

Research Association for Democracy, Peace and Alternative Politics

Annual Activity Report 2021



Research Association for Democracy, Peace and Alternative Politics (DEMOS)

Annual Activity Report: 2021

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About Us

Research Association for Democracy, Peace and Alternative Politics (DEMOS) was founded in 2015 in Ankara by people working in the field of social sciences who aim to communize their generation of knowledge. Since the day it was founded, the association has conducted research around peace studies in a broad sense, examining examples from Turkey and the world. Performing this studies, it placed the perspective of gender in the center of its focus.

DEMOS imagines a society in which social peace is established and all identities live in equality. It conducts researches, analyzes and translations in this direction, and shares them. DEMOS generates critical and accessible knowledge for and with subjects of rights, organizations, researchers, and activists struggling for social peace. It shares this information through print and digital publications, podcasts, conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. In this way, DEMOS informs the subjects of rights and grassroots organizations that struggle for social peace about current discussions, critical approaches and international developments in the field, supports and works with the subjects for empowerment in collaboration.

We continue to work with our colleagues from different disciplines of social sciences in the fields of peace and reconciliation, transitional justice, social memory and conflict transformation in Turkey and in the world. For more information, please visit en.demos.org.tr

Introduction

2020, was a year in which we took important steps on corporate empowerment and communication, and in 2021 we continued to improve ourselves in these areas. We discussed on policy documents in various topics, including gender equality, financial management and internal functioning (some of which will be published on our website soon); [renewed our logo and corporate identity](#) (thanks again to dear [Ceyda Pektaş](#)); and on April 11, 2021, we held our 3rd Ordinary General Assembly at the headquarters of the association to elect our new board of management and supervisory board.

We kept producing toward our dream of a society in which social peace is established and all identities live in equality. We recorded 16 episodes on topics such as memorialization, transitional justice, peace, and human rights in our podcast, Voices from DEMOS, and issued 10 DEMOS Newsletters in which we compiled the

developments in our fields of study. Throughout the year, researchers published articles and interviews on the DEMOS Blog on subjects such as peace and reconciliation, transitional justice and social memory in Turkey and around the world. Within the scope of the Peace from the Locality project, a series of articles was published on DEMOS Blog between January and April 2021 featuring discussion by 13 researchers on alternative approaches to mainstream peacebuilding efforts. In September 2021 we published a research report titled "From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: The Struggle for Peace by LGBTI+ and Women's Organizations in Turkey" and organized an online workshop titled "Join Us to Write Your Story of Peace!" We have started the Transitional Justice Seminars, with the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations, to discuss global transitional justice experiences, and held the first online seminar on Tunisia in October 2021. In November and December 2021 we published Turkish translations of two important sources on transitional justice, and we also held two closed online meetings, inviting representatives and researchers from civil society to discuss the "helalleşme" debate from the perspective of civil society.

For detailed information and links on the activities, see the relevant title of activities. Please feel free to contact us for any comments and suggestions via info@demos.org.tr or through our social media accounts. Enjoy reading!

Voices from DEMOS

Our podcast "Voices from DEMOS" have started in March 2020 and continued in 2021 as a prominent activity where we shared our research and analysis on our fields of work. In 2021 we continued our goal we defined when we set out to our journey, and shared our subject-oriented approach based on grassroots peace and gender perspective with our listeners.

We produce content in three different formats in our [Voices from Demos](#). We convey up-to-date studies, discussions and analyses on the disciplines and subjects in our focus and DEMOS researchers work on, and we also host guests from relevant fields. We continued our series on transitional justice in 2021, and talked about what gender perspective offered for judicial and extrajudicial mechanisms, and how transitional justice could be possible in the ongoing conflict. As part of the series Memory of Conflict, we heard about queer post-memory from Dilara Çalışkan, the Sivas Massacre and the relationship between mourning and memory from Ozan Çavdar, and October 10th and organized struggle from Hatice Kapusuz. We posted three episodes with Fatma Edemen on the relationship between social memory and

political cinema, and talked about peace movies. We have discussed the functioning mechanisms and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court in a critical view. We talked about the shortcomings in practice and framework of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which has finished its 20th year.

In the Field Selection, we discuss the work of international organizations, international/local civil society and research centers working on peace, democracy and human rights. In 2021 we talked with Şerko from the Ma Music Center about mother tongue and music, with Dilek Kurban, an academician, about the role of IHAM in the peace process and the Kurdish issue, and with Lale Mansur, a member of the delegation, about the Wise People Delegation in the solution process.

In 2021, we heard about the Demonstrations and the peace process in Colombia from Serhat Tutkal, and we talked about the last two hectic years of the International Criminal Court, as part of the Contemporary Peace title under which we discuss the current global developments in confrontation with the past, peace and justice and the historical and political backgrounds of relevant developments.

In 2021 Voices from DEMOS released a total of **16 new podcast episodes** and was listened **2674 times**. Our most listened episode was the one where Atiye Eren and Polat Yamaner from DEMOS talked with the academician Dilek Kurban about the IHAM and the Kurdish Issue within the context of the book [Limits of Supranational Justice: The European Court of Human Rights and Turkey's Kurdish Conflict](#).

You can listen to Voices from DEMOS, made with the contributions of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Association Turkey, on [all podcast platforms](#) including [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Google Podcasts](#).

DEMOS Newsletter

With our e-newsletter DEMOS Newsletter, we aimed to regularly inform our subscribers regarding the activities of demos in 2021, to increase the visibility of the developments we deemed important, sharing the activities of other institutions and organizations operating in the field, and to create a comprehensive monthly source of information. At the same time, we continued to produce original content for the newsletter every month, and publish blog posts written by researchers interested in our fields of study.

We create content for our newsletter under three major titles. In "News from DEMOS", we publish about our monthly activities and the content DEMOS produced. In "Our Selections from the Field", we compile the studies on issues that intersect with the working areas of DEMOS such as peace, human rights, memory, transitional justice in the civil field, and compile the published reports and present a trail for our readers to examine the studies carried out in the relevant fields for the month. In "What Caught Our Eyes", we share works such as films, theater plays and books selected by our team, who publishes the bulletin that month.

Throughout 2021, we published **10 newsletter issues** for our followers. As of January 2022 the number of total newsletter subscribers was **458**, and our top read issue was our newsletter in **June**, which was read by 75.1% of the recipients.

You can subscribe to the DEMOS Newsletter via [Mailchimp](#) to follow us through our newsletter.

DEMOS Blog

In 2021 several blog posts and interviews related to peace and reconciliation, transitional justice, social memory and conflict transformation were published on the DEMOS Blog. The blog, created as a platform of alternative and critical information, includes the work of academicians, researchers, journalists and organizations working in the same or similar fields and from various disciplines. In addition to a 13-week series of articles within the scope of the first leg of the Peace from the Locality project detailed under a separate heading below, the series of articles was published on DEMOS Blog Turkey Discusses Helalleşme, which we started in December 2021, and continued in 2022. Each content published on the blog was advertised both in our newsletter and via social media.

Atiye Eren spoke with journalist Gökçer Tahincioğlu in her interview titled Gökçer Tahincioğlu Talks: Unidentified Murders and Impunity, journalist Gökçer Tahincioğlu talked about the issues of impunity and confrontation in the axis of the revelations and confessions after the murder of Kutlu Adalı. Ayhan Işık discussed politically motivated impunity with his article titled Origins of Impunity in Turkey and (Un)confrontation which came to the agenda again after the Sedat Peker exposes, with various examples from 1915 to today.

Ebru Tutkal talked to Emel Ataktürk from Hafıza Merkezi and Abdullah Zeytun from the Human Rights Association Diyarbakır Branch (IHD Amed) about what the

Proposed Law on the Prevention of Financing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction means for civil society organizations working in the field of peace and how it will affect our work. Mertcan Doğan, Student Movements in the Face of Authoritarian Regimes: The Cases of Turkey and India, Mertcan Doğan comparatively analyzed the attacks of authoritarian regimes on universities and the position of student movements at the core of social objection through the JNU protests in India and the Boğaziçi protests in Turkey.

In Colombia, after the privatization of the health system and the new tax reform, people took to the streets in protest and the police resorted to a series of violent measures, including the use of live bullets, to suppress the demonstrations. Serhat Tutkal, a member of the National University of Colombia, wrote about the recent situation in Colombia for DEMOS, in an article titled "What is Happening in Colombia" Ebru Tutkal, Journalism in Colombia: Social Memory and Conflict Transformation, Ebru Tutkal interviewed Fernanda Barbosa dos Santos, who works for the Colombian Truth Commission on social memory, conflict transformation and transitional justice, on police brutality and human rights violations in Colombia.

The article, compiled from Onur Bakiner's presentation titled The Impact of Truth Commissions in the Light of Recent Academic Studies, focused on truth commissions and their possibilities to create impact and change based on the question "What does it mean to come to terms with the past through a truth commission?".

Nisan Alici highlighted the importance of building a grassroots transitional justice process which sees the demands of the victims/survivors decisive, in her article titled "What Kind of Transitional Justice Do We Imagine?"

Peace from Locality

The long-term Peace from the Locality project, which we started in August 2020 with the support of the Support to Rights program, was based on the need to rethink the limitations of mainstream peacemaking efforts, especially in Turkey but also in the world as a whole. We aimed to bring proposals to the currently dominant liberal and political actor-centered peacemaking efforts from Turkey, mainly for the Kurdish issue in Turkey. We built this on two pillars: uncovering the historical experiences of ethnic, religious and/or sectarian groups living in Anatolia and Mesopotamia based on peaceful coexistence and developing proposals that would purify this from racism and sexism.

In the first phase of the project, we published a [call](#) for all researchers who work or want to work on related topics to discuss the possibilities of building peace from the local level. Within the scope of this call, **13 abstracts** were selected among many valuable studies and it was decided to share the blog posts on our website in the first half of 2021. The first blog post complementing the call for abstracts was written by Yasin Sunca, one of the editors, in 2020. In the article titled [Radicalizing Peace](#), he questioned the facts taken for granted in mainstream peace studies and examined the relationship between social reconstruction and local peace practices from an anti-racist and anti-sexist perspective. Within the scope of the Local Peace series that started in 2021, a total of 13 articles were published on DEMOS Blog.

Derya Koptekin, with her article *The Role of Interaction with Different Communities in Gypsy/Roma Identity Construction Processes*, shared her experiences during the seven years she worked at the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Children and Youth Center in Tepecik, a Gypsy/Roma neighborhood in Konak district of Izmir. Tayfun Balçık, *Experiencing the Call for Peace and Dialogue as a Turk: "First You Killed, Now You Want to Talk?"*, Tayfun Balçık evaluated the dialogues between people from immigrant groups of Turkish origin within the framework of a dialogue project carried out in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam after the collapse of the resolution process, and the confrontations he experienced with his own identity during this process. Aysel Fidan and Atalay Göçer *LGBTI+s in War and Peace: Looking at Transitional Justice from Diyarbakır*, Aysel Fidan and Atalay Göçer discussed transitional justice for LGBTI+s by examining the discrimination experienced in 2013-2015 and 2015-2018 and the mechanisms of coping with these discriminations. Ferda Fahrioğlu Akın *Local Reconciliation Actor: With her article "Rûsipî"*, she examined the rûsipî (white bearded, white-faced) informal mediation system, which is a micro-conflict resolution method in Kurdish society. Safiye Ateş Burç, with her article titled *"Thinking Peace from Below, Masculinity and Tribalism in Kurdish Culture"*, discussed the possibility of tribal-type organization and peace from below, which constitute an important place in Kurdish culture from a gender perspective. Mehmet Ertan, in his article *Alevis' Demand for Equal Citizenship as a Quest for Social Peace*, elaborated on how Alevis' demand for equal citizenship harbors a potential for social peace. Mehtap Tosun, one of the editors of the series, in her article, *What the State Knows as "Onions": Dersim Alevis, Armenians and Assyrians*, Mehtap Tosun, one of the editors of the series, traced 1915 in two different geographies, Dersim and Mardin, and revealed how the reflection of the genocide on Alevi (Kızılbaş) [Kirmanc (Zaza)-Kurmanc (Kurdish)] communities in Dersim and Assyrian communities in Mardin was shaped around similar motives and discourses. Handan Çağlayan, in her article *The Demand for Peace in the Context of the Experiences of the Kurdish Women's*

Movement and the Feminist Movement, reminded us that the experience of joint work between the Turkish feminist movement and the Kurdish women's movement is instructive for the social construction of peace. Aslı Telli, On Radical Otherness and the Reality of Peace... "A blog essay in memory of David Graeber", discussed David Graeber's concept of radical otherness and social peace through the Mesopotamian cooperative model. Güneş Daşlı discussed peace from the local level from a three-pronged framework: non-state-centeredness, non-Western-centeredness and the space given to agency. Serhat Tutkal's article titled "Constructing Enmity from the Local: "While all the facts are obvious, these people still say peace", he analyzed some of Erdoğan's speeches addressed to mukhtars before the November 1 elections through critical discourse analysis and identified the discourse strategies of making various segments of society hostile to each other, legitimizing and reproducing existing hostilities and violence, and delegitimizing peace-building initiatives. Kemal Taylan Abatan's blog post, Thinking Radical Peace from Roboskî, discussed the question of how a political order in which everyone has their inalienable rights and peace prevails can be achieved, based on the Roboskî case. Dilan Elveren Peace Building from the Local and Alevism: We Didn't Even Know the Court Doors In the past, Dilan Elveren discussed conflict resolution practices between communities with ethnic and cultural differences through the peace-making mechanisms of Alevis.

Peace and Gender

According to our previous research examining peace with a gender focus and the feedback received from Voices from DEMOS, there is still a need for studies that look at the peace work of civil society in Turkey from a gender perspective and focus on the experiences of women and LGBTI+ persons. The report of the research we started in January 2021 with the support of the Support to Rights program, which is a continuation of our research agenda on peace and gender, was published on September 21, World Peace Day.

In the report "[From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: The Peace Struggle of LGBTI+ and Women's Organizations in Turkey](#)" written by Güley Bor, Güneş Daşlı and Nisan Alici, we examine the understanding of peace and the struggle practices of women's and LGBTI+ organizations waging peace struggle in Turkey by focusing on the resolution process that took place in Turkey to evolve the conflict based on the Kurdish issue into peace. Through in-depth interviews with participants from different women's and LGBTI+ organizations that carried out peace work around the resolution process between 2013-2015, we take a close look at the experiences of gender-focused organizations in the struggle for peace. With this report, we both

discuss some of the concepts that we find important within the framework of the relationship between gender and peace, and aim to leave a record for future processes by looking at the period when the hope for peace was the most intense from the perspective of social actors.

Transitional Justice Seminars

In the five-week Transitional Justice Workshops we organized with civil society organizations working on social peace in 2020, we discussed that it would be useful to examine concrete examples of the role played by civil society in various world experiences. Accordingly, in the Transitional Justice Seminar series, we will hear from civil society representatives and activists about experiences from different countries. On 26 October 2021, with the support of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Turkey, Salwa El Gantri, Director of the Tunisia office of the International Center for Transitional Justice, [spoke about](#) the experience of the transitional justice process in Tunisia and civil society's work for a participatory process in the first online seminar open to civil society organizations and researchers.

Agenda of Making Amends and Civil Society

Aware of the importance of civil society's voice in the debate on confronting the past, which was revived with the "helalleşme" discourse of the main opposition party leader, we held closed online meetings on 26 November and 23 December 2021, where we invited rights-based organizations, academics and researchers working on social peace, truth, memory, impunity, transitional justice, and discussed the role of civil society in transitional justice together.

Join Us to Write Your Story of Peace!

With the occasion of September 1st, World Peace Day, we organized a workshop titled "Join Us to Write Your Story of Peace", with Hatice Kapusuz as its facilitator. On September 2, 2021, the participants were first introduced to the six-part story writing technique and then asked to write their own short peace stories. With guiding questions such as "If peace were a hero, what kind of a hero would they be?", "What kind of a journey/mission would this hero have, what obstacles would they face and how would they overcome them?", participants narrated peace from their own perspectives and shared their stories together. Setting out from the stories, we questioned our mind map for peace and discussed the opportunities for a possible peace together.

Translation

In 2021, DEMOS published the Turkish translations of two significant sources in its fields of study which were originally written in English. On 15 November 2021, the publication [Guidelines on Transformative Reparation for Survivors of Sexual Violence](#), focusing on transformative reparation for sexual violence in conflict, prepared within the Gender Program of Impunity Watch Guatemala Office, was published with the translation of Dicle Çakmak. On December 6, 2021, again with the translation of Dicle Çakmak, [Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice](#), written by Martina Fischer was shared. Both articles were translated with the support of the Support for Rights Program.

Events and Interviews We Participated in

January 16, 2021: Nisan Alici made a [presentation](#) titled Women's World Experiences in the Struggle for Peace at the Youth, Peace and Security School organized by the Young Peace Builders of Turkey .

March 23, 2021: Nisan Alici presented the case of [Turkey at the webinar](#) Defending Women's Rights, Peace and Security in MENA/Asia: Challenges of the Shrinking Civil Space, organized by Femena .

April 11, 2021: Güley Bor made a presentation titled Peace and Gender at the Rights Summit organized by Bilkent University, Think in Color!, Women's Studies Society, Animal Friends Club, Human Rights Society and Vegan Society.

May 5, 2021: As part of the Karakutu Association Seeking Justice Seminars, Mertcan Doğan made a presentation titled "[Resistance Memory of Universities](#)".

May 8, 2021: Atiye Eren, Güley Bor and Volkan Muyan shared their experiences on Voices from DEMOS at the Podfresh Podcast Webinar.

June 28, 2021: Atiye Eren answered questions about the [Voices from DEMOS](#) experience and podcast production at Podfresh Podiolab Asks.

September 15-19, 2021 : With the support of Civil Rights Defenders, Ebru Tutkal participated in the International Conference on Human Rights: Effective Participation

of LGBTIQs and the Belgrade Pride Parade organized as part of Pride Week in Belgrade, Serbia.

September 22, 2021: Güley Bor and Güneş Daşlı were the guests of Açık Gazete on Açık Radyo and [talked about](#) DEMOS's report "From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: Peace Struggle of LGBTI+ and Women's Organizations in Turkey.

September 29, 2021: At the Queer Encounters in Kurdish Studies workshop held at the Cambridge University Gender Studies Center, Güley Bor, Güneş Daşlı and Nisan Alıcı presented the report From Crossing Roads to Narrowing Spaces: Women's and LGBTI+ Organizations' Peace Struggle in Turkey.

September 29, 2021: Güneş Daşlı and Nisan Alıcı talked about the [Peace Struggle of Women and LGBTI+ Organizations](#) on Medyascope Femfikir program .

September 29 - November 3, 2021: Ebru Tutkal attended the [LGBTI+ Media School](#) organized by Kaos GL Association .

October 2, 2021: Ebru Tutkal and Mertcan Doğan attended the Strategic Plan Preparation in Civil Society training hosted by the Equal Generations Association with the support of Think Civil.

18-20 October 2021: Dilan Elveren and Güley Bor attended the [closing meeting](#) of the Support for Rights program held in İzmir.

October 27-31, 2021: Mertcan Doğan attended the AG-DA Gender Equality Solidarity Network's [Monitoring and Advocacy Capacity Development Fall School](#) held in Antalya.

November 3 - December 6, 2021: Atiye Eren participated in the Peace Journalism Trainings organized in cooperation with *Kırkayak Kültür* and HasNa.

November 4, 2021: Güley Bor and Güneş Daşlı presented the report "From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: Peace Struggle of Women and LGBTI+ Organizations in Turkey" in the [Interviews Series](#) of Aramızda Association.

November 24, 2021: Güley Bor presented the report "From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: Peace Struggle of Women and LGBTI+ Organizations in Turkey"

as part of Bahçeşehir University Human Rights Club's 25 November International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

14 December 2021: Güley Bor and Güneş Daşlı presented the report From Converging Roads to Narrowing Grounds: Peace Struggle by LGBTI+ and Women's Organizations in Turkey at the event titled Peace Struggle and LGBTI+ movement in Turkey, organized by SPoD.

27 Aralık 2021: Ebru Tutkal participated in Together from Today: Memory and Peace Meetings organized by the beraberce Association.

Our Supporters

Institutional Support

Institutional Support Program for Human Rights: Support for Rights

Project Support

Civil Rights Defenders

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Turkey