

# IFLA/FAIFE World Report: Libraries and Intellectual Freedom



## Turkey

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When freedom of access to information and expression, constituting the fundamentals of freedoms basing on intellectual freedom, is evaluated in Turkey, it is seen that there are important deficiencies. In Turkey, where the concepts generally related to intellectual freedom and specifically related to access to news and distribution are quite well known, the foundations related to the subject are societies, trade unions, press unions and publishing houses. For this reason, when intellectual freedom and related freedoms are mentioned in Turkey, naturally these foundations try to get the attention of the public.

<b>Population:</b>	62.865.574 (1997)
<b>GNP per capita:</b>	\$ 2.878 (1999)
<b>Government / Constitution:</b>	Republic
<b>Main languages:</b>	Turkish
<b>Main religions:</b>	Islam
<b>Literacy:</b>	80.46% (1990)
<b>Online:</b>	3.05% (May 2000)

From the point of view of libraries which are aware of existence of the ethical rules such as supplying information to people by giving any kind of source of information and thus supporting access to information and naturally freedom of expression principle, in this way librarians are important address persons for supporting democratization period of Turkey.

When the subject is evaluated for Turkey, it is necessary to mention some basic topics. First topics is the general situation concerning libraries, librarianship and intellectual freedom, secondly the legislation of relevance to libraries, librarianship and intellectual freedom, thirdly library association statements and other activities related to intellectual freedom or professional codes of conduct or ethics.

### **The General Situation Concerning Libraries, Librarianship and Intellectual Freedom**

Upon establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923 in Turkey, as a consequence of a series of reforms of made in education and cultural fields (Act of Uniform Education on 03.3.1924 and Letter Revolution on 11.3.1928), the services offered by Public Schools' Reading Rooms (1930) and libraries affiliated to Public Houses (1932) also Village Institutions (1940) established for the aim of providing contributing to Turkish culture and art life have made revolutionary impact in Turkey of those years and legibility rate as well as reading habit has increased. The foundations gained attention by their libraries at that time were closed down in the following years, and libraries together with the ones heritaged from Ottoman Empire (General Libraries) were organised under the name of Public Libraries in 1960. Public libraries, affiliated to Ministry of National Education up to 1971, were transferred to General Directorate of Libraries under the body of Ministry of Culture, established in the same year. The duties of General Directorate of Libraries have been determined again in 1983 by means of a general arrangement made in the body of Ministry of Culture.

Libraries, especially public libraries in Turkey have an image complying with their universal definition and purposes. But they have considerable important problem in terms of personnel, building, budget and equipments. For this reason, their functions are subjects to debates time to time. Particularly very serious problem are experienced in the stage of providing issues for public libraries. "Ministry of Culture Regulation of Directore of Periodicals and Books Selection Board", which was issued firstly in 1975, has been applied under different names but generally in line of the same purpose up today. The views of librarians are not asked in a system, basing on providing issues for public libraries in line of central views. The lists provided by directors of libraries to centers through using their sole discretion time to time, in the issues selection operations, which depends upon political preferences of government, are examined and in case such lists are found appropriate, issue purchasing is accepted. This application has been applied particularly in 1987-1990, but due to the problems arrisen from general government structure of Turkey, application did not long last. At the beginning of 2000s no changing in Turkey but searching goes on intellectual freedom and libraries area.

### **The Legislation of Relevance to Libraries, Librarianship and Intellectual Freedom**

The inability to provide fundamental freedoms such as intellectual freedom, reading, access to information, expression and distribution of such views fully in Turkey is arisen from the fact that democratization process has not been completed in Turkey. The problems arisen in connection with regulation in this field still do exist in Turkey at present.

In the Constitutions made in Turkish Republic after the first Constitution of 1924, the articles about intellectual freedom have been generally defined in line of individual rights and freedoms. Intellectual freedom was firstly defined explicitly in

Constitution of 1961 and it has been defined in Constitution of 1982 separately. In these definitions there are two articles namely one for intellectual freedom and freedom of belief, and disclosing and publication of views. It is seen that especially disclosing and publication of views is subject to certain restrictions.

"Act of Duties and Authorities of Police" issued in 1934, "Act of Collecting Official Printed Writings and Pictures" issued in 1934, "Act of Intellectual Arts" issued in 1951, "Act of Press" issued in 1950 and "Anti Terror Act" issued in 1991, other than Constitution in Turkey have been debated for their articles related to intellectual freedom time to time.

Complete application to freedom of access to information and expression, which can not be held separately from general problems related to regulation, may provide successful results upon personal effort and endeavour of librarians. Especially librarians which are working in public libraries without expecting any materialistic benefit and by talking the support of people around them, who try to make people again the habit of reading, have been serving in various regions of Turkey. But such studies can encounter with some obstacles for they can not be released through personal efforts and, as very sensitive balances related to regulation must be compiled with. Such obstacles, causing professional and technical problems, are arisen from problems of general regulation as well as from problems of special regulation.

### **Library Association Statements and Other Activities Related to Intellectual Freedom or Professional Codes of Conducts or Ethics**

In Turkey intellectual freedom or professional codes of conduct or ethics activities have been increasing in terms of librarianship in scientific level in written. Some librarians have been working in this area such as article, thesis or declaration. Some of them are San (1969), Kizilkan (1988, 1993, 1994), Saglamtuñ (1991), Gülle (1994, 1996, 1997, 1998) also a selected bibliography is given enclosed. The most important development concerning this subject in Turkey "Professional Ethics or Conduct" was accepted by Turkish Librarians Association in september 1996. This is the first and single important document in Turkish Librarianship which is underlined some paragraphs below especially related to intellectual freedom and ethics.

In the first paragraph mentioned from all international statements or declarations completely but mainly "Universal Human Rights Declaration" and referenced their freedom of access to information items and finishes that "all information service workers try to suit related declarations' freedom of access to information items and defend their necessity for all persons of the community".

Second paragraph starts that, information service workers get their professional power from using of information and accept equality in the information retrieval for all persons of the community non-discrimination between race, tongue, religion, sex, social status and ideology.

Other paragraphs give information shortly; to timely present to right and adequate information to users thus wining respect of the community and administration also protect it; showing respect and protecting copyrights of the information producers; showing respect to confidentiality; protecting of the information centers' respectability; serving of the information center' goals; giving priority to professional benefits than personnel benefits; working hard for appropriating of all colleagues of these conducts.

Because of general education problems in Turkey there is no independent lecture concerning intellectual freedom in Turkish university library science departments at present but it is mentioned in the related lectures by the academicians.

### **Specific Cases, Incidents and Censorship or Other Violations of Intellectual Freedom**

There are applications in this area as example but these are related indirect with libraries. Some television or radio channels have been closed by Council of Radio and Television time to time because of various reasons, on the other hand some publishers, academicians and journalists meet pressure. They have been accused due to publish illegal books or express their ideas. But pressure groups and non governmental organizations' democratic activities have been increasing also Turkey's European Union candidate approved in Helsinki Summit in december 1999 then started to speed up democratization period and improve related regulations in Turkey. When anti-democratic regulations related to freedom of expression and access to information are improved all libraries will serve all the users more contemporary in Turkey.

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- Act of Press No: 5680 *Official Gazette* dated 07.24.1950 issued 7564 Adoption date 07.15.1950 (various amendments in 1983, 1988)
- Act of Intellectual Arts (Copyright) No: 5846 *Official Gazette* dated 12.13.1951 issued 7981 Adoption date 05.12.1951 (amendments in 1995)
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