



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

EUROPRIIS INTERVIEW

Enis Yavuz YILDIRIM

EuroPris talks with Enis Yavuz YILDIRIM, Director General of the Prisons and Detention Houses



EuroPris: Could you tell us about your career path? Why have you chosen to work in the prison and correctional field?

Enis Yavuz YILDIRIM: I was born in Elazığ in 1968. I graduated from Ankara University Law Faculty in 1990. Following my internship regarding judicature-prosecution in Elazığ courthouse between the years of 1991-1993, I have served as a judge in the Hani district of Diyarbakır and in the Şuhut district of Afyonkarahisar and I have served as a public prosecutor in the Divriği District of Sivas, respectively. I have served as a Chief Public Prosecutor of Doğubayazıt, Niğde and Hatay, respectively and I was appointed to Chief Public Prosecutor of Manisa by decree of July 2011. I was appointed as General Director of Prisons and Detention Houses on 11 April 2013.

How many Prison establishments do you oversee?

137 probation directorates and 361 prisons throughout Turkey are active under the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses.

How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Turkey?

As of 8 January 2016, there are in total 179.686 detainees/convicts in our prisons, there are 273.401 obligators (who are under probation measure).

How many staff do you manage?

As of 8 January 2016, there are in total 51.109 staff in prisons and probation directorates at the present time.



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

What are in your opinion the required attributes and qualifications of someone wanting to be a prison officer?

Working in prisons really requires a self-sacrifice. Because, they show their respect, love and kindness to the convicts/detainees holding in prisons may be more than their families. Respecting human rights, being successful in human affairs, thinking honest and professional are very important for people who want to work in prison.

What is your opinion on the role of women in the European correctional field?

There is need for woman staff as well as man staff in prison system. As you know, prisons are the institutions where the security is very intensive, our staff is assigned for searching both convicts/detainees and the visitors. In our country, there is only woman staff in parts to contact with prisoners in prisons for woman detainees/convicts and also our woman staff deal with woman visitors. I can clearly explain that women are one of the keystones of the prisons. Because, masculine environments such as prisons will become kindly by increasing the number of woman staff. I believe that woman staff in prisons particularly will be successful in the field of education and rehabilitation.

What is the biggest concern with regards to security in prisons in your country?

Security is extremely powerful in our prisons, but for our penitentiary system “overcrowding” is a big threat that affects adversely all penitentiary system in terms of security, education and psycho-social services.

What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2015? What challenges you had to overcome?

2015 was a year very valuable for us, because our partnership with international organizations like EuroPris and CEP began this year. I can easily say that our country takes important steps about presenting penitentiary system in the international arena; we have made big progress on behalf of the professionalization of the staff and organization. Furthermore, I think that by opening our penitentiary system’s door to press and NGO’s, our penitentiary system becomes transparent. One of the difficulties in the penitentiary system is the media that is constantly raising a negative perception for prisons. One of the biggest problems that we met in 2015 is that the any claims made and unsubstantial ones about prisons reflecting to press as though it were real.

What are the challenges for your service next year?

We continuously develop ourselves in the penitentiary field. Especially by concentrating extremely on education, psycho-social and vocational training activities, our prisons are memorialized with its function regarding reintegrate people into the society rather than places where people are locked up. In this context, one of the important problems that we may meet in 2016 is the issue of “Terrorism and Radicalisation”. Many measures are taken actually about radicalisation in prisons, but continuously increasing tendency in the number of the native and foreign terror convicts/detainees is a signal for us that we must work hard for reintegrating them into the society.

The most important obstacle about education, rehabilitation and radicalisation for convicts and detainees who connected to terror is their supporters who are civil-looking and in various legal organizational images of these organizations. Supporters in question keep alive these people’s motivation on terror.



THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISONS AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for the European prison and correctional services at the moment?

As I mentioned above “overcrowding” and “Serious increase in number of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Radicalisation in prisons” are the factors threatening penitentiary system in Europe.

What benefits do you see being linked to an organisation such as EuroPris?

EuroPris is in a very important position respecting mutual exchange of information and communication with our interlocutors in Europe in the penitentiary field. By making contributions more actively to EuroPris, we want both EuroPris and our general directorate to get maximum benefit from this partnership.

Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?

Our General Directorate, at every opportunity, is in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and charities, by this means providing support for prisoners who need help. Furthermore, I think organizations like various concert, conference, theatre etc. that are organized by NGO's in prisons make positive contributions to prisoners' training and rehabilitation activities.

What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in the correctional field?

Our most important happiness is, being at the head of the institution that take on a task of “enforcement” which is very important step of Justice, to rehabilitate persons in social terms until reintegrate them who are differed from community of a committing crime again into society, to be guide for gaining a person socially beneficial from a person who caused social problems.

On the other part, nowadays even though prisons becomes as an education hearth and home; it is a fact that taking a person into the prison has a very large impact on his/her life. Prisoners' sufferings like move away from their families and social life is our sadness.

If you could be remembered for one thing whilst being in charge what would it be?

While I was on duty I would like to be remembered by generating effort, reforms in penitentiary field, sensibility on human rights, fair management and staff satisfaction.