

POSSIBILITY OF POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF DEATH FAST AS A
POLITICAL ACTION

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POLITICAL ACTION**

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ABSTRACT

POSSIBILITY OF POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF DEATH FAST AS A POLITICAL ACTION

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This study addresses the possibility of a positive assessment of the death fast action juxtaposed to the negative image which underlines mortality. This thesis is based on interviews with people who participated in the death fast action in 1996 and the 2000s, protesting the F-type prisons and lockdown in Turkey. The purpose is to understand death fast action and the activists who participated in these actions; in this study, 20 people were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. The data obtained was evaluated and interpreted using a qualitative analysis method, in the form of a case study. By concerning the act of death fast as political action, an alternative conceptualization has been suggested. In this sense, a gap in the literature about this subject has been tried to be filled. The study intends to open the door to the discussion of how Baruch Spinoza, one of the 17th-century thinkers, would approach the act of death fast. Spinoza is included in the study because he tried to understand what a body is capable of; he is a thinker who points to the effort to exist, what a person can do within his/her power, and at the same time, he definitely rejects suicide and asserts that the living being cannot think of anything less than death. The discussion of how such a thinker would think about the death fast action that carries the risk of death was found meaningful. In line with this purpose, the themes obtained and derived from the

interviews briefly associated with a few concepts of Spinoza, which are *conatus*, *potentia*, affections, encounters, the will/free will, the understanding of body/mind, and sacrifice. In this regard, the study aims to pave the way for the discussion of Spinoza and death fast action and represent Spinoza's perspective as an enriching approach to the death fast literature.

Keywords: Death Fast, Vitalness, Risk of Death, Might.

ÖZ

POLİTİK BİR EYLEMLİLİK OLARAK ÖLÜM ORUCU EYLEMİNİN POZİTİF DEĞERLENDİRİLEBİLİRLİĞİ

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Bu çalışma, ölüm orucu eyleminin ölüme işaret eden yönüne vurgu yapan negatif yaklaşıma karşın pozitif bir değerlendirmenin olanaklılığını ele almaktadır. Türkiye’de, F-tipi cezaevlerine ve tecrite karşı yapılan 1996 ve 2000’li yıllardaki ölüm orucu eylemlerine katılmış olan kişilerle yapılan görüşmelere dayanan bu çalışma, ölüm orucu eylemini ve eylemcileri anlama çabası taşımaktadır. Bu araştırmada, yarı-yapılandırılmış soru formu kullanılarak, 20 kişi ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, nitel analiz yöntemlerinden durum çalışması ile değerlendirilmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Politik bir eylemlilik olarak ölüm orucu eylemine odaklanılıp, bu eyleme ilişkin bir kavramsallaştırma ortaya koyulmaya çalışılarak literatürde bu yönde olan boşluk da doldurulmaya çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu tezde, 17. yy düşünürlerinden Baruch Spinoza’nın ölüm orucu eylemine nasıl yaklaşacağı tartışmasına kapı aralamak amaçlanmıştır. Konuya Spinoza’nın dahil edilmesinin sebebi, O’nun, bir bedenine neye muktedir olduğunu anlamaya çalışması; var olma çabasına, insanın kudreti/gücü dahilinde yapıp edebileceklerini yapmasına işaret eden ve aynı zamanda da intiharı kesinlikle reddedip, canlı varlığın hiçbir şeyi ölümden daha az düşünemeyeceğini vurgulayan bir düşünür olmasıdır. Böyle bir düşünürün, ölüm riskini içerisinde taşıyan

ölüm orucu eylemine ilişkin nasıl düşünceği tartışması anlamlı bulunmuş ve bu amaç doğrultusunda, yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen ve çıkarılan temalar kısaca, Spinoza'nın birkaç kavramıyla, *conatus*, *potentia*, duygulanışlar, karşılaşmalar, irade/özgür irade, beden/ruh ve feda anlayışı, bağdaştırılmıştır. Bu yönüyle, çalışmadaki diğer bir amaç, Spinoza ve ölüm orucu eylemi tartışmasının yolunu açmak, ölüm orucu literatürüne zenginleştirici bir yaklaşım olarak Spinoza perspektifini sunmak olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ölüm Orucu, Yaşamsallık, Ölüm Riski, Kudret.

To my parents

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IRA	Irish Republican Army
TMA	Turkish Medical Association
HRFT	Human Rights Foundation of Turkey
WK	Wernicke Korsakoff
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Scope, Aim and Significance

There seems to be nothing substantial that could be found in the literature about the conceptualization of death fast itself. In the literature, death fast is considered to be the same as other such practices, such as hunger strike, self-immolation, suicide bombing, and suicide. One may not find studies that are locating the center to the description of death fast action. Therefore, this study's first aim is to contribute to the literature by conceptualizing death fast as a political action. Another purpose of the study is to try to understand the death fast action. Contrary to the views that emphasize the mortality aspect of death fast, it is crucial for this research to focus on the action's life-oriented aspect. In other words, rather than treating life and death as a total dilemma, the death fast activist is mediating between life and death. In action, there is always a risk of death, and the activist mediates between life and death; s/he is neither entirely alive nor dead. Hence, the following questions come to mind: What is the life-oriented aspect of the death fast action, is there a possibility that an action carrying the risk of death can point to the effort to exist and live? Thus, the central question of this study is whether it is possible to assess death fast action positively as a political action. Taking our cue from this question, the act of death fast will be tried to be understood, and the gap regarding the conceptualization of death fast action in the literature will be filled.

The study is within the framework of political theory. In this study, we mainly wanted to highlight the experiences of death fast activists. For this purpose, discussions of which political organization the participants belong to and F-type prisons will be excluded from the study. This is because we aim to understand the action through the narratives of death fast activists, not to mention the differences between political organizations or articulate the ongoing debates about F-type prisons. Similarly, the Turkish context will stay in the background in the study because it will

be tried to examine the death fast action within the phenomenological subject. We will look at the immanent points inherent in this action, in this process.

Furthermore, in the thesis we will include how Spinoza emphasizing effort to exist and the desire to live, will approach such an action that takes the risk of death. Spinoza's hypothetical view will be presented with a few concepts of him: *conatus*, *potentia*, affections, encounters, the will/free will, the understanding of body/mind, and sacrifice. These concepts will help to build an alternative approach to the act of death fast. Thus, a path for discussion of the act of death fast from Spinoza's perspective will be presented as a contribution to the discussions concerning death fast.

1.2.Methodology of the Research

The case study method, which aims to identify an event or situation and understand it in-depth and from multiple aspects, was chosen as the appropriate method for this research. The main reason for choosing this method is that it can provide a detailed understanding of the death fast action. In this sense, a qualitative method was used in the research. Regardless of the year that the action was carried out, interviews were conducted with people who participated in the 1996 death fast action and the 2000s in Turkey. The time period the people participated in the action did not matter for the study because the study aims to conceptualize the action and understand the action and the activists. In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 people with a semi-structured questionnaire. One of these people is a doctor, one is a lawyer, two of them did not participate in death fasts but were close witnesses of the events, and twenty of them were people who had participated in a death fast. Since the studies and interviews were conducted during the pandemic, the interviews were carried out online. Only five of the interviewees wanted to communicate via e-mail, and they submitted their answers in written form after the research questions were sent to them. The field study was conducted by obtaining permission from the people participating in the research, stating that their identities will be kept confidential, observing ethical principles. Interviews lasted an average of 1 hour and 15 minutes and were recorded on the tape recorder after getting the consent of the interviewees.

The semi-structured questionnaire consists of five main parts: demographic information, prior information concerning the action, the process during the action, opinions about the action, evaluation, and the effect of the action. The questionnaire consists of 25 open-ended questions to meet the purpose of the study. The first of the

questions are about the demographics of the death fast activists. The interviewer asked the interviewee's age, educational background, occupations, and during which period, and for how long s/he was on a death fast. In the second part, questions regarding the political climate before the action, what the interviewee's political ideology is, how s/he decided to participate in the death fast action, and the aims and demands of the action were asked. The third part consists of what the interviewee felt during the action, how s/he was fed, whether s/he had any difficulties. In the fourth part, the interviewee was asked how s/he defines the act of death fast, whether there is a change in his/her opinions about the action, and what s/he thinks about the similarities and differences between the death fast action and other practices. In the last part of the questions, it was asked whether the interviewee was subjected to forced intervention, what happened as a result of the action, how the adaptation period was, what the interviewee thought about the death fast actions in different periods, and whether the action had an impact on his/her life.

The research questions aim to uncover what the interviewees experienced before, during, and after the death fast action and to try to understand the death fast action with practical examples through interviews. Also, during the interviews, it was taken into consideration whether the interviewees experienced any psychological, physical, or any discomfort discussing the subject. Therefore, their situation was taken into account while asking the questions. While the use of observation and interview techniques, data collection tools, document research, books, and literature related to the research subject supported the research method, attention has been given to the reliability of the research.

After the interviews were completed, transcribing the recordings commenced. Within the framework of the research's problematique and the answers received, a total of 25 themes were created, and an excel file was created by writing codes next to each theme. Each theme was written and analyzed by the researcher, and separate word files were prepared for each topic with the codes given. In this way, it became clear how often the interviewees emphasized which topic. During this process, we gave random letters to the interviewees, and their statements were presented in the study with these letters.

1.3.Thesis Plan

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter I describes the research question and aims to provide general information about the subject. In Chapter II, the literature on death fast will be presented. Chapter III presents the analysis and interpretation of field research data. In that chapter, certain pertinent concepts of Spinoza's philosophy will be discussed, connecting them to the themes that were established through the interviews. In the last chapter, we will conclude the thesis by presenting a summary of the thesis research. As a part of this thesis, we will discuss death fast action both conceptually and practically, with the central aim of understanding such practice.

The first chapter is in the form of an introduction, which introduces the study and its goals. This chapter includes the research question and presents the main framework of the study. The second chapter includes the literature review and the alternative approach to death fast. We will start from the history of the death fast. The description of the action, its characteristics, differences, and similarities with other practices, like suicide, euthanasia, suicide bombing, self-immolation, and lip-sewing, will be discussed. Then, the concept of rights, which is reasonable to consider in the context of death fast, will be emphasized extensively. In the context of death fast, rights are discussed in the literature in legal and medical terms, and rights are mostly addressed through the right to life. In the legal perspective, considering life as a right that must be protected regardless of what happens and locating the right to life at the top in the hierarchy of rights also determines the approach to death fast. Since life is a right that must be protected regardless of whatever occurs, an action that is likely to result in a person's death is opposed. In other words, from a legal perspective, the fact that the right to life is an inviolable and inalienable right, which must be protected no matter what, offers a definite approach when considered in the case of death fast. From the legal perspective, the death fast is an action that must be prevented because it endangers human life. While presenting the approach to death fast in the legal framework, one dilemma drew our attention: The dilemma of the right to resist and the right to life. Although there is no direct statement in the constitutions that a person has the right to resist, it is stated that people can resist the things and practices they oppose. In the act of death fast, activists start to act in line with certain demands against the

practices they oppose. At this point, the question comes to the fore, whether the law will approach the issue over the person's right to resist or the right to life. In practice, it is observed that the law displays a right-to-life-centered approach. However, we think it is useful not to ignore this dilemma between the right to resist and the right to live. This dilemma also demonstrates how the definition of life is established and how life is understood. To clarify, regardless of whether the most important thing is to survive, it is also important to emphasize the dilemma of resistance and the right to live in terms of the perception of life. Regarding the medical aspect, the issue of forced intervention is dealt with in the context of the death fast. Two international declarations cover how the medical approach to forced intervention should be: these are the Tokyo and Malta international declarations. In these declarations, it is emphasized that the activist's consent is and should be at the forefront of the interventions. However, in practice, this has not been the case. For instance, in the case of the death fast actions in Turkey in the 2000s, hundreds of people were crippled due to forced intervention. For this reason, the subject of forced intervention is also vital for our thesis. This part of the thesis will examine how the forced intervention is handled in medicine and law, and its reflections in practice will be discussed in the chapter where the field research is presented. Moreover, Spinoza's conceptualizations will be employed to construct an alternative view of the act of death fast at the end of same chapter. The reason for choosing Spinoza and not any other thinker is that he sees the body as a field of resistance and tries to understand what the body is capable of. In other words, he tries to understand what a person can do and his/her powers with a focus on positivity. We argue how Spinoza, who attaches importance to the effort to exist (*conatus*), would evaluate the act of death fast. This is the main reason for Spinoza's involvement in the study. Also, Spinoza has original views about rights (according to him, "right" is the power of man. In other words, what a man can do is his right. He establishes identification between rights and might and offers an original and divergent approach to rights. We thought that Spinoza's divergent approach to rights could present another view against the handling of rights in the legal framework because a creativity is presented to the right-holders. In this section, an alternative approach to the act of death fast will be presented utilizing Spinoza's concepts: his understanding of the body and mind, the will & free will, *conatus*, *potentia*, encounters/affections, and rights. In the thesis, Spinoza and the death fast debate were

not dealt as the central concern, however, the goal was to open the door to discussing how Spinoza would approach the death fast action. In short, the second chapter of the thesis aims to present the literature on death fast, reveal its difference from other acts, and make a more explicit conceptualization regarding death fast as a political action. At the end of this chapter, it is aimed to clarify what is meant by the phrase death fast, as this is very important for the later parts of the thesis.

The first section of the thesis' third chapter covers Turkey's political climate from 1960 to the 2000s. In this section, first of all, the political climate of the period is aimed to be presented without going into much detail because the main goal is to focus on and understand the act of death fast, which is significant for the study. For this reason, the importance of addressing the political climate of the period is not denied but is not discussed in detail. This section intends to convey the political stage of the years of death fast actions. The other part of the third chapter is the section where the analysis with a case study and interpretation of the interviews made with the people who participated in the death fast actions in 1996 and 2000s are presented.

In the third chapter of the study, in which the field research is included, the death fast action has been discussed by rarely referring to Spinoza's concepts of mind & body, *conatus*, *potentia*, the will & free will, encounters/affections, and rights. Furthermore, at the end of this chapter, a section presents Spinoza's concepts, as mentioned above, linked with themes derived from the interviews. In this section, some themes derived from the interviews are discussed and presented within the framework of Spinoza's aforementioned concepts. Thus, the aim was to expand the context in which the act of death fast could be discussed with Spinoza's concepts.

In the last chapter of the thesis, a general evaluation and discussion are presented about the death fast action. In this chapter, the description of the death fast procured from the literature review, the information obtained from the field research, and the alternative approach presented through Spinoza are summarized. In this chapter, a few points are introduced where it is thought possible to assess death fast action positively.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW and ALTERNATIVE APPROACH to DEATH FAST ACTION

2.1.A History of the Actions of Hunger Strike and Death Fast

The history of death fast and hunger strikes goes back a long way. It is known that the oldest known hunger strike was in the Roman period: Christians practiced hunger strike as a reaction against the oppression, and in the period of Emperor Tiberius, Nerva, a close lawyer friend of the Emperor, started a death fast to protest the murder and torture. In ancient times, the hunger strike, which was an action observed in the Far East, was staged without a political purpose. In Japan, sitting in front of the door of a person whom someone regards as an enemy and starving oneself was seen as an act of humiliation, thus putting him/her in a difficult situation (Ömeroğlu, 2011: 85).

In the 20th century, hunger strikes acquired a political character. The first known example was in Czarist Russia (Sevinç, 2008: 657), where some exiled people and political convicts staged a hunger strike. However, it became known worldwide to women who struggled to gain women's right to vote in England in 1909.¹ Also, in India, Gandhi upheld several hunger strikes against colonialism to end internal conflicts (Boran, 2007:96). His actions, which were in the form of civil disobedience, did not exceed 21 days.

In 1920, political prisoners used the hunger strike as a method in Ireland, and especially in the 1970s, hunger strikes became widespread in the world. In Germany, members of the Baader Meinhof organization staged a hunger strike in 1974. At the end of the 1970s, hunger strikes were staged by IRA members in Ireland to oppose prison practices. In 1981, 10 people who participated in this action died in prisons. The penal execution law was amended after the death of a prisoner, as a result of the forced

¹ This action ended with the granting of voting rights to women in 1918.

intervention. In the 1980s and 1990s, political prisoners in Latin American countries also used the hunger strike as a common protest tool (Boran, 2007).

In Turkey, the most well-known hunger strike was staged by Nazım Hikmet in 1950. As Banu Bargu states in her book titled *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*, Nazım Hikmet began a hunger strike on April 8, 1950, protesting for justice. The poet was stopped the next day by the government, who was convinced that the authorities had joined his case. When nothing happened, he resumed on May 1. After eighteen days, he called it off upon the landslide election victory of the Democrat Party, when he was convinced by public pressure to stop his action until the new government was set up (Bargu, 2016:171).

Hunger strike and death fast actions occurred increasingly after 1980. These actions were done in 1982, 1984, 1996, 2000, 2012, and 2020 in Turkey. They were done mostly to protest prison conditions and against the maltreatment of political prisoners. As a result of the actions, hundreds of people lost their lives.

Gürcan Koçan, and Ahmet Öncü claimed in their article titled “*From the Morality of Living to the Morality of Dying: Hunger Strikes in Turkish Prisons*,” in 1982, four prisoners died on a forty-three-day hunger strike in Diyarbakır Prison to protest the torture, and in 1984, political prisoners in Istanbul Metris Prison staged a hunger strike with the demand for ending torture in prison and the right to wear civilian clothes instead of prison uniforms. The government did address the protests, and four prisoners lost their lives (Koçan and Öncü, 2006: 350). In 1996, the action against the Eskişehir coffin and F-type prisons was ended on the 69th day, with the demands being accepted. Eskişehir coffin was closed, and the prisoners were not sent to F-type prisons. Twelve prisoners lost their lives in that death fast action. In Turkey, the 2000s death fast action was the most prolonged and had resulted in the most deaths. This action started as a reaction to the government’s practice of building and developing F-type prisons. It also included a protest against the anti-terrorism law.² The activists’ primary demand on the action was the cessation of the F-type practice that isolates prisoners, violates their right to interact with each other and facilitates torture (Anderson, 2004: 816-817). The death fast action in the 2000s lasted about seven

² The Anti-Terror Law No. 3713 was published in the Official Gazette on 12/04/1991, which includes the provisions of terrorist acts, the definition of terror crimes, criminals, and the penalty to be given the criminal and the trial to be made. To access the law:

<https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3713&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>.

years, and 122 prisoners lost their lives as a result of the action, to which more than two thousand people attended at various times.

The hunger strike in 2012 began with the demands that the lockdown of Abdullah Öcalan be lifted and for the free use of the Kurdish language in the public sphere. The action was ended on the 68th day with Öcalan's call, but the demands were not met.

In 2020, individual death fast actions were observed. Some members of "Grup Yorum" started a death fast action to open the closed İdil Cultural Center, where Grup Yorum continues its works, and to end the band's concert bans. The demands were not accepted, and two members died as a result of the death fast. Moreover, with the demand of the right to a fair trial, Mustafa Koçak and two lawyers, Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal, took the death fast action. While Mustafa Koçak and Ebru Timtik lost their lives, Aytaç Ünsal ended the action after he was released.

2.2.The Conceptualization of Death Fast

The definition of death fast is not stated in the literature in precise terms. Death fast is similar to the hunger strike, although there are a few differences between them. This section aims to reveal what the death fast is as a precise category and try to describe it as a practice.

2.3.Definitions of Hunger Strike and Death Fast

By definition, a hunger strike is to cease any activities of eating to protest injustice afflicted upon a person or others (Taşkın, 2006: 234), while the most widely accepted definition is that hunger strike is a method applied to draw attention to the views defending, make various demands, to protest a specific event, attitude, and behavior. According to another definition, it is a form of protest which involves stopping eating food voluntarily, mostly by people who have no other choice but to obtain their demands (Ömeroğlu, 2011:83-84).

The hunger strike has minor differences in itself. It is divided into food boycott, permanent hunger strike, indefinite hunger strike, alternating hunger strike, supportive hunger strike, and hunger strike with death target. It will be instructive to know the scope and definition of each kind. According to Taşkın, in his article titled "*Açlık Grevleri ve Hak Arama Hürriyeti,*" (*Hunger Strikes and the Right to Legal Remedies*) a food boycott means that the prisoner refuses the food provided by the state and provides nutrition from his/her resources. Although it is said that this action

is not a type of hunger strike since the activists continue to be fed with their food, it is recorded as a hunger strike in practice because some prisoners regard it as a hunger strike and the prison administration also evaluates the action as being so. However, if the prisoner refuses the food provided by the state and refuses to be fed from their resources for a certain period, it is called a periodic hunger strike. It does not matter how long the period is in a temporary hunger strike. Activists can stage a hunger strike for a certain period according to their choice.

On the other hand, if the prisoner refuses to eat the food provided by the state or by his/her resources indefinitely, it is called an indefinite hunger strike. There is food and fluid intake during indefinite hunger strikes, but the person consumes these to survive. Although death is not the goal, death might occur because of sudden complications resulting from malnutrition in people involved in this type of action. Unlike temporary hunger strikes, in indefinite hunger strikes, there is no time limitation. Activists can terminate the action when their demands are accepted, or without this acceptance, they can decide to end the action still.

After carrying out a hunger strike for a certain period, the group of prisoners can transfer this action to another group that will partake in the action for the same period, interchanging amongst themselves: this is called an alternating hunger strike. This type of action can be sustained for many years, as strikers begin to take food after three days of hunger, regain their former resistance, and start the action again. A hunger strike for support purposes is a hunger strike of a prisoner to support another ongoing prison hunger strike.

Besides, in death fast, prisoners on hunger strike starve themselves by not taking nutrients for a particular purpose. In this action, the activists aim to satisfy their demands, and if the goal was not death itself, they risked death to achieve their goal (2006:237-239).

In the literature, many definitions express death fast through hunger strike or evaluate it as one of the types of hunger strike. Death fast is defined as the last stage of a hunger strike in which a person completely refuses to eat, which is not restricted to a specific period. A similar view defines death fast as an unrestricted hunger strike that lasts longer than a certain period (approximately 30 days) or occurs in the form of not taking any food, including water, from the beginning. This view explains death

fast as a hunger strike that could result in death, which is located as a possible outcome (2011:83-84).

According to all these definitions in the literature, a hunger strike is a strategic act and choice of a person or persons to protest a situation by starving to create public awareness. At the same time, death fast is defined as the next form of hunger strike.

2.4. Characteristics, Similarities, and Differences of Death Fast & Hunger Strike

Although hunger strikes and death fasts are often considered to be the same actions in the literature, it is sometimes mentioned that there are minor differences between them. Thus, it is meaningful for this study to emphasize the differences between death fast and hunger strike after describing their characteristics and similarities.

The first similar characteristic between a hunger strike and a death fast is that both actions involve demands and purposes, and the body is used as a tool. In other words, both hunger strikes and death fasts are being undertaken for political purposes and demands, by the means of transforming the body into a field of action to achieve these purposes and satisfy demands. Some views point out the politicization of the action regarding the fact that the body becomes a tool in these actions. In death fasts, there is a re-politicization of the 'body,' which is already political, once again, but up to its internal organs (Akkoç, 2012). Using the body as a tool for action makes the body itself political. This situation is the same in a hunger strike. As Simanowitz stated,

The hunger strike appears as a tool of 'passive resistance' in the face of particular injustice, as a method used in situations where another way of policymaking is blocked. Hunger strikers aim to put pressure on the power with the message they convey through their politicized bodies (quoted in Ova, 2013:107).

Another critical point is staging hunger strikes and death fasts voluntarily. While this issue has been discussed in practice, especially about death fast actions, whether the activists participate in this action by force or their own will, the subject of "will" has been discussed a lot in the literature, including hunger strike and death fast. This is also seen in the definition of a hunger striker. According to the 1991 Malta

Declaration³, “A hunger striker is a mentally competent person who has decided on a hunger strike of his/her own free will and therefore refuses to take food or liquids for a certain period.” It is a crucial point that a person participates in these actions voluntarily with specific goals and demands. Without a particular purpose and demand and a willful decision, the hunger experienced will only be a physical hunger and not a political action. As Ömeroğlu asserts, “If there is no will, the situation can only be hunger; it is not possible to talk about the hunger strike or death fast actions.” (2011:84).

It is possible to say that hunger strikes, and death fasts are very similar. Both have a particular purpose and demand, using the body as a tool in line with these goals and demands. Also, the will is vital in both actions. On the other hand, there is an explicit difference between these actions, which is continuity. Although there are some differences related to nutrition intake, it would not be wrong not considering nutrition as a difference between two actions because there are even nutritional differences in each death fast action in different periods. In other words, as mentioned in the first part, the hunger strike is an action staged at a specific time, depending on its type. In hunger strikes, death is not a planned part of the action. Conversely, the death fast is continued until the demands are accepted. While there is a continuity in death fast, it is not possible to mention continuity in the hunger strike as definite as death fast.

Accordingly, at the beginning of this study, while it was thought that it is possible to make a definite distinction between death fast and hunger strike, locating a definite distinction is not possible, regarding the mindset of these two types of action. There is only an apparent difference in terms of duration and continuity of the action, except that hunger strike and death fast actions can be considered almost the same type of action.

2.5. Peculiarities of Death Fast with respect to Other Self-Annihilation Practices

There are other actions that are used as a political or social protest method. Among these, it is possible to list suicide, euthanasia, suicide attacks, self-immolation actions, and lip-sewing practices. It is necessary to distinguish the death fast from such practices as the understanding of life can be problematic.

³ In November 1991, the declaration as a guide for doctors responsible for the health of hunger strikers was accepted by the 43rd World Medical Congress convened in Malta.

2.5.1. Differences of Suicide and Euthanasia from Death Fast

While most views argue that death fasts and hunger strikes are different from suicide and euthanasia, some claim these actions are the same. The opinions concerning the identity of the two are based on the view that, as Bedia Boran emphasized, people direct violence against themselves in both (Boran, 2007). In other words, the use of one's own body as a tool in hunger strikes and death fasts, and the fact that the person directs violence against herself/himself supports the claim that death fast is the same as suicide. However, this view is not widespread in the literature.

The view shared by the majority is that suicide, euthanasia, and death fast are different actions. A person commits suicide intending to end his/her life at that moment. While the reason for this can be personal, it can also be social. Similarly, in euthanasia, the person wants to end his/her life to stop feeling pain. The main difference between these actions and the death fast is that in death fast, the person begins the action for an unclear time. S/he knows that his/her life may end in this process, but this is not certain. The purpose of death fast is to realize the demands. The way to do this is to turn the body into a field on which actions are taken and, to struggle within this field, where it is thought that there is no other way anymore.

As Johanna Simeant emphasized,

All demanding political rights, all individuals engaged bodily in protest because their status is threatened or denied. Some of them have a long experience of domination over their bodies and have sometimes acquired knowledge in this area. Others turn to their bodies because their voices have no weight socially. Hunger strikes reveal the idea of the value of the body that some individuals are reduced to: bodies destined for work or reproduction, prisoners' bodies at the disposal of the prison, bodies of those without any status (Simeant, 2016:43).

Sevinç also comments on this issue. While he considers hunger strike and death fast as a particular phenomenon, he evaluates suicide and euthanasia as separate from them. According to him,

Hunger strike and death fast are different from suicide and euthanasia because, in suicide, the goal is to die; in other words, a person sees death as the only way and kills himself. However, hunger strike and death fast have an idea, a request. The aim is not to die; the participants play the only card they have, that is to say, their own lives (2008:656).

In suicide, a person sees death as the only cure for her/his troubles and wants to end his/her life. On the other hand, as underlined, death is a calculated risk in death fast. There is a demand in action, and one pushes his/her body closer to death to satisfy

this demand. In this way, a process is initiated, a possibility for negotiation is created. As noted, “Most hunger strikers are trying to effect political change rather than trying to become martyrs, commit suicide, or live with nutritional deficiencies.” (Oğuz&Miles, 2005:169). As Boran stated,

Unlike suicide, death is not the main purpose of hunger strikes, but the risk of death only gets stronger after a certain stage. Those who resort to this method aim not to die but to change a policy/practice they do not want. They aim to pressure authorities by mobilizing their conscience with their actions. In general, the hunger striker with political motives does not want to die but rather live better. His/her purpose is not suicide (2007:100).

Likewise, George J. Annas emphasizes the same point:

Hunger strikes differ from other forms of “suicidal” behavior because death is a prolonged one. This route is usually chosen because its slowness gives others a chance to meet the hunger striker’s political or personal demands. Two other responses are, of course, possible. The striking prisoner could be force-fed or permitted to die (Annas, 1982:21).

Besides, it is also possible to distinguish between euthanasia and death fast. In euthanasia, it is not possible to mention any political demand. The person wants to end his/her life to cease the physical and/or psychological pain s/he suffers. As Sevinç mentioned,

Euthanasia has to do with patients who have no hope of living humanely and who are suffering. These individuals or their relatives wish to acknowledge the patient’s desire to die and the desire not to burden their relatives or lead what they would consider an undignified life (2008:657).

On the other hand, in death fast, we see the use of the body in an alternative manner; in its instrumentalization for a prolonged action as a process.

2.5.2. Differences of Suicide Bombing and Self-Burning Practices from Death Fast

Suicide bombing could be considered a marginal action. Suicide bombing is pursued through the body, but it is difficult to call it an act of resistance or protest due to how it is realized and because of the damage it causes. This is because, in these actions, the person who acted both causes his/her death at that moment and the death of many people in a public space. Therefore, the use of the body in this action has different connotations, as opposed to death, in which the body becomes a field of struggle. The person on a death fast is only partaking in an action that brings his/her own body closer to death in the process. On the other hand, in suicide bombings, the person demolishes everything and knows this before acting. As Nehir Kovar claimed,

Arming the bodies of suicide bombers and instrumentalizing the body by hunger strike are two types of actions that will not be on the same plane. A living bomb turns its body into a weapon in a ballistic sense; it does not use its body's capabilities. [...] Until the moment of the action and at the moment of its realization, the body cannot constantly remind itself of all its fragility and needs. On the other hand, the hunger strike activist asks for the testimony of society as s/he opens his/her body to death. Although s/he takes the risk of physical death, his/her aim with death is a life-oriented, symbolic desire for return and socialization. A hunger striker's body is not a weapon that harms anything other than itself. It is a symbolic weapon, and its strength is overcoming the fear of losing a life (Kovar, 2017).

Some argue that it is possible to place suicide attacks as a form of action within the scope of "altruistic suicides," one of the types classified by Durkheim⁴ while for some, it is not possible to consider these actions as suicides because suicide bombing, which also harms civilians as they are carried out in public spaces, is frequently considered as a terrorist act in this respect (Açıköz, 2013).

Besides, it is important to discuss whether these actions are actions to begin with. According to Hannah Arendt, "Action is the only activity that takes place directly between people, without the mediation of things or matter; it corresponds to the plurality of human beings, to the fact that people live and reside in this world." (Arendt, 2018:36). For her, plurality is the condition of human action, and it is the action itself that creates the condition of collective memory, of history by acting in the political field. Action has a close connection with human birth (i.e, natality). As Arendt emphasized,

It is only because a newborn can start something new, that is to act, that the new beginning that is immanent in birth can make itself heard in this world. Moreover, since the action is a perfect political activity, not mortality, but fertility, apart from metaphysical thought, maybe the central category of political thought (2018:37).

Therefore, from Arendt's standpoint, suicide bombing will not be perceived as a public action or even, as an action.

Furthermore, self-immolating actions are actions performed through the body. These actions are mostly defined as protest actions. According to Bargu, "More broadly, self-immolation manages to threaten the state's monopoly over life and death." (Bargu, 2016:487). To break down the state's monopoly over life and death, a person decides and chooses death. Bargu regards this phenomenon as the weaponizing

⁴ In this suicide type, the individual sacrifices himself/herself for the values and future of the society/community in which s/he is a member.

of the body and states that in the death fast, the person does not choose death; s/he takes death as “only a risk to bear.” (2016:285). The purpose of self-immolation actions is to send a message by burning one’s own body. These actions can be understood as an act of sacrifice as well as a form of protest. In other words, in self-immolation, the aim is to deliver a message, and in the way that message is delivered, the action can also be defined as a protest. Hence, contrary to the death fast, that is, to demand and put his/her body to death, the dimension of protest is much more prominent in self-immolation actions.

There is a fundamental difference between suicide bombing and self-immolation from death fast actions when all these aspects are considered. A suicide bomber chooses between life and death. On the other hand, the person undertaking a death fast is “suspended” between life and death (Serin, 2015). It is precisely at this point that the term “suspended” is significant. Being suspended between life and death, for the death fast activist, is also crucial in indicating the struggle s/he is in. In suicide bombing, euthanasia, or suicide, the person chooses between life and death, and ends his/her life, while on a death fast, the person goes back and forth between life and death by keeping himself/herself and his/her body suspended between them. This movement between life and death, being alive, but at the same time approaching death day by day and slowly, reveals the death fast’s unique character. The activist going between death and life does not end his/her life suddenly, unlike acts such as suicide, euthanasia, or suicide bombing; s/he starts this being suspended situation by connecting the continuity of his/her life to the realization of his/her demands and taking the risk of death.

2.5.3. Differences of Lip-Sewing from Death Fast

We should also consider the practice of lip-sewing an act of protest using the body, because it involves transforming the body into a tool for a certain demand. Lip-sewing as a protest was firstly observed in 2002 in Australia’s biggest camp for asylum seekers, a protest of the delays of visa application processes. After this first example, this method was also used in 2003, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2018 in different countries for different purposes and demands such as asylum policies, slow court procedures, and poor living conditions.

Bargu, in her article titled “*The Silent Exception: Hunger Striking and Lip-Sewing*,” examines hunger strike and lip-sewing. She comments: “On March 2, 2016,

seven refugees in Calais announced a hunger strike to stop the eviction by the French security forces and the demolition of the southern part of the refugee camp, known as the 'Jungle.' At least five of them sewed their lips shut.” (Bargu, 2017:1). As being protest actions, people sewed their lips, and robbed themselves half-naked, wrote freedom slogans on their bosoms, and sometimes lay down on the train tracks before the eyes of riot police and a handful of reporters. These people wanted to show something, to do something in the state of silence, by keeping their mouths pricked and silent, thus becoming a political protest.

The people participating in lip-sewing action as a protest continue their actions until the demands are satisfied. There is no example of a lip-sewing action that has resulted in death. However, if the action continues, it will most likely end with death because the activists cannot eat.

Although lip-sewing is similar to the death fast in terms of instrumentalization of the body, the purpose of the death fast is to prolong the activist's death until the demands are accepted. For instance, in the death fasts around the 2000s in Turkey, one reason for taking vitamin B1 is to prolong the time of the action. Thereby, it is possible to say that there is a difference between lip-sewing and death fast regarding the duration that the action takes.

To recapitulate it all, if we try to make a series of distinctions based on all types of action pursued through the body, the main difference is that suicide and euthanasia aim to end one's life. While the reason for suicide can be social, individual, political, or a combination of these, the person decides not to continue his/her life anymore. In euthanasia, the person who wants to end his/her pain decides to end his/her life. Suicide bombers differ from death fasters because they harm both themselves and other people around them in the public sphere. According to Arendt's definition of action, it is possible to say that suicide bombing, which can be considered to be marginal, is not even an action. Also, self-immolation actions can be defined as an act of protest. In this action, a struggle that continues for a long time in the person's body does not manifest itself as it does in the death fast. In self-immolation acts, the person dies within a short time after the action is performed. The person gives a message with this act, with his/her death. The realization of his/her death in this way paves way for the body to become a protest tool. Among all these actions, it would not be wrong to

say that lip-sewing is the most similar to death fast as it involves demands, not aiming for death but the meeting of the demands.

As aforementioned, in all these actions, the person uses his/her body. However, in a death fast, the body becomes a field where the person fights both with himself/herself and outside during the protracted action. The activist does not die at once; s/he is always alive; on the one hand, s/he gets closer to death. The activist is suspended between death and life. This is the most important point separating death fast from all other acts previously mentioned. The activist moves between life and death but does not rest at any of them. His/her body is in a situation that presents this dilemma. When demands are accepted, the activist decides to stay alive. In this sense, death in a death fast appears only as a risk.

2.6.Considering Death Fast from the Perspective of Rights

2.6.1. The Right to Life

The discussion of ‘right’ is one of the topics related to the death fast discussion, and the issue of the right to life in particular is discussed mostly in law and medicine. As seen in Şahin Akıncı’s article, titled *“İrade Muhtariyeti İlkesi ve Şahsiyet Hakları Açısından Ötenazi, Açlık Grevi ve Ölüm Orucu”* (Euthanasia, Hunger Strike and Death Fast in terms of the Principle of Free Discretion and Personal Rights) the issue of the right to life and other individual rights are brought into the discussion. Akıncı discusses euthanasia, hunger strike, and death fast within the perspective of law. According to him, “The most important legal problems that arise in this regard are whether a person has the opportunity to save her/his own life and the legitimacy of consent in this way.” (Akıncı, 1998:733). The question is whether a person can decide to live or die on her/his own and whether consent has a role in these acts and demands.

At that point, the issue of personal rights comes to the fore. In Turkey, detailed regulation on personal rights has been established in article 23 of the Turkish Civil Code. This article emphasizes that personal rights cannot be waived, even partially, and these rights are inviolable (1998:736-737). The right to life is evaluated as one of the personal rights over which the right owner does not have the chance to subdue (1998:748). Consent to death is also against the law because it would be a waiver of personal rights. Doğan Soyaslan, a professor of law, states that “... It is unacceptable for a person to willingly embrace his death in the case of a hunger strike because the right to live is a fundamental right that the individual may not forgo.” (2008:672).

Actions such as suicide indicate the abandonment of the legal personality because, in law, the human being has become a legal entity, understood through his/her personality (quoted in Sevinç, 2008).

In law, life is a precondition for all other rights and must be protected no matter what. In this sense, although no law criminalizes death fast, the issue is examined through the perspective of protecting the right to life. The right to life is approached in many different ways by different writers, as Feinberg stated. The right to life is examined in a superficial and broad sense. In a relatively superficial way, the right to life refers to “the right not to be killed” and “the right to be rescued from impending death.” However, in broad terms, the right to life covers the “right to live decently.” (Feinberg, 1978). As Hugo Bedau expressed,

The life to which we now think men are entitled as of right is not [merely] a right at the barest level sufficient to stave off an untimely death; rather it is a life sufficient for self-respect, relief from needless drudgery, and opportunity for the release of productive energy (1978:94).

According to this view, the right to life is not merely the right not to be killed, as it is vaguely understood; on the contrary, it is the right to continue living and producing. In other words, according to this view, the right to life is not only the right to survive physically but as the right to “be alive, not survive.”

On the other hand, thinking from solely the perspective of the right to life and the idea that people can live whatever happens is examined by Samuel Adams in his book, *The Rights of Colonists*. According to him,

It is irrational for anyone to renounce a natural right and implies that such renunciations must be prompted by “fear, fraud, or mistake,” thereby failing to be wholly voluntary. But even if such a renunciation were somehow made without mistake, fraud, or reason-numbing fear, it would be invalid because a “gift” from an all-powerful Creator cannot, in the very nature of things, be refused or relinquished. Whatever we are to make of these arguments, there can be no doubt what conclusion they are meant to support: the right to life, like the other natural rights, cannot be given away or disposed of, even if one wishes (1978:14).

Adams believes the right to life is absolute, and claims, “If I decline to exercise the right positively or else waive it, then it is my life that I alienate, not my right to life.” (1978:115). In other words, according to Adams, the person renounces his/her right to life when s/he is alienated from his/her own life, but at this point, what s/he renounces is not the right to live, but his/her own life itself. Therefore, while the right to life is a right to be preserved regardless of the legal framework, it is possible to

focus on two opinions in this discussion. The first view examines the right to life in a broader sense, emphasizing that life is not just survival. The other view, more appropriate for the legal perspective, understands the right to life directly as the right not to be killed and to continue living in any way and argues that the right to life is an inalienable and intangible right of people.⁵

2.6.2. Understanding of Life

The understanding of life is important for examining the issues of the right to life, its understanding in law, and the right to die. It can be thought that the view that deals with the right to life in a broad sense is directly related to the definition and perception of what life is. The perception of life is significant while trying to understand the death fast action. Discussing death fast, what is understood from life, how it is defined, and how to approach the right to life are central issues.

When life is discussed, it is generally conceived through rights. While there are also opinions stating that life is something that should continue no matter what, as in the legal perspective, there are opinions that state, as Koçan and Öncü do, “the right to determine the circumstances of one’s own life is a matter of dignity” (Koçan&Öncü, 2006:357). Bargu has a striking comment about this issue,

The despatialized claim to a shared humanity based on the “right to live” was substituted for the counterhegemonic and partisan claim to the “right to die,” a claim that dissipated along with the constituent spaces at the margins. Through a humanist discourse that affirmed the sacredness of life, what had been a destructive line of flight from the biosovereign assemblage was now ensnared and incorporated within it (2016:222).

If we follow Bargu’s argumentation, the humanist discourse, which locates life’s sanctity as the prominent aspect, has replaced the hegemonic and partisan claim. The existing line of escape has been trapped by including. As McCloskey asserts, “like other rights, the right to life is involved in conflicts such that it cannot always be the overriding, absolute, inviolable right, as it is so misleadingly commonly claimed to be.” (McCloskey, 1975:423). Right to life and the right to die are in conflict in an

⁵ On the other hand, the right to die is not located neither in Turkish legal system nor in international law. It is only possible to discuss euthanasia in the Netherlands practically because euthanasia is legal there. However, overall, the right to die is not a subject located in the constitutions of the other countries. While this issue can be discussed a lot in the philosophy of law, euthanasia has not exemplified in practice. But, if it is thought from the claim that rights are universalizable demands, this demand arises from the approach of right as rectitude. Right as rectitude means it is the right way of doing something; that is, doing the right thing. Having right to die is not possible. In this case, it may only be two marginal liberty.

absolute and inviolable way, and the humanist discourse on the sanctity of life has replaced the hegemonic discourse. From such a point of view, life does not represent a situation or a right that should continue no matter what. Hence, upon discussing the issues related to the matter, violation of the right to life from the perspective of whether the right to life can be waived or not may create legal problems when trying to understand the act of death fast.

2.6.3. Dilemma of the Right to Life and the Right to Resist

Death fast can also be understood as an act of resistance, so it will be reasonable to examine the right to resist. The right to resist is divided into two, these being active and passive resistance. The characteristic of active resistance shows itself in the aggressive and defensive resistance, which are considered to be identical with rebellion (Anbarlı, 2006)⁶. In other words, to oppose and act against the power and force at that moment is to engage in active resistance.

Passive resistance is to struggle against oppression without resorting to force and violence, as a model of resistance that can be the source of civil disobedience (Anbarlı, 2006). In this form of resistance, in which the idea of non-obedience without using force is central, it is essential not to obey the state's orders and rules.⁷ The distinction between active and passive resistance is made in terms of using violence, force, and the period that the act continues. Unlike passive resistance, which carries on for a much more extended period without force and violence, force and violence can be used in active resistance. In this sense, it is possible to consider death fast as a kind of passive resistance.

The right to resist is mentioned for the first time in contract theory. This right expresses the legitimacy of opposition to the existing legal framework that oppresses citizens (Mısırlı, 2007:41). In natural law, "the right to resist is based on the

⁶ "The more complex defensive opposition can be divided into two types. In the first case, there is no doubt that the treatment of the individual is against the law. In this case, the individual can defend himself using violence. For example, he can resist the public agent who wants to break his/her door and enter at night. This behavior does not have the features of rebellion. The second situation is that the treatment is in accordance with the law but is against the objective rules of rights. What matters here is not the lawfulness of the public agent's behavior but the violation of the law with the objective rule of right and who decides this violation." (Anbarlı, 2006: 2). For detailed information on active resistance, see. Şeniz Anbarlı, Right of Resistance and Civil Disobedience Against Oppression (The Case of Turkey), 2006, Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Social Sciences Department of Public Administration Doctoral Thesis, pp.2-4.

⁷ For detailed information, see. Anbarlı, Ş., Right of Resistance and Civil Disobedience Against Oppression (The Case of Turkey), unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, pp.4-6.

understanding of the protection of some of the rights that a person has from birth.” (Taşkın, 2004:48). With the American and French revolutions, as emphasized in the corresponding declarations, the right to resist became conceivable in the legal domain. The common point in these declarations was that there should be a common belief in the illegal seizure of power and that there should be no other solution than resistance. (Anbarlı, 2006:261). In Turkey, in the preliminary promise of the 1961 constitution, the right to resistance is referenced as a fundamental right, stating “The Turkish nation carried out the revolution of May 27, 1961, using its right to resist power that had lost its legitimacy through its constitutional and illegal attitudes and behavior.” (Kili&Gözübüyük, 2000:174 from Taşkın, 2004).⁸

Whether the right to resist is a legal or political issue; whether it originated from natural law or positive law, are still debated issues. There is no consensus on this matter (Doehring, 2002:130). What is important to us in terms of death fast is how the right to resist is evaluated legally. There is a divergence of opinion between lawyers and authors about this subject. Leon Duguit⁹ approaches the right to resistance as a legal remedy: “the behavior has aimed at removing a power that has lost its legitimacy and turned into a brute force, from the beginning and to make the law superior is entirely legal and legitimate.” (quoted in Taşkın, 2004). On the other hand, according to some lawyers, the right to resist is illegal but legitimate. According to Taşkın, the right to resist is handled in constitutions not directly but indirectly. The reason for this is that the concrete criterion for the exercise of this right cannot be determined. For example, if an action that demolished the existing power to stop oppression causes another oppression and persecution, this act of resistance loses its legitimacy (Taşkın, 2004). For him, the form of resistance is vital; this way determines the action’s legitimacy.

Concerning death fast, while the right to life is generally explained clearly in the constitutions, the situation is not the same for the right of resistance.¹⁰ On one hand, the legal perspective states that the right to life must always be protected, and

⁸ In the Turkish Constitution, the right to resist defined after 1960 military coup was given to the nation not the individuals. For detailed information about the right to resist in Turkey, see. Taşkın, A. (2004), *TTB Dergisi*, issue. 52, pp.55-56.

⁹ Duguit, who is a sociologist, is a French public law expert working on the concept of rights.

¹⁰ From a legal perspective, while the right to life which is a precondition of other rights must always be protected, there are no explicit expressions about the right to resist.

on the other hand, it claims there is a right to resist, although it has some conditions and uncertainties. It is then possible to assert that there is a dilemma concerning the relation between the right to life and the right to resistance especially in the case of the death fast action, as it can be considered an act of resistance. Now, let us look at forced intervention because it is undoubtedly significant in the death fast discussions, especially in the discussions related to the 2000s death fast actions in Turkey.

2.6.4. Forced Intervention and Related International Declarations

We have discussed ways of approaching death fast from the perspective of law and rights. Yet, from a medical point of view, the subject of forced intervention emerges. For the first time in the history of hunger strikes, forced intervention, a dubious medical practice, was put into practice in 1909 against the people part of the movement demanding voting rights for women from England. (Reyes, 1998:3). It was defined as a type of torture by women's rights defenders who were also imprisoned in British prisons at the beginning of the 20th century. In this context, the forced intervention appeared, and it became a subject matter that should be treated very sensitively in terms of health and medical ethics. (Muti & Topaloğlu, 2014:79).

There are two internationally accepted declarations, which are the Tokyo and Malta Declarations, related to the treatment of hunger-striking activists and how to prevent torture. The common point of these declarations is that forced intervention is rejected, and the patient's well-being is the central concern (Reyes, 1998). The Tokyo Declaration of 1975 deals with torture during detention and other cruel, inhumane, degrading acts and punishments. According to this declaration, the highest respect for human life should be maintained even under dangerous conditions, even without allowing any medical knowledge to be used contrary to humanity's laws. Among the six articles of the declaration, Article 5 focuses on forced intervention, which is pertinent to our study: the consequences of the refusal to be fed should be explained to the convict by the physician. When a convict refuses to eat, if the physician is convinced that the person is conscious, and this decision is voluntary, the person will not be fed intravenously. An independent physician will also approve this decision. In the "Maltese Declaration on Hunger Strikes" adopted in 1991, it is stated in the first article that respecting the sanctity of life is an ethical obligation for every human being. In the medical profession, this issue is even more important; the physician has to

protect the patient's life and fulfill all the requirements of his/her job for the patient's benefit. However, when an emergency occurs, the physician must do what is best for the patient. The Maltese Declaration has a critical point: "In terms of his/her moral obligations, the physician has to bring the patient back to life, even if it is against the will of the patient; but in terms of his/her professional responsibility, s/he ultimately has to respect the patient's own will." In this statement, it is said, the final decision to intervene or not should be left to the physician. Since the medical profession's basic principle is the sanctity of life, recommendations have been made to physicians in this regard. Article 4 in the Maltese Declaration states that,

The final decision to intervene or not should be left to the physician. When necessary, the physician should indicate to the patient whether he or she approves of his/her (patient's) decision to refuse treatment, artificial feeding in the case of coma, and the risk of death. If the physician disapproves of the patient's decision to refuse, s/he should ensure that the patient is followed by another physician (Sayek, 1998:35-36).

As Betül & Gürcan Altun pointed out, the problem here is about what physicians will do after the activist has lost his/her consciousness and decision-making capacity. According to the common view, when a patient loses his/her consciousness or decision-making capacity, physicians are free to make the best decision to help their patients (Altun and Altun, 2009:146).

In these two declarations, in addition to emphasizing the sanctity of life and the fact that life comes first for the physician, it is stated that whether the activist's consciousness before his/her decision is closed should be taken into consideration. Also, deeper consideration is given to the idea of "life at all costs" in the medical field as is the case in the legal field. This is perhaps because "life at all costs" easily justifies forced intervention. In other words, the physician generally intervenes when a person is unconscious. Ömeroğlu states that the opposite path is taken in England:

Although it is legally possible to intervene in hunger strikes and death fasts in England, the British Medical Association's principal decision is to create a balance between respecting the autonomy of the patient (the activist staging hunger strike or death fast) and intervening in areas that will benefit them. This principle was put into practice in the Medical Ethics Handbook, published in 1981. The physician will decide on the intervention and will or will not intervene in line with this principle. In countries such as the USA, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, and Morocco, hunger strikes and death fast actions that occur in penal institutions and prisons are also intervened in accordance with legal regulations (2011:88-89).¹¹

¹¹ A decision of the European Courts of Human Rights (ECHR) on this issue is contrary to this example. Nevmerzhitsky/Ukraine's verdicts dated 05/04/2005 and Ciorap/Moldova of 19/06/2007, even if the

Legal approaches supporting the intervention have a strong platform in the field of law. As Soyaslan remarks, “The Turkish legal order gives the authority to intervene and end the strike against the hunger strikers from the moment the strike damages their bodily integrity.” (Soyaslan, 1990:280). Likewise, Feyzioğlu asserts in his article “*Hunger Strikes*” that, “In case of an order to intervene in a hunger strike that will harm bodily integrity, the order of the competent authority will be in accordance with the law since the Constitution does not give individuals the right to harm their bodily integrity.” (Feyzioğlu, 1993:167). On the other hand, it is essential to act with the activist’s consent regarding international declarations. As Sevinç pointed out, according to the TMA, the individual’s will and life are the primary concern (Sevinç, 2008). In other words, the activist’s consent versus the right to life is competing for priority in continuing debates on intervention.

The crucial matter in this discussion involves the possible outcomes of forced intervention, as the result of severe damages that keep on affecting people’s lives remain. The syndrome called WK occurs. There is no permanent treatment for this syndrome. Memory loss, disability, and balance problems are often experienced by the activists exposed to the forced intervention, depending on the WK. Now, we will make an inquiry to establish an alternative approach to death fast action using Spinoza’s framework.

2.7.An Alternative Approach to Death Fast Action

We have seen how death fast is examined in the wider literature and located in the legal and medical framework. An alternative approach that would be meaningful for this study is to consider the act of death fast within the scope of Spinoza’s thought.¹² The first reason to associate Spinoza’s views to our topic is that he asked

person is conscious, the person can be intervened by force without his/her consent. These decisions emphasize only the form of intervention. In other words, it was emphasized that an intervention could be made in any situation without the consent of the person, and only this intervention should be done temperately (2011: 89-90). For more detailed information. Ömeroğlu, Ö., (2011), In Light of the Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights; Hunger Strike, Death Fast and Intervention Problem of Convicts, Detainees and Detentions, pp. 88-90.

¹² Spinoza, “an ignored political philosopher” (Zelyüt, 2003:7), was born as a member of the community in the Jewish neighbourhood of Amsterdam on November 24, 1632. At that time, absolute monarchies were strengthening while the Thirty Years’ War (covering the years 1618-1648), based on religious conflicts, was storming in Europe. Spinoza’s father, Michael, came to the United Provinces (The United Provinces of the Netherlands, or United Provinces commonly referred to the Dutch Republic, that existed in Europe between 1588 and 1795.) at the beginning of the century and founded a small business in Amsterdam in 1623. In the years that his son was born, he became an influential member of the Jewish community. Spinoza studied theology and commerce at the Jewish school (Talmud), and from

the question, “What is a body capable of?” and he discussed this question at length. Before Spinoza, in the history of philosophy, the body has always been considered a field of indulgence. Yet, Spinoza cared about the body’s power and what a body is capable of. He thought that the realization of one’s resistance was divine. As Gilles Deleuze stated,

This does not mean what a body can do in general. It means: What does my body and your body be capable of? What are you capable of doing? It is like testing our capacity, trying to our power, but also building this capacity while experimenting. It is a very substantial situation (Deleuze, 2000: 76-77).

Spinoza is not asking what a body ought to do, but what it is capable of; asking what is within our power. This kind of thinking is directly related to examining the issue ethically rather than locating it on the ground of given moral norms.¹³ In other words, trying to understand what a body is capable of, regardless of its duties and goals, indicates that the subject is to be understood on an ethical level by moving away from the moral ground. In this study, while trying to understand the act of death fast, it seems convenient to make an ethical discussion, to deal with the issue on an ethical level, not to give meaning, but to understand as Spinoza did.¹⁴ Hence, as an alternative approach, the ethical viewpoint that focuses on what the thing can endure and what it can do, (not what it is) seems to have an important role in understanding the practice of death fast.

1651 onwards, he took philosophy and Latin lessons from Franciscus van den Enden. After his father’s death, he managed the family business together with his brother for a while. He was expelled from the congregation in 1656 when he was 24 years old and had not yet written or published anything. According to Gilles Deleuze, this is because he refused to repent and personally wanted this rupture. He left Amsterdam after an armed attack by a Jewish fanatic in 1660 and lived in small cities such as Rijnsburg and Voorburg as a tenant in the homes of large families.

Spinoza refused to earn money from his philosophical studies and earned his life by specializing in optics and lens polishing. He continued his philosophical studies while polishing lenses. He never married and never had any children. On February 21, 1677, when he was 45 years old, he passed away probably from a lung disease. For the more extensive biography of Spinoza, see. Nadler, S. (2008), *Spinoza: A Life*, trans. Baker, U., İletişim Yayınları.

¹³As Deleuze stated, “Spinoza does not talk about the moral ground but in the ethical ground. Ethics is a problem of power; it is never a duty. This means that to know what you are capable of but not as a moral issue at all; but as a physical question, a question to be asked to the body and soul.” (2000:31).

¹⁴ As Spinoza emphasizes, understanding itself is a virtue; it involves and explains. According to Deleuze, explaining and involving are two aspects of expression. As a rule, the expression encompasses and implies what it expresses, and at the same time, explains it. In *The Ethics*, Spinoza continually tries to explain something, not to give meaning. For more detailed information, see. Deleuze, G., (1990), *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Zone Books.

Secondly, the question of what Spinoza, who unconditionally affirms life, would think about an action that risks death is remarkable. He considers death as an inevitable bad encounter in natural beings' order. He also refuses the practice of suicide. As Çetin Balanuye emphasized in his book *Spinoza: Bir Hakikat İfadesi (Spinoza: An Expression of Truth,)* Spinoza states: "... those who attempt suicide are those who have weak souls, and they are possessed by external influences contrary to their nature." (Balanuye, 2012: 176). According to Spinoza, life is a way of being (Deleuze, 2019: 20), and he claims in *The Ethics* chapter IV 67th proposition: "A free man thinks of death least of all things; and his wisdom is a meditation not of death but life." Death, as the end of the living individual's existence, not the essence, is nothing to him and offers nothing to his consciousness. In other words, to think about death, which is nothingness; is nothing for Spinoza.

Among all these interpretations, which rely on the conviction that Spinoza dismissed the issue of death, Baker offers a unique approach: considering Spinoza's arguments related to death, it could very well be conceivable that he would believe that the act of death fast points out to life, not to death. In his article about death fast in 1996 in Turkey, Baker states,

Living creatures cannot think of death. This thought we learned from Spinoza is not factual but about existence. Thanks to him, we learn that death fasts do not lead to death but life, that they have demands for life, that they bond with it and affirm it because life is resistance. Life does not cost itself for a while, does not perceive its end, and when it ends, itself is not there (Baker, 1996:33).

Baker then underlines that Spinoza would approach death fast as an act that refers to life. Thus, it becomes critical to consider how Spinoza would locate existence and the effort to existence (*conatus*). Would he approach death fast action as a desire for death or as a symptom of *conatus*? It appears that Spinoza would argue that the act of death fast does not signify death, but it remarks life, existence, survival, resistance to the existence, awareness of one's power and limits. In order to understand and elaborate any viewpoint derived from Baker's comment, in the following section, the subject will be associated with the terms of the mind-body understanding of Spinoza, Spinoza's viewpoint about the will&free will, *conatus*, and his approach to rights. Under these four main headings, the other topics that will be mentioned will be encounters & affections and *potentia* (power/might).

2.7.1. The Issue of Mind & Body for Spinoza

We should focus on the mind and body problem, one of Spinoza's philosophy's cornerstones, in the context of death fast action in which the person uses his/her body as a tool and makes his/her body a field of struggle. Spinoza discusses the issue of mind and body in the second part of *The Ethics*. He does not create a dichotomy between them; on the contrary, he designates mind and body together. For this reason, this kind of thinking is called the 'parallelism' of mind and body in Spinoza, not by Spinoza himself but by those who interpret him. As Solmaz Zelyüt emphasized,

According to Spinoza, each dissemination modus has a corresponding thought modus, or for each modus of thought, it has a corresponding dissemination modus. So, there is a body corresponding to each idea or an idea corresponding to each body. This thinking will be called 'parallelism.' This term, which is not in Spinoza himself, will serve as a device of understanding him, especially on the relationship between soul-body or mind-body (2003: 29-30).

In *The Ethics* chapter II, in the first definition, Spinoza states, "By body, I mean a mode which expresses in a certain determinate manner the essence of God, in so far as he is considered as an extended thing."¹⁵ Human skin is united from many individuals in various natures, each of which is very compound.¹⁶ According to Spinoza, who uses mind and soul interchangeably, the mind is the idea of the body. As Deleuze stated, "the soul is the idea of the body. That is, it is the idea of a particular mode of extension, and it is just the idea of that mode. The soul is just an idea that represents a mode of extension." (Deleuze, 2005: 118). The soul and body are sometimes conceived as thought and sometimes as an extension. As emphasized by Nadler:

¹⁵ The first definition in *The Ethics* is *causa sui*. That means the cause of itself. According to Spinoza, there is only one substance that causes itself, a single substance from which everything that is happening derives itself. This substance is God. For more information, see. Spinoza's *The Ethics* chapter I named "On God."

In *The Ethics*, 4th definition of the first chapter: "By 'attribute' I mean that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance." As Nadler comments: "Attribute is the thing's principal property, and it is the most general and underlying nature of a thing. In other words, it is the nature that underlies all of its properties." (Nadler, 2006:56). It can be said that the manners of substance are called modus. That is, they are aspects of the attributes of substance. Each attribute expresses an essence of the substance and ascribes it to the substance. Attributes are not conceived in and through themselves like substance. As Deleuze states: Substance expresses itself. Attributes are expressions. The essence is expressed (Deleuze, 2005). For Spinoza, bodies and souls are not substance or subjects but modes (2019: 122).

¹⁶ Spinoza means the human body when he says the human skin.

According to Spinoza, man is the combination of soul and body. The human soul and the human body are not two separate substances. Our soul is only a mode of thought, one of the substantial attributes of God. The body is also a mode of thought, an idea or knowledge that corresponds to God's specific spatial attribute (Nadler, 2008: 272).

As Spinoza stated in *The Ethics* chapter II 12th proposition, "if the object of the idea constituting the human mind be a body, nothing can take place in that body without being perceived by the mind." The body also thinks with emotions, it is affected, and this effect is formed in the mind. Also, "anything that increases, decreases, limits or expands the power of the body to act affects the action power of the mind in the same way. Everything that increases, decreases, limits, or expands the action power of the mind, in turn, affects the body's action force in the same way." (Duman, 2019:62). In *The Ethics* chapter III 2nd proposition's note, Spinoza states:

It follows that the order or concatenation of things is identical, whether nature is conceived under the one attribute or the other; consequently, the order of states of activity and passivity in our body is simultaneous in nature with the order of states of activity and passivity in the mind.

If we consider the death fast in particular, the action that the activists perform with their bodies, according to Spinoza, is also an act of their minds. While the body produces value, emotion, and thought with its capabilities, their minds are affected, as well as their bodies. In other words, the body produces an affect by being starved; it produces emotion and affect. In this action, emotion and affect arise not only in the mind but also in the body. Besides, while the body is used as a tool in the act of death fast, there is also an ideational resistance in action. Without producing words, discourses, and representations; the body is instrumentalized without being symbolic. In this regard, it is possible to say that Spinoza's emphasis on the union of mind and body is definitely observable in the act of death fast.

2.7.2. Spinoza's View about the Issues of the Will & Free Will

The role of the will in the death fast action has been discussed in the literature, and whether the activists participate in the actions with their own decisions and will have been widely discussed. At this point, addressing the issue of the will through Spinoza's viewpoint will be meaningful since Spinoza has interesting comments regarding the will, especially on free will.

According to Spinoza, the mind and the will are the same because, like the mind, the will is an attitude of thought. In *The Ethics* chapter II 2nd proof of the 49th

proposition, he explicitly states that: “Will and understanding are nothing beyond the individual volitions and ideas. But a particular volition and a particular idea are one and the same; therefore, will and understanding are one and the same.” For him, the will unites with all ideas and expresses what is common to all ideas. Moreover, when Spinoza says will (volition), he designates it as a faculty that affirms or negates, not desires. In *The Ethics* chapter II note of 48th proposition, he claims:

By the will to affirm and decide, I mean the faculty, not the desire. I mean, I repeat, the faculty, whereby the mind affirms or denies what is true or false, not the desire, wherewith the mind wishes for or turns away from any given thing.

According to Spinoza, the will is not a desire of a person for something or someone; it refers to the ability to affirm or negate that thing or person. Thus, according to him, the will is something that occurs in people by the effect of something else. At this point, it is consequential to comment on the issue of free will. Spinoza asserts:

The mind is a fixed and definite mode of thought; therefore, it cannot be the free cause of its actions; in other words, it cannot have an absolute faculty of positive or negative volition; but it must be determined by a cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another (*The Ethics* chapter II proof of 48th proposition).

The desire of the soul (mind) is necessitated. Hence, our mind is not the free cause of its actions. We do not have free will because everything acts with causality, with absolute necessity. As Spinoza states in chapter II 48th proposition of *The Ethics*:

In the mind there is no absolute or free will; but the mind is determined to wish this or that by a cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another cause, and so on to infinity.

Spinoza rejects free will. We can link this to his rejection of a moral understanding of life. To clarify, Spinoza’s ethical approach and his rejection of a moral and teleological understanding of life, which we have mentioned at the beginning of this section, is also confronted again concerning the matter of free will. The question of what kind of relationship is there between his rejection of free will and his rejection of a moral understanding of life may arise. The person who is thought to have free will and makes choices according to his/her free will becomes justiciable with these choices in moral life. However, Spinoza provides no such justificatory vision, because, according to him, everything (God and man, too) acts with a necessary causality. Thereby, it becomes impossible for Spinoza to judge people who do not

make choices with their desires and who only use their affirmation and negation faculties.

When we think about the will discussion, in the context of the death fast, the issue of free will is undeniably significant for us. If we consider the issue from Spinoza's viewpoint, we can state: When deciding whether to start the death fast or not, according to Spinoza, the person decides not with his/her desire but with his/her faculty of affirmation or negation. Activists either affirm or negate to do that action; that action is required for a reason. Therefore, the argument that the activists cannot decide with their own free will, and that they act with the force of others, is not meaningful for Spinoza. With the decision to do the action, the activist is not on a ground that can be judged for Spinoza; on the contrary, understanding the activist comes to the fore because it is not possible for him to judge morally (due to his approach to the will and free will). As individual beings, activists decide within their power and might. They do this by creating an affect, feeling that it is a good encounter; it will be good for them. For Spinoza, the decisions of these people are not justiciable because they have no free will. These are some views expressing how Spinoza would assess the act of death fast in line with his approach to will and free will.

2.7.3. The Concept of *Conatus*

Conatus is another significant concept to understand Spinoza's probable outlook on death fast. According to Spinoza, not only people but everything that exists is in an effort to survive. Could an action, which carries the risk of death, and in which people put their bodies to death in line with certain demands, point out to *conatus* in Spinoza's thought, that is, the effort to exist? Is it possible to answer this question based on what one's power and the body can do?

For the first time, textually, *conatus* is seen as a verb in the 6th proposition of chapter III of *The Ethics*. "Everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being." In the proof of the same proposition, Spinoza says, "In so far as it can, and in so far as it is in itself, it endeavors to persist in its own being." Moreover, in the 7th proposition, he states, "The endeavor, wherewith everything endeavors to persist in its own being, is nothing else but the actual essence of the thing in question." Every being strives to maintain its existence as much as possible; everything tends to resist in its presence and makes this resistance within its power. Deleuze clarifies this, based on the meaning of *conatus*:

In Latin, an effort is “*Conor*,” whereas effort or disposition is *conatus*. Thus, the limit is defined as the function of an effort, and power is that tendency or effort itself, even if it is approaching, inclining to a limit. In concrete terms, everything under the view of inclining to a certain limit will be experienced as a power (2000:181-182).

Thereby, the question “What is a body capable of?” can be answered with the concept of *conatus*. Asking what a body can do is equivalent to understanding the power, limits, and effort of body and mind. Moreover, this power is not what that being wants, living or not, but what is in it; that is its essence (2000:118). As Nadler claimed in his book named *Spinoza’s Ethics*,

In the human body, *conatus* presumably manifests itself as the body’s physical resistance to any attempt to change the ratio of motion and rest among its parts to the point of dissolution. In mind, it is the conscious striving after those things that (as far as it can tell) promote its well-being and the well-being of the body on which its existence depends (Nadler, 2006:200).

To put it more clearly, according to Spinoza, a person wants what is good for him/her and strives for it. The mind searches for what is good and what is bad for itself. This is the effort of the mind; this is *conatus*. For Spinoza, human wants to exist and remain existing. S/he strives to continue his/her existence, do his/her best. While doing this, s/he tries to encounter what makes him/her feel happy and stay cheerful. When all these are considered, it seems that death fast action can be understood through Spinoza’s *conatus*; the activist mediating between death and life takes this action to survive and remain in his/her presence.

2.7.4. Encounters & Affections

According to Spinoza, emotion is the idea obtained about the body’s status. As Baker claimed, “Emotions are not instantaneous. In Spinoza’s words, emotions are increases or decreases in our power to exist.” (Baker, 2018:35). Affection is a mixture of bodies, which means that it is possible for a person to feel joyful or sad on the ground of encounters.¹⁷ In other words, if the encounter with something or someone is

¹⁷ According to Spinoza, there are basically three emotions: desire, pleasure, and pain. For example, if a person takes pleasure in seeing Ahmet, that encounter is a good encounter. However, if the same person feels sad when s/he sees Veli, this encounter is of an evil nature. Therefore, according to him, good and bad are relative; that is, there is nothing definitely good or bad. As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this approach is also ethically convenient. Ethics is the ground where good and evil are relative. The good and evil are determined in the field of the encounters. In Spinoza’s conceptualization, a person wants to organize good encounters with his/her mind because s/he wants what is good for him/her. S/he organizes this field of good encounters for himself/herself with the effort of his/her mind (*conatus*). S/he does this not only with his/her good affections but also with his/her mind. Therefore, while it is possible to talk about the existence of an emotive structure, the prominence of emotions, for Spinoza, we should not forget the importance of the mind, which he stressed.

good for a person and it makes him/her feel happy, that thing is good; if it is not good for him/her and makes him/her feel sad, then that thing is evil for him/her. At this point, reason emerges as an important ground because there is an affirmation with reason, and reason paves the way for a friendly approach of people to each other. What will does well in an encounter is gaining knowledge of the causes, understanding them, and realizing common notions.¹⁸

Hence, Spinoza will care about this crucial question in the act of death fast: Was it good or bad for activists to encounter the action; how were their feelings during the action? If it was good for the activists to encounter the action, if it made them feel happy, then that action was good for them; If they experienced sad feelings and the encounter was unpleasant, it could be said that this action was bad for them. Furthermore, according to Spinoza, emotions, which are delineated as changes in the body with the increase or decrease in the power of action on the body, also shape what bodies can do (Ahmed, 2019). Therefore, the joyful feelings a person feels on the ground of good encounters are also related to what one's body can do. In other words, a person feels joyful feelings with the increase in the power of action in his/her body, and this situation determines what the body can do. At this point, we locate both the unity of body and soul and the relationship of the affections alongside the capabilities of the body.

2.7.5. The Concept of *Potentia*

Spinoza introduced the terms of *potentia* and *potestas* and did not distinguish them because both of them mean power. Although Spinoza made no distinction, those who read his works (especially Deleuze and Negri) differentiated *potentia* and *potestas*. According to this distinction, *potentia* and *potestas* are two different ways of understanding the capability which is power. Basically, *potentia* is the primary one, while *potestas* is the relational status of power. In other words, *potentia* corresponds to man's power to do, whereas *potestas* relates to the power of ruling.

According to Spinoza, "Every individual is a degree of power (*potentia*) and a threshold of intensity or an inner style (*gradus*). Individuals belonging to the same

¹⁸ Spinoza explains and discusses common notions in *The Ethics* chapter II in the propositions of 37 to 40. He shows that the knowledge of the causes is in God, and they are in common notions. Common notions are concepts that form the basis of reasoning; they are a kind of thinking tool and knowledge of causes. Common notions provide the root causes of beings. They are not fictional or abstract, and they ensure that reality, that relationship is grasped as they are. They are obtained only by reason and are necessarily adequate ideas, that is, ideas of the essence of things.

species and genus are different from each other in terms of power levels and intensity thresholds.” (Ateşoğlu & Canaslan, 2015:241). That means that the power of each individual is different in terms of degrees. The issue of *potentia* overlaps with the idea of “doing what is good for oneself”. As we mentioned, the ethical understanding requires one to be good first, living by recalling one’s own *potentia* and returning to one’s own *potentia*, not for the sake of anything else. His/her power is to return to his/her *potentia* while doing and acting in line with his/her power and might. This point is related to Spinoza’s views regarding sacrifice. As Spinoza states in *The Ethics* chapter IV 25th proposition, “No one wishes to preserve his being for the sake of anything else.” In other words, man lives only for himself: the state of self-affirmation. A person living for himself/herself does not die for anything else. This is against the nature of being, according to Spinoza. From this point of view, it is possible to say that sacrifice has a connection with *potestas*. Put differently, sacrifice, paying the price, and dying for another reinforces *potestas*; sacrifice does not strengthen one’s might and power to do something but hinders one’s capabilities.

From Spinoza’s perspective, it is argued that the state of sacrifice, which shows itself in the death fast, does not coincide with the effort for existence. At first glance, Spinoza might argue that the act of death fast, in which it is highly likely to have a culture of sacrifice, does not refer to the effort to existence. On the other hand, Baker thinks that the way Spinoza would approach sacrifice, if applied to death fast, with respect to the death fast contrasts to this interpretation. According to Baker, concerning death fast and sacrifice, Spinoza would think death fast does not point out to a place of grief where self-sacrifice is blessed. On the contrary, Spinoza would think that death fast turns into an action targeting the erosion of *potestas*’s ground and put lives there again (Kara, 2020). If we look from such an angle, for Baker, Spinoza would claim that death fast goes towards life, not death; therefore, it augments human beings’ productivity and *potentia*.

2.7.6. Spinoza’s Perspective of Rights

In the first part of this chapter, the death fast action was examined in the legal framework, especially in the context of the right to life. As stated, from both legal and medical perspectives, the right to life is inviolable and cannot be waived. On the other hand, Spinoza offers a different approach to rights. According to him, right is nothing but power, the power of the individual or the community (Balibar, 2016:125). For him,

right means power, and it is inherent to the singular being.¹⁹ As Reyda Ergün underlined,

Spinoza rejects any abstract understanding of all kinds beyond singular entities that are supposed to transcend their physical association and finds the source of right in man's singular existence and even in all singular beings. He teaches that where there is no physical/mental communication of individual existences, the senseless dominance of the minority or the majority will prevail at the most. It presents this as a reality. By showing that there can be neither a universal mind nor a collective social mind, he proves that every decision made on behalf of another can be nothing but folly. (Akal&Ergün, 2011:58).

In other words, for Spinoza, everything a body can do is its natural right because it is within its power. As Spinoza stated in *Theological-Political Treatise*, everyone's right reaches the limits of what s/he can do (Akal&Ergün, 2019). This definition of right by Spinoza combines with the search for what is good for herself/himself, the effort of the mind, and *conatus*. The pursuit of good, *conatus*, is a person's right. As it was mentioned, for Spinoza, both body and mind search for what is good for themselves. This is not like the case where a person was given or acquired a right.²⁰ In this aspect, when examining law from an ethical perspective, Spinoza's this distinctive approach can be demarcated.

Spinoza is positioned in a different place in terms of the tradition of natural rights. Unlike Hobbes and Locke, concerning the transfer of rights to a sovereign by the social contract, for Spinoza, the sovereign is not a third person from the outside. Individuals do not transfer their natural rights to achieve the conditions of security. He states in chapter II of the *Political Treatise*:

By natural right, I understand the laws or rules of nature, that is, the power of nature itself, where everything is according to them. Consequently, the natural right of all nature, and hence each individual, broaden the extent of his power, and therefore a person does everything. According to the laws of his nature,

¹⁹ Spinoza's approach that identifies right with power/might points to a significant difference in political philosophy. The critical point here is that what Spinoza means when he says power is not political power; not the relational state of power (*potestas*), but *potentia*, which refers to the power of man's ableness to do it. For detailed information and analysis see. Akal, C. B. (2016), *Varolma Direnci ve Özerklik Bir Hak Kuramı İçin Spinoza'yla*, Dost Publications, pp. 151-71.

²⁰ Arendt said the following regarding the issue of rights, especially for human rights: Although human rights are rights that come from being a human, they are rights that a person cannot achieve without being a citizen. Therefore, rights and human rights are bound to a condition. Indeed, in terms of rights, this situation points out to an extreme contradiction. For Spinoza, nature creates only individuals, not people, and people are not born as citizens; they become citizens (Rızk, 2012:223).

he does according to the sovereign right of nature and has a right over nature to the extent of his power (2018:197)²¹

Individuals want to build a society to organize good encounters²². Thus, socialization takes place to be able to organize good encounters with the effort of the mind who seeks what is useful. According to Spinoza, “Man creates politics by expanding from being a part of nature to community life.” (2015:31). An intelligent, strong, free man begins by doing everything within his power. This is his right. In other words, he will save himself from the mercy of encounters; he will try to organize and seek good encounters. Then, he will begin to form rational communities among people. As emphasized by Cemal Bali Akal, “*Conatus*, which is the natural right of every being, corresponds to the resistance of the individual being against the things that can destroy herself/himself, and at the same time, the union established with similar beings against all kinds of adversaries.” (Akal, 2016:155). Socialization is the partnership of *potentia* and social production, and people try to organize good encounters amongst themselves.

The overall result of such reasoning is this: there is no transfer of rights to the third person while passing from state of nature to civilization. The rights remain in the community as sovereign, not transferred to a third. What is right, both natural and civilized, is human power and the right to do whatever a person can. In Spinoza’s viewpoint, “the source of the right is neither legal order nor moral values. In Spinoza’s philosophy, rights of man are explained, perhaps for the first and last time in the history of thought, by referring only to himself, that is, to the material existence of man as human.” (2015:132-133). For him, power is already an element of socialization in itself, and it is inseparable from spontaneity and productivity. This enables the composition of forces without mediation (2005:11). In other words, the law of nature is addressed in Spinoza as a norm of power, not of duty. Hence, right is the unity of power and the realization of power. The state is also bound to people living under the guidance of reason. Spinoza’s approach to rights is far from treating them as legal

²¹ See also. Spinoza, B. (2019), *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Cemal Bali Akal&Reyda Ergin part XVI pp.230-231.

²² “Spinoza radically opposes Hobbes and seeks a basis for the plurality of the multitude, the political power of collectivity. Unlike Hobbes’ static society, Spinoza envisions a society that intersects with each other and constantly shares emotions. Spinoza’s philosophy is that of praxis and plurality.” (Ateşoğlu&Canaslan, 2015:211).

norms and moral values that were mentioned. Contrary to the fact that the individual, who was given rights through citizenship, by reference to a nation-state, Spinoza sees a person's capabilities as his/her right. He offers an alternative approach to the right issue. In the act of death fast, it is concluded that what a person can do with his/her body is his/her strength, and therefore his/her right. Activist begins a process for himself/herself by going on a death fast. It is his/her right to initiate this process and also to leave this process. The activist's initiation of the death fast action process and doing it within his/her rights indicates dynamic notion of rights, not static rights. As a result of such a conception of rights, an alternative understanding in comparison to the established view that the right to life is not waived and inviolable is established. This kind of thinking can open a road in the assessment of death fast action in a legal sense. To put it more clearly, the right to life, the right to die, unlike the legal meaning of life, could be understood to be a human-centered view of right expressing physical and mental autonomy. The right offered by Spinoza, which is the power determined by the insistence of existence of everybody, can be considered in the context of death fast, especially concerning autonomy. The issue of autonomy is not addressed by Spinoza but by those who studied him. For Spinoza, the fact that "laws cannot regulate a spectrum of rights that is headed by physical/mental autonomy and separated from the framework of positive laws." (2016: 166) is related to the autonomy of the individual entering into death fast. In the death fast action, the activist starting a process, who instrumentalizes his/her body without rendering it symbolically. At the same time the activist partaking in ideational resistance, becomes autonomous by being free from eating. As a relative autonomy, autonomy in Spinoza is a state of self-concentration. That means to be autonomous from something or someone. The activist, who stops eating other than taking certain foods, concentrates on himself/herself in this action because s/he is free from eating. With this autonomy, the activist both maintains his/her insistence on the existence and uses his/her right coming from his/her might. Therefore, a completely different reading can be pursued about death fast action in terms of rights through Spinoza's theory of right. To present this different approach, we presented and discussed the issue of mind and body, the will and free will, the concept of *conatus*, encounters, affections, the concept of *potentia*, and understanding of rights according to Spinoza. Now, after summarizing the political climate in Turkey between the years of 1960 and 2000, we will present the chapter where analysis and

interpretation of field research data will be brought together and tried to be associated with Spinoza's thought.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL CLIMATE in TURKEY FROM 1960 to 2000s and the ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION of FIELD RESEARCH'S DATA

3.1.TURKISH POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1960-2000

While examining death fasts held in Turkey in 1996 and 2000s, examining the political climate will be essential to show what was happening in the country during the death fasts. Although this thesis will focus on the death fast actions undertaken in 1996 and the 2000s, the period beginning with the 1960 coup, the 1980 coup, and the political climate of those years will also be summarized.

3.1.1. 1960-80 Period

The 1960-80 period, which includes two coups and a memorandum, constitutes a long and changing period in terms of the political structure and politicization of Turkey, also including the formation, regulation, and renewal of its economy. Also, this period is crucial in terms of forming the background of Turkey in the 90s and 2000s.²³

On May 27, 1960, the first military coup outside the hierarchy of the TAF was carried out. The power of the Democratic Party, which had served for 10 years, was seized, and the landscape of the 1960-70 period began to form. As Kemal Karpat emphasized, although Turkey tried to be more democratic, more pluralistic with the 1961 constitution, problems were tried to be solved with tutelage from above. People's will was ignored (Karpat, 2019:169). With increasingly ideological politics, In the 70s, political activities increased in such an environment.²⁴

²³ According to some scholars, especially for Erik-Jan Zürcher and Feroz Ahmad, the 1960-80 period is called the 2nd Turkish Republic period.

²⁴ See the book *History of Turkey from 1960 to the Present* by Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın in 2014. In this book, the 1960 coup and the 61 Constitution are considered to represent a period when new

In the 1970s, the government headed by Süleyman Demirel experienced serious difficulties. The 70s were being discussed as the ground for a completely different period of political mobilization in this framework; that is, in the spiral of severe political discussions and separations. The political system found itself stuck and political violence increased. These situations were tried to be overcome by the martial law regime, and the memorandum was given on March 12, 1971.²⁵ Despite the martial law regime, a landscape began to form in which political actions, especially in the streets, were intensified. Simultaneously, governments that were weak and missing political power will also dealt with the lack of capital and unemployment. As a result of these events, the 1980 coup happened.

3.1.2. 1980-90 Period

With the military coup of September 12, 1980, which was carried out due to the atmosphere formed after the 1971 memorandum, the army also sought a civilian basis to support itself in the political sphere. People's opinions were given importance, but this is not due to respect for the people's views; instead, it was because of the search for a civic foundation. The student movements that rose and increased in the 1970s, and the politicization that started and expanded centered on these movements were interrupted with the 1980 coup. Unlike the 1960 military coup and 1971 memorandum, the 1980 military coup was in line with the TFA's hierarchical structure. The 1980 military coup aimed to end the political stagnation, ensure political restructuring, order, and peace.²⁶

policies came into play. See also. Ahmad, F. (1995), *The Formation of Modern Turkey*: Samnal Publications, pp. 173-207.

²⁵ While trying to ensure law and order with the memorandum, Turkey's political structure was demolished under martial law; youth organizations closed, all meetings of professional organizations and trade unions and seminars prohibited, torture was applied to political prisoners and their will that was engaged in radical politics was broke. The amendments made in the constitution in 1973 aimed to strengthen the state against civil society; superior courts were set up to suppress all kinds of opposition quickly and relentlessly; universities were reorganized to prevent student and faculty radicalism, and trade unions were pacified. However, the years after 1973 were a period when weak and unstable governments ruled Turkey. For a detailed analysis of the political framework of the 1971 memorandum and after, see *ibid*, pp. 209-255.

²⁶ On the one hand, the army has the country in the palm of its hand to take back all the socio-economic gains that the government has made since 1960; on the other hand, a foreign and military policy designed to serve the interests of the West, which was damaged by the Iranian Revolution in the region internationally, was adopted. The junta administration was determined to purge the urban youth, which had played an essential role in politics since the 1960s. Accordingly, as the number of arrests and detentions increased, torture in custody and prisons amplified, and the regime did not deny it. According to official figures, 650,000 people were detained after the coup; military courts tried 230,000 people; in prisons, approximately 300 people died due to torture, 50 people were executed, 1,683,000 people were

It can be claimed that with the changed and transformed economy and political environment, the 80s and 90s altered not only most concepts and definitions of the content of political literature but also the corresponding sociological, socio-political realities (Laçiner, 2001).

3.1.3. 1990-2000 Period

The 1990s were the times of the establishment of a revised upper form of militarism and nationalism in the face of the Kurdish issue as a refusal against all democratic rights and demands.²⁷ In this period, the political center seems to be subordinated to the preponderance of nationalism rather than being drawn to the center. Besides, the rise of political Islam, the economic crisis, and the conflicted political environment are significant matters.

In the 1990s, when the political conflicts were at their highest level, prisons were also the scene of many activities. When Mehmet Ağar was the Minister of Justice, Agar Circulars, also known as the “May Circular,” which the foundations of today’s F-type prisons were laid. Against this circular, on May 26, 1996, 2,174 prisoners started hunger strikes in 43 prisons, and when the circular was not withdrawn, the hunger strike actions were turned into death fasts. Twelve people lost their lives as a result of the death fast. Afterward, the government withdrew the circular, and the Eskişehir prison was also evacuated. F-type prisons were shelved until 2000.²⁸ In 2001, with the outbreak of a severe economic crisis, the national income and per capita income decreased and unemployment increased. It was clearly evident that Turkey had economic difficulties.²⁹

blacklisted. For detailed information on the 1980 coup and after, see. *ibid*, pp. 255-294, and Zürcher, E. (2008), *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi: İletişim Yayınları*, pp.321-450.

²⁷ The history of the modern Kurdish movement can be traced back to the early 1960s. At this time, Kurdish intellectuals joined the then-developing left in the struggle for equality and cultural autonomy and demanded the eastern provinces’ economic development. As the movement became militant in the late 1960s, it faced greater state repression; many East regions were ruled by martial law in 1979. After the 1980 coup, the pressure on the expression of Kurdish identity also intensified with the establishment of Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization (*JİTEM*) in 1987. For detailed information about the Kurdish issue, see. Zürcher, E. (2008), *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi: İletişim Yayınları*, pp. 432-436 and see also. Ahmad, F. (2006), *Bir Kimlik Peşinde Türkiye: İstanbul Bilgi University Yayınları*, pp.210-214.

²⁸ For more detailed information about the 1996 death fast and the May Circular, see. Bargu, B. (2016), *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*, Columbia University Press, pp. 184-5.

²⁹ According to Karpat, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who was elected as president in May 2000, was the cause of the economic crisis because he lacked knowledge of the intricacies of politics and economy. The fact that the Central Bank, deprived of making decisions contrary to the basic principles of the banking system, had to give the loans demanded by the ruling parties as an election investment. The International

In this political climate, the government forces launched raids in Diyarbakır, Buca, Burdur, Ümraniye, and Ulucanlar prisons. Following these raids, on December 19, 2000, the operation named “Return to Life” and also named “Flood”, was initiated simultaneously in 20 prisons. The goal of this operation was to apply F-type prison policies and take the prisoners to the F-type prisons. The operation was carried out by approximately 10,000 security guards. At the end of the operation, 32 people, two soldiers, and 30 prisoners were killed, and hundreds were injured.³⁰ As a result of this operation, political prisoners were sent to F-type prisons.³¹

Like the indefinite hunger strike-death fast actions in 1996, the protests in the 2000s were undertaken against F-Type cell construction and isolation. The most extended and most fatal death fast actions in modern history were held in prisons and outside until 2007. But in 2002, all 13 organizations except for the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (*DHKP-C*), participating in the action announced that they have terminated the action. During the death fast actions in the 2000s, 122 people lost their lives, and many people had to carry on with their lives sustaining physical and mental damage and disabilities due to forced intervention.

3.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In this part of the thesis, the narrations of the interviewees who participated in the death fast action will be presented. In this respect, the headings will include the

Monetary Fund (IMF) does not take into account the particular situation of the debtor countries. Also, Prime Minister Ecevit appointed Kemal Derviş, who had previously worked at the World Bank, as the minister responsible for the economy. He enacted approximately 15-20 laws through the parliament in a short time. This situation has led to the claim that the Turkish economy became dependent on foreign powers at IMF’s request. (2019:194).

³⁰ About the operation of “Return to Life” see. Ömer Laçiner, “Hayata Dönüş!” (Return to Life!), *Birikim*, no. 142-143, February-March, 2001, pp.10-16.

³¹ The project of F-type prisons was designed in 1997, as one of the ten projects by the Ministry of Justice. TMA had underlined that F-type prisons were medically unfavorable. Since F-type prisons came into the picture, it has been widely debated whether these prisons are cell type or room type prisons. Ministry officials have spread propaganda from the beginning that these prisons were planned to improve the prisoners’ quality of life, who lived in poor living conditions in the crowded ward system and that they were room-type prisons at European standards. The authorities ignored this discussion because a “cell” does not mean merely a dark, damp, cold dungeon-type space. However, the main emphasis in the “Cell” is not the area’s properties but the isolation (İşlegen, 2000). See for the effect of isolation, Human Rights Watch, Turkey: Small Group Isolation in F-type Prisons and the Violent Transfers of Prisoners to Sincan, Kandıra and Edirne Prisons. For detailed information about the establishment of F-type prisons in the historical process, see also. Anderson, P. (2004), “To Lie down to Death for Days: The Turkish Hunger Strike”, 2000-2003, *Journal of Cultural Studies*, Volume.18, Issue: 6, 816-846.

personal and social background of the death fast action, experiences related to the action, opinions of the participants about the death fast action itself, and the participant's interpretation of their own death fast experiences. Moreover, we will refer to Spinoza's concepts of mind and body, *conatus*, encounters&affections, and *potentia*.

3.3.Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewers

The participant group of the study consisted of people who participated in death fast actions in 1996 or 2000s (or the people who attended both). Due to the sensitivity of the subject, privacy of the participants, and difficulty in reaching the interviewees, the snowball sampling technique was used in the study. In other words, information and data were obtained by reaching from person to person and from person to the events.

The ages of the interviewees range between 40 and 65 and consist of 20 people, 6 women, and 14 men. As for their academic level, the group consists of nine university graduates, three high school graduates, three primary school graduates, one person getting a master's degree. Four of them were in prison while they were attending a university. While nine of the interviewees have not married, five are married, and six are divorced from their spouses, they are widows.

Two of the interviewees are retired. Two are still studying in different departments at a university, three of them are working in the field they have graduated from. While 11 interviewees work in different sectors, such as food, trade, and press, one is studying and working at the same time. Only one of the interviewees is currently not working due to physical and mental damage.

While three of the interviewees participated in the death fast action in both 1996 and 2000s, two participated in the death fast action in 1996, and 15 people attended the death fast action in the 2000s. One of the main reasons we could not meet with an equal number of people who participated in the protests in different years is that the death fast action in 1996 was much shorter in duration than the actions in the 2000s. Also, fewer people participated in 1996.³² Since the primary purpose is to understand the act of death fast both conceptually and practically, this does not

³² While the action in 1996 ended on the 69th day, the death fast action in the 2000s lasted seven years. 355 people attended the death fast action in 1996. Hence, the difficulty to reach any one of these 355 people is another factor.

constitute a problem for the study. In this part, the 1996 and 2000's actions will be discussed separately only when their differences are discussed based on the statements of the interviewees. Apart from that, data will be represented regardless of the year.

In 1996, 3 out of 5 people who participated in the death fast action continued it for 69 days, until the end of the action, while one of them continued for 68 days and one of them continued for 59 days. For the ones who participated in the death fast of the 2000s, the interviewees' actions in the death fast ranged from 90 to 280 days and lasted mostly between 200 and 250 days.

3.4. Background of the Death Fast Action

Under this heading, we will try to examine the basis of people's ideological outlooks in the death fast, the political climate of that period, their decision-making processes, and the purpose and demands of the death fast action.

Interviewees are asked questions that aimed to provide the background both personally and socially before proceeding with the action itself and its process. Thereby, the political climate until the 2000s will be portrayed with the interviewees' statements and become much more comprehensible.

3.4.1. The Origin and Foundation of Views

In this part, the origins of the interviewees' opinions and the central assumptions of their ideology are tried to be understood. Some of the interviewees were "born into the ideology" that they are still loyal to now. In contrast, some interviewees developed their opinions by experiencing a conflict with their families and their environment.

C stated that he born into the leftist world as follows:

I am a person from a middle-class Kurdish Alevi family. Although my family was upper-middle class, it was essentially a leftist revolutionary family. So, I'm "genetically leftist."³³ Opening my eyes to the left world, to a family environment where everybody talked about socialism, had an exceptional contribution on me. All of them were valuing revolutionaries and socialism, ascribing a special meaning, and even blessing with quotes. I had no escape. [...] Therefore, my revolutionism, leftism is not very original. [...] So, when I started high school, it was apparent in my head. I thought I have nothing to do with money and I would be a good person. Being a good person was also for me to be a part of the struggle to liberate the workers, laborers, and the oppressed. Marxism and Leninism were, of course, the only thing for me. (C)

³³ Emphasis mine.

On the other hand, K, who comes from a religious family where left thinking was not dominant, shared things emphasizing the difference:

The village where I was born was bordered by Armenia. [...] There was enmity against socialism, revolutionary thought as a result of nationalism-based ideas. Even while cursing, they used to say: “Even Lenin would not do what you did.” In my town, it was considered a severe insult: to be revolutionary, socialist, communist. I grew up in such a family. (K)

K met left-wingers in Istanbul, where he came to study, and he became a revolutionary in that way. The following words of E, who comes from a religious family and has a similar background to K, are vital in understanding the issue. After becoming a civil servant, E started to think differently by also working in a trade union.

I was perceived in the family as betraying the family. Because our family has never met leftist thoughts, they did not even go to the police station once. So, I actually became a traitor to the family. They love me very much, they didn't refuse, but on the other hand, they never got along with me. Because for them, I had a good position in society, they didn't understand why I am doing these. It was a very radical rupture for me. [...] Since I come from a community where the dominant ideology is reflected in the masses, the breakup process was very painful. From my point of view, I have no chance to say I wish I hadn't done these things, because I knew what I was breaking off from. I know the inside, the lifestyle, I know that the people there are good individuals (*oradaki insanların birer birey olarak iyi olduklarını biliyorum*), but I also know that they are in the system's ideological domain. I came through such a break. (E)

As mentioned, the intellectual backgrounds of the interviewees from different personal backgrounds have been formed through different processes. This process was much more complicated for the interviewees who formed their political ideas and ideologies by having a disengagement from their families and the environment in which they grew up. On the contrary, the intellectual background of some interviewees has developed naturally.

3.4.2. Political Climate and Activities

Turkey's political climate in the 1990s was definitely important in understanding the framework of the issue with the 1980 military coup and the process that developed after it.³⁴

The interviewees, who began organizing mostly in middle school and high school years, stated that since the 1970s, they had participated in student movements and association activities with increasing “massification.” They also engaged in

³⁴ For Turkey's political climate during the 1980 coup, the 1990s, and later, see this study's part titled “Political Climate in Turkey.”

writing and magazine affairs. Some of the interviewees were even arrested during hunger strikes protesting tuition fees. For instance, K tells:

I was engaged mostly in youth activities. However, these activities covered the youth as a whole. I was engaged in political activity among the working youth, university youth, high school youth. With the effect of these activities and false statements, I was arrested. When I went to prison, I was a young but political person. [...] While we were trying to improve ourselves theoretically, we were also trying to change something in practice. (K)

Most of the interviewees, who were students at the time, emphasized that they were engaged in political activities outside before they were arrested: “I was a student, but I was running other activities. The state was not aware of this. Nazım’s walnut tree came to my mind. So, there was such a situation.” (C)

The interviewees, most of whom were in the 1990s revolutionary movement, referring to the oppression and violence that the left movement was subjected to both in the prisons and outside after the 1980 coup, stated that they carried out activities in such a climate. The participants specifically underlined maltreatments that occurred during and after the operation on 19 December 2000:

We were kept for a day with our hands tied behind the back with plastic handcuffs. Many of our friends got gangrene. We were taken to prisons with very heavy treatment. While they were throwing us into cells, they literally plucked our hair and beards. We were thrown into the cells naked in that cold. Prisons were not ready enough yet, they were newly opened concrete buildings. There was no heating system. For the first month, I and everyone was beaten every day, morning and evening, even though we were on a hunger strike. Around 20-30 young guards were coming to the cell. I don’t understand how they fit in that cell. Think of a cell with three feet in width and six feet in length. There was a bunk bed and a plastic table lying there. Young guards, newly trained in sports, were filling that cell, and we were beaten continuously for not acting the way they wanted. (K)

With these maltreatments against political prisoners inside, reactionary movements began also outside. Almost all the interviewees emphasized the same point as to why the 19 December 2000 Return to Life Operation was carried out. According to the interviewees’ general impression, Bülent Ecevit’s saying, “If we do not control the prisons, we cannot implement IMF policies”³⁵. The 2001 economic crisis after the operation is critical.

The problem was not just a prison problem. I think it is necessary to understand through history and events. [...] The economic, political, social pressure was at the heart of the matter. Such an attack on prisons was not only

³⁵ Almost all interviewees emphasized Bülent Ecevit’s statement while talking about the political climate.

aimed at people in prisons, their identities, and personalities, and to force them to obey, but also to give a message to the whole society from those events that happened there. [...] They tried to give the following message to society: “These are your pioneers. We defeated them. We can easily dominate the whole society.” This was the message. (P)

Hence, in line with what the interviewees shared, it is possible to say that taking political prisoners to the F-type prisons happened as a result of the aforementioned political moves both inside and outside during the 2000s.

3.4.3. Purposes of the Death Fast Action and Demands

In both 1996 and 2000, the death fast actions were against the F-type prisons and the isolation system. The death fast action in 1996 was undertaken against the Eskişehir coffin, built due to the opening of F-type prisons, and against the prisoners being sent to these prisons in the 2000s. The interviewees also mentioned this issue. One of the most emphasized points during the interviews was the introduction of F-types and the practice of lockdown.

As being stated by the participants, the most basic demand was to prevent the opening of F-types. Political prisoners living together in the ward system and creating a living space described that they started the action against lockdown.

We were staying together; we lived in solidarity. We were seven people and used to share all the incoming money. We had friends who had no money. We were providing them to live in a decent condition. We used to bear the expenses of all our food, drinks, and clothes together. It was inevitable that all of these would eventually be distributed. We used to be able to argue with each other and be in social relationships. However, once the cells were opened, this would be blocked entirely, so we performed an action against it. (B)

The fact that F-types would destroy the life they jointly established in the wards and maintained in two peculiar fashion influenced the activists’ decisions. What M said about this is meaningful:

Many kiths and kin and friends cried as they were evacuated by saying that “we would go to a much worse environment than the present.” That was the psychology of that period. Many achievements were there; years of effort were there. We could not accept sacrificing the acquisitions of the years for a life that can be lived alone between four walls. We knew that another prison was possible and such a life was possible. Since we knew this, it was stronger [view]³⁶ not to accept it. (M)

Against the ward system and this environment, the interviewees interpreted spending years alone in a cell as complete isolation of and as the reproduction of power

³⁶ Addition mine.

in those cells. They emphasized that the desire to eliminate the environment established in prisons by the ward system points out a problem related to both prisons and society. For this reason, the slogan of the activists at that time was “Break the cells inside and outside.”

At that time, we created a slogan like: “Inside, outside, break the cells.” Apparently, they wanted to be taken to F cell-type prisons, but in fact, society, life itself, was desired to be confined into cells. (K)
Maybe, we could be the target, but it was more of an attack on public opposition than an attack on our behalf. It was an assault aimed at suppressing society, establishing the necessary conditions for more significant attacks, massacres, and violations of rights. At that point, it was necessary to resist. Based on these evaluations, we started death fasts to make the system take a step back and reverse the conditions. (D)

In other respects, P’s statements about the environment in a solitary confinement cell are striking:

They didn’t put the women in solitary confinement cells. Women were in groups of 3 and 4.³⁷ After we set the place in order... So, what I mean by “order” is this: There was almost nothing there, in the cell. There were only beds. [...] However, after establishing our own order, for example, you know that there is a game called Scrabble, we had a Scrabble board which we loved playing in Ümraniye. But we did not have a Scrabble here in Kartal, and we said let’s make a Scrabble. But how would you do it? There was a large cardboard on the wall which they used to hang notices such as “Everyone had to wake up at this hour, and the lights will turn off at this hour” for the soldiers and the prisoners. But other side of the cardboard was blank. Anyway, we used its backside to write the letters; we cut them with a razor blade. After that, we arranged and sewed a bag. Imagine, there was no television, no radio, nothing. As far as I remember, two newspapers had started to arrive daily after ten days, that’s all. We started playing Scrabble at certain times of the day. It gave people strength and motivation. (P)

This point shared by P is critical in emphasizing the prominence of togetherness and solidarity in the ward system. At the same time, it points out to the act of producing and doing something together, even in the cell. Spinoza claims that “People could be useful for people.”³⁸ in *The Ethics*. This situation is seen in this togetherness and the desire to be together, in organizing good encounters. The opposition to the lockdown and the mentioning of freedom in the ward environment reinforces this emphasis.

³⁷ V said, “Women were not put in solitary confinement cells due to social value judgments. Six or three women were staying together because of the possibility of rape and other such kinds of treatment.”

³⁸ I paraphrased the 35th proposition in chapter 4 corollary II of *The Ethics*: “As every man seeks most that which is useful to him, so are men most useful one to another.”

While the primary demand was the closure of the F-types, ending certain restrictive implementations was also among the demands. These implementations were blocking prisoners' access to books, magazines, written sources (only providing a few books), preventing contact with people who do not have the same surname and prohibiting common areas. Overall, the interviewees clearly stated that they started the death fast with the demand for ensuring humane living conditions. And the rationale for action was to protect their resistance and their own existence.³⁹ According to most interviewees, the aim of the death fast was to give a shared and social message, while some of them stated that there was no purpose in giving a message. Interviewees completely agreed that they started this action to state their demands and to realize their expectations. The common message and demand then were to oppose the cellularization and isolation of life and society.

3.4.4. Decision-Making Process on the Death Fast Action

During and after the action, one of the most controversial issues regarding death fast activists is about the accusation that they started the action as an organizational decision.⁴⁰ Throughout the interviews, the participants' most emphasized clarification was that the decision to start the death fast was made individually. In connection with the fact that the decision is an individual decision, the conflict of will, mind, and body are the issues that the interviewees focus on mostly.

All interviewees asserted that the people at the top of the organization did not determine who would participate in the death fast. They emphasize that this resulted in their own decisions and volunteering and through organizational discussion. P describes how this decision process was like:

When there was an attack, three organizations started the death fast action, and we were on a supportive hunger strike for a week. Our approximate number was between 22 or 25. [...] We gathered and reached the following decision: The state did exactly what it said, attacked; they wanted to take us

³⁹ M remarked this point.

⁴⁰ Organization means the political formations and structures that the state describes as outlawed. With the increasing student movements since the 1970s, political organizations have also increased. The state and the media have frequently emphasized that the death fast action is not made by the participants' individual decisions but by the decisions of the organizations they are involved in. Thus, there is a contrast between official image of fasters and internal reality; that is, insider's experience. For a detailed study examining how the death fast is covered in the press, See. Altundiş, A. (2019), *The Language of Media, Representation of Subaltern and Biopolitics: A Study on the Death Fast in 2000*, Master's Degree Thesis.

to the F-types. So, we shouldn't stop [our]⁴¹ action. We even kept saying that we should turn this into a death fast. This is all to say, those decision mechanisms work everywhere at every stage. (P)

H⁴², who partakes in these decision-making processes, explains this process as follows:

As being someone involved in those mechanisms, in fact, one of the biggest problems of those who run the organization is this: Many comrades volunteer and want to participate in the action. Deciding whom to choose creates tremendous pressure. You have to think about many things. [...] S/he should not have a disease and previous weakness as possible. So, s/he should have the physical capacity to endure. The family should not have one child; s/he should not be the only child in the family. There should be no people in the family who were shot before during their revolutionary political activities. The family should not experience another pain. We would consider these and similar factors. But there was also that the reproaches and interrogations of the unelected comrades, which overwhelmed us. And many would say, "You saw weaknesses in me and did not choose me. Don't you trust me?" We dealt with these questions. [...] I am telling this to explain these decisions are not easy to make. They have not imposed decisions, and these decisions were not made with simplicity like just saying that you die. The spiritual thing that person is going through is horrible, especially when something happens to the comrades you decided to participate in the action. For example, the one we lost in 1996... (the interviewer was tearful and could not continue.) (H)

Ü also points out that no one had participated in the death fast by force and claims the following about the process of deciding:

The individual voluntarily submits an oral or written application to the organization or to the responsible comrade or committee responsible for that individual. The responsible comrade or committee may be in the prison where that individual is; or they may be in another prison or outside the prison. In this context, the individual sent his/her request through appropriate channels and waited for the evaluation result. The evaluation is done together with the reasons for being convenient or not. The result of the evaluation is conveyed to the individual through the channels foreseen in the same way. When it is found to be suitable, the death fast is started within the planned time and conditions. (Ü)

While deciding who will be participating in the death fast, both in 1996 and 2000, the interviewees emphasized that everyone was competing to participate such that even I's sister was on the list, as she insisted and participated in the action. Likewise, Ö was rejected because of the rule that two members of the same family could not attend. However, he also insisted and joined the action.

⁴¹ Addition mine.

⁴² In 2000, H was not a death fast activist, but he went on a hunger strike during his imprisonment time for a total of 250-300 days. The reason he is not a death fast activist is because he suffered a total of five gastric bleedings after torture and hunger strikes, and he had other severe problems in his ribs.

In the first place, my organization rejected my request to participate in the death fast, saying that there should not be two members of a family. But I carried out the death fast by insisting because I had nothing else to do. (Ö)

What V shares is significant to understand how deciding on death fast was based on an individual choice. V was also in prison in 1993, but she did not participate in the death fast action in 1996 because she thought she was not ready. When the 2000s death fast actions started, V says that she could not finish the self-inquiries, and after a long time, she decided to participate in the action, and she describes this process as follows:

I prepared myself to be a death fast resister for seven years until 2000. At the end of 7 years, I said yes, I am ready. By the way, I was always one of those who stood in front of the barricades, when there was an attack. I was injured; I was shot. My head and eye exploded; I was hospitalized. I've experienced all of them. It is different to die or get injured at that moment, but it is very different to make that decision. I seriously fought with myself. I was ideologically ready, but not physically. Where was I deficient? [...] After 7 years, death fast started again. They came out and asked: "Are you ready?" I said, "No. Not yet." because I couldn't finish the questioning in myself. [...] Making a decision is not easy. We were criticized a lot. For example, people said: "You are affected by group psychology, herd psychology, here you are agitated by the psychology of the group." I said that if I had been agitated, I had been there for so many years, I would have participated in the death fast action in 1996 or indefinitely in hunger strikes. But it is not like that. It's not an easy decision. It is not the fear of dying. I don't know if I could explain. You are not afraid of dying. If you are afraid of dying, you would not be involved in such an organization, or you would not be ahead of those conflicts. It's not about being afraid of dying; it's about how you die. (V)

What V shares is vital to understand the issue and the process. As other interviewees emphasize, it has not been easy to be in a process in which you die "one by one and slowly" and make this decision. Therefore, they had to prepare themselves both mentally and physically for this: "This is not a struggle to go. It's a process that you live from moment to moment, second to second. So, if your brain isn't ready, it won't work." (D)

At that point, the importance of will both in the decision-making process and in the action comes up. The interviewees stated that the person pondering to start death fast conflicted not only with the outside but also with his/her own body, his/her own will, and that they struggled with their own mind and body:

We were trying to make it more enjoyable because it was something we did voluntarily. We didn't see ourselves as tormented. We were also fighting with our bodies. Although this was an effort to show will, we were also fighting against our bodies. Because at first, there was a desire to eat. Then that desire ended, but at first, we needed a fight of will against our body in that desire to

eat. When we got hungry, you drank water as something to compensate for it or think of food. [...] Our real chance was our body. We used it. (M)

It is stated by P that the will and discipline shown while in action are significant:

There are many factors that complement each other. First, one's mind has to be very clear about this action. It's not just a matter of volunteering. The second is will. Third, there are things we take water, sugar, salt etc. Taking them in a very balanced manner is important. A person should not take these too much but not too little. The fourth is the movement. Fifth, no matter what happens, I must stay uprightly. So even if I am going to die, I shouldn't be a person who was forced into bed and was intervened by the force that kept me alive. (P)

Only E while emphasizing volunteerism once again, was critical of revolutionary organizations, unlike other interviewees, and referring to the will of the organizations, stated that the condition of failure as a result of the action also causes negativity in social psychology:⁴³

An organization never says to anyone that they will participate in a death fast. On the other hand, question marks arise regarding people who are not included in the death fast process and why they are not included. [...] However, I actually have a critique of revolutionary organizations. If you sacrifice some people; if you drive them to the end of the barrel, if one person is gone, another person should go in return. The person who caused him/her to go that way should go, too. [...] If you do not have this organization, you will not do the other; you create despair and distrust in society. You cannot transform political psychology either. (E)

Based on all these, we can say the following: The interviewees underlined that they decided to participate in the death fast action individually. Some people made this decision for a much longer time. It was not easy for the interviewees to be involved in an act that gradually leads them to death every passing day. The activists emphasized that they were in a struggle with both external factors and themselves. In this action, where the body is used as the only means, the person's body has also turned into a battlefield.

At this point, the mind-body issue can be mentioned, as being underlined in the first chapter of the thesis. According to the parallelism of mind and body of Spinoza,

⁴³ R also expressed the death fast was voluntarily entered, and at the same time, claimed there were people directly elected by the organization. "First, those who participate in the death fast are chosen from the people that the organizations trust. Two, let's say they gave a bad test, people who informed against their friends in interrogation, or many other things. It is seen as an opportunity to reconstruct one's own will and revive a new state of determination. They were often entered with such a mix. Some are volunteers, as I said, some are chosen within that organization."

as the activists have pointed out, it seems possible to us to see this unity of mind and body both before and during the action. Body and mind together form affections in the death fast. Just as the body is affected, so is the soul (mind). The bodies and souls of the activists, whose bodies are in action, also produce emotions. Thus, we think Spinoza, who thinks of the body not as a ground of indulgences and impermanence, but a field of resistance, would see the unity of mind and body in the act of death fast and sense the body as a field of resistance in this action.

3.5. Experiences Within the Death Fast Action

In this part, the interviewees were asked how the environment was when they were doing the death fast, how they articulate their time, what kind of feeding they followed, and how the death fast action made them feel. Thereby, what is meant to be understood in this part is what people experienced during the action.

3.5.1. Environment During the Action and One Day in the Action

Most interviewees described that in a daytime, they carried on with their prison routines. They usually got up early in the morning but waking time was postponed as the action continued. They spent time reading the newspapers and books given to them and writing letters after eating the food they had in the morning while on the death fast. They shared that they paid attention to walking and moving and took short walks during the day at a slower pace, even though they did not engage in morning sports, which are always carried out in prison.

Before death fast, everything was in order like this: get up in the morning and do sports, have breakfast, train with your friends, and carry out individual training activities. Some of them do not happen in the death fast. For example, we were not doing sports in the morning because we didn't want to consume energy, but we were getting up early again. [...] So, something different happened, but basically, days were the same. I mean, waking up in the morning with discipline, reading a book, chatting. I was going to say food (laughing), taking liquid at certain times, writing... Days were passing like this. (N)

The interviewees stated that moving and socializing during the action both increased the motivation of the person and that it was good physically. Moreover, it can be said that communication is life-sustaining. Not to speak of anything in particular, but solely speaking itself is vital and good. The desire to communicate is a state seen in interviewees. Especially P, who was in a 3-person cell at that time, explained that she had mouth sores because she talked and chatted a lot with other

death fast activists. P's story seems bizarre but means something through our perspective:

You can stay in bed; nobody tells you anything at that time. However, if you contact other friends, that socialization is perfect for you. I mostly tried to go to friends' rooms because I think I am good for them. Of course, this has cost me the following: I am not a person that talks a lot, but when I start to talk, I talk a lot like right now. There were wounds in my mouth because of talking too much. [...] After that, I found a method like this. On a piece of paper, I wrote, "I will not talk for a while. Tell me the things you want to say, and I will give you a written answer." I thought that if those wounds don't heal, that is, if they move across to my throat, the aftermath might be harmful. (P)⁴⁴

K also narrated while experiencing the difficulties of a solitary cell, they published a humor magazine by somehow communicating with other friends.⁴⁵ Speaking, communicating, and doing something by communicating were considered important. A struggle for communication can be derived from this experience:

My waking and sleeping hours were exact and the daily work plan I made for myself was ready. At the same time, in those circumstances, we published various publications and humor magazines amongst ourselves, throwing them at each other from the roofs. In other words, we were continuing to keep ourselves alive by producing something; we were working on this. They were already shocked when they got hold of those publications, thinking about how they could do them under these conditions, how they did, how they sent them to each other. Of course, we found methods. For example, when we went out into the ventilations we could make balls of paper and throw them to the roofs of the other cells and communicate with each other like that; Or we were trying ways to communicate with each other by sound through channels created for rainwater to flow. "No matter how difficult the conditions were, we could produce certain things."⁴⁶ We spent more time like that. (K)

As Y asserted, "The main thing in prison and outside is to produce life (*yaşamı üretmek*)⁴⁷. The same goes for the death fast. Within a day, I was reading and writing depending on my energy, so I tried to contribute to life." It is possible to say that contributing and continuing life was seen in death fast activists at that time. In fact,

⁴⁴ Also, T said that in the cell, he was broadcasting and singing by himself during the day, and the guards said, "He got crazy, he has lost it." He said that they do not know he did so as not to forget to speak.

⁴⁵ Moreover, C emphasized the difficulty of the solitary confinement cell and communication there: "I was staying in a solitary confinement cell in a F-type prison. First of all, our communication was very limited, and it was difficult. Luckily, there were three friends, we got out to the same ventilation. Our communication with the outside was weak. [...] We could not get water. We were gone in the middle of winter, and the waters were cold. We were having difficulty in drinking. We had no communication with each other at first. No vents were opened. There was such a serious uncertainty. (C)"

⁴⁶ Emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ It is the statement of the interviewee.

the activists tried to create an affect. Z said that when they were first taken to the cells, they did not have newspapers, books, and television, and explained how they made carpets and spent their day. This situation, which can be an example of a person doing whatever is good for him/her within his/her power and might, is in line with Spinoza's conceptualizations, with *potentia*:

You know, when we were on a hunger strike in 2000, there was no television. They did not buy newspapers for a long time. There were no books either. There was nothing you could read in that process in the first days of the resistance. You couldn't hear anything; there was no television. We had sweaters at that time, old sweaters, we ripped them off, and we started knitting rugs with cupboard covers. So, we had made carpets and sent them outside. Then, they started to give books and buy newspapers. The days consisted of waking up very regularly, at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock at the latest, scanning the newspapers first, and reading novels. However, if there is such a very interesting theoretical article, we were trying to finish reading it persistently to discuss it. We also tried to walk. (Z)

3.5.2. The Experience of "Lemon Rain"

One of the most emphasized issues during the interviews was the solidarity between the death fast activists and those who did not participate in the action. The interviewees said that their friends who did not participate in the action "treated the participants with honor"⁴⁸, met all their needs, such as taking showers, preparing the liquids they need to take daily, cleaning the cell, and washing. People who do not participate in the action also go through an intense emotional and physical process.

The mood of our friends who were interested in those who resisted was also very challenging. They were melting with us every day. [...] For example, we had a comrade, her hair turned white. You wouldn't believe it, but in those few weeks during the resistance in the 2000s, a woman's all hair turned white, I witnessed that. Or some friends lost too much weight with us. (Z)

The activists have also demonstrated this mutual state of solidarity to the people who do not act. Trying to augment life through mutual solidarity is remarkable. This is togetherness; this is being able to organize good encounters like in Spinoza's thinking. What V said will also be more explanatory in this regard:

I think it's a tiny little thing that I've shared with people all my life, but we shared life with those six people so much. For example, I love *simit* (Turkish bagels) a lot. Bagels were also sold in the prison's canteen. We were making a list of what we wanted from the canteen; we were hanging it on the door, and the guards would bring the things in the list. Every day I used to write bagel on the list. When my cellmates were eating that bagel, I was so happy. So, I did not know how to tell you. (V)

⁴⁸ This statement belongs to E.

Besides that, some interviewees emphasized that the environment and what happened during that period were not always good and that there were mutually difficult times.

The importance of helping each other is evident here. We stayed with a friend for a long time. We knew each other and everything. You lived with the same person; there were also arguments. The days were not always a bed of roses. He got angry with you, got mad at you, you got mad at him, you felt jealous. These happened, you experienced all kinds of emotions together, but ultimately you shared the same convictions with that person. (U)

The following anecdote shared by C refers to the issue of solidarity:

In the last month or so, there was a quarter lemon thing. Lemons started to rain down on us from the side cells. I said, "What's going on?" Lemon came from there; it came from here. So yes, we were under a lemon rain. (C)

During the death fast, solidarity and togetherness have been significantly increasing. The activists paid great attention to moving, writing, and especially to reading. As we emphasized, contributing to life, continuing to contribute, and creating an affect were noticed in their actions.

3.5.3. The Nutrition Involved in the Action and the Relationship with the Body

During the death fast, the general diet was taking 3 to 5 liters of water, some sugared the water, some salted the water, 20 cubes of sugar, tea, and sometimes herbal teas. Some interviewees also used coffee, while others did not drink it because of the oil in it. Some people also ate lemon, hard candy, and mint. This feeding method might vary depending on the period of the action. The biggest of these changes is the use of Vitamin B1 (thiamine). Vitamin B1, which has no nutritional effect on the body, prevents the organs from weakening later and preventing the brain cells' death. Since one of the foods taken during the death fast is sugar and sugared water and sugar increases the destruction in cells when excessively used, Vitamin B1 has the feature of preventing this destruction.

The reason for the long duration of the death fast in the 2000s was Vitamin B1. When the 1996 death fast was taken as an example in the 2000s, this vitamin was started to being used with the suggestion of the HRFT and TMA. Although the TMA recommended thiamine in the 1996 action, it was rejected by the political organizations.

The use of Vitamin B1 in action in the 2000s also varies according to the decision of the political organizations. Throughout that period, some of the leftist organizations stopped using B1 or using it from time to time due to the media's discourse that B1 had a nutritious feature. While only 6 of the interviewees did not use B1 during the action, 3 of them used it intermittently or quit.

İ, who was in one of the teams⁴⁹ that did not use B1, stated that non-use was a decision that was later changed and that the reason for such change was:

We used B1 for five or seven days; we used it for a very short time. [...] In fact, it was a decision that was changed afterward because it was a reaction against the statements such as "they take vitamins, they eat, they drink, nothing happens to them." So, it was a common reaction. (İ)

Interviewees asserting that it takes some time to get used to this diet in the first days of the action; the body gets used to it and adapts over time.⁵⁰ However, since the same food was taken for a long time, minor changes could be made in the way it was taken. For example, activists sometimes consumed sugar not directly but by melting it. Mint was also consumed due to the uncomfortableness and disgust that occurs when a person continually consumes sugar.

Sometimes from the outside, families also sent food to those who were on the death fast. U laughed and described the situation and the food sent as follows:

As the process took longer, there were things that families sent, wanted to send, but we did not accept. As the process was prolonged, we applied methods like squeezing and drinking the juice of mint to relieve the stomach. There were many things like this; families even sent Turkish delight (laughing). However, nobody accepted them, of course. Our daily diet was like the outside; Here, we continued with water, sugar, and salt. (U)

Depending on the diet, the activists expressed that while they experienced physical and psychological problems, they also experienced mental problems at times. These problems started especially after the 100th day of the action.

It was the period when I said that I was dying from the 60th day until the 90th and 100th day. "I think I'm dead, okay, I'm going." because a hiccup started. I know from the 1996 death fast. If the hiccup has started, it's a sign that you're going to die. Also, gall came out of my mouth. I am telling them like this. I hope it doesn't bother you much. And I felt very intense pain while hiccuping and because of the gall. I don't know if I suffered so much from the torture. But I suffered such severe pain. (C)

⁴⁹ Teams were formed in 2000s death fast actions, and a total of 12 teams participated in the action. According to the teams, using B1 differed.

⁵⁰ G emphasized this point.

Likewise, Z described how she started to smell acetone from her own body and told more about the relationship with her body as follows:

For example, in 1996, after 45-50 days, I was almost unable to get even water. That sage gave me such a soap scent. So, I haven't drunk sage for years. (laughing.) [...] But after a certain period, I constantly smelt acetone from my body. (Z)

Above all, while the protesters experienced severe weight loss, especially sensitivity to light and sound, double vision, hair loss, foam and saliva formation in the mouth, foot aches, difficulty in walking, nausea was the most common physical difficulties in activists. The interviewees emphasized that these physical difficulties were also a dimension of their struggle with themselves.

I experienced temporary blindness and deafness. You were fighting with yourself so that this should not have happened in front of the guard's eyes. The effort to sustain yourself was a challenging thing. We were on a death fast, but we tried to do our best not to die. (K)

With these difficulties, L, who was hesitant about whether to quit the action at that time, said:

After the days, some friends could not continue the action anymore, and they applied for treatment. These things rarely happened. To be honest; when I heard these, I thought "Should I also accept treatment?". Later, I remembered the moment when I was in prison in Bursa during the operation on December 19. Two friends died right next to me there. I promised to them. I would take your resistance as an example until the end, I would complete my resistance. So, when I had a hesitation like, "Should I accept treatment too?" they came to my mind. When these came to my mind, I was ashamed of myself for thinking so. I said, "No, I will resist until the end." It was one of the things that kept me alive and strengthened my resistance a little more. After that, I did not hesitate again. (L)

Also, Y said:

The statement that I stayed with the same determination for 273 days would be a lie. There were many moments when I felt weak. But my belief didn't even make me think of stopping the action. (Y)

V stated that she got angry more quickly and had difficulty controlling her emotions, but she said that she "loved her body very much" during this process.

Inevitably, your nerves wasted away. You could get angry or be emotional very quickly. I was having a little difficulty when controlling it. For example, one of the guards said something to me, I don't remember now, but he said it jokingly, and I shouted directly at him. I calmed down afterward, of course, but it was difficult to control those instant feelings. [...] I loved my body very much. [...] I was very comfortable with myself; I was pleased. I think the important thing was; when you know what and why you did, whether you had health problems related to your body or your physical beauty or ugliness, I say

ugliness in quotation marks, I couldn't find a word there; you are happy because you know why you did it. (V)

The interviewees who talked about their diet and their difficulties emphasized that even though they had difficulties, this was the return of this action and the process. They predicted this before they started the action.

3.5.4. Feelings During the Death Fast Action

The interviewees were asked what emotions affected them during the death fast. Whereas two interviewees stated that they did not remember (because of WK syndrome; one of them told based on her family's account), most interviewees said they felt mixed emotions.

That feeling of non-submission, sense of honor that includes all of them. I can say so. [...] Is it possible that there was no grief? There was, of course. Wouldn't it be joy, so you stand firm to them. [...] I can say the sum of them all. That feeling of honor, resistance, standing firm, these are, of course, very important. So, you continue to be you. (C)

The interviewees emphasized that at the beginning of the action, the feeling of resistance, strength, not being alone, and being together were there; with their friends' deaths, sadness increased.

When the news of death came one after the other, you inevitably experienced this feeling: "We die one by one, this will not be the solution, we will all die." During the death fast process, we experienced this feeling more: "I will meet with the immortal those who leave in a few days on the other side." I felt that the moment has come slowly. You know, they say, "My experiences flashed before my eyes like a film strip." I've had this twice. After that, I felt like, "Yes, we are at the end, now I am going." I experienced that feeling, and I was sad, and I cried at times. (L)

The interviewees who said that the emotion they experienced was "enthusiasm" expressed it as follows:

There were moments and days when I felt every emotion for 273 days. But if I generalize, I can say that the enthusiasm of not surrendering was dominant. (Y)

Furthermore, R emphasized that the emotions a person felt in the action is not an extraordinary thing; they are felt while carrying on with life. This point is crucial to the fact that the death fast was considered as usual.

There was a time when you experience some joys and enthusiasm, but it wasn't a dominant feeling. There, you actually carried on with your daily life; instead, against all that extraordinariness seen from the outside, you maintained your existence by continuing that ordinary life as much as possible, experiencing the usual feelings. Such an unusual situation didn't prevail. (R)

While one of the interviewees emphasized that wondering about the situation of other friends was very strong, another interviewer said that she felt anger as she lost her friends. Apart from these, it has been understood that the sense of effort is felt by the interviewees.

There was an effort to continually read something, learn new things, answer letters on time, write down your feelings and thoughts. Also, there was an effort made in the following direction: My relatives would come to visit almost every day, my mother, my brother. I tried to have a good time with them. So, the first is to have a good time because now they really need it. Having a good time because I could die, and such memories should remain. (P)

S expressed that process as a humanity test and described how he felt as follows:

“Being human. That process was a test of humanity.”⁵¹⁵² I said it very briefly and clearly, but there is something huge behind it. [...] It was to build a barricade against all kinds of attacks to organizational actions, [*attacks to destroy organized action*]⁵³. This gave me pleasure. (S)

The main reason for asking the interviewees how they felt during the action is to try to understand how their encounter was with the action. As being understood from what the interviewees shared, although there is sometimes grief during the action, feelings of enthusiasm, joy, effort, and most importantly, power is frequently expressed. The interviewees said that they felt very powerful during the action. The question of whether this power can have a relationship with *potentia* comes to mind. The act of death fast, which can be observed from the outside as reducing human power and physical strength; inversely, has increased the power and capability of the activists. This point cannot be underestimated. Continuing to read, write and augment life while in action with an effort; while in grief (the point that U emphasized: “You are sorry, but you live with that sadness there.”), is vital to perceive this action as an action in life and to carry on with it. We think that from the angle of Spinoza’s philosophy of *potentia*, death fast is oriented towards an affirmation of life, not negation of life. We understand this to be precisely the continuation of life, the continuation of living. The death fast activists affirm life by increasing their might, the

⁵¹ Emphasis mine.

⁵² This point is similar to Arendt’s action understanding: “Action is the ultimate expression of our humanness.” (Rogers, 2014).

⁵³ Addition mine.

degree of their might. As Çetin Balanuye stated, for Spinoza, “to ‘be’ is to desire, to become, to relate, and to produce.” (Balanuye, 2006:106). We think that in the death fast, desire, becoming, producing, and people’s might are intensified. In this respect, death fast’s life-oriented aspect can be perceived.

3.6. Opinions of the Participants About the Death Fast Action

Now, let us try to express how the interviewees themselves describe the death fast based on their experiences and whether they consider it as a political action. The similarities and differences between the death fast action and other practices such as hunger strike, self-immolation, suicide, suicide bombing were asked. It is thought that these points, which are presented in the first chapter of the thesis, including the literature review, will be elaborated upon in line with the interviewees’ opinions and shared thoughts. Furthermore, in this part, we tried to understand whether there was a change in the interviewees’ opinions between the time they began the action and after it.

3.6.1. The Description of the Death Fast

In this part, the focus is on how the interviewees describe death fast. It is possible to discuss and provide the description of death fast in three different titles.

3.6.1.1. “The Death Fast is an Exceptional Political Action to be Applied at the Very Last Moment.”

The interviewees’ most emphasized point is, after the emphasis on it being an individual decision, the importance of will, and that the action is against F-type prisons, that the death fast is an exceptional act that should be carried out as a last resort. Except for 3, all interviewees expressed that the death fast should be done when there is nothing else to do.

The interviewees asserted each action should be evaluated within its own conditions. Especially regarding the death fast actions that started in the 2000s, they remarked that this action was started because there was nothing else to do in that period under those conditions.

Be sure; the death fast was the last thing we used. Until the death fast, there were boycotts such as not participating in the counting, not letting the guard in, short-term hunger strikes. After doing all these, the last thing was the death fast. [...] It had to be done. It could also happen like that: every day, someone would burn themselves. Maybe, you could do it like this, but that wasn’t the purpose. The purpose was actually to continue this process by losing fewer people. (V)

Likewise, D makes the same point:

If you impose such an extreme obligation on a person, there is no alternative. Under those circumstances, it was not like we could also make a press release, but we could carry out a death fast. We had only one thing we could do, and we did it. (D)

It is important to note that the death fast has definitive demands and goals, but the action itself is not the aim. In other words, the death fast has a goal, but it is not the goal itself. It is only a method, a tool used to achieve a certain goal. Hence, the interviewees also opposed fetishizing and absolutizing the death fast in that sense.

We did not think of death fasts as purposes in themselves; we considered them as a tool. When forced, when connections with the masses were weakened, the duty was left to us, the prisoners in the most challenging conditions. [...] Actually, the death fast was not an end; it was the only solution. This was a policy of making the state back down. (U)

P expressed this very clearly:

I do not understand friends who fetishize death fast. Let me say this with all sincerity: I do not want even my enemy to have to do such a difficult action like the death fast, which causes people to be in constant tension and fight in every way. So, I can die; death is not an issue. Let's say, a bullet comes and finds me. However, it should not be the result of such painful and complicated processes. Therefore, when literally, there is nothing left to do, the death fast action is done. And this must be the exception. (P)

Given that a death fast is an act that can be done as an exception, the activists underlined that many things can be done outside, and that even informing a person outside is a significant achievement. Therefore, they stressed that the death fast should not be performed outside.

You carry out the death fast to protect your identity, honor, and faith between the four walls, but there are other ways of acting outside. I am a person who survived the death fast. Under those conditions, it gives me the honor to be involved in that process. However, despite all these, today, I find death fasts, especially done outside, absolutely wrong. (K)

In this sense, we should not present death fast as a superior experience by exalting it. It is important to note that the death fast is not one of the usual forms of obtaining rights and should not be used under all circumstances.

Overall, the death fast was considered by the interviewees as the last thing to make the demands explicit when it was thought that there was nothing left to do in the conditions specific to the period. It is an action that you undertake by using your body because you have nothing left to do on your own, under conditions where you are alone in the cell. In this respect, it is possible to say that the act of death fasting is an

exceptional act of activity through which “You try to satisfy your demands with your life in a way that can result in death.”⁵⁴

Moreover, it is worth discussing whether the action itself is political. When this question was asked, the interviewees evaluated the death fast action as a political action, mostly because it was carried out against a policy or an official practice and it had political demands. They emphasized that death fast can be done for different reasons all over the world, but their own death fast was political.

Some interviewees said that “Death fast is a political action a style of action aiming for the struggle for rights.”⁵⁵ They also followed out a political agenda against a policy affecting them, and that the action was political in this respect. In contrast, some interviewees stated that the action itself was political because its aim was political. They claimed the action was political from top to toe.

While T expressed why the action is political, he said that this action does not aim to make a total change, that the action has goals for itself:

Firstly, the death fast is, of course, a political act. Firstly, you show that you do not surrender your will. [...] Secondly, it is an action that will negate all the pressures which will be imposed on you. The goal is to improve the quality of life in the place you live in, to ensure the acquisition of rights that will enable you to work freely, exercise, and eat healthily. This is a political thing, after all. However, nobody thinks such a thing, nobody ever expressed a simple judgment like we can change this order with these actions. (T)

Accordingly, the interviewees evaluated the political nature of the action by saying that they also run a political agenda against an official policy. For the interviewees, death fast was thought to be a political action, having an individual and a social purpose and demand in terms of the content and its purposes. Thus, it would not be wrong to locate the action of death fast as a political action performed under exceptional circumstances and as a last resort.

3.6.1.2. “In the Death Fast, Death is Taken as a Risk without Being Blessed.”

Another point expressed by the interviewees regarding the description of death fast is that death is regarded only as a risk in the death fast without attributing any sacredness to it. As mentioned in the first chapter of the study, Bargu emphasized that

⁵⁴ The emphasis belongs to L.

⁵⁵ This sharing belongs to G.

death fast has emerged as a “risk to death.” (2016:285). The interviewees asserted that in the death fast, the action was done by taking the risk of death. In this section, together with the risk of death, the matter of “existence and living” will be included. In this way, we think we will understand how that state of “being suspended”⁵⁶ really emerges in the act of death fast.

In the death fast, people who are suspended between death and life, take the risk of death until their demands are met. With this action, as D emphasized, the person says, “I risked death, I will not give up even if I die.” to the state.

There was a risk of dying, but not to die. It was a struggle to live or to live better. [...] We did not act to die; we risked death to change things. This basic logic should not change. Our effort was directed at change and we risked death, too. (D)

C laid stress on both life and existence and said the following:

Of course, living is the most basic instinct. Protecting our existence is very vital. However, even a very ordinary soldier knows that the probability of dying is sometimes even 100 percent when attacked on a front line. [...] It is necessary to look at it politically, in the context of revolutionaries. Otherwise, I have read many emotional comments until today. Why are you dying? Why is this happening? Humanity, life, the other... It is necessary to approach the matter by understanding that it is a part of a great conflict by correctly establishing the relationship between past, present, and future. Of course, emotional factors will work but this needs to be evaluated by placing it in the context of the conflict. “None of us were crazy or stupid. We knew what it was to live and all.”⁵⁷ (C)

When we look at L and M’s narratives to make the issue understandable, they underline that they participated in this action to provide living conditions for both themselves and other people.

The death fast is not something done to die. Unlike it, it is an act of attaining the things necessary for life; it is an expression that one will die if necessary, to ensure life. If the demands are not met, we would rather die in the face of a life you impose. We do not leave our humanity, do not ask us to leave our humanity. It is an expression of the statement that we cannot be purified from our convictions. (L)

When there is an imposition and when nothing else can be done in prison conditions, the death fast is seen as an action of an extraordinary quality that says “our

⁵⁶ We mentioned the person is in a state of mediating between death and life during the death fast. See. Chapter II, pp.16.

⁵⁷ Emphasis mine.

goal is to exist; if necessary, we will put our body to death against these impositions.”

At this point, we think the experiences of M is meaningful:

Our aim was to protect our reason for existence, our existence beyond being ideological and political. [...] Otherwise, we did not do this, based on the idea that we make people pity ourselves, let's die and be like this. It was just to express our own existence. “This is us”, we said. We meant that you couldn't go beyond here. Some costs have to be paid. When you risk this, you can create a barricade. (M)

V, who defined the death fast as a rebirth, also stated that they wanted to delay death:

The previous death fast resisters and martyrs had things to say: “Death fast is rebirth.” You are actually reborn both physically and mentally. It really is. [...] We wanted to delay death because of this we used B1 to keep our brain going. There is a Latin proverb; at the time, we said it so much “Hurry slowly.” This was the philosophy: “Hurry slowly.” We had this perspective. You know, when you cut off B1, your consciousness is closed, and you die. You could have died sooner too. But that was not what was intended. Let's prolong as much as we can so that less people die. Our power to sanction should be more. (V)

What N says also supports V's statements:

In the action, our primary purpose was not to die. You were struggling to live there. You were on a death fast, but it looks like a contradiction. Otherwise, if we would not drink water, eat sugar, we would die on the fourth day. Do not drink sugared water for four days, five days, do not drink water, so you will live for a maximum of one week or you would die in 10 days at the most. (N)

Based on the statements of the interviewees who emphasized that “death and life are not something to be blessed on their own”⁵⁸, it is possible to say that death has always been a risk in the death fast, but death is not a goal and the action is initiated solely by taking the risk of death.

3.6.1.3. The Issues of Sacrifice & Rebellion vs. Resistance

In this part, the interviewees were asked whether the death fast was resistance or rebellion: while two people said rebellion, one person said that it was both rebellion and resistance, and the rest stated that the death fast action was a type of resistance.

However, although the interviewees were not asked whether the death fast carries a spirit of sacrifice, some interviewees touched on this issue and stated that in the death fast there is a spirit of sacrifice.⁵⁹ Some interviewees emphasized that they

⁵⁸ This emphasis belongs to R.

⁵⁹ B criticized this point by saying that the death fast was performed with a great spirit, the spirit of sacrifice, and maybe claimed that, because of this, it has been used a lot since 1980 and should be used less frequently.

undertook such actions for those who will come after them and live in those prisons and for them to live.

Something needs to be done for the people you love. You make a choice there. So, you want someone to live with in exchange for your own life to live. As a bit of a mathematical equation, in fact, their lives are equal to the life of you and your friends. But in total, it is like our lives. (I)

Like V who says “Just think about it, would you do something like this if you didn’t love people? You wouldn’t. You do it because you love people.”, U and K also support the opinion of V and state:

The purpose of the death fast is shaped around self-sacrifice. You are doing this to contribute to a future struggle, an action, by revealing your own body. (U)
We started the death fast so that the people who would come after us and stay in prisons live in more humane conditions and, to provide that environment for them. (K)

As it was stated in the first chapter, Spinoza says, “No one wishes to preserve his being for the sake of anything else.” (In *The Ethics* in part IV, 25th proposition). Spinoza is deeply critical of sacrifice, and the sacrifice in the death fast action is in contradiction with his thinking. In Spinoza’s ethical politics, the sacrifice culture creates grief and does not give power to people to do something good for him/her; conversely, sacrifice sustains *potestas*. To clarify, sacrifice does not strengthen *potentia*, a person’s power/might. Hence, in our opinion, the sacrifice culture, which might be effective in the practice of death fasts, can contrast with Spinoza’s outlook regarding the expansion of *potestas*.

Furthermore, Z answered the question of whether the death fast action is resistance or rebellion by locating death fast action as “a resistance of honor.” Most of the interviewees that defined the death fast as resistance asserted that it was a “long-term resistance”⁶⁰ based on the belief that “I will not give up even if I die.” R, defining the act of death fast as rebellion, expresses why he thinks in that way. The statement of R is a crucial point in understanding the role of the body in the death fast too:

It’s a rebellion with all your being. So, if you can’t do anything with your hand, with your brain or anything else, you scream with your body. Actually, it is a scream. (R)

Concerning will, the issue of fighting with one’s own body also comes across in the subject of resistance. The point that the body (which we have discussed by giving

⁶⁰ The statement of “long-term resistance” belongs to Y.

reference to Spinoza) is an area of resistance is also discussed by the interviewees here. We can say that as the action is resistance, there is also resistance against one's own body. The dilemma concerning the body is as follows: The person's own body is both in total resistance, and the same body, which is considered as a tool used in the resistance, is a part of this resistance. Even the body is the locus of this resistance itself. Thus, the body is both used as a tool and instrumentalized, rendered free from representations, the same body resists without being symbolic. The emphasis of M, that we mentioned, appeared here, about the dilemma of the body:

We were also fighting with our bodies. Although this was an effort to show will, we were also fighting against our bodies. Because at first, there was a desire to eat. Then that desire ended, but at first, we needed a fight of will against our body in that desire to eat. When we got hungry, we drank water as something to compensate for it or think of food. [...] Our real chance was our body. We used it. (M)

3.6.2. The Similarities & Differences of the Death Fast Action with Other Self-Annihilating Practices

The interviewees were also asked whether they thought there was any similarity or difference between the death fast and hunger strike, self-immolation actions, suicide, and suicide bombing. While they stated that among these practices, the death fast is mostly like the hunger strike, and that there is no similarity between the other practices and the death fast action.

G stated that "the death fast was not related to suicide, and suicide was not even an action." This point leads us to the Arendtian definition of action, as we emphasized in the first chapter of the thesis. As Arendt clarified, action is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter". Action takes place between people, not between people and things or objects (Rogers, 2014). Hence, as G emphasized, when a person commits suicide, this does not have plurality; this does not happen between people. Also, suicide does not point out to a new beginning or birth. Having these in mind, it is possible to approach suicide as something that is not an action.

The interviewees claimed self-immolation and suicidal practices were aimed at killing:

A person can commit suicide, but it is instantaneous. S/he can get herself/himself going and do that. However, hunger is something else that happens second by second. [...] Suicide is about dying. All these kinds of practices like suicide have this; a thought about ending your own life. Hunger

strike and death fast are not like that. This is the main difference. Whatever thought is in your head about someone, you know that your life will end there. But there is a duration in death fast. (D)

Referring to the point that the action of death fast has a definite purpose and demand concerning the perpetuation of life, I has explained the difference of the death fast with the following words:

It is an action done for a purpose. The death fast is an action to achieve the goal. You can either live or die in the end. But in the act of suicide, it is certain you will die. There are differences between them, we cannot approach it as if they are the same. (I)

The point that the death fast action is performed for certain demands and continues as a process makes the death fast different than other similar practices that we cannot define as action.

Z expressed this difference very clearly:

Those practices called sacrifices are forms of acting directly on dying. In other words, an effort to give a message or an effort to send something out through dying. However, the death fast is not about dying, but mainly about backing the opponent with that resistance and building a better life. There may be death, but it is not based on dying. (Z)

The interviewees stated that they mostly think that there is a similarity between the death fast and the hunger strike. The interviewees, who considered the death fast as a greater form of the hunger strike, claimed that while the hunger strike is a more flexible form of action, the death fast is more precise.

There are certain similarities and differences between the hunger strike and death fast. There are similarities and even sameness in both in terms of drinking water, sugared water, salty water. The death fast can also be defined as the advanced and higher phase of the hunger strike. In this respect, “the hunger strike is the precondition and ground of the death fast.” The hunger strike that continues without a break naturally turns into a death fast after a particular stage. (Ü)

It does not seem possible to make an absolute distinction between the hunger strike and the death fast. Although there are similarities between the two in terms of nutrition, there may be differences according to the period the action was done. Also, while there is a difference in the duration of the action, it would not be wrong to define death fast as a higher form of the hunger strike.

Another point that demonstrates the variety in the opinions of the interviewees is the difference between an indefinite hunger strike and a death fast. Some interviewees say that indefinite hunger strike and death fast are different only in name,

while some interviewees point out a distinction between the two. T was one of those who underlined the difference:

There are actions to improve the living conditions of the prison, about obtaining a right. One of these actions is indefinite hunger strikes. This has a duration. So, let's say you go on a hunger strike indefinitely. For example, you say we will quit this action after 30 days. During these 30 days, some people do not participate; they attend, such as for five, ten, twenty days for support. These are entirely different from the death fast. When a consensus is reached in those living conditions, those hunger strikes are terminated. [...] However, the death fast has minimum and maximum demands. The indispensable condition is the improvement of the area you live in. Death fasts are done in this sense. The death fast continues until these are obtained. (T)

U asserts there may be a difference between the two in terms of conceptualization and understanding, but that they are not different from each stating the following:

Some of our friends also call it an "indefinite hunger strike". The indefinite hunger strike is actually a kind of death fast. When you add the word 'indefinite' to the name of such an action, it means that the action will be continued until its purpose is understood, until the current policy is changed. The death fast is a similar sort of action, but there may be differences in concept and understanding. (U)

It seems that there is a noteworthy difference between the death fast action and the indefinite hunger strike. While there is no time limit in a death fast, the action can be terminated with a decision after a certain period in the indefinite hunger strike. According to the interviewees, there is no similarity between the death fast and the other practices that we mentioned, suicide, self-immolation, suicide bombing; these are entirely divergent from the death fast. They are practices that take place instantly, and the person dies as soon as it is done; they do not aim to establish a continuance.

3.6.3. Changes in the Views at the Beginning and After the Action

The interviewees were asked whether there was a change in their ideas when they thought about the beginning and end of the death fast. While only one interviewee said that there was a change of mindset, all the rest of the interviewees stated that they would do the same if the conditions were the same. The interviewees, who expressed that they predicted how the process would be while starting the action, emphasized there was no difference in this sense. However, they were surprised when there were some evacuations because they did not expect any evictions to occur.⁶¹

⁶¹ Most prisoners who were on the death fast diagnosed as WK in the 2000s period, and with WK reports they were released.

M said that she did not expect such an end and her release surprised her:

I did not expect such an end; to tell the truth, I did not expect to be evacuated. The thing was, from my point of view, I was one of the oldest prisoners. Since I saw myself from those who would die first, my evacuation at the end was very surprising, something I did not expect. [...] So, while I was without expectation at the beginning of the process, the end surprised me. (M)

While R, the 1996 death fast activist, said that he felt better at the end when the action was successful, Y said:

Of course, my thoughts did not remain the same for nine months. But it would be neither wrong nor an exaggeration to say that I was steadfast not to surrender. (Y)

E had a change of opinion at the end of that process. She expressed this change of opinion as follows:

I am a Marxist, a socialist; this has not changed. There have been changes in my perspective on the action, my perspective on society, the way we see how we relate with society because you face death for 264 days, somehow always you are interbedded with death. Many people around you, your comrades, the closest, the good people, are dying, and there is a society that doesn't stop it. You don't know whom to blame. (E)

D also refers to this point:

There has been no change for me. I could predict what will happen. My resentment might be this: I expected from society to react more actively. It didn't happen. Apart from that, I did not experience a changing thought. [...] If we were to rewind history now, would I do the same? I would. (D)

Thereby, as we have asserted, all but one of the interviewees claimed they had no change of mind; they have the same mindset about the death fast action to this day.

3.7. Interpretations of the Participants Concerning Their Actions

In this section, we aim to evaluate the death fast action based on the responses of the interviewees to the questions about the outcomes of the action, damages they took as an effect of the action and forced intervention, the adaptation period after the action. Also, it includes the interviewees' assessments of death fast actions and how this whole process affected their lives.

3.7.1. The Outcomes of the Action

The interviewees were asked what happened as a result of the death fast and whether their demands were accepted or not. While most of the interviewees said their

demands were accepted at the end of the 1996 death fast⁶², they stated that no achievements were obtained regarding the death fast in 2000. They stated that the things they demanded at the beginning of the action were not accepted, the F-types were not closed, and they could not achieve their goals in 2000. Thus, according to the interviewees, the death fast action had to be done by considering the conditions of the period in which they were carried out. However, the action that started in 2000 took too long, and no acquisition was obtained. It has been stated that during the death fast of 2000, which lasted for seven years, the action lost its effect, with the loss of many people having lots of physical and mental damage and the loss of public interest regarding the issue.

P made the following interpretations on this issue as a self-criticism:

When I think about it, the act of death fast in 2000 was right from the outset, being against the cell-type prisons that revolutionary prisoners would not readily accept. So, it had to be done. However, we made a mistake. Even though the circumstances changed against us, we continued the action obstinately. That many people were not supposed to die. Especially after the state made the 19 December massacre move and succeeded in carrying all of us to the F-types without any serious reaction, that action should have continued for a while symbolically, but it should have been ended without so many deaths. It was nothing more than going away from a political mind. It was wrong and was a big mistake. We also evaluated it. It was a mentality that started to understand the struggle in prisons as the center of the struggle: the prisons as the epicenter of the social struggle. In other words, it was the loss of a political, strategic perspective. (P)

P emphasized that two mistakes were made during the death fast actions; the first was to think of prisons as the epicenter and to think and act prison-oriented, and the second one was that the tool became the purpose. Thus, the act of death fast itself became the goal and lasted for too long, as we emphasized above, it caused no impact on society.

Regarding the evacuations started at that time and the progress of the death fast action, B also asserted the following:

We could not win. We could not win in 2000. In a way, the evacuations were intended to break resistance. For example, my wife's condition was worse, but her punishment was not reversed. There were such different situations. There was an evacuation attack to break the resistance. However, it took too long. Neither a specific beginning nor an outcome was planned. (B)

⁶² The death fast action in 1996 was ended with the acceptance of the demands on the 69th day. Eskişehir coffin was closed, and prisoners were not taken to F-types.

While the conditions did not change, we observe that the stubbornness regarding the continuity of the action came at a very high cost, and no achievements could be obtained. We see this in D's words:

When I look at the process from outside, I say: You looked, you evaluated the conditions, you resisted, but you saw that the state, the system does not back off [*geri adım atmadı*]. Then, this action is no longer your tool; the system has started using it against you. In this sense, you should have thought: "We put up resistance under all possible conditions, but we have to continue this with different tools." You should not have persisted in the death fast because, after a while, deaths occurred, some people died, and they lost their bodies' integrity. This brought us to the point of what the attacker wanted to do regardless of our intent. [...] During that period, the correct tactics could not be developed. Whereas death fasts could be ended at the right point, and resistance could have been built with other forms of resistance. This could not be achieved. On the one hand, the system dogmatically said, "It will be this way," on the other hand, the revolutionaries responded, "If it is, it will be like this". Such a strange process of stubbornness took place. Of course, the costs of this persistence process have been very high. (D)

E emphasized that if you were in a fight, there would be no quitting, while at the same time explaining this "stubbornness", she also mentioned that no acquisitions were obtained as a result of the action.

We were aware that we were seriously damaged. For example, why didn't I stop the action? Why did I continue as soon as I realized that I was subjected to the intervention? Because when you get into a conflict, it would not stop anymore. If you have started, you continue whatever the consequences are. For me, I think the action resulted in a severe loss socially, but also politically. Most of our friends are unable to do this, and we do not want to accept it. We said this is a political victory, but Turkey's revolutionary movement had already proven its resistance tradition over the years. This is not something that happened in 2000; it already existed in society in general. However, we did not have entirely objective assessments to express ourselves to society. I think we approached the situation from a more subjective perspective. (E)

It was emphasized by the interviewees that the steps taken should have been changed according to the way of the action and changing conditions. C stated that a resistance base had already been created and that other steps must have followed it:

The number of comrades who lost their lives has exceeded 100. A severe discussion was taking place. There was also the possibility of sliding towards an entirely imaginary, completely subjective ground. At that point, one thinks it might not be right to admit the loss of 300-500 people on a death fast. Yes, a resistance was created there once. They saw that they could not operate their take-out policies at one or another level. That was not easy; they understood it a little bit. The mode of action could have been changed by using this and other gains as a step. (C)

Contrarily, the interviewees who thought there is an achievement emphasized that it was an acquisition in terms of resistance culture and memory. At the same time,

they said they gained both themselves and their will. Although there was no concrete, physical or tangible acquisition (in terms of prison structure and architecture), they did not prefer to say that there was no acquisition at all as a result of the action.

Of course, there is a feeling of anger at not succeeding. It's not like saying, "OK, we came through the process with a victory." Of course, we won our will, we won ourselves. Nevertheless, this is actually a political defeat. If this policy of the state continues today, it is a failure. On the other hand, the person involved in a death fast is successful in a sense. S/he who has put forward his/her own body is the winner. S/he has gained himself/herself, the struggle, his/her self-confidence. [...] I cannot say we have no acquisitions, but I say it is not enough. (U)

Besides, some interviewees asserted there were minor changes in prison practices. Nevertheless, it was underlined that in the death fast in 2000, demands were not satisfied in the full sense.

We were removed from those individual cells. Our communication rights had been acquired. Common areas were opened to everyone. The right of free visitation was obtained which we did not have before. You can bring any book, magazine or newspaper you want from outside. Has the aim been achieved? When I look back, it's not exactly 100 percent. (V)

In the 1996 death fast action, all demands were accepted. On the other hand, the demands were not met in the 2000 death fasts because social opposition was weak and the number of deaths were too high, it was concluded that no substantial acquisition was obtained. As emphasized in the interviews, people "won themselves" in terms of the will and resistance.

3.7.2. Damages of the Action

At the end of the death fast, even if the person had not lost consciousness and had not been subjected to forced intervention, some physical and mental damages occur. According to the interviews, similar damages occurred in all interviewees (13 people) who were not subjected to forced intervention. The most common impairment shared by the interviewees is memory loss. As T stated,

Let me tell you now; there is, of course, a memory recording problem in the short-term memory. It doesn't record. Believe me; although we talked so much now, I wouldn't be able to recognize, if I saw you on the road. That's why I sometimes say to those we've just met, "Don't get me wrong if I don't say hello to you. You look out for me, and I will talk to you then." (T)

Forgetfulness, lack of balance, death of brain cells, stomach distress, and neuropathy are the other impairments the interviewees mentioned. In addition to these, a burning sensation under the feet called "burning feet" is one of the physical problems

people are exposed to during and after the action. As P points out, this is a disorder caused by the collapse of the protein metabolism. There are medications used for this ailment, but there is no permanent treatment.

B stated that he experienced certain problems as follows:

My walking was impaired. It got better after six months. It has reached a certain level. Sometimes I forgot the way to the house, I went to the wrong places. But as I said, one of the important points is that I have overcome them somehow because I haven't been intervened. I did not have much physical damage. But I have muscle pain. I am weak now; for example, I divide the physical work a person does in one day into three days. (B)

At the end of the action, previously unknown diseases may occur in the body. U stated that he developed diabetes insipidus. Among these 20 people, except for Ü, all the protesters had forgetfulness and memory problems. However, interestingly enough, Ü stated that he developed an excessive remembrance. The reason for it is not evident.

As a result of the action, an exceptional situation occurred for me mentally. Commonly and in general, extreme loss of consciousness, forgetfulness and a series of other negativities effects developed. However, I also experienced an excessive and profound remembrance that could be called the opposite. (Ü)

3.7.3. Forced Intervention and Issues Related to WK Syndrome

In addition to physical and mental damages, the issue of forced intervention should be also addressed. While in the first chapter of the thesis we tried to approach this issue from a more legal perspective; in this chapter, we will examine it through the activists' experiences. We will mention the matter of the WK syndrome extensively because WK syndrome is connected to the issue of forced intervention. Concerning this issue, we interviewed Professor Hakan Gürvit. He provided information about forced intervention, its consequences, and the damages it causes. He has witnessed death fasts since 1996 and has specialized in hunger strikes and death fasts, and also works in HRFT and TMA. The major syndrome observed in the death fast activists who were subjected to forced intervention is called WK syndrome. As Gürvit states, WK is actually an illness observed in alcoholics:

Wernicke is German, Korsakoff is Russian. These are two neuropsychiatrists who lived at the beginning of the last century. The people they describe are mostly alcoholics. It has been sporadically reported among non-alcoholics as well, but the western cultural paradigm considered it as the direct result of alcohol. However, after a little research, it is revealed that if a person loses fluid in addition to experiencing malnutrition, they can develop the WK syndrome as was the case with the prisoners of the Second World War and the tropical regions, Japanese concentration camps.

Vitamin B1 deficiency; that is, thiamine deficiency, which we mentioned in the previous chapters, is the leading cause of WK. Gürvit explains the reason for this:

Thiamine deficiency is something that occurs if a person directly takes carbohydrates without thiamine because thiamine must be there for carbohydrates to be beneficial to the organism, thiamine must set off a chemical change in carbohydrates to benefit the body. Without thiamine, carbohydrate is a toxic substance, and it actually damages two very critical parts of the brain. However, these two parts are in the strategic location which is also called the “bottleneck” for both the Korsakoff component for memory and the Wernicke component for balance.

The hunger strike and death fast would not shrink all organs (contrary to what is said) but would cause WK, and this was something that could be prevented. Gürvit stressed that if the activists use B1, possible disabilities that may occur can be prevented. Therefore, while B1 was not used in the protests in 1996, its use was spontaneously initiated in 2000. Thus, the activists were able to carry on for 100 to 400 days in action.⁶³

Gürvit highlighted that WK’s effect decreased significantly when thiamine was used properly and mentioned that the people in the team who did not use B1 lost their lives in a shorter time. He also emphasized the point that when the person is intervened without B1, both during and after the action, the intervention cripples the person. The witnesses of the interviewees also support this. Almost all the interviewees stated that forced intervention disables people.

Seven of the interviewees were subjected to forced intervention. The difficulties they experience are connected to the intervention due to the deficiency of Vitamin B1. Let us focus on their statements regarding forced intervention.

What G experienced is a striking case. He was most affected by the forced intervention, and suffered 97% brain damage:

I am very much affected by the death fast. I have 97% brain damage. I am just starting to realize why the death fast was done. After the forced intervention, I was like a newborn child. It would sound very interesting and weird when they told me my name. The sound and talking would be extraordinary and interesting for me. During the five or six months after the death fast, I did not realize what I was doing. I was doing nonsensical things. I was not myself. I was not acting knowingly and willingly. (G)

⁶³ Referring to the evacuation of people with the WK reports at that time, Gürvit claims: “These evacuations were done to terminate the death fast action. Because of this, they just let out masses of people with WK reports. After a while, Forensic Medicine Institute reported that WK was recovered, and they started to imprison people again. However, WK does not recover, it continues throughout the life.”

He became dependent on someone else after the forced intervention and could not even satisfy his needs at that time. Now, after 20 years, he only can complete few tasks. Likewise, V explained that she learned to do everything again from the beginning after the forced intervention, stating:

Around the 270th day, I don't remember the exact day, but the guards and soldiers came from the prison and took me by force. I stayed at the hospital for ten days. I was unconscious in the hospital. They had already intervened when I experienced a loss of consciousness. I don't remember anything after that. My mother said, "When you gathered yourself together, you were five or six years old." I was in the hospital for eight months. My heart had stopped, too. Recovering took a long time, like about two years, with medicines, food supplements etc. I have had two years in my life that I don't remember what I did. (V)

E was exposed to intervention when she was unconscious, and she explains that she noticed the situation later:

They took me to the hospital. I thought I was hospitalized because I got sick in the village. One day, I moved my foot, I was chained from my feet, I couldn't understand. I was not aware that I was under arrest at that time. In those days, when a senior officer came and asked me about my case, I said, "I don't remember, when my brother comes, let's ask him." He replied laughingly, "We already know, we just asked whether you know." You know, suddenly, lightning flashed in my head. Then, I thought about why I was here, I realized that I was intervened. After that, I ended the intervention. I told the doctors that I would not let them touch me in any way. They also discharged me and sent me back to prison. (E)

Ö, one of the people exposed to the intervention, stated that he saw himself with a third eye after the intervention and that it could not be diagnosed clearly and was said to be neuropsychological. He said, "I was seeing myself with the third eye. One day, they took me to the sea and put me on the seabed. I see myself lying on the seabed in the air. Or we are talking about three or five people sitting in a room, and I could see as if we were videotaped."

Currently, 600 people in total, 450 in Turkey, 150 in Europe, are diagnosed with WK syndrome. A formation for the people who have WK syndrome also continues to work in Turkey. We interviewed T, who is this formation's spokesman in Adana-Çukurova. They carry out activities to ensure that people with WK carry on with their lives and participate in certain activities.

The death fast action (and the hunger strike) causes many physical, mental, and psychological damages, even if not intervened. When exposed to the forced

intervention, these damages become permanent, and people become disabled.⁶⁴ Even though the TMA and HRFT emphasized the importance of correct treatment in 2000, many people were intervened inadequately, and people had to carry on with their lives this way.

3.7.4. The Adaptation Period After the Action

After the intervention and the death fast action, while some interviewees returned to their previous jobs and continued their lives, some returned to university and worked in various jobs. The interviewees who were exposed to intervention experienced this process with more difficulties for a longer time. L, who was subjected to forceful intervention, stated that from the very beginning he tried to keep himself motivated and tried to walk and move:

To motivate me, I believed that I have a strong will. I did not give up even when dying one cell at a time. I did not surrender to death. Now, I should not surrender to this too, and I will not. The HRFT was providing exercise and physical therapy at that time. With the exercises, I slowly started to stand. [...] Now, I can go anywhere without assistance. Maybe, you can go the same distance in five minutes, I'll go in fifteen minutes, but at least I got rid of the feeling of being dependent on people. I believed again that I could do more on my own. When I put in the effort, I found that I could do some things that I could not do before. It made me a little stronger. The psychological effects and discomforts of the process helped me to overcome the illnesses. I can say that I am a little better than when I was worse in terms of physical health and memory. (L)

In this process, the interviewees motivated themselves by looking at the periods during the death fast they acted and tried to think that they could do it. Í, who was also subjected to forced intervention, expressed the following:

At least I'm better off than some friends. This is the return of my efforts. I was staying with my sister in prison for one month or so after the intervention. I lost 3 kilos because I couldn't walk and I said, I had to walk, and I was walking all the time. I could not speak, and the doctor said, "If you talk fast, it will improve." So, I was trying to talk all the time. Well... I lost my train of thought again (laughing) (Í)

The adaptation period was more difficult for some interviewees. V described this process as follows:

I had a hard time adapting to life for about two years. For example, when I left my sister, she was 13 years old. She was 24 years old when I met her again. I did not know her. You know, we have just started to understand each other. Can you imagine? All that time has passed. I will tell you this with my mothers' words because it's not a time that I remember much. I do not know

⁶⁴ We do not have enough data, but we have observed that the recovery processes of those exposed to intervention are longer and harder.

about my organized life and my family life. You are like a 5-6-year-old seven-year-old child. They taught me everything day by day. I even learned to write afterward. My parents taught me to write. (V)

Some prisoners who have been in prison for a long time explicitly emphasized that it is difficult to adapt to life outside. They stated that there were differences in technological developments and human and social developments between that time and now. Referring to the adaptation difficulties of some of his friends, T narrated this situation:

I didn't have any adaptation problems. So, of course, it is different for some people. For example, some friends were going back after 10 meters of walking, or they were always raising their heads to see the sky above, and they hit people. I did not experience such things. (T)

They claimed that were not alienated from everyday life, theoretically followed the process and developments, but underwent an adaptation process because they were weak in terms of socializing.

After this process, one of the important places that helped the activists was the "House of Life," (*Yaşam Evi*), which they established themselves. With the help of HRFT, together with people treated, a house was rented, and many friends started to live together in Istanbul. Later, they went to Ankara and established a house there as well. As many people recovered, they left the house, and the establishments in both cities united. Currently, there is a place in Istanbul. Three people who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia stay there. M expressed the time they lived in Ankara as follows; this narrative is vital to understand how their life continued and they stayed productive:

We were living in Dikmen in Ankara. The stallholders at Dikmen brought food every week to support us. We also told them, "You are doing an excellent thing, but give us a place in the bazaar, we will sell something there and we will earn money and buy stuff. Don't bring it to us. It would be a physical exercise for us." Then, the stallholders set up a counter for us in Dikmen Bazaar on Wednesdays, and we started selling toys on that counter. Then, we started buying our weekly food with the money we earned from selling toys. It has been better for us. We made postcards, handicrafts are very common in prisons, we wrote poems on wooden veneers, drew patterns, and sold them. We made plated covers for the lighters and sold them. We became the ones that meet our own needs rather than the ones who are waiting for help. We built such a life. (M)⁶⁵

⁶⁵ For an outstanding approach to action, and the activist, see. Zelyüt, S. (2003), *Spinoza*, pp.61.

Death fast activists continued to act against prisoners' isolation that the F-types created both with solidarity in action and with solidarity that continued outside after the action was over, too. Thus, the action is not solely opposed to something; there was also contribution to life by doing something either during the action or after it. In this sense, it is an impressive phenomenon that solidarity continues outside. With the ongoing solidarity outside, death fast activists carry on with their lives. Spinoza's point demonstrates itself once again: "As every man seeks most that which is useful to him, so are men most useful one to another." (*The Ethics*, chapter IV, 35th proposition, corollary II)

M wrote a book which is about her husband's life. Also, she shared her interest in computers for three or four years and what she has done:

I took computer courses for three years. When all the courses were over, I took the university exam this time. There is also a distance education web design department for the university exam. I willingly enrolled and finished it. I studied there for two years and graduated this year. Now we won't practice because of the corona pandemic. I have a web designer friend, if it happens, I'll improve myself a bit with his help at home. In that respect, my development and recovery were like this. So are other friends. They are somehow doing something to fill the gaps in their past lives. (M)

We see all these statements as notable in expressing that most activists still make an effort to live. It is not very easy to produce and continue at the end of a process in which one fights with his/her own body for a long time. However, they highlighted the point of accomplishing something with effort.

3.7.5. Views of the Interviewees about the Death Fast Actions in Different Periods

As we mentioned in the chapter named "The History of the Death Fasts and Hunger Strikes" in chapter II, in Turkey, death fast actions were in 1982 and also in 1984, 1996, 2000, 2012, and 2020.

The interviewees were asked what they thought and felt about these actions and the similarities and differences between different periods. While the interviewees mostly compared 1996 and 2000 death fast actions, they evaluated the current actions as individual vs. massive actions. According to the interviewees, the 1996 and 2000 death fasts have different characteristics. Also, most interviewees stated that death fast actions involving larger groups were more effective and that such actions should not be done individually. They stated that they respect individual actions, but they do not think it is right.

Z, who participated in both the 1996 and 2000 death fasts, underlined a difference between these two periods, primarily due to the lack of Vitamin B1 intake in 1996. In 1996, the death fast was much shorter, and the action was terminated as the demands were accepted. Z emphasized the other differences between the two periods as follows:

We were very strong in 1996. There was power of sanction, and we were together; we were in solidarity, and we could keep each other strong. This created moral support. [...] Besides, in 1996 there was a powerful soul outside; that is, the people who supported that resistance were more robust than the one in 2000. So, I can summarize in that way. (Z)

The interviewees asserted that each action should be evaluated within its conditions. It has been stated that the action in 1984 took place under a lot of pressure in prison conditions after the military coup of September 12, and the 1984 fast was much more difficult. In terms of nutrition, there was no possibility of obtaining tea or herbal tea. In 1984, only water, salt, and sugar intake were carried out, and it is possible to say that the 1984 action was different in terms of the pressure applied. The action in 1984 was against the practice of prison uniform and was successful. According to T, while the death fast in 2000 was similar to the action in 1984 in terms of the intense physical pressure, it was not so in 1996.

B, who also witnessed both the 1996 and the 2000 death fasts, made the following assessment:

Looking back from today, I stayed in prison for five and a half years and saw two death fasts. Before 2000, 1984 seemed too far to me. Looking back now, none of them seem too far. I think we have used this form of action a lot in a very short time. I don't see it very right from that point of view. Maybe, with the enthusiasm brought about by our young age death fasts were at a higher level. [...] In 1996, the F-types were already in the process of development. We opposed, but we won. But we knew that 2000 would come when we won. [...] So, I can't say that one of the death fasts was unnecessary, but how can I say, it sounds like it is too much. (B)

According to the interviewees, individual death fast is not politically correct since it does not create social awareness and remains only in a limited environment.

I am not advocating individual forms of action. If you're not doing it with your supporters, your action can only affect a limited field. It does not affect anyone else. Also, in my opinion, every resistance has an educational side. If you didn't think of resistance as an educational tool, but as a display of force against the other side, that would be wrong. Our main goal here is to create a tradition of resistance. [...] Individual actions' achievement is limited to their environment. But even the environment sees it as an individual action, not as a struggle. They only watch it from the tribune and forget it after a while. The

resistance that everyone lands on the field also brings them to the field, and the results of that struggle become more significant and permanent. (M)

Most interviewees also shared similar views with M, and they frequently emphasized that they respect the people who acted, but this is not true when considered from a political perspective.

P, offering a different approach to the issue, said:

What I find easy is that taking a decision along this line for a death fast and colliding with your own body. Otherwise, going out on the street and trying to tell people your problem is the hardest. (P)

As a result, the interviewees claimed each action should be evaluated within its period and conditions, and there are periodic differences between the actions. They emphasized that the death fast actions in the 2000s should not have continued for that long and that the action should have in a proper time.

3.7.6. The Participants' Evaluation of Their Death Fast Experiences & Its Effects

In this part, the interviewees were asked to evaluate their death fast experiences and to share whether there is any effect, change, or transformation they experienced in their lives. While most interviewees stated that their views and perceptions on life have changed, some of them emphasized the death fast is a part of life and claimed any transformation could not be mentioned regarding it.

B said that this period was the time that he lived life to the fullest:

Let me say that this has been the period in my life that I lived life to the fullest. I experienced friendship, and solidarity. When I look back to my 45 years of my life, that five or six-year period has a different place. In that short time, I experienced everything that I can experience in human relations. Pain, joy, happiness... So, everything was there. [...] Death fast was a form of resistance at some point in my life. Tomorrow I can do something else, the way of action, as a way of resisting what is imposed on me. We confront many things in life, and we stand against them. We fought back with such an action style in prison. We found that it was necessary. If it was the other way, we would do it another way. So, I do not put it in an exceptional place as a mode of action. For example, most of my friends do not know that I was on a death fast. Some people know, but I do not tell it to everyone. (B)

Participation in the death fast action and having gone through this process affected the interviewees. Hence, as N emphasized, putting effort, contributing, and doing something created an effect. Some interviewees stated that this action and the following process made him/her tender-minded:

In terms of the difference between my situation before the death fast and my aftermath, it just happened that I learned to look at life from a broader perspective because during the death fast, we also questioned ourselves, our life, and our relationships with people. Also, we were young at that time. We all had a lot of self-confidence of youth, of being revolutionaries. We thought that we had the power to do anything. After the death fast process, we started to think more realistically. Without a social consciousness, a change cannot occur with “heroes.” In that respect, the process has matured me. It made it too emotional in some ways, too humanistic. It has strengthened my human side in many things while I was stricter in the past. [...] In those hundred and fifty days, I reviewed myself, life, all people, their weaknesses, their excesses; I was listening to myself. The process took away many things, especially physically, but it also added a lot to me. It has given me something positive about being more humane, advanced individuals. Because I started to look at everything in great detail, for example, the situation of a poor person or an animal I see on the street affects me much more deeply today. (K)

I stated that she observed the same effect with some of her friends and said the following regarding her own life:

It was not such a significant change and transformation in thought. For some friends, for example, I think it affected them very positively. How can I say that? I think that the death fast makes tough people softer. I think it makes them more human. I saw it in practice. It made tougher friends softer. So, it's a good action (laughing). [...] I want a life from the past. But I cannot handle this physically or psychologically. It is necessary to struggle for something; this is how life is anyway. I think a person becomes more passive, at least in physical activities, after a death fast. Some physical actions are restricted. There is such a change. (I)

A few more interviewees emphasized the limitation of physical activities and the inability to move freely like before in terms of change. However, the interviewees did not express this as a regret. Z, claiming that the process matured herself, said:

I say I'm glad what I lived. So, everything has a meaning in its time. Today, it makes sense to go back and question them from these points, to examine them politically, but they were very meaningful in their time. Moreover, I have always been proud to be a part of them. The most apparent feeling I am experiencing right now is saying, “Fortunately, I lived”. (Z)

Finally, T, whom we mentioned at the beginning of this part, who thinks that this action is ordinary and does not indicate a change or transformation, stated that he did not conceive it exceptionally, he thinks it was just a task in those conditions, and he tried to fulfill this task.

3.8. Associating of Spinoza's a Few Concepts with the Interviews' Themes

In this section, we will associate the themes we derive from the experiences of the interviews with Spinoza's certain concepts. Overall, we will give a brief story of Spinoza's relevant concepts with the themes in the interviews. We tried to articulate

through Spinoza and wanted to open a path to understanding the death fast action in terms of the concepts of encounters, the will & free will, mind & body, *conatus* (striving for one's own existence, effort to live) & *potentia* (power/might), affections/emotive structure, sacrifice, and *autonomy*. We examined these concepts in the section titled "Alternative Approach to Death Fast Action." in chapter II. In the previous section, we introduced the interviews' analysis and interpretations and mentioned Spinoza's concepts in pertinent parts. In fact, we noticed that the themes we derive of in line with what the interviewees shared are usually connected to the concept of *conatus*. Thus, we discerned that the most compatible of Spinoza's concepts in the death fast action is the *conatus*.

Theme I: Solidarity & Collectivity in the Death Fast Action

Concept I: Organizing Good Encounters

The interviewees frequently emphasized togetherness (solidarity) and collectivity. Solidarity continued both in prison during the action and outside, after the action. Not only the activists provided solidarity among themselves, but also activists and non-activists have shown solidarity. As P emphasized (in the Scrabble example)⁶⁶, activists were producing and doing something together in prison. In fact, this production is an example of togetherness. Moreover, the bagel example provided by V is an example of solidarity. This solidarity is in line with the understanding of organizing good encounters that Spinoza states. Organizing good encounters means preparing the ground for friendship and doing something together. Such thinking is also relevant to Spinoza's proposition that there is nothing better for a person than a person. (in *The Ethics* chapter II prop. 35) As we emphasized in the previous chapters, according to Spinoza, a person wants what is good for himself/herself. His/her mind tries to organize good encounters for himself/herself by making an effort. This effort creates the ground for friendship. During the death fast, for instance, lemon rain is an example of such solidarity between non-activists and activists.⁶⁷ Another point that we consider very important here is to show solidarity during and after the action against isolation. To clarify, the death fast actions (1996 and 2000s) were undertaken against lockdown and isolation. However, the actions did not solely oppose isolation but also

⁶⁶ See. Chapter III pp.47.

⁶⁷ See. Chapter III pp.53-54.

showcased solidarity. In fact, the activists said: “We are against isolation, and that is why we started the action. And we are doing this action together.” We consider this point necessary because, together with the emphasis on solidarity, at the same time, the act of death fast does not come into existence just in opposition to something; that it does not exist in opposition to anything else. Even though the collectivity was not as much as expected and desired (especially in the public realm during the death fast action that started in 2000), there was solidarity inside and outside between activists and non-activists. After the end of the action, solidarity continued. Houses of Life was created, where activists who participated in the action and were subjected to forced intervention stayed together. The activists who recovered together left the house. An example of this situation is that M started making and selling something in the bazaar when they stayed in the house in Ankara. In this example, we see desire, a desire to produce, to exist, to be; we see collectivity, friendship; we see the organization of this friendship. We may state the possibility that Spinoza would observe this as solidarity, too, because, according to him, to be is to desire, to produce. Therefore, we think that this emphasis on collectivity that we noticed in the interviews can be associated with the concepts of *conatus*, *potentia*, and creating affect inside and outside.

Theme II: Participating in Action by Individual Decision

Concept II: Spinoza’s Understanding of the Will & Free Will

One of the issues that the interviewees underlined the most was that they started the action with their own decisions. During and after the actions, it was frequently stated that the activists started the action under the pressure of the political organizations. The media also represented the issue in that way. Yet, contrary to this claim, the activists we interviewed asserted that they participated in the action with their own decisions. In the framework of Spinoza’s thought, the will, especially free will, is a subject that is open to a thorough discussion. We also believe that it would be a broad debate to discuss the issue of death fast and the will within Spinoza’s framework. Hence, we will only dwell on a few main points that we have established for the discussion.

We mentioned that according to Spinoza, the will is the faculty for affirmation and negation. Everything happens with necessary causality, and that causality lasts infinitely. Thereby, according to him, there is no free will. This does not mean that everything is coincidental; on the contrary, the absence of free will indicates an

absolute causality for Spinoza. In a way, human will manifests itself by accessing the knowledge of reasons. At this point, the following can be said: Spinoza cannot defend that the interviewees stating that they joined the action with their own decisions enter the action with their free will. However, at the same time, it cannot be defended that they entered with the decision of the organization for Spinoza. We think Spinoza would not approach from such an angle, in which the decisions of the activists are judged. Morally, people become judicable by their choices. Yet, according to Spinoza, this is not possible because when there is absolute causality, it is not possible to talk about one's own choices. Therefore, Spinoza approaches the issue ethically, and activists cannot be judged from Spinoza's perspective. Activists decided to start the action with their affirmative faculties, and they declared the truth of the action.

Theme III: Struggle with Bodies&Struggle to Bodies

Concept III: The Parallelism of the Mind and Body

According to Spinoza, the human soul knows that the human body exists through the ideas of the body's emotions. Spinoza thinks there is a unity between the body and soul (mind). For him, the body is not a field of indulgences but a field of resistance. While the interviewees used their bodies as tools in the death fast action, bodies also became resistance fields, rendering themselves free from representations. Bodies were in action and they produced emotions. The body and mind together formed affections in the action of death fast. The body is affected; the emotion of this effect is formed in the mind. Thus, it is possible to claim that activists who feel something bodily during the death fast also have the idea of these effects in their minds. In the death fast action, unity of the body and mind can be observed; Spinoza would recognize this unity in action. Furthermore, the interviewees stated that they both turned their bodies into action tools and were also struggling with their bodies during the death fast. Although this situation may seem like a dilemma, it relates to the two-way aspect of the body's position in action: The body is turned into a tool, and a struggle is carried out with it, and activists have a struggle with their bodies. The body becomes an area of resistance, which is where emotions are produced, where the body is both instrumentalized, and the struggle is carried out either with the mind or the body. Hence, while analyzing the act of death fast through Spinoza's perspective, it would not be wrong for us to emphasize that in this action, Spinoza would point out both the unity of body and soul and the position of the body as a field of resistance.

Theme IV: Effort to Live & The Process in the Death Fast Action

Concept IV: The Concepts of *Conatus* & *Potentia*

In the interviews, we detected that in the act of death fast there is an effort to do something (to contribute to life) during the action. Also, the death fast action, which can be defined as a long-term resistance, continues for a long time. These are the points that we associate with *conatus* and *potentia*. The activists highlighted that they tried to spend their days by reading, writing, and continuing to do whatever they were doing in their daily lives. The emphasis on “effort” was realized through communication, and the effort to produce life. Activists tried to communicate in the cells’ difficult conditions. While the ones staying in single-person cells were trying to communicate with themselves by talking and singing, those who stayed in 3 to 4 person cells stayed in touch through the ventilation system. At that point, we see the vitality of communicating regardless of what is spoken and what is shared. While staying in a solitary cell, we find K’s emphasis striking, who tells us about how they created a humor magazine by communicating through the ventilation system. We understand this exertion as an effort to live, and we associate it directly with Spinoza’s *conatus*; we understand this as a state that nurtures *potentia* and creates affects. Furthermore, we allude to the effort of doing with the might of human beings and *conatus* as augmenting life. In other words, it reminds us that the protesters who continue to act, try to walk, try to talk, read and write intensify life with these acts. We think that Spinoza would interpret the interviewees’ narratives as an effort to live, especially when narratives are considered from the angle of process.

Other than that, the emphasis on life is linked to one of the themes we derived, which is purposefulness. Activists participated in the action to provide living conditions for both themselves and other people. The action was carried out to improve the living conditions in prison, carried out to the purpose of initiating a process as can be understood as right (power) in Spinozist sense, and there were demands in action. The interviewees claimed that the action would be terminated if these demands were accepted but stated that the risk of death was taken until the demands were accepted. Taking the risk of death for satisfying demands implies that the action is life-oriented

because death exists solely as a risk in the act of death fast. B's comment about the period during the death fast action as, "Lived life to the fullest" indicates the position of death in the action. The fact that an action that was done in line with certain purposes increases a person's power/might is a point in line with Spinoza's description of *potentia*. To clarify, it is essential that an action carried out in line with the aims increases the human being's power and the action continues until the demands are accepted, while death always remains a risk. The emphasis "Live life to the fullest." as stated by the interviewees shows that in the action, death always exists as a risk, but the action is done for a purpose. From Spinoza's viewpoint, this emphasis points out that encountering this action is good for activists and increases their power, their *potentia*. Furthermore, it can be thought that the aim of improving living conditions for activists themselves and those after them is a sacrifice. At the beginning of the study, we emphasized that sacrifice, which is in the act of death fast, strengthens *potestas*, not *potentia*. However, death was a risk taken to achieve that goal; precisely, we think that death is not a desired, intended thing, but a risk taken into consideration, that it will not be associated with *potestas*. An action that has a definite demand and purpose is more of an action to achieve that goal than a sacrifice, and Spinoza would argue that this is not "sacrificing itself for something else" but that the action is within the framework of purposefulness. To clarify, in the act of death fast, the activist's production, the continuation of his/her action, is something that increases the power of that person, and there are goals in the action. Hence, being purposeful diminishes sacrifice, and death fast action would be understood as increasing one's power and pointing to *potentia* from Spinoza's framework. Also, counterintuitively, the death fast action does not have the purpose of contrasting *potestas*; that is, it is not done against the political power. To put it more clearly, the act of death fast does not negate political power but rather reestablishes *potentia* in a positive sense. We can say that this is another point of positivity of death fast.

Moreover, we also introduced the difference of death fast from other self-annihilating practices. One of the most important differences between the death fast and these practices was that there was a process in death fast. The interviewees emphasized this point, too. In death fast, there is process unlike practices of suicide, self-immolation and suicide bombing; these practices happen suddenly, and death occurs at the moment of the action. On the contrary, in the death fast action there is a

process that the activist goes through, death does not occur at the moment of the act; death is present as a risk during the action. The action has a process. The action's continuation is also linked to the fact that the action is called resistance. The death fast action, which is a long-term resistance, emphasizes Spinoza's effort to exist in this respect. In other words, the person resisting in death fast action experienced the action at every given moment. Within this process, the activist takes action in line with certain demands. Thus, the duration is noteworthy, which is one of the most critical points that distinguish death fast from the hunger strike and other practices. The death fast, which can be described as a long-term resistance continuing indefinitely, can be associated with Spinoza, as the activist continually mediates between life and death - although with an effort to live. Therefore, we believe that until the demands are accepted, the person resisting with his/her body, who continues to read, write and contribute to life at the same time in a period of uncertainty can undoubtedly be associated with the concepts of *conatus* and *potentia*.

Theme V: Empowerment in the Death Fast Action

Concept V: Affections in Spinoza's Approach/Spinoza's Emotive Structure

In Spinoza's viewpoint, we stated that the way to understand whether there is a good encounter or not is to feel joyful or sad emotions. According to Spinoza, feeling joyful emotions when encountering something, a person, an event intensifies a person's strength, power, and capabilities; on the contrary, grief reduces a person's power. We claim that emotions are critical in Spinoza's thinking, which may indicate the presence of an emotive structure in his thought. In other words, according to Spinoza, good and evil are relative; If our encounter with something or someone makes us feel pleasure, then this something or someone is good for us; if it makes us feel sad, then this is evil. We believe that the determination of good and evil through one's emotions implies the importance of the emotive structure in Spinoza's thought. We tried to establish coherence between Spinoza's concept of affections and emotive structures with the empowerment in the death fast action.

When the interviewees were asked what they felt during the action, they stated that they felt and experienced enthusiasm, power, joy, and curiosity. The fact that the action creates joyful feelings in the person doing the action indicates that the action is enabling; that is, the action paves the way to do something; increases one's might. Thereby, we think that the emphasis on feeling pleasure in action is compatible with

Spinoza's emotive structure. An example of emotive structure and empowerment from the interviews is V, who tells that she loved her body very much during the action. In this example, both the power of the body is emphasized, and that the action undertaken with the body is felt good. Therefore, it is possible to say that the action is empowering for V, who has a good encounter with the action. Furthermore, solidarity in and outside and solidarity through emotions can point out that death fast action is an enabling action. To clarify, the solidarity during and after the action, which we discussed in the first heading of this section, is also an example of empowerment. The solidarity that occurs inside and outside through emotions, through emotional unity, increases people's might and their capabilities to act. Therefore, it is possible to claim that Spinoza's emotive structure correlates with the empowerment observed in the death fast action.

Theme VI: "To Be Free From Eating During the Death Fast"

Concept VI: Spinoza's Understanding of Rights and Autonomy

We have mentioned that Spinoza's understanding of rights is divergent in political philosophy. For him, right is identical to power and might; that is, if a person can be capable of doing something which is within his/her might, this is his/her right. We recall from Spinoza that power is not a power to govern, but the power to do, to produce/create something.⁶⁸ In the death fast action, people begin the death fast as much as they can and continue to act because the action is within their power. The activist can carry out this action with his/her body and mind; s/he has the power/might to do the action. That is, from Spinoza's perspective, the mediation between life and death is within the power of the activist. Therefore, participating in the death fast becomes the right of the person. The view that this is the right of the person if it is within his/her power offers a very unique approach to the issue of rights. This approach provides a very different perspective from the legal conviction which locates the right to life above all rights. Spinoza also defines the concepts of citizenship, sovereignty, and state based on the definition of rights he made. However, in the context of the death fast, it is important to look at the issue solely through the identification of power and right, which opens a new dimension. Looking at the death fast action through Spinoza's perspective to rights will represent a different approach from the idea that

⁶⁸ For Spinoza's understanding of rights see. Chapter II pp.34-37.

people have to survive no matter what; It can be said that if a person can act, this is his/her right.

Besides, Spinoza himself did not develop an arguments concerning autonomy. However, the issue of autonomy was included in his understanding of rights by those who studied him. In the context of Spinoza's works, autonomy means concentration on oneself. In the death fast action, the activist concentrates on himself/herself by releasing himself/herself from eating. In this way, the activist becomes autonomous to seek the provision of a space for emancipation. To clarify, the activist, by opposing isolation and demanding the improvement of living conditions, by depriving himself/herself from eating, proclaims: "You cannot do anything to me. I become autonomous by releasing myself from the need for nutrition, which is the most essential thing, and I engage in the death fast to ensure my liberation space." In other words, the activist becomes autonomous by being free from eating while performing the death fast within his/her power. We think that such an approach can be presented through Spinoza's definition of rights and the matter of autonomy may be associated with his opinions. Thereby, in our opinion, this situation (the person is in action by freeing himself/herself from eating) can be considered alongside autonomy in the context of Spinoza's understanding of rights. In this section, we tried to associate Spinoza's concepts with the themes we derived from the interviews. Now, we will present the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand the death fast action by pursuing a hermeneutical approach, what this action could potentially create through the body. Our focus was to conceive a positive assessment of death fast, despite the mainstream conviction that frames the death fast action as a desire to die. The study's primary purpose was not to explain the issue but to understand it. As a researcher from the outside, it has been a complicated process to understand this activism, in which a person is struggling both with his/her body and with his/her mind. Therefore, researching how the issue has been dealt in the literature or examining the action in practice made it easier to understand.

While trying to understand the act of death fast, we did not want to comprehend in terms of its differences from other acts, and we wanted to understand the death fast through its existence/performance, through its descriptive status. However, in the second part of the study, we emphasized the difference of death fast from other practices in order to be more explanatory and comprehensible. The most crucial difference between death fast and other practices is the process; there is a process in the death fast action. In a process, the activist carries out his/her action, every moment during a prolonged process. On the contrary, in suicide, euthanasia, suicide bombing, and self-immolation, death comes at the moment of action. In these other practices, there is no process; the practice arises and ends. The activist knows that s/he will die the moment s/he takes action. Lip-sewing action is more similar to death fast because in lip-sewing there is an undetermined time and process like in death fast.

Moreover, there are definite demands and goals in the death fast. The death fast action is initiated in line with certain demands and purposes, and the action is terminated when the demands are accepted. Therefore, death in the act of death fasting is not something that happens at the moment of the act; death is taken as a risk to satisfy certain collective demands. In the literature, the death fast is mostly used

synonymously with the hunger strike. The difference between the two actions is related to their duration. While the hunger strike can be terminated at any time, there is no established period in the death fast. Only the indefinite hunger strike and death fast act are very similar. According to some, these two actions are considered the same. For example, the name of the 1996 death fast is “1996 Indefinite Hunger Strike and Death Fast Resistance.” Although it is not possible to make a sharp distinction between an indefinite hunger strike and a death fast, the two actions have been separately understood by some, as there may be a situation where the action can be ended even if the demands are not accepted in the indefinite hunger strike. However, in our opinion, it does not seem possible to make a sharp distinction between these two acts. Therefore, it is possible to state that a definite distinction can be made between the act of death fast and suicide, euthanasia, suicide bombing, and self-immolation; no definitive distinction can be made between a hunger strike and a death fast. While it was thought that a certain distinction could be made between a hunger strike and a death fast at the beginning of the study, no such distinction was reached at the end of the study. Thus, it has been concluded that a death fast is the upper form of a hunger strike.

As a result of the field study, the followings can be said: The interviewees’ most emphasized point is that the decision to participate in the death fast was an individual decision. Contrary to the general opinion formed by the state and the media, the activists asserted that they took action deciding individually. The second emphasis regarding the death fast was that it was carried out against the F-type prisons and isolation. The activists started this action because their living spaces would have been severely limited in prison. The third emphasis in the interviews is the death fast is an exceptional act that should be used as a last resort. The activists emphasized that the death fast was done when there was nothing else to do, and almost all of the interviewees stated that they disapprove of undertaking death fast outside of prisons. Furthermore, the following problem was that forced intervention crippled some of the people engaged in the act. The subject of forced intervention was presented and discussed in the literature and through interviews. Forced and improper intervention causes permanent damage to people which cannot be healed. The syndrome resulting from a forced intervention, which we have mentioned in detail as WK syndrome, causes memory and balance problems. As a result of the death fast actions in the 2000s,

600 people developed WK syndrome, and hundreds of people became disabled. Respectively, the other point emphasized by the interviewees is that a death fast action is a political act. This points out that for the participants the action was not aiming a marginal or transcendental (i.e., non-policy) position. It is different from other practices; there is the risk of death in the death fast action and the emphasis on existence/life.

In consequence of this study, the description we have obtained regarding the act of death fast is this: The death fast action is undertaken when there is nothing more to do. The action is initiated in line with definite demands and purposes and continues until these demands are met. For this reason, there is no specific duration in the act of death fast; there is a process and continuity that is experienced each moment. During the action that continues for an indeterminate amount of time, the activist mediates between life and death. The fact that the activist is in a state of going between death and life raises the following questions: Is the face of the activist directed to life? Or is s/he desiring to die? The field research we did was effective in answering these questions. It seems to us the activist of the death fast has transformed his/her body into a field of struggle while at the same time making his/her body autonomous by being free of nutrition intake. The body, which we talked about with reference to Spinoza, has been active in the act of death fast, both as a tool of action, and the body becomes symbolic in action, far from representations. Thereby, the activist wanted the process of going back and forth between life and death to be longer as long as the demands were accepted, and with this desire, s/he points out to life.

The life-oriented aspect of the death fast became clear to us with what the activists did while in action. The activists who continue to write, read, and produce, made an effort to live during the action. They not only participated in the death fast action but also continued to act in the death fast. In other words, activists continue to do something and contribute to life during the action. In this sense, the death fast action becomes an action from beginning to end. And it is definitely in line with Arendt's definition of action. Moreover, in our opinion, the death fast action is political, not only because it is against a political practice, but also in a state of production and opposition to something. Death fast action does not establish its own existence solely as opposed to something else, but it exists in the way that the activists try to continue to live and act to continue living. This aspect of the action is also seen as compatible

with Spinoza's concept of *potentia*. Indeed, this is precisely how we perceive it through Spinoza. To clarify, the action is political in that it is not merely opposed to something, which means death fast is not reactionary. Also, in the death fast action the activist continues to do something within the action itself, which distinguishes death fast from sacrifice or pure passivity or isolation.

It is also very important point that the death fast activists provided solidarity during the action and even after the action. This solidarity continues with both those who participated in the action and those who did not. The action was not only opposed to something; it also formed an effect. This is a point that we have reached as a result of the field research and we think it is critical. Death fast action intensifies life in this sense. In other words, as we mentioned above, the state of communication, writing, drawing, reading, doing something together with people as production during the action intensifies the life in a remarkable manner. The activist states: "Against the F-type prisons, isolation, I have no other way but to act with my own body in prison. I risk death to end these applications. However, I do this to live, to survive." Just as V, one of the interviewees, said, and as we presented in the third chapter, "Every day someone could burn herself/himself, it could be like that, but we wanted to extend the process." We want to end this sentence as follows: "We wanted to extend the process. We wanted to continue living, to strive to live."

With respect to, Spinoza's thought which was presented as an alternative approach. Spinoza's entire philosophy and ethical understanding were not examined; solely the concepts of mind/body, the will/free will, *conatus*, *potentia*, encounters/affections, and understanding of rights, which were discussed within the scope of death fast, have been emphasized. We wondered what Spinoza would think about the act of death fast, who emphasized that not only human beings but also all living beings are trying to maintain their existences. It was thought that Spinoza would realize the unity of mind and body, the effort to exist, the increase of human power, the organization of good encounters that will increase one's power, and the formation of effects in the act of death fast. We agree with Ulus Baker on what Spinoza thinks about the act of death fast: Spinoza would claim that death fast does not signify death but life; we think he would think that death fast action erodes *potestas*, although this is not even its purpose; it reinforces *potentia*. However, in this study, this discussion

was presented without going into detail, but it was aimed to open the gateway to Spinoza and the death fast discussion.

Furthermore, the end of the third chapter included an attempt to associate the themes derived from interviews in light of central concepts borrowed from Spinoza. In this section, six concepts and themes are discussed. These themes and concepts are: Solidarity and collectivity in the death fast action with organizing good encounters, participating in action by individual decision with Spinoza's understanding of the will/free will, struggle with bodies and struggle to bodies in the death fast action with the parallelism of the mind and body, effort to live and the process in the death fast action with the concepts of *conatus* and *potentia*, empowerment in the death fast action with the connection to Spinoza's approach/Spinoza's emotive structure, and to be free from eating during the death fast with Spinoza's understanding of rights and autonomy. It was aimed to open up a discussion on how a Spinozian perspective would portray the act of death fast by establishing coherence between the selected themes and Spinozian concepts.

Overall, according to the literature review and interviewees' narrations and analysis and interpretation of these narrations, it seems possible to state that death fast as a political action has positivity in a few senses: First of all, death fast has definite goals and demands; that is, death fast is purposeful [*amaçsal*]. Secondly, as it is a type of resistance, the death fast not only opposes a policy or practice but also provides an act against that opposition. To elucidate, the activist who resists as a whole with his/her body and mind has a positivity in the sense that s/he creates an affect with this resistance. Another positivity is that death fast is vital and life-sustaining. Also, the death fast augments life. The one who is acting and contributing within his/her power is either life-sustaining or this acting/doing itself enhances life [*yaşamı çoğaltır*]. This characteristic is intensified in the death fast action and creates an affect in positive sense. The other positivity is solidarity which prevails during and after the death fast, and this aspect is vital. The activists are in unity both among themselves and with those who do not participate in the action. After the action is over, this solidarity continues outside. Lastly, the death fast action does not aim to negate political power and *potestas*. On the contrary, the act of death fast is done to reproduce *potentia*. In our opinion, these points demonstrate and underline the possibility of a positive assessment of the death fast action and conceiving it as truly political.

Besides, this study excluded Turkey's leftist history and the differences between political organizations. Also, we have not included the Turkish political history and the f-type prison discussions in detail. We think that it would be good for further studies on death fast to deal with these issues in detail. The issues of what happened in the background, the differences between political organizations, and the hierarchy within these organizations are significant in the political history of Turkey, we think that involving the f-type prison discussions will enrich the study to be done.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Sayı: 28620816 /

20 Mayıs 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Cem DEVECİ

Danışmanlığını yaptığımız Fatma Betül GÖKHAN'ın "POLİTİK BİR EYLEMLİLİK OLARAK ÖLÜM ORUCU EYLEMİNİN POZİTİF DEĞERLENDİRİLEBİLİRLİĞİ" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **175-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Dr.Öğretim Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ
İAEK Başkan Vekili

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions:

Sex:

Age:

Birthplace:

Job:

Marital Status:

Educational Level:

During which period and for how long did you participate in death fast?

Information About Pre-Action

According to your ideology, what were your political and intellectual convictions and the basis of these convictions?

How was the political climate before you started the death fast, and were there any activities you actively participated in or conducted?

How did you decide to start death fast? Was it an individual or an organizational decision? If it is the decision of the organization, how did you provide communication?

What were your demands?

Was your goal to give a message?

The Period Within the Action

How was the environment during the death fast? What did you experience throughout this period?

How was your diet during the action? Have you experienced physical, mental, or psychological difficulties over time because of your diet? If you have not experienced any difficulties, what was your motivation? If so, what were these difficulties?

How did you spend your days during the action?

What did the action make you feel? (such as joy, sorrow, effort, power, etc.)

Opinions Concerning the Action

How would you describe the death fast action based on your own experience? Do you think it is a political action?

When you consider your decision and compare your opinions at the beginning of the action with your situation towards the end of the action, was there a change in your views?

In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences between the death fast action and other practices, hunger strike, suicide, suicide bombing, and self-burning actions?

Assessments- Effects

What happened as a result of the death fast? What were the outcomes of the action?

Have you been subjected to forced intervention? If you did, how did this intervention affect you?

Did you suffer any mental or physical damages at the end of the action?

How did you get involved in life? /How was your adaptation period?

When you look back from today, how do you evaluate the death fast action and your experiences during that period?

How do you evaluate the death fast actions in the periods before or after the period you participated in? What are their similarities and differences with the period you participated in the action?

What are the effects of all your experiences before, during, and after the death fast on your life and lifestyle? Does this effect mean a change or a transformation for you?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Ölüm orucu eylemini pratikler üzerinden ele alan veyahut eylemi başka eylemlilikler ile birlikte düşünerek değerlendiren çalışmalar mevcutken ölüm orucu eyleminin bizatihi kendisine ait bir literatür mevcut değildir. Literatürde ölüm orucu eylemi, aynı olduğu düşünülen, diğer bu tip pratiklerle, açlık grevi, kendini yakma eylemleri, intihar bombacılığı, intihar gibi, benzer düzlemde ele alınmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmadaki ilk gaye ve literatüre de katkı olacak ilk nokta, politik bir eylemlilik olarak ölüm orucu eyleminin kavramsallaştırmasını yapmaktır. Çalışmanın esas amacı, ölüm orucu eylemini anlamaya çalışmaktır. “Ölüm orucunun, ölüme bakan yüzünü vurgulayan görüşlerin aksine, eylemin, yaşama ve yaşamsala işaret eden tarafını ele almak, bunu görmek mümkün müdür?” sorusu çalışma için önem arz etmektedir. Başka bir ifadeyle, yaşam ve ölümlü topyekun bir ikilem olarak ele almaktan ziyade, ölüm orucu eylemcisinin yaşam ve ölüm arasında salınan bir halde olduğu düşünülmektedir. “Bu salınımı barındıran ölüm orucu eyleminin yaşama dönük olan yüzü nasıldır, ölüm riskini bu denli içerisinde taşıyan bir eylemliliğin var olma çabasına, yaşama gayretine işaret etme ihtimali var mıdır?” soruları bu çalışma için önemlidir. Dolayısıyla, tezin ana sorusu, “Politik bir eylemlilik olarak ölüm orucu eyleminin pozitif bir değerlendirmesini yapmak mümkün müdür?” sorusudur. Bu soru ekseninde hem ölüm orucu eylemi anlaşılmaya çalışılacak hem de literatürde ölüm orucu eyleminin kavramsallaştırılmasına ilişkin boşluk doldurulmuş olacaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, esas gaye, tıpkı Spinoza'nın vurguladığı gibi, meseleyi anlamlandırmak değil anlamak olmuş; daha doğrusu, buna gayret edilmiştir. Kişinin hem bedeniyle hem zaman zaman bedenine karşı bir mücadele içinde olduğu bu eylemliliği anlayabilmek, dışarıdan bir araştırmacı olarak zorlu bir süreç olmuştur. Bu nedenle, meselenin hem literatürde nasıl ele alındığına bakmak hem de eylemi pratikte ele almak konuyu anlama çabasına yardımcı olmuştur.

Çalışmada, alternatif bir yaklaşım olarak Spinoza düşüncesine yer verilmiştir. Spinoza'nın tüm felsefesi ve etik anlayışından bahsedilmemiş yalnızca, ölüm orucu kapsamında tartışmaya alan açabileceği düşünülen zihin-beden, irade/özgür irade, *conatus*, *potentia*, karşılaşma/duygulanışlar, hak ve özerklik kavramları üzerinde

durulmuştur. Yalnızca insanın değil tüm canlı varlıkların kendi varlığını devam ettirme çabasında olduğunu vurgulayan Spinoza'nın ölüm orucu eylemi ile ilgili ne düşüneceği, tartışmanın ana noktasıdır. Ancak bu çalışmada bu tartışma detaya girilmeden sunulmuş yalnızca ilerde olabilecek Spinoza/ölüm orucu tartışmalarına bir kapı aralanmak istenmiştir. Spinoza'nın, ölüm orucu eyleminde sözünü ettiği, zihin-beden birlikteliğini, var olma çabasını, insanın kudretini artırmasını, kudretini artıracak iyi karşılaşmalar örgütlemesini ve bir *affect* oluşmasını ölüm orucu eyleminde görebileceği düşünülmüştür. Kanaatimizce, Spinoza, ölüm orucunun, ölüme değil, yaşama işaret ettiği; *potestası* aşındırıp *potentiayı* artırdığı düşüncesinde olurdu.

Çalışmada öncelikle, ölüm orucunun tarihçesinden başlanarak eylemin tanımı, özellikleri, diğer pratiklerden, intihar, ötenazi, intihar bombacılığı, kendini yakma eylemleri, ağız dikme, farkları ve bu pratiklerle (varsa) benzerlikleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Bunun sonucunda, ölüm orucu ve diğer pratikler arasındaki en önemli farkın, ölüm orucu eyleminde bir süreç olması ve ölüm orucunda belirli talepler ve amaçlar olduğu görülmüştür. Süreç mevzusu ölüm orucu eylemi için oldukça önemlidir. Açlık grevi ve ağız dikme dışında, bahsettiğimiz tüm diğer pratiklerde, intihar, ötenazi, intihar bombacılığı, kendini yakma eylemleri, ölüm, eylem anında gerçekleşir. Eylemci, eylemi yaptığı anda öleceğini bilir. Ölüm orucunda ise eylemci an an, saniye saniye yaşanan bir eylemliliğin içerisinde; ölüm riski çoklukla varken kişi ne tam ölmüştür ne de tam olarak yaşamdadır. Eylemci, ölüm ve yaşam arasında gidip gelme halindedir. Bu yönüyle, ölüm orucu eyleminin, açlık grevi ve ağız dikme eylemleri dışında, diğer pratiklerden farklı olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Ölüm orucu ve ağız dikme eylemleri bir süreci içerisinde barındırıp kesin taleplere sahip olmaları yönünden benzerlerken ağız dikme eylemlerinde eylemci ölüm orucundaki gibi yaşamını devam ettirmek, yaşamını daha da uzatmak adına beslenmemektedir. Daha açık bir ifadeyle, ağız dikme eylemlerinde kişi ölüm ve yaşam arasında gidip gelmekten ziyade ölüme yakındır. Dolayısıyla, süreç hususunda ölüm orucu eylemi ile ağız dikme eyleminin birbirine benzediğini söylemek mümkünken ağız dikme eyleminde beslenmenin mümkün olmamasından dolayı ölüm orucunda yaşamın uzatılabildiği kadar uzatılmaya çalışılması durumu görülmemektedir. Bu nedenle ölüm orucu eylemi bu yönüyle ağız dikme eylemlerinden farklı bir yerde konumlanmaktadır. Öte yandan, çalışmanın başında, ölüm orucu ve açlık grevi

arasında net bir ayırım yapılabileceği düşünülürken çalışma sonunda böylesi keskin bir ayırımın yapılamayacağı kanaatine varılmıştır. Bunun sebebi, literatür taraması ve alan araştırması sonucunda ölüm orucu ve açlık grevi arasındaki farkın yalnızca süre ve devamlılık olmasıdır. Başka bir ifadeyle, açlık grevinde de kişi, talepleri kabul edilene kadar grevine devam etme amacıyla başlar. Ancak bu devamlılık ölüm orucundaki kadar keskin ve net değildir. Ölüm orucu eyleminde, ölüm olsa da talepler kabul edilene kadar eyleme devam edileceği düşüncesi vardır. Dolayısıyla, süreklilik hususunun açlık grevi ve ölüm orucu arasında azımsanmayacak bir fark olduğu düşünülürken bu iki eylemlilik arasındaki ayırım yalnızca bu noktada bulunmuştur. Bu noktada, ölüm orucunun açlık grevinin bir üst formu olarak ele alınabileceğini ifade etmek mümkündür.

Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, ölüm orucu eylemi kapsamında ele alınan makul görüldüğü hak kavramı üzerinde detaylı bir biçimde durulmuştur. Ölüm orucu eylemi bağlamında hak mevzusu literatürde, hukuki ve tıbbi anlamda ele alınmıştır. Özellikle yaşam hakkı ve yaşam anlayışı üzerinden gidilerek, hukuki olarak ölüm orucu eyleminde haklar bağlamında oluşabilecek olan direniş hakkı ve yaşam hakkı ikilemi üzerinde durulmuştur. Hukuki perspektifte, yaşam hakkının, ne olursa olsun korunması gereken, dokunulmaz ve de feragat edilemez bir hak oluşu ölüm orucu eylemi özelinde bakıldığında kesin bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Hukuki perspektiften, ölüm orucu katıyen karşı durulması gereken bir eylemliliktir çünkü kişinin yaşamını tehlikeye atmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, kişinin yaşamını korumanın ilk ve önkoşul olarak görüldüğü hukuki bağlamda, ölüm orucu daha en baştan bu yönüyle reddedilir kılınmıştır. Tıbbi olarak ise, özellikle müdahale, zorla müdahale konularının literatürde nasıl ele alındığı üzerinde durulmuş ve müdahaleye ilişkin olarak Tokyo ve Malta uluslararası bildirgelerine değinilmiştir. Uluslararası bildirgelerde kati bir dille reddedilen zorla müdahale konusuna yaklaşım pratikte aynı kesinlikte olmamıştır. Türkiye örneğinde bilhassa 2000’li yıllarda başlayan ölüm orucu eylemlerinde eylemcilere zorla müdahale edilmiş ve çoğu eylemci zorla müdahale sonucunda sakat kalmıştır. Ayrıca, zorla müdahalenin en belirgin sonucu olarak WK sendromu, müdahaleye maruz kalan kişilerde oluşmuştur. İyileşmeyen ve insanda yaşamı boyunca kalan WK sendromu özellikle denge ve hafıza konularında kişiyi etkilemektedir. Zorla müdahaleye maruz kalan kişi ilk uyandığında çocuk yaşlarına geri dönmekte ve ne yaşadığını unutmaktadır. Zorla müdahaleye maruz kalan ve WK

sendromuna sahip olan eylemcilerde görüşmeler sırasında da bu durum gözlemlenmiştir. Kişiler yeniden okuma yazmayı, yürümeyi öğrenmişler; ölüm orucu eylemi sırasında neler yaşadıklarını, neden ölüm orucuna girdiklerini dahi hatırlamaz duruma gelmişlerdir. Günümüzde, ölüm orucu eylemi neticesinde zorla müdahaleye maruz kalan ve WK sendromuna sahip olan 600 kişi vardır.

Tıbbi ve hukuki perspektifte, ölüm orucu eylemine ilişkin sunulan net yaklaşıma karşılık olarak Spinoza'nın alternatif yaklaşımı sunulmuştur. Çalışmaya başka bir düşünürün değil de Spinoza'nın dahil edilmesinin nedeni, O'nun, bedeni bir düşkünlükler alanı olarak değil de aksine bedeni bir direnç alanı olarak görüp bedenine neye muktedir olduğunu anlamaya çalışmasıdır. Başka bir ifadeyle, insanın yapıp edebileceklerini, kudretini anlamaya çalışması, buna önem vermesidir. Var olma çabasını ve kişinin yapıp edebileceklerini, kudretini vurgulayan Spinoza ile ölüm orucu eyleminin ilişkilendirilip ilişkilendirilemeyeceği tezde tartışmaya açılmıştır. Ayrıca, hak konusunda da özgün görüşlere sahip olan Spinoza (O'na göre hak, insanın kudretidir. Başka bir deyişle, insanın yapabilecekleri onun hakkıdır.), ölüm orucuna eylemine hak konusundan bakıldığında da başka bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Başka bir ifadeyle, hukuki anlamda sunulan, yaşam hakkının ne olursa olsun korunması gerektiğine dair olan yaklaşıma karşın Spinoza, insanın kudreti dahilinde yapabileceklerinin onun hakkı olduğu gibi bir yaklaşım sunmuştur. Bu yönüyle, ölüm orucu eylemine ilişkin olarak hem Spinoza'nın bu hak tanımını ve anlayışı üzerinden hem de Spinoza'nın kendisi tarafından değil ama onu okuyanlar tarafından sunulan özerklik kavramı üzerinden bir perspektif geliştirilmiştir. Spinoza üzerinden kurulan bu yaklaşım da ölüm orucuna haklar düzleminde bakıldığında başka bir bakış kazandırmıştır.

1960-2000 yılları arasındaki Türkiye'deki politik atmosferi anlatan bölüm ile genel çerçeve sunulmaya çalışılmıştır. Ölüm orucu eyleminden söz ederken Türkiye siyasi atmosferinde neler olup bittiğinin, detaya girilmeden, çerçevesini çizmek amaçlanmıştır. Bu bölümün detaya girilmeden verilmesinin sebebi, çalışma için esas olan, ölüm orucu eylemini anlamaya çalışmak noktasından uzaklaşmak istenmemesidir. Bu nedenle, dönemin politik atmosferine değinmenin önemi yadsınmamış ancak detaylıca da ele alınmamıştır. 1960'lı yıllardan itibaren inşa edilen politik süreç 1980 darbesi ile belirginleşmiş ve Türkiye, 90'lı yıllarda oldukça hareketli bir siyasi atmosfere sahip olmuştur. 1996 yılı ve 2000'li yıllardaki ölüm

orucu eylemlerinin neden yapıldığını anlayabilmek için de Türkiye siyasi atmosferinin arka planını vermenin yararlı olacağı düşünülmüştür.

Siyasi atmosfer sunulduktan sonra, çalışma kapsamında, Türkiye’de gerçekleşmiş olan 1996 ve 2000li yıllardaki ölüm orucu eylemine katılan 20 kişi ile yapılan alan araştırması sunulmuştur. Yıl ayırımı yapılmadan, yani sadece 1996 ölüm orucu eylemine ya da 2000li yıllarda başlayan ölüm orucu eylemlerine katılan kişilerle görüşülmemiş, kişilerin hangi yılda eyleme katıldıkları çalışma açısından önem arz etmemiştir. Bunun sebebi, çalışmanın amacının, eylemin kavramsallaştırmasını yapmak ve de eylemi, eylemcileri anlamak olmasıdır.

Görüşmelerde, ölüm orucu eylemcilerinin demografik bilgileri, eylem öncesinde siyasi atmosferin nasıl olduğu, görüşmecinin siyasi ideolojisinin, yaptıklarının neler olduğu, ölüm orucu eylemine katılmaya nasıl karar verdiği ve eylemdeki amaç ve taleplerin neler olduğu, eylem devam ederken görüşmecinin neler hissettiği, nasıl beslendiği, zorluk yaşayıp yaşamadığı, eylemcilerin ölüm orucu eylemini nasıl tanımladığı, eyleme ilişkin düşüncelerinde bir değişiklik olup olmadığı ve ölüm orucu eylemi ile diğer pratikler arasında benzerlik ve farklılıklar hakkında ne düşündüğü, görüşmecinin zorla müdahaleye maruz kalıp kalmadığı, eylem sonucunda ne gibi sonuçlar elde edildiği, uyum sürecinin nasıl olduğu, farklı dönemlerde yapılan ölüm orucu eylemleri ile ilgili görüşmecinin ne düşündüğü ve eylemin, kendi hayatına etkisi olup olmadığı öğrenilmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırma sorularındaki amaç, hem ölüm orucu eylemi başlamadan önce hem eylem sırasında hem de eylem sonrasında görüşmecilerin neler tecrübe ettiklerini öğrenmek ve yapılan görüşmelerle, ölüm orucu eylemini pratikteki örneklerle de anlamaya çalışmaktır. Bu bölümde, nadiren Spinoza’ya referanslar verilerek konu tartışmaya açılmıştır. Ve bu bölümün sonunda, alan araştırması bulgularından da yola çıkılarak, ölüm orucu eyleminde sözünü ettiğimiz pozitifitenin hangi açılardan olabileceğine işaret edilmiştir.

Alan araştırması sonucunda elde edilen bulguları şu şekilde sıralamak mümkün görünmektedir: görüşmecilerin en çok vurguladıkları nokta, ölüm orucu eylemine katılma kararının bireysel bir karar olduğudur. Devlet, medya aracılığıyla oluşan genel görüşün aksine eylemciler, kendi kararlarıyla eyleme girmişlerdir. İkinci vurgu, ölüm orucunun F-tipine, tecrite karşı yapıldığı vurgusudur. Eylemciler, cezaevinde yaşam alanları yok edileceği için bu eyleme başlamışlardır. Üçüncü vurgu ise, ölüm orucunun en son başvurulması gereken istisnai bir eylem olduğu vurgusudur. Artık, yapılacak

başka hiçbir şeyin kalmadığı noktada ölüm orucuna girilmesi, eylemciler tarafından vurgulanmış ve görüşmecilerin hemen hepsi dışarda yapılan ölüm oruçlarını onaylamadıklarını söylemişlerdir. Ve bundan sonraki vurgu ise zorla müdahalenin sakat bıraktığı vurgusudur. Zorla müdahale konusu hem literatürde ele alındığı şekliyle hem de görüşmeler ile sunulmaya çalışıldı. Zorla ve yanlış müdahale kişide iyileşmesi mümkün olmayan kalıcı hasarlar bırakmaktadır. WK sendromu olarak detaylıca bahsettiğimiz bu sendrom hafıza ve denge sorununa yol açmaktadır. Sırasıyla, görüşmecilerin en çok vurguladıkları diğer konular ise, ölüm orucu eyleminin politik bir eylemlilik olması, diğer pratiklerden farklı olması, eylemde ölümün göze alınması ve var olma/yaşama vurgusudur.

Bu çalışma sonucunda ölüm orucu eylemine ilişkin ulaşılan tanım şudur: Ölüm orucu eylemi, kişinin artık yapacak başka hiçbir şey kalmadığı noktada başvurduğu politik bir eylemliliktir. Eyleme belli talepler ve amaçlar doğrultusunda başlanır ve bu talepler karşılanana kadar da eyleme devam edilir. Bu nedenle ölüm orucu eyleminde belirli bir süre yoktur, saniye saniye, an an yaşanan ve devam eden bir süreğenlik vardır. An an devam eden bu eylemlilikte eylemci, yaşam ve ölüm arasında salınım halindedir. Tam da bu nokta bizim sorumuzu da oluşturuyor aslında. Yaşam ve ölüm arasında gidip gelme halinde olan eylemcinin yüzü yaşama mı dönüktür; yoksa ölüm arzusu içinde midir? Yapılan alan araştırması bu soruya yanıt vermede etkili olmuştur. Ölüm orucu eylemcisi, kendi bedenini, yemekten azade kılarak özerk hale getirirken aynı zamanda, bedenini bir mücadele alanının kendisine dönüştürmüştür. Spinoza'ya atıfla sözünü ettiğimiz beden, ölüm orucu eyleminde temsillerden uzak bir biçimde hem eylemin aracı olurken hem de sembolik olmadan eylemde etkin olmuştur. Dolayısıyla eylemci, yaşam ve ölüm arasında gidip gelme sürecini, talepler kabul edilene kadar ne kadar uzatabilirse o kadar uzun olmasını istemiş ve tam da bu istekle eylemin yaşama işaret ettiği düşünülmüştür.

Ölüm orucu eyleminin yaşama dönük yüzü, eylemcilerin eylem içerisindeyken yapıp ettikleri ile belirginleşmiştir. Yazmaya, okumaya, üretmeye devam eden eylemciler bir “gayret” içindedirler. Ölüm orucu eylemcilerinin, tecrite/izolasyona karşı oldukları için başladıkları eylem içerisinde ve hatta eylem sonrasında bir dayanışma göstermeleri hem eyleme katılanlar hem de katılmayanlarla birlikte bu dayanışmanın dışarda da devam etmesi de önemli görülmektedir. Eylem, yalnızca bir şeye karşıt olmakla kalmamış aynı zamanda bir *affect* oluşturmuştur. Bu nokta,

çalışma sonucunda eriştiğimiz ve önemli olduğunu düşündüğümüz bir nokta. Ölüm orucu eylemi bu anlamda, yaşamı çoğaltıyor. Yani, yukarıda sözünü ettiğimiz gibi, eylem sırasında bir üretim halinde olarak, insanlarla bir aradalık içerisinde iletişim halinde olmaya, yazıp çizmeye, okumaya, birlikte bir şeyler yapmaya devam hali yaşamı çoğaltıyor. Dolayısıyla, çoklukla, ölüm orucu eylemi yaşamda kalmakta ısrar çabasında oluyor. Eylemciler, hem ölüm orucu yaparak bir eylem yaparlarken aynı zamanda da bu eylem içerisinde eylemliliklerini devam ettiriyorlar. Başka bir ifadeyle, başından sonuna kadar bir aksiyondur ölüm orucu; politik bir aksiyon, yalnızca ölüm orucunun bir eylem olması yönüyle değil eylemin içerisinde eylemeye, yapıp etmeye devam ediliyor olması ile de bir eylemdir. Ölüm orucu, yalnızca, siyasi bir uygulamaya, hamleye karşı yapıldığı için değil bir şeylere karşı yapılırken aynı zamanda o karşı oluşun içerisinde bir üretim ve eylem halinde olduğu için de politiktir. Kendi var oluşunu başka bir şeye karşıt oluşuyla kurmayan, kudreti dahilinde yapıp etmeye devam eden bir hal olarak, politik bir eylemlilik olarak ölüm orucu eylemi Spinoza bakışından da istifade edilerek böyle anlaşılmıştır.

Tüm bu veriler ışığında, ölüm orucunun siyasi bir eylem olarak birkaç anlamda pozitifliği olduğunu ileri sürmek mümkün görünmektedir: Her şeyden önce, ölüm orucunun belirli amaçları ve talepleri vardır; yani ölüm orucu amaçsaldır. İkincisi, ölüm orucu bir direniş olarak sadece bir politika veya uygulamaya karşı çıkmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda bu karşı çıkışa karşı da bir eylemde bulunur. Daha açık bir ifadeyle, ölüm orucu eyleminde, bedeni ve zihni ile bir bütün olarak direnen eylemci bu direnişle bir etki yaratır ve kendisini bir şeye karşıt olarak var etmez, eylem içerisinde yapıp etmemin, eylemliliğin devam ediyor olması ile kendisini var eder. Ölüm orucunun bir diğer pozitif değerlendirilebilirliğinin olduğu nokta ise ölüm orucunun yaşamsal olmasıdır. Ölüm orucu eylemi yaşamı çoğaltır. Yaşamı çoğaltma durumu ölüm orucu eyleminde yoğunlaşır ve bir etki yaratır. Son olarak, ölüm orucu sırasında ve sonrasında var olan dayanışma meselesi oldukça önem taşımaktadır. Eylemciler hem kendi aralarında hem de eyleme katılmayanlarla birlik içindedir. Eylem bittikten sonra bu dayanışma dışarıda devam eder. Hem eylem içerisinde hem eylem sonrasında devam eden dayanışma hali, eylemcilerin birbirleriyle dostluk zemininde gerçekleşen karşılaşmaları kendilerinde oldukça pozitif duygular oluşturmuş ve bu durum yaşamı çoğaltırken aynı zamanda da eylemcilerin kudretlerini

de artırmıştır. Tüm bu noktaların, ölüm orucu eylemini pozitif değerlendirebilme olasılığına işaret ettiği düşünülmektedir.

Biz, bu çalışmada, Türkiye siyasi tarihi anlatısına geniş bir biçimde yer vermezken Türkiye sol tarihini ve politik örgütler arasındaki farklılıkları dışarda bıraktık. Ayrıca, F tipi cezaevi tartışmalarını ayrıntılı bir biçimde ele almadık. Bundan sonra, ölüm orucu eylemi ile ilgili olan çalışmaların bu konuları da ayrıntılı bir biçimde ele almasının iyi olacağını düşünmekteyiz. Türkiye siyasi tarihinde, arka planda neler olduğu, politik örgütler arasındaki farklılıkların, bu örgütlerin kendi içerisindeki hiyerarşinin ne ve nasıl olduğu mevzuları oldukça mühimken F tipi cezaevi tartışmalarını da ele almak yapılacak olan çalışmayı zenginleştirecektir kanısındayız.

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