonged militarism in Turkey, which underlines the importance of women’s conscientious objection as an exploration of how militarist power and politics interact with nationalism and patriarchy in shaping everyday life.

### **Background on Conscientious Objection Movement in Turkey**

Early conscientious objection in the West was religiously motivated.<sup>3</sup> Starting from the nineteenth century the number of religiously motivated conscientious objectors decreased and those who based their conscientious objection on socialist and anarchist beliefs increased (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993, Epstein 2002). Moskos and Whiteclay (1993) explain the further increase in the number of secular conscientious objectors by the state policies in Continental Europe between the Two World Wars which provided the right to conscientious objection to religious objectors. States' resistance to the adoption of

the right to conscientious objection and state pressure in monitoring draft evaders in Continental Europe were also an outcome of the increased militarization in Europe after this period (Aydın 2008).

Unlike the development of conscientious objection movements in the West, which evolved more from religious to secular conscientious objection, the objectors movement in Turkey from its beginnings in the early 1990s involved anarchists and anti-militarists, and secularism dominated the source of their conscientious objections (Selek 2000, Uzun 2006). Participation of anti-militarists in the movement shaped an understanding of conscientious objection, as part of their anti-militarist politics. This encompassed a stance against all types of war and war preparation, and initially defined conscientious objection as more than refusal to serve in the army (Selek 2000).

Conscientious objection declarations by Vedat Zencir and Tayfun Gönül<sup>4</sup> date back to the early 1990s (Selek 2000; Altınay 2004). *Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* [War Resisters Association] (WRA hereafter) where many of the conscientious objectors organized, was established in İzmir in 1992 with the aims of: “struggling against war, militarism and racism, gathering people for these aims, establishing solidarity between these people and...contributing to the creation of an alternative, new, peaceful and libertarian culture instead of the militarist one” (Selek 2000:389). With these aims, WRA decided on the following spheres to operate: “developing conscientious objection movement, organizing an International Meeting for Conscientious Objectors (ICOM),<sup>5</sup> establishing an anti-militarist politics, adopting a position against continuous war in Turkey”(Selek 2000:390).<sup>6</sup> WRA was the first anti-militarist organization that adopted non-violence in the entire history of social movements in Turkey (Selek 2000)<sup>7</sup> and it was

disbanded by the state in 1993 due to its Charter.<sup>8</sup>

This was followed by the foundation of *İzmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (Izmir War Resisters Association- IWRA hereafter) in 1994. IWRA continued holding WRA's perspectives and political affiliation with anti-militarism and non-violence (Selek 2000). However, compared to WRA, IWRA generated deeper dialogue with the Kurdish movement and advocated for anti-militarism and non-violence with regard to the Kurdish Problem.<sup>9</sup> IWRA publicized a unique discourse in Turkey, expressed in their political motto: 'Don't serve in the military, don't serve in the Mountains'. This political motto and stance created tension between IWRA and Kurdish and Leftist organizations they worked with during this period who still advocated armed struggle against the Turkish state (Selek 2000).<sup>10</sup>

In opposing state militarism as well as the Kurdish militarism of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK-*Partiya Karkerê Kurdistan*), non violence and anti-militarism became the core component of IWRA's politics. The organization became an important political site that nurtured non-violence trainings and actions (Selek 2000)<sup>11</sup> and acknowledged conscientious objection as only a part of their challenge against militarism. However, the arrest of Osman Murat Ülke (Ossi hereafter) in 1996 directed all of IWRA's resources and campaign on the case of Ossi.<sup>12</sup> Ossi was imprisoned continuously between 1996 and 1999. This led to the exhaustion of IWRA activists who struggled for the continuation of Ossi's campaign; the organization was dissolved in 2001 (Selek 2000).

My interviews and the relevant literature (Selek 2000, Altınay 2004) suggest that the state's refusal to recognize the status of the conscientious objectors and their repeated imprisonment constitute the main reasons for the exhaustion of IWRA. Due to the



vulnerability of the imprisoned conscientious objectors, the organization constantly focused on conscientious objection rather than creating alternative actions for challenging militarism in Turkey. For the era of IWRA, although there has been anti-militarist mobilization, the main focus of activity inevitably became the campaign around Ossi and other imprisoned objectors.

The campaign did contribute to the overall challenge to militarism through conscientious objection (Selek 2000, Altınay 2004). Also, IWRA served as the birthplace of an anti-militarist feminist group that gathered under the roof of the Association (Selek 2000). Women who participated in this group later pioneered the phenomenon of women's conscientious objection.

Between 2001 and 2006, the conscientious objectors' movement, which was mainly composed of small groups of activists dispersed in Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara, organized two campaigns around the imprisoned conscientious objectors in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> These campaigns were supported by the anti-war movements, which started in Turkey as early as 2001. The support of the anti-war movement temporarily eased the problem of activist participation and mobilization that was an important reason for the exhaustion of IWRA and WRA. As a result, the numbers of the conscientious objectors increased dramatically after 2001.<sup>14</sup>

The rise in the number of the conscientious objectors by 2004 and 2005 was not only due to the anti-war mobilization during 2003, but also the year of 2004 witnessed two actions, *Militurizm Festivali* [Militourism Festivals]<sup>15</sup> and *Yüzleşiyoruz Kampanyası* [the 'We are Facing' Campaign],<sup>16</sup> in addition to the campaign against the imprisonment of another conscientious objector, Mehmet Tarhan, for fourteen months in 2005. During

this period, the actions and activities of the anti-militarist movement were especially in Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara.

Women started declaring their conscientious objection for the first time in 2004 during the first militourism festival in Istanbul. However, two of my participants who declared their objection during this festival emphasized that they started thinking about declaring their conscientious objections one or two years before but delayed it as women's objection and its reasons were not fully understood by the movement. They received negative reactions based on why women should declare conscientious objections since they are not conscripted. On the other hand, the first inspiration for other women declaring their conscientious objection was rather spontaneous. One of my participants was in the organization team of the festival and decided to declare her objection during the festival. Her declaration was announced before the festival as a call for other interested women and by this, the first women objectors appeared in the first militourism festival and declared their conscientious objections.

Militourism festivals are unique at an international level, due to their mixed gender participation and their challenge to the gender oppression militarism creates (Altınay 2006b). During the first militourism festival, heterosexism, gender and militarism were emphasized by the visit to *Gülhane Askeri Tıp Akademisi* [Gülhane Military Medicine Academy- GATA]. GATA is one of the military hospitals where medical examinations of military personnel and conscripts are conducted. For conscripts, this examination is compulsory and the records of medical examination are stored in the archives of the hospitals. In Turkey, gays are considered to be unfit for military service if they declare their homosexuality during the medical examination conducted by the

Military Hospitals. In return for this declaration, the hospitals conduct a further series of medical examinations to provide proof for homosexuality, which is required to prepare the Certificate of Disability for Discharge provided to gay draftees.<sup>17</sup>

Mehmet Tarhan's campaign (2005-2006) further became an important moment for debating hegemonic masculinity, populations exempted from military service (women, gay and transgender men, and disabled men), and militarism in Turkey. Tarhan's declaration of conscientious objection, focusing on homosexuality as defined in the context of a military medical examination and the state's campaign for his imprisonment (which included attempts to drag him to a military hospital for an examination to certify his homosexuality during his imprisonment), concentrated on the certificate of disability for discharge. According to my interviews with the women conscientious objectors, Mehmet Tarhan's campaign and imprisonment influenced women's acquaintance with the conscientious objection movement and decision to declare their conscientious objections after 2006 (Dilek İ, Seher, Sitem).

Although heavy activism between 2003 and 2005 resulted in a dissemination of knowledge on conscientious objection, challenging militarism in its links with sexism, and an increase in the overall number of conscientious objection declarations, anti-militarist activism after 2006 slowed down. The reasons behind this slowing down are beyond the limits of this thesis but relevant research shows exhaustion of the movement based on a relative lack of participation (Altınay 2004, Selek 2000). This is likely informed by the fact that many men and women conscientious objectors lack effective material means to support their lives. For reasons that I outline in Chapter 3 many of them lack health insurance and a solid job to sustain them selves.

The most important peak in terms of the number of conscientious objection declaration was in 2004, which brought five women conscientious objectors. The first women conscientious objectors in 2004 were followed by six women objectors in 2005. This decreased to one in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The overall conscientious objection movement survived through a slow down period in 2008 and 2009. After a slow down in the movement in general and decrease in the number of women objectors since 2004 and 2005, ten new women objectors joined between late 2009 and 2010 during the time when this thesis is written (Vicdani Retçiler Listesi 2010). Currently there are a hundred and twenty conscientious objectors: twenty four of them are women.

The aforementioned statistics indicate that women conscientious objection has not lost its significance for the movement. As I argue in this thesis, each new women objector brings in her own gendered experiences with nationalism and militarism in Turkey. Studying women's experiences with militarism and nationalism and their resistance against them by conscientious objection reveal the invisibility of militarism as a gendered discourse.

### **Theoretical Background, Method and Evidence, Project Risks**

By discourse, Foucault meant “practices that systematically form the object of which they speak” (Foucault 1989: 49). Meaning can only be formed through the knowledge of things, which is governed by discourse. Discourse is about knowledge production through language and knowledge production is not merely a linguistic process, but a process related with social practices (Hall 2001). Keeping in mind the above definition, I examine the discourse of the oral and written declarations of women's conscientious objection in the context of militarism in Turkey,<sup>18</sup> also analyze the

militarism they discuss in the interviews in order to reveal the social practices that inform this discourse.

While using a basic Foucauldian understanding of discourse, I draw upon post-structuralist feminist discourse analysis, which builds on Foucault by focusing on gender (neglected in Foucault's analysis), and on the possibility of resistance within discourse (Baxter 2003, Sunderland 2004). I further use Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism of speech utterances and the inter-discursivity of discourses (Bakhtin 1986) to enrich my examination of gendered discourses. I use this combination of theoretical tools to analyze the construction of the discourse of women's conscientious objection, its dispersion in connection with feminist and conscientious objection movement discourses in Turkey, and the ways in which it is recognized or refused by these discourses.

### **Militarism as a Gendered Discourse**

Gendered discourses position women and men in different ways and constitute certain forms and expectations of gendered performances. By post-structuralist definition, gender is continuously performed, enacted and negotiated in accordance with ethnicity, sexuality and race (Baxter 2003, Sunderland 2004). I focus on militarism, and its expression in different militarization periods in the post 1980 era in Turkey, as a gendered discourse.

Militarism as a gendered discourse is articulated in both state and social movement discourses in Turkey (Selek 2004). A Foucauldian (1989) understanding of power allows us to see the circulating character of militarism. According to Foucault (1989), power is not something concentrated in one centre like the elites, the law or the state. Further, power is not just a repressing but also a productive force, which constructs

knowledge and discourse (Foucault 1989). Discourse produces the subject through the articulation of knowledge and power (Baxter 2003, Sunderland 2004). Post-structuralist feminist discourse analysis argues for the possibility of subject resistance and defines discourse as “a way of seeing the world” (Sunderland 2004: 28). The act of seeing extends from reception to resistance. Further, gendered discourses can also work through contestation against and negotiation with the gendered content in discourses (Sunderland 2004). Using these theoretical tools, I examine how women conscientious objectors negotiate and subvert the meanings of conscientious objection through their own declarations and argue that the discourse of women’s conscientious objection in this way challenges and intervenes in the gendered discourse of militarism.

### **Discourses in Dialogue, Intervention and Social Transformation**

A given discourse is related to other discourses diachronically and synchronically (Wodak 1997, Baxter 2003, Sunderland 2004). Diachronically means that “with each word spoken, the meanings within particular discourses are carried through time”; synchronically means that “similar and different discourses exist in contemporary relation to each other” (Peterson 2002: 352; in Sunderland 2004: 11). Fairclough (1992) calls this inter-discursivity, meaning “the mixing together of different discourses and genres” (23). Bearing in mind this concept of inter-discursivity, I first analyze how the meaning of conscientious objection is defined through the content of women’s conscientious objection, by analyzing the written declarations of men and women’s conscientious objection. Then, using interview evidence, I evaluate the current and historical relationship of women’s conscientious objection discourse with feminist and broader conscientious objection movement discourses in Turkey.

In order to conduct an analysis of inter-discursivity, I employ Bakhtinian notions of dialogism (Bakhtin 1986). According to Bakhtin (1986), utterances exist in dialogic relationship to other utterances within the same discourse or embedded in other discourses. A text or a speech is always an answer to another text or speech. For this reason, Bakhtin (1986) draws attention to the importance of looking at the other within the speech utterance, to whom the utterance is directed. Imagination of the other in relation to the content of utterances also connects with genre and style. Genre and style choices exist in correspondence with certain calculations of the perception of the addressee (the other). Using the above notions of dialogism, I examine women and men's conscientious objection declarations with questions such as: 'Who/What are the addressees of the declarations?', 'What does the information that is transmitted through the declarations indicate about militarism and sexism?' and 'What kind of femininity is indicated, promoted and defined within these declarations?'. These questions are useful in understanding why women conscientious objectors chose 'conscientious objection declaration' as a primary genre in which to communicate knowledge of militarism and sexism.

In addition to these questions, I analyze the origins of the discourse of women's conscientious objection in its contemporary relationship to the discourses of the feminist and broader conscientious objection movements in Turkey, through data collected in in-depth interviews with the women conscientious objectors. These interviews focus on the motivation behind the declaration of women conscientious objection, the experiences of the women conscientious objectors with militarism and how these women see women's conscientious objection in relation to feminist and broader conscientious objection

discourses. I further concentrate on the meanings of violence and non-violence within the discourse of women conscientious objectors in order to examine the differences between feminist movements and the discourse of women's conscientious objectors in Turkey.

As a final step, I analyze whether the discourse of women's conscientious objectors involves steps toward social transformation. Here, I specifically investigate whether the expansion of the definition of conscientious objection's meaning, as indicated in the discourse of women's conscientious objectors, has the potential to bring social change. By acknowledging the dynamic character of discourses, Sunderland (2004) emphasizes that social transformation can occur through interventions into the contradictions within discourses "in part because they render discourses unsustainable" (Sunderland 2004: 213). I evaluate the intervention of women's conscientious objection in terms of its success in or potentials for social transformation and in this way, I point at further sites for feminist intervention with regard to the realm of militarism in Turkey.

### **Methodology and Evidence**

The core of this research lies in the analysis of the discourse of women conscientious objectors through a cross-examination of women conscientious objection declarations and in depth interviews. Critical discourse analyst Fairclough (1995) stresses three dimensions to conducting discourse analysis. First is the interpretation of the text, second is "the analysis of discourse practice" (processes of text production, consumption and distribution), and the final dimension is analysis of the context (i.e. analysis of discursive events as instances of socio cultural practice) (Fairclough 1995:2).

Through Fairclough (1995)'s three-dimensional discourse analysis, I examine declarations of conscientious objection in order to reveal the gendered experience of



conscientious objection at a textual level. For the second dimension, I conducted in depth interviews with women conscientious objectors in order to disclose the reasons why they declare their conscientious objections. In depth interviews provide personal information on the women conscientious objectors, investigate the past and current political activity and attitude of objectors and search for the reasons leading to the decision of declaring conscientious objection.<sup>19</sup> Further to this, I use the interviews to gather information about reactions towards women's conscientious objection by members of their close circle (friends, family, members of the conscientious objection movement in general, and from other political environments where women objectors participate), and to examine the daily life experiences of women objectors with the relationship between militarism and gender in Turkey.

At a third and final level, I contextualize in depth interviews and analysis of the conscientious objection declarations by locating the phenomenon of women's conscientious objection in the context of the social movements history of Turkey in the post 1990s. For this, I concentrate on the understanding of non-violence and how this affects the marginalization of the women conscientious objectors from women's movements in Turkey. In this regard, questions included in the interviews focus on my participants' definitions of 'anti-militarism', 'antimilitarist-feminism', 'violence' and 'non-violence' and analyze their definitions comparatively with how violence is represented within the violence against women framework of the women's movements. I also asked my participants about other relevant political self-definitions and examine the ways in which they relate these to their political identity as a conscientious objector.

I employed content analysis for both the interviews and the declarations. According to Fairclough (2003), discourses manifest themselves through texts and the social influence of these texts is based on meaning making processes. Processes of meaning making are composed of three elements: 1) Production of text, 2) The text itself, 3) Reception of the text (Fairclough 2003). In order to examine the meaning making process in the discourse of conscientious objectors (the first element), I examine the process of producing the conscientious objection declarations with the help of the interviews. I first organized data from the in depth interviews into different themes. Then, I used these themes to explain different stages towards the women's decisions to declare conscientious objection. I further constructed a timeline to indicate important dates of international and national incidents that yielded important turns in the rise and marginalization of the discourse of women conscientious objectors. This timeline contributed to contextualizing women's experiences with militarism.

For the second element, I undertook content analysis of declaration texts and discovered thematic overlap and differences between women conscientious objection declarations and men's declarations. I further analyzed whether there are new concepts introduced by women conscientious objection declarations: as Fairclough (2003) emphasizes, different discourses produce their own ways of representing social phenomenon. As a final step, I examined how women's conscientious objection declarations were perceived by women objectors' relatives and friends through thematically categorizing the data in the interviews.

I conducted in depth interviews with nine women who have publicly declared their conscientious objection. I got in touch with some of these women through my own

contacts in the conscientious objectors movement and used a snowball method, with referrals from initial subjects for organizing other interviews. As women have been declaring their conscientious objections since 2004, I had interviews with at least one woman for each year.

### **Project Risks**

The methodological risks embedded in this thesis project can be summarized as concerning the ‘objectivity’ of the research and the ethical concerns with regard to the legal status of the research subjects.

Feminist criticisms regarding who and what gets to be included in academic research serve as an important tool in challenging the objectivity of research and the researcher. The researcher’s identity is constructed as an insider or an outsider in relation to the research subject(s), due to their age, gender, race, dress and so on, which in turn affects the knowledge produced (Damaris 2001, Scott 1992). As a researcher, I identify with anti-militarist feminism and actively participated in the conscientious objectors’ movement since 2004. My position within the movement and my political views with regard to militarism in Turkey position me as an insider of sorts with regard to women conscientious objectors.

On the other hand, I am also an outsider because I have not declared my conscientious objection. Even though I do not refer to myself as ethnically Turkish because it signifies nationalism, rather than an ethnic identity, I do not have a Kurdish or an Alevi background and experience. This positions me as an outsider with regard to the experiences of some women conscientious objectors with militarism and nationalism. I am also an outsider because I am engaged in academic research on conscientious

objection. In order to overcome my outsider status, I designed an inclusive and participatory research process specifically for women conscientious objectors. The idea of the emancipatory research for this project feeds upon feminist standpoint methodology and postmodernist criticisms towards difference.

Feminist standpoint epistemology challenges the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched through conceptualizing feminist work as a political act. In this process, the researcher has more power when compared to the subjects of the research. The researcher has the means and access to shape the information produced. What is distinct with the feminist standpoint epistemology is its emphasis on emancipatory research, which encourages the researcher to share her power with her respondents and have them be active in the research process through extensive dialogue (Letherby 2003). Through my dialogues with the women conscientious objectors, I tried to share every aspect of my research with my participants. I organized a feedback period during the research project, which was organized after the interviews were conducted and two of the analysis chapters were prepared as an initial draft. These two chapters involved the analysis of the interviews and the conscientious objection declarations. These chapters were sent in Turkish to my participants in order to get their feedback. Further, my research participants were given a chance to add or withdraw information from the research. An ultimate aim of this feedback period was also increasing the accessibility of the project. All of the feedback collected was incorporated in the research.

Supporters of the feminist standpoint epistemology argue that the production of knowledge itself is a political act and therefore needs to be for the benefit of oppressed women, rather than the use of the dominant groups (Letherby 2003). On the other hand,

post modern feminist critiques of standpoint theory's monolithic category of woman, and the former's specific concern with the differences among women's experiences, also guides my analysis of the experiences of women objectors with militarism and nationalism. This project will serve as an historical and sociological assessment of the discourse of women's conscientious objectors in Turkey. In that sense, hopefully the conscientious objection movement will benefit from the research.

The most important risk in this research is the legal vulnerability of the women conscientious objectors. In Turkey, Article No. 318 of Turkish Penal Code hands down prison sentences for the crime of "alienating people from military service." Article No. 318 has been used to prosecute reporters who have prepared news about imprisoned male conscientious objectors and conscientious objection in general. None of the women conscientious objectors have been prosecuted using Article 318. However, in recognition of this possible risk, I use pseudonyms for the names of my participants. The pseudonyms are in no way related to the actual persona of my participants.

### **Research Contributions of Thesis**

This thesis project's analysis of women conscientious objectors' experiences adds to the limited international and Turkish literature on militarism, nationalism and gender (2000, Altınay 2004). I further contribute to the research about conscientious objection discourse in Turkey in two book chapters, outlining the phases of the conscientious objection movement (Altınay 2004) and examining the reasons Turkish conscientious objectors (including women conscientious objectors) have for declaring (Selek 2000). These accounts do not attempt to evaluate conscientious objection in interaction with other social movement discourses. I fulfill this aim by comparing conceptualizations of

violence and non-violence, framed within the discourse of women's conscientious objection and contemporary women's movements in Turkey. This analysis further contributes to the peace studies literature (Galtung 1965, 1990) and feminist understandings of non-violence and violence (Beckwith 2002, Costain 2000).

## **Literature Review**

### **Conscientious Objection and Women's Conscientious Objection**

The most popular definition of conscientious objection is refusal to serve in the military (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993). In *The New Conscientious Objection*, military sociologist Charles Moskos and historian John Whiteclay (1993) argue that there is a trend toward secularization in conscientious objection from earlier periods in western society to post-modern western society. They perceive this trend as a repertoire in post modern Western society whereby the right to conscientious objection and alternate service are provided by the state and/or compulsory conscription is abolished.

Starting from the eighteenth century the number of religiously motivated conscientious objectors decreased and those who base their conscientious objection on socialist and anarchist beliefs increased (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993, Epstein 2002). Both in Europe and in the United States, the secularization of conscientious objection occurred in interaction with socialist and anarchist ideologies, and antiwar movements (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993, Epstein 2002).

The new conscientious objection is more secular than religious and more common than marginalized; it not only involves objectors against compulsory conscription but also civil service people in uniform. In other words, the definition of conscientious objection has expanded and types of conscientious objectors have diversified (Moskos & Whiteclay 1993).<sup>20</sup> Although Moskos & Whiteclay's (1993) analysis is an important

attempt to categorize and understand the definition of conscientious objection, it only understands conscientious objection on the grounds of objectors' opposition to the military and/or military service.

In this thesis, I analyze conscientious objectors' views of militarism and the act of conscientious objection through an examination of their written declarations and in-depth interviews with a specific concern for the differences in women's conscientious objection. This analysis aims to determine distinctions, dominant trends and strategies and demands within the conscientious objection movement in Turkey, while contextualizing the discourse of women's conscientious objection within the movement.

The relevant research on the conscientious objection movement (Altınay 2004; Selek 2000, Uzun 2006, Yorulmaz & Üsterçi 2008) suggests that a majority of the objectors in Turkey base their objections on secular aims and that their declarations mainly involve an absolutist (total) objection rather than non-combatant conscientious objection.<sup>21</sup> This contributes to the male dominated understanding of conscientious objection as refusal to serve in the military because only men are conscripted in Turkey (Selek 2000). In order to contextualize the discourse of women conscientious objectors, analytically I refer to this trend as the dominant understanding of conscientious objection. I concentrate on the recent challenges of Kurdish, religious and women's conscientious objection to this dominant understanding, and how these challenges have been interpreted by women and men conscientious objectors in the movement, by examining the written declarations and articles posted by conscientious objectors to the War Resisters Turkey on-line archives.<sup>22</sup> I argue that the dominant understanding of conscientious objection is established through the principle of non-violence and their opposition to the just war

frameworks circulating within the discourses of *religious* and *Kurdish* conscientious objection. I assert that although this difference incorporates an understanding of conscientious objection as more than refusal of the military service, the declarations and the act of conscientious objection in the dominant understanding of conscientious objection are shaped by an understanding of compulsory conscription as the main facet of militarism in Turkey, a facet which is inevitably male dominated.

Altınay (2004) and Selek (2000) argue that women conscientious objectors perceive militarism as a gendered discourse and oppose it through their declarations. Drawing on this analysis, I argue that women oppose and subvert this male dominated definition of militarism and conscientious objection (as only the refusal of military service) by bringing their own gendered experiences and declarations into the discourse of conscientious objection movement in Turkey.

### **Militarism, Nationalism and Gender**

There is a plethora of academic work in Turkey that examines the political and economic costs of the militarism (see Fidel 1975; Heper and Evin 1988; Özdemir 1989; Hale 1994; and Heper and Güney 2000; Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1993; Cizre 2003). This research concentrates on the military's control of Turkish politics through the Turkish National Security Council and other mechanisms since 1960s.

In the same literature, there is a growing body of analysis on militarism as a social process. These works enlarge the sphere of the debate on militarism and examine the ways in which militarist politics become prevalent in everyday life as a social process.<sup>23</sup> Within this context, militarism is possible only if women consent to participate and serve for militarism; and women consent by employing the gendered roles offered through



militarism, which legitimize masculine domination (Enloe 2000, Altınay 2006a).

Enloe (2000) defines militarization and militarism as “a step by step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well being on militaristic ideas” (Enloe 2000: 3). Current international feminist scholarship on militarism distinguishes between “1) the military, as a social institution; 2) militarism as an ideology; 3) militarization as a social process” (Altınay 2004; see also Enloe 1993, Feinman 2000). By concentrating on the opposition of the discourse of women conscientious objectors to the militarization of gender I incorporate these three distinct areas, indicating the ways in which they intertwine within the course of militarization in Turkey. I analyze in depth interviews with nine woman conscientious objectors by focusing on the reasons why they declare their conscientious objection and their experiences with militarism using the literature on militarism and gender.

Turkish nationalism, as a significant component of Turkish militarism, was most visible in the experiences of women conscientious objectors who come from different ethnic and religious origins. They face nationalism and militarism in everyday life firstly as a gendering process, and secondly as a social process shaped by the official nationalist discourse of internal enemies, which articulates with xenophobia toward the bordering nations, such as Greece and Armenia.

For the first dimension, the international feminist scholarship understands militarism and nationalism as mutually constitutive of each other (Nagel 1998, Enloe 2000, Yuval Davis & Anthias 1989), and interlinked with the construction and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Enloe 1990, Nagel 1998). Nagel (1998) argues that nationalism perpetuates masculine cultural themes, like honor, patriotism, cowardice,

and duty. By referring to this culture of nationalism, she further states that a “micro-culture of masculinity in everyday life articulates very well with the demands of nationalism particularly its militaristic side.” (Nagel 1998: 252). Enloe (2004) notes that when nationalist movements become militarized, “male privilege in the community usually becomes more entrenched” (Enloe 1990: 56).

Many feminist scholars emphasize that the protection of women is depicted as key to maintaining the honor of the nation (Cockburn 2007, Higate & Hopton 2005, Altınay 2004, Enloe 2000, Selek 2000, Seifert 1999). Cockburn (2007) indicates that the regulation of women’s bodies is part of the core agenda of militarism, which legitimizes the masculine subject and men’s power. In this way, women are reduced to motherhood through which the nation is reproduced (Altınay 2004, Selek 2000). Women are also most frequently marginalized from the military due to their gender roles established by militarism (Feinman 2000, Cockburn 2007). Altınay (2004) emphasizes that even if women are invited into the process of defending the country or nation building (other than as beings to be defended), protection of women’s honor (i.e virginity or purity) becomes an important issue.<sup>24</sup>

Drawing on the four gendered narratives that Altınay (2008) argues are constructed in the authoritative discourse of militarism and nationalism in Turkey, I analyzed women objectors’ declarations in Chapter 2 as these narratives show the ways in which nationalism and militarism position women in Turkey and contextualize women conscientious objectors’ analysis of militarism as a gendered discourse.

For the second dimension with regard to the experiences of women conscientious objectors, Altınay & Bora (2007) emphasize that discourse on internal enemies shaped by

nationalism is the most fundamental aspect of Turkish militarism. Construction of the internal enemy is linked with the narration of Turkish national identity in moments of military intervention.

There is a consensus in the political science literature on Turkish nationalism that Turkish national identity is narrated as Sunni and Turkish, i.e. as ethno-cultural nationalism (Bazin 2009, Belge 2007, Bora 2007). This narration is further legitimized by the myth of military nation whereby defeating the enemies of the nation and Turkish love for soldiery are enacted (Altınay & Bora 2007). The myth of military nation includes military and military service as a necessary duty of the Turkish race/nation/culture. Within this framework, from the early years of the Turkish Republic onwards, the military nation myth was narrated as a cultural characteristic of Turkishness (“Every Turk is born a soldier!”) and the Turkish state, rather than as a historical product. This has “sanctified the practice of military service in the name of nationhood, placing it outside of history, outside of political debate” (Altınay 2004: 32). Militarism became a normalized practice, which is embedded in ‘Turkish’ culture (Altınay 2004).

The myth of military nation legitimizes the significant control of the Turkish military over politics (Altınay & Bora 2007). As noted above, the high number of military interventions since the establishment of the Turkish Republic October 29, 1923 is indicative of this phenomenon. The myth of military nation has also contributed to legitimizing the domination of militarist ideology in the realm of education, culture and the construction of Turkish citizenship (Altınay & Bora 2007).<sup>25</sup>

The nationalist and militarist depiction of Turkish nationalist identity, and construction of a monolithic and absolute Turkish national identity became fixed during

the 1980 coup d'état (Üstel 2004), which resulted in the state repression of different identity groups and communities (Kadıoğlu 1998, Üstel 2004). These identities in turn found their way forward through their opposition to the monolithic, ethno-cultural definition of the Turkish nation, and this era corresponded with the rise of Alevi and Kurdish movements (Çaha 2005, Kadıoğlu 1998).

The period after the 1980 coup and consolidation of ethno-cultural nationalism fed into the state's depiction of the internal enemies of the Turkish nation as ethnically and culturally different others (Belge 2007, Bora 2007). The limited amount of research on Turkish national education shows that this militarist and nationalist discourse on the internal enemies is disseminated through courses at every level of national education (Bora 2009, Altınay 2009).

As the aforementioned literature indicates, Turkish militarism and nationalism go hand in hand and fix an ethno-cultural understanding of Turkishness that puts the militarist emphasis on "Turks'" love for soldiery. Through the dissemination of the myth of military nation and the discourse on internal enemies at the level of the state and national education, individuals and groups are militarized, which triggers violence and discrimination against internal enemies. I deepen my analysis of women conscientious objectors' experiences by investigating types of performance and ethno-religious identities that position my participants as internal enemies. Women conscientious objectors' experiences further show that militarization of gender occurs through the militarization of motherhood, childhood and intimate relations, all based on the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Violence and Non-violence in Women's Movements and Discourse of Women Conscientious Objectors**

In my interviews and the women's declarations, non-violence is an important aspect of the discourse of women conscientious objectors and its practice feeds their opposition to militarism as a violent discourse. I analyze how women conscientious objectors understand, experience and perform non-violence and violence by blending the peace research literature (Galtung 1965, 1990) and feminist literature on non-violence (Beckwith 2002).

Peace research literature enables us to see the understanding of non-violence in the discourse of women objectors as a practice of daily life, and political action through women's declarations of objection as an extension of this practice. Galtung (1990) perceives violence as more than bodily harm and draws attention to structures of violence legitimizing and reproducing the mental transformation for violence.<sup>26</sup>

The peace research literature on non-violence does not consider the relationship between gender and non-violence. I analyze the gendered understanding of non-violence in the discourse of women conscientious objectors by drawing on challenges to the international feminist literature on women's movements, which argues for women's fundamental connection to non-violence based on the gender roles of women as care-givers.<sup>27</sup> One of these challenges focuses on the benefits of non-violence as a tactic and as a framing element in women's rights movements (Costain 2000). Political scientist Beckwith (2002) argues that "general sets of collective actions -violent and non-violent- are constructed in the course of a movement campaign in gendered terms, which offers women and men different opportunities for political engagement." (Beckwith 2002: 79). In other words, she argues for the gendered-ness of non-violence and/or violence as

dependent on specific processes, questioning the feminist arguments for non-violence as the essence of femininity (Beckwith 2002).

By blending the existing literature on non-violence by Galtung (1965, 1990) and that by Beckwith (2002), I argue that the discourse of women conscientious objectors defines non-violence as more than the absence of physical violence, and as a practice in daily life which shapes their engagement with politics. This understanding of non-violence, which challenges male domination as perpetuated by militarism and nationalism in daily life, finds its most accurate expression in women's conscientious objection declarations.

The close examination of the understanding of non-violence within the discourse of women conscientious objectors further provides clues with regard to their marginalization. I concentrate on how women conscientious objectors' analysis of militarism as a gendered discourse and of non-violence as a practice of daily life and a political action repertoire are marginalized from the women's movements in the post 1980 era of Turkey. I firstly analyze the interview data on the women conscientious objectors' views on feminism and women's movements in Turkey. Secondly, I investigate the problematization of violence and non-violence in the women's movements discourse and discourse of women conscientious objectors in order to build an understanding of the historical and current relationship of these two sets of discourse, and examine the marginalization of the women conscientious objectors from the women's movements in Turkey.

For the above analysis, I specifically consider the violence against women framework, which is largely founded by second wave feminists. By drawing on the

existing Turkish feminist literature on women's movements in Turkey (Bodur 2005, Çağlayan 2009, Tekeli 1998, Altınay & Arat 2007, Acar-Savran 2007, Işık 2002), I contextualize how the discourse of women conscientious objectors is marginalized from those movements. Here, women conscientious objectors' criticisms of second wave feminists' emphasis on autonomous women-only groups, and the latter's depiction of women as victimized by male violence, constitute the difference between the discourse of women's conscientious objectors and that of feminists. Stressing women's engagement with militarism and militarization processes, women objectors criticize the patriarchal violence employed by women and argue for the importance of mixed gender groups for struggling against militarism. Thus, I argue that women conscientious objectors' conceptualization of violence is shaped by several oppressions involving patriarchy and militarism. This draws the line of their difference and distance from the women's movements and is an outcome of how violence and non-violence are framed in the discourse of women conscientious objectors and the women's movements in Turkey.

### **Thesis Overview**

In the first part of this thesis I analyze women and men's declarations of conscientious objection, and the experiences of the women conscientious objectors with militarism. I argue that women's conscientious objection is different than male conscientious objection because the former defines gendered inequalities and gendered violence as consequences of militarism. By this, the discourse of women's conscientious objection aims to subvert conscientious objection through gendering militarism.

In the second part of the thesis, I concentrate on women conscientious objectors' experiences with militarism and nationalism in Turkey and show that militarism not only

circulates through state militarism but also within social movement discourses, at schools and in various other facets of daily life (Selek 2000) which bring the militarization of motherhood, intimate relationships and childhood. The experiences hold a gendering aspect, in the context of which women attempt to challenge everyday oppression non-violently. I further extend my analysis about the discourse of women's conscientious objection by focusing on how women conscientious objectors understand violence and non-violence and relate these representations to their feminism, and their understanding of the relationship between the political and the personal. Then, I examine feminist conceptualizations of non-violence and violence in Turkey within the framework of violence against women. By comparing them with the discourse of women conscientious objectors, I explore the challenges of the women objectors to the women's movements' conceptualizations. I would like to contribute to the dialogue between the women's movements and the women conscientious objectors by challenging the representation of women as the victimized gender in women's movements discourse in Turkey.

In the final part of this thesis project, I explore the strengths and limits of the discourse of women's conscientious objection and demonstrate that the discourse of women's conscientious objection is marginalized both in terms of its numbers, dispersion within, and interaction with different social movement discourses based on these movements' understanding of non-violence and the male dominated understanding of conscientious objection.



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> According to Military Service Act [*Askerlik Kanunu*] (Adopted in June 6th, 1927, Act No: 1111), all men are obliged by conscription. The Act is accessible at: <http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/437.html> (Accessed June 9th, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The List of the Conscientious objectors are available at: <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=27221&ArsivSayfaNo=1> (Accessed June 9th, 2010)

<sup>3</sup> From the sixteenth century onwards, Mennonites and Quakers were among the most popular sects that rejected armed service due their religious beliefs (Bröckling 2008).

<sup>4</sup> They were writers in the journal *Sokak* [Street] and the newspaper *Güneş* [The Sun]. Due to their conscientious objection declarations, they stood trial in a civil court based on Turkish Penal Code 155, condemning them for alienating the public from military service. Tayfun Gönül was acquitted and Vedat Zencir was punished with 3 months of imprisonment. Later, his punishment was turned into a fine (Selek 2000, Altınay 2004).

<sup>5</sup> ICOM was organized in May 1993 in Milas, Ören (Southwestern Turkey), hosted 90 participants from 19 countries and released *Zorunlu Askerliğe Karşı Manifesto* [Manifesto against Compulsory Conscription]. The manifesto opposed compulsory conscription as an integral part of militarism and violence and called for non-violent action to dismiss compulsory conscription that includes rejection of paying war taxes and refusing to cooperate with military research, production and trade (Altınay 2004; Selek 2000). For the full text of the Manifesto in Turkish, please see Savaskarsitlari.org 2004.

<sup>6</sup> War in Turkey stands for the war between Turkish State and Kurdish insurgency.

<sup>7</sup> On the use of militarist violence by the Turkish socialist and communist movements in the 1970s and 1980s and their marginalization after the 1980s as a result of the brutal suppression of the 1980 military coup by the state please see: Sarioğlu 2007, Ağırnaslı 2007, Çaha 2005, Selek 2000, Şimşek 2004. Communist and socialist organizations of the time operated within a just war framework, which legitimized the people's war and violence against the state (Selek 2004). These organizations were highly hierarchical, based on the Leninist party model and Politicized Military War Strategy (PASS or *Politikleşmiş Askeri Savaş Stratejisi*) (Ağırnaslı 2007). There was no other organization which advocated for non-violence because the majority of the social movements' repertoire consisted of the instrumentalization of violence against the state (Selek 2000).

<sup>8</sup> WRA defined itself as 'anti-militarist' in its Charter and the state referred to this as a political position aiming the defeat of the state (Selek 2000). For more on the actions of WRA, please see Selek 2000, Üsterçi & Yorulmaz 2008.

<sup>9</sup> The era between 1993 and 1996 is characterized by a tense atmosphere of armed conflict between Kurdish insurgency and Turkish state which is influential on IWRA's turn to Kurdish movement (Selek 2000). Gunter (1997) reports that after the end of the unilateral cease fire, declared by PKK between March 20<sup>th</sup> to the end of May, more than 4100 people had been killed in 1993 and many more the following year that PKK's violence reached its peak. As a response, the military presence was doubled in the South East region, strengthened by special armed forces, trained for terror only and army enlistments were extended for three to five months periods (Gunter 1997). The attacks weren't only undertaken in the South east but targeted tourism sites in the West. In parallel, there were vast amounts of emotional soldier funerals in İzmir, Alanya, Kuşadası and Antalya. The Kurdish problem was suddenly everywhere, not limited by the East anymore, producing anti-Kurdish discourse as symbolized in the local slogan: "İzmir will be a graveyard for the Kurds" (Gunter 1997:60). With its population of 1 million Kurdish people and also being

a national centre, where the War of Independence ended (Gunter 1997), Izmir witnessed the first outbreaks of anti-militarist politics.

<sup>10</sup> Three of my participants who were part of IWRA mentioned of this tension during the interviews.

<sup>11</sup> Some of the members of IWRA trained as non-violence trainers in a series of international workshops during 1995. The presence of non-violence trainers in IWRA quickly accelerated non-violent political action and debates on strategies of non-violence (IWRA 1998). A Turkish International Non-Violence workshop was organized to obtain more knowledge on the concept in 1996 in Foça (Selek 2000). There was an initial intention to publish a book from the workshop. However, the state banned its distribution. For its online version please see IWRA 1998a.

<sup>12</sup> Ossi was first imprisoned in a military prison on the basis of his draft evasion. As a result of his rejection of uniforms, complying with the orders of the military prison, and general rejection of the accusations against him, he was continuously charged for insubordination. Ossi stayed in prison more than 2 years between 1996 and 1999, was released twice for a total of four months and was tried for 11 times. Since 1999, his position has not been changed and he has the status of 'deserter' (Altınay 2004). Ossi's life is very limited: since he is 'a deserter', he is unable to open a bank account, get a legal job with social security, and apply for a passport or a new ID card (Altınay 2004). For more on his campaign please see Selek 2000 and Altınay 2004.

<sup>13</sup> One of these campaigns focused on the case of Mehmet Bal between 2002 and 2003. Mehmet Bal became the symbol of anti-war movements in Izmir, Istanbul and Ankara against the US led occupation in Iraq (Altınay 2004). For more on his campaign please see: Selek 2000 and Altınay 2004. The other campaign focused on the case of Mehmet Tarhan, who was a gay conscientious objector. His campaign lasted between 2005 and 2006.

<sup>14</sup> For a graph, that shows the increase in the number of conscientious objectors after 2001, please consult Appendix 2.

<sup>15</sup> Militourism stands for a humorous-protest in its combination of militarism and tourism which quickly became popular from 2004 onwards. Participants of the festival organized a tour of the militarist symbols in the cities that the festivals were held in. There have been three festivals held between 2004 and 2006. The first one was organized in Istanbul, the second in Izmir and the last festival was organized in 2006 in Ankara (Altınay 2006b). The last militourism festival was organized in Lefkoşe, Cyprus in 2009 (Savaşkarşıtları.org 2009).

<sup>16</sup> The campaign (2004-2005) was called "against the war in Turkey...the society turning its back to war, the state and media acting as nothing happens" (Savaşkarşıtları.org [War Resisters Turkey] 2004) and focused on the civilian story of the military operations in the South East of Turkey against PKK.

<sup>17</sup> The medical proofs generally constitute photographs of the person during intercourse, which prove him to be 'passive,' and show his face clearly. A rectal examination proving whether the person had intercourse is conducted by the Surgical Units of the Medical hospitals. In addition to these proofs, the person shall be examined in the presence of more than one doctor through a series of interviews, lasting more than hour and possibly repeated for more than once. These interviews are composed of personality tests like Rorschach Ink Test, Minnesota Versatile Personality Tests. If a committee of doctors can not decide on the homosexuality of the draftee, then that person may stay in the psychiatry clinics of the military hospitals, known as 'pink ward' up to 3 weeks. The pink wards are isolated from the other units of the hospital. These procedures for proof may be requested for three years, in consideration of the possibility that a person may be cured of homosexuality (Biricik 2008).

<sup>18</sup> These declarations were publicly spoken at different times between 1997 and 2010. I only included eighty eight declarations due to the time frame of this thesis. Declarations are published online by the only formal Turkish conscientious objectors' group *Savaşkarşıtları* [War Resisters]. For the declarations please see Savaskarsitlari. Org 2008a, Savaskarsitlari. Org 2008b, Savaskarsitlari. Org 2008c, Savaskarsitlari. Org 2008d.

<sup>19</sup> For the detailed form of the interview questions, please refer to Appendix I.

<sup>20</sup> Moskos and Whiteclay (1993) classify conscientious objectors (Cos) into sub-categories: 1) Religious Cos; 2) Secular Cos (with political and private motives); 3) Universalistic Cos (opposed to all kinds of wars); 4) Selective Cos (opposed to a particular conflict); 5) Discretionary Cos (opposed to particular weapons, eg. weapons of mass destruction). There is also another classification which defines a conscientious objection by its willingness to cooperate with the state: eg. Non-Combatant COs (willing to serve without arms, for instance in the civil services within the army) or Absolutist Cos (who totally refuse to serve either in the army or in the alternative civil service).

<sup>21</sup> Absolutist (total) objectors reject any type of alternate civil service instead of military service whereas non-combatant objectors accept serving in alternate service.

<sup>22</sup> The online archive of the War Resisters [*SavaşKarşıtları*] is accessible at [www.savaskarsitlari.org](http://www.savaskarsitlari.org). For women conscientious objectors, I specifically use interview material.

<sup>23</sup> For militarism and law see Parla 2002, Parla 2006; for militarism and education see Altınay 2004; for militarism and social movements see Selek 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Altınay (2004) illustrates this process by examining the memoirs of *Sabiha Gökçen*, the first woman pilot, who was the adopted daughter of *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, the military leader and later first president of the Turkish Republic. Through these memoirs, Altınay (2004) argues that women in the armed forces, when they get an invitation, not only defend the land but also hold the honor of the nation through protecting their own honor.

<sup>25</sup> The continuation of the myth of military nation is traceable in an interview with the president of Chief of General Staff Military History and Strategic Studies, Lieutenant general pilot Abidin Ünal at the 12<sup>th</sup> Military History Symposium, '*Turkish Military From its Establishment Until Today*', organized by Chief of General Staff Military History and Strategic Studies (*Genel Kurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı*), Military Studies Centre (*Askeri Etüt Merkezi ATEM*) and Turkish Military History Commission (*Türk Askeri Tarih Komisyonu*) in 2009. In this interview, he referred to the military nation as a constant concept in Turkey which represents the "inseparable unity of Turkish culture and Turkish military culture and inseparability of the military nation concept" (*Silahlı Kuvvetler Dergisi* [Armed Forces Journal] 2009: 57).

<sup>26</sup> According to Galtung (1990), there are three types of violence: structural, direct violence and cultural violence (Galtung 1990). Structural violence is "unintended structure generated harm done to human beings" (Weber 1999: 354) and is built into social, political and economic structures that govern unequal opportunities and power (exploitation, segmentation, sexism and racism). On the other hand, direct violence is an actor generated and direct form of violence (killing, maiming, repression, detention) and cultural violence represents how "the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society" (Galtung 1990:292). These violence types feed upon and stand in cyclical relationship to each other and this creates the cycles of violence (Galtung 1990).

<sup>27</sup> On the links between women and non-violence please see: Ruddick 1997, Costain 2000, Gilligan 1997.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Conscientious Objection as Speech Genre**

In this chapter, I use Bakhtinian notions of speech genre and dialogism to analyze the content and types of conscientious objection declarations, in order to examine the principle of non-violence that shapes the dominant understanding of conscientious objection. By dominant understanding of conscientious objection I mean the consensus on the characteristics of conscientious objection as a political act. By defining a dominant understanding of conscientious objection, I aim to make women's conscientious objection visible and examine the tensions it creates with this dominant understanding. In that sense, I use this term to indicate the limits of the dominant definition of the act of conscientious objection in Turkey.

By 2010, there are a hundred and nineteen formal conscientious objectors in Turkey, twenty four of them are women. In this chapter, I include the public declarations of eighty eight in my analysis<sup>1</sup> and support this analysis by data from interviews with nine of the women conscientious objectors.<sup>2</sup> For ethical purposes with regard to the legal risks that women conscientious objectors face, I use pseudonyms throughout this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

Bakhtin (1986) argues that specific speech genres and utterances exist in dialogic relationship to other utterances and speech genres within a discourse. A text or a speech is always an answer to another text or speech. I contend in the first section of this chapter that the dominant understanding of conscientious objection in Turkey is shaped by a principle of non-violence that stands at the core of and establishes the scope of dialogue with different types of conscientious objections.

Emphasis on non-violence draws the lines between secular and religious conscientious objection, Kurdish conscientious objection, and non-combatant conscientious objection versus absolutist (total) objection. Absolutist objectors reject any type of alternate civil service instead of military service whereas non-combatant objectors accept serving in alternate service. Kurdish conscientious objection is declared by the Kurdish insurgency only against the Turkish Military. My interviews and the relevant literature on conscientious objection in Turkey (Altınay 2004; Selek 2000) reveal that the dominant understanding of conscientious objection is secular and mainly involves an absolutist (total) objection rather than non-combatant conscientious objection. This contributes to the masculinist understanding of conscientious objection as refusal to serve in the army (Selek 2000).

In the second half of this chapter, I examine the differing and overlapping elements in men's and women's conscientious objection declarations in order to reveal how the discourse of women's conscientious objection subverts the dominant understanding of conscientious objection. Women conscientious objectors' declarations subvert this dominant understanding by drawing attention to the militarization of gender in Turkey. In order to analyze this, I draw upon four gender narratives that are constructed in the authoritative discourse of militarism in Turkey: the Soldier-Wife Kezban, the Altruistic mother (*Little Ayşe*), the first woman combat pilot (*Sabiha Gökçen*), and legendary Kurdish woman guerrilla, *Zilan* (Altınay 2008). I will examine the women conscientious objectors' declarations and interview data against these gendered narratives. Drawing on a Bakhtinian (1986) notion of dialogism of utterance, which conceptualizes speech as a site of social struggle, I understand each conscientious

objection declaration as an answer to militarism and to other declarations. I argue that a principle of non-violence against militarism is expressed differently in men and women's conscientious objection declarations, despite their overlapping themes.

Through out the chapter I mention the term just war framework because the conscientious objection movement in Turkey has been reacting against it since the movement's establishment in the 1990s based on the principle of non-violence (Selek 2000). The literature on the just war theory is interested in the ethics of war and just war briefly stands for any war having a just cause.<sup>4</sup> Here, just cause encompasses not only the defense of a nation under attack, under recent attack or about to be attacked, but it also involves defense of another nation under attack, when genocide is taking place or when a nation is in chaos (Fotion 2007). Contributing to this definition, the conscientious objection movement in Turkey refers to revolutionary violence and all other kinds of counter-armed political violence as just wars (Selek 2000). This just war framework in the discourse of the conscientious objectors specifically objects the violent means used by Leftist guerrilla organizations and the armed struggle of Kurdish insurgency even if both of them locate oppression and political ideology as just causes for armed struggle.

### **Dominant Understanding of Conscientious Objection**

The dominant understanding of conscientious objection in Turkey is shaped by secularism and total objection by distancing the movement from religious and Kurdish conscientious objection. This distance feeds upon an understanding of non-violence that rejects and opposes against any kind of militarism (particularly just war framework in religious and Kurdish conscientious objection) that is expressed by the total objectors in their declarations. Although total objectors assert that conscientious objection is not only

the refusal of the military service and means an act of total refusal and struggle against militarism, it still stands male dominated (Selek 2000). How this occurs is important for my discourse analysis of the women's conscientious objection, as the discourse of women conscientious objectors challenges the dominant definition of conscientious objection by focusing on militarism, as a gendered discourse and conscientious objection as more than the refusal of the military service. The discourse of women conscientious objectors also borrows the understanding of non-violence from this dominant understanding of conscientious objection and genders it in their struggle against militarism and definition of conscientious objection.

It is hard to give a simple answer to the question of 'Who is a conscientious objector?' or 'What is conscientious objection?' Referring to the difficulty of setting limits on the act of conscientious objection, woman conscientious objector Melek expressed: "There are as many definitions of conscientious objection as the number of the conscientious objectors" (Melek). This quote suggests that conscientious objection is an individual act, whereby conscientious objectors' motivations, the legal and societal risks that they face due to their declarations, and their willingness and strength to take up these risks, are diverse. Despite the heterogeneity of reasons and content of the conscientious objections, there is significant consensus on the principle of non-violence, which is perceived to be at the core of anti-militarist politics and the conscientious objection movement. Non-violence has been continuously emphasized since the initial charter of *Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (War Resisters Association- WRA hereafter) adopted in 1992 (Selek 2000).

The understanding of non-violence is not limited to opposition against war, but all forms of violence, including discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, race, religious sect, and the use of political violence.<sup>5</sup> By the emphasis of non-violence, the dominant Turkish understanding of conscientious objection disassociates itself from Kurdish and religious (for e.g. Islamic) conscientious objection. These types of conscientious objections are perceived to involve violence because they support the just war framework.

Unlike the development of conscientious objection in the West, which initially started among pacifist religious sects, in Turkey the conscientious objection movement has had a distant relationship with religious conscientious objection. My observations, interviews and conversations with the conscientious objectors, and the relevant research (Altınay 2004; Selek 2000, Uzun 2006, Yorulmaz & Üsterci 2008), suggest that the majority of the objectors in Turkey seek secular ends and are distant from conscientious objectors that base their reasons on religious beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Although they are varied, a majority of the Turkish religious conscientious objectors declare their conscientious objections only against the military based on the criticism that the military does not permit, but rather insults, religious living during military service.<sup>7</sup>

According to the dominant understanding, religious conscientious objection to military service in Turkey is perceived as an act that does not challenge the understanding of Jihad in Islam whereby Jihad is seen as just war. My participants expressed this criticism. Woman conscientious objector Seher who shares this criticism specifically emphasized that she does not believe in the sincerity of religious conscientious objectors



for objecting to all kinds of violence and militarism and noted the Islamic conscientious objectors' belief in Jihad that contradicts with the understanding of non-violence built in the act of conscientious objection:

There is an Islamic group that objects against serving in the military, just because the military is nationalist... And this comes to my mind: well would these Islamist people, would they be in the army if there is Jihad? Well, I think they would.... Because the order of religion that says not to kill will only come to some of these people's minds. These people wouldn't participate in it [the Jihad army], they would stand at one corner. But perhaps many of them would participate willingly in an army, crying out for Jihad ...while rejecting a Kemalist army (Seher).

Opposition to just wars based on religion is obvious when the conscientious objector Hakan Ekinçi is examined.<sup>8</sup> Ekinçi was a conscientious objector who hijacked a plane to demand the recognition of his objection to military service for Turkish state and military. Upon his arrest, Ekinçi declared that he is a Christian and did not want to serve in a Muslim army based on his religious beliefs. In response to this act, *Vicdani Ret Komisyonu* (the Commission on Conscientious Objection) organized a press release conference against his acts of protest.<sup>9</sup> In the press release, they referred to the act of hijacking a plane and Ekinçi's emphasis on the Turkish military as a 'Muslim army' as contradictions with the act of conscientious objection. The Commission defined the act of conscientious objection as "an act of refusing violence" (Özkan 2006).<sup>10</sup>

In previous years, the secular understanding of conscientious objection has been challenged by a few of the conscientious objection declarations. Majority of these declarations drew on Islamic beliefs with regard to non-violence and love as the ground for conscientious objection. It is worth emphasizing that these religious declarations involve a criticism of Jihad in Islam. Drawing on the reactions to her own religious

conscientious objection, one of the women conscientious objectors, Dilek İ., reflects that the religious interpretation of non-violence in the recent declarations is still an unresolved debate in the movement. Dilek İ. implied that religious aspects of her declaration are misinterpreted by some of the other conscientious objectors, causing negative reactions to her religious declaration:

Someone said that you should go and be the soldier of Allah. But that is not what I want to say. That is not what I want to tell. I believe in many things and I go after them. That doesn't necessarily mean that I will become a soldier of someone or do something for someone. I would take [Allah's] words and carry them to other places. That is [Allah's] main characteristic... However, in all of the religions that I believe in- that I love all of the religions- killing is forbidden...I would reject that kind of a religion. I would reject the religion that orders to kill (Dilek İ.).

The misinterpretation of Dilek İ's conscientious objection can be a result of the relatively distant relationship between the secular and religious conscientious objectors in Turkey. Conscientious Objectors Uğur Yorulmaz and Coşkun Üsterci (2008) draw attention to this distance by referring to encounters between different conscientious objectors, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and deserters, and the conscientious objection movement in Turkey, as "coincidental" (Yorulmaz & Üsterci 2008: 230). They emphasize the absence of a holistic political agenda that integrates claims and needs of different conscientious objectors in Turkey.

Dialogue between religious and secular conscientious objectors in Turkey is a recent phenomenon.<sup>11</sup> Within the context of the dominant secular understanding of conscientious objection, religious conscientious objection only becomes tolerated if the particular conscientious objection takes into account the principle of non-violence, involving opposition against any violence, including just wars.

The principle of non-violence and the critique of just war framework as militarist shape the distance between the dominant understanding of conscientious objection and Kurdish conscientious objection. Kurdish conscientious objection is declared by some participants of the Kurdish insurgency against the Turkish military. Kurdish conscientious objectors claim that they are against military service in the Turkish armed forces, but consent to participate in the Kurdish guerrilla war against the Turkish State. In my interviews, I observed that Kurdish conscientious objection is not an accepted form of rejection of military service among majority of the women objectors (including some of conscientious objectors having Kurdish origins), since it is used to justify another war against civilians and soldiers. These objectors' principle of non-violence involves opposition to the deaths of soldiers, civilians, and guerillas because they consider guerillas as victims of militarism.<sup>12</sup> The fundamental challenge, based on the dominant understanding of conscientious objection in Turkey versus Kurdish conscientious objection, was also emphasized when I asked my participants about Kurdish conscientious objection. Woman conscientious objector Melek stressed that Kurdish conscientious objectors reject only military service in the Turkish army, which does not correspond with "a holistic understanding of militarism and consistent perception of conscientious objection." (Melek)

The dominant understanding of conscientious objection is primarily shaped by the principle of non-violence, which distances the movement from Kurdish and religious (particularly Islamic) conscientious objectors. However, this dominant understanding is heterogeneous in understanding the practice of non-violence and components of militarist discourse, whereby conscientious objectors diverge upon absolutist versus non-combatant

forms of conscientious objection.

The distinction between absolutist and non-combatant conscientious objectors was a concern after 2006, when the absolutist conscientious objector Osman Murat Ülke case in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) came to a final decision. The Turkish State was condemned for not developing any legal infrastructure for conscientious objectors.<sup>13</sup> Since Turkey is in the process of joining the EU, the decisions of the ECHR are binding and this led to a debate over the email list about the movement's future political involvement when Turkish State was forming the legal infrastructure for conscientious objectors. In that sense, one of the significant questions was related to whether the movement is going to advocate for alternate service and how absolutist and non-combatant conscientious objectors will continue to struggle together even if the right to conscientious objection is provided by the state. These questions were crucial in defining conscientious objection, seeking an answer to whether conscientious objection is a struggle to demand the right to conscientious objection from the state or if it is the holistic expression and total act against militarism.

After 2006, differences within the dominant understanding of conscientious objection were revealed through the distinction between absolutist versus non-combatant objection. Unlike in the years before this, few of the declarations after 2006 included a special emphasis on objectors' willingness to participate in alternate service. This change in the conscientious objectors movement can be seen as a result of the legal legitimization of the right of conscientious objection in Turkey through the ECHR's decision. Nevertheless, non-combatant conscientious objectors stayed low in number in the

movement and absolutist objectors dominated the movement (Uzun 2006), and continued to shape the definition and understanding of conscientious objection.

Absolutist objectors refer to themselves as total objectors. There is a consensus among total objectors in challenging the term 'conscientious,' which is perceived to be inadequate in capturing the anti-militarist act of total objection. Total objection encompasses an attitude of opposition to state, military, domination, hierarchy and capitalism and is intended to prevent the limitation of the movement to the struggle for the recognition of the right to conscientious objection (Uzun 2006).<sup>14</sup>

For many of the women conscientious objectors, distinction between total versus conscientious objection is a non-sense issue which weakens the movement. During my research, I heard that there are deserters who did not declare their conscientious objections due to family issues, personal strength questions, or their willingness to study and work abroad<sup>15</sup> and some of my participants told that these people participated in campaigns and regular meetings of the movement despite their deserter status. To my limited analysis, it is unfair to refer to the movement as isolated and concentrated on absolutist aims. Rather, I argue that the contemporary understanding of conscientious objection, which is dominated by secularism and total objection, is continuously challenged with each conscientious objector's declaration: each objector brings a different voice and experience with militarism into the discourse of conscientious objectors. In a Bakhtinian sense, each conscientious objector's declaration is an answer to the wider militarist system and other conscientious objectors' declarations.

On the other hand, distinctions between different conscientious objectors stand as

breaking points in the conscientious objection movement in Turkey. I understand these breaking points as acts of dialogue between discourses of militarism and conscientious objection. Osman Murat Ülke's final decision contributed to this process by eliciting the possibility of the adoption of the right to conscientious objection and/or alternate service to military service by the state. This possibility accelerated debate between total objectors and non-combatant conscientious objectors. Overall however, although there are some exceptions in the form of religious conscientious objection, the conscientious objection movement is mainly dominated by total objection, as the refusal of military and alternate service. It is in this context that the content of male declarations is constructed around military (and secondarily alternate) service, even if they assert a wider understanding of militarism. This will become clearer in the following section as I examine how the discourse of male objectors, mainly secular and total objectors, define and express the principle of non-violence and anti-militarism in their declarations.

### **Making Sense of Conscientious Objection Through Declarations**

*“Özgürlük elinde, özgürlük seninle özgürlük  
[Liberty is in your hands, liberty is with you, liberty]  
Özgürlük sen oradaysan orada”  
[Liberty is there, if you are there]  
Bandista (2009)*

Many of the declarations of conscientious objectors are shaped by a specific understanding of total objection. Altınay (2004:106) draws attention to four common levels of resistance in the conscientious objection declarations. These are “resistance to defin[ing] themselves as members of the state, resistance to participat[ing] in militarism and wars, resistance to participat[ing] in the destruction of nature, resistance to contribut[ing] to discrimination based on gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion”

(Altınay 2004:106). Altınay (2004) includes all of the men's and women's declarations in her analysis without comparing them. In my comparative analysis I argue that the first three levels of resistance are strongly emphasized by men's declarations, while the last represents the challenge by women conscientious objectors. These different levels of resistance do not stand mutually exclusive; rather they are represented in both men's and women's conscientious objectors in dialogue with each other.

Within the context of total objection, the majority of the objectors emphasizes resistance to defining "themselves as members of state" (Altınay 2004:106) and rejects all roles and positions (combatant or non-combatant) linked with wars and militarism. It is with the articulation of total objection that conscientious objectors' declarations concentrate on "resistance to all wars and militarism" (ibid.) that is intertwined with resistance to being defined as members of the state. A majority of the declarations (41 out of 72 total) argues that militarism is perpetuated by the military and military service through disseminating and legitimizing violence in society and across states:

Wars, produced by the state's anxiety for power creates inextinguishable wounds for humanity through the massacres, hunger they cause and extreme poverty. I reprobate all kinds of wars, terror and violence and I declare that I will not be an instrument for them (Erdem Yalçınkaya 2001).

I hate the armament madness which threatens lives of all beings and humans on earth. I hate every mine, awaiting its prey, all uniforms manifesting murder and every bullet shedding blood. All wars are murder and all states are murderers (Ersan Uğur Gör 2004).

As is restated by a majority of the male conscientious objection declarations, the military is the guardian of the state and privileged classes in protecting their interests. Many of the male conscientious objectors further challenge the duty of military service

by driving attention to the relationship between state, military and the privileged classes perceived to be intrinsic to militarism:

I see the hegemony of people over other people, states and their imagined borders as the biggest obstacle for humanity; and militaries as violent institutions for guarding the interests of capital and the state (Uğur Yorulmaz 2000).

Militaries have been the bloodiest organized crime institutions in history and they continue to be so. They are the perpetrators and guards of the hegemony and exploitation of one or more social groups over other groups. They are the corporate actors of deliberate assault...They are the clearest expression of discipline, hierarchy, insult, discrimination, natural destruction by human hand, forced labor and oppression (Yavuz Atan 1993).

As emphasized in the above quotes, men conscientious objectors' declarations draw attention to any military as the guardian of states' nationalist power, ideology and aggression against enemy nations. With this, they stress militaries and states as institutions of aggression and violence whereby militarism becomes inevitable. After September 11, 2001, this triangle between states, wars and militarism is repeatedly emphasized in the declarations, through contextualizing the triangle.. in the current wars, specifically the US led occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. The declarations further underline the rise of nationalism in the Middle East (in countries like Palestine and Iraq) as an intrinsic outcome of militarism in the region. Men conscientious objectors specifically drew attention to the war of the Turkish State against the Kurdish insurgency as a binding feature of Turkish militarism and nationalism within in this context.

I interpret this emphasis as an outcome of the increasing relationship between anti-war movements in Turkey and the conscientious objection movement, as outlined in Chapter 1.

In parallel to the resistance to all wars, nationalism is regularly challenged in



men's declarations as another intrinsic component of militarism. In the challenge against nationalism of all sorts, the armed conflict between the Kurdish insurgency and Turkish State is emphasized along side wars in the Middle East. This challenge constitutes another important reason for men's conscientious objection. By referring to the effects of militarism and nationalism, conscientious objector Doğan Özkan (2004) criticizes the processes whereby different communities become enemies to each other. Conscientious objector Özkan (Kalin) Kılıç (1994) specifically condemns Turkish nationalism and the state in waging war against the Kurdish territories of Turkey and Iraq by referring to these operations when he declared his conscientious objection in 1994:<sup>16</sup>

Communities in the entire Middle East, in our country's geography and all parts of the world are sacrificed by the states for protection and advancement of state power. In Iraq, Palestine, Turkey and in other places, communities are introduced by the sovereign powers as their enemies. Kurdish, Palestinian and Iraqi communities are subjected to torture, exile and mass murder by the states. I refuse to partake in these mass murders and service the states that are murderers of these communities (Doğan Özkan 2004).

In the four years that have passed, human rights violations in the western part of the geography that I come from continued with intensification; on the other hand, on the eastern part, in the Kurdistan territory, war has reached an international level by expanding to cross-borders. ...the Turkish state continues an aggregate war within its borders and on cross-border territories against the Kurdish society with all of its political, diplomatic, economic, military institutions and organizations alike. And, it bears this war by feeding upon all of the resources of people, living in that geography (Özkan (Kalin) Kılıç 1994).

Through the emphasis on nationalism intertwined with militarism, male objectors' declarations criticize social representations of military service as men's duty and the citizen's debt to the homeland that legitimize compulsory conscription and normalize militarism:

I will not take part in any structure, which guards and reproduces the militarist

culture and mediates relations of domination. I say that I don't have any relationship with the state [Turkish State] and its armed forces which are among these institutions and I feel their over presence in my daily life. And, I reject the military service, which is demanded from me under the name of debt for homeland. I am a conscientious/total objector. (Necati Balbay 2005)

I reject violence, guns and armies as a person who has never fought all his life. Necessity for being a human is not being a soldier. Military service is not my duty and right as a Turk. It is my right and duty as a human being and an individual that I will live with efficaciousness and minimum harm to the land I am living on. That is the need of our earth. For this, one doesn't have to be a soldier (Ahmet Karayay 2008).

As these declarations suggest, a majority of the men conscientious objectors emphasize their rejection of wars by promising and calling for a general strike against them. They oppose how states and militaries serve as guardians for the privileged classes. They further reject nations, nationalities and nationalisms. Within all of the oppositions above, objection against compulsory conscription stands at the core. The dominant understanding of conscientious objection favors total objection against compulsory conscription to the extent that it rejects any kind of civil service or citizenship:

I don't accept any civil service which the state will force on me...In addition, I clearly express that I will repudiate any law, legal entity and court which I will face in the incidents of custody, judgement and conviction due to my disobedience against the military and state. I don't believe in law, I believe in individual and collective justice. (Deniz Özgür 2008)

For this reason, I repeat myself as a total objector for the second time in terms of an aggregately opposing position against the aggregate war of the Turkish State. In addition to the state's threats on depriving me of my citizenship, I declare for the rest of my life that I reject any Turkish citizenship employing such a state mentality.<sup>17</sup> (Özkan Kalın Kılıç 1994)

As a last level of resistance, many of the men's conscientious objector declarations emphasize the damage of militarism on nature, specifically through wars and the arms industry. They further stress hierarchy and anthropocentrism as intrinsic

components of militarism that perpetuate capitalism. With this, they not only criticize environmental destruction and pollution as a result of wars and arms industry, but they also challenge the militarism that perpetuates war between humans and nature even during peace times by rejecting service for militarism:

Wars that were and will be erupted by militarism and its cooperators don't only harm human beings. What kind of reason can justify the destruction and degradation that is and will be caused by both biological and nuclear weapons, at the hands of the militaries? However, don't the ones that claimed that they have those weapons for human security and guarantors of lives know what the world would be like when/if they use these weapons? It is of course impossible to think that they are stupid to the extent that they can't see the dilemma. (Mehmet Bal 2003)

Human kind wants to own the entire universe by the greed that can not be controlled. I don't want to subordinate nature and its entities. (Erkan Ersöz 2003)

I came to the point just recently that this system is an enemy to all of the plants in nature, it cuts down trees. Then, I understood that it is against animals as well. Finally, I came to realize that this systematic movement, which is enemy to other living beings, is inevitably hostile to the humans. I couldn't understand how a system, created by human beings can behave against people (Ahmet Cem Öztürk 2003)

Emphasis on "resistance to contribut[ing] to discrimination based on gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion" (Altınay 2004) became an issue in the men conscientious objectors' declarations after 2004. The first declaration in which compulsory conscription is elaborated in relationship with sexism and heterosexism is Mehmet Tarhan's in 2001. Growing numbers of women conscientious objectors after 2004 continued to question and emphasize the relationship between sexism, heterosexism and militarism and contributed to analysis of militarism as a gendered discourse. The emphasis on the intersections of militarism with sexism and heterosexism are acknowledged in the men's declarations, especially after 2004. The quotes below from relatively recent declarations

emphasize sexism, and discrimination based on gender and heterosexism, as outcomes of militarism, and refer to these as systems of oppression to be diminished in connection with militarism:

I am a conscientious objector to diminish the militarist institutions and apparatus for a world that all of the living beings can live freely. I want a world without discrimination based on race, religion and gender and a world that free individuals can live in (Yahsan Çatak 2005).

These are the partial reasons to my conscientious objection...: lack of political maturity in the state that has the violence monopoly; weakening of the emotions of peace by offending the masses; ignorance of the social and political will; unproductiveness of free thought; presence of discrimination based on class and sexuality; cultural genocide; murder of children and intellectuals (Ahmet Aslan 2007).

The solution of what we are living through comes from facing and questioning the culture of war, militarism, nationalism, sexism and likewise realities that are the outcomes of the patriarchal mentality. Military service is not holy. It is to kill and to be killed (Ali Aydın Çiçek 2009).

Within the context of total conscientious objection, the most common themes in men's declarations are resistance to becoming members of states that participate in militarism and war (Altınay 2004). In declarations after 2004, I observe an increasing emphasis on the links between sexism and military service. I argue that the case of Mehmet Tarhan and the increasing number of women conscientious objectors declarations contributed to this trend. Declarations before 2004 strongly associated conscientious objection solely with compulsory conscription and state, which resulted in a masculine definition of conscientious objection (Selek 2000).

Male domination of the definition of conscientious objection was expressed in my interviews with the women objectors through their emphasis on the doubt and uneasiness they felt before deciding on their acts of conscientious objection. In this period of

uneasiness, they started re-inscribing and re-questioning the meaning of militarism. Melek tells that she delayed her declaration for a couple years because conscientious objection was understood directly as refusal of military service and there was no legitimate space for women conscientious objectors because of their non-conscription:

During that period [the mid-1990s], [conscientious objection] became an important agenda. But, during those times, I was constantly associating men with conscientious objection. Just like many people today. But then when I started asking 'Why can't women be conscientious objectors?' When I asked if they shall be or not, I didn't have the courage to declare my conscientious objection at the time [the beginning of the 2000s]. But then I realized that conscientious objection is not [just] an issue of not serving in the military, it is a political word where you express yourself against militarism (Melek).

Many of the initial women conscientious objectors feared they would sound funny since women are not conscripted in Turkey. Some of them delayed their declarations for years to question it more deeply. This questioning period was followed by a loud debate in the conscientious objection movement. The initial groups of women objectors debated with the rest of the conscientious objectors about the potentials and definitions of woman's conscientious objection. As expressed by many of the women that I interviewed, these debates helped the conceptual digestion of this unique phenomenon. By May 2004, women started joining with their own conscientious objection declarations. The phenomenon of women's objection stands in dialogue with the male objection based on women's claim to subvert the meaning of conscientious objection as more than the refusal to serve in the army. As I argue in the following sections, the discourse of women conscientious objectors concentrates on militarism as a gendered discourse. In line with this analysis, I argue that women's declarations emphasize discrimination based on gender, sexism and heterosexism as intertwined with militarism.

**Can women declare their conscientious objection when they are not conscripted?**

This is the most common question that I have gotten since I started working on this thesis project. I can not even remember how many times I had to answer this question. It is an important indication of how conscientious objection is understood by the vast majority in Turkey. This common question occupied a great deal of discussion in the conscientious objection movement as well. Since women are not conscripted in Turkey, women's conscientious objection seemed confusing and even at times silly to other conscientious objectors. This indicates that conscientious objection is associated with refusal of military service. As one of the initial women conscientious objectors explained in our interview, they were criticized by the rest of the objectors for "stirring up" the concept of conscientious objection:

During those times, they criticized us for stirring up the concept, for confusing it. The reactions came as it [conscientious objection] was developed differently in abroad. They [People reacting against it] were asking where would the concept go, even if you declare it when there are no legal penalties awaiting. However, the explanation that I felt in me was: nothing can be as bad and crystal clear. Besides for me, the ideology which we call non-violence has this aspect of going beyond. This shall always be present....If the concept of conscientious objection is lived like that in this culture, then it means that we should go beyond it. Women can not exist in this movement. Even though they exist they are ignored. When they try to go beyond the concept [of conscientious objection], it is pulled back every time (Çağla).

Another woman conscientious objector, Gamze also expressed that even though she did not get any bad criticism with regard to her objection she also did not get any obvious support from her ex-husband, who was a conscientious objector:

When I first wanted to declare my conscientious objection at that time I told this to my ex husband who was a conscientious objector. Even he didn't really support it but he didn't really hinder it as well.... He was a little confused...It was new. It

was talked [about] among us [a group of women in the conscientious objectors movement] for the first time. There was no woman conscientious objector until that time. But he didn't support me. He didn't say that it would be great if you declare it. But then when there came another woman, another woman, we [in the conscientious objection movement] came to the idea that yes, it can happen (Gamze).

Beyond the criticisms, there was also support that came from some of the male conscientious objectors.

In my interviews, I specifically asked my participants if they got negative criticisms from the movement on their declarations and the answers I got indicate that the discussions started around the question "Can a woman declare their conscientious objection?" and these discussions were resolved to a point where women objectors are mainly accepted by the contemporary movement in Turkey. Especially women conscientious objectors after 2006 expressed that they did not receive any bad reactions from other conscientious objectors in the movement. However, many of the women objectors, both earlier and later, also expressed that the concept of women's objection is not clearly understood by the activists of other social movements because conscientious objection is generally understood as refusal of military service in these movements. As one of the woman conscientious objectors reflects:

For all the conscientious objectors at the time, [women's conscientious objection] was a topic of discussion. So, it was a consequence of a road traveled together. But consequently we came across the common question of "You don't serve in the army, why are you a conscientious objector?" We faced this question in the anti-war movement; we faced it in the feminist movement. It seems like a very non-sense thought from outside. Or it is not understood. Very strange things have been said as well. Well they ask questions like what are the risks and difficulties for you? Well, I think that is the most difficult part: constantly making explanations. (Melek)

The most difficult part of this thesis project was making other people understand

why I analyze this ‘non-sense’ phenomenon. That is why I deepened my interviews around the question of Why do women declare their conscientious objection? I never realized the potential of this question in opening up a different space for discussing militarism as a peculiarly gendered discourse until one of my participants expressed it:

Men’s conscientious objection limits the struggle...But because the women’s conscientious objection makes one ask, ‘Why ... do women declare their conscientious objection?’ it makes militarism more debatable. Because then you say, militarism is not only about the military. (Melek)

Women conscientious objectors specifically wanted to deepen the understanding of militarism as a gendered discourse. In this way, they subverted the meaning of conscientious objection and militarism. In the next section, I expand this argument by going over interview answers to the question Why do women declare their conscientious objections?

**Let’s face it: Why do you declare your conscientious objection?**

Enloe (2000) defines militarization as “a step by step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well being on militaristic ideas” (3). Women are victimized by militarism through murder and rape, but also integrated into militarization processes and militarism as supporters. Enloe (2000) stresses the importance of understanding the experiences of women with militarism by taking account of their two-way positions as victims and supporters, and specific narratives associated with these positions. Altınay (2008) argues that in Turkey there are three gendered narratives that are constructed in the authoritative discourse of militarism:

Women within the construct of citizenship, which has been gendered, sexualized and militarized, until recently, were given meaning through obedient wife



(*Kezban*), altruistic mother (*Little Ayşe*) and the Republican woman who will fight in war if needed (*Sabiha Gökçen*). While being *Kezban* and *Ayşe* are expected from all of the women without any exceptions, being *Sabiha Gökçen* was coded to be an exception and a privilege. (Altınay 2008: 113)

Altınay (2008) adds another woman narrative, named *Zilan* that is the mythic woman guerrilla of the Kurdish Guerrilla war.<sup>18</sup> Altınay argues that women conscientious objectors oppose these narratives stemming from specific gender positions through their declarations. Reading these gender narratives against the declarations, I will also argue that women objectors express a different understanding of militarism and conscientious objection.

#### **Soldier –Wife: Hüsmen’s Kezban**

Altınay (2008) borrows the narrative of *Soldier-Wife Kezban* from a story published in *Ülkü*<sup>19</sup> in 1933. In the story, *Hüsmen*, a young soldier, lives through the last day of his military service, during which he falls asleep. In his dream:

After he is back in the village and has his wedding, he will tell Kezban all about the things he learned in military service... When Hüsmen says it all to Kezban, she will be dumbfounded (*parmak ısırıp kalacak*); the fascination of his wife... will make Hüsmen proud (*gururunu okşayacak, koltuklarını kabartacak*). He will first teach Kezban how to identify herself (*künyesini belletecek*). When he calls “Kezban,” Kezban will run to him like a soldier, stand in front of Hüsmen and, after giving the official greeting, she will say “Ali’s daughter Kezban, 329 Poturlar [her address]... yes, sir! (*Emret Efendim!*)” and will wait for his orders (Sıtkı 1933: 250-251 in Altınay 2004: 77)

Using this story as a vantage point, Altınay (2008) argues that military knowledge contributes to the subordination of women in a context where military service is interwoven with hegemonic masculinity. In the story, *Hüsmen* is the unconditional commander of his household even if he was beaten up and humiliated during military service by his male superiors. *Soldier-Wife Kezban* simulates the secondary role by admiring and obeying the orders of the head of the household (Altınay 2008).

The gendered position of the *Soldier-Wife Kezban* narrative is situated to be both the victim and supporter of violence perpetuated by militarism. She is the victim because, as *Hüsmen's* dream indicates, women in the household are expected to obey the rules of head of the household army. Secondly, she is the supporter because she is required to continue and perpetuate this militarist system by culturally reproducing and justifying it through her silence. The discourse of women's conscientious objection criticizes militarism through several vantage points in order to answer back to the gendered and militarized discourse of *Soldier-Wife Kezban*.

Drawing upon the characteristics of *Soldier- Wife Kezban*, Altınay (2006a) further asks: "What kind of soldiers are we as women born into? Until we grow up, we are made into soldiers that first obey our father then our husband." (Altınay 2006a:25). The discourse of women conscientious objectors opposes *Kezban* by concentrating on three main themes. The first theme is criticizing the military and military service as institutions of violence. The second theme focuses on challenging the legal penalties on criticizing the military, military service or militarism publicly in Turkey. The final theme emphasizes the gendered practices that normalize and justify militarism. These gendered performances silence criticism through militarized cultural conventions and expressions.

Within the discourse of women's conscientious objection, compulsory conscription is perceived to perpetuate cycles of violence. Here, what I refer to as cycles of violence draws on Galtung's typology of violence (Galtung 1990). Galtung (1990) argues that violence comes in cycles whereby direct violence by the military stands in reciprocal relationship with the structural and cultural aspects of preparation for military action (Galtung 1990). Study of militarization as a process must encompass identification

of “structural and cultural aspects that would tend to reproduce the readiness for military action, production and deployment” (Galtung 1990: 296). In parallel, Enloe (2000) argues in *Maneuvers*, that international relations among states, and warfare, needs such structural and cultural aspects to reproduce the processes of militarization. In the discourse of women conscientious objectors there is a similar understanding of militarization shaping the cycles of violence. Within this context, militaries and nation-states are the initiators of the processes of militarism in which military service has a distinct place. Conscientious objector Gamze explains that cycles of violence are initiated at every level of society, which is ultimately carried on to international relations between states. She also emphasizes how redundant she feels at the middle of these cycles of violence as they are based on the exclusion of the individual:

Essentially my thought [in declaring my conscientious objection] was that there is an institution called the military service; there is a military as an institution. And there are state politics and these state politics in some way encourage violence on its own and on behalf of you, by ... excluding you as a person and actually without asking you.... It starts from the bottom and then, they bring it to the top, to the politics between states. And they say, you are going, you will die for us, you will fight for us (Gamze).

According to the women conscientious objectors' declarations and my interviews, cycles of violence reproduced by militarization processes involve gender-based violence. Military service and knowledge are argued to work as the source of male domination and women's subordination, and to reinforce violence against women. This contributes into the justification and normalization of militarism. It is within this context that expressing cycles of violence in militarism constitutes a vantage point for opposing the *Kezban* narrative.

Woman conscientious objector Hadise expressed during our interview that women are crucial in the reproduction of militarism through their subordination by male domination. By this, she implied that women's refusal of their subordination has the potential to break the cycles of violence pertaining to militarism:

Here, all of the men know how to use guns. As a consequence of compulsory conscription in Turkey, men know how to use guns in Turkey. Women also know how to use men as guns and they tend to grow men as strong heroes. There is this duty; there is a distribution of duty in that sense. That is a societal duty and as long as women don't refuse, they will dig their own graves. (Hadise)

Another aspect emphasized here is the mechanism of consent in the process of militarization, through which women become direct supporters. Enloe (2000) argues that the processes of consent taking are rather silent and varied.<sup>20</sup> The discourse of women conscientious objectors argues that legal penalties on public criticism of the Turkish Armed Forces and State are silencing practices of militarism.<sup>21</sup> The state acts to keep its citizens silent through legal regulations, but frames this as a process of obtaining consent via the public sphere by locating this sphere as closed to criticism against the state and military.

Woman conscientious objector Seher exemplified this phenomenon during the interview with her reference to a famous court case on Article No. 318 in 2008.<sup>22</sup> The case was opened against one of the first transgender singers in Turkey, Bülent Ersoy, based on a conversation about military service in Turkey with another woman singer, Ebru Gündeş, during a famous TV show called Pop-Star Alaturca. Ersoy expressed that she would not send her son (if she had one) to military service. Gündeş reacted to Ersoy's point by declaring that she would send her son (if she had one) with honor and pride.

Seher explained how the case was opened against Ersoy for expressing that she would not encourage her son for military service:<sup>23</sup>

There are many women who are contaminated by violence. As I have mentioned previously, Bülent Ersoy said that she wouldn't send her son to military service... she said: Whose war?; What is it about?; Some people are taking decisions in front of their desks and then some people's children die. And Ebru Gündeş jumped out from another corner and said: I would send him. Shall I say that these people are the spokespersons of the Chief of Staff? Or, are they raised by the Chief of Staff? Well...what ever you would understand... which ever stratum one is, whether you are educated or whether you are an elite or whether you are from the commoners, violence has been taught to women (Seher).

Although Bülent Ersoy was acquitted from the case above, by drawing attention to the other cases of Article 318 in the popular media, Ersoy's case showed that the military is an unquestionable taboo in Turkey maintained by legal penalties.<sup>24</sup> In parallel, when I asked the women conscientious objectors about the reasons for their declarations, by underlining the unquestionability of the military in Turkey, Sitem argued that their declarations serve as "a scream, maybe an outcry. Soon, someone screams from somewhere, starts to annoy and you scream. That was it" (Sitem). By drawing attention to the legal risks of openly criticizing the military, another conscientious objector explains her urge to declare her conscientious objection to make the military and its moves questionable publicly, despite the legal penalties:

I thought it was necessary: if I have some problem with militarism...I want to name it, if the risks are %1 or %100.... I wanted to clearly name it here and I wanted to express it. Aftermath is not important whether you are imprisoned or not... Since women are not imprisoned [for conscientious objection], many people think that it is not a heavy burden for women. But if my problem is to make people question militarism, and ... when this expression exists in my declaration, then it will become debatable here. So, I decided to declare my conscientious objection. (Sitem)

Another way of publicly criticizing the military in the declarations of women conscientious objectors is the emphasis of solidarity with other conscientious objectors.

In a majority of the declarations, women conscientious objectors emphasize their support for conscientious objection, male objectors' declarations, and questioning militarism and making it debatable. It is also worth noting that a majority of the women objectors have been friends or lovers with male conscientious objectors before they declared their conscientious objections. Whatever their social relations have been with male objectors, many of the women conscientious objectors co-experienced the difficulties that male objectors have to live with while and after rejecting military service. Even if they do not explicitly consider it in their declarations, women's decisions and timing to declare their objection are affected if a fellow objector is imprisoned. Below Dilek İ. explains that she wanted to respond to the imprisonment of conscientious objector Mehmet Bal through declaring her own conscientious objection.<sup>25</sup> In that sense, her timing and urge for declaring her conscientious objection stemmed from Bal's imprisonment and the state's ill treatment of him during his incarceration:

After Mehmet Bal I decided that I have to do this because really people are going, my friends are taken into custody just in front of me and we can't get any news. I remember it with Mehmet Bal. For a while, I couldn't get any news. I was worried. Then, when the news arrived that his arm was broken and they made it into a shape where he can't write... Then I said, really we need to do this. Really someone has to throw a stone. They started it somehow and somehow others should follow. (Dilek İ.)

By drawing on the phenomenon of women conscientious objectors in Turkey, Enloe (2008) asserts that in countries where conscientious objectors are viewed as traitors, supporting it becomes very political. However, by acknowledging the political importance of expressing their solidarity with the conscientious objectors, many of the women objectors express that they do not declare their objection solely on the basis of their secondary roles based on gender. Expression of solidarity with male conscientious

objectors occupies some part of the discourse of women's objection, and a partial focus is against the gendered narrative of the *Soldier-Wife Kezban*. Women would like to express their own perception of conscientious objection which involves a comprehensive analysis of militarism and militarization as a gendered discourse. They redefine conscientious objection as a stance not only about militaries or the state, but rejecting a totality of militarization, circulating in multiple spheres of culture, ideology, institutions and economy.

Enloe (2000) emphasizes the invisibility of cultural practices that militarize women's lives. By its invisibility, militarism becomes normalized. For Turkey there are so many examples of the militarization of traditions because militarism and nationalism are important aspects of Turkish state and Turkishness until today (Altınay 2008). Altınay (2004) argues that militarism is normalized through the cultural aspects of Turkishness and symbolized by the common expression "every Turk is born a soldier" (*Her Türk asker doğar*). Women conscientious objectors also mentioned parallel arguments with an aim of exposing militarist cultural practices. One of the women objectors, Gamze, pointed at the traditional expression of "horse, woman, gun" (*at, avrat, silah*)<sup>26</sup> as a discourse from old Turkish nomad communities that continues in the discourses of the Turkish modern state and nationalism. For Gamze, this expression is a cultural myth to militarize people's lives through ordering them to protect the Turkish nation and kill its enemies and this idiom is utilized by the state not only through compulsory conscription but within the sphere of Turkish state's relationships with other states.

Based on the interview with Gamze, “horse, woman, gun,” further indicates the intertwined relationship between Turkish nationalism, militarism and patriarchy. Feminist scholar of hegemonic masculinity and militarism in Turkey Selek (2008) argues that “horse, woman and gun” represents the fundamental idiom for hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. According to her, Turkish hegemonic masculinity corresponds to a family man (presumably a father), committed to Turkish traditional values who in a sense, owns his estate and the heterosexual woman as his domain and is entitled to protect all of his properties, including his heterosexual woman. If necessary, this family man would fight for his property (Selek 2008). Drawing from Altınay's (2004) and Selek's (2008) arguments on the myths of militarism in Turkey, expressions such as “every Turk is born a soldier” and “horse, woman and gun” contribute to the normalization of militarism, nationalism and patriarchy.

Altınay (2004) argues that “every Turk is born a soldier” is the expression of Turkish militarism, established on the myth of military nation. This myth dominates the educational system through history and Turkish security classes, and militarist values are disseminated in the earlier years of childhood (Altınay 2004). One of the women conscientious objectors that I interviewed told how she observed the militarization of the educational system in Turkey not only in the curriculum, but within the framework of school manners. Her observations resulted in her act of conscientious objection:

At that time [when she was thinking of declaring her conscientious objection], militarism at schools grasped my attention. Well, the oath that is taken every morning before starting the class, singing the national anthem every Monday and Friday, while doing them forming a line. They are all obviously a part of military practice. I have seen its face solidly in daily living. Of course, the Turkish military is the most obvious form of it but the thing that I saw inside the schools is the normalization of militarism. It really bothered me (Aydan).



To summarize this section, the discourse of women's conscientious objectors answers back at the gendered narrative of *Kezban* by drawing attention to the militarist knowledge provided to men by compulsory conscription. The objectors argue that militarist knowledge contributes to the subordination of women through intensifying gender-based violence. Militarist knowledge, values and manners are disseminated through cultural expressions and an educational system that is based on the foundation of the myth of military nation.

It is in this context that cycles of violence are maintained and justified through the circulation of militarism in different discourses. The reasons of women for their acts of conscientious objection stem from challenging the unquestionable military and military service in Turkey. By doing this, they criticize the silencing practices of militarism at a multiplicity of levels. Their declarations are made against legal penalties on public speech critical of the military and military service. The women objectors present culture and the educational system in content and manners as spheres of circulating militarist knowledge and practice that normalize and reproduce militarism. Further, women conscientious objectors emphasize their solidarity with other conscientious objectors. All of these themes constitute the reasons for the act of women's conscientious objection as a reaction against the victimized and supporting roles of women produced by militarism. The discourse of women conscientious objectors calls for acts of disobedience to these roles, in contrast to the obedient *Soldier-Wife Kezban*.

**If every Turk is born to be a soldier, who gives birth to these soldiers?**

Little Ayşe, Little Ayşe  
Tell me what you are doing  
I am looking after my baby  
I am telling her a lullaby

Little soldier, little soldier  
Show me what you are doing  
I looking at my rifle  
I am attaching the bayonet to it

*Little Ayşe* is an anonymous song that I was taught in primary school. *Little Ayşe* is positioned as an altruistic mother that needs to be defended by the soldier-citizen, *Little Soldier*. According to Altınay (2008), *Little Ayşe* as a gendered narrative stems from the intertwining relationship between militarism and nationalism in Turkey. In parallel to Altınay (2008), Nagel (1998) draws attention to the political processes building nation-states that are closely knitted to hegemonic masculinity. Nationalism becomes an integral part of militarism through masculine themes, like patriotism, heroism, mission and courage (Nagel 1998). In conjunction with these masculine themes, femininity is shaped in the militarization of motherhood. It is within this analysis that the *Little Ayşe* narrative symbolizes a militarized and national motherhood (Altınay 2008).

According to Enloe, "Militarizing motherhood often starts with conceptualizing the womb as a recruiting station" (Enloe 2000:248). For the Turkish case, Parla (2001) argues that the continuing processes of nation-state building in Turkey have been established on the imagination of the essential trait of femininity as motherhood. She contends that the modern citizen identity was provided to women through the essentialised understanding of women as natural mothers (Parla 2001). Contributing to this debate, Altınay (2004) stresses that militarism promotes the construction of women

as natural mothers. Further to this, Akşit (2005) emphasizes, in her research on modernity and nationalism in the realm of girls' education from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Turkish republic, that teaching housework stood at the core of the nationalist educational curriculum. The curriculum at Girls' Institutes was based on teaching housework (cooking), household economy, sewing and stitching. According to Akşit (2005), "The cooking, sewing-stitching, household economy classes at the Institute was meant for the girls who would give birth to and raise a new nation" (145).<sup>27</sup> The infantilization of *Ayşe* (with the word little) in the song alludes to this allegedly naturally given state of motherhood for women that was reproduced in the educational curriculum.

The majority of women conscientious objector declarations express their opposition to this nationalist discourse as perpetuating the militarization of motherhood based on national motherhood. There are two levels of resistance frequently expressed in the declarations: 1) resistance to sexism that depicts women as naturally born mothers and women's bodies as the land of the nation; 2) resistance to heterosexism that is intertwined with the first level via nationalism and militarism. The first level of resistance stresses the militarized and national gender regime that invades the sphere of motherhood. Further to this argument, many of the declarations emphasize that women's bodies are turned into the nation's land as the wombs of the nation. Contributing to these arguments, woman objector Seher adds that women represent the moral virtue of the nation, responsible for teaching the knowledge of militarism to their offspring. She further expresses that women of the nation are expected to be proud of these militarized gender duties:

I didn't want to be the womb of the militaries; I didn't want to become any models of the holy mother, holy wife, mother wife who gives birth to the

soldiers. And also most importantly: militarism doesn't only take their sons from them. Well if your son is murdered in the military, [militarism] doesn't only take your son...there are civil society organizations like Mothers of the Martyrs Association (*Şehit Anneleri Derneği*)...These kinds of associations give another mission to women apart from taking their sons and their husbands from them. Besides the mission of being the womb, ...they give you the mission of telling the positive sides of being a mother of a martyr to the society. And we see them. The Mothers of the Martyrs Association is visible...through the support of nationalist and Kemalist structures (Seher).

As suggested here, the most contemporary example of the altruistic mothers of the nation is the organization, Mothers of the Martyrs (*Şehit Anneleri Derneği*). They are very popular in the media, and at the state and military level, because of their efforts for self denial to protect and glorify the nation by sacrificing their sons. Representations by media, state and the military construct the Mothers of the Martyrs as the nation, "figuring women as motherland, the fecund body of the nation" (Gedik 2008: 105).

Women as the fecundity of the nation's body places women as the representation of moral virtue and nationalist social norms. Within the nationalist discourse women are depicted to reproduce the nation biologically as well as culturally. The ultimate aim of the national and militarized motherhood is the nourishment of children that are propitious to the homeland and the nation. Mothers of the Martyrs are used as symbols of ideal motherhood, which represents in turn moral purity and honor of the nation (Gedik 2008). As Mothers of Martyrs indicate, dominant femininity in Turkey is defined by motherhood and honor rather than individualism (Sirman 2007). Their bodies are consecrated for the nation (Gedik 2008).

The militarization of motherhood favors the heterosexual family. Feminist scholarship on masculinity and militarism emphasizes that compulsory conscription is perceived as a passage to the adulthood that plays an important stage in hegemonic

masculinity (Cockburn 2007, Selek 2008, Enloe 2000, Sinclair-Webb 2000). Marriage constitutes the next passage in hegemonic masculinity that underlines heterosexuality as the norm. This second level of resistance against heterosexism perpetuated by militarism is frequently expressed in the declarations. One of the women conscientious objectors, Sitem explains this relationship between heterosexism, militarism and patriarchy:

I think that there are similarities between militarism and heterosexism. There are times when they are intertwined. Heterosexism is prevalent with the modern states. The family, children, reproduction all of these are about it. Modern states try to protect the family through perpetuating heterosexism. Militarism does the same thing. They feed upon each other. A heterosexist family gives birth to little soldiers. Militarism gets into it and they grow up to be soldiers. They become slaves in a way... But it [the parallel course of militarization] is not only implemented upon homosexuality, it is also implemented upon femininities. If you are a woman, then the military service is important, right? If you are going to save the nation, in order to do that you need to have a penis, and your penis in quotation shall be working. If you are outside of it, you are a child; you lack any kind of action. There is a perception like that. And, by that way militarism and heterosexism are intertwined. (Sitem)

Many of the declarations refer to the state construction of “unfit” populations for military service, namely women, disabled populations<sup>28</sup> and gays, as a reflection of male domination perpetuated by militarism. In their declarations, women conscientious objectors criticize the certificate of disability for discharge that is attained by gays as justifying and normalizing militarism and hegemonic masculinity. In recent years, some of the heterosexual conscientious objectors that have undergone numerous trials have been given certificates of disability for discharge by the state.<sup>29</sup> This phenomenon further locates compulsory conscription within the sphere of hegemonic masculinity. Conscientious objection is regulated by the state within the confinement of a disability and, thereby, pushes objectors to the margins of hegemonic masculinity and positions them as feminine in militarist discourse.<sup>30</sup> A woman objector’s declaration in 2008

especially focused on the state's attempt to certify the disability of imprisoned conscientious objectors (for discharge).

In this section I argued that one gendered narrative that the discourse of women's conscientious objectors criticizes is the narrative of *Little Ayşe*. The declarations specifically argue against the militarization of motherhood through nationalism. I asserted that the *Little Ayşe* narrative legitimizes the heterosexual family through the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. As the relevant research shows (Biricik 2008, Selek 2008), the "heterosexual matrix" constitutes an important component in the establishment of militarism as an ideology. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1999) argues that the gender regime based on a heterosexual matrix assigns certain performances of femininities and masculinities. Further, the subjects with gendering and sexual performances deviating from this gender regime are treated as objects and therefore discriminated against as others, punished or, when needed, destroyed. Women conscientious objectors' declarations oppose the gender regime constructed on the heterosexual matrix because they argue that the heterosexual matrix is invented through militarist and nationalist discourses.

**Strange Encounters of Gendered Narratives: The First Women Combat Pilot, Sabiha Gökçen, and Kurdish Woman Guerrilla, Zilan**

*Ar değilim, zar değilim*  
*[I am not honor, I am not a membrane]*  
*Kimsenin namusu hiç değilim*  
*[I am not the honor of anybody]*<sup>31</sup>

Women taking part in combat positions in militaries and/or guerrilla movements have been shocking for anti-militarist feminists (Feinman 2000) because women have long been characterized as the peaceful gender (Burgieres 1990, Feinman 2000, Skjelbæk

2001). The anti-militarist feminist movement in the US discussed masculinity and femininity as circulating gendered positions, which led to the assumption that women can also be the agents and representatives of militarism and militarized violence (Feinman 2000). On the other hand, even if women become agents of militarist institutions and movements, they are differentiated as “woman” guerrilla or soldier within institutional vocabulary that corresponds with gender discrimination (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). In parallel, women’s violence is depicted as an anomaly and violent women are represented in the narratives of whores and monsters (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007). Women are also secondarily called to armed struggle or war only when they are needed (Enloe 2000). It is possible to infer that even if women must be called to armed struggle, gendered narratives like the whore or monster that regulate the spheres of masculinity and femininity shall be put into force to legitimize the violent acts of women. These are indicators of militarism as a gendered discourse.

*Zilan* was the first woman guerrilla of Kurdish armed struggle. *Sabiha Gökçen* was the first woman soldier and combat pilot, and adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal, the first Turkish president and commander in the War of Independence.<sup>32</sup> It is an interesting coincidence that *Zilan* was from Dersim, in the Eastern part of Turkey where the Kurdish Alevi population is high. Dersim further has a symbolic value in the history of the Kurdish Armed struggle as it is the place where the first Kurdish uprising was initiated and suppressed by the Republican armed forces in 1937 commanded by the combat pilot *Sabiha Gökçen*. This was her first and last mission (Altınay 2008). Within the context of Turkey, the narratives of *Zilan* and *Sabiha Gökçen* employing violence are

invented through the aforementioned factors. They are secondarily called upon in armed struggle and their presence is justified through these predominant gender narratives.

Discourse of women's conscientious objectors answers back at both of these gendered narratives of violent women through the slogan: "Don't serve in the military service and don't serve in the mountains," with the latter referring to the call for non-violence by Kurdish guerrillas (Altınay 2008: 131). I argue that the discourse of women's conscientious objectors articulates this anti-militarist and non-violent position on both sides of the Kurdish conflict. In the declarations and the interviews they express this claim by acknowledging the following themes: 1) being against all kinds of war by concentrating on the human dimension and victimization involved; 2) criticism of state militarism with regard to the Kurdish question; 3) criticism of militarism as a discourse that reproduces the secondary roles of women in armed struggle or in the military; 4) criticism of heroic/warrior women narratives; 5) opposition against individual and collective use of guns for any ideological purpose; 6) non-violence as a means of struggle against oppression and militarism; 7) strategic emphasis on 'the value of life' against militarized rhetoric of the honour of dying for the struggle or the nation.

The phenomenon that women are secondarily called upon for the defense of the nation was prevalent during the War of Independence in Turkey (Altınay 2004). Drawing on the writings of Sabiha Gökçen about her efforts to enter the army as a pilot, Altınay (2004) emphasizes that women were invited to the military nation not only as mothers and wives, but as daughters. Further, daughters of the military nation were depicted as warriors. However, the daughter position is a legendary position that only a few women can access while the rest are predominantly responsible for reproduction (Altınay 2008).



The same invitation for women when and only if needed is still in effect by the first article of the *Act On The Duty of Armed Struggle Against the Enemy, Inside the Nation* [*Memleket İçi Düşmana Karşı Silahlı Savunma Ödevi Yönetmeliği*],<sup>33</sup> which reads as follows:

At incidents and times of emergency (*olağanüstü*), men citizens between 16 and 60 and women citizens between the ages of 20 and 45 are obliged to struggle with arms against the parachuters, landing armed forces through air, strikes through the sea and borders. When there are no men available to serve in the military, women are used in supporting services. (1944)

The Act states in Article no. 9, H section that “Women who are pregnant and who have children, whose husbands are in military service and who have no one to take care of [them]” are exempt from the duty of armed struggle. Both of these sections depict women as the sole reproducers of the nation and only some of them are secondarily called to defend the nation.

By drawing upon the actual narrative of *Sabiha Gökçen*, Altınay (2004) points to the fact that even if she became a combat pilot, her position as pilot did not overshadow her gender position. Her honor (*namus*) became the honor of the nation and the nation was depicted as a gendered embodiment, enclosed within the body of the combat pilot/woman soldier. As a result, Gökçen’s mission to Dersim was not only repressing the uprising against the state by force, but she was also responsible for defending her dignity and honor by not becoming the site of enemy invasion, namely rape and torture (Altınay 2008).<sup>34</sup> Protecting the honor of the nation by defending one’s sexual embodiment served as an important justification for calling the participation of women in the defense of the nation.

Inventing new mechanisms for the participation of women in armed struggle led to an

ideological shift in the Kurdish armed struggle against Turkish militarism and nationalism after 1980. In her analysis about the political constructions of Kurdish women's identity, Çağlayan (2009) argues that Kurdish insurgency predominantly disseminated the struggle for Kurdish liberation by devising new slogans to drive women into the movement after the 1980s. New slogans abandoned the misogynist understanding of the feminine as corrupted and colonized by the enemy and thereby not trustable. Instead, they invited Kurdish women to struggle by establishing the new nation-family where women became active agents, and relocated masculinity as something to be defeated for the benefit of the struggle. Defeat of masculinity was found to be crucial for liberating women as well as Kurdish communities and was presented as possible only through obtaining "real masculinity" (*gerçek erkeklik*) (Çağlayan 2009:120-121). This was to be managed by giving up fake masculinity (*sahte erkeklik*), which stands for the exercise of power over Kurdish woman. Instead, real masculinity was obtained by war, fight and victory in the struggle, which "will save [Kurdish] men from feminization and will make them real men" (Çağlayan 2009: 121)

Within this ideological shift, the Kurdish nation was understood to be feminized because of Turkish domination and oppression and the only possible way to reclaim her identity was recovering from fake masculinity to real masculinity. A parallel intervention was made calling women into the struggle. In that sense, the new Kurdish woman identity was made contingent on becoming an active participant of the movement and armed struggle, which would prevent her from corruption and colonization. This call for women's active participation to the extent of death was discursively knitted to their deification (Çağlayan 2009). This new political identity was not a narrative that it is

possible to perform in daily life. Rather it is constructed as an aim, “which is impossible to obtain while living” (Çağlayan 2009: 113). Within this context, *Zilan* was the main guerrilla goddess as a suicide bomber that became the representative figure of the slogan calling on women to armed struggle: “Ones that will fight will liberate, Ones who are liberated will beautify, Ones who are beautiful will be loved” (Çağlayan 2009: 110).

It is worth noting that the nationalism and militarism represented by the narratives of *Sabiha Gökçen* and *Zilan* are different from each other. Although women surmount to the limits of nationalism as represented by the narrative of *Sabiha Gökçen*, women are hardly accepted to the army, based on their designated role for reproduction in the continuous process of nation-building. Even if they are accepted, still their sexuality and body are depicted as lands to be protected (Altınay 2004). On the other hand, the narrative of *Zilan* speaks for the inclusion of women into Kurdish armed struggle (Çağlayan 2009). In that sense, these two gendered narratives react against and articulate elements of militarism and nationalism in different ways. Women conscientious objectors oppose both of these narratives and emphasize that women can become active agents of militarism and nationalism. But this does not overshadow their passive gender roles and even if they are active agents, they still are positioned as the honour of the nation.

The most common answer to the question of why did you declare your conscientious objection expresses a general attitude of being against all kinds of wars and militarism that destroy people from all kinds of geographies and nationalities. This is a continuing theme with the men conscientious objectors. As I indicated in the earlier sections of this chapter, anti-war and anti-militarist positions with regard to wars are argued in line with the general principle of non-violence which dominates the

conscientious objection movement in Turkey. These political positions have two intertwined perspectives on war. In one way, this perspective criticizes all kinds of war and finds them to be destructive for human beings and nature. On the other hand, the counter-armed struggle by the victims of oppressed nations or groups are perceived to be equally as devastating.

All of my participants expressed that they are against all types of wars, including the counter-armed struggles. However, specific incidents motivated some of the women conscientious objectors in declaring their objections, and these motivational incidents became prioritized points of emphasis in their declarations. Woman objector Seher emphasizes that although she embraces an understanding of non-violence about war, she was particularly motivated to declare her conscientious objection by concentrating on what she calls “militarist crimes”. She publicly expressed her criticism of the crimes of Turkish militarism in her declaration, as well as during our interview:

[pertaining to Turkish military in this quote] I established it over the military. But I need to emphasize this in parenthesis that my anti-war and non-violent position is not only limited by opposing against the military. Because I don't like violence in any sphere of my life. I hate using guns for the benefit of an ideology. It is just the same with my hatred against compulsory conscription... I built it on the military because there was the incident of Uğur Kaymaz.<sup>35</sup> It was in 2005...I guess...a little kid was killed with his father. That really influenced me. That is probably why I wanted to be a conscientious objector. Because I wanted to express [against] the [Turkish] militarist crimes (Seher).

Parallel to Seher, my interviews were particularly shaped by women objectors' criticism of state militarism towards the Kurdish movement. In other words, women conscientious objectors use their declarations as an opportunity to express their public criticism against militarism by referring to contemporary incidents where they think militarism reveals itself in direct violence towards the Kurdish movement. While

emphasizing a non-violent position against both Turkish and Kurdish militarism, during my interviews many of the women mentioned the Kurdish armed struggle as an inevitable consequence of state militarism, and as an integral component of Turkish militarism. As one of the women conscientious objector explains:

There is a problem, which keeps militarism fresh in Turkey: the Kurdish problem. Actually, there has always been a Kurdish problem. However, this problem turned into a terror problem during 1984...<sup>36</sup> That happened in a way that the General Staff started to perceive it as a terror problem. Unfortunately, since it [the state] perceives the Kurdish problem as problem of terror, it can not solve it. That is why I concentrated on the military in my conscientious objection. (Seher)

Although this perspective on the Kurdish question is significant, within the women conscientious objector declarations, it is possible to find a general anti-war stance against the wars in the Middle East that bypasses a special emphasis on the Kurdish armed struggle. Another woman conscientious objector, Serpil, was motivated by the *lack* of reference to the Kurdish question within the declarations and thus concentrated on the Kurdish struggle as an important component of militarism in Turkey:

Everybody was declaring their own conscientious objections by mentioning the wars all over the world and they also were mentioning their reasons for participating in this action. Nobody mentioned the war, continuing in Kurdistan. Then, I took the word and declared that I am a conscientious objector. We are all against war but there has been a war against Kurdish people in this country for 20 years and there is Kurdish problem which awaits urgent solution. And not mentioning this is a negation....I felt the need to do this declaration because of perceiving the serious lack of this in anti-militarist action (Serpil)

The general anti-war stance in the declarations concentrated on the idea that nationalism is the intrinsic component that makes militarism work, by creating an enemy. A majority of the participants in this research mentioned that Turkish and Kurdish militarism are similar phenomena. By drawing attention to the ideological constructions of the enemy in the context of Turkish militarism, Gamze expressed that a special focus

on the Kurdish problem would lead to an overemphasis that erases nationalism and militarism operating within Kurdish armed struggle. Although she experienced discrimination based on her Kurdish ethnicity and observed similar discrimination against her family, she tells that she never preferred to overemphasize her origins, like members of the Kurdish armed struggle do:

Kurdishness and Turkishness... These are all cultures, to my view. There is a group of people together. They are from the same culture and they share the same geography and they have the same history but then the politics intervene. Borders are drawn and wars are waged and enemies are revealed. Bad intentions occur. That kind of thing happens. I speak of my Kurdishness because of this kind of discrimination. Well, this discrimination is about Kurdish people, something that is done to Kurds. My relatives' kids- my cousin's kids- both of the 2 kids had Kurdish names. And they couldn't register them.<sup>37</sup> We weren't able to speak our own language. I don't know Kurdish for instance and I am really sad about it. People who were throwing stones at our houses were doing it because of the fact that we were Kurds.... The fact that this mentality has emerged is so ridiculous. But I don't say that I am Kurd, Kurd, Kurd against this. I say, yes I am Kurd, against this. What can you do, I am a Kurd? (Gamze)

In light of the declarations and my interviews, the discourse of women conscientious objectors aims to draw attention to the victims of the Kurdish problem in Turkey within the context of wars and militarism as a holistic system dominating the entire world. Deaths and killings are drawn attention to during the interviews to oppose all kinds of just war frameworks. This argument is a continuing element in men's conscientious objection declarations such as the following:

They [Kurds] see it as self-defense. I can only understand it to a certain extent because something is trying to destroy your culture. It attacks with every means; it attacks by guns, by preventing the right to be educated, takes your transportation card and throws it into trash.... It is some kind of genocide. We [She is Laz] were assimilated as well. We never struggled. That is why I respect their struggle so much.... But, when it comes to their armed struggle, it is impossible for me to support at that point. It doesn't matter where it comes from. Everybody says it at any time; people are dying (Sitem).

Some of the conscientious objectors (Dilek İ., Serpil, Seher, Melek) referred to the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish armed struggle as war rather than a consequence of terrorism (as Turkish state does) which further signifies that they recognize the state's oppression against the Kurds and Kurdish movement as a legitimate struggle (unlike the state). However, they also expressed that Kurdish problem can not be solved by armed struggle. Rather it reproduces Turkish and Kurdish militarism. Woman conscientious objector Dilek İ., who had a friend from the South East of Turkey where a majority of the Turkish military operations against the Kurds and PKK counter-attacks occur, emphasizes that her motivation in declaring conscientious objection stemmed from the phenomenon of the Kurdish children of war in Eastern Turkey:

I have a friend; he grew up in Muş, Varto. One day he told me that... when we were in high school, we were continuously talking about what we had done when we were a child. Well you know we did this and that, we would climb up to that tree...that kind of a thing. But he never spoke. Well he was my best friend. One day I said to him: 'Well, brother, haven't you ever played?' Well, I was making fun of it. He said that 'When we were kids' and he was really sad in saying this, 'when we were kids, we used to pick up bullets instead of the marbles.' When he said this, I was blocked. Well they pick up bullets in the East. And, I mentioned this [in the declaration]. They speak of the children of peace (*barış çocukları*) but there are no peace children, there are war kids. Really there are war kids. Children grow up in war in the East. (Dilek İ.)

Dilek İ. continued our dialogue on the effects of the military conflict in the South East region on children in her account of another experience of hers, during Newroz (*Nowruz* or Kurdish New Year) celebrations in the East. Dilek İ. emphasized her confusion when a Kurdish girl thought that she was a woman guerrilla because of the traditional pants she was wearing.<sup>38</sup>

During *Newroz*, a girl grabbed me. She asked whether I came from the mountains. I had the baggy trousers [*Şalvar*]...She said, when I grow up, I will go up the mountains. A Kurdish girl was saying this. And this really upset me. The fact that a 10 year old kid would be thinking things like that really upset me (Dilek İ.).

Dilek İ. was surprised by the admiration of the Kurdish girl for being a guerrilla, because to Dilek İ this shows the immense militarization in the Kurdish communities. Kurdish feminist activist and political scientist Çağlayan (2009) also stresses the admiration activists of the Kurdish women's movement have for Kurdish women guerrillas. Women guerrillas symbolize not only ethnic liberation, but women's liberation from gender oppression.<sup>39</sup> The Kurdish Armed Struggle mainly associated gender liberation with the participation of Kurdish women in the armed struggle after the 1990s, and this influenced how members of the women's movement conceived of liberation (Çağlayan 2009).

It is not only Kurdish militarism that positions Kurdish women as legendary and heroic when they become active in armed struggle. During our interview Dilek İ. also criticized the legendary heroic narratives of Turkish women and the depiction of these heroines as warriors of the nation. She highlighted Ömer Seyfettin's tales<sup>40</sup> and his heroic women warriors, such as the well known figure of *Nenehatun*, the first woman commando of the War of Independence.<sup>41</sup> According to her, all of these warrior woman figures represent Turkish militarism and nationalism. Altınay (2001) argues that contemporary Turkish women, who are successful in non-traditional jobs (i.e. military) were also represented by their resemblance to *Sabiha Gökçen* and *Nenehatun*, since both of them left their traditional gender roles of reproducing the nation. A majority of the declarations refuse performing these kinds of violent women narratives circulating in Turkish cultural and literary spheres and oppose their circulation in Turkish literature since they think that they legitimize and normalize the processes of Turkish militarization.



As analyzed in the narrative of *Sabiha Gökçen*, protection of female honor against enemy invasion is depicted as another face of defending the nation. Altınay (2004) argues that the conceptualization of honor at the juncture of nationalism and militarism provides the cultural imperative for justifying the underlying masculine and militarist attitude of the protection of “*womenandchildren*”<sup>42</sup> (Enloe 2000: 127). Protection of women and children turns against women and involves the protection of female honor in the defense of the nation.

In the stories of *Sabiha Gökçen* and *Zilan* honor is the militarist mechanism whereby women become their own bodily-guardians against the enemy invasion and death becomes clear expression of the value of service in the armed struggle or the military. As a response, a recurring theme in the declarations and interviews is the opposition against embodying the honor of the nation. In line with this, a majority of women conscientious objectors’ declarations emphasize the value of life against the value of death through the repetition of the phrase “I refuse.” The phrase is used to express the strategic emphasis on the value of life against militarized rhetoric on the honor of dying for the struggle or the nation. In that sense, “I refuse” connotes a negative and a positive meaning. The former stands for the promise of disobedience by not performing militarized gender roles and the latter refers to developing alternative gender performances and tactics against militarization of gender. The act of women conscientious objection constitutes a part of this alternative anti-militarist and non-violent gender performance for struggle.

Parallel to the devastating effects of the counter armed struggles of the Kurdish and Leftist movements, conscientious objector Melek mentions that she perceives

military violence as illegitimate because it causes death of human beings, but she also sees it as inadequate in reaching its aims. She suggests a new way of looking at the issue of militarism. She draws attention to the relative weakness of the Kurdish and Leftist armed struggles when compared to the forces and powers of the Turkish state and military. In contrast to violent armed struggles for ideological causes, woman conscientious objector Melek insists that a non-violent action repertoire can serve as a resource for struggle:

Is there a chance in which your means of violence are much stronger than the means of the state? State is an apparatus. It is a long-established entity. And [the state] doesn't much care about your cheap guns or this and that. If it wants, it can do anything it wants. The same goes for the conscientious objectors. Therefore, there is nothing you can win out of this. If this is a win and lose thing... Well we say, there is some way different [non-violent action], we say it can be tried (Melek).

Non-violent disobedience is called upon as an answer to both the *Zilan* and *Sabiha Gökçen's* narratives. A majority of the women conscientious objectors' declarations express the idea that women shall not support, consent to or directly become implementers of militarism. They declare that they will disobey militarism in their daily lives and will accept and act upon non-violent political struggle against militarism.

### **Non-Violence and Militarism as a Gendered Discourse**

The gendered narratives of *Kezban*, *Little Ayşe*, *Zilan* and *Sabiha Gökçen* symbolize the designated roles of women in Turkey, articulating the contradiction of militarist and nationalist gender regimes that require both the victimization and support of women. The discourse of women conscientious objectors challenges these narratives and gender positions through an argument of non-violence in a multiplicity of spheres. In that sense, non-violence encompasses recognizing and acting against circulating militarism

and violence in daily life and political struggles. It is within this context that women's conscientious objection is shaped through moving beyond the refusal of the military service. Women's conscientious objection is an active reaction against the male domination of conscientious objection in definition.

Through women's objections the male domination of the definition of conscientious objection is framed as another circulating militarist discourse, which erases the broader influence of militarism and nationalism. The discourse of women conscientious objectors emphasizes "resistance to discrimination based on gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion" (Altınay 2004: 106) alongside resistance to all types of militarism and war; it thereby aims to open a space for dialogue by arguing for women objectors' inclusion. Violence is understood as circulating in cycles, whereby compulsory conscription provides only a partial focus.

The discourse of women conscientious objectors argues that a refusal to participate in and consent to militarism will break the cycles of violence embedded in militarism and nationalism. The frequently used phrase "I refuse" in the declarations corresponds with the critique of militarism as a gendered discourse, and non-violence as a form of disobedience to dominant gender performances symbolized in the narratives of *Kezban*, *Little Ayşe*, *Zilan* and *Sabiha Gökçen*. In the next chapter I analyze women objectors' alternative performances that stand in conflict with the militarist gender regime through further consideration of their interviews. In particular, I examine the experiences of women with militarism and the limits they encounter in challenging militarism in daily life.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> All of these declarations are online at:

<http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=39671&ArsivSayfaNo=1>,  
<http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=27222&ArsivSayfaNo=1>,  
<http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=36286&ArsivSayfaNo=1>,  
<http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=45401&ArsivSayfaNo=1>

<sup>2</sup> By the time I started my interviews, there were fourteen women conscientious objectors. I did not have a chance to speak with the most recent two women conscientious objectors, who declared their conscientious objection in December, 2009. I included their declarations into my analysis. One of the women conscientious objectors died in 2005. Two conscientious objectors wanted to be left out of the research; I was not able to reach two women conscientious objectors for interviews.

<sup>3</sup> The pseudonyms that I chose for this project come from the names of transgender women who were murdered in the last two years in Turkey. These names have nothing to do with the actual names of my participants.

<sup>4</sup> For more on just war theory see: Walzer 2000; Orend 2000; O'Driscoll 2008. On Islam and just war theory see: Kelsay 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Here, political violence refers to revolutionary violence and counter-armed struggles of the oppressed.

<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, there are a few religious conscientious objection declarations that are not included in my sample because they are declared by the end of 2009. These declarations base their acts of conscientious objection to military service on Muslim beliefs. However, religious declarations before 2009 are included in my sample.

<sup>7</sup> In parallel, Altınay (2004) draws attention to Turkish military organized as a prototype of the ideal nation that is nationalist and secular.

<sup>8</sup> Hakan Ekinci contacted the War Resisters e-mail group through their website in order to declare his conscientious objection. However, he is not considered to be a part of the movement due to his action of hijacking a plane. For his declaration see: Savaskarsitlari.org 2006b.

<sup>9</sup> Commission on Conscientious Objection was established in 2006 within the organizational framework of the Human Rights Association. It aimed for providing legal services to conscientious objectors, documenting the numbers of the conscientious objectors in Turkey and establishing a network of conscientious objectors. For more on the goals of the commission see: Savaskarsitlari.org 2006a.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the incident see: Özkan 2006.

<sup>11</sup> The most recent case of a dialogue is observable in the case of imprisoned conscientious objector Enver Aydemir who based his refusal on his Islamic beliefs. Enver Aydemir was taken into custody on December 24, 2009 while going to a conference on Conscientious Objection in Istanbul. Although Aydemir's reasons for conscientious objection are based on his Islamic beliefs, secular anti-militarist conscientious objectors support his campaign. However, there is still an on-going debate over the email list of the conscientious objectors whether to support his campaign. Also, there are secular conscientious objectors who prefer not to support his campaign based on the fact that Aydemir declared his conscientious objection only against the Turkish military.

<sup>12</sup> The 'We are Facing' Campaign organized by Istanbul Anti-militarist Initiative (discussed in Chapter 1) around the slogan: "Don't serve in the military, Don't serve in the Mountains" is the most significant

indicator of the perspective, criticizing armed struggle of the Kurdish insurgency, known as PKK, and the military operations of the Turkish Armed Forces in the Kurdish territories of Turkey (Selek 2000).

<sup>13</sup> In the final decision, the absence of legal infrastructure was emphasized, causing the vicious cycle of continuous trial and arrest that Osman Murat Ülke lived through. This vicious circle, referred as “Civil Death,” was found by ECHR to be against human rights, specifically Article 3 of the European Human Rights Convention: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” The decision called upon the State of Turkey to adopt laws and legal measures to prevent cases like that of Ülke. However, the final decision did not involve a demand for the right to conscientious objection. Rather it called for the adoption of legal measures to deal with the issue of conscientious objectors. No measures have been adopted and the legal ambiguity surrounding the conscientious objectors still stands. For the online verdict please see Netherlands Institute of Human Rights. N.d.

<sup>14</sup> For an interview with total objector Deniz Özgür (conducted by AHALİ, an anarchist collective) about the difference between total objection and conscientious objection see Ahali 2008.

<sup>15</sup> According to the Military Service Act [Askerlik Kanunu] (Adopted in 1927), male citizens are given the right to defer their military service until their age 29 if they are studying abroad and/or participating in higher education institute in Turkey. If a male citizen is working abroad, their military service is postponed until the end of his contract but this person can not exceed the age of 38 for military service and entitled to 21 days of military service. Many of the deserters exercise this right and avoid military service. During passport renewals, the status of a male citizen is controlled by the Police Headquarters and if a male citizen does not defer his military service due to the aforementioned conditions, he is not given a passport. For more on the Military Service Act see: The Ministry of Justice 1927.

<sup>16</sup> For an intriguing journalist work on the memoirs of the soldiers that served their military service during the operations in South East Turkey and Iraq, see Mater (1999). This book was banned by the state in 1999 and a court case has been opened against the author and the publisher that were acquitted in 2001. On the court case please see: Bia News 2001. The book is accessible online at: <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=6&ArsivAnaID=111> (Accessed June 19th, 2010)

<sup>17</sup> According to the new Turkish Citizenship Law, adopted in 2008, military service has been withdrawn from the reasons for deprivation of Turkish citizenship. Refer to Radikal News 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Zilan, with her officially registered name, *Zeynep Kınacı*, conducted the first Kurdish suicide bomb attack in 1996 in Dersim (Tunceli in Turkish). As a result of the attack, 6 soldiers died alongside more than 30 other casualties (Altınay 2008).

<sup>19</sup> *Ülkü* is the model journal of People’s Houses. People’s Houses were establishments in cities, operated between 1935 and 1950 in order to prepare the necessary ideological, economic and cultural infrastructure for national development (Karaömerlioğlu 1999).

<sup>20</sup> In *Maneuvers* (2000), Enloe illustrates the militarization of a tomato soup which contains pasta, cut in the shape of Star War satellites. By this, she emphasizes that in every stage of the production and consumption of this tomato soup many people are militarized. In that sense, practices of asking for consent in militarism are diverse (Enloe 2000:1-2).

<sup>21</sup> Altıparmak (2007) draws attention to a multitude of law articles in the Turkish Criminal Code which are designed to protect the values of the nation. Article 318 is one of these articles. He also draws attention to Article 301, which restricts Turkish citizens on the grounds of humiliating speech against Turkishness (Altıparmak 2007). According to Önderoğlu (2007) from *BIA Medya Gözlem Masası* (BIA News Media Monitoring Desk), there are 72 media personnel (writers, editors) who were convicted of violating Article

No. 301 in 2006, which showed a rise since 2005. Considering the fact that there are no formal statistics for documenting the “crimes” connected with Article 301, the total number of convictions is unclear.

<sup>22</sup> This Article hands down prison sentences for the crime of “alienating people from military service” and it has been used to prosecute reporters who prepared news about imprisoned male conscientious objectors and conscientious objection in general.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account of the incident see Gürcan (2008) .For more about the court case see Bia News 2008.

<sup>24</sup> On the case against Columnist Perihan Mağden, accused for her article on conscientious objectors in Turkey see *Hürriyet News* 2006. On the case against Writer Cezmi Ersöz, who was accused of his article on military service see Önderoğlu 2008b. On the case against Columnist Birgül Özbarış see Önderoğlu 2008a. On the case against Actor Mehmet Atak, Activists Oğuz Sönmez, Gürsat Özdamar and Serkan Bayrak who were accused of organizing a press conference in support of Conscientious Objector, Mehmet Bal see Bia News 2009a.

<sup>25</sup> For more on Mehmet Bal’s campaign and case, please refer to Chapter 1.

<sup>26</sup> Selek (2000) argues that the value system of the old Turkish nomad communities, expressed through the expression of “Horse, woman, gun” [*At, avrat, silah*] indicates the militarism of these communities. Since the fundamental subsistence of these communities relied on plunder, a horse was the closest ally and the most valuable estate of Turkish men. Turkish men were all soldiers and women were perceived as the mothers of the soldiers of the next generations. Selek (2000) also stresses that cutting a man's horse's tail and raping a man's wife were considered to be equal insults against men in these communities, which further indicates the intertwined relationship between militarism and male domination.

<sup>27</sup> In her book, she examines the patriarchal, ideological formations of the Turkish gender regime in the early Turkish Republic through re-evaluating the experiences of women who were educated in Girls’ Institutes (Akşit 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Since 2008, disabled men are called up to representative military service for one day. The one day military service is conducted during the official week marking disabilities in the second week of May. For more on the issue, please see the relevant newspaper articles *Star News* 2008 and *Milli Gazete* 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Conscientious objectors Halil Savda and Mehmet Bal were given a certificate of disability for discharge upon their release from military prisons in 2008, see Savda 2008.

<sup>30</sup> In his research with gay men that obtained the certificate of disability for discharge, Biricik (2008) reveals that while gays (that are participants of the research) are trying to prove their disability for military service with regard to their sexualities, the medical and militaristic discourses push them to perform like women. Biricik (2008) contends that his respondents conduct a sort of patriarchal bargaining through their continuous attempts of proving their femininity while trying to obtain the certificate.

<sup>31</sup> This is a common feminist slogan.

<sup>32</sup> Until 1955, no women other than Sabiha Gökçen had the right to participate in the military. Sabiha Gökçen exceptionally stood as the only woman combat pilot and soldier (Altınay 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Adopted in August 7th, 1944 by decision no. 4654 (The Ministry of Justice 1944).

<sup>34</sup> Before the military operation, Sabiha Gökçen's father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, gave her a gun to use to protect her honor if ever she was captured by the enemy (Altınay 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Uğur Kaymaz was a 12 year old Kurdish child, who was murdered by the police with his father on the suspicion of them being terrorists. For more on the developments upon the court case please see Bia News 2009b.

<sup>36</sup> In this year the PKK conducted its first armed attack against the public and military buildings in the city of Şemdinli in the South East of Turkey (Gunter 1997).

<sup>37</sup> From the beginning of Republican era, use of Kurdish names is banned, as the official language was legally recognized to be Turkish (Göçek 2008). This restriction on the use of Kurdish continued until 2002. A recent report on Kurdish Human rights by *Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP)* in 2008 states that restrictions on giving Kurdish names and registering them with Turkish officials still continue due to the ban on the use of Kurdish letters in the birth certificates. The same report further implies that high rates of unregistered children in the South East and Eastern regions of Turkey is a result of the ban on the use of Kurdish letters in name registration. Please refer to the draft version of the report in English at KHRP 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Dilek İ. was wearing *şalvar*, a regular Kurdish outfit of women guerillas in the mountains.

<sup>39</sup> According to the survey by Çağlayan (2009) among the women activists of HADEP (Pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party) the most beloved heroine is *Zilan*. Çağlayan (2009) argues that *Zilan* represents women's liberation and Kurdish liberation within the imagination of Kurdish women activists.

<sup>40</sup> Ömer Seyfettin is a short story writer and a well known founder figure of Turkism in Turkish literature.

<sup>41</sup> *Nenehatun* is a well known woman soldier that participated in the war of Independence (1919- 1922). Her narrative involves both the altruism of a mother and a soldier of the nation as she left her baby and joined the armed struggle. *Nenehatun* was chosen by the Turkish Women's League [*Türk Kadınlar Birliği*] to be the best mother of the year in 1955, when she died (Durakbaşı 2000).

<sup>42</sup> By *womenandchildren*, Enloe (2000) also draws attention to the infantilization of women through the discourse of militarism.

### Chapter 3

In this chapter, I first examine women conscientious objectors' experiences with militarism. I will demonstrate that women conscientious objectors understand militarism as a circulating discourse in Leftist movements in Turkey. I then extend this analysis to Turkish nationalism, indicating that militarism and nationalism are more than official discourses. Militarism and nationalism are taught and reproduced at various levels of daily life. This is most obvious in my participants' experiences of discrimination based on ethno-religious nationalism in Turkey, which I argue is shaped by Turkish militarist-nationalist depictions of the internal enemy to the nation.

Among the nine women conscientious objectors I interviewed, one of them declared herself Kurdish; another one recently learned about her Kurdish origins. Two of my other participants declared themselves to be Kurdish-Alevi,<sup>1</sup> one Arabic-Alevi or Nusayri, another one Laz.<sup>2</sup> One originated from Bulgaria. The last two participants did not define themselves as Turkish but also declared that they don't know their origins.

The ethnic and religious composition of the sample reflects a micro-representation of the ethno-religious identities suppressed by a monolithic Turkish national identity shaped by ethno-cultural nationalism in Turkey (Bazin 2009, Belge 2007, Bora 2007). In parallel, Bazin (2009) draws attention to the invisibility of these minorities in Turkish national census statistics, which is an official signification of the Turkish nation.<sup>3</sup>

In the second section of this chapter, I concentrate on the gendered aspects of militarism by analyzing daily life experiences of women conscientious objectors. My analysis is based on the understanding of militarism as a gendering process, because women (and men) are forced or encouraged to engage in gendered roles that are closely



related with the goals of militarism (Enloe 2000). This process further articulates Turkish nationalism.

Militarism and nationalism are interlinked with the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Enloe 1990, Nagel 1998). Women's conscientious objectors' gendered experiences with militarism and nationalism show that women's lives are shaped by militarization of national motherhood, intimate relations and childhood. I further examine women's non-violent daily resistance practices against the militarization of gender.

Within the discourse of women conscientious objectors non-violence is a political action repertoire and the declaration of conscientious objection by women represents this repertoire that perceives non-violence as a principal in daily life. In the third section, by using Galtung's theories of non-violence and violence (Galtung 1965, 1990) I concentrate on this understanding of non-violence by focusing on how my participants define non-violence and operationalize this in their daily lives.

All of my interviews show that through the adoption of non-violence in daily life as an outcome of the act of conscientious objection, the discourse of women conscientious objectors underlines that the personal is political as much as the political is personal. Here, women conscientious objectors' combination of the personal and the political further constructs the way they perceive violence as more than bodily harm, and non-violence as an individual and collective ethical responsibility and a political action repertoire. Within this context, they frame women and men as equally responsible for violence and non-violence.

This understanding distances the discourse of women's conscientious objectors from the women's movements in Turkey, because according to the women conscientious

objectors women's movements' framework on violence against women depicts women as victims of male violence. As women conscientious objectors argue in their analysis of the militarization of gender, this ignores the ways in which women exert power, authority and violence. The discourse of women conscientious objectors is further critical of women's only group organizing and the emphasis on women's issues within the context of the women's movements.

Drawing on these criticisms in the last section of this chapter, I concentrate on feminist conceptualizations of gender based violence in Turkey and compare this with how women conscientious objectors understand violence and non-violence, in an attempt to show possible means of dialogue between the discourse of women objectors and the women's movements in Turkey. Here, I use the term women's movements to imply that the actual women's movement is so diverse, involving lots of different feminisms and other women's groups that do not identify with feminism. Nevertheless, I concentrate on the framework of violence against women as a main agenda formed by second wave feminists and Kurdish women's movements.

### **Militarism in Circulation**

Participants in this research associated militarism with fear, repression and acts of torture, silencing, exerting hierarchy, discipline and authority. They expressed these views by referring to the memory of the military coup on September 12, 1980.<sup>4</sup> Conscientious objector Serpil, who spent the 1980s in exile when there was a legal prohibition for political participation, stresses the brutal military repression of 1980 by stating that her generation is "alive by chance":

In our generation, that lived the political regime of September 12<sup>th</sup>, there is almost no one who has friends that are not tortured, executed, disappeared or murdered

by police and gendarme bullets. Members of our generation are alive just by chance. (Serpil).

It is plausible that because of this trauma of the military intervention of 1980 until the 1990s Turkish political and historical literature referred to militarism as *darbe* (literally blow), meaning “an expression of direct intervention by the military in the political system” (Altınay 2004: 2). Further to this, women conscientious objectors understand militarism as a discourse circulating not only in the state and the military, but in social movements, the educational system and workplace. In the following sections, I examine how women conscientious objectors experience militarism in these spheres of their daily lives.

### **Militarism in the Left**

All of the women conscientious objectors have an activist past in a variety of different social movements in Turkey. Despite their age, ethnicity and class differences, and different activism pasts, all of them found leftist movements authoritarian and hierarchical, which made them feel uncomfortable when they faced or participated in these organizations. They see this as an outcome of circulating militarism.

Hierarchy firstly stands for the masculine domination in Leftist organizations that associates the sphere of politics with male dominated norms and agendas. The second meaning the objectors attach to hierarchy refers to the distance between the revolutionary agenda of the left and struggles of everyday oppression. In other words, there is a hierarchy between different agendas for political struggle (such as student’s issues, women’s issues etc.,) that are seen as secondary to the revolutionary agenda.

In parallel with this second understanding of the hierarchy of agendas, women conscientious objectors criticized the ways in which activists are instrumentalized. They

challenged putting the revolution and the revolutionary organization in front of personal needs and claims because, according to these women, daily oppression serves as a ground for struggle. In that sense, there is a hierarchy between the activists and the organization whereby the organization constitutes the most important vehicle for revolution and the activists are instrumentalized. These criticisms portray the challenges to left politics by social movements in the post 1980 era which underline daily oppression as a ground for political struggle (Çaha 2005), and internal hierarchies and hierarchical agendas in the Left as obstacles for collective struggles (Acar-Savran 2007).

Women conscientious objectors refer to masculine domination in the Left as a face of circulating militarism. Conscientious objector Sitem specifically emphasized the discourse on armed struggle and militarist structure in leftist movements in Turkey as a constitutive factor for masculine domination and hierarchy, based on her experience as a participant in a Marxist Leninist revolutionary organization that defended revolutionary violence. For Sitem, male organization members' militarist and sexist perceptions of women activists served as a moment of her departure from the overall perspectives of the organization. During our interview, she told of a secret book as representing another peak point in her discomfort with militarism and masculinity in the organization. This book, *Rules to a Revolutionary Life*, circulates only within the organization.<sup>5</sup> According to Sitem, it seeks to establish common norms and a shared revolutionary persona whereby feminine traits are depicted as weak and armed political struggle is defined by masculine traits. Sitem describes the overall masculinist and militarist atmosphere in the revolutionary organization and critically reflects upon her own militarist and masculinist ideas in the past:

Well...you didn't have many alternatives [in the place I was living], there was only one way of being critical... you look up to your sisters and brothers, they are so tough and masculine. Back then I didn't like women. I was never fond of them. Because they would have cried and etc., that is how I thought by then. That is why I thought that toughness was a necessity in political struggle. You've got to be tough. You must never cry. If needed, you've got to be able to fight. If you are going for politics, you've got to do it like a man...etc., I was influenced by [the masculinist thinking of political engagement] and [the organization] was my only choice. If there was another organization, I would have been in that organization. I have no doubts about that. (Sitem)

Much of the feminist literature on militarism as an institution emphasizes that military legitimizes masculine domination through articulating feminine traits as weakness (Enloe 2000, Altınay 2004, Kuloğlu 2005). This grounding assumption depicts *womenandchildren* as populations in need of masculine protection and limit women to secondary roles and positions.<sup>6</sup> In parallel to this feminist literature which marks military as a gendered institution, Sitem's experience echoes a course of masculine domination, enforced by the militarist structure in her Leftist organization. Historically the women's movements of the 1980s criticized the Leftist movements in Turkey for their masculinism, not integrating women's issues into the agenda of the Left, and the secondary gendered roles given to women (Acar-Savran 2007). Nevertheless, none of these criticisms involved a challenge to the *militarism* circulating in the Left and women conscientious objectors open up a new venue for discussing militarization in the Left.

Melek expresses that she left a Leftist organization because she thought that its hierarchical structure pacified her political involvement. Instead, she became active in the conscientious objection movement, as she found it much more sincere and horizontally organized:

Let me tell you this: I wasn't able to be active in the Leftist movements because of the militarist structure. I wasn't able to name it by then. There was something that impeded me from feeling comfortable; I wasn't able to feel that I belonged to it.

The only place I felt that I belonged was [in the conscientious objection movement]. Because their political promise was clear and sincere (Melek).

During our interview, Melek told me that she felt disappointed with herself when she realized she could not identify with the Left. She was a Kurd and her family was Leftist and because of this she understood university as a place where she would become active in the Left. As soon as she started participating in a leftist organization, she thought that activists' lives were instrumentalized for the cause of the Revolution. To Melek, this resembled how the military uses soldiers. Sitem expressed the same.

Melek mentioned that after her departure from the Leftist organization, she searched for a political organization that politicized daily oppression and met the conscientious objection movement. According to her, since conscientious objectors refuse compulsory military service and face unemployment and other types of social and political oppressions in daily life,<sup>7</sup> their political engagement in Turkey politicizes and opposes militarist oppression in daily life. To her, this combines the personal and the political.

The horizontal structure of the *Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (War Resisters Association - WRA) and later *Izmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (Izmir War Resisters Association - IWRA) further contributed to Melek's feelings of comfort in the conscientious objection movement. This structure involved practice of consensus methods, which is understood to be a part of the non-violent culture these organizations attempted to establish. Increasing equal participation and preventing hierarchies within the organizations were the main reasons for practicing consensus methods. Another measure to prevent hierarchies was that the organizations did not have a leader or a leading committee of any sort (Selek 2000).

According to political scientist Çaha (2005), placing the needs of daily life as the determinants of political struggles was the founding characteristic of the Turkish social movements' agenda in the post 1980 era. The social movement politics of the 1990s was constituted through perceiving the state as a negotiating partner rather than an entity to be defeated and this major ideological transformation of the public sphere in the post 1980s era was the result of the rights framework that was also a major influence on the Alevi, Kurdish and Feminist movements (Çaha 2005). Through the influence of these movements, the actions and rhetoric of the militarist movements dating from the 1970s, which "condemn[ed] opposite political tendencies and the capitalist state," were transformed: "people began to focus on demands for early retirement, women's and workers' rights, religious freedom, better education, environmental issues and sectarian rights" (Çaha 2005:22).

Melek's experience and criticism with regard to the hierarchies in the Left expresses this larger transformation of the public sphere in the post 1980 era. However, none of these movements considered militarism as a reason for the hierarchical structures in the Left. The conscientious objectors' movement from its start in early 1990s has been concerned with the hierarchies in the Left. Their criticisms against hierarchies stood at the core of their anti-militarist politics (Selek 2000) which fed women conscientious objectors' understanding of militarism as a circulating discourse in the Left.

### **Turkish Nationalism, Militarism and Internal Enemies**

I understand nationalism as "both a goal to achieve statehood and a belief-in collective commonality" (Nagel 1998: 247). The first goal—achieving, maintaining and exercising statehood—commonly involves armed conflict in the form of revolution or

anti-colonial warfare; the second goal assures the imagination of a common-national past and present (Anderson 1991) and invention of traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). All of these aspects involve the creation of others to the nation. The creation of otherness is often built on drawing ethnic-racial boundaries that mark attitudes and ideas of national superiority (Nagel 1998).

Turkish national identity holds the traces of earlier militarization periods. Political scientist Üstel (2004) draws attention to two important moments that were influential on the state in defining the nation and the realm of Turkish citizenship. First is the Republican era of 1923-1980. Rather than the citizen, the fundamental actor of the era is the nation, which was a cultural community based on common descent. A Turkish nation was established upon a common language, land, race and historical past exceeding the boundaries of national sovereignty and professing common descent with Turkish ancestors in Central Asia.

The second moment occurred after the coup d'état in 1980, consolidating this essentialist view of citizenship and nation constructed during the early years of the Republican era. Here, in addition to essentialist views of citizenship, Muslim Sunni ideology played a key role in constituting the fundamental aspects of Turkish nationalism. There is a consensus in the literature on Turkish nation-state building and the consolidation of nationalism during the 1980s, that Turkish nationalism resulted in the repression of different identity groups and communities by the state and constructed a monolithic and absolute Turkish national identity (Kadıoğlu 1998, Üstel 2004). Also, the post 1980 era witnessed the rising of Alevi and Kurdish movements that criticized this monolithic Turkish national identity (Kadıoğlu 1998, Çaha 2005). None of these



movements built an anti-militarist agenda that challenged militarism and nationalism as simultaneous factors in constructing Turkish national identity (Selek 2000).

These militarization periods shaped “Who and How should one be a Turk?” rather than “Who are the Turks?” (Kadioğlu 1998: 34). As Kadioğlu (1998) contends, domination of this former question in Turkish history is parallel with the phenomenon that “nationalism engenders nations not the way around.” (Gellner 1983: 49). Within this context, Altınay (2004) refers to militarism as the significant component of nation building in Turkey until today; this associates military with a necessary duty of race/nation/culture.

During all of my interviews, the monolithic Turkish national identity was a major issue of challenge for conscientious objectors. Serpil argued that the image of national identity in Turkey is still dominated by a certain kind of Turkishness: “Still In Turkey, everybody is regarded as a Turk. Everybody is born to be Turkish, Sunni, heterosexual and a soldier” (Serpil). Serpil specifically implied that this monolithic Turkish national identity exceeds the official state discourse by circulating in a wide variety of societal levels in Turkey.

Although the relevant literature commonly examines militarism and nationalism in the *official* discourse of Turkish citizenship, conscientious objectors’ experiences here show that dominant understandings of Turkish national identity circulate in society, across groups and individuals. This is most observable in women objectors’ stories of discrimination based on ethnicity and religious sect, more specifically against Kurdish and Alevi populations.

As I indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, women conscientious objectors originate in different ethnicities that shape their experiences with militarism and nationalism. Women's experiences with nationalism below show that ethno-cultural nationalism in Turkey, re-consolidated especially during and after the 1980 coup d'état upon Kemalism,<sup>8</sup> resulted in the perception of Kurdish and Alevis as the internal enemies by the state, the nationalist front and/or Turkish intelligentsia, and constructed the internal enemy based on ethnic and religious difference (Belge 2007, Bora 2007). All of my participants triangulated these arguments and their experiences and observations in different spheres of daily life, indicating the circulation of nationalist rhetoric on the internal enemy at the civil society level as well. Other than Altınay's research on the National Security courses, none of the Turkish political science literature on nationalism mentions the role of militarism in the construction of the internal enemy. The experiences below indicate significant links between nationalism and militarism in Turkey. This is most obvious in the image of the internal enemy (Altınay 2004).

Enloe (2004) argues that fear of the other governs the militarization of national consciousness. Although Enloe specifically refers to the fear leading to the mental transformation required for armed ethnic-cultural conflicts, I also argue that nationalist fear of the other cultivates militarism in Turkey. Turkey is not currently at war with the border nations, but fear of different nations and resistance to ethno-religiously different communities constitute the most fundamental characteristic of national identity in Turkey, framed as a nation on alert against war with border nations and ethnically and/or religiously different communities (Kadıoğlu 1998, Belge 2007, Bora 2007). Here, being

on alert for war stands for war preparation during peace-time as a fundamental constituent of Turkish militarism (Altınay 2004).

Seher criticizes state discourse of Turkish nationalism and militarism that perceives the neighboring nations as enemies. She expresses that this is perpetuated by the military and disseminated via the national education system:

We didn't manage to have a good opinion about our neighbors [Nations at the borders of Turkey]; we didn't see our citizens by their citizenship identities, we saw them as Kurds. We ignored them. We all ignored Greeks, Armenians. These are the things that nationalists taught to the society. These things are taught especially by the military. They said, turn right, turn left, stand to attention, dismiss, we were trained in a military fashion. What is more is the fact that we have taken National Security classes (Seher).

National Security classes offered as compulsory within higher education curriculum serves as an excellent example for understanding militarism and nationalism in Turkey. The fact that these classes are taught by retired soldiers is one of the most significant indicators of normalized militarism in higher education (Altınay 2004). In *Myth of Military Nation*, Altınay (2004) examines the contents of class books, and interviews with students from diverse backgrounds taking these classes and teachers who teach them. She argues that construction of security threats to the nation are shaped by ethno-cultural nationalism, and fear of ethnically different (Kurdish), non-Muslim minorities (Jewish) and other neighboring nations (Greece) in the content of text-books and discussions generated during these courses (Altınay 2004).

In her interview, my participant Aydan emphasized that Turkish nationalism and militarism circulate within each course at school, extending to extracurricular activities that presents neighboring nations, specifically Armenians, as a security threat to the nation. As an example, Aydan mentioned a conference, an extracurricular activity in the

high school that she temporarily worked at. The conference was about Armenian Genocide and criticized the French National Assembly that voted in favor of a bill that made Armenian Genocide denial illegal in 2006. Aydan told how a majority of the students in the conference were Kurdish and were indifferent to the nationalist content of the seminar. According to her, many of these students perceived the seminar as a way to escape the class hour.

Altınay (2004) observes a similar indifference of the students she interviewed towards the National Security Classes and argues that their indifference to the nationalist and militarist content in these courses indicates the process of normalized militarism in Turkey. Aydan's observation can be linked to a parallel course of normalized militarism at school. Aydan is not Kurdish<sup>9</sup> but she expressed her surprise in observing xenophobia by some of the other Kurdish students against Armenians as a result of the aforementioned conference and tied this xenophobia to the assimilation of Kurdish students to Turkish nationalism:

There was an activity, organized by the Ministry of National Education, about the so-called<sup>10</sup> Armenian Bill. It was a seminar with 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students...I was actually curious and that is why I participated but I could barely stand it... I was sitting at the side of the chair, ready to go out at any time. I've never been to a place like that so I was also curious about it as well. There were three teachers as speakers. They made propaganda about the so-called Armenian Genocide Bill. This was really militarist propaganda, I think... I stayed to observe the reactions of the children. Many of them didn't much care. What is so interesting is that there were Kurdish students and they asked whether I liked the seminar... I said it was disgusting! And, they said, 'No it was very good.' These students were all Kurdish but they were born and raised [on the Western coast of Turkey]... Their parents come from [the East]. But is [militarism and nationalism] all normalized for them as well? I didn't really get it. Well, the seminar was about Armenian Genocide but there was an awful nationalism, Kurdish hatred, and an awful xenophobia... I don't know maybe they were assimilated. (Aydan)

In research on the discourse of nationalism in contemporary text books of all grades, Bora (2009) draws attention to the case of Armenians as exemplary in circulating Turkish xenophobia. Armenians are depicted as minorities that cooperated in the threats by foreign countries during the nineteenth century and rebelled against the Ottoman Empire. These books prevent any criticism against Turkish nationalism and discuss contemporary political conflicts (i.e. the Armenian conflict) through referring to them as security threats to the nation (Bora 2007, Altınay 2004).<sup>11</sup> Aydan's observation during the seminar on Armenian Genocide further indicates that these xenophobic teachings are disseminated through extracurricular activities in addition to the courses.

Interviews by Altınay (2004) with the minority students who take National Security Classes show that discussions of such contemporary political issues in these classes are governed by a fear of politics in the classroom. Below, the experience of Dilek I. at high school indicates a parallel restriction on challenging nationalism and militarism in the educational system. Altınay (2004) asserts that fear of politics is disseminated by the soldier-teacher and nationalist-militarist content of the text books, but Dilek I.'s experience shows that other students become the defenders and agents of these ideologies at school and reproduce the fear of politics in the classroom towards other students who speak and think differently. Dilek I. explains that during high school, she was perceived by other Turkish students as a traitor due to her different political perspectives on the Kurdish Issue:

In high school, I was accused of being a traitor to the nation, three times a week [by the students]. Well, these guys were saying things like: '...PKK killed ten soldiers today, but the opposite party killed 100 so we killed a hundred [guerillas of PKK] '.... This was making me think that you know, the opposite party [PKK] kills three men and they become happy that they killed three men. We are happy for killing three of them, so what? What happens is nobody gains anything. So what happened? We died

and that is it. We have nothing except for dying...then why do we do this? ... And yes, when I talked like this, I became the traitor (Dilek İ. 2009).

Altınay (2009) stresses the overload of the legitimization of war in Turkish history and politics through the domination of the myth of military nation, and the absence of teachings on peace and non-violence. Dilek I.'s experience further suggests a course of the glorification of war and militarization of students through the educational curriculum. The fact that Dilek I. completed her high school education at a conservative school indicates that ethno-cultural nationalism and militarism particularly articulate within conservative agendas in Turkey.<sup>12</sup>

Becoming a traitor to the nation is not limited to criticizing Turkish nationalism. Performing and pronouncing ethnic-religious difference are associated with treason. The scholarship on political history in Turkey depicts such a turn to the internal enemy as a frame imposed by the state right after the Second World War, and observes its intensification after the 1980 military coup (Belge 2007, Bora 2009, Bozarslan 2009). According to Belge (2007), as a result of the population exchange and 6-7 September incidents in 1955<sup>13</sup>, the Christian population in Turkey was decreased. The Cold War made Turkey a NATO ally of the West. All of these developments contributed to the state's fight with communism internally rather than with the West (Belge 2007).

The transformed security agenda during these years, the 1980 coup d'état and rising violent social movements in Turkey after 1970, all provided grounds for the construction of internal enemies. The state framed demands for recognition by groups representing significant ethnic, cultural, religious, political and ideological differences as a problem of national security (Bozarslan 2009). As Bozarslan argues, "The political sphere was identified by the sanctity of 'the nation in danger.' Any negotiation with the

'internal enemies' was seen as a challenge to the Republic and Kemalist dogma" (Bozarslan 2009: 229). It was through the re-consolidation of Turkish ethno-cultural nationalism in the post 1980 era that politics became a sphere defined by national security, and the official ideology constructed the internal enemy through ethnic, religious, political and ideological differences. In this realm, xenophobia against Christian minorities and bordering nations was articulated along side the framing of internal enemies to the nation.<sup>14</sup>

My interviews with Gamze and Seher indicated that the framing of internal enemies by the state and military is more than mere official discourse. Here they emphasize that nationalism is wide spread in a variety of different social sectors, groups and individuals. This understanding equates Kurdishness with being a member of PKK and a traitor to the nation. Both of them feel non-belonging to their ethnic cultural community because of their illiteracy in spoken and written Kurdish. Nevertheless, both of them found pronouncing their Kurdishness important in opposing the state's pressure on Kurdish communities:

I speak in Turkish today. It is because I don't know Kurdish very well. People are surprised when they learn that I am Kurdish. I came across this at different times of my life: you are a guerilla of PKK... some of the things stay behind in the past, but this never stays in the past (Seher).

I don't know Kurdish. During that time, Kurdish was restricted. It was never spoken in our family. It was never spoken at home. We were not with our relatives. My father was a teacher. My mother and my father would talk in Kurdish with each other but they never attempted to teach it to us because the place that we grew up was a very [Turkish] nationalist place. The village that I grew up in was a nationalist village...I feel in-betweenness at the middle of all this...I have been in Istanbul for almost ten years. When I have looked for some land to belong to... I was not able to find one. There are labels as such, in Istanbul as well...you are from the West, or from the East or you are Kurdish...you always live this out where ever you go in Istanbul. It doesn't change. In appearance, it

seems like there is some change but in mentality, but there is no difference (Gamze).

Fear of the other reaches its peak at times of conflict. Historian Bozarslan (2009) argues that at any moment of crisis, the military and the nationalist elites mobilize the resources of the sacred nation, such as the concept of motherland (*vatan*), the flag or national anthem, Atatürk's speeches, and the tomb of Atatürk in Ankara. Any hostile act against these symbols becomes an act against the integrity and sovereignty of the nation. Hadise lived during such a politically tense moment in Turkey when Kurds participating in the celebrations of Newroz [Nowruz- Kurdish New Year] burned the Turkish flag.<sup>15</sup> She shows that fear of the other can evolve into direct discrimination against Kurds in daily life:

It was during the acts of burning flags and just because I wear a nose-ring and look like an Easterner, a man who was selling *simit* [thin bagel] didn't want to give me one on the ferry just because he thought that I was a Kurd. Then, he decided that I am not, based on my speech and accent and sold one to me (Hadise).

As evident in Hadise's experiences, the appearance of dark skin, cultural artifacts used on the body, difference in spoken Turkish and specific accents are perceived as signs of Kurdishness and, at times of crisis, as a threat against the nation. Further more, critical political language and performances against the symbols of the nation signify a traitor to the nation and result in violence or a threat of violence. Hadise tells that she faced the threat of violence because she did not stand up for the national anthem twice a week in the village:

Now I am living on a small island... twice a week at around 5p.m. the national anthem is played. I hear it from here [from her house, close to the center of the island] because they placed speakers all over the place. If I am at the center of the island and if I don't stand up, you might be beaten so you have to stand up. That is why I am trying not to be around the center around 5 p.m. And, if I am there, I try



to run and get farther away and find a door to sit down. Before, I was there for a couple of times and didn't stand up. Then I realized that it started getting dangerous. I thought that I can not struggle against it on my own. I couldn't dare to uphold the same risk all the time.

During our interview, Hadise mentioned seeing a person who did not stand up when the national anthem was played eventually thrown to sea. For her, the danger she felt was more than real.

Two of my participants emphasized that they experienced discrimination from the state police forces. Melek stressed that during the years after the 1980 coup d'état, she was taken into custody while searching for rental houses on the street because of the place of birth on her national identification certificate. Her experience indicates that police forces operate in tandem with nationalist fear of the ethnically other:

Well, my national identification certificate says that I am a Kurd. When I first came here [the city where she lives currently] and all those years after the coup d'état, I always felt uncomfortable. What happened in the end? I was taken into custody. Just because it is written on my national identification certificate...This, I felt was discrimination...We were living in Turkey and it was during the years of the military intervention...there could have been any identity checks and let's say you are from [the West coast of Turkey] and [the police] wouldn't care about you but if [your national identification certificate] writes a city of the South East, you would be taken into custody. These were so normal by then...I was not taken into custody during a march or an action...I was taken into custody on the street. I was looking for a flat. Well, somebody had complained [to the police] and they examined my national identification certificate and took me into custody (Melek).

In parallel, Serpil argued that her political affiliation with the Kurdish movement directly positions her as a traitor to the nation. She stated: "telephones are listened to by the state." She "still faces continuous harassment" by the state through cars following her after work.

According to my interviews with the women conscientious objectors, these terrifying experiences that involve either violence or the threat of violence by the state

authorities resulted in fear of the uniform and national authority figures. For instance, during our interview, Melek told that her fear of the national police and civil police has become concrete in her fear of “white Renaults and men who walk on heels [like a soldier].” She is still afraid of police stations, due to the discrimination she faced.

Nationalism that binds internal enemies to external enemies and constructs them as security threats to the nation is a significant determinant of the reproduction of Turkish militarism. It is evident from the experiences of women conscientious objectors that fear of the other is increased at times of national conflict. The other opposed to Turkish national identity involves being Kurdish or Alevi and pronouncing this ethnic-cultural identity as different than being Turkish, challenging nationalism and/or actively engaging in Kurdish movement. Further to this, speaking Turkish with a Kurdish accent, a certain physical appearance or skin color, and the refusal to perform nationalism (such as not standing up during national anthem) can become signs of treason to the nation and reasons for discrimination in daily life to the extent of the threat of violence employed by individuals and groups. It is through these processes that Turkish nationalism and militarism are reproduced in daily life.

### **Gendering Militarism**

In *From Where We Stand*, research based on observations and interviews with anti-war and anti-militarist feminist activists from all over the world, peace scholar and activist Cockburn (2007) argues that militarism and patriarchy are mutually constitutive of each other. All of my participants expressed this constitutive relationship between militarism and patriarchy through offering a variety of their experiences ranging from the militarization of motherhood to love relationships.

Literature on nationalism, gender and militarism suggests that militarism and nationalism are masculinist enterprises through which male domination is legitimized and women are given secondary roles (Nagel 1998, Enloe 2000, Altınay 2004, Yuval & Anthias 1989). Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) emphasize five ways in which women become involved in the realm of nationalism: “1) as biological producers of members of ethnic collectivities, 2) as reproducers of the [normative] boundaries of ethnic/national groups [by enacting proper feminine behavior], 3) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture, 4) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences and 5) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles” (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989: 7-8).<sup>16</sup> Enloe (2004) argues that experiences of women excluded from these processes or women who refuse to become part of nationalist and militarist ideologies, including women conscientious objectors, are important in understanding the limits on the gendering processes of militarism and nationalism.

While elaborating upon their experiences during the interviews, all of my participants expressed that militarism makes them feel obstructed in exercising their anti-militarist and non-violent beliefs and thoughts in daily life. In my interviews, they continuously questioned the limits of their daily resistance through intervening in the processes of militarism in order to develop new ways of non-violent and anti-militarist intervention in daily life. With this, their experiences reveal the contradictions of militarism as a gendered discourse.

As I explained in Chapter 2, processes of militarization often intermingle with the patriarchal regulation of women's bodies. Depicting women's bodies as the main

recruiting station for future soldiers that will defend the nation is one of the main characteristics of this patriarchal agenda (Enloe 2000). Nationalism and militarism become interlinked with patriarchy in regulating women's sexualities (Nagel 1998).

Feminists also examine when and how regulating the sexuality of women becomes an agenda for the state (Nagel 1998, Enloe 2000, Altınay 2004). All of this literature argues that women's sexualities become part of a national agenda because women's role in nationalism is depicted primarily as the mother, "the symbol of national hearth and home" (Nagel 1998: 256). Further to this, daughters and wives become the carriers of masculine honor and unruly women threaten the nation and masculine honor (Nagel 1998).

By drawing attention to the nationalist and patriarchal interventions over women's sexuality, feminist anthropologist Sirman (2007) and feminist historian Najmabadi (1997) argue that nationalism is built on defining the scales of love by answering when, where, how and between whom the act of loving will take place. Since nation is composed of all sorts of different communities that do not know each other (Anderson 1991), nationalism invests in the foundation of a sense of relatedness by governing the spheres of love and hatred. This is a fundamental need of all nationalisms and occurs in the reordering of relationships between men and women and men with other men by the construction of hegemonic masculinity. By this, new men and women are created that will form and reproduce the nation (Sirman 2007). Sirman further argues that nationalism is more than a political ideology. It is a constitutive discourse, governing every day relationships through reordering and governing the family, the relationships of members of the family

with each other, the relationship of families with each other and with other institutions. In this way, nationalism builds relationships between family affairs and the nation.

In her research on the nationalist novels of the early Republican era (1930-1940), Sirman (2007) examines love for the homeland (*Vatan sevgisi*), which symbolized the transformation from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state and constituted the basis for hierarchy in men's fraternity over women. She argues that middle class novelists that were among the pioneers of the nationalist revolution in Turkey depicted a new society, in which the class system is no longer based on closeness to the Royal family and Royal House. Within this depiction of the new society, love for the homeland (*Vatan sevgisi*) represented an equal and classless society, free of the Empire and its hierarchies and constructed upon brotherhood. Within this new society, women were depicted as the ones to raise the patriot children—in other words as mothers of the nation. Here, women were represented to disseminate the national essence if they are educated and by education acknowledgement of altruism and love for the nation (*millet sevgisi*) are gained.<sup>17</sup>

Further to this, women as daughters bear the ultimate responsibility of choosing the most proper husband and building the family. Here, love for the homeland and love for the nation once more govern the feelings of falling in love (*aşk*) and love (*sevgi*). Falling in love with an improper person in the nationalist novels—any man that does not perform hegemonic masculinity—was depicted as dangerous for the nation. In that sense, falling in love corresponded uncontrolled love (*aşk*) and dangerous when it replaces love for the homeland, husband, children and society (Sirman 2007).

Through these constructions of love, Sirman (2007) contends that nation-family is built on love (*sevgi*) for the homeland and the nation rather than uncontrolled love (*aşk*) and women become responsible for reproduction, choosing the right husband and building the heterosexual family in the name of the nation to raise patriot children. Considering that the myth of the military nation was the primary constituent of Turkish nationalist discourse and is still an ongoing one (Altınay 2004), the experiences of women outlined below indicate that the gender-based roles that nationalism designates to women, as wives, mothers and daughters, establish dominant femininity in Turkey. This femininity is fundamentally linked with marrying and having intimate relationships with men who have done their military service, giving birth to sons and raising them as soldiers (Altınay 2004). These aspects point to the militarization of a multiplicity of spheres—intimate relationships, motherhood, childhood—which all indicate militarism's inescapable need for patriarchy.

In Chapter 2, we saw that many of the women conscientious objectors had or are still having intimate relationships with men conscientious objectors. During our interview, Seher told that having a conscientious objector boyfriend did not receive social approval, especially from the men that she was working with at a textile firm.<sup>18</sup> Patriarchal surveillance of her intimate relationships was legitimized by male co-workers through a common anonymous expression: “We would not give any girl [as a wife] to a man that did not do his military service.” Here, within the context of Seher's experience at work, “we” corresponds to the brotherhood that is established by love for the nation and homeland. We also represent the male persona that is the defender of the nation, and of woman's honor. Since dominant femininity is constructed in parallel with hegemonic

masculinity—with military service the most fundamental aspect of the latter (Selek 2008)—surveillance of women and imposing proper relationships constitutes another aspect of regulating women's sexualities. In that sense, her male co-workers especially interrogated Seher about whether her relationship with a conscientious objector was known by her family, as the family constitutes the next circle of surveillance when family honor is represented in the honor of the daughter (Altınay 2004):

I didn't receive any positive reactions from my male friends [at work]...They constantly picked on me. And they asked me this: Does your family know? Does your family know that you are friends with a conscientious objector? Well there is that you know: We would not give any girl [as a wife] to a man that did not do his military service. At last they told me that (Seher).

In Turkey women's sexualities are regulated through designating them as the mothers of the nation, and presenting this as a sanctified position shaped by the sacrifice and altruism of mothers (Gedik 2008, Altınay 2004). By underlining the emotions of self denial that a mother feels upon becoming a mother, Gamze criticizes the motherhood that is sanctified. She tells how women are silenced so that they can not speak up against the difficulties they face after giving birth. She further indicates that although mothers talk about these difficulties among each other in their daily lives, sanctified motherhood and the altruism of national motherhood hinder struggling against these difficulties. National motherhood—the nourishment of children that are propitious to the homeland and the nation—occurs through the altruistic mother, which compels women to perform sanctified motherhood and prevents mothers from speaking up against these difficulties:

Think about it, having a child is very difficult...But there is a concept called sanctified motherhood. It is imposed on you. This process occurs quietly and unobtrusively. It is not spoken in words but it is written to your consciousness. Because of the sanctified motherhood, you can't talk much about the difficulties you live through. Because there is this thing that you are a mother and you have to shut up. You have to obey...Saying, this is hard can not even be expressed loudly

in this society. When mothers and women who have recently given birth come together they always tell each other that it is so hard...I would always try to make a mother admit it [being a mother is hard]...I would say: Don't worry, this is hard. And admit it...don't make yourself uneasy for that...There is always something that you need to defend: that is your mothering. Mothering is already beautiful. You don't have to defend it to anybody. There is no bad mothering (Gamze).

According to Gamze, the difficulty of being a mother comes from the fact that men do not take responsibility for care giving. She further argues that men are more privileged because mothers usually provide male children with whatever they want. This male privilege can be viewed as a result of nationalism, militarism and patriarchy.<sup>19</sup> Militarization of motherhood and femininity brings the militarization of childhood. Although there is no research in Turkey on how this is maintained, Gamze's experience with her son forms a starting point. During our interview, Gamze emphasized that women are continuously silenced whereas men are encouraged for being violent and tough from childhood. As a mother and a woman conscientious objector, she observed the militarization of childhood, in her own kid's socialization. She further noted that militarization of childhood is not only done by the mother, but involves a wide variety of actors starting from those in the school. She told how she attempts to struggle against this by guiding her son's focus on other things, with play such as puzzles rather than guns. She also mentioned that it is a hard job since the militarization process is a lot more varied than a mother can cope with:

The society has already been organized in a certain manner. For instance you know there was this song good soldier, sweet soldier what was that? My Ayşe, my beautiful Ayşe [Little Ayşe, lyrics in Chapter 2], my son sings that! Well, he did. He learns all this in pre-school... He learns the Turkish flag...In this process, they are taught of the state, nation, homeland...etc., they are taught of mother, father, family...Well, I say I shouldn't intervene now but he comes and sings this song. But a kid shouldn't sing a song like that! ... I'm not trying to put pressure on him but I don't buy him a gun for instance...But if you ask if I was ever able to get rid of the fighter planes, I couldn't...Today, he asked me to buy a soldier uniform for



him. I told him that I don't like uniforms and it won't suit you well. I am trying to teach him one by one and slowly like this...It is because of the pre-schooling, school, etc., my kid is all concentrated on fighting. He is all interested in sword-shield games. This becomes a sword, that other thing becomes something else. Well, all of the cartoons are like that and they play it at school. He was just one year old when he was racing cars! Well, I was thinking where did he learn to race cars? ... Well, he is interested in playing with puzzles and we paint pictures together...but then he finds a wood and says to me, "Come on this will be my sword." Well, I don't play with him of course, I don't accompany him but would he be giving it up? He is probably playing at the pre-school. So, it is hard...But, I will not have a photograph of him in uniform. (Gamze)

Mothers are perceived to be the most important component in teaching the national militarized values at home (Gedik 2008). Within this context, love for the nation is equalized with the love for children which silences the difficulties of being a mother, and brings a burden of looking after the nation's children. Through this, mothers of the nation are depicted by their self-denial and altruism for the nation (Sirman 2007). By describing love as a significant means of ensuring the power of nationalism, Sirman states that these moments of experienced difficulties in motherhood become a moment of keeping a secret for the love of the nation. As a result, "If nationalism is risking one's life for his nation, keeping a secret for the love of the nation is nationalism as well and revealing these secrets would be treason" (Sirman 2007: 244).<sup>20</sup>

In my interviews with women conscientious objectors, I realized that another version of "keeping a secret for the love of the nation" is involved when one is waiting for their soldier relatives to return from military service. Some of my participants had many stories about waiting for the beloved ones and their waiting influenced their decision to declare conscientious objection. For instance, Dilek İ. told me during our interview that she primarily started thinking of declaring her conscientious objection because of the tears of her mother while her brother was serving his military service:

We send our friends to military service. I send my brother. After them, we also join the military service for 1000 times [*Arkasından bin kere askere gidiyoruz biz de*]. We pour out tears, we cry for him not to go and join. What is the need for this? Why does he have to get a gun in his hands? (Dilek İ.)

Regardless of whether a woman is a mother or not, as a result of dominant discourses women are cautioned not to appear grieving or even worried when they are waiting for their loved ones in service. In her research, Gedik (2008) found that Mothers of martyrs tend to mourn silently and feelings of pride for the lost son dominate their silence. Pride for the dead soldier-son reinforces militarism and dominant masculinity (Gedik 2008). Bearing in mind that Mothers of Martyrs are presented by the mass media, state and military as representing the ideal femininity (Gedik), it can be inferred that showing worry for the loved ones, for soldiers in service, is not among the performances of femininity shaped by nationalist militarist discourses. In parallel, telling stories of the military service is one of the most important features of hegemonic masculinity (Altınay 2004, Selek 2008). Feminist Sociologist Selek (2008) argues that stories of military service told by men actually mask the traumatic experience of the soldiers. In emphasizing her brother's trauma of military service, Seher mentions that waiting for her brother was a trauma to her and her family:

There are people who talk extravagantly about their military service...people who served in the military both in the west and in the east have a lot of stories. We couldn't get a word from him for 4-5 months...My father is in the trade union. When my brother phoned, my father told him that 'if you are not able to communicate with us and if you see a dipper operator in the mountains, it would probably be in our trade union, if you talk to them and tell my name, they would tell it to my friends in the trade union and therefore they would call me. 4-5 months later there was some news from the union. He saw a dipper operator in the mountain and told him to give the news that he can't call us. And by that we heard about him. We were happy to death. Our feet were above the air. But...when he came back, they would always ask for a story from him...he really hated it, he never wanted to speak about it...If a person insists, he would really hate him. He

would ask, why people are asking things like that. He would also never have a photograph of him wearing a uniform (Seher).

By the above mentioned quote, Seher critically stressed upon how the trauma of the military service for men is invisible.

In all of these experiences women conscientious objectors non-violently intervene against militarism at the individual level. Seher tries to challenge her co-workers' views on compulsory conscription while Gamze attempts to speak with other mothers and encourage them to share the difficulties of being a mother in order to intervene in the militarization of motherhood. She further emphasized that she is trying to guide her son's focus on other areas where he can learn non-violence and anti-militarism.

All of the aforementioned gendered experiences of militarism become the reason for their conscientious objection declaration and their non-violent interventions against militarism in daily life go hand in hand with their act of conscientious objection as they reject performing militarized gender roles in their declarations. The discourse of women objectors is composed of this intimate relationship between the personal and the political. Here, personal is the political as much as the political is the personal. In the next section, I specifically concentrate on the understanding of non-violence in the discourse of women conscientious objectors, which underlies this close relationship between the political and the personal.

### **Non-violence in Cycles**

International scholarship on non-violence is in two distinct areas. Peace research examines various historical traditions that employ non-violent action (Galtung 1965, Weber 1999). This literature mainly understands non-violence as a principal in daily life

and non-violent action as the outcome of this principal and as reflected in political struggles. Galtung's works on non-violence and violence are the most influential in this area.

The second area of research considers social movement repertoires that use non-violent techniques (e.g. strikes, direct action) and does not examine non-violence as a principal value in daily life.<sup>21</sup> This scholarship considers non-violence as the absence of physical violence in political actions. In this section, I derive my analysis from Galtung's conceptualizations of non-violence (Galtung 1965) and violence (Galtung 1969, 1990).

Women's declaration of conscientious objection is a non-violent action which challenges militarism as a gendered discourse and makes it visible to the public. It is shaped by the understanding of non-violence because women conscientious objectors perceive militarism as a discourse that engenders violence by articulating patriarchy and nationalism. For this reason, woman's conscientious objection constitutes the non-violent expression of this political understanding and declarations promise the extension of the practice of non-violence to encompass intervening against gendered narratives of militarism and nationalism in daily life.

For women conscientious objectors, being non-violent further involve constant resistance against any type of violence and emphasis on building equal relationships with all living beings. In that sense, they resist hierarchies in relationships based on ethnicity, class and gender and find ways to non-violent communication. Feelings of empathy and respect for difference cover the meaning of non-violence that is gradually attained through self-realization of the violence one faces and employs. In that sense, non-

violence is not purification from violence but it is the individual and collective attempt to undo violence in a multiplicity of spheres.

Galtung (1965) understands non-violence as a constant act of undoing violence cycles. Here, violence is “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is” (Galtung 1969: 169) and violent structures leave bodily and mental marks on individuals and groups leading to the mental transformation of them (Galtung 1969).

Galtung perceives violence as more than bodily harm and draws attention to structures of violence legitimizing and reproducing the mental transformation needed for violence.<sup>22</sup> Non-violence is not merely abstention from bodily harm but a wider agenda of political action and the value of resisting the mental transformation leading to violence. The discourse of women conscientious objectors resists this mental transformation by their declarations and their practice of non-violence in daily life.

Participants of this research who were active in *Izmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (Izmir War Resisters Association-IWRA) mentioned a non-violence exercise, a week long event organized in Foça on the meaning of non-violence.<sup>23</sup> My interviews indicated that this event was influential in women’s discursive understanding of non-violence. *Şiddetsizliğin El Kitabı* (The Handbook of Non-Violence) (1998a), an online report on the non-violence exercise in Foça, emphasizes that non-violence is not a strategy that is adopted against violent acts; it is a principle in social life (IWRA 1998a). According to a referenced and translated text in this report, as a political project non-violence does not ignore conflict that exists in all social and political struggles.<sup>24</sup> Rather, non-violence works by re-constructing and re-negotiating differences whereby persuasion and debate

are embraced. Many of the texts in the *Şiddetsizliğin El Kitabı* present non-violent means for struggling against structural and direct violence and emphasize that non-violence is a principal in social life.

In parallel with *Şiddetsizliğin El Kitabı*, many of the women conscientious objectors that I interviewed described non-violence as a daily practice and a political approach, which is more than the absence of physical violence. Non-violence begins by saying no to violence at any cost. Serpil emphasizes that violence coming from institutions of power, as well as from individuals, can be prevented: “I am pretty sure nothing will change instantly from today to tomorrow. But, if it is going to change then we need people who will say no to violence as from today. That is what [women conscientious objectors] do. We are able to say no. When [the number of] people who say no increases, then there will be changes gradually.”

For Hadise saying no to violence translates into an alert consciousness which will prevent violence from occurring. According to her, this requires more thought on the structural constraints and other factors causing violence to appear, and an exercise of thinking and acting beyond the dichotomies of the oppressor and oppressed. Instead, Hadise suggests inventive ways of interference which involve preventive non-violent acts:

Another way of not employing violence is that I am trying to behave in such a manner that will not lead to occurrence of violence. If there is somebody who is screaming at me or if there is somebody who is behaving badly to me or if there is somebody who is thinking to harm me...it is not only his/her madness that put him/her into that position but there is also something that I say, something I say triggers the process...If I put him/her in such a position, then it is possible that I can reverse it or it is possible that I won't put him/her such a position. Just as I think like this, I try to observe more and evaluate differently. I try to lead him/her to the calm space of re-evaluation and conversation. Because when I intervene

into his/her space then firstly violence comes out, secondly you behave violently as well and whatever the content is the issue slips out of staying calm.

In all of my interviews, women conscientious objectors emphasized that a state of calmness was an important element in offering non-violence against violence. All of my respondents shared their own means to build calmness. One of these ways was the construction of more equal and humane (*insani*) relationships. Aydan describes how non-violence is a relation of equals that corresponds to feelings of empathy, comfort, independence and acceptance. She draws attention to how people meet each other through various identities pertaining to class, gender etc., and argues that her understanding of non-violence gradually builds in a relationship where labels and identities are not prioritized:

If there is inequality in violence, then in non-violence there is equality. It is the logic. You can build a relationship more comfortably through equal association, accepting the other person, and if you can feel empathy. You can have a more humane relationship. We can relate to each other without our labels. When we examine relationships, it is our identities that are prioritized rather than our humane characteristics and we talk with our labels at most of the times. This always has been so disturbing to me...They [labels] determine the relationship you have built (Aydan).

In parallel with the search for humane relationships characterized by more equality and less oppression, Gamze puts emphasis on respect among people with differences and demands open possibility for expressing herself freely even if she argues against someone:

I actually describe non-violence by respect to other lives and for my own life... I try to solve the problem of violence within the frame of humane relationships for instance. In more general terms, I prefer not to intervene and enter into the space of the person in question without his/her permission and when s/he needs help or when it is required. I prefer that I'd be able to argue on the opposite end or show my support or indicate some difference in perspective (Gamze).

Non-violence means respect for the other even though there are differences. In a parallel conceptualization of difference and respect, Serpil defined non-violence as “growth of human mind,” which stood for “opening up the possibilities of endurance, welcoming the process of maturation, discussing anything, people understanding each other even though they do not accept each other's thoughts.” For Seher non-violence is maintained by the acceptance of differences. By this argument Seher emphasizes the importance of building non-violent dialogue:

How do you become non-violent? For instance, you shall accept the person at the other end, no matter what s/he thinks...For instance, my best friend was a nationalist when I started working...You become non-violent by accepting all groups and all people as they are, by accepting an Alevi as an Alevi, a Kurdish as a Kurdish, a non-violent as a non-violent, a nationalist as a nationalist without fighting out with them, but you accept them by building dialogues with them. You become non-violent by developing dialogue other than through verbal and physical violence (Seher).

Sitem and Melek argue that building non-violent dialogues involves self-realization, whereby one reflects upon her own mistakes and violent means of dialogue and emphasizes that non-violence is the dynamic process of self-realization with regard to different cycles of violence one implements on other living beings physically and psychologically, and which in return, others implement on the self:

Non-violence is actually a learning process, that you learn everyday and it is a process where you need to invent new habits...But [non-violent habits] are not easy in your daily life...In the end I used to think that I have done it to my own kid from time to time. Well, I was not hitting my kid but I didn't really define violence as limited to that anyway. But we are all so nested with violence-well this is all true for many of the countries- and violence is in our habits and the way we have been grown up. Violence is a concept that we have internalized (Melek).

Due to the Turkish concept of non-violence<sup>25</sup> my respondents emphasized that the term implies purification from violence in addition to passivity. As Melek argues, “When you say non-violence, people understand it as passivity... It is like you accept everything.



But [non-violence] is not like screaming out...I say it is a process of change in perceptions and habits.” For Dilek İ., non-violence stood for a gradual process of solving the problem of violence. I call it undoing violence at a multiplicity of levels, ranging from the individual to the structural levels. Undoing violence requires a change in the understanding of violence, choosing and (when necessary) building an alternative path of realization and acting against violence rather than simply ignoring it or protesting against it:

Non-violence...I wish that there was no violence but it is so present that I don't know how it would be like without it... But there is violence and well...you invent a solution against it. Just like, riding a bicycle against cars or let's say there is a guy who disturbed me by throwing a word at me [while riding the bicycle], then I would choose another road. But we should build such a path that then no one would be able to disturb you by throwing words at you (Dilek İ.).

The self realization process intrinsic to non-violence involves undoing violence conceptualized as more than physical violence. Although women conscientious objectors define non-violence to be a learned experience through the course of their struggle against militarism, two of my participants contended that they are non-violent as a result of their personal upbringing. Gamze told that she learned non-violence through how she was raised. Hadise drew attention to her Arabic-Alevi (Nusayri) beliefs as influential in her understanding of non-violence. As an Atheist Hadise told that she skipped the oppressive and patriarchal parts of the religious teaching she was exposed to during childhood and re-invented her own non-violent version shaped by the emphasis on equality among every living being. She explains the understanding of justice that shapes her own version through a past teaching of her grandfather, who was a local religious leader:

It actually goes out from thinking in favor of the benefits for everything and everybody...It is built on an understanding of justice. You know, it for instance calls such acts as violence: if an animal is left without water that is violence... For example, once we had a tall tree in our garden. I had an eye on the highest apple on the tree. I was trying to climb to have the apple. My grandfather said, no. And he continued [by pointing the tree]: Now, you can gather these [apples on the lowest branches]... this much [apples on the middle branches] are for the people who are passing by, this much [apples on the upper middle branches] are for the neighbors and the apples on the top of the tree are for birds (Hadise).

As I indicated, non-violence is understood as series of attempts at undoing violence, rather than a final point of arrival where purification from violence is achieved. The borderline between violence and non-violence is blurred when it comes to the issue of self-defense. All of my participants emphasized that use of violence of any sort is not legitimate. However, two of my participants did not refuse the possibility of self defense in the face of heavy physical and psychological violence. With these claims, Hadise's definition of non-violence included the final possibility of self defense—in other words; employing violence is the last resort:

My understanding of non-violence is that I understand it as non-violence in action. I embrace non-violence as a form of action. I think that it is impossible to be purified of violence but it is important to adopt non-violence as much as possible. That is why in my life and well, in my relationships with people, I am trying to be non-violent as much as possible. But sometimes I see self defense as a natural right. Well, it is a little complicated. If I think that I am going to be killed, raped, or seriously harmed and if I see [violence] as absolutely necessary, if that is the only solution, then I would react. That is the final resort for me (Hadise).

Although employing violence is illegitimate, self defense might become a source of intervention if all the other possibilities of non-violence are consumed. It is only through the emphasis on last resort that self defense and employing violence is integrated into the understanding of non-violence in the discourse of women conscientious objectors.

Women conscientious objectors understand non-violence as more than the abstention from bodily harm. In parallel with Galtung's conceptualization of non-violence, women conscientious objectors understand non-violence as an act of undoing violence at a multiplicity of spheres and perceive it as fundamental principle of their life. Within this context, respect and tolerance towards different identities and views are prioritized. Actions and feelings of calmness stand as the non-violent alternative to aggression in violence. Women conscientious objectors invent new ways of communicating against violence and women's conscientious objection declarations form part of this repertoire. On the other hand, differences between people can create conflicts and may require time and a series of self-realizations to get resolved. These things are all represented as the aspects of non-violent dialogue. This points to the dynamic process of non-violence cross-cutting daily life experiences. Political action repertoires and non-violent action stand for all of types of actions, involving personal and political acts which define non-violence as a holistic agenda. This involves self and collective realization of non-violence and violence in the personal and political spheres.

### **Non-violent Links: Personal and Political**

*"You cannot buy the Revolution. You cannot make the Revolution. You can only be the Revolution"*  
(Le Guin 1974: 300)

We have seen that women's declarations of conscientious objection are built on their experiences with militarism and nationalism as gendered discourses in Turkey. These declarations politicize these militarized personal experiences in the discourse of women conscientious objectors and resist the militarization of gender. Their understanding of non-violence indicates that women conscientious objectors continue their political stance against violence and embrace non-violence as a constructive element

for all of their acts. In that sense, their non-violent political views extend to their personal lives and their personal experiences of militarism are politicized within their declarations.

I asked my participants if there were any changes in their lives after their declaration of conscientious objection in order to understand how women objectors relate non-violence and their conscientious objection to the spheres of political and personal. The answers I got indicated that they feel an ethical responsibility for organizing their personal lives in coherence with their political acts. This covers a variety of spheres from choosing a job sector to friends and boyfriends/girlfriends.

A majority of the women I interviewed emphasized that they do not choose to work in militarized job sectors such as the military hardware industry or other military-related sectors such as companies developing military software. They prefer not to work in government agencies due to their rejection of states. Four of my participants work as independent artists, one works in a human rights organization, one is a university student, and one is unemployed but worked within textile companies before. One of my other participants works in seasonal and/or semi-contracted jobs, such as non-military software design, and my other participant works temporarily as a teacher in a secondary school. My participant who is a teacher told that she tries to employ non-violent techniques at school to be consistent with her declaration even though she works at a state school. My last participant works in a municipality owned shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence and since municipalities are government agencies, she expressed that she feels inconsistent with her declaration by working in this shelter. However, she also declared that she has never had health insurance and worked in a permanent job other

than in seasonal jobs (mainly as a waitress), and came to a point in her life that she cannot live without benefits and a regular wage.

By emphasizing her personal ethics as an attempt hold consistent between her political declaration and her personal life, Gamze underlines that her conscientious objection and understanding of non-violence are determined by her conscience: "I have a conscience and I determine my acts by asking whether my conscience is in peace or not." Gamze further told that this ethical responsibility influences her judgment about the acts of her friends. In that sense, she asks for a consistency between the political promise and claims of her friends, how they employ these in their lives and relationships:

I declared my conscientious objection. While I was doing that or while I was trying to express this [her opposition against militarism], what did I really want to say? And how do I employ it in my life? I think hard about what my friends defend and what they actually do, within the circles of my friends, that is a political group involving conscientious objectors. This really concerns me (Gamze).

A majority of women conscientious objectors expressed that their declarations led to more active political engagement in the conscientious objection movement and this extended to interventions in their daily lives. Seher and Dilek İ. told that after their declarations they started talking more about conscientious objection and militarism in Turkey with their families and friends. This is another reflection of the ethical responsibility of conscientious objection that involves continuation of their opposition against militarism in their daily lives. In parallel, Melek expressed that she feels uncomfortable as other daily responsibilities got hold of her life (she had a child) to the extent that she is not able to perform the responsibility of her declaration. She further added that the most important change after her declaration was "feeling responsibility much more intensely."

Supporting conscientious objection and the practice of non-violence in daily life and publicly criticizing militarism further lead to feelings of solidarity and unity in cause in the movement. Dilek İ. expressed that she learned to be much stronger in her daily life against militarism and oppression by this solidarity. On the other hand, Hadise expressed that she feels marginalized while struggling for consistency between her personal life and political promises because she feels that people who try to do this are a minority in Turkey:

I am having problems about a lot of issues; I am having problems in continuing my life. I am struggling when I communicate and build relationships with people. I am struggling when I am making friends. I am further struggling when I am trying to have an intimate relationship. I can not get along easily with people. That is why I sift among a lot of people and have to choose my friends and boyfriend from the ones that are left afterwards. This is not easy and on the other hand, we are not that fortunate...there are not many people who dream about the same thing or think similarly...they are few. (Hadise)

In parallel, Gamze also feels that people who employ non-violence are a minority, drawing attention to the militarist system surrounding her: “We are a minority as people who are thinking this way. When I look into the daily life, people do not live like us. I am not telling this to make us special. Just, there is no life that we dream of (*Düşündüğümüz gibi bir hayat yok*)” (Gamze).

These responses indicate that declaring conscientious objection changes the lives of women conscientious objectors and makes them feel more responsible towards the conscientious objection movement. They further pay more attention in preserving the balance between their political promise of objection and non-violence; this is maintained by choosing non-military sectors for work and making friends with people who think in parallel. This points to an understanding of a personal ethics shaped by the understanding of non-violence in the discourse of women conscientious objectors. The personal

experiences of militarism and nationalism, intertwined with patriarchy, lead to women's conscientious objection declaration as a political promise of resistance against militarism as a gendered discourse. This political promise leads to re-organization of their personal lives and building non-violence throughout their lives.

This close relationship between the political and the personal is not very easy because many of the objectors suffer poverty. They further struggle though marginalization in their daily lives due to their preference for non-violent relationships. Also, their overall understanding of non-violence leads to a different perspective on violence when compared to other social movement discourses. In my interviews, I specifically asked how feminist groups reacted toward their views on violence and non-violence in order to analyze how militarism, violence and non-violence are viewed by the women's movements in Turkey.

All of the women conscientious objectors expressed that the most important political difference on the definition of violence was that the women objectors do not find violence legitimate in any case. Gamze expresses that when a small group of anti-militarist feminists in *Izmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği* (Izmir War Resisters Association-IWRA) (later many became conscientious objectors) started working towards disseminating their views on non-violence and anti-militarist feminism, they encountered resistance from some of the feminist groups close to the Kurdish women's movement:

When we as anti-militarist feminists started to work, our first target was that we would contact the women's groups and talk to them about non-violence...But the responses we got were such as: "Of course, we are against violence against women but we can not ignore the women guerillas and their struggle on the mountains." Or these responses insisted on the separation between just and unjust violence and that is why, we were not able to reconcile our differences. For us, it was clear that no violence was legitimate (Gamze)

According to the experiences of Gamze with other women's groups in women's movement, resistance to the understanding of non-violence that defines any kind of violence as illegitimate (even if it is conducted in response to heavy violence) was not limited to the groups close to the Kurdish movement. Gamze further told that as a group who participated in a couple of central meetings for women's organizations and groups<sup>26</sup> and got a similar answer defending the perspective on just violence: "if a woman is raped multiple times and if this woman kills her husband or this person, the violence she faces can not be ignored" (Gamze). Elaborating the current women's movements' perspective on non-violence, Gamze argued that within the women's movement today it is a neglected area for further inquiry; that is why she thinks that women conscientious objectors are marginalized from the women's movements.

As an ex-participant in local women's groups before her conscientious objection declaration, Hadise thought that the women conscientious objectors started a debate within feminist circles on militarism in Turkey, and this contributed to feminist opposition against militarism.<sup>27</sup> However, all of the women conscientious objectors feel some distance from women's movements in Turkey because of their difference in understanding violence and non-violence. In the next section, I examine the feminist conceptualization of violence and non-violence in Turkey in comparison with the understanding of these things in the discourse of women conscientious objectors. This draws attention to differences and possible points for dialogue between women's movements and the discourse of women conscientious objectors.



### **Feminists and Non-violence**

All of my participants emphasized that violence not only covers physical violence but also involves verbal and psychological violence which enforce hierarchical and unequal relationships. When I asked about my participants' experiences of violence in daily life, without exception my participants told me about gender based violence that they face at home, at work and on the streets. One of the most common forms of violence that women conscientious objectors face is harassment on the streets (Serpil, Gamze, Dilek I, Melek). Domestic violence is employed psychologically and through limiting women's mobility (Melek, Aydan, Serpil, Gamze), and violence experienced at work was also noted by two of my subjects (Gamze, Seher).

Here, while Gamze emphasized masculinization of the work place and the definition of her previous profession (whereby masculine codes and behavior dominated and defined success); Seher stressed psychological violence that comes from women. According to Seher, working women internalize the gender roles that restrict them from entering certain job positions and sectors and this further forces women to conform to the masculinization of the work place. Idiomatic expressions help us to understand this internalization, as in Turkish short skirt (*eksik etek*) refers to woman while tomboy (*erkek fatma- masculine Fatma*) refers to a woman who has masculine behavior.<sup>28</sup> Seher draws attention to woman's transformation from short skirt to tomboy in order to conform to the masculine work place, and how this process further reproduces violence, competition and hierarchy among working women:

When two women come together and speak about something, the woman tells the other woman you are a short skirt (*eksik etek*), what do you know? And that short skirt becomes a tomboy (*Erkek Fatma*) in order to jump to another rank in society. Tomboy uses a tough and destructive style in speech like men do and she is

embraced by being a tomboy...You can exist much more easily if you are masculine... [Men] let you in if you become a tomboy (Seher).

Although all of my conversations about gender based violence with my participants involved feminist ideas, as they expressed that these violent experiences were an outcome of patriarchy, two of them identified themselves as distant from and critical of feminism in Turkey (Serpil, Dilek I). Two of my other respondents expressed sympathy with anti-militarist feminism but refused to be identified by any ideologies or isms (Seher, Gamze). The rest of the five women conscientious objectors identified themselves as anti-militarist feminists. Although the self-identification of my participants varied, all of them criticized women's movements for only dealing with "women's issues" and ignoring the authority, violence and hierarchies that women employ.

Participants who did not identify themselves with feminism think that feminism constructs the project of liberation in women's activism only and ignores the hierarchies and violence employed by women towards other women, and even against men in daily life. Dilek I. emphasized that she observed inconsistency in the daily life practices of some of her feminist friends in the past, and in feminist understanding in the search for equality:

I am for sure into [feminism]. How much am I immersed in it? Until I realize that feminism becomes sexism. Sometimes...I met such women that well they are feminists saying that they would just play with men on their fingers etc., you know men have such kind of behaviors, expressing that they are with one woman for each night. When a woman made such an act, for me her feminism ends there. (Dilek I.)

In parallel Seher sympathizes with feminism, but argues that some feminists tend to ignore women who employ violence. She adds that women become active agents in the deployment and encouragement of violence, especially at times of militarization:

Some of them [feminists], not all of them, say this and I don't know which groups but they strictly refuse women's relationship to violence. I don't find this sound. Because many of the women are already militarized...If they weren't, they wouldn't be sending their sons to military service, waiting for their husbands to come back from the military service- you know there is this thing of waiting for one's military service; they wait for the military service to get married. (Seher)

All of the women conscientious objectors understand feminism as an individual and collective achievement and this is a result of their understanding of non-violence as individual and collective transformation. Within the discourse of women conscientious objectors, like their understanding of non-violence, feminism is understood to build in a responsibility for organizing one's personal life in coherence with feminist political acts and promises.

Emphasizing that militarism influences both men and women, Serpil drew attention to the need to incorporate different subjectivities in women's struggle: "The struggle of women's liberation will of course be true through the struggle of women but I don't think that it is going to happen *only* with women" (emphasis added). As an anarchist and anti-militarist feminist Hadise criticized women-only groups and emphasized the need to work in mixed gender groups where there are separate sub-group opportunities for women and men:

Let's say we sat down with you and three other women and we thought of various things. We improved ourselves and learned a lot. We developed new ideas, and said that we would do this and that and we started doing them. But if we are unable to share how all of these things came about, if we are not able to share how we got to that point step by step with men and other mixed groups then something remains missing. And our purpose is not liberating women only. Our purpose is not only saving women or some other people, our purpose is to transform ourselves, transform the world. (Hadise)

Among the women that I interviewed who self-identified with anti-militarist feminism, two of them pointed to anti-militarist feminism as one among their other

political identities (Çağla, Hadise); three of them (Aydan, Melek, Sitem) did not mention any other identities or ideologies linked with their anti-militarist feminist identity. Both Aydan and Melek mention that they do not limit their agenda by a feminism that is confined by women-only issues and ignores much wider circulations of militarism, authority and hierarchy initiated and employed by women themselves:

Women are not the only people who are oppressed...there should be struggle for instance for street kids or well, for others that are excluded and oppressed by the society. I don't think that it is a good idea to limit the struggle by woman... yes I am a feminist but I don't limit myself to feminism. When I examine myself yes I defend women's rights because women are oppressed and I am not critical of women's groups...Just that I look at myself and I don't think it is right to struggle in a woman's only space...one should struggle against hierarchy, authority and militarism at every sphere of life and one should internalize this struggle...Actually, we should continue feminist struggle with anything that bothers us in any sphere of life. (Aydan)

I think that there can be no feminist perspective that doesn't question authority, hierarchy and militarism. I think of feminism as my background. Anti-militarism, conscientious objection and various other things that we do are located on that background...But my actual background color is that [feminism]...I used to say I am an anti-militarist feminist but now I call my self,—feminist and anti-militarist. Feminism is of some priority for me or maybe it is the thing that I am more into right now. Anti- militarism is my perspective on politics, life...But I am not all alone an anti-militarist. And I am not all alone a feminist. But feminism more belongs to me. Anti-militarism is more linked with non-violence, conscientious objection and etc., the things, spheres and points in life that I would like to interfere with. (Melek)

On the other hand, Çağla and Hadise identified themselves with anarchism as they find anarchism, anti-militarism and feminism together define the world they would like to live in. In all of these perspectives on feminism whether connected with anarchism or not, mainstream feminism in Turkey is viewed as women's struggle and opposition against women's oppression that excludes men and this exclusion prevents women conscientious objectors from defining themselves as feminists even though a majority of them sympathize with the feminist movement. All of this indicates that women conscientious

objectors' conceptualize violence as shaped by several oppressions, including patriarchy and militarism. This also influences women conscientious objectors' understanding of non-violence as a principal value and responsibility in daily life that is realized in a multiplicity of spheres.

International feminist literature on women's movements argues for women's fundamental connection to non-violence, based on the gender roles of women as caregivers.<sup>29</sup> In research on the non-violence of women's rights activists in the US, Costain (2000) argues that the choice of non-violence is a tactic and framing element in the movement because non-violence strengthens "creation of a desirable collective identity: citizen and peacemaker" (Costain 2000: 179) and inspires more women to speak up on their problems. As a challenge to this, Beckwith (2002) examined the 1989-90 United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) strike against the Pittston Coal Group. By investigating how political leadership of the strike shaped the gender of non-violence and violence, she argues that "general sets of collective actions, violent and non-violent, are constructed in the course of a movement campaign in gendered terms, which offers women and men[activists] different opportunities for political engagement" (Beckwith 2002: 79). Here, as a challenge to the feminist arguments that non-violence is the essence of femininity, she argues for the gendered-ness of non-violence and/or violence, depending on how a movement frames violence and non-violence.

Drawing from Beckwith (2002), women conscientious objectors' criticism against the women's movement is shaped by the ways in which violence and non-violence are framed within the discourse of women conscientious objectors. Within this context, women as well as men are framed as initiators and victims of violence due to the

militarization of gender. Through this frame on violence, in their declarations women subvert the male domination of conscientious objection. By emphasizing the role of women in initiating violence they further present non-violence as an opportunity that men and women can politically engage. This further genders the concept of non-violence and draws the line between women conscientious objectors and the women's movement in Turkey. The difference between women conscientious objectors and women's movements is shaped by the women's movements' framework on violence against women. This framework is mainly constructed by autonomous women's groups and has been criticized by some feminists for being limited to women's issues, which weakens the understanding of patriarchal violence and depicts women as victims of male violence.

Violence against women was a major issue of the second wave (1980-1990) feminists in Turkey and the first wave (1910-1980) specifically struggled for equal opportunities for women's education, political participation, employment and recognition of women in social life (Tekeli 1998). When second wave feminisms sprang into being after the military coup in 1980s,<sup>30</sup> they challenged the first wave Kemalist women's arguments that gender equality is maintained through the course of the Republican Revolution by the modernization of the legal framework.<sup>31</sup>

The second wave feminists specifically drew attention to patriarchy of the state, family, educational system, media and capitalist economy and emphasized the importance of women's autonomous organization for feminist struggle (Tekeli 1998, Altınay & Arat 2007, Acar-Savran 2007, Işık 2002). Autonomy went hand in hand with the formation of consciousness raising groups<sup>32</sup> that prioritized women only groups and a women's agenda. Many of the stories that narrate the foundation of women's

organizations and groups during this era<sup>33</sup> suggest that autonomy was a significant dynamic behind the expansion of women's movements in the mid-1980s,<sup>34</sup> and that dissemination of feminist terminology in law and media developed in the 1990s (Altınay & Arat 2007).

Tekeli (1998) emphasizes that the first wave feminist struggle in Turkey was shaped by ideologies of nationalism, liberalism, Islam and Turkism, which depicted women's liberation as equal with the national liberation. Koray (1998) stresses the distance of second wave feminists from any ideology as they challenged these ideologies for putting women and women's issues second in struggles; this caused the formation of women's only groups and limitation of these groups' agenda to women's issues.

From late 1990s until today, second wave feminists are criticized by other feminists for representing women as the victimized gender. As an anti-militarist feminist sociologist Selek (2006) emphasizes that the women's movements' agenda was confined to gender based violence and women's rights with women depicted as victims of male violence. Feminist scholar Acar-Savran (1994) emphasizes that "male violence against women is not the foundation of patriarchy but an expression of it." (Acar- Savran 1994: 52). By blending psychoanalysis and feminism, Acar-Savran (1994) draws attention to heterosexism and homophobia as complementary facets of patriarchy where men are constantly encouraged for violence not only against women but against those not considered to be the masculine:

Hetero-sexism and homophobia play a significant role in the protection of masculine power. Male identity is not [just] "strong and tough" that is required by the masculine power and assumed by its phallic symbols. What makes "a man" possible is the suppression of passivism and the softness, in other words, it is violence. These unconscious suppressions are completed by approval and encouragement of male violence. Men are encouraged to employ violence against

women from law to culture and to media and in every sphere (Acar-Savran 1994: 52).

Male violence is a major expression of patriarchy, but Acar-Savran draws attention to how processes of patriarchy are complicit and interwoven with other systems of oppression. When the overall criticisms expressed in this literature are considered, male violence towards women constitutes only a partial analysis of patriarchy; hierarchies between women and differences among women's experiences with violence exhibit other faces of patriarchy. In parallel, Koray (1998) emphasizes that women's movements in Turkey need to build relationships with other ideologies to enlarge the movement to other subjectivities in the struggle against patriarchy.

Victimization of women further erases women having different experiences by constructing the hierarchy between saved/savior and the victim women. Taylı & Yalçın (2007), activists of the feminist organization *Mor Çatı* [Pink Roof],<sup>35</sup> argue in an article on Women's Shelter Commission Meeting (*Sığınaklar Kurultayı*) (organized in 2007)<sup>36</sup> that women exposed to domestic violence are often seen as victims by feminists even though these women have differences in experiencing gender based violence. *Mor Çatı* criticized women's groups' attempts to strike out "patriarchal violence" from the Committee's agenda, which for *Mor Çatı* reproduce hierarchies between different women (Taylı & Yalçın 2007).

Through the frame of women, as the victimized gender, rather than the peaceful gender, transformation of the legal framework on women's equality issues, and struggle against the problem of gender based violence, constituted the main agenda, especially after the 1990s (Selek 2006). This frame shaped violence as *male* violence. Male violence constitutes a partial analysis of patriarchal violence that is interwoven with other systems



of oppression such as nationalism and/or militarism. The emphasis on victim women and this partial analysis of patriarchal violence played a role in the failure to challenge hierarchies between different women (Selek 2006) and prioritized women-only groups and women's issues (Koray 1998).<sup>37</sup> All this indicates that gender based violence is framed differently in the women's movements in Turkey than it is in the women's conscientious objectors' understanding of violence and non-violence, which explains the relative marginalization of the latter from women's movements in Turkey.

In an article about feminism and anti-militarism, anti-militarist feminist sociologist Selek (2006) draws attention to the need for dialogue between feminism and anti-militarism in Turkey as she argues that this dialogue will strengthen feminist analysis of militarism and patriarchy and anti-militarists' perceptions of feminism. She contends that this dialogue will challenge the framing of victim women (Selek 2006). Based on this research and my experience in the last ten years in various feminist groups, I also argue that dialogue between anti-militarism and feminism will enhance the understanding of patriarchal violence in Turkey, which will serve as an important step in re-thinking feminist conceptualizations of non-violence among women.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Alevi is a religious sect in Islam. In Turkey, there are Alevis that originate in Kurdish and Turkish ethnicities (Massicard 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Laz are the ethnic minority group dispersed in the Northern parts of Turkey and Istanbul. They are assumed to be the oldest settled populations in the Northern parts of Turkey. They resisted Turkification during the Ottoman Empire. Laz, further refers to a gullible and goofy mountaineer which is a prejudiced phrase used for all the North east populations of Turkey (Bazin 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Bazin (2009) indicates that the Alevi population is totally invisible in the statistics whereas Christian populations are visible and analyzed with detailed Christian sects. On the other hand, Kurdish population counts are partially invisible as the indication of Kurdishness in the population census is based on the declaration of the person. Bazin (2009) exemplifies this by analyzing the 1960 population census. According to his analysis, the actual Kurdish population should be much higher. For instance, respondents in the 1960 census that declared Kurdish as their second language after Turkish were not counted as Kurdish population. In the 1960 census, communities speaking other than Kurdish and Turkish were listed as 'Islamic minorities'. This category refers to Arab, Georgian, Laz minority groups and immigrants from Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania in Turkey and prevents the exact population count of these groups.

<sup>4</sup> According to unofficial records gathered by Foundation of Science, Education, Esthetics, Culture, Arts Research (BEKSAV), in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup d'état, 650 thousand people were arrested, 230 thousand people were tried in various courts, more than a hundred thousand people were tortured, 171 people were tortured to death and 517 people were sentenced to the death penalty. However, the actual numbers are higher as a result of the lack of official recording at the time (Oberdiek 2007). For more on the aftermath of 1980 coup d'état please see Oberdiek 2007.

<sup>5</sup> I was not able to find this book as it is a secret and illegal book that circulated only among the militants of the organization in question. My respondent's copy was burned during a police raid.

<sup>6</sup> In her research on women's experiences in the Turkish military, Kuloğlu (2005) emphasizes that women's participation in the Turkish Military is limited by their secondary positions and specifically that combat positions are restricted to their entrance based on the allegedly psychological and physical weakness of women.

<sup>7</sup> Without the military service, men can not be employed with benefits and social security and are restricted from travel abroad (Selek 2000, Altınay 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Kemalism stands for the nationalism during the Republican era (Belge 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Aydan chooses not to refer to herself as Turkish due to its nationalist connotation linguistically. In Turkish, there are two words that describe Turkishness: *Türk* (Turkish) and *Türkiyeli* (Person from Turkey). Due to my experience in mixed feminist groups involving Turkish and Kurdish woman activists, Kurdish feminists challenge the former term and prefer the use of the latter as an umbrella term against the nationalist content 'Turkish' signifies. Aydan's rejection of the former term refers to a parallel feminist sensitivity.

<sup>10</sup> The majority of the mainstream media adds 'so-called' at the beginning of Armenian genocide to reflect its controversial status on the Turkish side.

<sup>11</sup> Likewise, especially during the National Security classes, discussions over contemporary politics are moderated by the soldier-teacher in a fashion that prevents any criticism and aims to teach nationalist values (Altınay 2004).

<sup>12</sup> For research on the circulation of nationalisms in different sectors of Turkish society see Kentel, Ahıska, Genç (2009), based on an analysis of 97 in depth interviews with nationalist, conservative, religious, ethnic and cultural communities' representatives.

<sup>13</sup> During these violent incidents in 1955, many of shops belonging to Anatolian-Greeks living in Istanbul were damaged and plundered. This was mainly due to the mainstream media propaganda on Anatolian Greeks as aiding financially the ethnic cleansing operation against Turkish Cypriots. The incidents started when the mainstream radio channel in Turkey reported that the house in Thessaloniki that Atatürk (the founder of Turkish Republic and first president) was born in was bombed by Greeks (Güven 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Contemporary Turkish nationalism is shaped by xenophobia against Armenians to the extent that Kurdish conflict came to be interlinked with xenophobia toward Armenians. Turkish nationalist discourse claims that Kurds (particularly PKK) work in alliance with the Armenians (in and outside of Turkey) targeting partition of Turkish territory (Bora 2007). This is an example of how internal enemies are interlinked with the external enemies that are seen as security threats to the Turkish nation.

<sup>15</sup> The incident happened in 2005 in Mersin (in Southern Turkey where Kurdish populations are higher) during the celebrations of Kurdish New Year. In the following weeks, there were numerous marches in the name of 'showing respect to the flag' organized by nationalist civil society organizations such as *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* [Association for Kemalist Thought], *Emekli Ast Subaylar Derneği* [Association for Retired Non commissioned Officers], *Emekli Subaylar Derneği* [Association of Retired (Military) Officers] and many more. In the indictments of the famous court case on *Ergenekon* in 2008, the master plans of this incident of flag burning and later marches were condemned to be held by an ultra-nationalist gang, called *Ergenekon* in order to provoke violent conflict between Turkish and Kurdish citizens and provide the reason for another military intervention to take over government's control in Turkey. The trial still proceeds. For an English source about the case on *Ergenekon*, please see Rainsford 2008.

<sup>16</sup> State feminism and/or women soldiers that fight for the liberation of the nation are among the most frequently given examples of this phenomenon for the Turkish case. For state feminism please see Kandiyoti 1997; for women soldiers see Altınay 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Altruism is depicted not as a given for women but a process of acknowledgment of national consciousness disseminated through education. In that sense, Turkish nationalism is different when compared to Indian and Iranian nationalisms, as in these countries women are represented as the direct essence of the nation (Sirman 2007). For Iranian nationalism, please see Najmabadi (1997) and for Indian nationalism please refer to Chaterjee (1989).

<sup>18</sup> Seher was unemployed at the time of the interview and her aforementioned experience happened in her last firm where she was employed at the managerial level.

<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, there is no research in Turkey which examines the experiences of mothers at the juncture of nationalism, militarism and patriarchy other than Gedik (2008)'s research on Mothers of Martyrs.

<sup>20</sup> In 2006, a mother publicly criticized the military and the state for the loss of her son during military service. In response, the Prime Minister of Turkey argued that it is not easy to do the military service and casualties may occur (Temelkuran 2006). His remarks also gave away the negative attitudes towards the mothers that are deviating from the ideal. Enloe argues that "designing a militarized motherhood... requires marginalizing or suppressing alternatives notions of motherhood" (Enloe 2000: 247) and this is how keeping the secret for the love of the nation is legitimized.

<sup>21</sup> On non-violence as an action repertoire please see: McAdam & Tarrow 2000.

<sup>22</sup> According to Galtung (1990), there are three types of violence: structural, direct and cultural violence (Galtung 1990). Structural violence is “unintended structure generated harm done to human beings” (Weber 1999: 354) and is built into social, political and economic structures that govern unequal opportunities and power (exploitation, segmentation, sexism and racism). Direct violence is actor generated (killing, maiming, repression, detention) while cultural violence is a type of violence that legitimizes direct and structural violence (Galtung 1990). These violence types feed upon and stand in cyclical relationship to each other and this creates the cycles of violence (Galtung 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Non-violence Exercise (*Şiddetten Arınmışlık Antrenmanı*) is a week long workshop with simulation of actual violent cases. Through these cases, participants discussed their experiences with violence, elaborated upon non-violent responses towards these cases and developed non-violent strategies. The workshop further involved seminar meetings on militarism, non-violence, violence and conscientious objection (IWRA 1998a).

<sup>24</sup> The original text included in *Şiddetsizliğin El Kitabı* is translated from International Fellowship of Reconciliation’s brochure on non-violence. For more of the brochure see: “Definitions” (IFOR n.da) at <http://www.ifor.org/definitions.htm> and “FAQ” (IFOR n.db.) at <http://www.ifor.org/faq.htm> (Accessed May 17th, 2010). For the Turkish translation included in the book and accessible online please see IWRA 1998b.

<sup>25</sup> Non-violence in Turkish is *Şiddetsizlik*, which connotes some process of purification from violence or total abstention from violence. Two of my participants told that initially the term was *Şiddetten Arınmışlık* [Purification from Violence] which enhanced this later impression of the meaning of non-violence in Turkish.

<sup>26</sup> She was not able to specify these meetings by name or date. Considering IWRA’s time period, these meetings should have taken place between 1996- 2000.

<sup>27</sup> In the past five years, *Amargi and Feminist Politika*, popular feminist journals in Turkey, dedicated their quarterly issue to militarism and this shows dissemination of the analysis of militarism as a gendered discourse. For other various articles see online peer reviewed feminist journal *Fe-Journal*: <http://cins.ankara.edu.tr/> (Last retrieved May 17th, 2010). For a feminist internet site, gathering news and articles on militarism, gender and the feminist movement see Feminisite: <http://www.feminisite.net/archive.php> (Last retrieved: May 17th, 2010). Also, growing academic work on militarism and gender, as well as dispersion of this analysis into Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Travestite and Transsexual (LGBTT) movements in Turkey, further indicate that there are more activists who think and act against militarism as a gendered discourse. LGBTT organizations, Lambda-Istanbul and Kaos GL (in Ankara) often contributed to the campaigns of conscientious objectors in the past.

<sup>28</sup> According to *Türk Dil Kurumu* [Turkish Language Association]’s online Turkish dictionary, short skirt [*eksik etek*] officially refers to woman [*kadın*] <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TR/Genel/SozBul.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFFAAF6AA849816B2EF4376734BED947CDE&Kelime=eksik%20etek> (Last retrieved May 17th, 2010)

<sup>29</sup> On the links between women and non-violence please see: Ruddick 1995, Costain 2000, Gilligan 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Women's movements sprang into being right after the 1980 coup d'état brutally suppressed leftist activism. Political science scholar Bodur (2005) emphasizes that women who participated in the leftist movements of the 1970s were given secondary roles but that because men were arrested as a result of their activism, this gave women space to speak against these secondary roles. Leftist women challenged Marxist

Revolutionary discourse in Turkey for its neglect of women's issues and started to organize in autonomous groups (Bodur 2005, Selek 2004, Acar-Savran 2007).

<sup>31</sup> In 1926, by the adoption of the Civil Code, women were considered to be equal to men in terms of rights. December 5th, 1934, women were given the right to enter elections. In 1935 the Turkish Women Association abolished itself by claiming that gender equality is reached. This Association was established instead of the Turkish Women Party, as the central party-government prevented a woman's party (Tekeli 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Through the emphasis on autonomous women's groups in the mid-1980s, the consciousness raising groups in Ankara and Istanbul became inspiring for a lot of women for discussing patriarchal violence in the private sphere and prepared the background for a *Dayağa Hayır* [No to Battery] campaign in 1987 (Altınay & Arat 2007, Işık 2002) against physical violence in the private and public spheres. Another campaign on sexual harassment, *Bedenimiz Bizimdir: Cinsel Tacize Hayır* [We have got our own bodies: No to Sexual Harassment] in Istanbul during 1989 drew attention to women's gender roles in the private sphere (Altınay & Arat 2007). Women's movements started to conceptualize gender based violence within a frame of patriarchal violence that is not only physical. This conceptualization led to another campaign in 1990 against Turkish Criminal Code 438 which reduced the punishment for rape crimes against sex workers. Through this campaign, feminists challenged the concept of honor (*namus*) as linked with the patriarchal regulation of women's sexualities and criticized the separation between women with dignity or honor (either married or virgin [*namus, iffet*]) and dishonourable women, connoting sex workers.

<sup>33</sup> For a compilation of some of the stories of women's groups please see *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm* [Feminism in Turkey in the 1990s], ed. by Bora & Günel (2002).

<sup>34</sup> Tekeli (1998) further emphasizes that second wave feminists showed solidarity with Islamic feminists. On the other hand, they also opposed an Islamic state in Turkey.

<sup>35</sup> *Mor Çatı* is a feminist organization working on domestic violence and administers an autonomous women's shelter for the victims of domestic violence. They lobby for the increase of women's shelters country wide. For more on the goals of the organization please see:  
[http://www.morcati.org.tr/tanisalim\\_bizimoykumuz.html](http://www.morcati.org.tr/tanisalim_bizimoykumuz.html) (Accessed June 29th, 2010)

<sup>36</sup> For the out coming declaration of the meeting please refer to Bia News 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Another indication of this process is that still in Turkey there are few mixed gender groups that adopt a feminist agenda, concentrating on gender based violence. This is further linked with the emphasis on the autonomy of women's groups from other political parties and organizations, which enforce women only groups. "We are not Men" [*Biz Erkek Değiliz İnsiyatifi-BEDİ*], Lambda Istanbul and Pembe Hayat's mixed sexuality groups are the only mixed gender political groups. For more on BEDİ please see:  
<http://bizerkekdegilizinsiyatifi.blogspot.com/> (Last retrieved May 17th, 2010).

### **Conclusion: Marginalization of the Discourse of Women Conscientious Objectors**

“We need to understand...when and how men are persuaded into using guns, when and how women are persuaded into supporting their brothers, husbands, sons and lovers that are conscripted. How are these pressures arisen? What is its meaning with regard to the relationship between men and women? What happens when women resist against these pressures?” (Enloe 2004: 224)

The dominant understanding of conscientious objection in Turkey is shaped by secularism and total objection both of which are male dominated even if the majority of the themes within the men's declarations represent conscientious objection to be more than refusal of the military service. Within this context, just like women conscientious objectors, Kurdish and religious objectors attempt to change the definition of conscientious objection by enriching the analysis of militarism through declaring their own reasons for and experiences with it. This shows the dynamic character of the movement and the meaning of conscientious objection.

Women conscientious objectors subvert the definition of conscientious objection through their declarations and they present a gendered analysis of militarism that is an outcome of their daily life experiences with militarism and nationalism in Turkey. According to this analysis, militarization of gender is maintained by both the victimization and support of women in militarization processes. Thus, the discourse of women conscientious objectors oppose this two way role of women in militarization processes by declaring that they will not perform the gender roles necessary for the reproduction of militarism.

As mentioned elsewhere, militarism is not a discourse that operates only within war times. Rather it is a discourse that continuously reproduces itself during peace times through war preparation (Enloe 2000). In Turkey, militarism and nationalism involve a

unique discourse built through the myth of the military nation. This myth links (ideal) Turkishness to the duty of military service with an aim of constructing a soldier-nation. By this, not only men are militarized; but women are coerced in gender roles that are supportive of these mechanisms (Altınay 2004). What are these roles and performances? What do they say about patriarchy, nationalism and militarism in Turkey? What are the main coping mechanisms and principles that women conscientious objectors offer and implement? How effective is the response of the women conscientious objectors in their declarations and their daily practices?

Militarism, nationalism and patriarchy construct four gendered narratives in Turkey and these are the soldier-wife *Kezban*, altruistic mother *Ayşe*, (first) woman combat pilot *Sabiha Gökçen* and Kurdish woman guerrilla *Zilan* (Altınay 2008). Women's conscientious objection declarations represent and oppose the militarization of gender built in these narratives.

As a response to the *Kezban* narrative, women conscientious objectors criticize in their declarations and daily practices the military and military service as institutions of violence, the legal penalties that hinder the criticism of Turkish military publicly, the militarist cultural expressions, values, manners and norms that invade the educational curriculum.

As a response to the Altruistic mother *Ayşe*, women objectors challenge the militarization of national motherhood and militarized hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. They see sexism and heterosexism as fundamental aspects of militarism and nationalism. Militarized national motherhood represents women as naturally born mothers and women's bodies as the land of the nation and this locates the heterosexual family as the

core institution needed for the militarist nation. By this, militarized national motherhood enforces heterosexism and women conscientious objectors reveal this analysis in their declarations.

The gendered narratives of (first) woman combat pilot *Sabiha Gökçen* and Kurdish woman guerrilla *Zilan* represent violent women in armed struggle. The declarations of women conscientious objectors specifically oppose all types of war and engagement with any war or armed conflict. They encourage non-violence on both sides of the Kurdish conflict, criticize the Turkish state's militarism against the Kurdish question and yet also challenge militarism, use of guns and violence by the Kurdish insurgency even if it is against state's oppression. Women objectors criticize militarized and armed discourses for reducing women into secondary roles and strengthening the militarized masculinity that is constructed upon the protection of women and children as representing the honor of the nation. Women objectors further draw attentions to the myth of heroic warrior women killed for the honor of the nation and strategically stress non-violence as a mean to struggle against oppression.

Women conscientious objectors' declarations present militarism, nationalism and patriarchy as interconnected. My participants' experiences with militarism further provide evidence for their interconnection as they faced militarization of intimate relationships, motherhood and childhood. As a result of these experiences, the acts of women declaring their conscientious objections focus on revealing the links between militarism, nationalism and patriarchy. In that sense, women's conscientious objection is different from men's conscientious objection and challenges the male declarations' focus on the act of refusal to serve in the military.



The experiences of women conscientious objectors reveal militarism to be a circulating discourse in a variety of different spheres in daily life. Militarism circulates not only in the state and the military but also in Turkish Leftist and Kurdish movement discourses, the educational system and workplace. Experiences of women conscientious objectors who come from different ethnic-cultural backgrounds further show that Turkish militarism is primarily shaped by the other created by discourse on internal enemies of the nation, defined as ethno-cultural groups that deviate from Turkishness. Certain performances become symptomatic of this deviation, such as pronouncing oneself a Kurdish or Alevi, challenging Turkish nationalism and/or actively engaging in the Kurdish movement. This enmity becomes even more acute in national conflicts and turns into ethno-cultural discrimination in daily life to the extent of the threat of violence. It is through these mechanisms in the discourse of internal enemies of the nation that Turkish nationalism and militarism are reproduced in daily life.

The discourse and daily practices of women's conscientious objection support non-violence and non-violent methods against the violence cycles created by the aforementioned systems of oppression. Women conscientious objectors challenge and reveal militarism, nationalism and patriarchy through the non-violent protest of their declaration. They also call for non-violent political protest and practice of daily life. Another dimension of non-violence is found in the women conscientious objectors' attempts to organize their lives (such as through their choice of profession) based on anti-militarism, feminism and non-violence. The subjects of this research explicitly stated their own means of non-violence in daily life as a crucial component of their political activism linked with their formal act of conscientious objection.

The idea of women declaring their conscientious objection despite the fact that they are not obliged to perform military service in Turkey still faces surprise and is thought to be non-sense by many people outside of the conscientious objection movement. Within the movement, this thought has evolved into a measure of acceptance of women conscientious objectors and their analysis of militarism as a gendered discourse.

According to the accounts of my participants and feminist journals and group actions, their analysis of the interconnection between patriarchy, militarism and nationalism is absorbed in some of the groups within the women's movements in Turkey. However, their understanding of non-violence distances the discourse of women's conscientious objection from that of groups in the women's movements in Turkey due to the different framing of violence and non-violence in the two sets of discourses.

Women's movements in Turkey frame women as the victimized gender. Through this frame, transformation of the legal framework on women's equality issues, and struggle against the problem of gender based violence, constituted the main agenda, especially after the 1990s (Selek 2006). This frame shaped violence as *male* violence. The emphasis on victim women by male violence played a role in the failure to challenge hierarchies between different women (Selek 2006) and prioritized women only groups and issues (Koray 1998). On the other hand, the discourse of women's conscientious objection argues for women's fundamental roles in engaging violence and supporting militarism and thus, their understanding of non-violence contradicts the women's movements framing of violence. Although these two discourses have lots of common ground, they are not fully in cooperation with each other.

The number of women conscientious objectors has increased since 2004 and constitutes an important challenge against militarism and nationalism as gendered discourses in Turkey. Women conscientious objectors' daily life experiences with militarism, and disobedience in taking up militarized gender roles, indicate that militarism is a common phenomenon not limited to the periods of military coups and militarization or certain institutions such as the military and the state. Their challenge shows that struggle against militarism shall take place at a variety of different spheres of daily life. In that sense, a starting point is found in the question: What does the disobedience of women conscientious objectors say about obedience generally in the context of militarism, nationalism and patriarchy?

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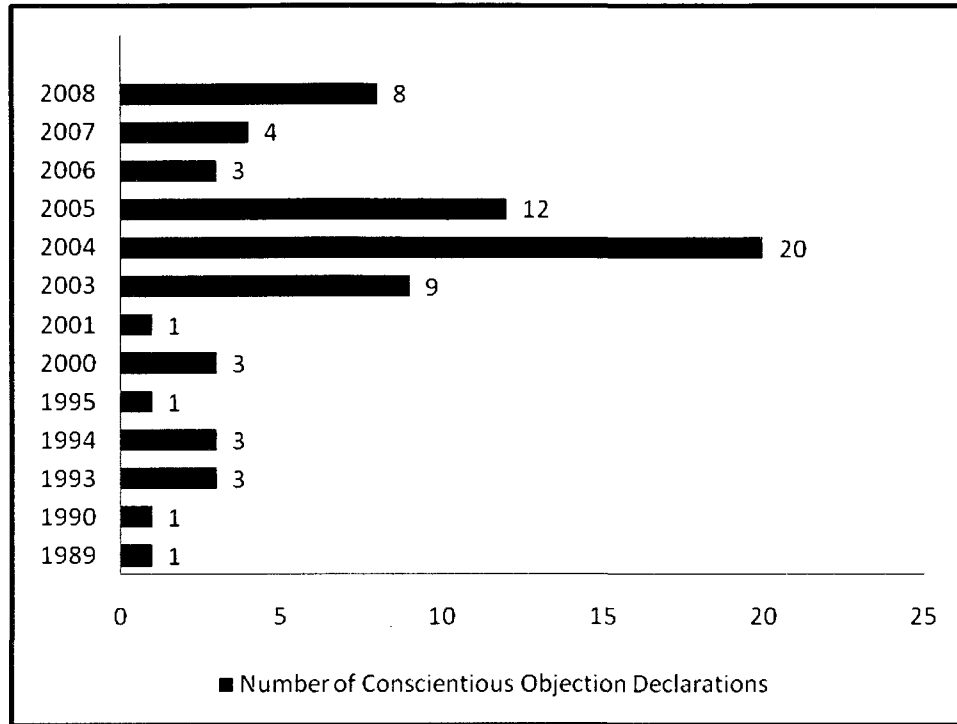


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### **Appendix 1- Sample Interview Questions**

1. Personal Information about the respondent (Where are you from? What do you do? What is your occupation? Where do you work? How old are you?)
2. When did you declare your conscientious objection?
3. How did you decide to declare your conscientious objection?
4. What kind of a political agenda did you have before you declared your conscientious objection?
5. What was the reaction of other conscientious objectors to your declaration?
6. What was the reaction of your family and your friends to your declaration?
7. What has changed in your life since your conscientious objection?
8. Can you please tell me about the relationships among women conscientious objectors? Do you regularly see them or plan actions?
9. In what other organizations do you participate? What kind of a debate do you engage in with regard to your conscientious objector identity within these organizations?
10. How do you define anti-militarist feminism?
11. What are your personal experiences with militarism in daily life?
12. What are your personal experiences with nationalism?
13. How do you cope with nationalism and militarism in your daily life?
14. How do you define violence and non-violence?
15. How do you cope with violence and non-violence? What are your daily and political practices of non violence in conjunction with your conscientious objection?
16. Besides conscientious objection, with what other identities do you define yourself? And, what is the relationship between these identities and your conscientious objector identity?
17. How do you perform these other identities in different political settings and organizations that you participate in?
18. What do you think about the women's movements in Turkey?
19. What do you think about the current political situation in Turkey and the future of the anti-militarist feminist movement?

**Appendix 2- The number of conscientious objectors between 1989- 2008<sup>1</sup>**



**Table 1. Number of CO Declarations between 1989-2008**

<sup>1</sup> I constructed this table based on the data available on [www.savaskarsitlari.org](http://www.savaskarsitlari.org) (Last retrieved December 2009).