

SIPPENHAFT IN TURKEY



Sippenhaft is a German term revived in Nazi Germany and justifies the collective punishment of a family for an act of crime committed by one of its members. Based on this term, relatives of the people blamed for crimes against the state were held responsible and arrested, even executed, though the crimes they were accused of were also controversial. What has been happening in Turkey sadly reminds of the sippenhaft practices of Nazi Germany. Turkey was shaken by the disclosure of a corruption case and Erdoğan's implication in it which resulted in hatred and a feeling of revenge against the police who made it public. The result is that the police have been suffering from doing their duties; as for the wives and children, they have been paying the price of coming from the same family of the jailed police.

11 women, the wives of the former police chiefs who carried out corruption operations against AKP government including Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his inner circle on December 17/25 2013, have been sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison for alleged links to the civic faith-based Gülen Movement, accused by the government of being a terrorist organization. Erdogan claims the scandal was fabricated to overthrow his government by Gülen movement sympathizers and labels the police investigations as a coup against him. The police chiefs were handed down life sentences. Detained in 2017, their wives were convicted in April 2019. The court ruled for the imprisonment of the defendants to continue. Erdoğan's witch hunt against the movement escalating after the controversial coup attempt of July 15, 2016 expanded to include these women whose only crime is to be the wives of the police officers who led the corruption investigations. The time of the detention of the women is noteworthy in that it corresponds to the time when Iranian gold trader Reza Zarrab-the prime suspect of the corruption investigations- who was arrested in Miami in 2016, gave a testimony in parallel with the evidence exposed by the police in jail. The police officers and their families are collectively punished by violating a basic principle of jurisprudence "*Criminal responsibility is personal. No one shall be deemed culpable for the conduct of another.*" Worst of all, this is not the first time the families face the detention or imprisonment. Birsen Atayün, the wife of jailed police Anadolu Atayün was detained along with her children aged 15 and 17. Two daughters of jailed police Ali Fuat Yılmaz, Fatma S. and Rabia F. Yılmaz were imprisoned in 2017 with a sentence of 7 years. Selda Özdemir and Faruk S. Köse, the sister and the son of jailed police Ömer Köse respectively, were sentenced to 6 years, 3 months in prison.