



## **THE REPORT ABOUT THE CURFEW IN SUR DISTRICT AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1. Introduction

Societal crises such as war and mass migration are particularly effective on women and children. Crises of such magnitude affect these two groups more than crises adult males. Curfews declared in several Kurdish towns by the Turkish state represent a vivid example to these situations where women and children are deeply traumatized by the curfew and the following conflicts between the state security forces and the youth in Kurdish towns.

Our interviews with women revealed that women and children are affected by the curfew regardless of the neighborhood they reside in the district of Sur. Some of these people had to live under conditions where even their right to live was under a constant threat of the state security forces. Interviewed women stated that their children could not continue their education. These interviews showed that elderly people, handicapped people, and children did not have any access to health services while the curfew continued. There were also cases where pregnant women could not go to hospitals even though they had a serious risk of miscarrying their babies.

This report is result of the work and collaboration by the following institutions between 28 March 2016 and 30 May 2016: Sur Municipality, Kayapınar Municipality, Bağlar Municipality, Yenişehir Municipality Division of Women Policies, Diyarbakır Municipality Division of Women Policies, Diyarbakır Academy for Women, and Diyarbakır Education Union Branches (Eğitim-Sen) 1 and 2.

This report focuses on human rights abuses during the curfew and how women and children were affected by the curfew and the clashes. The data for this report were generated through face-to-face interviews and natural observation method in İskender Paşa, Nebi Cami, Melik Ahmet, Cami Kebir and Ziya Gökalp neighborhoods of Sur district. These interviews were recorded by the interviewers and statements of the women were translated into English without making any changes to its meaning.

In this report, we chose not use the real names of some of our interviewees upon their request. The images in this report are used with the permission of the Press Division of Sur Municipality.

## 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand how the curfew and the clashes influenced women and children who had to leave their homes during the curfew. With this report, we also aim to report the human right abuses as our interviewees narrated them.

## 1.3. Scope and Methodology

During the course of this research, we have interviewed 1003 women who were directly affected by the curfew. These interviews aimed at understanding how the curfew and clashes influenced women and their children. We have interviewed women who left Dabanođlu, Fatih Pařa, Cevat Pařa, Savař, Cemal Yılmaz ve Hasırlı neighborhoods and sought safety in other neighborhoods in Sur and Diyarbakır.



*Photo; A street in Sur District after the curfew ended.*

## 1.4. Information about the Curfew in Sur District

Governorate of Diyarbakır declared 6 different curfews in the following 6 neighborhoods of Sur District: Cevat Pařa, Fatih Pařa, Dabanođlu, Hasırlı, Cemal Yılmaz, Savař neighborhoods and Gazi Avenue.

- First curfew was between 6 and 13 September 2015,
- Second curfew was between 10 and 13 October 2015.
- Third curfew was between 28 and 29 November 2015.

- The fourth curfew lasted for 103 days without any breaks once it was declared on 2 December 2015.
- Clashes in Sur ended on 9 March 2016. However, the curfew was only partially lifted. On 22 May 2016, the curfew was lifted in 14 streets of Savaş, Dabanoğlu ve Fatih Paşa neighborhoods. The curfew was still enforced in the rest of the neighborhoods at the time of the writing of this report.
- Except the original 6 neighborhoods mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, an 8 day-long curfew was declared in the following neighborhoods: Abdal Dede, Ali Paşa, Lale Bey, Süleyman Nazif, Ziya Gökalp, İskender Paşa ve Melik Ahmet neighborhoods between 27 January and 3 February 2016.



*Photo; Historical Kurşunlu Mosque in Sur after the end of the curfew*

## 1.5. Summary

The last of the 6 curfews declared by the Diyarbakır Governorate started on 2 December 2016 in Cevatpaşa, Fatihpaşa, Dabanoğlu, Hasırlı, Cemal Yılmaz and Savaş neighborhoods. Though the curfew was officially lifted on the 103th day in Dabanoğlu, Savaş ve Fatih Paşa neighborhoods, a de facto curfew was still enforced by security forces. During the curfew, 10 women and 7 children died by the security forces.

Our interviews demonstrate that the curfew will possibly have long-lasting psychological, social, and economic effects on the local population and in the region.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1. Socio-Demographic Structure of Sur and the Curfew Period

Sur is one of the four districts that form central Diyarbakir. It is at the same time the historical district of the city, which still is a part of the UNESCO Heritage List. The district is named after the castle walls that surround the town. It was a center for different civilizations; therefore accommodating a rich history and culture.

The curfew and the conflictual phase had important effects on the demography of the district. Available data reveals that 5,497 families left the town during the curfew. Before the curfew, the population of the district was 117,698 people of which 59,619 were female and 58,079 were male. The table below shows the distribution of the population in Sur according to neighborhoods.

**Table 1: Population in Sur District in 2015 (Source: TÜİK)**

<b>Population in Sur District (2015)</b>	
<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Population</b>
Abdaldede	896
Ali Paşa	2985
Cami Kebir	1265
Cami Nebi	2437
Cemal Yılmaz	2104
Cevat Paşa	3256
Dabanoğlu	3075
Fatih Paşa	5153
Hasırlı	5696
İskender Paşa	6720
Lalebey	3000
Melik Ahmet	6793
Savaş	2409
Süleyman Nazif	514
Ziya Gökalp	3408
<b>Total</b>	<b>49711</b>

Sur was known for its authentic city life, which was enhanced by its rich history and a unique social structure. The destruction inflicted upon by Sur during the curfew and the resulting emigration harmed the fabric of this town irreparably. Historical Sur was known for its narrow streets that were surrounded by two-story houses with big gardens. This architectural style fused with the history of Sur, while shaping the social fabric of the town as well. Therefore, the neighborhood dynamics in Sur were quite different from other towns. People in Sur neighborhoods lived a communal life where friendship and a sense of belonging to a greater family prevailed. Interviewed women expressed this feeling by arguing that they were able to borrow whatever they needed from their neighbors be it money or something else. They furthermore added that this quality of life in Sur prevented a feeling of poverty even though the majority of inhabitants in Sur belonged to economically lower classes. Women also repeatedly expressed their anger for they were deprived of the social environment in Sur.

The curfew influenced economic life of Sur residents. Before the curfew, the town was the economic and cultural center of Diyarbakir. Therefore, it was a major source of jobs especially for its poor residents. Those people who worked in service sector underwent grave economic problems once the curfew suffocated the life in Sur.

UNESCO accepted Sur district as a part of World Heritage List. However, the curfew seriously damaged the authentic architecture of Sur, which earned the town a place on this list. On 21 March 2016, the Turkish Cabinet of Ministers ratified an unlawful decision that allowed the Turkish state to expropriate 6,292 parcels in Sur.

It is obvious that the curfew and clashes caused irreversible damage to the cultural, economic, and social life in Sur while destroying a historic town that hosted several civilizations at its bosom throughout its history.

## **2.2. Observations about the Conditions in Neighborhoods**

### **2.2.1. Physical Conditions and Hygiene**

People experience important difficulties in their access to their basic needs because the curfew is still in force practically. During our interviews, we observed that many houses had broken windows and doors and bullet holes on the outer walls. Interviewed women also stated that their furniture that they had to leave behind during the curfew were harmed and became unusable in most cases.

Explosions in neighborhoods caused a great damage to the infrastructure in the town. During this research, we observed that some streets were covered with human excrement due to

extremely damaged sewer system. This situation created risks particularly for children who played in these streets. Women also reported frequent electricity and water cuts.



*Photo: Women and children returning to their homes after the curfew ended*

### **2.2.2. Sheltering and Nutrition**

After the curfew started, people in Sur had to move to different districts of Diyarbakır such as Bağlar, Yenişehir, Kayapınar. Those who could not find shelter or rent a new apartment had to live in parks under open air during the curfew period. Families reported that some of had to return to Sur despite the danger because they could not afford to pay high rents in other districts of Diyarbakır. Those families who sought safety in the houses of their relatives during the curfew suffered from overcrowded houses and loss of their privacies.

Interviewed women explained that they had difficulties to access food in Sur during the curfew. Many families had to consume the food that they stored for the wintertime. When their wintertime stocks were depleted, some spent days without eating anything.

The following conversations are made with women from Sur:

**B.D. (Fatihpaşa Neighborhood):** *“We are more or less OK. Our main problem is our 65 years old father. He worked day and night for 20 years in our village. He built his own house in the village with his own hands. Then, the state burned his house without any mercy. Then he had to move to Sur. Our house in Sur was in the conflict zone. They (the security forces)*

*destroyed this house as well with their artillery. My father worked for 40 years to have a house of his own. They destroyed his house every time he built one for himself”.*

**F.G. (Hasırlı Neighborhood):** *“It was not possible for us to leave our house during the curfew. Our family is a crowded one. We lived on our wintertime stock for a while. When it was depleted, we could not find anything, not even a piece of bread. So, we were hungry for days. We were surviving somehow, but our children were crying because of hunger. This was why we left Sur even though we did not want to leave our homeland at all”.*



*Photo: Kitchen of a House after the end of the Curfew*

### **2.2.3. Education**

According to Diyarbakır Education Union, 15 schools and 7,450 students were directly affected from the curfew in Sur. Interviewed women explained that the security forces used many schools as headquarters for their operations. Therefore they could not dare to send their children to the school.

Some families chose to register their children to schools outside of Sur temporarily, however parents became anxious that their children could be harassed or beaten up by the police at security check points. Hence, some parents chose not to send their children to these schools at all.

In cases where students had to continue their education outside of Sur, children experienced serious adaptation problems. Our research reveals that 713 students in Sur dropped out because of these adaptation problems.

Interviewed women are quoted below:

**K.Y. (Dabanoğlu Neighborhood.):** *“My son was preparing for his university entrance exams with a great enthusiasm. However, curfew interrupted his studies, and he had a bad exam. Because of this my son has become aggressive. I do not know how I can help him now”.*

**P.M. (Cevatpaşa Neighborhood.):** *“My 15 years old son dropped out from school during the curfew. My husband and I tried hard to convince him, but to no avail. My son says it does not make any sense for him to continue his education. His siblings are also affected from his attitude. They lost their enthusiasm for school”.*

#### **2.2.4. Health Services**

Face-to-face interviews revealed that at least 186 people with chronic diseases and 163 handicapped people were affected by the curfew. Women argued that family members who were in need of treatment did not have access to health services during the curfew. There were also serious difficulties in getting the medication their patients needed.

At least 218 pregnant women were affected from the curfew conditions. Pregnant women were traumatized by sounds of clashes and forced migration. Some had premature births while there were also cases where miscarriages were reported by women.

Children in Sur experienced sleep problems and a psychological trauma during the curfew due to disruption of their routine and sounds of clashes.

Below are the statements of three women on these matters:

**N.A. (Fatihpaşa Neighborhood.):** *“On a certain night, clashes were really fierce and my husband was not home. I could not sleep. I wanted to take my children to the woodshed in our garden and keep them there. At that moment, a bullet shattered our window and my children woke up in fear. My youngest daughter threw up because of her fear. Then we went to the woodshed, which had no windows. My daughter continued to throw up throughout the night. We waited my husband there for a day covered with my daughter’s vomit. I myself was pregnant and bleeding as well.*

*My children are heavily traumatized. They wet themselves during sleep. My oldest son started to stutter after the curfew.*

*We went to our neighborhood to see our house. It was burned completely. My bleeding restarted after that. I picked a half-burned blanket from my house, I do not know why.*

*My physician says that I have a high risk of miscarriage. I had this emotional connection to our house in Sur. I cannot attend to my children; I cannot eat. I beat my children frequently. I am very unhappy”.*

**A.K. (Hasırlı Neighborhood.):** *“During the curfew, my daughter started to faint frequently. She told me that she first fainted when the police opened fire into the air while she was going back home after the school. She is still afraid of that incident.*

*I have asthma, and constant tear gas had a very bad effect on my health. I suffer serious problems with my breathing”.*

**G.Z. (Hasırlı Neighborhood.):** *“I am from Hasırlı neighborhood. I went back to see my house after the curfew ended. When I saw that my house was completely razed down, I fainted. I also had a hemorrhage after that. Even though I had two surgeries, it did not help much. Now, my left eye lost its sight completely”.*

### **2.3. The Curfew, Clashes, and the Psycho-Social Situation in the Aftermath**

Of 1003 women with whom we held interviews, 250 were from Cevat Paşa, Fatih Paşa, Dabanoğlu, Hasırlı, Cemal Yılmaz and Savaş neighborhoods that were conflict zones during the curfew. Our research revealed that women and children who resided in these neighborhoods during the curfew period were particularly affected by the clashes. According to women from these neighborhoods, sounds of artillery, gunfire, and sirens did not stop throughout the curfew. Some women also explained that their houses were hit either by artillery rounds or bullets. The trauma of the conflict became visible on women with several symptoms. Extreme physical reactions to sudden noises, inability to sleep, frequent nightmares, sleeping in hallways or in bathtubs, and avoiding windows are just some of the examples of these symptoms.

Interviewed women also complained about extreme use of teargas during the clashes. They explained that they tried to avoid the effects of teargas by hiding in rooms without windows.

Some women said that they still kept their furniture and personal belongings ready in case they needed to leave Sur immediately. They added that this situation put them in a difficult position psychologically.

Another problem for these women was lack of access to their basic needs. The stores in Sur were closed. Heavy and increasingly abusive controls at checkpoints were preventing the women going to the stores outside of Sur to get their needs. Therefore, family members in most cases had to live on what they stored in their houses before the curfew started.

Women also explained that family members who had their businesses or workplaces in curfew-zone could not open their businesses or go to work for five months. Family members who had to go other districts of Diyarbakir also lost their jobs because they could not go to work either.

Women argued that they felt safer in their houses, therefore they avoided going out if it was not absolutely necessary. They also added that they were particularly worried about the checkpoints present at several places in Sur. Women explained that the police forces in these checkpoints searched them with their hands, and the way these police officers talked to them was especially abusive. They expressed their feeling of being alien in their own homeland.

Many women argued that they did everything in their power not to leave their houses. Most decided to leave only after their houses or nearby houses were hit by bullets or artillery rounds. These women also explained that they left their houses not because they feared for their own lives but for their children's lives.

The women who left their houses during the curfew explained that they could not gather their personal belongings because there was not enough time. Therefore, the furniture and their personal belongings that formed the background to many of their memories were also destroyed along with their houses. This particular situation had a very negative effect on family members who expressed their feeling that their memories belonging to the period before the curfew also faded with the loss of their houses, furniture, and other personal belongings.

Interviewed women discussed that their anxieties especially about the future caused anger and frustration for them. This situation affected the whole family negatively resulting in disturbance in family life causing even domestic violence in some extreme cases.

### **2.3.1. Psycho-Social Situation of Women**

Women reported loss of appetite, irregular menstruation, sleep problems, and loss of weight. In some cases, women reported physical pains in different parts of their bodies. Psychological symptoms included depression, extreme reactions to noises (i.e. police or ambulance sirens),

anger restraint problems, anxiety, and panic attacks. They also reported that they felt ashamed because they could not provide for their children due to impoverishment after the curfew.

Women also argued that they missed their neighbors and they felt alone. The fact that they had to leave their houses with gardens for apartment buildings created adaptation problems as well.

### **2.3.2. Psycho-Social Situation of Children**

Huge events such as wars and curfews disrupt children's routine in lives. There is a high risk that the trauma of these events will have long-lasting psychological and sometimes even cause physical symptoms.

Through interviews with their mothers, this research also attempted to understand the ways in which the 103-day curfew and the clashes affected children in Sur. Mothers of these children frequently cited that their children sought protection in corners of the rooms and crawled to move around the house due to continual shelling and shootings. Women also reported an increase in their children's aggression especially towards their siblings and friends, anxiety, and development of several phobias that was not observed before the curfew. It was also noted that children increasingly chose to play war-games while in the streets.

Reported physical symptoms included but not limited to sleep problems (i.e. screaming during the sleep, night-walking, inability to sleep alone, and crying and talking during the sleep), bed-wetting, stuttering, recession in motor abilities (i.e. losing ability to walk, write, or eat alone). Mothers also expressed that loss of appetite and resulting weight losses were physical symptoms that appeared during or after the curfew.

Mothers also complained that increased aggression on both sides harmed the relationship between the parent and the child irreparably. Some mothers also added that they were not even able to watch TV when their children were with them.

Mothers reported that the security forces targeted their children between the ages of 14 and 18. The police forces frequently humiliated, insulted or beat children belonging to this age group.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1. Statements of Interviewed Women

**F.İ. (40 years old):** *“My house was in Dabanoğlu Neighborhood. I was a tenant in my house. One day, the police knocked on my door, and they ordered us to leave our houses immediately. I asked them where to go. They told me to go to the Sur district governorate. I resisted. I said that this was my house, and they dared to tell me to leave it and to go to the district governorate. I said that I was not leaving.*

*Then the police asked me to give them the keys for the door to the roof. I answered that I did not have the keys to the roof because I was a tenant. They said that if I did not have the keys, they would break the door. I told them to do as they will, and shut my door. Then I watched them through the peephole. I saw the police carrying sandbags and chests to the upstairs. One of them was saying that the roof was a perfect spot to set up artillery. I got afraid, and talked to my wife about what to do.*

*Then the police knocked on my door again. They were angry that we had not left yet. They said that if something happened to us, it would be on us. We had no choice but to leave. I was so shocked that I picked nothing from the house, not even a piece of cloth.*

*The police asked for our IDs in the street while we were leaving. They asked me my mother’s marital name and such. We had no idea about what to do or where to go after we left our house. Finally we went to my mother’s house.*

*I was living in Sur for years. After the curfew ended, I again rented an apartment in Sur because for me it is the only place where I can live”.*

**\Daughter of Seniha SÜRER:** *“Our house was a two-story big house with a garden. I have four siblings. They are all students. When the clashes first started, the curfew was not declared yet. In the morning, I left the house for work but they (the police) did not let me go back home in the evening. My father also was out of Sur to go to the pharmacy to buy medicine for mom. They did not let him go back either. My father and I had no choice but to go to my elder sister’s house. Therefore my mother stayed home alone. For 93 days she stayed alone. From time to time, she called us to say that she was OK. That was it.*

*Our neighbor S.A. was pregnant and alone. She came to stay with my mother. That period was very difficult for us. We had little to no information about my mother’s health. Every time our phones rang, we feared that it was bad news. When the clashes intensified, my sister’s house became almost a mourning house. Relatives and friends visited us in dozens. They never offered their condolences to my father but they kept crying and mourning for my mom. One day my mother called us. My father even inquired her about her will.*

*We were continually pressuring the officials to open a humanitarian corridor for civilians so that they could evacuate the conflict zone. All our efforts failed. My father also went to the police station several times to convince the security forces for a humanitarian corridor.*

*For 93 days, we kept worried about my mother and our other acquaintances in Sur. We used to get real happy when mother called us. However, our happiness was immediately fading when we listen to the sounds of artillery fire and explosions coming from Sur. We felt all those explosions within.*

*A week before my mother left Sur, they finally opened a humanitarian corridor but they only let only 55 years old Aunt Fatma out in this occasion. However, she also did not make it because she lost a lot of blood. We later heard that Aunt Fatma was hit when she went her garden to get some water from the well.*

*We never stopped pressuring the officials for a humanitarian corridor. Finally after 93 days, they allowed my mother and our pregnant neighborhood to leave Sur. My mother was hit from her arm. There were also scratches on her ear and bosom. They kept my mother on sedan chair for a long time. There, she lost a lot of blood. Then they took her to the hospital and from hospital to the prison.*

*When I was able to talk to my mom finally, she told me not to worry about her. She also added that they (the security forces) killed many people before her eyes. She said that they had nothing but water for days. I later on learned that my mother was insulted by the police during the interrogation”.*

**B.H. (45 years old):** *I was born in Sur; I was raised in Sur; and I married in Sur. I cannot live in that is not Sur, no matter what.*

*We were happy and in peace in our neighborhood. We did not have any problems. Then they (the security forces) came with their tanks and artilleries, demolished our town. They expelled us from our houses and our homeland. Now they say they will expropriate Sur. How about our memories and lives? Why would I need a state, which does not care about us?*

**Mother of Rozerin Çukur (53 years old):**

*Rozerin was a curious girl. She used to question everything and make her own research. Our village was forcibly evacuated by the state in the 1990s. Whenever we went to our village, she used to ask us questions about the wrecked houses in our village. She was asking about these wrecked houses and why it happened.*

*In our village, we used to live side by side with Armenians. When Rozerin learned this, she made a research about our lives with Armenians. She also started writing a piece about the Armenians of our village. She could not finish it because they (the security forces) murdered her.*

*They murdered my children, and I do not know how to make the state pay for this crime committed against my daughter.*

*I was at Dağkapı with my husband at 13:00. My heart was in Sur though. Then a very violent clash erupted in Sur. We could see the flames in the air. That moment I felt something in my heart. We ran back to our house. His father’s phone rang, and he started screaming after talking to the person at other end of the line. We turned the TV on, and captions in TV were also writing that Rozerin was shot. I am not well since then. I forget about the things I do; I forget the things I say; and I forget the places I went. I always see myself running after*

*Rozerin. I do my best to forget about her memories. The places we went together... I fear that I might lose my sanity if I remember. (Pointing to her two children) what will they do if I lose my sanity?*

*Rozerin was 17 years old. She was a successful student. She always brought her certificates, which were proofs of her successes at school. She was in love with historical places. She liked travelling and researching things. She told me that she wanted to be a psychologist. Before she was determined to be a lawyer. She changed her mind later because she was afraid that her actions as a lawyer could hurt innocent people. This is why she changed her mind, and wanted to become a psychologist. She said that she would be a psychologist and help the people. She used to say that she wanted to listen to people's troubles.*

*They killed my daughter. I don't know who did it and why he did it to us. They brought their weapons and artillery and took our children away from us. We are desperate; we have no means to fight back. We still did not turn our back to them. We still want peace. However, they always perceived us as their enemies. We repeated our resolve for peace, but they came and killed us to get paid. This is the way the state treats Kurds for decades.*

*It was the same in the 1990s. I went through similar things in the 1990s. However, the savagery we witnessed in Sur was of a different kind. Nobody expected the state to go this far in Sur. Nobody...*

*I did not let my child out because I was afraid. They killed our youth everyday during protests. They kept killing even though the people from other towns did not leave Sur alone.*

***(Here Rozerin's father interrupts the mother and talks):*** *We waited for 5.5 months for Rozerin's body. We knew that her body was still buried in Sur. This was what people who left Sur told us. The state keeps telling that the state officials transported bodies from Sur, but it is not telling the truth. We found our dead on our own. We informed the state about the whereabouts of Rozerin and Ramazan (another civilian child killed during the curfew).*

*Because the media wrote frequently about Rozerin's death, the state was paying extra attention to her case. Especially my wife went through a lot of difficulties. The head prosecutor used to get pissed off whenever he saw us. He refused to give us appointments. I had no choice but to meet his deputy then.*

*When DNA results for Rozerin and Ramazan came, they did not reveal the results for Rozerin. Our lawyer and I went to the office of prosecutor to ask about the results. Everyone in his office denied that the test results came. But we were 100% sure that the body in their possession belonged to Rozerin. When the prosecutor saw me, he told that the DNA results did not match and I needed to get out of his office.*

*Then I called an academic who visited us during our protest in Sümerpark. I asked her if she had any friends in Istanbul Forensics. I asked why they did not reveal the DNA results for Rozerin yet. An hour later she called me back. She told me that there is a DNA match and we should press the Office of Prosecution to get the report. Upon this I went back to the Office of Prosecution. I told the man in his office that we know there is a DNA match. He had no choice but to give us our report. The date on the report was the same as the date on Ramazan's report. This is how I knew that the results for Ramazan and Rozerin actually came*

*on the same day. I got really angry and started pounding the doors. This is when I saw the prosecutor was coming from the other direction. The police immediately grabbed me and covered my mouth with their hands. The deputy prosecutor insulted me endlessly. I could respond because my mouth was covered. Then the police took me downstairs. There a state official opened the back door for me and told me to leave the building.*

*On the paper that they gave me it was saying that we should bury Rozerin immediately. Now the law says that a body in the morgue should be buried if it is not claimed for 15 days. That 15-day period for Rozerin was not over yet but they wanted Rozerin to be buried immediately because they were disturbed by the publicity of her case.*

*A female state official in the morgue told us that Rozerin's body is in Yeniköy cemetery. I hastily went to the Yeniköy cemetery. I told them that I want to bury my daughter in my own village. First, the police did not want to give me my daughter's body. Then they told me not to open flags or chant slogans during the funeral. I told them it was not my business to tell people what to do or what not to do during Rozerin's funeral.*

*The thing that upsets me most is my daughter's successes. They stole her successes. She was physically beautiful. She was clever. She had the most beautiful manners. The way she kept the pen in her hand was beautiful. However, they destroyed everything that belonged to her. Somebody should write about her, so people would not forget Rozerin. They should pay for what they did. Our kids might be death, but their fight is still alive. Do not forget that”.*

*(Rozerin's mother resumes her talking) “We had a sit-in protest for 5.5 months. We also went made a hunger strike for 20 days to get our daughter's body. I shouted at the police during the protest in Sümerpark. I told them that my child was a civilian and she was a local of this neighborhood and this city. My daughter was wearing her school uniform when she went to Sur. She was carrying her schoolbooks with her. Why did they kill my daughter? She was not carrying a gun. If she were, prove me that she was armed. I can prove her innocence, then they should prove her guilt”.*

**Mother of Mehmet DEMİREL (35 years old):** *Mehmet was 17 years old. He was affected by sounds of clashes coming from Sur. I was always talking to him, trying to convince him... One night I suddenly woke in the middle of my sleep. I went to his bed only to see that it was empty. We got the news that he was killed one day later at 11 am in the morning. He died immediately after he went to Sur because the state forces were shooting at any moving object in Sur. We went to Sur to retrieve his body, but they rejected our request for four days. After that, we went to the party (pro-Kurdish political party HDP) to get help. Only with their help were we able to retrieve our son's body. Then we took his body to the hospital. They kept his body there for autopsy for another day. Therefore it took us six days in total to bury him.*

*Women in Sur left his body to a place in Sur. This is where we picked our son's body. I have three daughters and four sons. One of my sons is killed, now I have three sons.*

*One night around midnight, seven policemen raided our house. One of them wanted to pick Mehmet's picture. I did not let him to touch his picture.*

*My son should not have been killed. I know this, and always repeat this. I curse the people who killed my son. They were the cause of all these incidents.*

*After this incident, I can be happy no more. How can a mother be happy after such a catastrophe? I raised my seven children in a one-bedroom house in poverty. Because we did not have enough space in our home, my children had to sleep in my mother-in-law's house.*

*Mehmet was a breadwinner for me. He was working as a construction worker with his father. After his death, his father could not go to the same construction site. His father said that his son's memories were everywhere in that construction site so he could not work there anymore. It is not easy to see your son taken away from you like that. Is this justice? I hope those who caused such great pain in me will suffer in the same way.*

**Mother of Cihat MORGÜL (42 years old):** *“During the clashes, we were the only family, which did not leave the building in our apartment. The police ordered us to leave the building. When their pressure became unbearable, we left our house only with our clothes.*

*We lost Cihat when we were leaving the apartment. I think he entered one of the side streets. We wanted to go back and look for him, but they did not let us. We tried again later, however they did not permit.*

*Then we rented an apartment outside Sur. Our relatives and friends brought furniture for this apartment. Now, my house is full of furniture. Look, you can lose your furniture; you can lose your house. These things are replaceable. However, my son will never come back. I lost a piece of my heart with him.*

*My father-in-law used to live across our apartment. He went to Sur after the curfew ended. He told me that our apartment was completely destroyed. I have two children. They (the security forces) murdered my son. My little daughter keeps asking his big brother. I cannot cry when I am with her because I do not want to upset her. I cannot go to Sur either. It reminds me of my son. Maybe in time, I might be able to do that.*

*I did not hear about my son for a long time after we left our house. He only called me once to tell me that he will come back.*

*When my father learned about our son's death, he did not tell me immediately. Nevertheless, I understood that something was wrong and started crying. He gave me his word, and assured me that Cihat was safe. On the same day, we were watching midnight news. There I heard that Cihat Morgül is murdered. I was so angry. I forced my husband to go and seek help from people. He tried to soothe me by saying that he would go in the morning. When the morning came, we went to the party (HDP). I also took Cihat's picture with me. There I learned the truth about my son.*

*My son was buried three times: first in Sur after he died; then in Antep in a cemetery for nameless; and the third time in Yeniköy. We gave blood samples for DNA match. However, it was a bit late. This is why it took us so long to retrieve my son's body. In the police station, they misspelled our name in documents. We corrected this mistake later. Meanwhile, they buried my son in the cemetery of nameless in Antep. Then we went Antep to exhume our son. We brought him to Diyarbakir and buried him to Yeniköy”.*

**L.H. (50 years-old Hasırlı Neighborhood.):** *“They (the security forces) kept firing at us. We had no means to stop them. We called 155 (Turkish emergency phone) to tell them to come and get us. They were saying they had no security, so they could not come. At the beginning,*

*they (the security forces) used to open fire from the choppers. Then they used snipers to shoot at people.*

*One particular day a bullet hit the wall just a couple centimeters in front of me. I immediately threw myself to the ground. I also saw with my own eyes that baker's son across my house being killed with shell fragments while he was picking woods for the oven.*

*We never wanted to leave. I was telling myself that I would never leave Sur. However we had to leave the house on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the curfew because so many rounds and shells were hitting our neighborhood. In total, 13 people from three houses decided to leave. For our safety, we used fox holes opened on the walls of gardens during the clashes. The police kept firing and we opened a white flag to signal that we were civilians.*

*The police started shooting at us when they saw that my son was on a wheelchair. They shouted at us and warned us not to bring him. I jumped on them, and yelled not to shoot because my son is handicapped. They picked my son's arms and tried to make him stand. They also checked his health reports. Only after that, they were satisfied.*

*They searched everyone thoroughly. My daughter tried to resist them because they were touching everywhere in her body. They kept us waiting at the beginning of Balıkçılar Street for three and a half hours.*

*I feel very sorry now. I wish that I never left my house. It was a mistake to let them have my house. Maybe there would not be so many death people then. But what could I do with my two handicapped sons. They were really afraid because of the sounds of the clashes. They cried all the time. Sur was my heart. It was the apple of my eye. I have no purpose in life without Sur. I swear to God that I am not going to leave Sur to them again”.*

**A. A. (31 years old Hasırlı Neighborhood):** *“I constantly called 155 to ask them to come and get us. The lady who picked the phone was complaining that she could not understand me because of artillery and tank fire. I got really angry and told her that it was her people doing that to us. I told her that there were around 100 people with me.*

*We used the holes in the walls to get out. Because of the bricks our clothes were all red. When the police saw me, he asked me whether I carried wounded people because he thought that the color came from blood. I answered him angrily. They detained me because of this. They took me to Class Hotel. They let me go only after they checked my ID.*

*During the clashes, I have seen the snipers firing upon people from the helicopters. The distance between my house and the police position was around 50 meters. They were firing their weapons randomly. I decided to seek shelter in the coal cellar when I saw that. My three children and I stayed in coal cellar for 10 days.*

*I left Sur after 27 days. I could not take it anymore. I thought my children would die. They were affected so badly that none of my children talked to their teachers and never participated in their classes throughout the second semester at school. They still scream when they hear a loud noise. A week ago, I went to Sur. I saw that my house was completely destroyed. Four rooms and a kitchen... They were all gone.*

*In Sur, there was a peace of mind. My neighborhood was full of kind people. We knew everybody. In this apartment, nobody even knocks on my door”.*

**Mother of Remziye TOSUN (55 years old):** *(Remziye Tosun was arrested while she was with her 2.5 year-old daughter after she left Sur.): “What we went through was harsher. Only God knows what we have been through. Children’s conditions are even worse. They would have had hope if their parents were free.*

*My daughter stayed in a coal cellar in Fatih Paşa. Her father applied to the Office of Governor and the Police Headquarters in Diyarbakir for a safe passage for her. The police in Sur çarşı police station told us that she could leave safely if she opened a white flag. We said Remziye to do so when she called us on phone. In response, she told me that the police killed Aunt Fatma when she got out of her hiding place, and she did not want risk that.*

*We thought she would come home freely if she were able to get out of Sur. We never thought that they would arrest her. She even asked me what I was cooking for dinner for that night.*

*The next time I saw her, they were taking her to the office of prosecution. I hugged her there. That was also the last time I saw her.*

*Before the curfew, I was a host in Remziye’s house. I left her house to visit a relative who had a birth recently. Then my daughter called me, and told me that the clashes started and she and the children were not able to move.*

*My grandchildren cry without a reason. Sometimes they look at their mother’s picture and ask where she is. This devastates me. I am so desperate. I did not die, but I feel that I am dying every single day.*

*Her children could not go to school for a month. Oldest one needs to repeat his class. The other goes to the school, but he does not want to attend the classes. He goes to the backyard of the school and sits there on his own. The third one did not want to go to school either. We forced her to go. The youngest is 2.5 years old, and she is staying in the prison with her mother. When we visit Remziye in the prison, all she does is to hug her kids and cry.*

**S.A. (İskenderpaşa Neighborhood.):** *“One morning we woke up and saw that bearded people were patrolling our streets. These people reminded us beheadings and rapes in Syria. We were so afraid that we left our houses immediately on that very morning”.*

**A.A. (Camikebir Neighborhood.):** *“They destroyed authenticity of Sur. It is said that snakes and scorpions in Sur do not harm people because prophets commanded these animals not to hurt humans. It is no more.*

*They destroyed our lives and memories. We did not even want to drive a nail on the walls of our precious house. They destroyed it, and buried its rubbish into the waters of Tigris River”.*

**T.E. (Melikahmet Neighborhood.):** *“ Our house was in Fatih Paşa Neighborhood. I am 65 years old. When the clashes started, I took my two children out of Sur. Then I returned to Sur because I did not want to leave my house. Three other women like me and I stayed in the basement of a house for three months. We did not have sufficient water and food but we did not dare to leave the basement because the police was shooting at everything that moved. We*

*used candles to lighten the basement. We also covered the door with a thick curtain. We were afraid that the police could learn about our whereabouts. We did not any means for heating. One of our friends was diabetic thus had a higher body temperature. Sometimes, we were hugging her to stay warm. After I left that basement, I do not sleep properly. I frequently wake up with great fear. I keep thinking about my days in the basement and I get scared”.*

***F.Y. (Cami Nebi Neighborhood.):*** *“I tried to stay in my house till the very end. The police forced us and a couple of other neighbors to gather in the street. Then they read my husband’s name along with some other names, and they said that they would detain these people. My husband fled and returned to our neighborhood but I could not. I did not receive any news from him for 45 days.*

*One day, neighbor’s daughter and I were going to bakery to buy bread. We heard shots. Neighbor’s daughter scared and she ran away while running back to her home, but the police shot her. They did not let us help her, and she died on the street because she lost of a lot of blood. Her body remained on the streets for days.*

*I cannot sleep properly since the day I left my house. My conscience bothers me because I left my neighborhood. Sometimes, I beat my children”.*

***Ş.K. (İskenderpaşa Neighborhood.):*** *“The police was deployed onto the roof of the house right across of our house. They were swearing to my children when my children went to the balcony. They also fired tear gas into our balcony a couple of times. Sometimes, they used to keep their torches to the windows of my bedroom. None of these matter that much. I just cannot forget the innocent people who were killed. Because I never had to leave my house and my house was not damaged unlike other houses, I feel guilty towards other people”.*

***Ş.D. (Melikahmet Neighborhood.):*** *“They were gassing (tear gas) our neighborhood without a break. My children were always throwing up because of the gas”.*

***E.Y. (Ziyagökalp Neighborhood):*** *“My 12 years old son had a facial stroke due to extreme levels of stress. He also does not sleep well”.*

***R.D. (İskenderpaşa Neighborhood.):*** *“That period affected me very badly. I am nervous all the time. I did not menstruate for the last 6 months. I also became harsher towards my husband. My 9 years old son always wets himself”.*



*Photo: Women in Sur making victory signs*

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4.1. Observations and Conclusions**

- Turkish state did not allow people to retrieve the bodies of their relatives in neighborhoods under curfew. The state thus prevented the families to live the mourning phase for their dead.
- The losses of relatives and forced migration process caused a deep fear for the future among the women in Sur.
- Because the Turkish state continues to reiterate its resolve not to negotiate the terms of a peace with the PKK, the women in Sur fear that they could be forced to migrate by the Turkish state again in the future.
- Though the curfew in Sur ended, Turkish police continues to search the residents of the town in checkpoints. During these searches, the local population is frequently harassed and insulted by the security forces. Women also express that they do not feel safe due to presence of the police forces in Sur streets.



*Photo: A Street in Sur after the Clashes*

- The clashes caused many people in Sur to lose their jobs thus causing even greater impoverishment in Sur that was already inhabited by economically lower class people.
- During the curfew, the security forces converted schools and hospitals in Sur into their headquarters. As a result, thousands of children lost their access to education and Sur residents had serious problems in reaching to health services they needed.
- Children who had to go to other schools during the curfew experienced serious adaptation problems in their temporary schools causing some of them to drop out from school permanently.
- Women who are in need of constant healthcare did not have any access to health services during the curfew. Some pregnant women had miscarriages because of lack of access to health services. There were also cases where pregnant women had premature births.
- It is observed that interviewed women delayed their psychological treatment and healing process in order to take care of their children and other family members
- Some families started living with their relatives after leaving Sur. This situation caused important economic problems for the host families as well. Some families chose to rent an

apartment together since they could not afford to do so on their own. However, this practice harmed family dynamics for co-renters.

There were also cases where some family members chose not to leave their houses despite the curfew. As a result members of these families had to live in separate houses during the curfew.



*Photo: Graffiti written by the Turkish police on the wall of a house: “Gendarmerie special operations is here, where are you?”*

- As discussed before in this report, women in Sur had a strong identification with their neighborhoods and their neighbors. We have observed that women waiting at checkpoints that were established at the entry of their neighborhoods though they knew that they would not be allowed to enter their neighborhoods.

- During this research, we have observed that many families had to leave their furniture and personal belongings behind. This fact caused important difficulties especially for female family members. In many cases, the furniture that was left in the houses was damaged and became unusable during the curfew.

- Two months before this research started, Melek Alpaydin (38 years old, mother of three) died with a mortar round while having her supper. The women who lived in the same neighborhood with Melek Alpaydin argued that they were deeply affected by this incident, and did not feel safe even they were in the relative safety of their houses.

- Some women explained that they were fined by the Turkish state because they did not obey the curfew conditions. There were also some family members who were detained by the security forces with the same reason.

- Our research revealed that many families who were forcibly migrated from Sur during the curfew were the same families who were forcibly migrated from their villages in the 1990s after the Turkish state burned their villages.

- During the course of this research, the Turkish Cabinet of Ministers ratified a decision to expropriate the district of Sur. This decision increased anxiety levels of women considerably. Interviewed women repeatedly expressed their resolve not to leave Sur.



*Photo: People returning to their homes after the curfew ended*