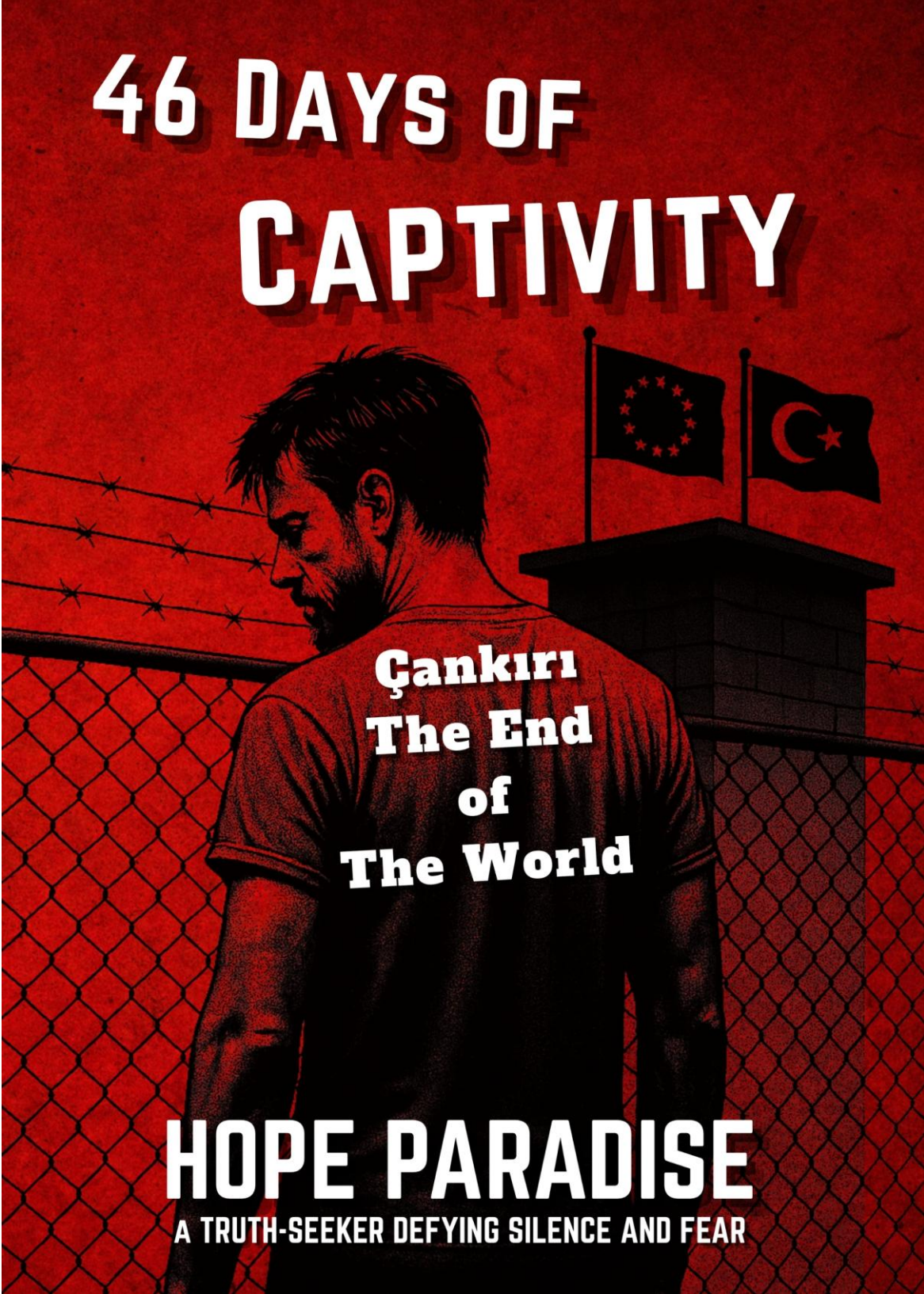
46 Days of Captivity



Çankırı The End of The World

HOPE PARADISE

A TRUTH-SEEKER DEFYING SILENCE AND FEAR

46 Days of Captivity

Çankiri: The End of The World

A book-format report to human rights organisations on the appalling conditions of migrant detention camps in Turkey administered and funded under the auspices of the European Union

By: Hope Paradise – 2025

46 Days of Captivity

Çankırı: The End of The World

Author: Hope Paradise

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This is a work of nonfiction. All statements, documents, and accounts contained within are based on factual records, verified court verdicts, and publicly available evidence.

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Tribute

I dedicate this book, without any ethnic or national bias, to:

All those across the world who have been unjustly imprisoned or held in forced captivity.

All migrants who have been driven away from their homeland and the embrace of their motherland.

All individuals and families who have suffered harm as a result of unfair imprisonment.
All those who endured pain yet could not raise their voice.

All spouses and children left defenceless when their partner, their protector, was taken away.

All men and women who have been left with lasting or temporary injuries from unjust captivity.

All who, whether individually or as part of an organisation, openly or quietly, strive to end such injustices around the world.

Even the officers who, despite being trapped within oppressive and corrupt systems, keep their conscience awake and still strive to preserve their humanity.

All detainees around the world who are held without justice or due process.

All judges and lawyers who placed the law of their country, the principles of justice, professional integrity, and humanity above the power and pressure of their government and security apparatus.

And, finally, to the ordinary people of Iran, who for decades have lived under the captivity of the Islamic Republic's dictatorship — those who appear free, yet in truth are confined within a far larger prison called the Islamic Republic of Iran, with no path but to endure or to flee from a blood-soaked regime.

Legal Disclaimer

This book is a **first-hand, factual account** drawn entirely from my personal experiences, direct observations, and verifiable witness statements obtained during the events described. Every incident, statement, or depiction within these pages is based on one or more of the following:

1. **Direct personal experience** – events that I, the author, personally endured or was directly subjected to;
2. **First-hand observation** – incidents I personally witnessed with my own eyes and ears;
3. **Verified witness testimony** – accounts provided to me by individuals who were present at the relevant time and place, which I was able to cross-check for accuracy based on my own knowledge and corroborating details.

Where incidents concern my own detention, treatment, or legal proceedings, many are supported by substantial and credible documentary evidence in my possession. Such evidence includes, but is not limited to:

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Hope Paradise is a pseudonym (Pen Name) used for the true narrator of the story, the translator, the editor, and the author. All are introduced under the name Hope Paradise.

This work is the result of a genuine personal experience told by an Iranian individual, and translated and edited into English.

“This book is, above all, a truthful record of survival—offered not to defame, but to bear witness, in the hope that such abuses are prevented in the future.”

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Introduction

Motivation for writing this book

In Turkey, because of political tensions between the Turkish and Iranian governments, I lost my Turkish citizenship and ended up being detained for 46 days. It didn't matter that the cancellation of my citizenship was unlawful, or that I had lived legally in Turkey for years as a citizen. Suddenly, they told me I was an "illegal migrant" and treated me as one.

But that's not what this book is about. I've decided to describe what happens from the very moment someone is detained under the label of "illegal migrant" — whether they truly are or not, it doesn't matter. When the government says you're an illegal migrant, that declaration is usually above the law itself. That's what I felt deeply and fully in Turkey: that the government, its offices and the security system seem to operate above the law — at least in my experience.

Purpose and Approach of the Book

I want to share these events exactly as they happened, without exaggeration and without downplaying anything. Maybe telling this truth

will serve as a warning to human rights organisations about what's going on behind Europe's borders.

This book is written with hope — hope that conditions might improve for those whose lives and mental health are at risk in Turkey. It carries no political agenda, just the plain truth, drawn directly from my own personal, documented, and real experience.

My effort in telling these truths is to help stop others from facing the same injustices — those who might not be as lucky as me to be able to write a book and speak about the abuse they've endured, abuse that will stay with them and their families for the rest of their lives. I'm thinking of those who suffered in silence, and those who have lost their lives, or will lose their lives, because of these obvious acts of negligence.

Do not forget — this book is not about me; it is about the clear and systematic violations of human rights in migrant detention centres of a country that consistently proclaims itself a defender of human rights. These facilities are directly or indirectly under the oversight of the European Union, and, to the best of my knowledge, all construction, equipment, maintenance, and operational costs are funded by the European Union. The EU has long presented itself as one of the most active advocates for human rights, and as a staunch opponent of those who violate them.

Detention: Unbelievable But True

Day Zero: Police Station

The First Shock

Even though I had gone to the local police station myself after receiving a call from them, they told me I was under arrest. They took me to the detention area. First came security procedures like a body search and handing over any prohibited items. Then I was placed in a cell alongside people who had committed level 1, 2, or 3 crimes.

Even though this police station detained many so-called illegal migrants every day, there was no separate holding area for people like me — people who might not even have a traffic fine on their record. We had to be kept in the same place as regular criminals, and sometimes even dangerous ones.

The cell was cold and damp, made entirely of stone, with stone platforms along the walls. No beds, no basic facilities — just three or four blankets. The kind of place you wouldn't even keep an animal. It was about three

by three metres, enclosed on three sides by stone, with the fourth side facing the corridor, separated by iron bars and a metal-barred door.

The entire detention area had four or five such cells. Realistically, each cell could accommodate four people lying down on the platforms. But there were more than ten people crammed into each one. At night, when we needed to sleep, some of us had to sleep sitting up — I did too.

It was so cold and the surfaces so hard that nobody could sleep properly, even with the blankets they usually put underneath themselves. People would lie down for half an hour or an hour, then have to stand up for a few minutes before sitting back down again.

The most shocking thing was that no officer was constantly present in the detention area. If you needed something, you had to shout for at least five or ten minutes, banging on the cell doors and walls, before the officer would finally open the main door and come in — always with an insulting attitude, asking “What the hell is your problem?”.

Whether there had been a fight, someone was seriously ill, or someone urgently needed the toilet — it didn’t matter. Even if you desperately needed the toilet, they wouldn’t open the door or escort you to the toilet near the guard’s desk. Instead, they would tell you to wait half an hour or an hour and then walk away.

From what I could tell, they had set times for toilet breaks, maybe every three hours or so, and no one could persuade them to allow earlier access. This was one of the worst kinds of torture imaginable — ignoring the most basic human rights, even though we hadn't committed any crime at all.

Another thing: the officer was much more flexible with Turkish detainees. His attitude towards local Turkish suspects was completely different — more tolerant, more respectful.

But migrants — so-called illegal migrants — from all walks of life were thrown together with Turkish suspects and criminals, and they were often subjected to racist abuse and harassment. The officer would even smile when migrants complained about this abuse. Because I spoke Turkish fluently and was older than many others, they didn't target me too much. But especially the Syrian and Black detainees were treated terribly, and the officers not only ignored it but actively sided with the Turkish detainees, mocking us and saying things like "You shouldn't have come to Turkey" or "You shouldn't have stayed."

Another shocking thing: having access to a phone to call a lawyer or family is a basic right for anyone in detention. But here, despite it being clearly written on the wall, there was no such right.

No one was allowed to smoke. There was no outdoor space, no walking around allowed. The toilet was filthy, completely lacking in hygiene, and there wasn't even a light — not a single bulb.

The blankets were clearly filthy too — so dirty that I didn't even want to sit on them.

We were essentially trapped like animals in a small, damp, unventilated space, without even a guard constantly present.

Whenever we asked about our situation, we were met with insults and swearing: "Shut up! We'll take you to the immigration office whenever we feel like it."

I felt so humiliated that I kept thinking I must be having a nightmare — any moment now I would wake up. I couldn't believe how people were being treated worse than animals in a country that constantly talks about "human dignity." It was unbelievable, but it was true.

In those early hours, the detainees began to protest because they were hungry. The officers brought a tiny juice box and a sandwich for each of them — a sandwich no bigger than the palm of your hand, just two pieces of bread with a bit of cheese inside and nothing else.

During my time there (2 Days), I didn't eat anything — only drank water. Partly because I was in shock, and partly because I was terrified, I

wouldn't be able to hold it until the officer finally allowed us to go to the toilet. I didn't want to embarrass myself or cause trouble for others.

I kept thinking about my wife and child. I couldn't swallow a single bite.

In that detention cell, I died and was reborn in my mind many times. The only thing that gave me strength was the hope of seeing my family again.

The humiliation was so overwhelming that I often thought of ending my life — and I hadn't even committed any crime. But every time, the image of my child's face would come to my mind and stop me.

The worst part was the behaviour of the officers themselves. They would casually tell me "Your wife came here, but we won't let her see you" — as if they enjoyed emotionally torturing me and the others.

This stemmed from the growing hostility in Turkish society towards migrants. I had known about it in recent years, but I didn't expect them to humiliate vulnerable people like this — people who had no way to defend themselves.

Mandatory and Formal Rights

The very first basic human right — access to hygiene — wasn't respected at all, so what other rights could anyone expect?

From time to time, general forms were brought into the detention area for so-called illegal migrants to sign. We were simply told, “Sign this quickly,” and anyone like me who objected or refused to sign was subjected to constant insults and then taken outside to the guard officer.

The guard officer would say, “If you want to be transferred to the immigration office faster, just sign.” The document basically stated, “I admit that I am an illegal migrant.” But I never signed it — because I wasn’t an illegal migrant.

Luckily, one of my friends had come with me from the beginning and informed my family and lawyer, who quickly arrived at the central police station. But even then, they weren’t allowed to see me.

Only after some conversation with the driver who had brought them, and with another friend, did I manage to speak to my lawyer for about three or four minutes — and that was just an exchange of greetings.

When my wife cried out at the police station, begging and demanding to see me and know if I was okay, they finally brought me briefly out to the corridor so she could catch a glimpse of me and be reassured about my condition.

They didn’t even allow me two minutes with her.

Of course, there were some decent officers there too — officers who quietly expressed sympathy, saying things like “I’m sorry, we don’t have any other options or facilities,” or at least saying that to comfort us.

The reports that should have been carefully prepared individually for each detainee were written in bulk — completely templated — and I can honestly say that people were practically forced to sign them.

The reports were in Turkish, and some detainees couldn’t even speak Turkish, let alone read it, yet they were expected to sign these documents without the presence of a translator, a lawyer, or any understanding of what they were signing.

Even the most basic legal standards weren’t met. Everything felt fake — a formalistic, bureaucratic process that, to me, reflected something very dark about the legal system in Turkey.

Not only were the most basic human rights, printed on the police station walls as their laws and ethical charter, ignored — but often, the exact opposite of those principles was happening.

Honestly, that police station felt more like a place for holding and torturing kidnapped people than a place for upholding the law.

Any request or complaint — no matter how urgent or how basic to human dignity, like needing the toilet or food — was met with humiliation,

insults, and complete disregard from the detention officer. The officer wasn't even present most of the time; you had to make noise for five minutes just to get his attention. And usually, the other detainees, who were trying to sleep, would also complain and tell you to stop making noise.

Beyond all this, honestly, I didn't see that place as worthy of any human being — no matter how much of a criminal they might be. Of course, we hadn't committed any crime at all, but in my opinion, that place wasn't fit even for a cold-blooded murderer or a serial rapist.

Twice I had panic attacks, and an ambulance was called. Once, my blood pressure was over 200, but the police chief there refused to allow me to be transferred to hospital. Even in that critical condition, he spoke to me in a threatening manner.

It's shocking to think that someone at the brink of death would be threatened like that. They told me, "If you go to hospital, we'll make your life hell. We don't have extra officers to send with you." They even threatened, "If you go to hospital, we'll make your file worse" — even though I didn't have a file at all.

In the end, under pressure from the police chief and with some persuasion from a few officers, I was forced to sign the ambulance form saying that I didn't want to be transferred to hospital. And to be fair, the injection the

ambulance doctor gave me, after seeing how the police chief was pressuring me, did help. I felt a bit better afterwards — before that, it felt like my chest was about to explode.

I was returned to that dungeon once again, though I did get about 15 minutes of fresh air.

During those 15 minutes, I repeatedly asked the police chief for a chance to see my wife — but it was as if his heart was made of stone. He never allowed it.

Other incidents also took place at the police department — events unrelated to the conditions in which migrants were held, and instead connected to the political relations between Turkey and Iran. As these matters fall outside the scope of this book, they will not be recounted here.

Transfer to the Removal Centre (Immigration Camp)

It had been two days when the detention officer came in, smiling, and said, “Time to say goodbye — you’re all being sent to the special camps for holding illegal migrants under the immigration authority.”

They handed us our belongings in plastic bags and told us to go to the toilet and get ready for transfer.

To my shock, they put handcuffs on all of us. It was strange — we were already inside a police station, fully secured, and they were going to

transfer us in a prisoner transport vehicle. What was the point of handcuffs? We didn't understand, but we had no choice but to accept it.

They put us in the vehicle and first took us to the nearest state hospital.

But they didn't even let us get out of the car — they simply handed some health forms to a doctor, told him no one had any complaints or issues, and easily got health clearance reports for everyone before driving off again.

When I told one of the officers at the hospital that I felt weak and that my blood pressure was high (as I suffer from hypertension and needed my medication), he snapped at me in a humiliating tone: "Shut your mouth and sit down. Just try to stay healthy for these last couple of hours."

The implication was clear: you're not asking for trouble, are you?

I was already humiliated enough — I swallowed my tears and just stared silently at the road ahead, still unable to believe what was happening.

During the journey, the officers constantly mocked us, making jokes about every one of our nationalities and laughing loudly.

There were eight of us packed into that station wagon, all with lumps in our throats, knowing that if we protested, we would face the worst treatment.

In the police station there were cameras — but now we were in a vehicle, on an empty road, around 9 pm, with no cameras at all.

Tuzla: The Nazi Camp

Violation of Basic Human Rights Under the Flag of the European Union

Entering Nowhere, Funded by the EU

We arrived at the Tuzla (An area on the outskirts of Istanbul) removal centre — the holding camp for illegal migrants.

The first thing that caught my eye was the European Union emblem: golden stars on a blue flag.

I felt a sense of relief — I told myself, at least now I'm somewhere safe until my lawyer can do something.

I had travelled to Europe many times before, and I was sure the EU wouldn't allow substandard facilities.

But this was about to become the worst nightmare of my life — one I'll never forget.

It was raining. They made us get out and wait about 40 minutes in the rain while the admissions process and bureaucracy were completed.

I thought, at least now I'm being taken somewhere warm with minimum standards.

After registration, they led us to a basketball court surrounded by old, windowless portable cabins.

To my disbelief, people were lying down in the rain on the basketball court itself.

That's when I realised how much better the police station detention had actually been.

There was no phone.

No way to communicate with the outside world.

No shop or kiosk.

The treatment was even worse, as if we were slaves.

The toilet had no door, no water, was in a filthy state, and its drain was blocked.

The only advantage was that you could smoke because it was open-air.

I spent the whole night smoking, pacing, and thinking: just two days ago, I didn't even imagine such a place could exist.

But today, thanks to the European Union, it does.

On the walls were the EU emblem and the Turkish flag.

There were slogans about respect for human rights — but to me, this camp was designed exactly for violating the most basic human rights.

Facilities of the Nowhere, Funded by the EU

It was so unbelievable to me that I honestly thought this place must have previously been under EU supervision. I even asked some of the guards, "Was this place under the European Union before?" and they smiled and replied, "No, actually in recent years it became part of the European Union system."

The behaviour of the guards here was a bit better than at the police station. Although their attitude and language were still clearly racist and full of insults, because the conditions were so bad and unbearable, they seemed to act a little calmer — probably to prevent any collective protests or tension.

That night, until about 4am, I just walked back and forth, smoking and thinking about seeing my child again.

Once again, my blood pressure spiked and I had a panic attack — I passed out.

When I came to, an ambulance was there and my blood pressure was recorded at over 190. They gave me some heart medication, apparently did an ECG on me, and found my condition was not good.

Despite clear concern from the paramedics and a doctor who was on the phone speaking directly with the camp authorities, they still refused to let me be transferred to hospital.

Eventually I calmed down a bit and started taking propranolol and the two other pills they had given me every four or five hours, which helped me feel a little better.

Breakfast time came — once again, we were given those same tiny cheese sandwiches and a small juice box. I didn't take any.

The way they distributed the food was almost beyond belief:

A few immigration officers stood behind the fence and simply threw the sandwiches and juice boxes into the basketball court where we were being held.

People rushed to grab them, crowding around — some getting three, some getting none.

But beyond all that, my emotions finally broke down and I cried.

I cried hard — and that was natural. Everyone was crying.

We were being treated in a way that wouldn't even be acceptable for animals.

Lunchtime came, and again it was the same tiny cheese sandwich — this time, without a drink.

There was a small kiosk in the corner of the basketball court that opened about an hour later.

I bought some biscuits and tea and ate them — by then I was feeling really weak.

Night came, and dinner was again the same sandwich, this time served with ayran (a yoghurt drink).

It was shameful and utterly dark.

I was curled up, shivering from the cold, and the rain just didn't stop.

The portable cabins around the basketball court were uninhabitable.

People were lying on the ground inside the court, parts of which had no roof at all, and large sections were flooded.

I honestly don't think even prisoners of war would be treated this way — but this was happening here, every day.

We had no access to hygiene facilities or any healthy food.

Sometimes people even complained that the cheese sandwiches were mouldy, or that the tiny juice boxes were past their expiry date.

Challenges in Nowhere, Funded by the EU

There was no doctor. At least not during the two days I was there — along with hundreds of others — all stuck in the middle of a basketball court with a half-covered roof, while it rained on us.

Everyone was sick with colds. Some people said they had been sleeping on the ground there for 10 to 12 days.

It was heartbreaking. I was in complete shock.

Just when I had thought this place would at least be better than a police station detention cell, I realised that the police station — for all its problems — felt like a palace compared to this.

I had only ever seen places like this in films about slums.

I kept thinking, Where does all that funding go? The money Turkey claims to receive — or the EU keeps talking about in its migration budgets — where is it?

Is this really what any human being deserves — no matter whether they entered a country legally or not?

I couldn't stop worrying about what would happen to my wife and child if something happened to me here. What kind of future would they face?

Everything was unclear. Even the officers at the camp didn't seem to have much information or a proper plan.

I asked them multiple times to contact my lawyer or family, and eventually they responded with racist abuse, shouting insults at me and saying:

"You're nothing but trash here! You'll wait until we decide it's time — don't ask questions. We know what we're doing."

Even the worst criminal in prison has the right to contact their family or speak to a lawyer by phone. But apparently, whatever our crime was, it was considered worse than anything else.

Transfer from Nowhere to an Unknown Destination

After two days, the gendarmes arrived. Before saying anything else, they began shouting threats and orders at us. Loud, aggressive voices echoed through the camp:

"Whoever we call, come here, sit on the ground, and get ready for transfer!"

Transfer to where? Nobody knew — and no one dared ask, because it was obvious that anyone who questioned them would be met with either a baton to the body or a stream of racist, degrading insults.

They had already shouted threateningly: “Don’t ask us questions! We’re just here to transfer you. If you have questions, ask the immigration officers.”

They began calling out names, and mine wasn’t on the list at first. But then an immigration officer spoke to one of the gendarmes and added three more names — all of us were unwell, and I was one of them.

I joined the line and they told us to sit down. But I couldn’t sit. My legs hurt so badly I just couldn’t sit on the cold, wet ground. After a few seconds, I stood up again.

One of the gendarmes shouted at me: “Are you stupid? I told you to sit down!”

I said, “I’m sick. I’ve been walking nonstop for two days, and I’ve only slept for a few hours sitting on the wet floor — I can’t sit anymore.”

When he realised I spoke fluent Turkish and explained clearly, his anger eased a bit. (In my years living with Turks, I had learned that they tend to be more sympathetic toward those who speak their language well.)

He replied, “Alright, fine. You can stand.”

Then they brought plastic handcuffs and began tying everyone's wrists. One man with a heart condition said, "We have nowhere to run. You're armed. Please don't tighten my handcuffs — I can't breathe and might have a heart attack."

But the gendarme snapped, "Not my problem. Either you die on the way or you make it — your choice."

Silence took over the group. Around 50 of us, all with a heavy lump in our throats.

I had only ever seen this kind of behaviour in films about World War II — how the Nazis treated people. And now, here I was, experiencing it firsthand: racism, cruelty, dehumanisation.

Unbelievably, they tightened the cuffs on the man with the heart condition even more and told him, "If you're going to die, now's the time. We can't stop halfway."

At that point, I lost it. I shouted, "This is wrong! You have no right to treat people this way or say such things! If you want to shoot me, go ahead — but you can't hide the truth. I will report your racist behaviour to the Turkish authorities and my lawyer. You don't get to play with people's lives!"

The officer who was clearly in charge came over, and it was obvious he wanted to hit me. But an immigration officer stepped in, whispered something in his ear, and he backed off.

Later, on the transfer bus, someone who had overheard them told me that the immigration officer had said, “He’s sick, and both his lawyer and family are actively following his case — don’t touch him.”

A few seconds later, the officer ordered the release of the man with the heart condition and told the others, “Keep an eye on him — his hands are free.”

What’s crazy is that we were being held in a camp that looked more like a prison, on a hill outside Istanbul, with no streets or homes nearby. The transfer bus was parked inside the camp’s own lot — there was no chance anyone could escape.

We were taken to the bus, and each of us took a seat.

After the bus had started moving, the same officer — the one who had nearly hit me — came and sat beside me. I thought he was there to get revenge, that now we were alone on the bus, he’d rough me up. I braced myself for the blows.

But quietly, he whispered in my ear: “Do you want to call your family?”

I said, “Absolutely. And I won’t forget this kindness — it really means a lot.”

He pulled out a mobile phone from his pocket and handed it to me. I called my wife and spoke to her for about a minute. After that, the officer said, “That’s enough. This is illegal — I only let you do it because you looked unwell.” I said goodbye and returned the phone, thanking him sincerely.

But things weren’t as they seemed.

He had done it to get my wife’s phone number.

Later, I found out he called her and asked for a bribe to get me released.

My wife, who was with a close family friend at the time, passed the phone to him and said, “Speak to this man — he handles our affairs.”

Unbelievably, the gendarmerie officer offered to release me in exchange for $100,000.

About an hour and a half into the journey, the bus stopped at a roadside rest area. I saw from the window that the officer and two other guards met with our family friend — they had arranged to meet him on the way to negotiate the bribe.

When we got back on the road, the officer came to me again and said, “Here, take this phone — speak to your family.”

I answered the phone and heard our family friend say, “They’re asking for money to release you.”

I replied, “First of all, I don’t have that kind of money. Second, even if they’d accept less, it’s still illegal. If I agree to this, I’d be committing two crimes: bribery and escape — and I haven’t committed any crime in the first place.”

I told my wife that this made no sense — there was no way they’d actually release me, since I had already been officially handed over by the Istanbul immigration office, and would most likely be delivered to another immigration facility on the list.

At my insistence, my family refused further negotiation.

To prevent the officer from mistreating me, I told him, “My family won’t agree. They say we don’t have that kind of money, and they don’t believe you’d really release me anyway.”

He got frustrated but, thinking I wasn’t the one to blame, walked off to the front of the bus.

I asked him several times, “Where are we going?” — but he wouldn’t answer. I truly believed we were being taken to the border to be deported directly.

After around six or seven hours, the bus finally entered another camp.

But this time, seeing the EU flag didn't make me happy — I didn't even flinch.

I looked at the sign and realised we had arrived in **Çankırı** — one of the most notorious migrant detention centres in Turkey, known for incidents like deaths of sick detainees, hunger strikes, mass unrest, and fires.

Everyone in Turkey had heard about it.

That's when I knew — I wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. I had been moved to a long-term holding facility.

Çankırı: The End of The World

Europe's Hidden Prison

Arrival and Inside Conditions

We got off the bus and waited for about ten minutes. Looking around, I realised we were in the middle of a desert or wasteland — far from any urban area. It was freezing, and I was shivering. Rain was falling too.

Eventually, the camp officer arrived with his team, lined us up, and gave a short but threatening speech:

“Do whatever the guards say. Any disruption during entry will be dealt with harshly. This is the end of the world — and I’m the one in charge here!”

Everyone stood in line. Any extra belongings were put through an X-ray scanner. There was a guard collecting belts and lighters — and unbelievably, he was throwing them straight into the bin.

No one dared say anything, but I spoke up:

“Sir, these are our personal items. Why are they being thrown away?”

He replied calmly, “I’m just following orders. Here, belts and lighters are thrown away. Don’t stress yourself — just do what you’re told.”

(It was the first time I’d seen a human response from a guard, and it gave me a tiny bit of hope.)

After a body search, we entered the inner yard of the camp — and I was stunned. There were about ten separate sections, all made from stacked metal containers. One building nearby clearly belonged to the gendarmerie and administrative staff.

I was freezing. My whole body was shaking.

The head officer noticed and asked, “Are you sick?”

I said, “Yes, very.”

He separated me from the group and quickly gave me a pillow and a blanket, then sent me to Block 1 — into the first container.

Yes, finally, I saw a human being — someone who, despite strictly following the rules and maintaining professional discipline, still tried to act with a bit of humanity. And I’m genuinely glad about that.

His name was Burak, and I'm proud to say that even though he ran the place with a stern face and firm control, on that freezing winter night, his behaviour — not his words — showed signs of humanity.

He was a strong, well-built man, but you could see his humanity in how he treated people, not necessarily in what he said.

The cells — or rather, soulless metal boxes

The space was about two metres by five. At the back were three bunk beds. On the floor were three dirty foam mattresses. Despite the number of beds and mattresses, there were **11 people** inside.

Next to the container door, there was a small toilet and shower.

Rain was dripping in from above the container door. The whole space felt damp and miserable.

At first, I thought this was just a place to sleep. But when the guard locked the door from the outside, I realised — this was a **cell**.

There was no space left for me, but one of the men who had been sleeping on the floor near the toilet moved to share a bed with his friend so I could have his mattress.

The container was small, damp, and metal — suitable for maybe 2 or 3 people at best. But there were 12 of us crammed inside. It felt like there wasn't even enough air to breathe.

The door was locked from the outside by the guards. Everyone was trapped.

When I asked someone about it, they said, "We only get one or two hours of outdoor time a day — and sometimes not even that."

I couldn't believe the **European Union** had built this place — and was managing it. But it was true.

That night, after a bit of small talk, everyone went to sleep.

I lay down on a foam mattress on the cold container floor, right next to the toilet. Rain was dripping from above the door and hitting my feet.

I had one thin blanket — but even with it, I was constantly shivering.

Still, it was better than Tuzla. But I couldn't really sleep. Even the ones on the beds couldn't sleep because of how cold it was.

There was one wall-mounted radiator in the container, but people said it only gave hot water between 4am and 6am — after that, it didn't warm the place at all.

Sleep was torture. I kept waking up every few minutes. But I wasn't alone — everyone else was doing the same, shivering from the cold.

I think the outside temperature was below zero. Inside was a bit better with all the body heat, but the container was metal and cold. Wind came in from gaps in the structure. Rain dripped through from different spots. There was even a hole in the middle of the floor — water was seeping in from there too.

I pulled the blanket over my head and cried quietly — sometimes thinking of my child, sometimes my wife, and sometimes just feeling sorry for myself.

Never in my life had I held back tears for four days straight. This was the chance to let them out. I cried several times through the night — just to release the pain.

In the end, I have to say this about that cell: I'm certain that most people in Europe wouldn't even let their pet spend a single night in there — let alone a human being.

And yet, the painful truth was that this place operated under the supervision of the European Union. According to the staff, it was even funded by the EU — and that, for me, was deeply disturbing.

What made it even harder to accept was the fact that it was located in Turkey, and run by Turkey's immigration authority.

Given all the things I'd heard — the talk of hospitality, humanity, and generosity from both the Turkish state and its people — I just couldn't believe what I was witnessing.

All of a sudden, everything I had believed about Turkey and the European Union shifted.

People who had committed no crime whatsoever were being held in far worse conditions than actual criminals — and even now, I still can't come to terms with that.

In this book, I have dedicated a chapter to presenting a limited selection of publicly available photographs found online, alongside my own mental sketches — visual memories of what I personally witnessed.

Health and Hygiene — or rather, the Lack of It

There was no drinking water — each person was given just one small bottle of water per day.

There was only one bar of soap for the entire cell, and almost no one used it out of fear of getting a skin infection. Later on, during my second week there, they gave one bar of soap to each person — and that was the only time throughout the two months I was held there.

Shampoo was a joke — it simply didn't exist. There wasn't even any liquid hand soap.

Hot water was practically a myth. Between 4 and 6 a.m., the water would sometimes turn lukewarm for a short time. I was told that anyone who wanted to shower had to queue inside the cell during those hours.

I hadn't had a shower for four days, so I asked someone to wake me up at 4 a.m.

When I finally got under the water, I was shocked — it was freezing cold despite the early hour and the supposed warm-water window.

I had no choice but to wash, just to avoid getting even sicker — but I ended up catching a cold anyway.

There were no towels. I had to dry myself with my own underwear, shivering the entire time.

If I could've screamed, I would have. But I couldn't. I teetered on the edge of madness.

I crawled back under the blanket, shaking and crying — not because the water was cold, but because I knew my child hadn't heard their father's voice for four days, and I had no idea how they were doing.

Once daylight came, I noticed how filthy and dusty the cell really was — and there was nothing we could do but endure it.

Every time someone used the toilet, the smell of sewage would fill the entire cell for about thirty minutes. There was no ventilation system — just a small hole with a metal grate above the toilet.

The light in the toilet didn't work, so we had to use the bathroom or shower in complete darkness.

During my time there, I fell four times because of the lack of light — twice I hit my head against the metal wall.

The floor was wooden and smooth, and anyone going to the toilet had to be extremely careful not to slip, especially when their shoes or slippers were wet.

A plastic bin without a lid stood in the corner of the container between the main door and the toilet door. All our rubbish was thrown in there, and the smell would spread through the cell day and night.

The small window above the broken radiator never closed properly, so cold air constantly blew through the container.

Still, the cold air was probably better than the alternative — with all the people packed into that space, we would have been at even higher risk of respiratory illness.

Almost everyone smoked, which only made things worse.

We were never given razors or proper shaving blades — only women's disposable leg shavers, the kind used after waxing.

I never used one, but those who did would often end up bleeding, because they simply weren't strong enough to shave facial or body hair.

People either pressed too hard or broke off the safety guard just to get the blade to work, which caused painful cuts.

I refused to use them because I knew, in that unsanitary environment, one open wound could lead to serious infections.

These so-called razors were distributed only once in the entire two months, and were collected the same day for "security reasons."

Alongside the razors, one electric hair trimmer was given per ten cells.

People took turns getting haircuts from other detainees who happened to be barbers.

But a single trimmer for so many people — and no alcohol or disinfectant to clean it between uses — made it completely useless after just five hours.

At least for me and many others, it became unsafe to use.

Most of the long-term detainees said that after three months, no one would even touch the trimmer or those plastic razors anymore.

During my two months, no cleaning supplies were ever provided for the cells.

We just used water to wash the floor — once a week, by ourselves.

There was a small kiosk that sometimes sold soap, shampoo, or toothbrushes — but it only opened for one or two hours per day in each block and sometimes wouldn't open at all for four or five days.

Basically, if you had money, you could buy basic hygiene products and survive.

If you didn't, you were left without even a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, or shampoo.

It was the same for slippers, towels, socks — everything.

To give you an idea of just how bad the hygiene situation was:

When I was finally released, even though I had brushed my teeth daily, taken two showers a day, and done everything I could to stay clean — I had to be taken straight to hospital.

I underwent surgery on my respiratory and digestive systems because of serious internal infections.

There was a cyst in my throat that had to be removed surgically.

On the following, you'll see an image of the razor that was distributed just once during my entire two-month stay.

Food — or What They Dared to Call Food

Breakfast consisted of a single-serve cheese packet, approximately 10 grams, accompanied by either a similarly sized jam or butter packet, and two miniature ready-made hamburger buns. There was also a communal samovar and disposable cups for tea or hot water. Incredibly, breakfast was served between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m.

Lunch was typically 50 to 100 grams of bulgur or Turkish-style rice, paired with a small portion of bean stew, aubergine stew, or spinach on some days. On other days, it was around 100 grams of plain pasta and 50

grams of soup. Every meal came with a single ready-packaged hamburger bun.

Dinner usually consisted of cold items such as a slice of vegetable patty or other unpalatable dishes served in meagre quantities. These portions are approximate, based on my own visual assessment.

Only once a week would a meat-based or chicken stew be served.

Meals were distributed in four-compartment polystyrene containers, which often included a small serving of yoghurt. These containers were extremely poor in hygiene and quality—often littered with flakes of polystyrene and plastic dust. One had to rinse the container beforehand just to avoid ingesting contaminants.

The dining hall had three taps for washing hands, though for much of my time there, they were unusable and lacked soap. On many days, for unexplained reasons, meals were distributed directly inside the cells instead—this was the case for nearly half of my time in the facility.

As with everything else, access to better food was a matter of money. Those who could afford it were able to buy instant noodles, biscuits, or juice from the small canteen, which opened only one or two hours a day and was sometimes closed for four or five days straight. These limited choices were still far better than the facility's meals. For those without

money, the only option was the low-quality, unhygienic food, clearly outsourced to a private contractor.

It was widely known among the detainees—and even acknowledged several times by staff—that the catering company had ties to the officials overseeing the facility. I do not confirm or deny this claim, but I personally witnessed high-ranking provincial authorities visit the dining hall during food distribution. They observed everything, yet no changes were made. The same contractor continued to be paid, despite widespread dissatisfaction and visible hygiene failures. From what I observed, food prepared for 250 detainees in Block 1—where I was held—would barely have sufficed for 100 under normal circumstances.

One prevailing interpretation was that the substandard food (and conditions in general) were a deliberate method of psychological pressure—encouraging detainees to sign “voluntary return” forms and accept deportation. This view was repeated often by staff and reinforced through practice. Any complaint about food—or anything else—would be met with: “Then sign the consent form, and we’ll deport you today.”

So-called "special meals" were reserved for sick individuals, served in closed containers which appeared more hygienic. However, all patients—whether diabetic or suffering from heart conditions—received the same food. It was merely salt-free and lacked spices. Ironically, diabetics were

given extra portions of rice or pasta, which made little medical sense. Though the containers appeared cleaner, I discovered the shocking reality behind them.

For example, if regular lunch was bean stew, patients would be given plain pasta. At dinner, when regular meals consisted of plain pasta, the patients would receive the same stew—minus the meat. It was the same food in a different order, with the same level of neglect and disrespect. It was disgraceful.

On days when chicken or meat was served, both the kitchen staff and the gendarmes in the dining hall made humiliating and racist remarks. They sneered, "You poor souls have never seen meat in your lives—eat up, it's coming out of our Turkish pockets."

It baffled me. In Turkey, even the poor can eat meat or chicken if they work. Many detainees had jobs outside—legal or not—and could afford basic nutrition. But over time, I understood: it wasn't about poverty. It was about control and humiliation. Resistance to racism was impossible—we were all prisoners. Detainees from African countries were treated especially poorly in this regard.

In short, we were all subjected to a mandatory, harsh, and exhausting dietary regime. In less than two months, I lost 17 kilograms—not solely due to the food, but it was certainly a major factor.

Lack of Basic Rights or Amenities

There were no welfare facilities whatsoever—not even the most basic necessities for hygiene, clothing, or surviving a mere five days. Not a single cup or a pair of slippers was available, and many individuals were tragically left barefoot.

To our disbelief, cutlery was strictly prohibited. Lighters were banned as well. Every few hours, a designated officer would visit the block to light a single cigarette for the block leader, from which others had to share the flame. Ironically, they claimed it was to prevent fire hazards, though everyone knew even a lit cigarette could start a fire.

Watches were forbidden, which was perhaps the most bizarre rule—likely to ensure detainees remained unaware of time in an otherwise chaotic and unstructured environment.

Mobile phones were obviously banned, and detainees weren't even permitted to retrieve a contact number from their phone in the presence of an officer.

Only one payphone served approximately 250 people. If someone had no money, they couldn't contact their family at all. Even those with funds often waited days for a chance to use the phone for a mere two minutes—if they were lucky.

No clothing was issued. Everyone had to rely on their own clothes or hope someone could bring them something from outside. Alternatively, they could purchase a standard set from the canteen—if they had money. Those without financial means were left wearing torn or unsuitable clothing, regardless of the season. Cold or heat—none of it mattered to the camp authorities.

Everyone carried a foul body odour, primarily due to the severe lack of hygiene products—either because they were unavailable or unaffordable. Approximately 90% of detainees couldn't afford anything from the canteen, and even those who could had very limited options.

Television was a fantasy. I recall once telling my wife over the phone, "Every minute here feels like a year," and she replied, "Watch some TV to distract yourself." I told her, in disbelief, "There's no television here."

There was a sports court between the container blocks, marked for basketball and football—but no ball was ever provided. Even the two-hour daily outdoor break, which sometimes got cancelled for no clear reason, felt like an illusion.

A single nail clipper was distributed once a week for all 250 detainees to use on the same day. From the time I arrived until my release, that single clipper remained broken—turning what should have been a basic hygiene practice into an act of suffering.

There were no pillows. When I once requested one, the officers laughed and said, “You must not know where you’ve come.”

Every moment spent there, I kept thinking—even animals in a zoo are afforded a minimum standard of care. Here, not only was there no welfare provision, but even the most basic rights of existence were cruelly and deliberately denied.

Psychological Environment or Mental Torture Chamber

From the very first day until the last, the psychological atmosphere remained tense and hostile, as if deliberately designed to inflict mental harm.

While some might not immediately perceive it—or grow accustomed to it over time—it was abundantly clear that the camp authorities intentionally maintained an unstable, uncertain environment. The goal seemed to be to instil constant fear that detainees could be forcibly deported or taken to the border at any moment.

Officers regularly circulated both real and fabricated anti-immigration news, trying to persuade detainees to sign voluntary return forms. They did this despite knowing that for many, returning to their home countries meant the risk of death, imprisonment, or prolonged torture. Who, after all, could endure such a place unless survival was their only option? For

most, there was no alternative but to hold on, hoping for eventual freedom or a change in fate.

There was a so-called "psychology unit" that operated once a week. It served merely to tick boxes, offering superficial attention only to those with prior mental health diagnoses or substance addictions.

Visitation time was strictly limited to 15 minutes, regardless of the length of time someone had been detained or the distance a loved one had travelled. Even this could be arbitrarily reduced to five minutes at the discretion of the officer on duty—openly violating basic human rights.

Once, a man who had protested against conditions was brought into our container. The electricity was cut, and four officers brutally beat him in the dark. He didn't speak for an entire day. Later, I learned that in every block, one container was randomly selected every two weeks for such public punishment of dissenters—to deter others from speaking up.

They humiliated detainees in overtly racist ways that made it clear they were following verbal instructions: the aim was to break people down until they signed deportation forms just to escape. Every two weeks, officers would spread rumours that certain nationalities would be forcibly deported en masse. Fearful, many rushed to sign voluntary return forms.

The psychological games were countless. Sometimes they were even laughable. On two occasions, I was summoned to the office and strip-searched because they believed I had outside contact and was aware of their lies. They had previously made public announcements full of false deportation claims, and I had laughed and said, “That’s impossible.”

Unbelievably, no one was allowed to formally claim asylum. If someone insisted, they were told to submit a written request—yet no paper or pen was provided. After a week of persistence, I managed to write my asylum request. I was told it had been entered into the system and to await a response. Later, when I followed up, they said it had been rejected by the system. Over less than two months, I filed four asylum requests to Turkey. But once I was released and contacted the Turkish immigration office, I discovered that none of them had been submitted. The camp authorities had deliberately ignored them.

Even medical staff engaged in psychological abuse—through insults, rudeness, and blatantly racist language. Many African detainees told me, “We’d heard stories about slavery from our ancestors, but now we truly understand what it was like.”

Every two or three weeks, a list of names would be called, and those individuals would be forcibly taken to the airport. Some were actually deported. Others who refused to board the plane or created disturbances

were returned to the camp. Out of each group of about 20–30 people, only 2 or 3 typically resisted and were brought back—proof that the psychological warfare continued on all fronts.

News of deaths among ill detainees was intentionally spread by officers, aiming to frighten others into signing their own deportation papers. All I can say is this: anyone who spent even a single day in that place will almost certainly carry psychological scars for the rest of their life.

Medical Facilities — or a System of Silent Torture

In a camp that held over 2,000 detainees, there was not a single licensed physician on site. Whenever we asked for medical assistance, a migration officer—possibly a paramedic or a medical student, though I am not certain—would visit each block periodically and examine around ten individuals. For every condition—whether dental issues, infections, or chronic diseases—the only solution offered was a painkiller.

A heart monitor device existed in the facility, yet there was no one capable of operating it or trained to interpret its data. The paramedic only worked during official hours, which was shockingly inappropriate in such a high-risk environment.

Patients who had prescriptions from outside doctors or hospitals often had no access to their medications. The distribution of drugs fell under the responsibility of a non-medical staff member—another immigration

officer—who would enter the blocks at his convenience to hand out medication. Once a week, gendarmerie forces would escort seriously ill detainees to the state hospital in the city of Çankırı, but even then, prescribed medication was often not administered properly or on time.

There were days when this assistant simply forgot to deliver the medicine. As a result, critically ill individuals deteriorated and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance, always under armed escort.

There were two medical aides: one female and one male. The female aide was remarkably punctual and behaved kindly despite the overall inhumane atmosphere. In contrast, the male aide—named Ahmet—was overtly racist and routinely shouted at patients. When a detainee expressed concern that delays in receiving his medication might result in a heart attack, Ahmet coldly replied, “Better to die and get it over with,” and threw pills at him. On multiple occasions, he physically assaulted elderly patients.

In my own case, despite having a known history of hypertension, I was unknowingly given aspirin for a week. I collapsed when my blood pressure reached 210 and was rushed to the hospital unconscious. The next day, I was taken back to the hospital under direct orders from the camp director for further tests. The hospital doctor asked me, “Are you taking aspirin?” I replied, “No, I’ve only been taking a white pill marked ‘CO’

which the medical aide gave me." He laughed and said, "Stop taking it immediately. Always ask to see the original blister pack. Tell everyone in the camp to do the same."

His words still echo in my mind: "Whoever gave you this was either trying to kill you or had no idea what they were doing." Whether it was deliberate malice or sheer incompetence, I refrain from judging. Either way, the consequences were life-threatening.

Even after being prescribed the correct medication, Ahmet failed to administer it consistently—some days he did, other days he didn't. My condition worsened, and within two months, I had to be transported by ambulance four times. I was also taken to Çankırı State Hospital three times in a single month.

And I was not alone. In my container, there was a man with diabetes who required strong glucose-control medication. He, too, was hospitalised three times with blood sugar levels over 400 or 500.

In summary, what was presented as a medical facility in that camp functioned more as a mechanism of silent torture than a system of care. It seemed designed not to alleviate suffering, but to deepen it.

Neglected Until Death

During the 46 days I spent in that hell, five individuals died—at least that I know of. It is likely the true number is higher, but information rarely reached us fully.

One African man, unable to eat the camp food due to a serious digestive condition, was transferred from another block to ours—not for medical reasons, but merely to reduce tensions in his previous unit. He was left in our cell without any medical attention or support. Tragically, he was so unwell that he had lost control of his bodily functions. For the final five days of his life, he lay motionless in a corner of our cell, unable to move or speak. We tried to feed him, often having to force him to take small bites, only to see him vomit it back within minutes or hours.

We repeatedly alerted the officers, immigration officials, and gendarmerie guards that he required immediate hospitalisation, both to save his life and to protect others from potential infection.

No one cared. He died in front of our eyes.

Another man from a different block died after a group fight broke out over the use of the public phone. He had a known heart condition and, following a blow to his chest, suffered a cardiac arrest.

Two others in our own block died of tuberculosis. We had begged the authorities to isolate them and provide urgent treatment. Our pleas were ignored.

A fifth individual, in a separate block, died by suicide. His mental health had visibly deteriorated, but no psychological support or access to a trained professional was ever provided. He took his own life and died en route to the hospital—too late for help.

These deaths were not the result of natural causes.

They were the product of systemic neglect.

Of a system that dehumanises, isolates, and abandons people in their most vulnerable state.

Of a facility that treats illness as a disciplinary inconvenience, not a medical emergency.

The so-called detention centre in Çankırı was not just a site of physical confinement.
It was a site of medical abuse—where healthcare was denied, suffering was ignored, and death was accepted as collateral damage.

No proper doctors. No emergency protocols.

No access to specialists.

No psychological care.

And no accountability.

In any civilised nation, the role of a detention facility is to enforce immigration laws—not to let people die slowly in front of one another.

The silence of the Turkish authorities in the face of these deaths speaks louder than any written statement could.

These were not just lives lost—they were lives erased, as if their presence had never mattered.

Çankırı: The End of the World

At the end of this chapter, it must be said that Çankırı was never designed to be a place for either temporary or long-term residence for migrants. Rather, it appeared to be deliberately constructed as a **systematic torture facility**, utterly devoid of even the most basic human necessities. Even some of the Migration Authority staff who entered the camp during office hours—and still possessed a degree of decency—**expressed their discontent with the conditions**. It seemed that even for them, the situation was unbearable, despite the **astronomical budgets** repeatedly announced by both the Turkish government and the European Union for such facilities.

Apparently, somewhere along the pipeline, there were "leaks"—those funds never reached their intended destination. Whether this misappropriation was orchestrated by the Turkish state or by corrupt local authorities remains unclear and requires the scrutiny of independent experts and international auditors.

As someone who was detained there for nearly two months, I can assert with confidence that neither the EU nor the Turkish government exercised any meaningful oversight. On one occasion, it was said that EU delegates had arrived for inspection, but none of the detainees ever saw them. On that day, outdoor time was cancelled, complete silence was enforced, and even phone access was denied. Ironically, the water and electricity were cut off for two hours on the very day when one would expect the camp to appear more presentable.

Representatives from the Çankırı Governor's Office reportedly visited the camp three times. Detainees voiced their grievances loudly and clearly, but the only response they received was a hollow smile and an empty promise: "It will be resolved." What followed, however, was even harsher treatment from the officers and migration staff toward those who had spoken out.

As one officer put it—perhaps with bitter accuracy:

"This is Çankırı… The End of The World."

Hell Routine: Daily Life in Limbo

Engineered Instability

The Daily Routine of Çankırı

If you wanted to take a shower with water that wasn't freezing cold—just slightly lukewarm—you had to wake up at 4 a.m. and queue up inside the cell. There were no towels and no heated space, so you had to dry yourself quickly using your worn clothes, then hang them on the metal bars, hoping the sun would dry them. If it didn't shine, you would wait for two or three days until the clothes dried on the window.

Between 5:30 and 6:30 a.m., the guards would usually open the cell doors for breakfast—if they intended to serve it in the dining hall. This varied greatly and had no fixed time. We would be escorted block by block. There's nothing new I can add about the breakfast itself.

If, however, the authorities decided the dining hall was unavailable—due to repairs, for example—we stayed in our cells and the block elder, along with a few inmate helpers, distributed the food.

After breakfast, the doors were locked again and the daily mental torment would begin.

Around 10 a.m., if the block guard was willing, the phone room key—located in an upper container—would be handed to the inmate responsible for phone access. He would take each cell, one by one, to the single telephone available. With 250 people cut off from the outside world, only half could make a call on most days. Each person had three minutes—sometimes just one minute if time was restricted until lunch. It could take three days for one cell to reach its turn.

Around noon, if permitted, inmates were allowed out for fresh air—one or two hours before lunch. During my two-month stay, only about one-third of days had any outdoor time. That's roughly once every three days. Meanwhile, Europeans walk their dogs daily and claim animals become depressed without fresh air. Yet, we—sick, imprisoned humans—were allowed outside once every three days. Once, we went a full week without fresh air. We felt less than animals. That was clearly the intended policy: make us suffer and hope we break.

Lunch had no fixed time. Some days it came at 11 a.m., other days as late as 3 or 4 p.m. The same went for dinner. Often, both meals were served close together—lunch at 4, dinner at 6—which was disastrous for someone with health conditions like mine.

All day, the cell doors remained locked. Guards came every few hours, sometimes just to provide a lighter for cigarettes and take it back. The rooms were always thick with smoke. Even non-smokers suffered—eyes burned, coughing was constant.

If someone's condition worsened, we had to bang on the cell door and scream for five to fifteen minutes before anyone responded.

At 9 p.m., lights out. No noise allowed. Any sound from inside the cells could result in a guard storming in, threatening us, or cutting off electricity and water. If a cell protested, their electricity was shut off. If there was a fight, the whole cell lost phone privileges and outdoor access for days.

Psychological punishments were so deeply embedded that guards regularly instigated divisions among groups—blacks vs whites, Afghans vs Iranians, Turkmens vs Azeris, Pakistanis vs Afghans. They had succeeded. We were broken and scattered.

To summarise, there was no structured daily schedule. Most of our time was spent in overcrowded cells—spaces built for two people, housing over twelve. One cell in our block held 25 people in the same space. Movement was impossible. Complaints led only to humiliation, psychological damage, or even physical abuse.

Whenever we tried to protest, the guards would bring a loud troublemaker from another unit into our cell, cut off the power, and beat him up in front of us in the dark—to remind us what resistance brings.

Tedium as a Tool of Torture

Despite the pervasive disorder, monotony itself was weaponised as a form of torture. What could be more torturous than being locked in a roughly 10-square-metre cell with more than 12 people, unable to even pace a few steps?

The sheer boredom was so excruciating that even those without any medical issues began feigning illness, just to receive painkillers from the medic. If luck was on their side, and they managed to get some pills, they would spend the day asleep.

Some people resorted to primal forms of entertainment—playing with insects or drawing imaginary games onto the cell floor. Others turned to singing and dancing. Yet, after all of that, sometimes the entire cell would fall into collective despair. Fifteen men would bury their heads under blankets and weep, lighting cigarettes between sobs.

At times, racist arguments erupted, or tensions flared for no apparent reason—just to break the monotony. It wasn't about the subject of the dispute; it was simply about having something to occupy the mind.

Even requests for pens and paper were repeatedly denied—this, in itself, was a form of psychological torture. Had they forced us into labour, the place would have been no different from a Nazi concentration camp. The only distinction was that no labour was demanded of us.

Each time we submitted a request for an update on our case, we were told that if anything changed, they would call us. No explanations, just evasion. Whenever we asked to speak with the officer responsible for our files, either our names would be noted down with no follow-up, or after two to three weeks we might be granted a five-minute conversation that clearly served no purpose other than ticking a box.

In a place where even clocks were prohibited, we had to gauge the time by the position of the sun or by the sound of the call to prayer—like primitive human beings.

No matter how hard I try, I cannot fully capture the unbearable atmosphere of Çankırı. Every time I finish describing one aspect, I realise how many untold details still remain. The only way to truly understand this place—this torture chamber—is to have lived inside it.

Behaviour of Other Detainees

Those who had no money were constantly looking for a way to get hold of even a small amount—just enough to make a phone call to their families, smoke a cigarette, or eat a biscuit. It was deeply distressing. I

personally did everything I could to share the funds I had in my detention account, but it was never enough. Realistically, about 90% of the 250 detainees in our block had no money at all. Around 5% had a minimal amount that was occasionally sent by family or friends, and the remaining 5% had enough to meet their own needs.

Selfishness was so widespread that it became nearly impossible to interact with anyone without conflict. If you accidentally brushed against someone in the crowded corridors, it could immediately spark a fight—not because the individuals were inherently violent, but because such an environment leaves no room for compassion. When your own survival is constantly at risk, looking out for others becomes nearly impossible.

If you gave someone a single cigarette, a biscuit, or a juice, a line would instantly form, with others demanding the same. And if you refused, they would indignantly ask, “Why did you give it to him and not me?” Even if you explained that it was a leftover or that you had nothing left for yourself, it didn’t matter. They weren’t interested in your reasons.

Fights over phone access were a daily occurrence. For instance, a man with three children hadn’t heard their voices in five days. Even if he spent only one minute with each, that meant four minutes on the phone—an eternity in a place where others were desperately waiting their turn. Yet

some single men used their phone time to call friends, catch up on outside news, or even hear a joke, further inflaming tensions.

The level of chaos was so extreme that there were multiple cases of sexual assault. When these were reported, the only response was to relocate the victim or the accused to another block. Nothing else was done. Younger or physically smaller detainees were expected to obey older or stronger individuals—or face serious consequences, including isolation and violence.

Petty theft was common. If you weren't paying close attention, your belongings—be they food, clothing, or cigarettes—could disappear. Yet reporting theft was futile; recovering stolen items was nearly impossible, and the whole block, including the victim, might suffer consequences. Strangely enough, I believe some of the people who took things from others were among the most honourable individuals there. In a place that resembled hell more than a European-run detention centre, it was inevitable that people would try to survive by any means necessary.

The true horror of Çankırı becomes clearer when you realise the European Union flag is displayed throughout the facility. If the camp were operated solely by the Turkish government, one could argue that such contradictions are embedded in national policy. But this place was under

European administration—an entity known for its grand proclamations and human rights courts. The irony is staggering.

Normally, when someone is wronged in their home country and their local court system fails them, they turn to the European Court of Human Rights. But if someone like me needs to file a complaint against the European Union itself, where should they go?

Imagine a place where you cannot even ask your spouse to bring your child for a visit—because the unsanitary conditions could make your child ill or leave them emotionally scarred forever. How can kindness survive in such a setting?

I can say with certainty that never in my life—nor even in the stories I'd heard—had I imagined such a place could exist in the 21st century. And yet it does. And it continues to operate, day after day, unchanged.

Formal Questions: No Answers

Interrogations and Questioning

Procedures designed more for protocol than truth

Once a month, one of the officers from the Directorate General of Migration Management would initiate a round of interrogations and reviews concerning detainees' complaints or requests. One was named Mustafa, the other Hakan. Just as I mention the names of honourable people, it is equally necessary to name those responsible for intensifying the psychological torment within that environment.

They would ask a few questions in under five minutes—"What was the problem?", "Why were you arrested?", "What is your request?"—and hand over a form. This form, however, was clearly a formality. We were directly told not to take it seriously. I, and many others, repeatedly asked them to register our applications as asylum seekers. But they never did. I only discovered this after I was released.

Submitting a complaint led to immediate retaliation. The very next day, intimidation would begin, making your life even more unbearable. If you

attempted to elaborate or speak up, they would ignore you so thoroughly that you'd eventually stop talking out of sheer humiliation.

Hakan, on several occasions, shouted at me with contempt, using the words "shut up" and instructing guards to "throw him back in his block like a dog." Mustafa, although calmer, made it equally clear through his apathy that neither interrogations nor complaints had any effect whatsoever.

Each form bore the emblem of the European Union. Yet I am certain not a single EU official ever read a word of what was written. The system seemed designed solely to remind us that our efforts were futile. These were merely internal administrative exercises for box-ticking purposes, as they themselves often admitted.

And always, at the end of each conversation, came the same statement: "If you're so upset, why don't you just sign the voluntary deportation form and leave?"

This was the response given even to those who would be executed upon returning to their country. And when such a person said, "You know I'll be executed if I return," the shameless reply was: "Wouldn't that be better than living in this filthy hellhole?"

Faced with such conversations, I became acutely aware of the depth of the tragedy. An institution that declares itself the saviour of humanity seemed to value the lives of innocent people not at all.

Psychological Pressure as a Tool of Control

In those so-called investigative or complaint-review sessions, some detainees were persuaded by Mustafa or Hakan to sign a voluntary deportation form—not for repatriation to their home country, but to be transferred to a third country that they could enter without a visa. The very next day, officers would arrive, call out their names, collect them, take fingerprints, and ask them to sign more detailed forms. Then they would declare in front of everyone that these individuals were being sent to another country—but for the rest of you, forced deportations will begin before the end of the week.

This announcement would destabilise the entire block. The psychological pressure was so overwhelming that some detainees would start contemplating suicide. I was one of them. I vividly remember the days they repeatedly told me that I would definitely be deported by force to my country. On such days, I seriously considered ending my life. One time, I banged my head against the bathroom wall repeatedly until my cellmates intervened and prevented me from continuing.

Looking back, I ask myself—how could they have broken me to the point of contemplating suicide? I, who always believed that suicide solves nothing, only transfers pain to one's family and friends, and that a human being is stronger than that. But in those moments, I had entirely let go of years of belief. I was completely shattered.

This psychological trauma has remained with me, as with others who were there. I know it will never fully disappear. I still have nightmares about Çankırı, and when I wake up, I rush to my wife and daughter and hold them tightly.

The inability to see them was the worst part of Çankırı.

The camp was built far outside the city in such a remote location that even local lawyers from Çankırı were reluctant to come. They would show up only for the first court session or infrequently after that. How could I possibly ask my wife to travel nearly 400 kilometres from Istanbul and leave our child behind? I didn't want my daughter to see me in that condition.

Therefore, visiting my family was simply not an option.

My lawyer, who was based in Istanbul, did visit me three times. His sense of duty and humanity was clear. He even brought my wife twice for visitation. But I didn't allow them to bring my daughter. She was left with

a trusted friend in Istanbul during those visits, and both times my wife and I spent the entire meeting in tears, barely able to speak a few words.

The emotional burden was so heavy that we could only say things like “I love you” to each other—or my wife would beg me, “Don’t sign anything. Just remember, if you return, you’ll be executed. We can’t live without you.”

That was the entire conversation we had.

I asked about our daughter and begged her to make sure the child wouldn’t find out where I was. “She’s too young. She’ll never forget it,” I said. “Tell her I’m in hospital.”

Strangely enough, right after I was released from Çankırı, I was taken straight to hospital and underwent surgery. When my daughter saw me there after two months, she finally believed I had been sick. Before that, she kept asking, “If he’s in hospital, why can’t we visit him?”

Now imagine a person under this much psychological pressure, with failing physical health as well.

The entire environment was designed so that the only way to escape death was to sign the voluntary deportation form. But for me, that wasn’t an option. Returning to my country didn’t mean prison—it meant execution.

And in other countries, I was subject to international pursuit by my government.

There was no choice but to endure. And every time I thought of ending it all, only one thing stopped me—my wife and child.

Legal Proceedings: A System Built to Delay and Deny

In Çankırı, the term "legal process" was almost a parody. While the camp administration frequently emphasised detainees' right to appeal and to have access to a lawyer, in practice, nearly every barrier imaginable was put in place to prevent meaningful legal recourse.

For those fortunate enough to have legal representation, communication with lawyers was severely restricted. Most lawyers were based in Istanbul or Ankara—several hours away—and would only visit occasionally. Phone calls to lawyers were possible only during limited hours and often interrupted. For detainees without legal counsel, the only available support was a government-appointed legal aid lawyer, whose role was more symbolic than effective. Many of them were seen as mere extensions of the state's immigration apparatus rather than defenders of individual rights.

According to accounts shared by fellow detainees, several lawyers conducted three to four meetings with individuals inside the detention facility before accepting their cases—often under the pretence of thorough

legal preparation. However, once payment was made, many of these lawyers ceased communication altogether, refusing to answer phone calls or provide updates. This conduct amounted to outright fraud. Yet there was no accessible or effective mechanism through which detainees could file complaints or seek redress. No legal body within the detention framework offered oversight, and local lawyers were unwilling to pursue legal action against their colleagues, even in clear cases of malpractice. The result was a systemic failure of legal accountability that left vulnerable individuals with no protection or recourse.

It is important to emphasise, however, that this was not the case with my own lawyer. In fact, I can confidently say that the first real chance I had of escaping this dysfunctional system came through my wife—and the second, through my lawyer. Unlike many others who abandoned their clients after receiving payment, he remained committed, responsible, and present throughout. His actions stood in stark contrast to the pervasive negligence and exploitation by others in the legal system surrounding the detention centre.

When a detainee submitted a formal appeal or legal objection—whether to the deportation order or to the conditions of detention—the process would enter a bureaucratic black hole. Responses from immigration courts were either massively delayed or not delivered at all. Some detainees never received any feedback on their cases during months of detention.

Formal Questions: No Answers

Legal proceedings within the detention system were fundamentally flawed and devoid of fairness. Court hearings were often held **in absentia**, with the detainee entirely excluded from the proceedings and merely notified of the outcome afterwards—an explicit violation of fundamental human rights and due process. There was no opportunity for legal defence, cross-examination, or the presentation of evidence. The detainee's voice was entirely absent from the judicial process, and decisions were often based on incomplete or misleading documentation provided by migration authorities.

This opaque and inconsistent system made it nearly impossible for detainees to exercise their legal rights. Even for those who had valid asylum claims or ongoing applications in third countries, including European nations, the camp authorities either ignored the pending processes or deliberately blocked access to supporting documents needed to prove such claims.

Ultimately, the so-called legal system inside Çankırı served not justice, but the prolongation of suffering and the slow erosion of hope.

Systemic Neglect: About Legal Rights

No Voice, No Choice, No Protection

Fundamental Human Rights Ignored

There was no access to the most basic hygiene standards, and my post-release surgery stands as clear evidence of that.

There was no access to legal counselling; the extremely high costs my family incurred to hire private lawyers prove this point.

There was no reliable access to telecommunication; the psychological trauma experienced by my family, who still cannot tolerate me being away for just a few hours, is testimony to that.

There was no access to proper nutrition; I lost 17 kilograms in less than two months, which speaks for itself.

There was no access to personal mobile phones.

There was no access to suitable clothing.

There was no access to any independent oversight body for filing complaints. Everything was controlled by Turkish immigration authorities, disguised under a European Union flag. Not once did we see a European staff member.

There was no access to fair trial proceedings. All hearings were held in absentia.
There was no access to a public defender who would actually carry out their duty.

There was no access to psychological counselling, even though it is a fundamental requirement in such facilities.

There was no access to a doctor.

There was erratic and unreliable access to medication—some days it was available, other days it was not.

There was no permanent access to the canteen. Some days it was open, some days it was closed.

There was no access to personal belongings such as clothes without prior coordination with the storage unit days in advance.

There was no access to fresh air.

The cells were freezing, non-standard, and severely overcrowded.

There was no access to safe drinking water. If you consumed the single small bottle provided for 24 hours, you were left without water for the rest of the day.

There was absolutely no access to recreational or physical activities—these were myths.

There was no designated area for washing clothes, and we had to wash them with cold water in the shower.

There was no proper place to dry clothes.

There was no access to hot water.

Even basic cleaning supplies such as mops and brooms were inconsistently provided.

There was no access to razors or haircuts, even though such services are essential to prevent disease in closed environments.

There were restrictions on accessing our own money—nobody was allowed to keep all their funds with them.

There was no access to lighters.

There was no access to boiled water for tea or coffee.

Daily visits were not permitted; even twice a week was not guaranteed.

There was no access to judicial officials. The most you could do was give a written note to your lawyer to pass on to a judge.

There was no access to hygiene products or cleaning liquids.

There were no pillows.

There was no access to clean blankets, nor any system for washing them. On sunny days, we would lay them out on the ground in an attempt at disinfection.

There was no access to heating or cooling systems.

There was no access to our own case files.

There was no access to writing materials.

And above all, we were continuously addressed with verbal abuse and racial slurs.

Access to Interpretation and Legal Counsel

There was no direct access to any official interpreter. Immigration officers and gendarmerie personnel repeatedly told detainees—regardless of their legal right to language assistance—that they "should have learnt Turkish." No staff members spoke English, and translation was routinely carried out by fellow detainees who happened to share a language with the person in need. This practice was entirely unlawful. These unqualified individuals

had no interpreting experience and often mistranslated crucial information, particularly in situations involving medical consultations or communication with immigration authorities.

This informal and unreliable approach to translation even extended to formal monthly interviews with immigration officials. Despite the clear legal requirement for access to a certified interpreter during such proceedings, this right was routinely denied. The entire system was structured to be performative—procedures were maintained only in appearance, while detainees were systematically deprived of due process. The camp flew the flag of the European Union, yet its practices bore no resemblance to the EU's human rights standards.

Access to legal counsel or legal aid was, at best, a tragic illusion. Those who required a state-appointed attorney were occasionally visited by a notary public from Çankırı. On such days, large groups of detainees were gathered to sign legal representation forms, without the presence of a translator. Individuals were made to sign these forms without understanding their content, effectively granting power of attorney to one or more public defenders—assuming immigration officials even approved the request. In many cases, such approval was denied outright, and securing legal aid required extraordinary effort.

Systemic Neglect: About Legal Rights

From the very beginning of detention, the same pattern applied. Upon arrival, detainees were presented with documents in Turkish and forced to sign or fingerprint them. The translations, if provided at all, were vague and deliberately misleading. For example, the Turkish text would read "notification of detention for deportation to the country of origin," but the accompanying translation would merely state "notification of detention." The absence of proper legal interpretation was not an oversight—it was a mechanism of control.

No legal counsellor or legal advisor was ever present at the facility, despite numerous posters on the walls claiming that "free legal aid is a right for all." When I asked for legal advice during my first days of detention, I was laughed at and told bluntly, "These are just formalities—don't take the signs seriously." Staff explained that, once a month, there would be a round of formal interviews for all detainees, but nothing ever came of them. They added that only someone outside the camp—either your lawyer or family—could help you. The facility was designed solely for deportation, not for justice or resolution, and no one cared about detainees like me who had never spent a single day in Turkey illegally.

In reality, I was far from alone. Nearly half of the detainees were in similar situations: they were either Turkish residents with valid permits or even Turkish citizens. The other half had entered the country irregularly. Yet regardless of background, everyone was treated the same. We were

housed together and subjected to the same fate, with no regard for individual circumstances or legal status.

Personally, I submitted multiple written requests for legal review—asking that my case be referred to the asylum authority, that my legal residency be verified through the Turkish Civil Registry, that the Security Police confirm my clean record, and that the European Union's legal protections be applied in my case. Every time, the response was evasive. I was told that my concerns had been "forwarded to the authorities." But after my release, I discovered that many of these requests had never even been recorded in my file. Some had been discarded altogether—literally thrown in the bin.

Conduct of the Staff, Guards and Gendarmerie

The behaviour of the staff within the removal centre reflected a deeply divided culture. While most of the migration office employees displayed overt hostility, racism, and a bureaucratic indifference, a few of the gendarmerie officers—those tasked with daily operations—showed moments of rare humanity.

Some enforcement officers, such as Mr. Halil, Mehmet, and Recep, stood out for their decency. Their presence was a buffer against the complete moral collapse of the centre. Without them, the environment might have descended into an even deeper abyss of cruelty. In stark contrast, other

gendarmerie personnel consistently used racial slurs and told vulgar jokes about our nationalities in our presence. They took visible pleasure in the humiliation of detainees, with impunity.

The staff of the Directorate of Migration Management, on the other hand, were unanimously harsh and dehumanising. With the exception of one female nurse, none showed a shred of compassion. They acted as if it was their mission to create hell, and even when gendarmerie officers attempted to grant basic rights such as open-air time or access to the phone or kiosk, migration staff would swiftly overrule them. The kiosk itself, a meagre facility selling little more than cigarettes, became another symbol of controlled deprivation.

The majority of the gendarmerie were young and impressionable, seemingly influenced by nationalist propaganda and media narratives. Their primary tactic was to break the spirit of migrants through insults and intimidation, hoping to coerce them into signing voluntary deportation papers. Of the dozens I encountered, only three or four exhibited any semblance of humane conduct.

There was no viable mechanism to report abuses. If a gendarme assaulted a detainee with a baton, no complaint could be lodged—there was simply no authority to hear it. This created a culture of impunity. Particularly appalling was the systemic mistreatment of detainees of African origin.

They were subjected to even harsher violence and mockery. On more than one occasion, I witnessed them being beaten en masse with batons after daring to protest their treatment.

One of the most humiliating experiences of my life occurred during a hospital transfer. I had been taken for further medical evaluation along with 15 other sick and weakened detainees. Around 1:00 p.m., while waiting inside the transfer minibus, I overheard two gendarmes—unaware I had already returned—plotting a cruel joke. They ordered food from the hospital restaurant, boarded the bus, and began to eat in front of us, commenting on how delicious it was and laughing about how we'd been eating "immigration garbage" for weeks. A stray cat approached the bus, and they tossed it a piece of meat, saying: "Look, even God provides more for this cat than for you." We were starving and dehydrated, forbidden from buying anything ourselves. Many of us wept silently that night—not because of hunger, but because of the inhumanity of it all.

The gendarmerie treated us worse than animals. The respect they showed to a stray cat surpassed the way they treated us. I have never, in my entire life, witnessed such concentrated racism and cruelty in one place. And yet, I still believe not all of them acted out of personal hatred. Rather, a toxic system enabled and encouraged this behaviour—a system backed by the Turkish government, supported by the European Union, and devoid of any

oversight. I don't say there was a lack of proper supervision; I say there was no supervision at all.

I will carry the memory of that humiliation for the rest of my life. The nightmares still haunt me. And I shudder to think of what those endured who stayed there longer than I did.

Others: Fellow Detainees

Stories Behind the Walls

Lives Trapped in Limbo

In this chapter, I share the stories of several individuals with whom I shared cells or common blocks during my detention. Each of them was carrying a weight far greater than their physical belongings—stories of loss, trauma, injustice, and despair. Despite their diverse backgrounds, one thing united them all: the silence of a system that refused to listen.

These were not nameless figures or mere numbers on a list. They were fathers, sons, brothers, refugees, workers, and survivors. Each had been cast into this place for different reasons, but all were subjected to the same indignities, trapped within the same broken machinery of detention.

By recounting their stories here, I aim not only to honour their suffering but also to preserve their voices—voices that were muted behind locked doors and barbed wire fences. What follows is not fiction. These are real people. I remember their faces. I remember their cries.

A Voice for Women, Silenced by Power

The first story belongs to a young man who, during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, had intervened to protect a woman being assaulted by police forces. His act of defiance—standing up against the brutality of the Iranian authorities—led to his identification and subsequent prosecution by the judicial system. Facing imminent arrest, he fled the country illegally and crossed into Turkey, where he managed to survive by working informally for nearly a year.

Despite repeated requests for asylum, his application was never properly assessed by Turkish immigration authorities. Instead, he was arrested as an undocumented migrant and transferred to the same detention centre in Çankırı where I would later encounter him. After my own release, we remained in contact, and I can confirm that he remained in custody for exactly one year before being released.

Lacking any support system or family in Turkey, he endured extreme psychological hardship. According to his own account, the emotional scars inflicted by Çankırı have never healed. The experience, he said, left a permanent imprint on his mental well-being—an invisible injury that continues to shape his life long after his physical release.

He Became a Father in Detention

Sulaiman, a man from Sierra Leone, was another detainee in our cell. His story reflected the anguish of countless individuals from post-colonial nations whose resources had been systematically plundered, often with the complicity of their own governments and the silent cooperation of Western powers. Sulaiman had migrated to Turkey with his wife, hoping to find a better future, but his application for legal residency had been rejected.

While in detention, Sulaiman became a father. His son was born while he remained confined in Çankırı, denied even a temporary release to witness his child's birth. For two days, he wept uncontrollably—an image none of us could forget. He was held for six months in the centre, long after his spirit had been broken.

As one of the few Black detainees in our cell, Sulaiman endured the brunt of deeply ingrained racism within the system. He was routinely subjected to verbal abuse, degrading remarks, and even physical violence by guards, immigration officers, and gendarmes. Despite our repeated efforts to shield him from such hostility, the attacks persisted with impunity. The cruelty directed at him was not incidental—it was systemic, and it revealed a deeper rot within the institution itself.

Detained Despite Willing to Return

Hamid was a young man from Pakistan who had no access to education or job opportunities in his home country. In search of a better life, he had travelled illegally through Afghanistan and Iran before arriving in Turkey. In Istanbul, he had worked in the textile industry—a humble labourer trying to stand on his own feet to eventually build a life worth living back in Pakistan. He was a quiet soul, the kind of person who wouldn't hurt a fly.

Yet, because he lacked the proper documentation to remain in Turkey, he was detained. Hamid repeatedly requested to be voluntarily returned to Pakistan, but the immigration staff showed blatant disregard for his pleas. Repatriating Pakistani nationals required formal negotiations with their embassy, and as such, his case was indefinitely delayed. Hamid remained in detention for six months—locked away not because he wished to stay, but because the system could not be bothered to let him go.

When a Lie Was Enough

There was one man—whose name I will not disclose—who had legally migrated to Turkey with his wife and children. For four years, he had held valid residency and a work permit, contributing to society and abiding by the laws. One day, he was involved in a minor traffic accident with a Turkish lawyer. Despite the fact that the lawyer had rear-ended his

vehicle, the situation quickly escalated—not because of the accident, but because the lawyer, upon learning that the man was a foreigner, issued a chilling threat: "Either pay me for the damage, or I will have your residency revoked."

When the man refused to pay for a fault that wasn't his, the lawyer called the police and accused him of something far more serious—allegedly insulting the Turkish flag and Atatürk, the founding father of modern Turkey. The accusation was completely unsubstantiated, without any evidence or witness. Still, he was immediately arrested. At the police station, his residency was revoked on the spot, and he was transferred to the detention centre—all without any trial, without any legal procedure, without a single hearing.

In Turkey, as I learned firsthand, the police and immigration authorities can unilaterally cancel a foreigner's residency or even citizenship based solely on an accusation—without a court order, without judicial oversight. It is a power exercised arbitrarily, and it stands in direct contradiction to Turkey's own domestic laws and international obligations.

And yes, the same fate befell me. I lost my citizenship under similar circumstances. Let that sink in.

A Residence Lost Without a Knock

There was another Iranian man named Saman, who was living and working legally in Turkey. His case illustrates yet another arbitrary injustice embedded in the country's immigration system. In Turkey, immigration officers conduct periodic address verifications to ensure that registered residents actually live where they claim to. In Saman's case, the officer assigned to check his address never even visited the location. Yet, he filed a report stating that Saman was not residing there.

It didn't matter that the address was both his home and workplace. No warning was issued. No second chance was offered. Based on that one unchecked claim, his legal residency was revoked.

What followed was even more troubling. Saman was summoned to the immigration office under the pretext of clarifying his address. But upon arrival, he was detained immediately—because, by that time, his residency had already been nullified. He had walked into a trap set by the very system that was supposed to process his claim.

This, too, was a product of systemic racism—of a structure designed to give immigration officers unchecked power to destroy lives, without accountability, oversight, or consequence. In Turkey, a single officer's false report can lead to someone's detention and eventual deportation, and

no one in the system blinks. Migrants know this well. It is not a secret—it is survival knowledge.

A Brother Nation, Yet a Prisoner

There was another cellmate named Ahmet, an Azerbaijani national in his mid-fifties. Despite the rhetoric often repeated in Turkey that "Azeris and Turks are one nation," his treatment told a different story. Ahmet had lived in Turkey legally for eight consecutive years, working and renewing his residency without issue. But when he applied for his ninth residency permit, it was suddenly denied—without explanation or due process.

Even more disturbing was the fact that Azerbaijani citizens are generally allowed to remain in Turkey without a passport under bilateral agreements. So it was unclear why Ahmet, of all people, had been detained.

He repeatedly asked to be deported voluntarily, wishing only to return home. But Turkish authorities had another excuse: they told him they lacked the budget to purchase a flight ticket to Baku. And so, despite his willingness to leave, Ahmet was forced to remain behind bars for four months—a prisoner not of his own will, but of bureaucratic negligence and systemic contradiction.

Punished for Being a Victim

Another detainee was Mohammed from Morocco, who had been living legally in Istanbul. One day, near Şişli, he became the victim of a violent street robbery. When he resisted handing over his mobile phone, the attackers assaulted him. Bystanders called the police, but by the time they arrived, the assailants had already fled.

Instead of receiving support or justice, Mohammed was taken to a local police station. Shockingly, the officers filed a report classifying the incident as a “physical altercation,” rather than a robbery. Based on this skewed report, his legal residency was revoked. Without trial or proper investigation, he was sent to the detention centre—punished not for a crime, but for standing up to one.

This was not an isolated incident. In fact, it was disturbingly common. If you ask other migrants, many would recount similar experiences—instances where they approached the police to file a complaint, only to find themselves accused or criminalised instead. Migrants who tried to report offences committed by Turkish nationals often faced retaliation in the form of residency cancellation. Police and immigration officers wielded unchecked authority to allege "suspicion" against an individual—a vague designation that, once declared, was often enough to strip someone of their legal status and detain them indefinitely.

Punished for Seeking Justice

Another detainee was a 62-year-old man from Angola named Tobi. He had been living legally in Turkey for three years and was the father of four children. Tobi was detained and transferred to the detention centre after insisting on filing a complaint against a Turkish national. He did not speak Turkish and repeatedly requested a translator during his visit to the police station. Despite the officers' advice to drop the matter, he remained firm in seeking justice. His persistence and demand for a fair process were ultimately punished with his arrest.

As a result, in recent years, the legal rights of many migrants in Turkey have been systematically undermined. Fear of retaliation has deterred numerous individuals from filing complaints against Turkish citizens, effectively silencing victims and fostering a climate of impunity.

If we choose not to call this racism, then what should we call it?

When a man is legally residing in a country for years, requests a translator at a police station, insists on filing a complaint against a local citizen, and is punished with detention for doing so—what else can it be?

Is it not racism when people are treated with contempt for their skin colour, their language, or their nationality? Is it not discrimination when the law bends to protect one group while punishing another for seeking justice?

Perhaps one might attempt to label it as “systemic bias”, “institutional prejudice”, or “administrative abuse”. But none of these euphemisms change the reality on the ground.

This is racism—dressed in uniform, backed by silence, and protected by bureaucracy.

And if we hesitate to name it as such, we only help to prolong it.

A Tourist Detained, a Passport Forgotten

trip. It was his first international journey, and he was staying at a hotel near Istanbul’s Taksim Square. One afternoon, he was stopped by authorities and asked to present his passport. Unaware that tourists were required to carry a copy of their passport at all times, Rahman explained that it was safely stored in his hotel room nearby.

His explanation fell on deaf ears. Instead of being escorted to retrieve the document, he was arrested on the spot and transferred to a detention centre. For weeks, Rahman pleaded daily with officials, begging them to accompany him to his hotel to collect his passport or to send an officer in his place. His requests were consistently ignored. After nearly two months of unjust detention, he reluctantly signed a deportation order just to end the ordeal.

Rahman was returned to Iran. His passport and all of his belongings remained at the hotel in Istanbul—forgotten by a system that treated his innocence as irrelevant.

A Citizen Stripped Without Trial

Hamidullah was originally from Afghanistan but had obtained Turkish citizenship through an investment scheme. After about a year of living as a legal citizen, he was summoned to a police station—where he was unexpectedly arrested and transferred to a detention centre. His citizenship had been revoked.

He never disclosed the exact reason for the revocation, and none of us pressed him for details. What struck us most was not the specifics of his case, but the sheer ease with which citizenship could be annulled—without legal process, without due notice, without the right to defend oneself.

His story resonated deeply with me, having gone through a similar fate myself. I had already been rendered stateless. But after meeting Hamidullah, I realised I was not alone. He told me about others who had shared the same experience—some of whom had been arrested with him at the police station, and were now being transferred to other centres like Tuzla and Çankırı.

Punished for Refusing to Be Scammed

Afshin was another Iranian detainee who ended up in Çankırı for a reason that defied logic and justice. While visiting Turkey as a tourist, he found himself targeted by one of the country's notorious nightclubs—establishments known for exploiting foreign guests. When he refused to pay the excessive and fraudulent charges they demanded, he was physically assaulted.

To his shock, it wasn't the club staff who faced arrest. Instead, the police detained him and transferred him to the deportation centre. Despite making it clear that he was a tourist and requesting to be taken straight to the airport, and even though he signed a voluntary deportation form on the very first day, he remained in detention for two months.

Seeking Asylum, Treated as Criminals

Numerous cases involved Afghan and African asylum seekers who were detained and transferred to deportation camps immediately after approaching Turkish migration offices to request asylum. In practice, declaring one's intent to seek asylum had effectively become a punishable offence in Turkey.

Rather than being protected under international law, these individuals were criminalised. Their asylum claims were either ignored entirely or discarded without review—an egregious violation of the international

conventions Turkey has ratified, including those tied to its agreements with the European Union.

One cannot help but question the EU's silence. It is difficult to believe that such systematic violations are unknown to Brussels. In fact, Europe has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to fund externalised border control measures—no matter the human cost—so long as migrants remain outside its gates.

Refugee Status Revoked Without Cause

Among the most disturbing accounts I heard within those cold, unfeeling walls were from Syrian detainees. Many had lived in Türkiye for years under official refugee status—a status that, after war, displacement, and unimaginable hardship, was their only anchor of hope. Yet, during routine visits to the migration offices, some were suddenly, and often without any explanation, informed that their refugee status had been revoked.

This phenomenon was not limited to Syrians. I met Palestinians and Lebanese nationals who recounted the same bitter story, and many Iranians too, whose refugee status had been removed for political or, at times, obscure reasons. Some had once secured that status through complete and verified documentation, yet now, without committing any offence or breach, they found it taken from them.

Strikingly, when these individuals learnt about cases like mine—where someone who once held Turkish citizenship was stripped of it for political reasons—they seemed to draw a strange form of consolation. It reminded them that even official papers and lawful standing offered no guarantee of security against sudden decisions and unseen agendas.

What was taken away was not merely a legal designation—it was a broken promise, and with it, the fragile sense of safety they had clung to. The unspoken message to all of us was clear: no matter how much you comply, no matter how thorough your documentation, your future rests on the shifting sands of administrative will. In a just world, such instability would not exist, yet in the system I witnessed, it occurred far too often.

A System Designed to Break and Profit

Upon reviewing the stories of those detained alongside me and analysing the consistent patterns of behaviour exhibited by officers, guards, and migration officials, I came to a disturbing realisation: the goal was never just to deport us. It was far more calculated, and it served three distinct purposes.

First, the system aimed to instil deep psychological and emotional trauma in migrants—whether legal or undocumented—so that they would never wish to return to Turkey again. The prolonged detention, abuse, and

dehumanisation were not incidental; they were part of a deterrent strategy rooted in humiliation and despair.

Second, delays in deportation were not due to bureaucratic inefficiencies alone. The extended confinement of detainees likely carried financial incentives. Every additional day in detention translated into more funding, more operational expenses, and perhaps, more untraceable profits—either for the institution or those complicit in its operation.

Third, the European Union's role cannot be overlooked. While it is unlikely that Brussels is unaware of the human rights abuses occurring under its very eyes, its silence suggests tacit approval. By outsourcing border control and migrant containment to Turkey, the EU effectively turned a blind eye to the means employed—as long as migrants remained locked outside Europe's borders.

This system was not broken by accident. It was designed to function this way: to repel, to profit, and to comply with an external political agenda. In such an environment, justice and human dignity became the first casualties.

At Long Last: Freedom

The Bitter Release

A Bargain Forced Behind Bars

During my time in detention, I was initially approached by police officers and members of the security apparatus who demanded bribes in exchange for my release. Later, gendarmerie officers who transported me from Tuzla to Çankırı also sought illicit payments. I formally filed complaints against them through my lawyer.

Following this, I submitted—again through my lawyer—complaints regarding the discriminatory and hostile conduct of Çankırı detention staff, as well as the deliberate neglect by the Migration Directorate and Governor's Office—despite clear evidence that I was lawfully residing in Türkiye and had committed no offence.

In the final stage, I filed a legal complaint, through my lawyer, against the judge who had twice denied my release, even though we had provided comprehensive documentation proving my legal residency and the imminent danger I would face if returned to my country of origin. The

judge's decisions were not only negligent but showed blatant disregard for my basic rights.

Due to my deteriorating health and the fact that I required urgent surgery, and because the Turkish authorities could not lawfully deport me to Iran—where I faced the imminent risk of execution—the judiciary ultimately decided to release me. However, this release came with conditions.

It was around the fortieth or forty-first day when my lawyer visited and informed me that I would be released—but only if I withdrew all my complaints. At first, I resisted. But he implored me to think of my wife and child. He said, "Now that they have conveyed this offer through me, you must accept it. First, we must get you out—then you can pursue justice." I knew well that once I agreed to withdraw the complaints, I would no longer have any legal standing to file further action against the judge or the Çankırı authorities. But I was physically frail, emotionally depleted, and deeply concerned for my family. So, I complied and wrote the dictated withdrawal statement.

After my release, I continued to seek justice through my lawyer by filing formal complaints against the Security Police, the Migration Directorate, and the Turkish Presidency, as they had all acted in clear violation of both domestic and international law.

Freedom Delayed, Dignity Denied

It was the forty-sixth day. I sat hopelessly, reflecting on the fact that I had already withdrawn all my complaints, yet nothing had happened. My lawyer had previously told me, “Be patient—you’ll hear good news soon.”

Around 5 p.m., the door to the block suddenly opened. A guard called my name. Without hesitation, I walked toward him. I knew that at this hour, there were neither administrative procedures nor scheduled visits. So it had to be one of two things: release—or hospitalisation.

He looked at me and said, “Pack your things—now.”

“Am I being released?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied. “Hurry up. You have ten minutes.”

The joy I felt was overwhelming—so powerful that it nearly gave me a heart attack. I thought I’d finally see my wife and child again that night. My heart pounded violently, and tears ran uncontrollably down my face. Everyone in the block was cheering. They had seen the psychological and physical torment I had endured. I embraced them all, said my goodbyes, grabbed a few pieces of clothing, and followed the officer into the corridor of the Migration Office.

They returned my wristwatch, wallet, and some cash. I expected to walk out into freedom. But instead, I was taken—along with around ten others

from other blocks who were also being released—into a camera-free room.

“Wait here,” an officer told us. “Your release documents are being processed.”

An hour passed. Then two. Then three. The air was stifling, and we could barely sit any longer. I knocked on the door and complained.

“Are we really being released?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“Then why are we locked in this room?” I replied. “You have no right to keep us here.”

They moved us back to the hallway. Another hour passed.

Around 9:30 p.m., an officer from the Migration Directorate arrived with a stack of papers.

“Sign these,” he said.

We read the documents. They stated that we had been released at 5:00 p.m.

I refused. “It’s now 9:30,” I said. “I’ll write the actual time next to my signature.”

He scowled and said, “Then I won’t release you. I’ll say you attacked me

and file a charge. Don't you want to see your wife and daughter? Just sign it—and piss off, you arrogant foreigner."

I knew it wasn't worth fighting anymore. I signed.

Half an hour later, another official arrived and said, "Be ready. In fifteen minutes, we'll take you to the intercity terminal in Çankırı. You're free to go wherever you want."

At precisely 11 p.m., a minibus dropped us off at the terminal. There were no buses to Istanbul until the next morning. I had no choice but to take a taxi all the way back. At 5 a.m., I finally arrived home and held my wife in my arms. After a shower and shaving my face, I spent hours embracing her and my daughter, who had just woken up.

By around 1 p.m., my condition sharply deteriorated. I was rushed to hospital. The doctor said I needed emergency surgery. Upon admission, blood tests revealed severe malnutrition. I remained hospitalised for one week, regaining some strength through proper food and medication. Only then was the operation safely carried out.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I learned that the official release order for my case had been delivered to the Çankırı Migration Directorate and the detention centre at 3:30 p.m. on the day of my release. Despite this, they had intentionally delayed my release until late at night, even

though I was in poor health. It became clear that their intention was not merely to process procedures but to inflict one last act of humiliation—not only on me, but on others as well.

And because I had been coerced into signing a document stating I had been released at 5:00 p.m., I was legally barred from filing a complaint against them.

Freed by Law, Trapped by Power

I was released based on a final ruling by the Turkish Criminal Peace Court, and shortly afterwards, the Administrative Court of Turkey officially annulled my deportation order. The court explicitly stated that deporting a Turkish citizen was illegal and contrary to the law. These final and unappealable decisions were duly submitted, alongside formal update petitions, to the Turkish Directorate of Migration Management, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Security Directorate. The same verdicts had already been communicated to those entities by the courts themselves, given that they were the respondents in the original lawsuits.

Despite receiving and confirming these court orders and petitions within two to three weeks, these authorities never genuinely respected them. A year later, when I attempted to leave Turkey for a short international trip—armed with legally binding verdicts protecting my rights—I was once again detained and deported.

Although I had already won a lawsuit concerning this issue, I was forced to initiate a second legal case for the exact same matter. This shows the institutional disregard within the Turkish state. When a government body refuses to honour even its own country's judicial system, what recourse remains for the individual?

Based on my experience, I can tell you: **none**. When power triumphs over law, not even a final judgment from Turkey's highest courts can guarantee the restoration of your rights.

Psychological: Hard Impact

Invisible Wounds

A Mind Under Siege

In the aftermath of my release, the visible wounds slowly faded, but the invisible ones grew deeper by the day. The psychological toll of forty-six days in administrative detention was not merely about the harsh conditions, isolation, or uncertainty—it was about the systematic erosion of one's sense of self. The humiliation of being treated as a criminal despite legal residence, the pressure to withdraw complaints in exchange for basic rights, and the prolonged exposure to dehumanising treatment had created a sustained state of internal siege.

I was discharged from the hospital after undergoing urgent surgery—a direct result of physical neglect in detention—but no medical procedure could address the mental injuries I carried. Panic attacks, insomnia, sudden tears, and recurring nightmares became part of daily life. I feared being left alone, distrusted any form of authority, and would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night expecting to be taken back to that dark

place. These were not fleeting moments of anxiety; they were the continuation of captivity in another form.

Months later, when I attempted a short family trip abroad—fully legal, fully documented—what should have been a healing experience turned into a devastating relapse. I was detained again, despite court rulings in my favour, and summarily deported. In that airport, where my right to freedom was once more stripped away, I felt my body freeze and my mind collapse. It wasn't just a return to fear; it was confirmation that my trauma had never truly ended.

But perhaps the most painful part of this experience was not what happened to me, but what it did to those I love. My wife, once strong and independent, began to suffer from persistent anxiety and depression after my detention. For nearly a year, she lived in emotional survival mode—haunted by the memory of my disappearance and the fear of losing me again. Our daughter, who was too young to fully understand, absorbed the tension in our home and developed deep fears of separation. Even today, she becomes distressed if I step out of the room for too long.

When we travelled together and were again confronted by state violence and legal betrayal, it broke something in all of us. It confirmed that our safety was still conditional. Since then, I have not been able to leave my family alone—not because they depend on me physically, but because the

psychological scars we all carry run too deep. I live with the burden of knowing that my survival came at a cost, and that cost is still being paid every single day.

Between Hope and Despair

There are wounds that do not bleed—wounds that remain invisible to the eye but scream in silence, day after day. After forty-six days of arbitrary detention, deprivation, humiliation, and uncertainty, I found myself breathing outside the camp walls. But that breath did not bring peace. It only marked the beginning of a new chapter of anxiety, disorientation, and profound vulnerability.

I was no longer in a prison, but I was not free. I had been broken down, stripped of my citizenship, denied protection, and left with nothing but a suitcase full of fear and legal papers that meant nothing to the authorities.

Even after the Turkish courts confirmed my freedom and overturned my deportation, the state refused to acknowledge it. And then, in what was meant to be a moment of normalcy—a simple family holiday abroad—we were ambushed again. At the airport, I was detained and deported without warning. Ten days later, we were notified: our Turkish passports had been officially invalidated.

We were now stranded in a foreign land with no status, no home, and no certainty of the future. We had left everything behind. Our home, our

documents, our belongings—objects that carried our memories and gave our daughter a sense of safety and continuity.

For my daughter, it was especially painful. Her favourite toys, the ones she used to sleep with, speak to, and confide in, were now gone. She searched for them in hotel drawers and asked when they would return. We had no answer. My wife tried to comfort her, but I could see in her eyes the weight of a thousand unspoken fears.

My own mind was a battleground. I fluctuated between hope that maybe someone would see the truth, and despair that everything I believed in—justice, law, decency—had failed me. I couldn't sleep. My body was fragile from the previous ordeal, and now my mind was catching up—lost in a maze of helplessness.

We had fled from persecution and ended up lost between borders, abandoned by every system. Our daughter clung to us with a fear far too mature for her age. My wife began to suffer from deep emotional exhaustion, and I—who once held everything together—could no longer reassure them with certainty.

What do you tell a child when she asks why she can't go home? What do you tell your spouse when she asks if she'll ever feel safe again? How do you answer when you don't even know what tomorrow looks like?

We are not refugees by choice. We are not criminals. We are a family who dared to believe in safety and dignity. Now, we carry the scars of a state's failure—not just on our documents, but on our souls.

No Escape Within

They often ask, "How did you cope?"

But the honest answer is—I didn't.

There is no strategy, no psychological trick, no guided breathing technique that can erase the sound of a prison gate closing behind you, the image of your child trembling in confusion, or the hollow feeling when your identity is stripped away by a stamp on paper.

I did not develop resilience—I simply survived. And survival, in such a context, is not a triumph but a slow erosion of the self.

We are often told to "stay strong," to "move forward," to "focus on healing." But healing requires safety. It requires time, stability, and trust—none of which were offered to us. Instead, I carried my pain like a second skin, invisible yet suffocating.

I refused to lie to myself. These wounds do not fade. There is no magical forgetting. The pain took root not only in me but in my daughter—whose nightmares, silences, and sudden tears reminded us that even innocence has memory. My wife, once the anchor of calm, was lost in spirals of

panic, sleeplessness, and deep emotional fatigue. And I, despite trying to appear strong, was crumbling within.

When you're denied the right to feel safe, to protect your family, to simply exist without fear—what strategy could possibly make that bearable? No book, no therapist, no retreat can undo what has been done to us. The trauma wasn't an event. It became a condition of our being.

So no, I won't offer advice on how to "cope." I won't insult others who suffer by pretending there's a method that works. There is only truth—and the truth is: this pain reshapes you. It carves a place inside you where no light reaches. And you learn to carry it, not because you're brave, but because you have no other choice.

This is not about giving up. It's about acknowledging the weight. It's about refusing to dress wounds with false hope. It's about honouring the truth that some experiences cannot be healed—they can only be remembered.

Scars Beyond Borders

They say time heals all wounds.

But what if time itself becomes a reminder of what was taken?

Every calendar day, every season that passes, brings echoes—not of healing, but of what was lost. Safety. Dignity. Trust.

We did not cross borders in search of a better life. We ran because we had no other choice. And even then, we were met not with refuge, but with rejection. With suspicion. With cruelty cloaked in bureaucracy.

The scars left behind are not always visible. They surface in how we wake up startled at night. In how our daughter still clings to us even during the day. In how we avoid loud sounds, sharp looks, or immigration checkpoints.

These are not just personal traumas. They are systemic injuries—delivered by institutions that chose efficiency over empathy, and control over compassion. And those injuries don't end when you leave the camp or the courtroom. They follow you. They settle into your bones. They become part of who you are.

We live now with an unspoken burden—a quiet awareness that we are both survivors and strangers. No longer at home in the country we fled. Not yet accepted in the country we reached.

Between two worlds, we carry invisible wounds—hoping, perhaps foolishly, that one day, someone will truly see them.

We did not lose our home once—we lost it twice.

Once in Iran, the country of our birth.

And once more in Turkey, the country that officially recognised us as its citizens.
To be stripped of a homeland twice is not a small wound.

It is the cost of seeking the truth—nothing more, nothing less.

Echoes: From 46 Days of Captivity

Visions That Never Faded

When Memories Bleed

After forty-six days of silent screams, dim hallways, rusted metal doors, and broken spirits, I was finally free—at least in body. But the mind, the soul, they do not walk out of such a place as easily. Freedom came not as a celebration, but as a quiet, trembling breath—a fragile moment between disbelief and survival.

In the days and weeks that followed, my memory began to paint pictures. Not with colours, but with shadows. Not with light, but with scars. These are the images that haunted my sleep and woke me up in cold sweats. They were not just memories—they were wounds that my mind kept drawing, again and again, trying to make sense of the senseless.

In this chapter, I will not describe what I saw. I will describe what I **felt**. These mental sketches are my truth, etched not on paper, but on the fragile walls of the soul.

Some of these images originated as mental impressions, sketched first by my own hand on paper, and later reconstructed or refined with the assistance of artificial intelligence.

Some of these images were also sourced from the internet, precisely matching the locations I was in and witnessed firsthand.

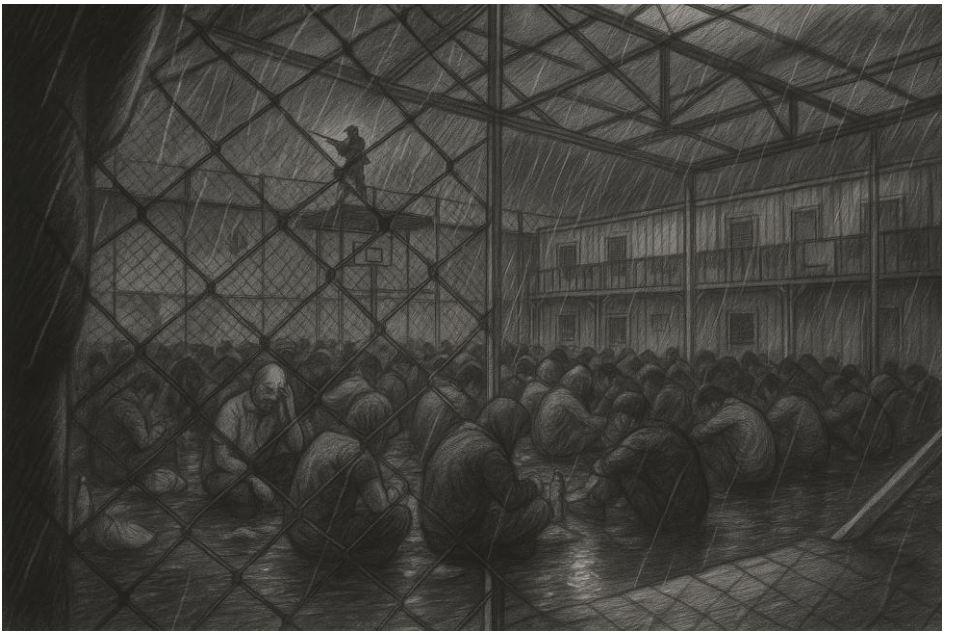
Police Station Detention Cell

You can easily find photographs of these temporary detention facilities in Turkish police stations by searching the phrase “Türkiye nezarethane karakol” on Google. However, the key point is that these holding cells were originally designed for only a few hours of confinement, yet in some

cases, migrants may be kept there for up to five days while awaiting transfer to a camp.

Tuzla Immigration Detention Centre

https://www.hrw.org/modal/98761



The first image is real and was found through an internet search (https://www.hrw.org/), while the second is a mental image that has remained with me since my first night of transfer to Tuzla.

In the first photograph, it is painfully evident that human beings are afforded almost no value. They are forced to sit on a floor that is both filthy and either uncomfortably cold or unbearably hot, with no facilities whatsoever. Strikingly, this was once a basketball court, repurposed to hold people. Some individuals had been kept here for up to two weeks, without any proper place to sleep or rest, without a single functioning toilet, and without access to real, nourishing food.

Çankırı Immigration Detention Centre

This photograph shows the initial outdoor area immediately after the main gate of the Çankırı Immigration Detention Centre.

This photograph shows the initial corridor where the immigration officers' offices are located. At the far end of this corridor, out of the camera's view, is the storage area where migrants' belongings are kept.


ÇANKIRI HABER 18
AFAD
AFAD


ÇANKIRI HABER 18

These two photographs depict the interior of the blocks—either Block One or Block Two.

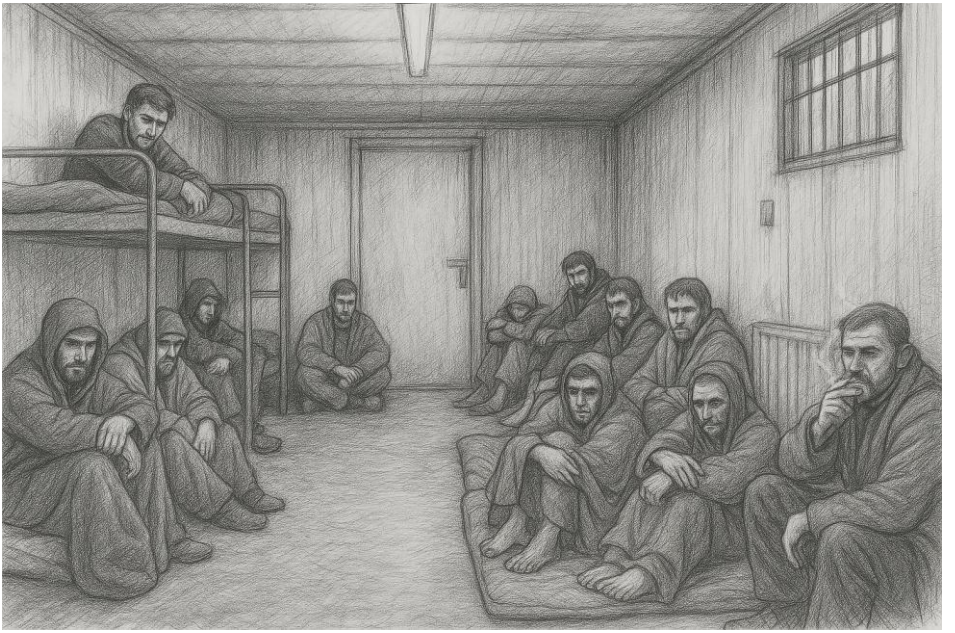
This photograph is also a blurred view showing only the entrance to each cell.

All of these photographs were found publicly through a Google search and were originally published by Turkish news agencies, with the corresponding source links available.

https://www.haber18.com/cankiri-geri-gonderme-merkezinde-tatbikat/8624/

https://www.haberci18.com/cankiri-il-goc-idaresi-geri-gonderme-merkezinde-isyan/19933/

This is a mental image of the block in which we were held.



This is a mental image I remember of the cell.

This is another mental image of a different cell where more people were held.

At the end of this chapter, I must state that these images may represent barely one per cent of what truly exists in that hell. To grasp the scale of the Çankırı tragedy, it would be enough to spend just twenty-four hours there to believe that, even in today's modern world—full of human rights slogans—institutions that themselves drafted these very laws and principles to prevent abuse and protect human dignity fail to uphold even their most basic obligations. What we see in their media outputs and social

platforms, in my view, is carefully curated to deceive public opinion and show only the most favourable side of the story.

That said, I do not deny that the existence of such organisations is better than their absence. However, the question remains: why should such atrocities occur under their watch while they turn a blind eye to the reality? With a proper oversight system, and using the very budget they already have, they could end these human rights violations in such detention centres once and for all—but this does not happen.

Call to Action: Final Words

Truth Beyond Survival

Why the Story Must Be Told

This book is not just an account of what happened to me. It is a mirror held up to a system that thrives on silence, opacity, and fear. I did not write this to make peace with the past. I wrote it because peace is impossible when the truth remains buried. What I endured is no longer just a personal memory—it is evidence. It is a document. And it is a warning.

The importance of telling this story lies not in its uniqueness, but in its familiarity. Too many others have lived similar stories, and far too many have not survived to tell theirs. This book gives voice to the voiceless, form to the formless, and record to the undocumented. When cruelty becomes protocol and injustice becomes standard operating procedure, storytelling becomes a form of resistance.

There were many moments—perhaps too many—when I questioned the point of documenting this ordeal. What would change? Who would care? Would it just bring more risk, more pain? But every time I thought of those

still trapped behind metal doors, still waiting for justice that may never come, I realised that silence was not an option. Silence is complicity.

The world often looks away from places like Çankırı. Detention centres are designed to be invisible. Their pain is meant to be private, their abuses unspoken. But when we tell these stories—truthfully, relentlessly, and without fear—we force the world to look. And sometimes, looking is the first step to change.

I also wrote this for those who one day may find themselves in a similar place. I want them to know they are not alone. That their suffering is not meaningless. That someone, somewhere, documented what the system tried to erase. That their pain matters.

And finally, I wrote this for my family. For my daughter, so that she may one day understand what happened, and why her toys vanished overnight, and why her parents held her tighter than ever. For my wife, who endured her own quiet nightmare while trying to stay strong for all of us. For all the families who carry these invisible wounds but are told to move on, to be grateful, to be quiet.

Truth is not always enough. But it is always necessary. This book may not bring justice. But it brings clarity. And sometimes, clarity is all we have.

Recommendations for Accountability

I did not write this account to seek pity, nor to dwell on the pain. I wrote it because silence is what allows injustice to grow. What happened to me could have happened to anyone. And unless we speak out, it will happen again.

This is not a story of a single person's suffering—it is a mirror held up to a broken system, one that thrives in secrecy and impunity. By documenting my experience, I hope to contribute to a broader understanding of the consequences of unchecked detention regimes and the psychological torment they inflict not only on individuals, but on families, communities, and generations to come.

I believe in the power of testimony. I believe in the strength of truth when it is spoken clearly, calmly, and relentlessly. My voice may not reach every corner of the world, but if it reaches even one policy maker, one human rights worker, or one ordinary reader who refuses to look away—then this effort was not in vain.

This story must be told because it is not just mine. It belongs to every man who watched a friend die in a cell. To every woman who carried her trauma in silence. To every child whose toy was taken, whose home was stripped away, whose nights are still filled with fear. We owe them our words. We owe them our truth.

Recommendations to Human Rights Organisations and Governments

1. **End Arbitrary Detention**

   Governments must abolish the use of indefinite or prolonged detention for migrants and asylum seekers, especially in the absence of criminal charges or court orders. No one should be imprisoned simply for seeking safety.

2. **Enforce Transparent Legal Procedures**

   Access to legal counsel must be guaranteed from the moment of detention. Detainees must be informed—clearly and in their own language—about the reason for their detention, their rights, and the legal process ahead.

3. **Establish Independent Complaint Mechanisms**

   Detainees should have access to confidential and effective mechanisms to report abuse, discrimination, or unlawful treatment. These channels must be monitored by independent human rights bodies.

4. **Ensure Access to Healthcare and Psychological Support**

   Detention centres must meet minimum standards for medical care, hygiene, and mental health services. International standards such

as the Mandela Rules and Istanbul Protocol must be applied without exception.

5. **Protect the Rights of Children and Families**

   Children should never be detained. Where families are involved, alternatives to detention must be prioritised. Separation, trauma, and displacement leave lasting scars—especially on young minds.

6. **Limit the Role of Security Forces in Civilian Detention**

   Military or paramilitary forces should not manage civilian detention facilities. Immigration matters are not security threats, and treating detainees like criminals only deepens trauma and mistrust.

7. **Allow Regular Visits by Humanitarian and Legal Organisations**

   Access to facilities by lawyers, NGOs, and independent monitors must be routine and uninhibited. Denying external scrutiny enables abuse and isolates detainees from the outside world.

8. **Hold Officials Accountable for Abuse**

There must be clear legal consequences for state officials who engage in or tolerate mistreatment of detainees. No system can function justly without accountability.

9. **Train Staff in Human Rights Protocols**

   Detention centre personnel must be trained in international human rights law, trauma-informed care, and cultural sensitivity. Ignorance is not a defence for cruelty.

10. **Direct Oversight by International Human Rights Institutions**

    One of the most painful truths about my forty-six days in detention was not just the abuse itself—but the silence. Not one person from a credible international body, be it the European Parliament, UNHCR, or any global human rights institution, ever entered that facility. Not one voice from outside the walls asked us who we were, why we were there, or whether we belonged.

If even a single independent observer had spoken to me—or to the others—they would have learned that many of us were being detained unlawfully, despite holding valid residency documents or protection status. They would have realised that we were not criminals or threats, but people with families, legal papers, and valid reasons for being in Turkey. But no one came. No one asked. And so, the abuses continued in the dark.

I strongly recommend that international human rights organisations, including the United Nations and the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, establish routine, unscheduled, and unrestricted access to detention facilities in host countries. This oversight should not rely solely on government invitations. It must be part of international agreements, enforced by law and backed by consequences.

Had there been any system of genuine oversight, even once during my detention, my story—and the stories of countless others—might have taken a different path. At the very least, we would have been seen. Heard. Counted.

Indifference kills more silently than cruelty. International silence is not neutral—it enables.

To Those Who Still Listen

I never expected to write these words. Not because I lacked the courage, but because I once believed that no one would care to read them. For years, I thought pain was something we were meant to carry silently—that the world was too loud to hear the muffled cries of those buried beneath bureaucracy, silence, and injustice. But I now know silence serves only the oppressor.

This is not just my story. It is the story of thousands—of mothers and fathers, children and grandparents, students and workers, whose names

will never appear in headlines. It is a shared trauma, scattered across borders, hidden in detention centres, and erased from public memory. And if you're reading this, you are now part of that memory.

I don’t ask for pity. I ask for attention. I ask for your willingness to listen—not just to me, but to all those who have been rendered invisible. For every story told, there are countless others untold, suppressed, or forgotten. And that is precisely why this book had to be written.

There is a reason I described each bruise, each scream, each unanswered cry. Not to relive the horror, but to ensure it is not repeated. If even one person walks away from these pages more aware, more compassionate, or more willing to challenge cruelty—then this suffering has meaning beyond itself.

To those who still believe in human dignity, justice, and truth: never underestimate the power of bearing witness. Your attention is a form of resistance. Your memory is a shelter for stories the world tried to bury. And your voice—yes, yours—might be the only thing standing between someone else's suffering and the world's silence.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for remembering.

The Media's Duty: Amplify the Unseen

In a world overflowing with trending hashtags and algorithm-fed headlines, truth often goes unheard—not because it is hidden, but because it is unmarketable. Major media outlets, driven by viewership metrics and engagement analytics, have increasingly turned into echo chambers of what is already popular, rather than what is most important.

But what about the stories that haven't yet gone viral? The lives trapped behind barbed wires, the cries that never made it into soundbites, the silent battles fought in detention blocks far from the public eye? Who decides which pain is worthy of attention?

It is not just a moral failure when media neglect these stories—it is a betrayal of their foundational purpose. Journalism was never meant to follow trends. Its role is not to mirror the noise, but to expose the silence. In the absence of media visibility, abuse thrives. Had just one reputable outlet listened to those of us trapped behind the gates of that detention centre—had they bothered to ask questions, to verify our legal status, to compare our stories against the law—the outcome could have been drastically different.

Media platforms must reclaim their ethical compass. They must learn to identify and amplify unheard voices before they are trending, before the

wounds turn into statistics. Stories like mine—and those of countless others—should not have to wait for death or scandal to be told.

So this is a plea, not for sympathy, but for responsibility. To journalists, editors, and newsroom directors: Go beyond what is viral. Seek what is vital.

Because truth that is not amplified, is truth that is buried.

Appendices

Everything in this book is drawn from my direct experience. I have retained documents, court decisions, medical records, prescriptions, photographs and notes that corroborate what I have described. Where I refer to other people's accounts, I do so because I witnessed them first-hand or because multiple detainees described the same event independently. Where relevant, I also include public sources that report on conditions in Türkiye's "removal centres", including Tuzla (İstanbul) and Çankırı.

These appendices are not exhaustive; they are a starting point. Full materials can be shown to bona fide investigators, lawyers and recognised human-rights bodies upon request through my legal counsel.

What I hold (on file)

Court rulings and filings relating to my detention, release, and the annulment of my deportation order.

Hospital and clinic records (A&E/ER admissions, prescriptions, post-release surgery).

Written submissions/complaints made via my lawyer to the Presidency of Migration Management and other authorities.

Notes taken contemporaneously in detention (where possible), and shortly after release.

Names and dates (redacted in the manuscript for safety) of officers, staff and detainees relevant to key incidents.

Corroborating public reporting (selected)

• Scale and opacity of immigration detention in Türkiye

Turkey operates one of the world's largest networks of migration-related detention centres ("removal centres"), with persistent concerns about accountability, access and abuse.

(https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/turkey)

globaldetentionproject.org

• Country reports on detention law, practice and conditions

Global Detention Project's country reports (2019–2021) outline legal bases, length of detention, vulnerable groups and oversight gaps.

(https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Immigration-Detention-in-TURKEY-October-2021.pdf) ECOI.net

• AIDA/ECRE – 2024 update on removal centres

Asylum Information Database (ECRE) notes 32 removal centres operating across 25 provinces in 2024 (capacity ~18,780), with widespread reports of coercive returns, poor conditions and transfers that hinder legal representation.

(https://ecre.org/aida-country-report-on-turkiye-update-on-2024/) ECRE

• AIDA – Conditions in detention facilities (incl. Tuzla)

AIDA summarises issues flagged in official monitoring of Tuzla Removal Centre: hygiene problems (e.g., scabies outbreaks), very short psycho-social interviews (~5 minutes), and phone access problems after phones are confiscated.

(https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkiye/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/conditions-detention-facilities/)

Asylum Info Database

• Official monitoring of Tuzla Removal Centre (TİHEK)

Türkiye's Human Rights and Equality Institution (TİHEK) published a formal visit report on the İstanbul Tuzla Removal Centre (Report No. 2023/16), noting methodology (unannounced room selection; private interviews with detainees) and recommendations.

(https://www.tihek.gov.tr/public/images/kararlar/wcqkni.pdf)

tihek.gov.tr

• Access to removal centres

AIDA reports that UNHCR can access removal centres only with prior notification/PMM approval; there is no established NGO access protocol; contact with family varies by centre.

(https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkiye/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/access-detention-facilities/)

Asylum Info Database

• Çankırı Removal Centre – incidents reported in Turkish press

Multiple outlets reported a fire/riot at Çankırı Removal Centre in July 2023; officials said it was contained; several people were treated for smoke inhalation.

(https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/cankiridakigeri-gonderme-merkezinde-yangin%2CCZQqCFBAbke8xnwMQy7f_w)

(https://www.trthaber.com/haber/turkiye/geri-gonderme-merkezinde-yangin-779461.html)

(https://www.sozcu18.com/cankiri-geri-gonderme-merkezinde-yangin-41652h.htm)

NTV

TRT Haber

Sözcü 18

• Çankırı Removal Centre – facility listing

Independent registry entry confirming the centre's administrative status and contact details.

(https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/turkey/detention-centres/2491/cankiri-removal-centre)

globaldetentionproject.org

• HRW – arbitrary detention and coerced "voluntary" returns

Human Rights Watch has documented arrests, detention and deportations of refugees (including forced signing of return forms, abuse and poor conditions).

(https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/24/turkey-hundreds-refugees-deported-syria)

(https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/24/turkey-syrians-being-deported-danger)

(https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/26/turkey-forcibly-returning-syrians-danger)

Human Rights Watch

• HRW – on Afghans, pushbacks and detention

Findings and recommendations regarding Afghans, including concerns about detention conditions and funding safeguards.

(https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/11/18/no-one-asked-me-why-i-left-afghanistan/pushbacks-and-deportations-afghans-turkey)

Human Rights Watch

• AIDA – place of detention (incl. Tuzla's capacity and profiles)

Background on which Istanbul centres house which profiles; notes Tuzla as a men's removal centre and changes over time in nationalities held there.

(https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkiye/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/place-detention/)

Asylum Info Database

Scope notes

- These sources are context for the reader; they do not replace, define or dilute my testimony. Where press articles are cited (e.g., on incidents at Çankırı), they are used to show public reports of events that mirror what detainees described.
- Formal monitoring (e.g., TİHEK) and databases (GDP, AIDA/ECRE) provide snapshots; conditions can vary sharply between blocks and over time. My account covers what I experienced directly, including periods and practices that may not appear in official summaries.

If you are a journalist, researcher or human-rights advocate and require structured references (dates, case numbers, medical file numbers), please request them via mail: **info@bravescript.com.**

About the Author

Hope Paradise is not a public figure. There are no interviews, no face, no personal spotlight—only a quiet, determined voice committed to documenting truth where others look away.

Hope Paradise is not one person—Hope Paradise is the voice of all victims of persecution, torture, harassment, and execution.

Over time, Hope Paradise became a witness—not to events firsthand, but to the stories of those who lived them. Survivors of torture, exile, arbitrary imprisonment, and systemic abuse entrusted their accounts to this author, not for fame or pity, but to ensure that their suffering would not be forgotten. Their voices, often ignored by official records, are preserved here with respect and precision.

Each narrative captured by Hope Paradise is more than just testimony. It is a fragment of history that might otherwise be erased. With deep compassion, careful verification, and an unwavering commitment to justice, Hope Paradise collects these fragments and gives them form—so

that readers around the world may understand what it means to live under regimes that rule by fear.

This book, like others that may follow, is part of an evolving archive—not built by institutions, but grounded in memory, trust, verified testimony, and official documentation.

Hope Paradise writes not to provoke, but to reveal. Not to judge, but to document. And always, to remember.

Because truth, once spoken—even in whispers—cannot be silenced.

"Hope Paradise is a truth-seeker"

Hope Paradise is currently developing a series of forthcoming titles that continue her focus on exposing systematic injustice, state violence, and the global misuse of power. These upcoming books will delve deeper into real-life accounts of victims and survivors, blending legal analysis, investigative research, and first-hand testimony.

Published Work

- ***Operation Redlist – Volume I: Hunted in the Shadows*** – An investigative exposé revealing how authoritarian regimes exploit international law enforcement systems to target political dissidents abroad, combining legal analysis, witness testimony, and documented evidence.

Among the forthcoming titles are:

- ***The Operation Redlist Volume II and III*** – a three-volume exposé on the authoritarian regimes' exploitation of international legal mechanisms to target political dissidents abroad
- ***Hellish Nightmares Trilogy*** – a three-volume investigation into gender-based repression, systemic abuse and torture
- ***The Devil's Detention Centre*** – an exposé on institutional torture and hidden detention centres
- ***From Rasoul Mosque to Cornerstone Church*** – a personal and investigative journey across two worlds divided by faith, freedom, and political oppression.
- ***Silent Executions*** – an unflinching account of hidden state killings and the mechanisms used to erase them from public memory.
- ***Seven Five Two*** – a detailed reconstruction of the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752.

Further details will be announced through official publishing channels: Website: bravescript.com - Instagram: @bravescript

X: @Hope_Paradise_

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46 Days of Captivity – Çankırı: The End of the World

This is a work of nonfiction. All statements, documents, and accounts contained within are based on factual records, verified court verdicts, and publicly available evidence. Where personal experiences are described, they have been faithfully recounted without embellishment, alteration, or omission.

All names, identifying details, and certain geographic references have been altered, withheld, or anonymised where necessary to protect the safety, privacy, and dignity of individuals. Where pseudonyms are used, any resemblance to actual persons, living or deceased, is purely coincidental and unintended.

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