

COOPERATION OR ABJECTION?
A RE-CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY BEYOND LIBERAL
VALUES AND DICHOTOMIES: THE “ISLAM VS. HOMOSEXUALITY”
DEBATE IN TURKEY

SUMRU ATUK

BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY

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Sumru Atuk

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Thesis Abstract

Sumru Atuk, “Cooperation or Abjection? A Re-conceptualization of Civil Society beyond Liberal Values and Dichotomies: The ‘Islam vs. homosexuality’ Debate in Turkey”

The main argument of this study is that the liberal tradition which idealizes civil society as a sphere for the cultivation of democratic values, equality, pluralism and cooperation lacks explanatory value in terms of explaining the complex dynamics and internal contradictions of civil society. Supporting this argument, the debate which was initiated by the discriminatory declaration of the former Minister of Women and Family in Turkey - who announced that “homosexuality is a sickness” - and turned into an “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate with the intervention of Islamic civil society organizations (CSOs) and Muslim columnists, revealed that neither the identities nor the practices of civil society actors are pre-established and fixed. They rather are context and actor dependent. Another important factor upon which this debate shed light is the centrality of power relations to the civil society. As Foucault argues, there is no Power as such invested in predetermined institutions, groups or individuals; rather it exists in every aspect of the social. Thus, there is no essential boundary and opposition between the ruler (state) and the ruled (civil society) as liberal thinkers have depicted. Depending on the context, this boundary might get blurred and the actors of civil society might cooperate with the discriminatory state due to the fact that their subjectivities are affected by the same discursive formations. In this respect, the notion of civil society needs to be re-conceptualized in a way as to reveal relations of power and negotiability of subjectivities.

Keywords: Civil Society, Islam, Homosexuality, Bio-power, Discourse, Alliance

Tez Özeti

Sumru Atuk, “İşbirliği ya da Dışlama? Sivil Toplum’un Liberal Değerler ve İkili Karşıtlıkların Ötesinde Yeniden Kavramsallaştırılması: Türkiye’deki ‘İslam vs. Eşcinsellik’ Tartışması”

Bu çalışmanın temel argümanı, sivil toplumu demokratik değerlerin, eşitliğin, çoğulculuğun ve işbirliğinin yeşerdiği bir alan olarak idealize eden liberal geleneğin, sivil toplumun karmaşık dinamiklerini ve içsel çelişkilerini yorumlamakta yetersiz kaldığıdır. Bunu destekleyecek şekilde, eski Kadın ve Aile Bakanı’nın ayrımcı “eşcinsellik bir hastalıktır” açıklaması ve tartışmanın, İslami sivil toplum örgütlerinin ve Müslüman köşe yazarlarının müdahalesiyle, bir “İslam vs. eşcinsellik” tartışmasına dönüşmesi, sivil toplum aktörlerinin ne kimliklerinin ne de pratiklerinin sabit ve önceden belirlenmiş olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bunlar daha ziyade bağlam ve aktörle birlikte değişiklik gösterir. Bu tartışmanın ışık tuttuğu bir diğer unsur da iktidar ilişkilerinin sivil toplum açısından oynadığı merkezi roldür. Foucault’nun da iddia ettiği gibi İktidar önceden belirlenmiş kurumlara, gruplara ya da bireylere ait değildir; sosyal olanın her açısında bulunur. Dolayısıyla, liberal düşünürlerin öne sürdüğünün aksine, yöneten (devlet) ve yönetilen (sivil toplum) arasında temel bir ayrım ve karşıtlık bulunmamaktadır. Bağlama göre, aradaki ayrım bulanıklaşabilir ve sivil toplumun aktörleri, öznellikleri benzer söylemsel formasyonlar tarafından kurulduğundan, ayrımcı devletle işbirliği içine girebilirler. Sonuç olarak, sivil toplum nosyonu, iktidar ilişkilerini ve öznelliklerin müzakere edilebilirliğini ortaya çıkartacak biçimde, yeniden kavramsallaştırılmalıdır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sivil Toplum, İslam, Eşcinsellik, Bio-İktidar, Söylem, İttifak

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 7 March 2010, the Turkish public started to “discuss” homosexuality following the speech of the Minister of Women and Family at the time. The speech, published in a widely-read national newspaper, *Hürriyet*, declared:

I believe that homosexuality is a biological disorder, a sickness. I think it is something that should be cured. In this regard, I do not approve homosexual marriages. Our ministry does not have any efforts in this regard. Besides, there is no demand conveyed to us. We do not say that there are no homosexuals in Turkey, this phenomenon exists.¹

The declaration by Aliye Kavaf was not surprising when it is considered within the context of Turkey since it exemplifies various manifestations of institutional homophobia.² In fact, it is possible to witness the repercussions of this official approach in encounters of LGBT³ individuals with a number of state institutions. For instance trans-gender individuals are constantly exposed to violence by the police and by other

¹ Hürriyet. 7 March 2010. Available [online]: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/pazar/14031207.asp> [22.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

² Homophobia refers to negative, fearful and hateful attitudes and behaviours targeting gay and lesbian individuals. This definition is criticized for the fact that anti-homosexual prejudices are not phobias in clinical terms since homophobes do not experience physiological reactions that can be observed in other phobias; see Duygu Çabuk and Selçuk Candansayar, “Tıp ve Homofobi”, in Kaos GL, *Homofobi Kimin Meselesi?* (Ankara: Ayrıntı Basımevi, 2010), p. 85. For the very same reason Muslim actors who believe that homosexuality is a sickness, a threat, etc. argue that their attitudes cannot be defined as homophobia since it does not involve any irrational fears. However, the term is still used in order to define prejudices and discriminations against LGBTT individuals.

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-gender.

individuals and are brutally murdered.⁴ In most cases, the murderers cannot be found. Even if they are found, the courts provide them with plea-bargains (reduce their sentences) in most of the cases on the grounds of “unjust provocation”.⁵ Thus, the official approach of Turkish state is far from developing an effective policy to prevent deaths of LGBT individuals.

Besides, further official practices of state institutions attempt to decrease LGBT individuals’ visibility and degrade their lives. For instance, from the very beginning of LGBT movement in Turkey, there have been systematic efforts to close down LGBT organizations on the grounds that they provoke immorality in society.⁶ RTÜK (Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu – The Radio and Television Supreme Council) constantly

⁴Human Rights Watch. 22 May 2008. “*We Need a Law for Liberation*”. Available [online]: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/05/21/we-need-law-liberation-0> [25.06.2012]; International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission. “Turkey: Change Law of Misdemeanors to End Abuse of Trans People”. Available [online]: <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/globalactionalerts/1018.html> [25.06.2012]; European Parliament. “European Parliament resolution of 10 February 2010 on Turkey's progress report 2009”. Available [online]: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0025+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN> [25.06.2012].

⁵ Principle of “unjust provocation” (haksız tahrik indirimi) is explicated in Article 29 of Turkish Penal Law as follows: A person who committed a crime as a result of anger, of extreme pain caused by an unjust deed, is sentenced to imprisonment from 18 to 24 years, instead of aggravated life imprisonment. The punishment given in other cases is mitigated to amounts from ¼ to ¾. See, Turkish Penal Law. Available [online]: <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5237.html> [24.06.2012]. This principle is mobilized in crimes against LGBTs. When murderers claim that they killed an LGBT individual on the grounds that she “proposed same sex intercourse”, the majority of Turkish courts decide that there is an unjust provocation. Thus, being thought as a gay is accepted as an insult which creates extreme anger or pain. For a detailed discussion see Bawer Çakır’s news. Available [online]: <http://moreleskisehir.blogspot.com/2009/11/mahkeme-haksz-tahrik-indirimiyle.html> [24.06.2012].

⁶ Regarding these cases see Bianet, 27 September 2005. Available [online]: www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/67867-kaos-gl-icin-kapatma-istemi-hak-ihlali [22.06.2012]; Bianet, 29 April 2009. Available [online]: www.bianet.org/biamag/bianet/114196-lambdaistanbula-karsi-kapatma-davasi-kronolojisi [22.06.2012].

punishes TV channels for scenes with “gay” content in programs arguing that homosexuality is against the spiritual values of Turkish society.⁷

This official stance was also strengthened with the recent constitutional changes. The Turkish Constitution declares that “all citizens are equal regardless of their language, religion, gender, political ideology, religion, sect, *etc.*”⁸ This article was ammended in order to secure the equality of certain groups such as women and children in 2010. LGBT organizations have been struggling to remove the abbreviation “etc” and develop a more through and egalitarian description of “equality”. What has been demanded is the inclusion of “sexual orientation” into the article; yet it was not changed.⁹ Thus, even though there was a demand for a more comprehensive equality, LGBT rights were not considered as a matter of egalitarianism in Turkey.

This homophobic tendency is also reflected in the actions of conservative political parties. For instance in May 2012 the youth organization of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) put up a poster reading “Homosexuality is Immorality” and “Adultery Should Be an Offense”.¹⁰ As a response some people wanted to file criminal complaints about the banner of Felicity Party; however, the police did not accept the petitions.

⁷ As an example see Vatan, 20 December 2010. Available [online]: <http://haber.gazetevatan.com/rtukte-gay-dizi-catlagi/347719/1/Haber> [22.06.2012].

⁸ See Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası (Turkish Constitution), Article 10. “Herkes, dil, ırk, renk, cinsiyet, siyasî düşünce, felsefî inanç, din, mezhep ve benzeri sebeplerle ayırım gözetilmeksizin kanun önünde eşittir”. (My emphasis)

⁹ Regarding the discussions about constitutional changes see Bianet, 22 March 2010. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/120832-akp-lgbtleri-gormezden-geldi> [22.06.2012].

¹⁰ Esra Güleç. 18 May 2012. *Saadet Partisi “Eşcinsellik Ahlaksızlıktır” Pankartı Açtı*. Available [online]: www.kaosgl.org/sayfa.php?id=11372 [22.06.2012].



Photograph is retrieved from Kaos GL's web site.

It is worth noting here that the symbolic meaning of the banner was as important as the message it contains. The image used in the banner is a photo taken after the volcanic eruption in Pompei. The deaths (including those of children) after the eruption are considered as a reiteration of the story of Sodom and Gomorra in which tribes were punished by god due to homosexual relations.¹¹ This image is used in order to warn homosexuals of what will happen to them. Despite the level of threat that the poster involved, the police did not accept the petitions of those individuals who wanted to file criminal complaints about the banner.

In such a context, neither the declaration of Kavaf nor the actions of other government officials, nor the results of law suits brought against homophobic declarations and actions of the police department are surprising. After the former minister's speech, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government did not make a declaration that criticized the minister. Nor did it answer the parliamentary questions of

¹¹ As an example of how the visuals are used, see İbretle Seyredelim Kavimlerin Helakı Lut Kavmi ve Pompei Halkı. Available [online]: www.youtube.com/watch?v_kImIzI_00I4 [22.06.2012].

the opposition parties (the Republican People's Party, CHP, and the Peace and Democracy Party, BDP),¹² asking whether the words of Kavaf reflected the general policy of the government against homosexuals,¹³ or whether the government thought that such explanations by a minister would foster animosity against homosexuals in society.¹⁴ In the period following the declaration, Lambdaistanbul¹⁵ made a lawsuit petition to the Bakırköy Chief Prosecutor against Aliye Kavaf. However, it was rejected due to the lack of legal grounds since the defendant is a minister and any complaint about her should be decided in parliament.¹⁶ Kaos GL¹⁷ members also protested Kavaf who was giving a speech in a conference about 'gender equality' with banners reading "Apologize!". At this event another state institution, the police, stepped in and violently forced the protesters out of the conference room.¹⁸

¹² Parliamentary question by Mehmet Sevigen. 2 April 2010. Available [online]: http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/yazili_soru_sd.onerge_bilgileri?kanunlar_sira_no=82383 [22.06.2012], Parliamentary question by Sebhat Tuncel. 06. April 2010. Available [online]: http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/yazili_soru_sd.onerge_bilgileri?kanunlar_sira_no=82396 [22.06.2012].

¹³ Bianet, 16 March 2010. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/120710-kavafin-aciklamalari-hukumetin-ortak-politikasi-mi> [22.06.2012].

¹⁴ Bianet, 12 October 2010, Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/120618-sevigen-kavafin-ayrimciligini-basbakana-sordu> [22.06.2012].

¹⁵ Lambdaistanbul is one of the LGBT organizations based in İstanbul. For detailed information about the organization's activities see Lambdaistanbul's official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/> [25.06.2012].

¹⁶ Bianet, 07 July 2010, Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/123240-bakirkoy-savciligi-bakan-kavaf-hakkindaki-sikayeti-kabul-etmedi> [22.06.2012].

¹⁷ Kaos GL is one of the LGBT organizations based in Ankara. For detailed information about the organization's activities see Kaos GL's official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/anasayfa.php> [25.06.2012].

¹⁸ Bia Haber Ajansı, Kaos GL, Bakan Kavaf'ı Protesto Etti, 15. 04.2010, Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/121341-kaos-gl-bakan-kavafi-protesto-etti> [24.06.2012].

The debate that was prompted by the declaration of Kavaf was significant in that the Turkish state crossed the threshold of ignoring the LGBTTT community and openly declared its homophobic character for the first time.¹⁹ What was unexpected and surprising about the declaration of Kavaf was the fact that a number of Islamic civil society organizations (CSOs)²⁰ declared support for the former minister.²¹ Following the supportive actions of Islamic CSOs, certain Muslim columnists got involved in the discussions either supporting the CSOs and the minister or criticizing them. Thus, the debate that started when Kavaf stigmatized LGBTTTs as pathological turned out to be a debate about the place of homosexuality within Islam, which I will call the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate.

The claims of Islamic CSOs that supported the former minister by writing her an open letter and those of Muslim columnists who supported her by arguing that her declaration should be regarded as a matter of freedom of speech contained various contradictions. Both the signatories of the letter and the columnists argued that the state and society have to take precautions against the “threat” posed by homosexuality. The declarations of Islamic CSOs such as MAZLUMDER (Association of Human Rights and

¹⁹ Yasemin Öz, “Her Şey Haktan Ama Zulmetmek Kuldân”, *Amargi* 17,(Summer 2010), pp. 40-41.

²⁰ The term Islamic civil society organization (İslami sivil toplum örgütü) is the self definition of these associations. These organization, primarily identify themselves as Muslim or Islamic organizations. Secondly, they present themselves civil society associations which work in the field of human rights. For that reason, I prefer to identify them in the same way rather than referring them as NGOs.

²¹ The list of the signatories is as follows: AKABE Vakfı - AKDAV - AKODER Aileyi Koruma Derneği - Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı - Anadolu Gençlik Derneği İstanbul Şubesi - ASDER Adaleti Savunucuları Derneği - Ayışığı Derneği - Hayata Çağrı Platformu - Hukukçular Derneği - İHH İnsani Yardım Vakfı - İnsan ve Medeniyet Hareketi - MAZLUMDER İstanbul Şubesi - Medeniyet Derneği - ÖNDER İmam Hatip Liseleri Mezunları ve Mensupları Derneği - ÖZGÜR-DER - Sağlık ve Gıda Güvenliği Hareketi - İnsani Değerler ve Ruh Sağlığı Vakfı - Sıcak Yuva Vakfı - TİYEMDER Tüm İlahiyat Mezunları Derneği - TÜMER Tüketici Hakları Merkezi - TGTV Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı (160 sivil toplum kuruluşu çatı örgütü) - Türkiye Yazarlar Birliği.

Solidarity for Oppressed People)²² and Muslim columnists showed that, even though they are vocal supporters of human rights, equality and cooperation within civil society, solidarity with LGBTs is neither possible nor desired. Nor LGBTs' rights and equality are considered as a matter of human rights and equality that they struggle for.

On the other hand, the very same debate also showed that the relations between Islamic CSOs and LGBTTs cannot be explained by a simplistic Islam vs. homosexuality debate. A number of Islamic CSOs such as BKP (Capital City Women's Platform)²³ and AKDER (Association of Women's Rights against Discrimination)²⁴ refused to get involved in the debate since they considered the approach of the minister and the supporting Muslims as a discriminatory one. However, the members of this second group were criticized by the former for not being "real Muslims".

Thus, this debate illustrated that the relations among the actors of civil society cannot sufficiently be explained by attributing them predefined characteristics. Nor can they be explained by identifying certain groups, such as Muslims, as "bad civil society" and assuming them to be the enemies of democracy. For this reason, the discourses of these organizations, columnists and members of the several Islamic CSOs will be

²² MAZLUMDER is among the prominent human rights organizations in Turkey. A detailed discussion about this organization will be provided in previous chapters. For detailed information about the activities of MAZLUMDER see its official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.mazlumder.org/> [25.06.2012].

²³ BKP is an Islamic women's organization based in Ankara. A detailed discussion about this organization will be provided in previous chapters. For detailed information about activities of BKP see its official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.baskentkadin.org/> [25.06.2012].

²⁴ AKDER is an Islamic women's organization based in İstanbul. A detailed discussion about this organization will be provided in previous chapters. For detailed information about activities of AKDER see its official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.ak-der.org/default.gbt#tab=tab-1> [25.06.2012].

analyzed in this work in order to understand civil society with the complexity and contradictions that it bears.

I decided to write this thesis with questions that appeared in my mind as I delved deeper into the details of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate between the actors of Turkish civil society. The major questions that led me to engage in this study can be summarized as follows: How can we explain the fact that certain CSOs may align themselves with discriminatory positions taken by the state? How can we explain the fact that certain rights activists may exclude a portion of society when defending “rights”? How can we explain differences of position between CSOs that explicitly espouse a common ideology or faith? How can we explain solidarity or lack of solidarity between CSOs that claim to be victims of power?

All these questions gather around a particular question: How can civil society which promises pluralism, equality and democracy, be a ground for discrimination and abjection?²⁵ With this major question in mind this study attempts to re-conceptualize the notion of civil society in a way that reveals its complexities. I will argue that the liberal conceptualization of civil society does not capture its complexity and the relations of power it harbors. The particular context of the debate demonstrated that the fundamental premises of the liberal paradigm such as boundary between state and civil society,

²⁵ Iris M. Young, borrowing Julia Kristeva’s theory, defines abjection as a result of hegemonic power relations and argues that hegemonic race, sex or sexual orientation first expulses and then repulses the abject who is not hegemonic; see Iris Marion Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 141-148. Similarly, Pinar Selek argues that the real problem is the fact that approval and rejection within the societal relations are intertwined with the phenomenon of power - which is a relationship that results in exclusion and elimination of elements which are thought to be harmful. Thus, abjection is necessarily a result of hegemonic power relations; and state is not essentially a party to the relations of power; see Pinar Selek, *Maskeler, Sıvariler Gacılar, Ülker Sokak Bir Alt kültürün Dışlanma Mekanı* (İstanbul: İstiklal Kitapevi, 2001).

pluralism, harmonization of interests and essentiality of voluntary organizations for establishing cooperation within civil society lack explanatory value.²⁶ The involvement of Islamic civil society actors²⁷ in the homosexuality debate has illustrated that when the actual dynamics of the “civil society” are analyzed, a very different web of relations can be observed. The assumed boundary between the state and civil society can get blurred, the actors might assume new identities which challenge the cooperative, egalitarian voluntary organizations ideal or they might establish coalitions which are not expected by liberal thinkers.

With the aim of answering the above mentioned questions, I will analyze the discursive practices of the above mentioned actors regarding LGBTs in relation with their general discourses such as “human rights”, “anti-discrimination” and “equality”. My objective here is to introduce a contextual and actor-dependent understanding of civil society that is conceptualized as a site of power relations. In other words, I argue that the subjectivities of the actors of civil society and their relations with others are discontinuous and negotiable.

Such an analysis will basically challenge the widely accepted conceptualization of civil society as an insurance of democracy. However, my aim here is not to argue that certain civil society actors challenge democratic values. I rather argue that the concept of civil society should not only be considered within the framework of democracy since it is

²⁶ The theoretical discussion of civil society will be provided in Chapter II.

²⁷ I define actors of civil society referring to widely accepted definition of Habermas. He names civil society actors “voluntary organizations” and lists them as “churches, cultural associations, sports clubs and debating societies [...] independent media, academics, groups of concerned citizens, grassroots initiatives, and organizations of gender, race and sexuality, [...] occupational associations, political parties and labor unions”; see Habermas qtd. in Bent Flyvbjerg, “Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?”, *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 (June 1998), p. 210.

far more complex. In this respect, I aim to contribute to the literature regarding Turkish civil society in three ways. Using a Foucauldian method of analysis, I will primarily argue that the relations within civil society should be considered as effects of power, the latter being relational, but not solely vested in institutions, groups or ideologies. Accordingly, I will argue that the identities of civil society actors are not pre-given; they are also relational and context-dependent. Lastly, I will argue that in order to identify the complex power relations within civil society, an analysis of concrete practices and strategies of its actors is required.

It can be argued that the literature on concrete practices *within* civil society is quite rare. A review of the literature shows that academic work considering the dynamics of civil society is mainly concerned with theoretical discussions and the historical evolution of the concept. These studies reveal that civil society first became a key element in theoretical debates on democracy after World War II. Recent discussions illustrate that the concept gained renewed popularity after the collapse of communist states.²⁸ By the 1980s, civil society was characterized as a necessary institution which is capable of bringing about democracy, egalitarianism, freedom and solidarity to societies that have to cope with political and economic complexities, the hardships of modern politico-economic order and the threat of despotism.²⁹

The discussions of civil society in Turkey also date back to the 1980s:

“Paradoxically, the coup which set out to destroy the institutions of civil society helped

²⁸ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), p. 15; Keane qtd. in John Hall, “In Search of Civil Society” in John Hall, ed., *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, (Cambridge, Polity Press: 1995) p.1.

²⁹ Cohen and Arato, pp. 17, 25.

to strengthen the commitment to civilian politics, consensus-building, civil rights and issue-oriented associational activity”.³⁰ In the post-1980 coup period, especially in 1990s, new civil society actors – such as Kurds, feminists, Islamists and LGBTs - emerged. The identity claims of all these actors challenged the official Kemalist ideology and secular modern “citizenship prototype”. The existing literature generally referred to Turkish civil society as consisting of a premature set of practices that could not achieve Western standards of activism and toleration.³¹ Corresponding to the rise of Islamic CSOs in the early 1990s, especially to their anti-Kemalist problematization of the headscarf issue, these organizations also attracted the attention of academic circles. The literature about Islamic civil society scrutinizes its dynamics in order to analyze its democratic capacity as a response to the Western literature which either characterizes Islamic societies as incapable of establishing a democratic civil society³² or challenges the former.³³

However, literature concerning non-Western civil society experiences mainly failed to analyze the complex relations *within* civil society, since it limited itself to either comparing them to the Western ideal or challenging the latter and trying to prove that Islamic civil society can also be friend of democracy, though not in a Western way. Put

³⁰ Binnaz Toprak qtd. in Selim Suavi Akan, *The Human Rights Perspectives of Two Human Rights Organizations in Turkey: MAZLUMDER and İDH* (Master’s Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010), p. 17.

³¹ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, “State and Civil Society in Turkey: Democracy, Development and Protest” in Amy B. Sajoo, ed., *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*, (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

³² See. Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

³³ See Özdalga qtd in Ayşe Kadioğlu, “Civil Society, Islam and Democracy in Turkey: A Study of Three Islamic Non-Governmental Organizations,” *Muslim World* 95, (January, 2005), p. 36.

differently, these accounts of civil society have taken for granted the main premises of the liberal paradigm and did not develop an analysis of its complexities and intra-contradictions. On the other hand, recent work such as those conducted by Yasemin İpek Can and Funda Gençoğlu Odabaşı provided accounts of civil society that consider the relations of power it bears.³⁴ However, none of these studies provided an analysis of the relations between Islamic civil society and LGBTs from the perspective of power relations. Thus, I aim at contributing to the literature on Turkish civil society with a contextual analysis of the specific and complex relations between LGBTs and Islamic civil society.

Foucault's analysis of power constitutes the conceptual backbone of this work. I suggest that civil society needs to be re-conceptualized so as to elucidate its complexity, dynamism and power relations. As a site of power, its subjects, objects and relations among them are effects of discursive formations. Despite the fact that power exists in every single aspect of social life, it cannot be observed and analyzed with respect to its very existence. It can rather be detected in its effects. One of the major effects of power is the fact that it turns *things* into the objects of discourses. From the perspective of Foucault a discourse refers to an area of social knowledge which enables and limits the possibilities of writing, speaking or thinking "about a given social object or practices only in a certain specific way".³⁵ Since discourses are both discontinuous and open to

³⁴ Yasemin İpek Can, *Volunteers or Governors? Rethinking Civil Society in Turkey Beyond the Problematic of Democratization: The Case of TEGV*(Master's Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006); Funda Gençoğlu Onbaşı, *Civil Society Debate in Turkey*, (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010).

³⁵ Alec Mc Houl and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 32.

transformation, they are productive of non-stable subjectivities which vary contextually. Thus, an analysis of the subjects of a given discourse requires paying attention to this dynamism. Considering civil society from the perspective of bio-politics provided me with the conceptual tools which enabled such an analysis. Re-conceptualization of civil society from the perspective of bio-power and governmentalization illustrates that power relations are existent in every single detail of societal relations. Thus, we cannot talk about a power which is vested in the state only. Since power comes “from below... there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between the rulers and ruled”.³⁶ Such an analysis of civil society challenges the assumed boundary between state and society, but reveals how interpenetrated they are.

Bio-power functions by optimizing life, normalizing it and securing the welfare of the population. It objectivizes life and determines which “lives” are worthy of protection. By definition, it does not need institutions to do so, since it is a type of power which can be pinpointed at every level of social, political and economical relations (at the ‘sub-state level’ in Foucault’s terms). Thus, no institution has the monopoly over power. What Foucault calls “governmentalization” has a specific role in the operation of bio-power. Governmentalization simply means “conduct of conducts” or “acting on the actions of others”. It is important for analyzing civil society for the very reason that it invests individuals and groups with the ability to act upon others’ practices. Thus, the state is no more the privileged actor that *exerts* power onto society or individuals. However, this does not mean that it totally fades away. Through mechanisms of

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *History of sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 94.

governmentality the “responsibility” is decentralized.³⁷ In this way people became responsible for their own security and took responsibility for fighting against such problems as health, poverty, etc.³⁸ The very discourse of “security” paves the path for actors of civil society to develop strategies of “protection” which function through defining “what is worth protecting” and “what poses a threat to it”.

The main claim of this thesis is that the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate has created a Muslim subjectivity that constructs itself through its opposition to homosexuality. Moreover, the discursive dynamics of the debate has stigmatized homosexuality as an extraordinary, unnatural, and a dangerous threat to humanity, religion and society. Considering CSOs’ and Muslim columnists’ discursive efforts to reconcile human rights activism with homophobia and the axes of resistance that are also effects of the same discursive formations, provides an analysis of civil society that overcomes simple binary dichotomies that preclude conceiving its complexities.

Methodology

To begin with, I have to clarify that Islamic civil society is not the only formation that discriminates against LGBTs. On the contrary, discourses which are mobilized by actors of Islamic civil society bear significant similarities with other groups such as the

³⁷ Foucault, *Resume des cours, 1970-1982* (Paris, 1989) 1970 – 1982 (Paris, 1989) in Graham Burchell, “Peculiar Interests: Civil Society and Governing” ‘the System of Natural Liberty’”, in Burchell, Gordon and Miller, *The Foucault Effect*, p. 141 qtd. in Can, p. 52.

³⁸ O’Malley qtd. in Can, p. 46.

socialists.³⁹ Thus, my choice of focus does not aim at presenting Muslims and LGBTs as always-already antagonist and mutually exclusive groups. However, considering the main puzzle of this work, the period of public debate after Kavaf's declaration, certain Islamic civil society actors got willingly involved in the debate and transformed it into a discussion of homosexuality from an Islamic perspective. Among them, MAZLUMDER was the most vocal, so it became the self-proclaimed object of this study. The second reason behind my choice is that some groups, revealing the complexity of civil society, emerged as examples of Islamic CSOs with a different (even oppositional) Islamic position regarding homosexuality. These, namely BKP and AKDER, were singled out as actors that complicate the Islam vs. homosexuality debate.

MAZLUMDER is chosen as a case study for specific reasons. First of all, it is known for its anti-discriminatory and comprehensive human rights perspective. It declares its unconditional support for each and every discriminated community in Turkey and in the international realm. For that reason, MAZLUMDER's support of Kavaf's declaration was criticized more than any other signatory of the letter. Critics argued that MAZLUMDER challenges its own organizational policy and human rights discourse by not maintaining its principles with regard to LGBTs. The members of the organizations responded to these critiques, defending the propositions in the letter and announcing homosexuality as a human rights violation. Thus, it became one of the prominent actors of the debate.

On the other hand, with respect to the columnists, I did not engage in any selection processes and simply included all of the articles which were published in

³⁹ This issue will be discussed in Chapter III.

newspapers or in internet in 2010 regarding the debate. The reason why I did not limit my scope to certain columnists is to demonstrate the variations in their arguments and the minor debates regarding the Islamic interpretation of homosexuality. Thus, I aim to point out that the “Muslim party”⁴⁰ of the debate is not a unified entity and the discursive space of the debate was productive of different, even oppositional Muslim subjectivities.

This work has three main sources of equal importance. The first one is the formal documents which are published by Islamic CSOs on their official web sites. These documents helped me to understand the organizational policies of MAZLUMDER, AKDER and BKP and the discursive strategies which are deployed in their human rights struggle. In addition, the documents published by MAZLUMDER during the period after Kavaf’s declaration provided me with the possibility to comprehend its organizational position regarding LGBTs. My second source is the articles published either in the printed media or in internet considering the debate. These articles provided insights about how civil society actors positioned themselves with regard to the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. In this respect, I analyzed texts published not only by the members of the Muslim party of the debate but also by LGBTs and third parties.

The last source is the in-depth interviews conducted with the members of Islamic CSOs, LGBTT organizations and other CSOs which do not belong to these categories. I conducted 19 in-depth interviews in the period between 2010 and 2012. The interview questions were semi-structured ones. In this way, I wanted to assure that the interviewees could mention issues which are of importance from their point of view. This technique

⁴⁰ Here, I refer to the Muslim actors of the debate as the “Muslim party” referring to the Islamic CSOs and Muslim columnists who involved in the discussion about homosexuality in a way so as to abject LGBTs. I use this term on purpose in order to stress that these actors represent neither all Islamic CSOs nor the Muslims as a whole.

also provided with me with the flexibility to ask for more elaboration on certain issues. The interview questions mainly consisted of the interviewee's ideas about relations among CSOs and with the state, their human rights definitions, their approaches to the idea of cooperation and their positions concerning Kavaf's declaration and the ensuing debate on homosexuality.

Choosing the interviewees, I used the methods of both systematic and snow-ball sampling. At the early phases of my research, I contacted outstanding figures who were involved in the debate by means of writing in newspapers or various blogs. In addition, I contacted several organizations and interviewed the members that they chose. I tried to achieve an unbiased interviewee profile with respect to their organizational identities and most importantly their positions within the debate. The interviewees whose ideas will be mentioned in this work consist of 9 individuals from Islamic CSOs, 7 from LGBTT organizations and 3 from other CSOs. Except for two,⁴¹ the real names of these interviewees are withheld for ethical reasons; instead I used pseudo names. All these interviews were conducted in İstanbul and Ankara. I could have interviewed more members from other offices of MAZLUMDER; nevertheless, I preferred to limit my scope to these cities where BKP and AKDER located. In this way, I aimed to limit locational intervening variables. However, I resorted to a previously conducted study⁴² as a secondary source since I decided that the specificity of the Diyarbakır office of

⁴¹ None of the interviewees who participated in this research asked me to conceal their names. However, I choose to give them pseudo-names for ethical concerns. On the other hand, I did not change names of Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal and Ayhan Bilgen for various reasons. First of all, due to their positions which are considered to be "not revealing Islamic perspective" they became two of the significant actors of the debate. Secondly, I also gave place to their articles or public speeches in this work. For that reason, I chose to reveal that the authors of these articles and the interviewees are the same persons.

⁴² Akan (Master's Thesis).

MAZLUMDER is of great importance for this work. In addition to these methodological strategies, I attended relevant conferences so that I could get access to the ideas of more actors.

I used all my sources in order to conduct an analysis of the discourses that are deployed within the framework of the debate. However, what is meant here by the term “discourse analysis” is not only the analysis of language used or the statements made. This is not a hermeneutical study *per se*. Neither does it aim at discovering any hidden meaning in the declarations of the “Muslims” or their true intentions. The purpose of this work is, as Foucault argues, to determine the conditions of possibility of certain discourses, to show what kind of statements are excluded, and how existing ones are able to claim a position which cannot be occupied by others and the law behind the statements.⁴³ Put differently, I attempt to scrutinize how subjects of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate are positioned *vis a vis* one another and the relations of power that emerged out of the discursive framework of the debate.

Sequential order

In the second chapter of this work, I present a theoretical discussion of the evolution of the concept of civil society. I provide a detailed review of the dominant liberal conceptualization of civil society and a critical deconstruction of it from the perspective

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. Tavistock Publications Limited (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 31-32, 56.

of Foucault. This chapter also explains the major Foucauldian theoretical and methodological tools which constitute the conceptual backbone of my work.

The third chapter involves an analysis of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate from the perspective of bio-power. This chapter aims at elucidating that civil society does not necessarily function as a mechanism of checks and balances which attempts to limit state actions and bringing about multilateralism. I attempt to scrutinize how the practice of the state and the civil society can coincide regarding LGBTs with reference to bio-politics.

The fourth chapter provides a detailed analysis of the discourses which shaped the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. My aim here is to discuss the specific ways in which homophobia, which used to belong to the private realm, has been politicized and how this process of politicization effects the reconstruction of the actors within the discursive framework of the debate. This analysis also shows that the discourses of civil society are not limited to liberal ones such as plurality, individualism, universalism and solidarity.

The fifth and sixth chapters are based on the interviews conducted with members of CSOs. The major aim of the fifth chapter is to challenge the liberal conceptualization of “voluntary organizations” as an essential means of cooperation and participation. Comparing three Islamic civil society organizations, I argue that depending on the context and the possibilities of discourses the organizations might assume both cooperative and abjecting positions with regard to LGBTs.

The sixth chapter questions the possibility of solidarities within civil society which are not necessarily built on the harmonization of interests while opposing state

despotism. This chapter consists of two related sections. In the first section, I attempt to analyze the possibility of establishing coalitions which harbor conflicts rather than seeking compromise, with reference to Judith Butler's theory of alliances. In the second section, taking Butler's theory of civil struggle into consideration, I aim at discussing the obstacles faced by existing alliances between Islamic CSOs and LGBTs.

CHAPTER II

TWO MAJOR THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CIVIL SOCIETY

The notion of civil society has attracted great attention throughout the history of political theory. Even though there is a vast literature about it; there is no consensus regarding the meaning of the concept. The idea of a civilized society which connotes an active citizenship was revived as a modern concept antithetical to the authoritarian “socialist-party states” in 1950s.⁴⁴ Starting with 1980s, civil society has been celebrated as a sphere in which values such as democracy, egalitarianism, freedom and solidarity can be cultivated. It has been idealized as a means to deal with modern politico-economic order and, especially, the threat of despotism.⁴⁵ The multiplicity of these definitions attributed to the civil society throughout history eliminates the possibility of achieving a clear conceptualization of the term.⁴⁶ However, for the sake of conceptual clarity, the neo-Tocquevillean definition of Larry Diamond which refers to the most emphasized characteristics of civil society can be recalled. He conceptualizes civil society as an intermediary sphere, between the private realm and the state, because it is an:

⁴⁴ Cohen and Arato, p. 15; Hall, 1.

⁴⁵ Cohen and Arato, pp. 17, 25.

⁴⁶ Flyvbjerg, p. 210.

organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules... [I]t involves citizens *acting collectively in a public sphere* to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demand on the state, and hold the state officials accountable.⁴⁷

Diamond's definition summarizes the modern liberal civil society ideal. In the history of civil society, the liberal conceptualization of the term, which started with the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers and mostly characterized by the theory of Alexis de Tocqueville, has a specific importance for being the dominant way of understanding civil society.⁴⁸ The liberal tradition builds its theory of civil society on two major dichotomies: the one between state and civil society, and the one between individualism and universalism. The liberal thinkers aimed to preserve the former dichotomy for the sake of realizing the egalitarian and pluralist promises of civil society, while they attempted to eliminate the latter for the very same reason. Even though this tradition is criticized in many aspects, it has been the dominant way of understanding civil society, especially in the neo-liberal context.⁴⁹ For that reason, the literature composed of liberal discussions of civil society deserves attention for any work which aims at analyzing civil society.

Accordingly, this chapter will discuss the main premises of liberal civil society theory, while pinpointing the theoretical and practical gaps and shortages of this tradition. Even though, in the literature, the merits of civil society are dominantly discussed within the liberal paradigm, these discussions lack the explanatory capacity to

⁴⁷ Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3, (1994), p.5. (Author's emphasis)

⁴⁸ Cohen and Arato; Can (Master's Thesis), p.89.

⁴⁹ Can, p. 26.

analyze the internal tensions, paradoxes and complexities of civil society. In this respect, this chapter also proposes that civil society needs to be reconceptualized from a Foucauldian perspective which keeps micro-relations of power in mind.

Liberal-pluralist Paradigm

The liberal tradition assumes a strict differentiation, and also an essential opposition, between the state and civil society and it defines the latter as the antidote of potential dominations and violations by the former. This separation of civil society from state characterizes the modern usage of the term. Throughout history, philosophers such as Aristotle, and contract theoreticians such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau have also mentioned a *soicetas civilis*; however they do not refer to a distinction between state and civil society.⁵⁰ Seligman argues that this tradition is an invention of Scottish thinkers such as Hume, Ferguson and Smith who attributed to civil society a connection with “private interests.”⁵¹ In this way civil society is defined as a realm which differs from the state and has its own institutions and principles.⁵²

Since one of its institutional cores is a limited, accountable government which operates under the rule of law;⁵³ the civil society is formulated as an arena for “standing

⁵⁰ Gençoğlu Odabaşı, pp. 22, 23.

⁵¹ Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁵² Josepf Femia, “Civil Society and the Marxist Tradition”, in Kaviraj and Khilnani, *Civil Society: History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) qtd. in Can, p. 20.

⁵³ Perez Diaz, Victor. “The Possibility of Civil Society: Traditions and Character and Challenges”. In *Civil Theory: Theory, History and Comparison*, edited by John A. Hall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 81.

resistance to government”,⁵⁴ a site for participation, empowerment and mutual help⁵⁵, and an indispensable condition for democracy and a guarantee for freedom and equality.⁵⁶ As Tocqueville and Montesquieu strongly emphasize, despotism is considered to be “the best known enemy of civil society”.⁵⁷ For that reason, Tocqueville conceptualizes civil society as an essential element of democracy, eliminating the threat of despotism.

Such a separation is deemed essential by the liberal thinkers for consolidation of democracy thanks to its pluralist character.⁵⁸ In fact it is considered, as Barber points out in his famous “civic culture” thesis, as the only sphere in which democratic features such as participation and openness are cultivated.⁵⁹ On the other hand, this democratic-pluralist thesis also constitutes one of the major paradoxes of liberal tradition. As Diamond clarifies, following the Tocquevillean democratic path, pluralism within civil society refers to means of cooperating and negotiating “*without fragmenting*”.⁶⁰ It is limited in the sense that it only concerns the plurality of mainstream ideas and excludes

⁵⁴ De Tocqueville qtd. in C. Fred Alford, “Civil Society and Its Discontents”, *The Good Society* 12, no. 1 (2003), p. 11.

⁵⁵ William F. Fisher, “Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices”, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997), p. 442.

⁵⁶ Havel, V. “How Europe Could Fail”, *New York Review of Books* 18 (November 1993), p. 3, qtd. in Flyvbjerg, p. 210.

⁵⁷ Hall, p. 7.

⁵⁸ See. Havel qtd. in Flyvbjerg, p. 210; Tocqueville qtd. in Can, p. 22; Hall, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Benjamin R. Barber, “Clansmen, Consumers, and Citizens: Three Takes on Civil Society”. In *Civil Society, Democracy, and Civic Renewal*, edited by Robert K. Fullinwider (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), pp. 9 – 30.

⁶⁰ Larry Diamond, “Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation”, *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3, (1994), p. 12, qtd in Gençoğlu Onbaşı, p. 48. (My emphasis)

“maximalist, uncompromising interest groups or groups with antidemocratic goals and methods”.⁶¹ The openness of civil society appears to be possible as long as it does not disturb societal *order*.

From a critical democratic approach, Habermas criticizes the pluralist understanding of liberal tradition for reducing liberty to individualism and missing the important issue of solidarity within the society.⁶² He aims at developing a more comprehensive pluralism through his “discursive public sphere” thesis which enables “people to talk about common concerns in conditions of freedom and equality”.⁶³ Since everybody can participate in this discursive sphere, he eliminates the risk of exclusion of certain ideas. In the public sphere, according to Habermas, people can achieve consensus and solidarity through exchange of arguments.⁶⁴ However, it would be misleading to overemphasize this critique of Habermas since he still preserves the main premises of liberal tradition, and suffers from its limitations, such as assuming that everybody can participate equally in the public sphere disregarding effects of power and inequality.⁶⁵ For this reason, Nancy Frazer criticizes the Habermasean public sphere, for it assumes

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Jürgen Habermas, “Equal Treatment of Cultures and the Limits of Postmodern Liberalism”, *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (2005), p. 2, qtd in Gençoğlu Onbaşı, p.76.

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, “Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” qtd in John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*, (New York, New York University Press,1999), p.219.

⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 160, qtd. in Gençoğlu Odabaşı, p. 71.

⁶⁵ Gençoğlu Odabaşı, p. 75.

that the inequalities of status can be eliminated in public discussions, ignoring the existence and importance of “*subaltern counterpublics*”.⁶⁶

The reason behind liberal ignorance of minority/marginal voices lies in a further dichotomy which is of great importance for the liberal theory of civil society - the one between individualism and universalism. Since the Scottish thinkers believed that this dichotomy can be overcome; and, individual and collectivist interests can be compromised within civil society they did not problematize the question of ‘limits of plurality’. Especially Ferguson’s *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* was one of the leading texts which proposed civil society as “a socially desirable alternative both to the state of nature and the heightened individualism of emergent capitalism”.⁶⁷ Put differently, the liberal tradition praised civil society as a realm in which people can both seek their own interests and find a way to harmonize them in the institutional order of civil society, under the rule of law. Perez Diaz argues that Scottish thinkers knew that the actual societies might divert from the ideal path of civil society. However, they “were in search of a fully fledged community of free individuals in which a moral and emotional equilibrium would be reached through conciliation of private and public pursuits”.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Nancy Frazer, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” in C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109-142.

⁶⁷ David Lewis, “Civil Society in Non-Western Contexts: Reflections on the ‘Usefulness’ of a Concept”, Civil Society Working Paper 13, Center for Civil Society, London School of Economics, 2001, p.1. Available [online]: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29052/1/CSWP13_web.pdf [08.06.2012].

⁶⁸ Perez Diaz, p. 95.

Thus, liberal philosophers thought that conflicts within civil society are neither permanent and nor are its determining characteristics. They believed that contradiction would be replaced by cooperation which is the rational response of citizens living in a civilized society. Especially Tocqueville supported the idea that cooperation is both a requirement and an ultimate result of living in a civilized society:

As soon as common affairs are treated in common, each man notices that he is not as independent of his fellows as he used to suppose and that to get their help he must often offer his aid to them.⁶⁹

Liberal tradition presupposed that participation in voluntary CSOs is the most functional means to achieve such a cooperation. For that reason, voluntary organizations are defined as fundamental elements of civil society and ethical/rational response to the despotic state. They are presented as the major solution to the tension between individual interests and collective action. Tocqueville was one of the prominent thinkers who emphasized the significance of CSOs; rather than conceptualizing civil society as a sphere consisted of free individuals.

Feelings and opinions are renewed, the heart is enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another... [T]hese influences are reduced almost to nothing in democratic countries; they must therefore be artificially created, and only associations can do that... If men are to remain civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of conditions spreads.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Tocqueville, Alexis de, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence. Edited by J. P. Mayer. New York: Perennial Library, 1988, p. 510.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 515, 517.

Thus, associations are rendered as key elements to assure participation and empowerment of and mutual-help among individuals within civil society.⁷¹ According to Tocqueville, only through participation in such organizations, the individuals could go beyond being passive subjects of power and become active “citizens”.⁷² Habermas even expands the scope of the voluntary organizations and classify them as solutions to both public problems and their private resonances. These organizations can be established in the form of “churches, cultural associations, sports clubs and debating societies... independent media, academics, groups of concerned citizens, grassroots initiatives, and organizations of gender, race and sexuality, ... occupational associations, political parties and labor unions”.⁷³ According to Habermas all these organizations function “for the public to set in motion a critical process of public communication”.⁷⁴

As can be observed, the liberal literature on civil society is mainly established on the basis of cooperation and communication. Even if liberal thinkers were aware of the conflicts of interest, they believed that these conflicts were soluble within the pluralistic atmosphere of civil society through interaction. They characterized only one type of indispensable and necessary conflict – the one between the civil society and state. Once the former manages to limit the latter and eliminate the threat of despotism, it is believed that the diverse interests will meet in harmony thanks to the principles of equality before

⁷¹ Fisher, p. 442.

⁷² For discussions about linkage of citizenship to associational participation see Tocqueville’s further comments on associations. De Tocqueville, pp. 189-194.

⁷³ Habermas, Jürgen. “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”. In *Habermas and Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun. Cambridge (Mass:MIT Press, 1992), qtd in Flycbjerg, 210.

⁷⁴ Habermas, Jürgen. “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”. In *Habermas and Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun. Cambridge (Mass:MIT Press, 1992), p. 452, qtd. in Gençoğlu Odabaşı, p. 67.

law, morality which determines the functioning principles of civil society, and rationality which would lead individuals to understand that it is in their interest to cooperate.

However, liberal theory does not provide a detailed analysis of the intra-society relations which shelter antagonism and/or hostility. It systematically excludes the micro resistances (within society) which are not defined in terms of resisting the state. “[T]he cultural and normative underpinnings of civil society itself were thought to be relatively given and unproblematic”; thus, the effects of domination were not taken into account.⁷⁵ This tradition overemphasizes the public sphere as a mechanism of confronting the inequalities and domination that are stemming from the state and attributes a predetermined, universal characteristic to the civil society actors as if they would act in the same way under any circumstances.

This optimism of liberal theory is questioned by recent political theorists. Writers such as Chambers, Kopstein, and Fiorina criticized the former theories for not paying attention to the fact that there might be forms of participation in the civil society which undermine democracy instead of assuring it. In other words, they emphasized that CSOs are not always already appropriate means for cooperation since some of them might have “beliefs, creed, agenda, ideology, or platform” that are “incompatible with a belief of equal moral consideration”. However, these are also liberal critiques of liberal tradition which lack the capacity to go beyond the latter and deconstruct it in the light of above mentioned problems. They take an all-encompassing morality and liberal

⁷⁵ Chet Meeks, “Civil Society and the Sexual Politics of Difference”, *Sociological Theory* 19, no. 3 (November 2001), p. 332.

democracy for granted as virtuous characteristics of living in a civilized society. Accordingly, they only point out that there might be certain organizations which promote hatred instead of cooperation; thus divert from the ideal liberal democratic path. Thus they maintain the predetermined “good” nature of civil society while warning that there are also civic associations which are “bad” in their nature.⁷⁶

However, as Flyvbjerg brilliantly asserts, human beings might be “more complex than Habermas’s *homo democraticus*”.⁷⁷ Neither the civil society organizations nor individual actors within the public sphere have pre-given and fixed identities.

People know how to be, at the same time, tribal and democratic, dissidents and patriots, experts at judging how far a democratic constitution can be bent and used in non-democratic ways for personal and group advantage.⁷⁸

As long as such complexities of current civil societies are considered, it can be concluded that civil society does not essentially situate itself as a critique of government and the very use of “rights” and “equality” notions might serve to violation of these principles. This is not to say that CSOs always act so as to endanger pluralism within the society. Nor does it mean that there exists a perfect liberal civil society and there are certain organizations which always serve to “good” ends while there are others which are in service of destroying democracy. I rather argue that civil society and its elements cannot be regarded as unified entities with predefined characteristics and goals. It is a site which is productive of different identities and practices, as well as resistances. As

⁷⁶ Simone Chambers, Jeffrey Kopstein, “Bad Civil Society”, *Political Theory* 29, no. 6, (December 2001) pp. 837-865; Morris P Fiorina. 1999. Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement. Available [online]: <http://www.stanford.edu/~mfiorina/Fiorina%20Web%20Files/DarkSide.pdf> [22.06.2012].

⁷⁷ Flyvbjerg, p. 217.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

much as it can be a ground for exclusion and discrimination; it can also be one which produces unexpected horizontal relations between its internal elements. Thus, in order to develop an understanding of such a complexity, it is required to add new notions (which are systematically opted out by the liberal theories) to the civil society debate, such as context, negotiation, production of subjectivities, antagonism, conflict, abjection and alliance. In other words, it is worth discussing the civil society as a site of power relations, as Foucault concludes.

Theory of Foucault as a Critique of Liberal Notion of Civil Society

Michel Foucault does not specifically theorize about civil society. Nevertheless, a Foucauldian re-conceptualization of the notion is a fruitful one for deconstructing the liberal civil society theory. Such an analysis of civil society provides one with the tools (theoretical propositions, as Foucault names them) which liberal tradition leaves without answers; such as the non-fixed character of the relations within civil society as well as those with the state, a contextual focus, effects of power relations, possibility of negotiation, exclusion, abjection and resistances.

To begin with, a Foucauldian analysis requires an understanding that no entity is free from power relations. Neither is civil society exempt from the effects of power since “power relations are rooted deep inside the social nexus”.⁷⁹ Thus, “a society without

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power” in Faubian, ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, V.3* (NY: The New Press, 1977).

power relations can only be an abstraction”.⁸⁰ This does not mean that there is a fundamental form of power which regulates every single aspect of social relations. Foucault rather refers to the very possibility of “action on action of others” makes power circulate in each and every relationship within society in different forms.⁸¹ In order to develop a full-fledged understanding of civil society based on power relations, it is worth revisiting Foucault’s theory of power in more detail.

Foucauldian Notion of Power

To be precise, with Foucault, I claim that power neither refers to state institutions which demand obedience of citizens, nor to a regime of repression. He defines power:

as the multiplicity of force relations [...]; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another; and lastly, as strategies, in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of law, in the various social hegemonies.⁸²

Such a notion of power does not necessarily refer to destructive relations of force which stem from a definite “powerful” source, as the form of (state) power which is characterized by liberal paradigm. In order to comprehend power, Foucault suggests analyzing it from the perspective of power relations which harbors struggles and

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 343.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.345.

⁸² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 92-93.

resistances which belongs to everyday life.⁸³ Significantly, these struggles do not aim at attacking an “institution of power, or group, or elite”.⁸⁴ They, rather, are formed against a form of power which turns individuals into subjects. Thus, power is by definition relational and multi-dimensional. As an effect of the relations of power, individuals become the subjects of discourses such as biology, sexuality, madness, illness and so on.⁸⁵ Discourses on the other hand, determine what can these subjects do, say or think.⁸⁶ Put differently, while power creates individuals or groups as the subjects of discourses, discourses determine the possible subjectivities of and the relations among the subjects; thus the positions that the subjects adopt in the relations of power. Since discourses are not continuous, they are productive of new subjectivities, new types of relations and different objects to speak about none of which have pre-established characteristics.

Society as a Regime of Power

According to Foucault, society should also be conceived as a regime of power/knowledge. Thus, it is also productive of “goods, desires, individuals and collective identities”,⁸⁷ as well as, subjects and norms by which these subjects live. However, as opposed to the claims of liberal theory, these norms are not established as a

⁸³ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, pp. 329, 331.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 331.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 326-331.

⁸⁶ A detailed discussion of discourses will be provided in Chapter IV.

⁸⁷ Michael Hardt, “The Withering of Civil Society”, *Social Text* 45 (Winter, 1995), p. 34

result of intrinsic democratic values such as egalitarianism, pluralism, cooperation and freedom. On the contrary, every norm is a power structure which affects relations within the sphere in which they circulate. In the civil society they function as “rules of judgment” which bring about a liberal “order” to the society as Hobbes theorized.⁸⁸

Taking the civil society as a site of power constitutes a direct challenge to the major propositions of the liberal civil society theory, starting with the strict boundary between the state and civil society. From the perspective of Foucault such a classification of power as a ‘possession’ of the sovereign refers only to a single mechanism of power which Foucault classifies as juridico-normative power. This type of power is not capable of explaining complex relations in the modern/neo-liberal era because it leaves out other forms of power, which function at micro levels and have significant effects on the practices and discourses. Differently put, he refuses the “contractarian illusion that power can be made visible, localized, and restricted to the political state whose boundaries are clearly delimited by the rights of juridical subject”.⁸⁹

In the first volume of *History of Sexuality* Foucault identifies three specific mechanisms of power, which function at different levels, target different objects and have different effects. These are sovereign power, disciplinary power and regulatory (bio) power. All these mechanisms of power are intrinsic to the functioning of civil society. Despite their characteristic differences, these types of power do not necessarily exclude one another but they may be incorporated into one another. Depending on the context, different mechanisms of power can interpenetrate, affecting instances in which

⁸⁸ Can, p. 39.

⁸⁹ Cohen and Arato, p. 260.

the supposed boundary between the state and civil society is blurred and their practices coincide for being produced by the same discourses.

Understanding Power in a Plural Way

The “sovereign power”, which is identified as the despotic state by the liberals, resides in the king, the ancient father figure who had the right to decide on the lives of his subjects which are the objects of this type of power. The means of exercising his right over life is taking lives of the subjects or letting them live.⁹⁰ The main functioning mechanism of sovereign power is the law which was codified as a punishment mechanism that enabled the sovereign to take lives. To put it more clearly, this type of power “was the juridical form of power – the right of a ruler to seize things, time, bodies... life of subjects... that was codified and generalized in classical political philosophy – a model that remained essentially *unaltered when the ‘king’s head’ was displaced from sovereign state*”.⁹¹ This ancient form of power remained in the nation-state thanks to its interminglence with disciplinary institutions and regulatory power which incorporated and transformed the juridical power, as well as the juridical subject.

A further form of power that Foucault mentions is disciplinary power - which is differentiated from juridical power on the ground of its functioning principle. The object of this form of power is not subjects any more. Rather, it functions at the level of

⁹⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, pp. 135-137.

⁹¹ Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, “Biopower Today”, *BioSocieties* (2006), p. 196, My emphasis.

individual bodies with the aim of training them and “making” them.⁹² It is embodied in the institutions such as the school, barracks, hospitals, etc. This power mechanism separates and differentiates its objects by the instruments such as “examination which combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of normalizing judgement”.⁹³ Disciplines create effects of norms rather than juridical ones. The individual, reduced to a single “case” by disciplinary techniques, becomes an object of knowledge. In this manner, s/he is corrected and predisposed towards the norm or excluded for not fitting into it.⁹⁴ In other words, disciplines separate the abnormal from the normal and try to fix the latter in order to make it conform to the norm.⁹⁵ It is worth noting here that what disciplinary power does is not *normalization*. The prerequisite of disciplinary strategies is the norm, rather than normal and abnormal. Thus, it creates effects of *normation*. Hierarchical relations between the normal and abnormal follow this normation process. In this way, disciplinary institutions create new types of political subjects whose subjectivities cannot only be explained through the rights and liberties discourse of juridical power. As opposed to juridical power, disciplinary power as such does not work “from outside but from within, not at the level of an entire society but at

⁹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 170 - 195.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 184.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the College de France 1977 – 78* (London: Palgrave-Mac Millan, 2007), p. 57.

the level of detail, and not by constraining individuals and their actions but producing them”.⁹⁶

Despite its significance for explaining certain dynamics of civil society; the disciplinary power is not sufficient to analyze its complexities either. In order to develop a satisfactory understanding of complex dynamics of civil society we have to discuss a third form, bio-power, which incorporates former power mechanisms. Historically bio-power is the most recent form of power. Thanks to the “birth of bio-politics”, according to Foucault, in the late eighteenth century, power relations turned into mechanisms of regulation which work neither at the level of subjects nor of bodies; but at the level of population as a whole. In this way, as Deleuze argues, the institutions have lost their privilege to control.⁹⁷ Even though institutions might be the most visible form of deployment of power, they are not its primary sources⁹⁸. We witness more fluid networks of power and resistance.⁹⁹

This new power which first emerged in the West “exerts a positive influence on life, which endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations”.¹⁰⁰ The aim of bio-power, as opposed to

⁹⁶ Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics”, *The American Political Science Review* 85, no.1 (March, 1991), p. 90.

⁹⁷ Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, *October* 59, (Winter, 1991), pp. 3-7 qtd. in Hardt, p. 35.

⁹⁸ Michael Hardt, “The Withering of Civil Society”, p. 35.

⁹⁹ Deleuze qtd. in Rabinow and Rose, p. 198.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p.137. At this point it is worth noting that historical narrative of Foucault might sometimes have flaws. Thus, it is not possible to refer an exact era in which bio-power emerged.

formerly used techniques of disciplinary power, is not to dominate these groups but to protect the normal population by exposing the deviant to the risk of death.¹⁰¹ Such a technique is enabled through the replacement of anatomo-politics of human body with a bio-politics of human race which functions through statistical terms that define the ratio of births to deaths, the diseases, etc. It does not intervene at the level of individual since it does not aim modification or *normation*. “It intervenes at the level of generality”.¹⁰² This type of power establishes security mechanisms to retain the random element (in terms of statistical capacity for representing the normal distribution of population) in the population and protecting it from the “internal dangers”. In this way it optimizes and regularizes its objects.¹⁰³ In other words, biopolitics statistically sets a normal and defines non-standard deviations from this normal. Thus, it refers to a *normalization* process which does not exclude disciplinary normation but functions differently. Through this *modus operandi* death is disqualified by celebrating life.

What is at stake here is no longer the existence of a sovereign in juridical terms but the “biological existence of a population”.¹⁰⁴ It aims at protecting the lives, which are worth to be protected, through regulation and normalization. For realizing this objective, it does not necessarily need the institutions. For that reason, by definition, it is a type of power which can be pinpointed at every level of social, political and economic relations (at the ‘sub-state level’ in Foucault’s terms), since no institution has the

¹⁰¹ Foucault, Michel. “17 March 1976 lecture.” In *Society Must Be Defended*, Michel Foucault (London, Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 239-263.

¹⁰² Ibid., 246.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 247, 249.

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 137.

monopoly over power. In this respect, as Rabinow and Rose argue, non-state entities can play “a key role in bio-political struggles and strategies”.¹⁰⁵ Yet, these struggles do not necessarily have to be conducted against the state. On the contrary, they can be conducted in cooperation with it. Within the discursive framework of bio-power, subjects are reproduced as the protectors of the values which assure the security of the normal. These new actors of bio-politics do not only define themselves through the discourse of rights and freedoms any more. They are defined through discourses such as ‘sacredness of lives’, ‘health’, ‘security’ and ‘protection’.

In accordance with this subject formation societal actors assume a role in the process of optimizing life, normalizing it and making the population live, as the institutions do, for their practices are effects of the same discourses. Thus, from the perspective of bio-politics the assumed boundary and essential antagonism of the state institution and the civil society proves to be an invalid one. As opposed to juridical power, it is everywhere. Since it comes “from below... there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between the rulers and ruled”.¹⁰⁶ In this respect, Foucault avoids the term civil society on purpose since he “hold[s] that the theoretical opposition between the state and the civil society which traditional political theory belabours is not very fruitful”.¹⁰⁷ This does not mean that the state and the civil society collaborate all the time. However, it means that the state and the society are interpenetrated in complex

¹⁰⁵ Rabinow and Rose, p. 203.

¹⁰⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, trans. R. J. Goldstein and J. Cascaito (New York: Semiotext, 1991), qtd in Can, p. 33.

ways. Even though the state is the manifestation of centralization of bio-power, it is not the only actor. Organizational and non-organizational actors of civil society, whose actions and inactions do coincide with those of the state, can also assume a significant role in bio-politics. As long as the actors of the state and those of civil society are speaking from within the same discursive formations, it is not surprising that they stand as collaborating parties rather than conflicting ones. In this respect, the “non-liberal” practices, of the CSOs, which deviate from the liberal ideal are not exceptional phenomena. On the contrary, the unequal relations of antagonism, discrimination and abjection are rooted in the structure of social body, as Foucault asserts.

These characteristics of power which turned out to be more complex phenomena with the birth of bio-politics, should be considered in relation with the governmentalization of the state. Foucault argues that civil society is neither a “natural given” nor an ideological construct. It rather stands as a governmental technology.¹⁰⁸ Put differently, he characterizes society as a ground for governmentalization which simply means the ‘conduct of conduct’ and which cannot be explained through individual institutions such as the state. Living in society is a way of life that “some can act on the actions of others”. Thus, state is no longer the main, visible actor which ‘uses’ power on the society. Yet, it does not mean that it disappeared. Through governmentalization, the former functions of the sovereign are transferred to the micro-units of government. This process creates an effect of responsabilization or maximization of “the forces of population both collectively and individually”.¹⁰⁹ In this way people assume

¹⁰⁸ Michel Foucault, *Resume des cours*, qtd. in Can, p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

responsibility for their own security and for fighting against such problems as health, poverty, etc.

Rather than having a uniform level of security provided by the state, skilled and self-reliant individuals may now work with their peers in the 'community' (arguably the voluntaristic and enterprising successor to the discredited 'social'), make arrangements with 'their' police to provide the services they require, and purchase the level of commodified security they deem appropriate to their specific needs.¹¹⁰

Thus, from the perspective of governmentality, civil society cannot be characterized as an entity which is necessarily in conflict with the state due to the former's power-limiting role. On the contrary, governmentality draws attention to the significant degree of interpenetration between the two entities. Governmentalization basically relies on the interpenetration among "the government of ourselves, the government of others and the government of the state"¹¹¹. All these, according to Foucault, are linked and internal to both state and society.¹¹² Thus, analysis of relations of state and civil society refers to a triangle: "sovereignty-discipline-government, which has its primary target the population, and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security".¹¹³ From this perspective, the separation of the state and the society is a tactical one which aims to determine and increase the capacity of the state "which make possible the continual

¹¹⁰ O'Malley, Pat. "Risk and Responsibility." In *Foucault and Political Reason*, edited by A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 199 – 202, qtd. in Can, p. 46.

¹¹¹ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), p.2..

¹¹² Michel Foucault, "Governmentality" in G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1991), p. 91.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on”.¹¹⁴

The deconstruction of the “state versus civil society” dichotomy by introduction of micro-level power relations to the discussion also challenges other basic propositions of liberal theory - such as the possibility of overcoming the opposition between individual and universal interests through cooperation. Power relations are never fixed. So are the subjectivities and relations that are produced by them. This means that individuals or groups do not have permanent and context-free interests. Their practices with regard to others are not predetermined. They are discursively shaped depending on the context of encounters. In this respect, conceiving civil society actors as entities which have essential characteristics reduce them to ones that are fixed and generalizable; and miss the contextual shifts in their practices.¹¹⁵ Thus, even though they might be cooperating under certain circumstances, they might also be the very subjects who contribute to abjection of certain others. Flyvbjerg concludes that since “power is always present” it is meaningless for liberal philosophers “to operate with a concept of communication in which power is absent”.¹¹⁶

This position also negates an understanding of voluntary organizations which always act in favor of rights, equalities and freedoms. First of all, these liberal ideas are not the only norms which CSOs struggle to protect. In actual civil societies “the struggle was carried out from case to case and utilized arguments and means which worked in

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

¹¹⁵ Fisher, p. 442.

¹¹⁶ Flyvbjerg, p. 216.

specific socio-historical context”.¹¹⁷ It is true that power produces its own break down points/resistances.

[I]f we understand the ubiquity of power as an expression of the fact that the subject always exists in social context that influences his agency, then we must allow that any regime of power will provide him with resources for challenging social norms as well as pressures to follow them.¹¹⁸

However, the resistances, as effects of power relations, cannot be essentialized as limiting the power of the state. This might be one of their aims; but not the only one. In addition, aim and ultimate effect might not coincide. Micro-level resistances against the effects of subjectivation within society should also be taken into consideration. In addition, as power has multiple sources and cannot be limited to one single institution or group; resistance cannot be intrinsic to a single ‘powerless’ group or entity (such as liberal CSOs). “[R]elations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution”.¹¹⁹ The subject of the discourse might re-utilize and reverse it; thus change her position in the distribution of power relations. Thus, there are no constant ‘victims of power’ as there are no permanent power holders. The position of the subjects is circumstantial and context dependent. Groups that have been marginalized in one particular social context may actually become part of hegemonic power relations in other contexts. Accordingly, there is not a single form of resistance such as that of civil society against state. To the contrary, what is at stake is the plurality of resistances which relies on the discourses and

¹¹⁷ Flyvbjerg, p. 219.

¹¹⁸ Mark Bevir, “Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy”, *Political Theory* 27, no. 1, (February 1999), p. 71.

¹¹⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 99.

the rules of their formation.¹²⁰ In this respect, resistances cannot be generalized and essentialized as egalitarian and libertarian forms of struggle. Timothy Mitchell draws attention to the fact that the deployment of strategies of resistance might also be modeled on disciplinary institutions.¹²¹ In other words, resistances might also contain relations of power rather than being mere attempts to limit Power.

Secondly, even if CSOs claim to be struggling for “rights”, the rights discourse per se can be an exclusionary one. This can be observed in the interpenetration of discourses of bio-politics (i.e. health, survival of the population) with those of juridical power (i.e. rights, freedoms). In this way – in Agamben’s terms - an “exclusionary inclusion” is assured.¹²² Thus, the struggle may leave certain groups out depending on the context and identity of ‘others’.

The theory of sovereignty, and the organization of a legal code centered upon it, have allowed a system of right to be superimposed upon the mechanisms of discipline in such a way as to conceal its actual procedures, the elements of domination inherent in its techniques, and to guarantee to everyone, by virtue of sovereignty of the state, the exercise of his proper sovereign rights”.¹²³

On the other hand, the very same relations of power can be productive of resistances which points to horizontal relations and diverse types of cooperation among groups. In *Frames of War* Judith Butler mainly considers this possibility, referring to unusual

¹²⁰ Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse” in G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1991), p. 55.

¹²¹ Timothy Mitchell, p. 93.

¹²² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹²³ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972) , p. 105, qtd. in Cohen and Arato, p. 262.

“alliances”. She argues that the precariousness of some people or groups has been maximized by social and political institutions, while that of others have been minimized throughout history. In this way, claims Butler, certain populations became the target of exploitation by rendering their lives less than lives, “destructible” and “ungrievable”; thus, they have been deemed “lose-able”.¹²⁴ She names this process “differential allocation of precarity” which refers to differential exposure of certain populations to injury violence and death.¹²⁵ For this very reason, Butler suggests that a strategy of resistance which challenge this discrepancy, questioning “how existing norms allocate recognition differentially” rather than asking “how to include more people within existing norms”.¹²⁶ According to her, picturing subjects as caught up in pre-established cultural conflicts and envisaging certain subjects in a never-ending conflict lack the capacity to provide an analysis of and a solution for precarity.¹²⁷ Instead, she proposes that forming alliances or coalitions, which do not necessarily aim at finding a ground for reconciliation of differences but have “overlapping aims” and are built around “active antagonisms”, might achieve such aims.

At this point, it is worth highlighting that Butlerian coalitions significantly differ from the liberal idea of cooperation. The problem to which Butler is offering solutions is not simply a problem of co-existence but of mobilization against arbitrary forms of

¹²⁴ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London, New York: Verso, 2009), pp. 2, 31.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

violence.¹²⁸ She aims at uncovering the methods by which the power creates a “differential subject formation” and mobilize subjects such as immigrants and sexual progressives¹²⁹ against each other.¹³⁰ In other words, she focuses on the possibility of presumably “improbable” alliances between groups that seem to be antagonistic given their ideological inclinations. She supports this argument giving examples of working alliances such as ones between Muslim immigrants and LGBTs.¹³¹ However, the reverse may also be true. Societal groups which suffer from unequal relations of power may fail to form horizontal relations and contribute to marginalization of one another because power:

[M]ust also master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counterpower that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions – anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions.¹³²

Given the complexity of power relations and the multiple possibilities they create, framing civil society and its sub-level actors as if they are free from relations of power would be fixing them to a certain (hypothetical) moment in history. Such an analysis would only partially include the characteristics of a limited number of actors acting in line with a static/universal norms structure. It can be argued that this systematic denial of

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 32, 162.

¹²⁹ None of the segments of society can be deemed essentially “progressive” or “backward”. No group possesses democratic traits by virtue of the ideas that it holds. How groups are positioned vis-à-vis each other according to power differentials activated in society is what marginalizes them or casts them as “expendable”.

¹³⁰ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 32.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 146.

¹³² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 219.

the multiplicity of relational possibilities is one of the major gaps within liberal perception of civil society which requires re-conceptualization.

CHAPTER III

CIVIL SOCIETY AS A BIO-POLITICAL SPHERE

This chapter aims to argue that civil society does not necessarily function as a mechanism of checks and balances that attempts to limit the state actions and bringing about multilateralism. Nor the groups within civil society cooperate all the time. On the contrary, under certain circumstances the civil society actors cooperate with the state as it can be observed in the case of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate in Turkey. Following the discursive strategies and practices that took place within this debate, I attempt to analyze *how* the practices of the state and the civil society can be concerted regarding LGBTs. The main arguments that will be elaborated below are that different mechanisms of power are intrinsic elements of functioning of civil society; and, their context dependent interpenetration points to the moments in which the supposed boundary between the state and civil society is blurred. The coincidence of their practices relies on the fact that subjectivities of both actors are effects of the same discursive formations.

An analysis of civil society as a site of power requires an illustration of the complexities of the relations of power, which affect subject formations and positions in the civil society, in terms of contingency and contextuality. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective of civil society, this chapter discusses *how* the relations among its actors are formed. Even though the debate is framed in terms of religion-based arguments, the

simple dichotomy of Islam vs. homosexuality is not capable of explaining the variety of approaches in the debate.¹³³ Nor can it be satisfactorily illustrated from within the liberal paradigm which overemphasizes consensus and cooperation. If we analyze the issue only from the perspective of cooperation and consensus we would exclude the encounters which disable cooperation between certain groups that are struggling against inequalities within the same system. Such a method would automatically undermine the conflicts and power relations which take place at such moments. In addition, it would not answer *how* civil society actors contribute to the “victimization” of other communities, allying with the state.

It is required to approach the issue from a perspective which has a potential to illuminate the structural factors which affect the relations of power within civil society. From this viewpoint, a detailed discussion of bio-power’s functioning within the context of Turkish civil society might be revealing. Such an analytical path sheds light on the complexities within civil society, which is a sphere dominantly idealized with equality and dialogue while in practice it might create effects of abjection. In fact, the recent “homosexuality debate” in Turkey exemplifies the idea that civil society actors can also be the subjects and objects of bio-politics; thus it demonstrates that the dynamics of civil society are more complicated than expected by liberal thinkers.

¹³³ The explanatory capacity of “Islam vs. homosexuality” dichotomy and variety of responses of the civil society actors will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Celebration of Life by Civil Society

The debate of “Islam vs. homosexuality” reveals that the very mechanisms of bio-politics can be observed in the structure of the civil society. Since the same discursive formations affect the practices of institutions and societal actors, the latter might also be influential in the process of optimizing life, normalizing it and making the population live. Thus, from the perspective of bio-politics, the assumed boundary and essentialized antagonism between the state and the civil society ceases to be a valid one. Even though state is a central actor of bio-power, it is not the only one. Individual and organizational actors of civil society do also have a significant role in the processes of normalization.

Since the discourses which determine “what a life is”, “what is worth to be protected” affects the conducts of both civil society and state, the acts of the former might not differentiate from those of the latter. The active role of civil society as an actor of bio-politics can be observed in the incidence of the open letter written by Islamic CSOs and addressed to the former minister Kavaf. The discursive mechanisms mobilized within the text perfectly exemplify the regulatory power’s core functioning principles such as celebration of life, responsabilization of civil society, incorporation of former models of power and exclusionary effects of supposedly egalitarian norms.

The letter, as a whole, comprises the celebration of human life and a guideline for its very protection from being ruined because of homosexual relationships. The signatory CSOs’ main objective is to re-emphasize the necessity to take action for enabling the survival of human species:

Acceptance of “homosexuality”, which is against fitrat, as a “sexual orientation” and legitimization of its spread by presenting it as if it is among the natural choices pactly mean accepting the extinction of human kind [...] In this respect, to accept this normal(!) preference is as legitimate as accepting to exterminate life throughly.¹³⁴

Here, homosexuality is taken into consideration not only from the perspective of religion. It is problematized as a matter of life or death which refers to the extinction of the whole human species. However, before characterizing homosexuality as an internal danger which might cause the extinction of the human species, the Islamic CSOs first disqualify the arguments which approach homosexuality as a “sexual orientation” rather than as a “choice”. In this way, homosexuality is classified as an erroneous choice rather than a state of being which might be representative of (at least a portion) of *normal* human population. Thus, non-heterosexual relations are framed as illegitimate for “annihilating life itself”.

Following the classification of homosexuality as a “threat”, the Islamic CSOs emphasize the importance of life and demand its protection against homosexuality which is a deliberate “betrayal” to the life due to its potential to eliminate procreation:

We also think that homosexuality which is supported by lobbies/mentalities/entities which mess with the human generation and the future of the world is an anomaly. Not accepting homosexuality which threatens the security of the generation and the future of human kind as an anomaly, will cause a lack of demand for treatment/therapy from the people who suffer from this problem and

¹³⁴ Özgün Duruş. 22 March 2010. Available [online]: <http://www.ozgundurus.com/Haber/Guncel/22032010/Islami-STKlardan-Kavafa-acik-mektup.php> [22.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

to the spread of this phenomenon. To legitimize this issue and accept it as a natural phenomenon is a betrayal against the life itself.¹³⁵

As can be observed, not only LGBTTs themselves but also the ones who “legitimate” homosexuality as a “normal” state of being are framed as dangers which threaten the “future of humanity” and the “world”. The signatories grounded this argument on the preoccupation that the “legitimization” of homosexuality would result in making it a widespread phenomenon and eliminate the possibility of “normalizing” LGBTTs due to the fact that LGBTT individuals would refuse to be cured.

From this perspective, one can argue that the aim of the signatories was not only to support the minister’s statement. They also wanted to publicize their concerns about the existence and actions of a group of people who pose a threat to the rest of the population. Above all, the document which was addressed to the minister was an open letter; thus, it was written with the aim of attracting public attention. The representatives of the signatory organizations gathered in front of the Sirkeci post office in the presence of press members and the public. The letter was read in the form of a press statement. They gathered there to inform all believers about the problems caused by homosexuals and invited them to oppose homosexuality for the sake of the continuation of life.

*It is normal for Muslims - despite the fact that Islam is a religion for peace and toleration, both norms have limits - and people with other religious beliefs to stand against what they believe is immoral and sinful. In fact it is their responsibility and this is not only the responsibility of Muslims but also of all humanity. Therefore, legalization and legitimization of something that is immoral and sinful can never be supported.*¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

¹³⁶ Ibid. (Authors’ emphasis). See Appendix for the original quote.

What is at stake is not only the signatories' own conducts but there is also a more comprehensive goal with regard to the conducts of the population. The whole argument of the text is built on the claim that fighting against homosexuality – which is both a “disgrace” and “sin” - is among the “responsibilities” of Islamic CSOs. However, the responsibility does not only belong to the signatories; it is delegated to the whole faithful community (including the members of other religions). All believers are invited to act in the same way as the signatories do and stand up against the degeneration of the society by homosexual relations. In this respect, they were not only asking for protection from the state. They were also adopting the role of the protectors of the human life.

The Islamic CSOs are aware of the fact that this new guardian role contradicts the discourse of “Islamic tolerance” since they adopt this position at the expense of LGBTs' rights and equality claims. However, they justify their practices by arguing that norms should have limits; and in this case the limit is the continuation of human life. On this ground, the religious norm of “toleration” is replaced with a bio-political one: “survival of human species”. This points to the fact that, similar to subjectivities and relations among subjects, norms are not universal or pre-determined values. They can be transformed and even replaced by other norms depending on the context and object of the discourse.

This very moment demonstrates that techniques and discourse of bio-power are intrinsic to civil society not because it allies itself to the state institutions or actors. The reason behind CSOs actions is that human life and its protection matters for these organizations, just as they are of great concern for the state. Thus, the boundary between

the state and the civil society is far from being explanatory in terms of the relations of CSOs with the state. However, this is not because they provide direct verbal and practical support for one another but because their acts are determined through the very same discursive practices, in this case those of bio-politics. In fact, the Islamic CSOs who signed the letter underline that they got involved in the Kavaf debate due to the fact that it is a “societal” issue:

We felt the need of writing this letter after the discussions and developments that have taken place following your statement that “homosexuality is a sickness” with respect to the societal importance of the issue.¹³⁷

The interesting point worthy of attention here is that homosexuality is neither characterized as a private matter which concerns LGBTs nor as a strictly political issue which concerns the state. It is problematized as an issue which has a “societal dimension”. Put differently, homosexuality is classified as a sickness which might have negative effects on society. Thus, the boundaries of public and private are redefined through the notion of “necessity”. It can be argued that the assumed responsibility of Islamic CSOs for fighting against homosexuality stems from this necessity which can be considered as an effect of governmentalization of “societal health”.

Rabinow and Rose argue that bio-power is productive of new kinds of struggles (as that of Islamic CSOs against homosexuality, in this case) “in the name of ‘claims to right to life’” as it turns life into a political object.¹³⁸ With the birth of bio-politics, new

¹³⁷ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

¹³⁸ Rabinow and Rose, p. 196.

groups and individuals who “define their *citizenship* in terms of rights and obligations to life, health and cure” emerged.¹³⁹ Life became the major concern of governmental strategies as well as the strategies of welfare and security.

The mobilization of security as a technique of bio-power should draw more attention for the purposes of this thesis. Foucault argues that with the purpose of optimization of a certain way of life “security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in the population of living beings”.¹⁴⁰ This randomness refers to the statistical capacity of representing the normal distribution curve. However, it is not a constant random but a contingent and context dependent one. In the context of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, this random element is determined as the normal, healthy and heterosexual individual whose security needs to be assured. However, from the perspective of bio-power it would be misleading to consider ‘security’ as monopolized by institutions. On the contrary, as an effect of governmentality individuals assume responsibility for their own security. “Rather than having a uniform level of security provided by the state, skilled and self-reliant individuals may now work with their peers in the ‘community’ ..., make arrangements with ‘their’ police to provide the services they require”.¹⁴¹ The letter incident may well be regarded as an example of responsibilization of civil society for the sake providing its own ‘security’ and ‘protection’. With the letter addressed to Kavaf, Islamic CSOs take the responsibility for

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 203.

¹⁴⁰ Foucault, “Society Must Be Defended”, p. 246.

¹⁴¹ O’Malley, qtd. in Can, p. 46.

the protection of the “future generations”, which also means protection of sexual intercourse that has procreative capacity.

On the other hand, they do not plan to secure this protection alone and invite the juridical state and its disciplinary institutions to share the responsibility - which is an attitude that draws attention to another characteristic of bio-power: incorporation of the former models of power. By the letter, the related CSOs primarily called upon the juridical power and emphasized the necessity of legal bans on homosexuality as a precaution to prevent “spread” of homosexuality:

In many Islamic countries, homosexuality is illegal and the aim of this prohibition is to protect the human generation and to prevent this anomaly from becoming widespread.¹⁴²

It is true that homosexual relations are legally banned in a number of countries and not only in Muslim ones. It should be noted here that the legal sanctions in some of these countries are not limited to imprisonment. A significant number of legal systems such as those of Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen sentence homosexuals to death.¹⁴³ Thus, the results of legal sanctions on homosexuality are in significant contrast with the discourse of protection of life. However, signatory CSOs kept a blind eye on these examples and presented legal prohibition as a requirement for protecting “human generation”.

¹⁴² Özgün Duruş. 22 March 2010. See Appendix for the original quote.

¹⁴³ Kaos GL, “Dünyada Eşcinsel Hakları”, *Kaos GL: Eşcinsel Kültür/Yaşam Dergisi* 103 (Kasım-Aralık, 2008), pp. 28-29.

In addition to invoking juridico-normative power, the bio-political discourse of Islamic CSOs also incorporate the disciplinary power. In fact, they consider mobilization of the disciplinary institutions of the state as “of vital importance” for the protection of the population:

In order to prevent the increase in homosexuality among future generations, we should adopt the right attitude with respect to the health and education policies... The spread of this problematic phenomenon which is presented as a legitimate and normal one in various ways, with various materials and in various environments leads to disruption in the family structure and the extermination of the generation. It is required to provide easy access to any kinds of treatment for the people who have this problem and prevent the spread of homosexuality. In order to achieve this, the policies that will be adopted by all related agencies, especially of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of State for Woman and Family, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of National Education - in cooperation with CSOs if necessary - are crucial.¹⁴⁴

Here, Islamic CSOs invite the state to develop appropriate education and health policies in order to protect the “family structure” whose corruption is equated to the destruction of “generation”. Thanks to such policies, that Foucault would have defined as disciplinary, it is expected that the “homosexual choices” among members of next generations will be reduced. In order to assure this, a meaningful list of ministries is called for duty: Ministry of Health, Ministry of State for Women and Family,¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Interior and Ministry of National Education. Thus, homosexuality is simultaneously defined as a health problem with the risk of “spreading”, as a danger which might

¹⁴⁴ Özgün Duruş. 22 March 2010. (Authors’ emphasis). See Appendix for the original quote.

¹⁴⁵ In 2011, the name of this ministry was replaced with Ministry of Family and Social Policies during the last term of AKP government.

undermine the heterosexual “family”, as an “internal” danger with concerns the police and a problem which can be eliminated through a correct “education system”. Islamic CSOs, here, do not only expect these state departments to provide a solution to the problem of homosexuality in Turkey. They also offer help if necessary; thus, they want to be a part of the solution.

In this case, the image of civil society which is willing to cooperate with the state seems to be in deep contrast with the model of civil society pictured by the liberal tradition. In fact, the above mentioned practices of Islamic CSOs demonstrate that civil society and the relations formed within it are significantly more complex and fluid. While bio-power manifests itself with the discourse of protection of the human life and population, it also indirectly produces new subjectivities which are not predicted by the liberal thinkers. The subject assumes a new form of performativity which determines the limits of what is worthy of protection. This civil society actor, who also engages into bio-politics and represents a random point (representative of normal population) on the normal curve, does not only demand protection from the state. S/he also takes action to protect the life of whole community as well as her own. I prefer to call this bio-political subject ‘offensive normal’ - offensive in terms of her enthusiasm to celebrate life and its aggressive stance regarding its protection, and normal for being heterosexual. From this perspective, it is not surprising that s/he does not hesitate to ally herself/himself with the state against the internal dangers (in Foucault’s terms) within society.

This is not to say that civil society always acts in accordance with the institutions of state. Such an argument would be as misleading as picturing civil society as the

always already anti-thesis of a notion of the state which possess power and use it on its subjects. I rather discuss that in the case of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, Islamic CSOs cooperated with the state because relations of power are rooted in the very basis of civil society. Since both supposedly antagonistic actors are created through the same discursive formations, their practices coincide. This coincidence relies on the simultaneous coincidence of the notions they aim to protect and make live such as human race, future of the next generations and family structure.

These organizations do not call for killing homosexuals despite the fact that they consider LGBTs as internal threats to the fundamentals of human life and society. Making someone die is not among the traits of bio-power. It rather determines which lives must be celebrated and protected. This categorization also demonstrates whose lives and which discourses are not worthy of protection. Thus, bio-politics of life brings about “segregation” and “social hierarchization” and assure “relations of domination” and “effects of hegemony”.¹⁴⁶

The discourses which are aimed to be protected, namely the ‘family’, ‘religion’, ‘society’ “are all normative, and susceptible to *deviation*, which all have a margin for *tolerance* and a threshold *beyond which exclusion is demanded*”.¹⁴⁷ These very discourses directly point to what is left out of the limits of protection, that is, ‘perverted sexuality’. As an effect of bio-politics of civil society, the place of the pervert is at the lowest levels of the societal hierarchy. There are other lives, those who will assure the

¹⁴⁶ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁷ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 46. (*My emphasis*)

survival of family and human species through procreation. Thus, they “should” be provided with protection in the first place.

Significance of the Object of Discourse

In this discussion, what is worth paying attention to is the critical object of bio-power: sexuality which has a specific place in the history of power relations. It is an element of power “endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies”.¹⁴⁸ Foucault asserts that sexuality symbolizes the point where body (disciplines) and the population (regulation) meet.¹⁴⁹ Accordingly, the practices of Islamic CSOs are produced through the intersection of the mechanisms of bio-power and disciplinary techniques which are enabled by the instrumentalization of sexuality by power. At this very point of intersection of bio-power and disciplinary power, the truth about the “normal” and “abnormal” is determined; so is a hierarchy established between them. The normal which is under protection and surveillance of power starts to consider the abnormal as a natural threat. With the perception of being threatened, the normal which is aligned with the norm (that is heterosexuality) demands more protection. Put differently, bio-power does not only limit itself to the decisions of the state about the

¹⁴⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁹ Foucault, “Society Must be Defended”, pp. 251-252.

sub-groups of the population. These sub-groups also act upon the bio-hierarchy and declare themselves as the ones who deserve to be protected.

In this respect, the “Islam vs homosexuality” debate cannot be sufficiently explained by the simple presumption of religious hatred against LGBTs. In order to achieve a satisfactory explanation for this debate, its actors have to be framed in the specific context of the discussions. In addition, the argument of Islamic exclusion lacks the capacity to explain the general position of Islamic CSOs as human rights activists. “Islam vs” kind of arguments are proved to be invalid, when their relations with and approaches to other supposedly antagonist groups are considered.

For instance, one can observe totally different dynamics in the relations of the Islamic CSOs with minority religious groups in Turkey. Islamic civil society actors acknowledge the hierarchy and inequality which is mostly created by the state at the expense of these populations and challenge it by cooperating with minorities. Thus, discourses and actions of Islamic civil society and the state do not coincide with regard to these populations but they do with respect to homosexuality. It can be argued that what differentiates the relations between Muslim civil society and LGBT’s from those with other minorities is the specificity of the instrument of the power which creates hierarchy between (supposedly heterosexual) Muslims and homosexuals.

MAZLUMDER’s sensitivity regarding the discrimination against religious minorities exemplifies the differential treatment to “sexual minorities”. As opposed to the organization’s actions regarding homosexuality following Kavaf’s declaration, MAZLUMDER had taken significant steps in the name of standing up against similar

declarations of state officials about other vulnerable groups. However, if we consider the issue as a matter of exclusion as a result of the Islamic doctrine, we would have expected prioritization of lives and rights of Muslims compared to the members of other religions.

For example, in 2008 Turkey witnessed a similar discriminatory declaration of another minister. The former Minister of Defense, Vecdi Gönül, publicly legitimized the discrimination against non-Muslim and non-Turkish minorities of Turkey. He asked: “Could it be the same nation-state today, if Greeks had existed in the Aegean region and Armenians in many regions of Turkey?”.¹⁵⁰ Following this declaration MAZLUMDER argued that the minister “legitimized the discrimination against different ethnicities and praised the discriminations in the past” and filed a criminal complaint against the minister.¹⁵¹

Similar discussions took place also in 2009. Following the speech of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who argued that ‘the position of religious minorities in Turkey feels like being crucified’, a number of politicians made discriminatory declarations.¹⁵² As oppose to its organizational response to the declaration of Kavaf, MAZLUMDER criticized the discrimination against the Greek Orthodox community with a press statement. They asked for equality of Sunni Muslims and religious minorities:

¹⁵⁰ Bianet. 11 November 2008. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azinliklar/110785-bakan-gonul-etnik-dinsel-temizligi-itiraf-ediyor-ders-almiyor> [22.06.2012].

¹⁵¹ Bianet. 14 November 2008. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/110862-mazlumder-bakan-gonulu-ayrimciliktan-mahkemeye-verdi> [22.06.2012].

¹⁵² Milliyet. 19 December 2009. Available [online]: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Siyaset/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetay&KategoriID=4&ArticleID=1175930&Date=20.12.2009&b=Tarihimizde%20carmih%20yok> [22.06.2012].

In contemporary democracies, it should be taken naturally and be respected to criticize those practices which violate the fundamental human rights and liberties. Our democracy, which takes the criticisms of “Sunnite/Muslim/Turks” naturally when they criticize the present order which violate human rights, should be equally tolerant to non-Muslim communities and citizens. The reactions and news which imply that the non-Muslim citizens and intellectuals, who present similar criticisms, are “traitors” remind us of many events from the past from which we have suffered a lot and worry us [...]. The “democratic value” of a statement would be controversial if it involves an expression which does not assure the fundamental rights and liberties of non-Muslim communities or threaten their freedom of expression. Therefore, it is crucial for the public authority and the government to immediately take measures about all of the discrimination issues in the country and make arrangements to guarantee the rights and liberties of non-Muslim communities and respect all types of opinions.¹⁵³

As can be observed above, MAZLUMDER - one of the most vociferous actors of the homosexuality debate - demands the equal protection of rights of other religions’ members. When the matter of question is discriminatory attitudes against religious minorities, the discourses of life, security and human generation are replaced with those of “democracy”, “rights and freedoms” and “citizenship”. Contrary to the call for duty in the case of homosexuality, the state authority is reminded that it is obliged to “respect all types of opinions” and to take the necessary steps to “eliminate the discriminations” in Turkey.

Thus, Islam *per se* does not explain the complexities of the homosexuality debate. The Islamic CSOs which define themselves as human rights organizations do not limit their rights claims to the condition of being Muslim. In this respect, they seem to

¹⁵³ Murat Çiçek. Patriğin İfade Hürriyetine Saygı Gösterilmelidir. Available [online]: <http://batman.mazlumder.org/faaliyetler/detay/basin-aciklamalari/1/patrigin-ifade-hurriyetine-saygi-gosterilmelidir/4431> [22.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

conform to the liberal ideal of voluntary organizations. However, this is not the only identity they assume. When the actors of the discussion are replaced with LGBTs, they assume a totally different identity and stop mobilizing rights discourse regarding the sexual minorities. The ‘effort’ they make to protect the lives and rights of heterosexual groups disappears as the matter of concern is homosexual relations which are the effects of “perverted sexuality”.

This dilemma points to a further distinctive character of bio-power, which is “letting die”. The effort to assure celebration of life involves decreasing the importance of certain lives and disqualification of certain deaths. Foucault asks “Given that this power’s objective is essentially to make live, how can let it die?”.¹⁵⁴ Within the framework of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate the same question can also be asked. How can an entity that serves to protect human lives and rights be homophobic at the same time? It would not be misleading to argue that the answer to this question lies at the heart of specific definitions of ‘life’, ‘human rights’, ‘family’ and ‘Islam’ in heteronormative ways.

Islam and Sexuality

At this point, it is worth paying more attention on the specific interpretation of sexuality by religion. Sexuality is also an area which is aimed to be strictly regulated by religion and it is objectivized in a way as to exemplify the interpenetration of different

¹⁵⁴ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 254.

mechanisms of power. In fact, sodomy has been fiercely condemned and classified as a grave sin for being “contrary to nature” by the discourse of religion.¹⁵⁵ When the way in which Islam approaches to sexuality is taken into consideration, it can be argued that religion assumes the role of a sovereign unity which decides about the truth about sexuality. Besides, it aims to discipline its subjects in order to make them conform to the religious norms while regulating their practices at the same time. This facilitates the objectification of homosexuality through the discourses mobilized within the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate and normalizes its condemnation by the “Muslim party” of the discussions. Despite the fact the fact that religion *per se* cannot be held responsible for the discriminations and abjection that LGBTs face, the way in which the Islamic doctrine is interpreted by the “Muslim party” of the debate demonstrates that it can be instrumentalized so as to establish hierarchical relations among the “subjects of god”.

In order to develop a detailed understanding of the way in which Islam regulates sexuality, the approach of the Directorate of Religious Affairs¹⁵⁶ in Turkey can be illuminating. *İlmihal*¹⁵⁷ which is prepared by the Directorate in order to inform

¹⁵⁵ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 38.

¹⁵⁶ The Directorate of Religious Affairs is an institution which functions under prime ministry. It is regarded to be an indispensable institution whose existence is protected by the law. Its declared mission is “to enlighten the society in the light of the true and up-to-date knowledge which depends on the fundamental sources of Islam, with the aim of meeting religious necessities and expectations of the society; to carry out the issues related to faith, worship and moral principles and to administer the worship places. Our vision is to be an effective and respectable institution which is referenced about each and every issue related to Islam, in Turkey and in the world”. See official web site of Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. Available [online]: <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/turkish/dy/Default.aspx> [10.08.2012].

¹⁵⁷ *İlmihal*, as a document is the publication of the Directorate which explains the principles of Islam to the believers. For a detailed explication of *İlmihal* see Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. Available [online]: <http://sorusor.diyamet.gov.tr/> [10.08.2012]

Muslims about the basic principles of Islam explicates the the requirements and boundaries of sexuality which is appropriate for and expected from the believers. The *Sexual Life (Cinsi Hayat)* section of İlmihal begins with the following assertion:

The maintenance of the descent of the living creatures on the earth depends on the activity of reproduction; and, this generally depends on the common activity of two different sexes, male and female.¹⁵⁸

As can be observed above, the very existence and life of living creatures depends on the capacity of reproduction which is secured only by the sexual intercourse between *two sexes*. Thus, in order to assure the continuation of human *descent*, any kind of sexual activity which does not have reproductive capacity are excluded from the sexual lives of Muslims. In this respect, the question of homosexual relations is systematically eliminated from the possibilities that are provided by the Islamic discourse. Muslims are required to act within the limits of a prescribed sexuality which is the *normal* way of *being*, in terms of conforming to their *nature*. It is clearly declared that any kind of sexual satisfaction which is contradictory to ‘normal’ sexual nature is not approved by Islam. In order to exemplify such disapproval, İlmihal refers to the tribes of Sodom and Gomorra and argues that Lut people are strongly criticized and excluded from the society for they stuck into homosexuality.¹⁵⁹

Taking these interpretations into consideration, it can be argued that the Directorate of Religious Affairs - which is the legitimate authority for speaking in the

¹⁵⁸ “Yeryüzünde canlı varlıkların soylarının devamı üreme faaliyetine, bu da genel olarak erkek ve dişi olmak üzere iki farklı cinsin ortak faaliyetine bağlıdır”, see in Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, *İlmihal II: İslam Ve Toplum*, 2006, p. 124

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 126

name of Islam in Turkey – has developed two approaches regarding homosexuality. First of all, any kind of sexual orientation is announced to be out of the limits of the normal human behavior. Secondly, despite the fact that unnatural/abnormal sexual relations are rendered as an abomination, their existence is recognized and they are subjected to punishment not only by god but also by the believers. Social exclusion of homosexuals is presented as of the fundamental principles of Islam through the specific interpretation and regulation of sexuality by the Directorate.

It is also mentioned in İlmihal that Mohammed cursed men who try to resemble to women; and women who try to resemble man and applied certain sanctions on such people.¹⁶⁰ Even to sleep in the same bed with somebody who belongs to the same sex is banned by Islam.¹⁶¹ However, the content and the severity of these *sanctions* and the consequences of not conforming to the prohibition are not clarified. Despite the fact that the regulation of sexuality and its limitation to the intercourse between male and female is justified by the “protection of life” discourse it poses a significant threat to the lives of LGBTs. They are categorized as the *abnormal* individuals who do not deserve to be treated equally; rather they are *cursed*.

It should be noted that Prophet Mohammed is regarded to be the role model of Muslims. The latter is expected to follow the doctrine and actions of the prophet. As it is declared by the Directorate, among the fundamental principles of Islam, that he cursed and sanctioned such people, his followers are required to do the same. Since the nature

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 171

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 127

of punishment deemed suitable for homosexuality is not clarified, it becomes a matter of personal and/or societal interpretation. Thus, Muslims can find a variety of sanctioning mechanisms such as insulting, physically abusing and even murdering LGBTs. In a cyclical logic these acts can be and are legitimized with the excuse of Islamic requirements. Such legitimization strategies can be observed in the arguments of a number of actors who involved into homosexuality debate. However, before delving into these discussions it is worth analyzing how the discourses of religion and bio-power correspond within the debate.

What is a Life?

To say that bio-politics celebrates life does not mean each and every life is a part of this celebration. A certain definition and practice of life is the object of modification of bio-power. In other words, the truth of life is framed in a specific way that provides power with the legitimacy to intervene. The lives which do not fit into this definition are not conceived as lives at all. “The ‘being’ of life is itself constituted through selective means; as a result, we cannot refer to this “being” outside of the operations of power”.¹⁶² As the fundamental basis of bio-power is to ensure life, it cannot blatantly risk it. Thus, “make die” can never be one of the attributes of bio-power. However, power should prevent these lives - which are not qualified as lives and which pose an internal threat to the life which is celebrated - from bringing harm to “the life”. Thus, it simply ignores

¹⁶² Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 1.

these lives and lets them end. To put it more clearly, in order to let somebody die, bio-power excludes her from the category of “human” and her life from the category of “life”.

The homosexuality debate within the Turkish civil society can well be regarded as an example of how certain lives are not considered as lives at all. The whole discourse of protecting human life systematically disregards the lives of LGBT individuals. The specific framing of life through the bio-politics of civil society creates a hierarchy between different lives. In Butler’s terms, this hierarchy points to the maximization of precariousness for some and its minimization for others.¹⁶³ This process is linked to “differential allocation” of precarity which “designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death”.¹⁶⁴ The differential allocation of precarity within Turkish civil society simultaneously determines which lives are worthy of protection.

With reference to the articles of Muslim columnists and declarations of members of Islamic CSOs, it can be argued that a homophobic definition of life is assured through the discursive reproduction of “human rights” in such a way as to represent ‘certain rights of certain human beings’. Within the framework of this discursive formation, what is regarded as democratic rights for Muslims, turns out to be “disgusting” right violations if mobilized within the LGBT movement. Ahmet Özsöz from MAZLUMDER

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 3, 25.

İstanbul, argues that the reason why they do not defend rights of LGBT's while they do struggle against all other kinds of discriminations depends on fundamental definitions about 'human' and 'human rights':

The reason is not that we do not consider this as a violation of human rights or we are not able to get involved into this issue at the moment. It is the basic definitions of human rights violations and human beings [...] Regarding the issue of homosexuality, we define human beings as a species which consists of two sexes - man and woman – and which is reasonable. God sent his first revelation with the first man; and sent his prophet to guide human beings. For this reason people find out how to live on earth by the guidance of that revelation. However, since this is a world of trial, some of the characteristics attributed to human beings are good while some others are bad ones. We, Muslims, believe that if people live their lives defeating those bad qualities and preserving the good ones the, future will be much more different [...]. Because we believe that people were created with twokinds of sexualities and the continuation of human generation depends on these sexualities. From our perspective, [homosexuality] is an attack to the future of humanity, and a total human rights violation.¹⁶⁵

Another interesting issue worthy of attention is that this systematic exclusion of homosexuals from the definition of humanity is supported by celebration of all “human” rights, including those of LGBTs. In fact, Özsöz emphasizes the sacredness of all “human rights”. He declares that they support rights of homosexuals as they are human beings too, as long as these rights are not claimed as “LGBT rights”:

Every homosexual is a person. Human rights are sacred. We defend all of them. We defend their [homosexuals'] human rights as well, as they are human beings. However, we do not approve any processes which aim at turning homosexuality into a life

¹⁶⁵ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 31 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

style. [Homosexuality] is one of the points where human rights violation starts.¹⁶⁶

It should be noted here that Özsöz differentiates human rights from LGBT rights. In Agamben's terms, a certain lifestyle is separated from the "form-of-life" which refers to "a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life".¹⁶⁷ With this term Agamben conceptualizes an understanding of life which does not exclude certain ways of living while including certain others:

It defines a life – human life – in which the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply *facts* but always and above all *possibilities* of life, always and above all power. Each behavior and each form of human living is never prescribed by a specific biological vocation, nor is it assigned by whatever necessity; instead, no matter how customary, repeated, and socially compulsory, it always retains the character of possibility; that is, it always puts at stake living itself.¹⁶⁸

However, from Agamben's perspective, power manifests itself in the exclusion of certain lives. Such selective ontological definitions make certain populations the target of exploitation by rendering their lives less than lives, "destructible" and "ungrievable"; thus, they have been deemed "lose-able".¹⁶⁹ For instance, Özsöz defines humanity in such a way as to exclude homosexuality. He considers LGBTs as human beings as long

¹⁶⁶ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 31 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

¹⁶⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 31.

as they are stripped from their sexual orientations. In this way, he legitimizes the lack of effort with regard to protection of rights and lives of LGBTs, as opposed to the effort to make human beings live. Such a selective and contingent definition of human life explicates *how* the differential allocation of precariousness is normalized in the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate so that it creates no general resentment, grief or resistance but silence.

However, it should also be noted at this point that all Muslim civil society actors or columnists do not agree with this selective definition human rights.¹⁷⁰ For instances, Nermin Ayca and Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, from BKP argue that rights struggle of LGBT’s is similar to those of other discriminated groups, especially to that of Muslim women. Thus, they assert, LGBTs should have the right to organized struggle not only because they are human beings but also because they are a discriminated sexual minority.¹⁷¹ Tuksal argues that “veiled Muslim women and lesbians are discriminated against through the same words” and “ignored through the same silence”.¹⁷² On the other hand, it can be argued that such comments are very few among “Muslim party” of the discussion. The general approach is that LGBT movement and veiled women’s rights cannot even be compared since the former is forbidden by god while the latter is the order of god.

¹⁷⁰ A detailed discussion of the variety of Islamic CSOs’ approaches to LGBTs will presented in Chapter VI.

¹⁷¹ Nermin Ayca, interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 11 March 2011; Hidayet Tuksal, interview by author, field notes, İstanbul, Turkey, 7 November 2010.

¹⁷² Hidayet Tuksal, interview by author.

The above mentioned hierarchical classification of rights of Muslims and LGBTs (as if they are mutually exclusive groups) is also reflected in the Turkish media which is also a significant element of civil society. This can be observed in the articles written during the debate. The writers of these articles argue that “if homosexuality is a right” fighting against it is the “right of the Muslims” as well:

Homosexuality, which is an obvious assault for the human kind and honour, is a disgusting and ugly perversion which is not committed even by animals [...] If these people have the right to present this action as if it is a pretty and right one, then we have the right to explicate how Islam interprets this issue and to criticize this ill favored action [...] Henceforth, it is one of the prominent duties of every believer to struggle against a perversion such as homosexuality which bears the danger of altering the value system of the Muslim community [...] It is for sure that every individual has the right and freedom to live as they desire. However, if this freedom has a dangerous dimension which threatens other people, and especially the future of human race, it cannot be called freedom anymore.¹⁷³

Ahmet Emin Seyhan, here, tries to prove the extent of “squalor” and “ugliness” in homosexuality with a pseudo-scientific¹⁷⁴ approach, referring to zoology. In this way, he presents homosexuality not only as a form of life which is less-than-human life; but, he also classifies it as a perversion which is “inferior to bestiality”. On this ground, he justifies his “critical” position and takes it as his “fundamental duty” to fight against this “perversion” which is capable of altering the whole “value system of a Muslim society”. On the other hand, he asserts that liberal human “rights and freedoms” should be

¹⁷³ Ahmet Emin Seyhan. 5 November 2010. Eşcinsellik Tedavisi Mümkün Olan Bir Sapkınlıktır. Available [online]: <http://www.diyanehaberler.com/yazar/escinsellik-tedavisi-mumkun-olan-bir-sapkinlikdir--25.html> [22.06.2012]. (My emphasis). See Appendix for the original quote.

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion of animal homosexuality see <http://www.news-medical.net/news/2006/10/23/20718.aspx> [22.06.2012].

respected *to a certain extent*. However, he excludes the freedom to be homosexual from the definition of freedom since it constitutes a “dangerous threat” to the rights to life of “human kind”. In this way, he could develop a homophobic definition of human rights and freedoms and avoid a self-contradictory position.

With respect to argumentation of Seyhan, it can be argued that what is left unsaid is as important as what is declared. Seyhan’s line of argumentation bears a strict us vs. them dichotomy. What is not said directly but systematically denied in his article is the existence of Muslim LGBTs. He frames Muslims and LGBTs not only as mutually exclusive groups but also necessarily antagonist ones. He presents the hatred against LGBTs as a natural and essential response of “Muslims” who are supposed to protect their religious value systems. Within this framework, it is also worth paying attention to his emphasis on “Muslim society”. In this way, he attributes an ambiguous position to LGBTs. Despite the fact that they live within the Muslim society they do not belong to it. Moreover, they endanger it. Thus, “we” (Muslims) are attributed the responsibility of fighting against the danger that “they” pose.

Similarly, Bülent Şahin Erdeğer argues that homosexuality cannot be considered among the “human” rights just as “nourishing viruses” cannot be a right:

No unnatural reality to be encouraged and supported by our will can be considered as a humane right. On the contrary, this is an assault to the human nature and the social order. Just as nourishing viruses which are created as a result of mutation is not a right, neither is legitimating and supporting homosexuality.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Bülent Şahin Erdeğer. 13 March 2010. İslami Perspektiften Eşcinsellik Olgusu. Available [online]: http://www.aktuelsikoloji.com/haber.php?haber_id=3303 [22.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

Identifying LGBTTs with “viruses which are results of mutation” which is an unnatural phenomenon, Erdeğer emphasizes that “legitimizing and promoting” homosexuality cannot be regarded as a right. Neither can homosexuality be regarded as a “humane” characteristic since it is an attack to “human nature” and “social order”. Another interesting point worthy of attention in his argument is that he defines homosexuality as an “unnatural reality”. Being classified as both unnatural and real makes LGBTs something living but also something which cannot be identified concretely. This brings about the possibility to reproduce homosexuality by defining it with reference to what it is not – natural and identifiable heterosexual human population which LGBTs are not representative of.

To sum up, in these articles, homosexuality is not only defined as a disgusting practice but also one which threatens the health and life of human beings. In this way, fighting against it is presented as the only way to protect human race. Thus, violation of “LGBT rights” is rendered essential for protection of “human” rights.¹⁷⁶

Taking the above discussed discourses and practices into consideration, one can argue that a conceptualization of civil society as a ground for mutual help,¹⁷⁷ and an indispensable condition for democracy and a guarantee for freedom and equality¹⁷⁸ is not a functional one. It is not because civil society is essentially antithetical to cooperation,

¹⁷⁶ I will dwell upon the discursive strategies mobilized within the framework of the debate in a more elaborate manner in Chapter IV.

¹⁷⁷ Fisher, p. 442.

¹⁷⁸ Havel, qtd. in Flyvbjerg, p. 210.

human rights, freedom and equality; but, the problem here is that these very notions are problematic ones. As it can be observed in the case of Islamic civil society actors in Turkey, civil society can stand for protection of human rights and freedoms. However, the conceptualization of these notions can be discriminatory.

Liberal notion of civil society grounds its arguments on ideal types and concludes that people can find out the ways to relate each other which would serve to the interest of all. This can be achieved through reason.¹⁷⁹ From this perspective, the exclusionary uses of rights discourse appear to be an exceptional case which diverts from the practices of ideal civil society. However, from the perspective of power relations, the differential and exclusionary definitions of rights and freedoms points to a structural feature of civil society.

Such an understanding of civil society also challenges the liberal assumption that there is a clear boundary between the state and civil society and the latter is an arena for “standing resistance to government”.¹⁸⁰ As long as their conducts are determined through the same discursive formations they can ally against a common ‘threat’ which is also discursively defined. The homosexuality debate demonstrates that Islamic CSOs’ and the Turkish state’s actions are shaped within the same discursive space. An inquiry of the law case regarding the homophobic declaration of Islamic CSOs and their

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion of “reason” and “rationality” see Locke’s and Rawls’s comments. John Locke, “Second Treatise on Civil Government.” In *Two Treatises of Government*, edited by P. Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 271; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, c1996), pp. 28-34.

¹⁸⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville qtd. in C. Fred Alford, “Civil Society and Its Discontents”, *The Good Society* 12, no. 1 (2003), p. 11.

approach to LGBT murders from the perspective of bio-politics can illuminate the dynamics of the coincidence of the two actors to a better extent.

Incorporation of juridico-normative power by bio-power

The previous sections of this chapter discussed the effects of bio-power which are productive of a certain type of civil society which engage into a selective human rights defense. This kind of civil society is also open to strategic cooperation with the state. This feature of the civil society is worthy of attention for two reasons: it challenges the supposed boundary between the state and the civil society and underlines that this boundary is determined, maintained and blurred by a complex network of power relations: “Producing and maintaining the distinction between the state and the society is itself a mechanism that generates resources of power”.¹⁸¹

In order to develop a detailed understanding of how the actions and discourses of the civil society and those of the state are intermingled, it is worth analyzing how the different mechanisms of power function at different sites but in a complementary way. This kind of complementarity can be observed in the legal cases which involve the actors of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate and point to the interpenetration of the norms and the laws.

The moments of interpenetration of the discourses of law and the norm also point to the instances of interdependence of the state and the civil society. This

¹⁸¹ Mitchell, p. 90.

interdependence does not rely on the assumption that they are two discrete, yet, necessarily cooperative entities. It rather depends on the fact that the mechanisms of different models of power (which function at different levels but support each other) conduct the conducts of the subjects in such a way as to challenge their supposed discreteness. Juridical power which is institutionalized in the nation state, the disciplines which are institutionalized in the hospitals, prisons, schools and bio-power which overcomes the institutional requirements and functions through the celebration of life bring these two entities together within the same discursive ground.

According to Foucault, every norm is a power structure which ensures the conduct of conducts. Thus, the practices and subjectivities of the subjects are determined through the circulation of norms. Foucault argues that one of the effects of bio-power is the “growing importance of the norm, at the expense of the law”.¹⁸² This does not mean that the law vanishes from the scene of power relations. He rather means that it starts to operate as the norm and the judicial institution is incorporated into the regulatory apparatuses.

As penetrated by discourses of various kinds and the techniques of bio-power, legal codes start to serve the dynamics of normalization and regulation; thus, they turn the juridical subject into an effect of power.¹⁸³ Through the techniques of bio-politics, the criminals also turn into bio-criminals who attack not the sovereign but the society. Thus, as Cohen and Arato brilliantly evaluate, “all of society, vicariously (through

¹⁸² Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 144.

¹⁸³ Cohen and Arato, p. 264.

publicity) or directly, takes on the role of judge and engages in normalizing judgments”.¹⁸⁴ In other words, it can be argued that there are two simultaneous processes in which bio-criminals (the perverted population who poses a threat to the rest of the society) are prosecuted. One is the juridical process (the laws) of the state which promises to protect the rights from being violated. The other one is the normative judgments of the society which aim at protecting itself from degeneration through protection of its foundational norms. The law suit considering the letter of the Islamic organizations and the ruling of the Turkish courts illuminate the relationship between the law and the norm; as well as the one between the state and the civil society.

Following the declaration by Islamic civil society organizations, Lambdaistanbul filed a criminal complaint against the signatory organizations and wanted to sue them for crimes such as “insulting”, “commandment” (provocation of crime) and “provoking grudge and hatred within the public”. LGBTs and non LGBT supporters of the movement based the criminal complaint on the argument that it constitutes commandment against LGBT individuals. The letter was considered as a provocation of crime due to the fact that, referring to “how god punished homosexuals”, the signatories invited the believers not to tolerate but to oppose homosexuality.¹⁸⁵ However, the prosecutor decided to adjourn the case. Before the ruling only one MAZLUMDER

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 288.

¹⁸⁵ Ruken Adalı. 21 January 2011. ‘Eşcinsellik Hastalığıdır’ Sözü İfade Özgürlüğümüş!. Available [online]: <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/medya/escinsellik-hastaliktir-sozu-dusunce-ozgurluguymus/> [22.06.2012].

representative's testimony was taken and the act of the Islamic organizations was evaluated within the limits of "freedom of expression":

It is announced that the declaration consisted of sincere and responsible assessments which totally aim at expressing ideas. It does not provoke anybody to commit crimes, and it was intended merely for the purpose of supporting the Turkish Minister of Women and Family, Selma Aliye Kavaf. Thus, they [the signatories] did not say anything or take any actions which degrade or insult anybody. For that reason, it is decided that there is no need for public prosecution depending on the facts that the claims of the representatives of the organizations are just abstract ones and there is freedom of thought in Turkey. Thus, the thoughts have not taken the form of actions and there is no evidence which requires public prosecution about the officers of the suspect organizations.¹⁸⁶

Here, the court decided that announcing homosexuality to be "a sickness which threatens humanity" is neither insulting nor does it constitute a provocation of crime. On the contrary, the judge announced that the declaration of the Islamic CSOs is an action which stems from their "responsibility". This decision is supported with the argument that the letter does not involve hateful elements but it rather is a matter of "freedom of expression". As can be observed, both the representative of the judicial institution of the state and the Islamic CSOs are legitimizing their practices through the exact same normative discourses, which are responsabilization of the society and liberal rights/freedoms discourses. One of the fundamental elements of this functioning are discourses of truth regarding the "'vital' character of human beings" and "an array of authorities competent to speak about it".¹⁸⁷ In the case of the homosexuality debate,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

¹⁸⁷ Rabinow and Rose, p. 197.

both the state and the civil society are the authorities who legitimately speak on the “truth” about human sexuality which is a matter of life and death.

What is at stake here is not that the state and the civil society support each other strategically as a matter of deliberate action plans. As was discussed above, it is rather the fact that they are two sites of power which involve actors whose actions are shaped through similar power relations and discursive formations. In other words, the alliance of the state and the civil society is not a result of deliberation of autonomous actors; it points to a structural phenomenon. Their practices coincide due to a specific functioning of power; which is bio-politics. On the other hand, the actors of power relations are not deprived of their agency and “agents are creative beings; it is just that their creativity occurs in a given social context that influences it”.¹⁸⁸ They have the possibility of choosing among the options which are determined and produced by power relations. The actors of the homosexuality debate also act within the “possibilities of a discourse” in Foucault’s terms. Put differently, the same power relations also provide them with the option of resistance. However they choose to define life selectively; and this causes them continuously to legitimize themselves since their attitude is in contradiction with their rights discourse. This choice of Islamic CSOs can be observed in their approach to the LGBT murders in Turkey.

¹⁸⁸ Bevir, p. 67.

Letting die “par excellence”

As opposed to the sovereign power, bio-power does not make any element of the population die. Neither does it support any discourse and practice which qualifies death as something to be concerned. The “economy of contemporary biopolitics operates according to logics of vitality, not mortality, while it has its circuits of exclusion; letting die is not making die”.¹⁸⁹ The downside of bio-power’s celebration of life is the disqualification of death. The “effort” to make the population survive, intrinsically involves a certain degree of contingency which lets something happen. It does not directly kill but it allows the inferior, diseased species to extinct. Thus, who is made live also elucidates whose lives are losable/riskable for the sake of protection of the population.

As was argued, in line with the definitions of life and human rights, LGBT individuals are redefined as internal threats to the population. They represent the anti-thesis of the lives that should be protected. This does not mean LGBTs are sentenced to death by power. However, they fall out of the normal distribution of populations. Hence, they do not represent the random element of population; which means that their deaths are not statistically significant. This statistical metaphor can be observed in the (non)response from the civil society regarding the normalization of LGBTs’ deaths.

As was mentioned previously, LGBTs are brutally murdered in Turkey. Most of the times, the police cannot find and arrest the murderers. Even if they are found, they

¹⁸⁹ Rabinow and Rose, p. 211.

benefit from plea-bargains (reduction of sentence) in most of the cases. Especially transgender individuals are not provided with protection even if they file criminal complaints and declare that their lives are in danger.¹⁹⁰ Despite the whole array of human rights discourses, these murders do not create resentment or grief (in Butler's terms), within the majority of the (civil) society. When the disqualification and normalization of death is considered from the perspective of liberal human rights discourse it appears to be a self-challenging attitude. The liberal paradigm cannot answer questions such as how it is possible to simultaneously disregard or ignore the end of life while celebrating it; or how the civil society remains silent in the instances of fundamental violations of right to life of LGBT individuals. In order to answer these questions, it is worth analyzing the element of letting die which is intrinsic to the principle of making live.

Foucault proposes that *silences* and moments of inertia should also be taken into account in analyzing power relations. It is worth mentioning here that the silence regarding the LGBT murders is a common feature of a number of civil society groups including socialists and third¹⁹¹ party human rights associations. In other words, what is at stake here is that hate crimes and violations regarding LGBTs are absent in the majority of discussions and action plans of CSOs. LGBT murders are not mentioned as hate crimes even by the groups which aim at taking action against such crimes. For

¹⁹⁰ Fırat Söyle's speech in "Ayrımcılık ve Nefret Suçları ile Mücadele Günü". 19 January 2011. Available [online]: <http://www.yurtsuz.net/News.aspx?newsid=559> [25.06.2012].

¹⁹¹ In terms of being neither Islamic CSOs nor LGBT organizations.

instance, İHAD¹⁹² (İnsan Hakları Araştırmaları Derneği – Human Rights Research Association) prepared a “Law Draft against Hate Crimes” following a nation-wide research which was conducted in the period of 2009-2010.¹⁹³ However, hate crimes against LGBTs was not mentioned in the report of İHAD.¹⁹⁴ Challenging the reports validity, Göregenli and Özer report that LGBTs are among the groups which suffer from hate crimes the most (the other two groups are the leftists and the Kurds).¹⁹⁵ For instance, it is reported that 16 LGBT murders took place in 2010.¹⁹⁶ Lawyer Yasemin Öz argues that “the fact that hatred against LGBT individuals was not mentioned indicates that this type of hatred is thought to be legitimate”.¹⁹⁷ Thus, human rights organizations within the civil society are also functional in the legitimization of hatred against LGBTs.

Similarly, socialist groups have not been vociferous actors of the struggles against heterosexism and critical about discrimination against LGBTs. Eylem Yıldız from Democratic Rights Federation (Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu) identifies Turkish

¹⁹² İHAD is a human rights organization based in Ankara. For detailed information about the association’s activities see its official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.ihad.org.tr/contact.php> [09.08.2012].

¹⁹³ İnsan Hakları Araştırmaları Derneği. Nefret Suçlarının Önlenmesi İçin Yasal Düzenlemeye Yönelik Savunuculuk. Available [online]: <http://www.ihad.org.tr/faal-nefretsuculari-lobi.php> [22.06.2012].

¹⁹⁴ Ali Erol 2 May 2011. “Nefret Suçlarına Verilecek Taviz, Nefretle Mücadelenin İçini Boşaltır”. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=6869> [22.06.2012].

¹⁹⁵ Melek Göregenli and Evren Özer, “Medya ve İnsan Hakları Örgütlerinin Verilerinden Hareketle 1980’lerden Günümüze Türkiye’de İşkence: Epidemiyolojik Bir Başlangıç Çalışması”, *Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı Yayınları*, (2010), pp. 53-55.

¹⁹⁶ Amnesty international, ‘Ne Bir Hastalık Ne de Bir Suç’: Türkiye’de Lezbiyen, Gey, Biseksüel ve Trans Bireyler Eşitlik İstiyor (London: Amnesty International, 2011), p. 31.

¹⁹⁷ Erol. “Nefret Suçlarına Verilecek Taviz, Nefretle Mücadelenin İçini Boşaltır”.

Left's approach to LGBTTs as an abjecting one. She summarizes the general discussion lines about homosexuality within leftist groups as follows:

- Discussions on homosexuality which argue that
- it is against human nature and that men-women intercourse is obligatory due its procreative function;
 - that homosexuality is a sickness (both biologically and pathologically);
 - that homosexuality is a remnant of capitalism and an outcome of alienation to human beings;
 - that homosexuality is widespread among higher classes in the society and it is occurs as a sexual deviation..¹⁹⁸

These arguments demonstrate that Islamic CSOs and leftist ones base their arguments on similar discourses such as “human nature as composed of two sexes” and “biology as a means to define homosexuality as a sickness”. This common state of mind can be regarded as one of the factors which effect silences which shelter power relations. The problems of LGBTs are not regarded as important as the other inequalities in Turkey. On the other hand, the Turkish Left is not a unified entity and there are leftist actors who criticize the attitude of other socialists and argue that a struggle for equality must not exclude LGBTs.¹⁹⁹

When the discursive strategies mobilized against LGBTs and the variety of intra-group approaches are considered, it might be argued that Islamic CSOs approach to the homosexuality represents that of Turkish civil society in general. Neither the umbrella organizations such as İHAD nor socialists stand up against the hate crimes targeting

¹⁹⁸ Eylem Yıldız, “Homofobi ve Sol”, in Kaos GL, *Homofobi Kimin Messelesi?*, p. 164.

¹⁹⁹ See Ertuğrul Kürkçü, “Patriyarkal Kapitalizme Karşı Omuz Omuza”, Ilgım Yıldır, “Birlikte Özgürleşmek için Birlikte Mücadele”, Ecehan Balta, “Homofobi ve Sol” in Kaos GL, *Homofobi Kimin Messelesi?*.

LGBT individuals. However, the Islamic civil society actors differ from the other groups, including the Islamic CSOs which refused to be a party to the debate, in certain aspects.

First of all, as opposed to the other organizations, certain Islamic CSOs and public Muslim figures continuously announce that homosexuality is a grave source of degeneration of society, a crime against humanity and a great danger for the human race. These arguments are shared in public through declarations or various communication channels; thus, their hate speech easily circulates. Put differently, their position cannot be explained only by the non-response regarding the violence that LGBTs face. They are actively involved in the disqualification of lives of LGBTs as threats to “the life” optimized by mechanisms of bio-power. Thus, inaction regarding the deaths of LGBTs follows an action which deems their lives lose-able. With regard to the discourses mobilized against LGBTs, murdering them can well be legitimized (by the killers) as attempts to do what these organizations advise, namely protecting the values of the society. Thus, the discourses discussed previously can function as a call for annihilating LGBTs despite the fact that they do not bear direct connotations of violence.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that when the lives are at stake Islamic CSOs do not generally keep silent. On the contrary, they celebrate life, condemn violation of right to life and challenge the state authorities for being idle in protecting the lives of the citizens. Given this rights-based general approach, the instances in which they choose to keep silent demonstrate whose lives are not worthy of protection. This is also important to demonstrate that bio-politics, as all the other forms of power relations, is context

dependent. As the context and the actors change; so do the practices of Islamic CSOs. When the case of MAZLUMDER and how this organization responds to violation of right to life in other cases are taken into consideration, their bio-political subjectivity appears to be a context and actor dependent one. With regard to the injustices and discriminations that the Kurdish minority faces MAZLUMDER's definition of life is a comprehensive one which celebrates lives of Kurdish individuals as much as those of the Turks. Such an attitude does not coincide with the state's disqualification of the deaths of Kurds. On the contrary, the organization criticizes the latter's discriminatory definitions and actions.

MAZLUMDER's response to Uludere (Roboski) massacre exemplifies the context dependent nature of power relations to a great extent. In December 28, 2011, 35 Kurdish people (who were border traders) between 12-28 years were murdered as a result of bombing by Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles. This event is explained as an unfortunate intelligence mistake since the Turkish military thought that the group was consisted of PKK members.²⁰⁰ The military officials explained that the bombing took place at a region where PKK camps were based to a great extent. Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, regarded the issue as an accident and as a conspiracy which aimed at humiliating Turkish armed forces:

[As far as we know] these kinds of smuggling are carried out by three, five or ten people. The fact that the group was consisted of fourty, reminds us of the Gediktepe and Hantepe raids where guns were carried by mules. Back then, it was asked why they were not

²⁰⁰ Bianet, 29 December 2011. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/135083-tsk-bombardimani-dogruladi> [22.06.2012].

intervened with. This time it was aimed that our security forces avoid such a mistake but 35 of our citizens lost their lives.²⁰¹

Thus, he implied that it was a mistake to be in that region as a group of 40 people and that the military performed its duty. However, he also promised that those responsible for the accident would be punished. Similarly, the Minister of Interior said that “they (the young people who were killed) should not have been there” since the area is known for the terrorist activities.²⁰² However, many CSOs including MAZLUMDER and opposition parties such as BDP argued that the case was not investigated properly and the relevant evidence was spoiled (concealed) by the state officials. The Prime Minister responded to the critiques, especially those of BDP members, arguing that they were “necrophiles who establish their political discourse on terror and death”.²⁰³

The fact that the Uludere incident was defined as a military “accident” rather than a “massacre” which cost lives of 35 individuals reveals that Turkish state did not aim at killing these people. In addition, the state officials did not want this “accident” to be discussed on the basis of the deaths. The purpose of the operation was to protect the rest of the population from terrorist attacks. Thus, even if it was a mistake it was made for the greater good which is the protection of Turkish citizens’ lives. In this way, the lives of Kurdish people who were massacred in Uludere were cast lose-able for the sake of lives of “non-terrorist” individuals.

²⁰¹ Bianet, 30 December 2011. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/135125-cenazeler-defnedildi-basbakan-konustu> [22.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁰² Bianet, 25 May 2012. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/138604-iktidar-in-dilinde-uludere-ve-dersim> [22.06.2012].

²⁰³ Bianet, 27 May 2012. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/138650-hayvana-karsilik-nekrofilik> [22.06.2012].



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MAZLUMDER was one of the most vocal critiques of this stance of Turkish state. In a meeting which took place in April 28, 2012, a group of MAZLUMDER members organized a protest meeting to call government officials to the duty. The president of MAZLUMDER Diyarbakır argued that the state remains idle while it has the capacity to find the responsible for the massacre:

During the process, the village of Roboski has been turned into an open prison by either a detention or an arrest, in response to each and every demand for justice by the individuals who lost their relatives and us, the public. We know that the state has the means to bring a murder to light which has been committed within its chain of command. What we do not know is whether the state will find the criminals and bring them to justice. The state has to give its ponderousness with respect to bringing the Roboski massacre to light, bring the responsible of the massacre to justice and prosecute them. State institutions should apologize to the citizens, who experienced that justice functions differently for them, without waiting the inquisition to be concluded and bring the criminals to justice as soon as possible. The misery of families from Roboski is our common pain and it will not diminish until

the justice is secured. Let our heats dry out, if we forget [Roboski]
until the justice is secured.²⁰⁴

Here MAZLUMDER openly challenges the practices of the Turkish state which does not show due respect to the lives of Kurdish individuals who were killed and the rights of their families and friends. They openly challenge the differential allocation of importance attributed to the lives of Kurdish border traders. However, as was discussed previously, when the context and its actors change and a definition of life over sexuality is made the criticism is replaced with support. One witnesses that the same organization cooperates with the state rather than contradicting its differential distribution of precarity. Even though MAZLUMDER argues that their approach does not differentiate regarding the groups whose rights are violated, such a critical stance which challenges relations created by bio-power cannot be observed in their approach to LGBT murders.

Let alone taking initiative for LGBT rights, they fail to act even if they are asked for support by LGBTs. For instance, MAZLUMDER refused to support Elif Tez's press declaration when she was beaten by the police.²⁰⁵ On the other hand this does not mean that the organization is unaware of the fact that LGBTTs face physical violence in Turkey. They even mentioned such incidents of violation in the rights violations reports of the organization.²⁰⁶ Ayhan Bilgen argues that in the intra-group discussions certain

²⁰⁴ İhlas Haber Ajansı, 28 April 2012. Available [online]: <http://www.ihb.com.tr/mazlumder-den-uludere-icin-tabutlu-eylem-20120428A280408B-ankara-haberi> [25.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁰⁵ Elif Tez, interview by author, İstanbul, Turkey, 13 April 2011. This incident will be discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

²⁰⁶ For an example see MAZLUMDER's web site Available [online]: http://www.mazlumder.org/haber_detay.asp?haberID=885 [25.06.2012]. The violation reports of MAZLUMDER will be discussed in further detail in Chapter VI.

members of MAZLUMDER agree that they should not be silent when physical violence against LGBTs is at stake. However, he argues, the organization refuses to be an actual participant of the LGBT rights struggle since it would mean legitimizing homosexuality which is corruptive of public morals and religious principles.²⁰⁷

This inertia should also be taken into consideration with regard to the “*su testisi su yolunda kırılır*” (“live by the sword die by the sword”) understanding, which results in normalization of LGBTs’ deaths, among the actors of homosexuality debate. Within the discursive framework of the debate it is emphasized that the actors of Islamic civil society are against any type of violence. Thus, they do not support the murders of or violence against LGBTs. However, this does not mean that they feel themselves responsible for the protection of the lives of homosexuals as they do for other discriminated minorities. Another critique of Uludere massacre, Kenan Alpay – who is the vice-president of Özgür-Der and a columnist in *Yeni Akit* newspaper – defined the violence against LGBTs as homosexuals’ “internal problem” which does not have anything to do with Islamic CSOs:

The question, why others are kept responsible for the “internal problems” of a group of people whose significant majority has turned into drug addicts due to their depressive personalities, who have strong suicidal tendencies and are prone to violence, is not as meaningless as it is assumed to be. What do we and other Muslims have to do with the fact that transvestite Esmeray was beaten or with the murder of homosexual Ahmet Yıldız? We do not encourage any people to beat or murder others. Moreover, we are neither friends our neighbours with people with such personalities; we are neither family friends with them nor their companions or confidants. Since they are neither our students,

²⁰⁷ Bilgen, Ayhan. “Hak Temelli Bakış Açısı Neyi Gerektirir?” In *Homofobi Kimin Meselesi?*, edited by Kaos GL, p. 128.

customers nor our employees, we do not have any connection with them. As Muslims, we naturally oppose this type of thinking and relations which drag the society to hideous sins.²⁰⁸

Here, not only the suicides but also the LGBT murders are framed as the internal problem of an abnormal group of society. Furthermore, Alpay associates LGBTs with other “criminal”, “pathological” and “abnormal” *activities* such as psychological breakdown, drug addiction and inclination towards violence. Through this association, being an LGBT ceases to be a matter of sexual choice only, but becomes identical to the position of other social outcasts. In this way, the effects of discriminatory discursive practices are canceled out from the list of discussable matters in the debate. In other words, by simultaneously acknowledging the violence against LGBTs and framing it as a problem which does not concern ‘normal’ population, the self-contradictory position of Islamic CSOs is legitimized. Including lives into the discourse of protection in an exclusionary way is justified. Thus, a homophobic subjectivity which is built upon the sacredness of human life and rights, except the lives and rights defined in terms of homosexuality, is assured.

From that perspective it can be argued that although Islamic CSOs are aware of the fact that the lives of LGBTTs are at stake, these lives are deemed less important than making a certain –moral, religious, heteronormative- life continue. Thus, it can be argued that unless the refusal of violence does not take an active form in terms of refusal of hate propaganda, it remains no more than a conscious inertia. They know that LGBTs

²⁰⁸ Kenan Alpay, Özgür-Der'den Kaplan'a Eşcinsellik Cevabı, 07.04.2010, İslami Gündem. Available [online]: <http://www.islamigundem.com/zgur-derden-kaplana-escinsellik-cevabi-haber-4180.html> [25.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

face physical violence and they are murdered. However, for the sake of not legitimizing and protecting a “life style” which is assumed to be capable of bring the end of lives of the rest of the population, they simply let it happen.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS AFFECTING THE “ISLAM VS. HOMOSEXUALITY” DEBATE

In the previous chapter, the effects of the discourse of bio-power on the alignment of Islamic CSOs with discriminatory state ideology - which seems to be in significant contradiction with their organizational strategy - was discussed. However, there still remain very important questions unanswered: How did the debate started with the declaration of a former minister transform into one of “Islam vs. homosexuality”? How does Islamic civil society, which builds its core values on its own victimhood and discrimination by the Kemalist regime, became the actor of an unequal relationship that increases the vulnerability of an already precarious group?²⁰⁹ And, most importantly, through which discourses are Muslims and LGBTs positioned as necessarily antagonist groups? In order to answer these questions, the ways in which actors of civil society position themselves within the discursive space of bio-politics have to be analyzed. In other words, we have to pay attention to the discursive formations of the debate which is productive of specific subjectivities, objects and power relations.

With this aim in mind this chapter attempts to discuss the specific ways in which homophobia, which used to belong to the private realm, has been politicized. In addition,

²⁰⁹ The individuals and groups whose discursive strategies are referred in this chapter constitute the portion of Islamic civil society which chose to involve in the debate as a party. Even though theirs is a dominant position they do not represent the whole Islamic civil society. The variety of the intra-group approaches will be discussed in the Chapters V and VI.

this chapter also constitutes an attempt to answer how this process of politicization effects the reconstruction of the actors within the discursive framework of the debate. For this purpose, an analysis of declarations of Muslim columnists who willingly became parties of the debate, as well as those of Islamic CSOs' officials seems to be an efficient way to pinpoint the discursive practices of the Muslim actors of the debate. Such an analysis demonstrates that the "Islam vs. homosexuality" debate is a result of various discursive strategies which frames LGBTs as "serious threats" to society, humanity and Islam. The Muslim subject is recreated as one who is necessarily heterosexual and homophobic due to her role in protecting these values.

In this chapter, I will first revisit the Foucauldian theory of discourse in order to highlight its importance for analyzing the diverse formations of subjectivities and strategies within the debate. In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss the effect of religious discourse on the formation of different subjects and objects. This section aims at demonstrating that the debate of "Islam vs. homosexuality" is productive of different even contradictory Muslim subjectivities and minor debates among them with regard to the religious interpretation of homosexuality. In the last section, I will discuss the ways in which religious discourse is interpenetrated with other discourses such as science and society. This last part attempts to discuss that this interpenetration constitutes a means to legitimize the homophobic positions of Muslim actors of the debate and provide them with the status of authority.

Discourse as a constraining and enabling factor

Foucauldian notion of discourse does not refer to the common use of the term which is “a coherent or rational body of speech or writing”.²¹⁰ Following this definition, in the common sense language discourses are confused with statements. On the contrary, according to Foucault, a discourse is not about language we use or the way in which we interact with other people. It refers to the “areas of social knowledge”; that is the space in which “we can write, speak or think about a given social object or practices only in a certain specific way”.²¹¹ In the *Archeology of Knowledge*, in which Foucault discusses the role of discourses and their relation to power, he emphasizes that discourses are not reducible to statements. He concludes that in order to understand statements, we need to understand the rules that govern their existence; which are the rules of discursive formations.

In order to track a discourse, according to Foucault, one has to detect the emergence of discourses, the authorities which delimit them and analyze the system of specification (how the object of discourse is divided, contrasted, related, etc.).²¹² However, this is not enough to understand the discursive formations. It is also required to search for the relational dynamics between the objects of the discourse as well as the relations between different discursive formations. It is also necessary to be aware of the

²¹⁰ Hall, Stuart. “West and the Rest.” In *Formations of Modernity* edited by Stuart Hall and Bram Gibson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 291.

²¹¹ Alec Mc Houll and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 32.

²¹² Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 46-47.

power relations which affect and are affected by these discourses. In fact, Foucault asserts that “these relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, and modes of characterization”.²¹³ This is not to say that these relations are intrinsic to the object itself, but they make it appear as the object of specific discourses, determines its place in relation to other objects and specify its difference.

Discourses are sets of rules which form regularities among their elements and situate their objects in a both constraining and enabling way. They enable objects to exist in a certain way, under specific conditions of a complex group of relations and enable subjects to speak of them in a way determined by discourses, not in any other way. They offer options of practices within the possibilities of discourse.²¹⁴ Thus, discourses affect the possibilities of what is to be said, thought or done. While they enable saying, thinking or doing something, they also limit these practices within the boundaries of discursive formations.

When the process which started with the declaration of Selma Aliye Kavaf is considered from the perspective of the Foucauldian notion of discourse, it can be argued that various regularities can be observed in the statements of the state officials, certain Islamic CSOs and Muslim columnists. They speak from within the same discursive formations and redefine the norms of Islam, society and humanity throughout the politicization of homophobia. What is important here is that while they are redefining the norms, they do not only refer to principles which are assumed to be traditional but

²¹³ Ibid., p. 50.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

they also embrace strategies of various discourses that they also politicize as the legitimization mechanisms of homophobia.

For instance, within the discursive space of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, they intertwine human rights discourse and homophobia. Even though they present themselves as human rights advocates, they need to justify that homosexuality is still unacceptable. For this purpose, they resort to other legitimating discourses such as biology, science, nature and medicine which are usually not their major reference points. The relations and alignment of the actors of the debate are reproduced and determined by these discourses. By linking various discourses together, the “Muslim party” of the debate acts in a new discursive space which does not require them to align with LGBTs as they do with other minorities. Within this discursive space whose possibilities are determined through the antagonism of Islam and homosexuality, new norms (which also incorporate the *traditional* ones) emerge regarding the position of homosexuality within the discourse and how it should be treated.

However, the function of this discursive formation is not limited to giving a specific meaning to the object of the debate, i.e. homosexuality. Islam has also been reconsidered and has become the object of the discourse. It has been specified and divided; different Islams have been classified; and, inside/outside, normal/abnormal dichotomies have been incorporated into the understanding of Islam. For instance, Ayhan Bilgen’s Muslimhood has been questioned and excluded from the boundaries of *real Islam* due to the fact that he challenges homophobic positions from within the Islamic doctrine. Hence, it would not be misleading to argue that homophobia is tried to

be redefined as a norm intrinsic to Islam and religious positions which contradict the discursive practices which support this norm are abjected.

Picturing the subject as an effect of relations of power/knowledge and the subjectivities as effects of discourses, significantly challenges the liberal assumption of rational, autonomous individual who knows both what is best for her and for her community. Accordingly, it also contradicts an idea of civil society as a sphere for autonomous action which functions through supposedly universal and everlasting norms such as equality, plurality and liberty. As opposed to the individualism of liberal understanding of social science which grounds its arguments upon societal actors and assumes that they have full sovereignty over their acts and choices, Foucault denies the *a priori* sovereignty of the subjects.²¹⁵ He concludes that “one cannot speak of anything anytime; it is not easy to say something new, it is not enough for us to open our eyes, [...] or to be aware”.²¹⁶ The possible positions that the subjects may assume are determined by discourses depending on their relations with the objects and other elements of the discourse.²¹⁷ Thus, not only the objects are effects of discursive formations but also the subjectivities and subjects’ relational positions. However, this does not mean completely stripping the subject of her agency. Discursive formations rather define and constrain the positions that the subject can assume while speaking about a certain object.²¹⁸ However, since the discourse is also enabling and it inherits

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 232.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

points of resistance, it can be played with and changed.²¹⁹ Thus, subjects do not have the liberal sovereignty over discourses and their practices; but, it does not mean that they lack agency. The subject of the discourse might re-utilize and reverse it; thus, she can change her position in the power relations. On the other hand, they might use their agency “to regulate themselves in accord with social norms”, promoting normalizing effects of power.²²⁰

In this respect, it is worth analyzing the regularities in the practices and arguments of the actors (that positioned against LGBTs, i. e. state officials, members of civil society organizations and columnists) of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. Scrutinizing their subject positions in relation to the discourses is also worthy of attention. On this ground, an analysis of the practices and statements of these actors might help understanding the rules of the discursive formations in which they exist as the actors of a debate. Even though discourses cannot be reduced to statements, “they [statements] do things, bring about effects”²²¹ -as those of Kavaf have done. For that reason, it is important to analyze the statements and writings of the subjects of the debate in order to identify the relations, similarities and regularities among them. In other words, a discourse analysis is necessary in order to give satisfactory answers to the

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 231.

²²⁰ Foucault qtd. in Bevir, pp. 74-75. Bevir brilliantly differentiates between the autonomy and agency which are accorded (or not accorded) to subjects by Foucault. According to him, Foucault denies the liberal idea of an autonomous subject; however, he does not totally deny agency. He argues that “although agents necessarily exist within the regimes of power/knowledge, these regimes do not determine the experience they can have, the ways they can exercise their reason, the beliefs they adopt or actions they can attempt to perform”.

²²¹ Mc Houll and Grace, p. 38.

above mentioned questions about the dynamics of the debate and to have an idea about the discursive space in which the debate have taken place.

Religious discourse: Homosexuality as a sin

The homosexuality debate had first been initiated by the former minister Selma Aliye Kavaf who was talking from within the medical discourse and announcing homosexuals as sick people.²²² Owing to the critiques from the LGBTs, anti-homophobic public and other politicians - along with the general silence of the government party – homosexuality became a major topic of public discussion. The debate evolved into one about religion with the involvement of Islamic CSOs and Muslim columnists who either supported Kavaf or introduced new arguments to the discussion regarding the Islamic interpretation of homosexuality. In fact, homosexuality has already been an object of religious discourse.²²³ With their intervention, it was reclaimed as an object on which religion is the authority to speak and reproduce the truth of sexuality.

Thus, it is expected that the statements and practices of the actors have been informed mainly by religious discourse. However, what is worth noting here is that it has penetrated into all the other discursive strategies that are mobilized within the debate. Even if religious discourse and discourses such as science, biology and medicine seem to be contradictory, they are intermingled within the discursive space of the debate.

²²² Even though she was the minister of a conservative party it is not among the aims of research to discuss whether her declaration was inspired by her religious belief.

²²³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 101.

On the other hand, incorporating various strategies of various discourses, religious discourse has also been transformed. Despite the fact that discourses are discontinuous, they can intersect with one another;²²⁴ and since they are not limited to existing discourses such linkages might form new discursive spaces. The Muslim actors have chosen to combine religious discourse with those of medicine, biology, society and humanity while assuming diverse positions in the debate. In addition, one can also argue that they legitimized their major discursive practices with these linkages. Thus, this intersection of discourses has enabled a new discursive space which in turn has affected formation of new objects, positions and subjectivities.

As the Islamic discourse has evolved throughout the process, the Muslim actors responded this transformation in quiet different ways. In fact, the way in which and the extent to which Islam should be mobilized against homosexuality had become an individual debate among the Muslim actors. For this very reason, the way in which religious discourse is mobilized is not only informative of how homosexuality is positioned as the obvious antagonist of Islam. It also makes the formation of new Muslim subjectivities within this debate more intelligible. For that reason, it might worth discussing this minor debate before analyzing the whole web of discourses mobilized within the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate.

²²⁴ Mc Houl and Grace, p. 32.

Is Homosexuality a Sin or a Sickness?

The former minister, Kavaf was not the only actor of the debate who presented homosexuality as an object of medical discourse. There have been a number of Muslim actors who referred to homosexuality as a sickness which is simultaneously a sin. It can be argued that especially the Muslim columnists frequently engaged in medical discourse with regard to homosexuality.²²⁵ In this manner, they emphasized its abnormality instead of sticking only to religious discourse which might reduce homosexuality to a sin that can be committed by all people and normalize it. In addition, considering homosexuality only as a sin might deprive one from the possibility of intervening and trying to eliminate it, because it is an issue between the God and (wo)men. Mobilization of medical discourse rather than sticking to the religious one became one of the major lines of discussion which points to the formation of different, even oppositional subjectivities within the “Muslim party” of the debate.

Identifying homosexuality as pathology is a common strategy among the Muslims who involved into the debate. In this manner, the Muslim party of the debate frames LGBTs as the diseased portion of the society. However, this identification, as pathological, is not exempt from critiques from the other Muslim actors of the debate. Hilal Kaplan (former columnist in *Taraf*, currently writing at *Yeni Şafak*), who is known for her polemics with other Muslim columnists, is one of the most vociferous critiques

²²⁵ Even an online petition drive was initiated to emphasize that homosexuality is a sickness. For detailed information see the blog of the campaign. Available [online]: www.escinsellikhastaliktir.blogspot.com [27.06.2012].

of this position.²²⁶ She argues that the issue of homosexuality should be discussed from within the Islamic discourse rather than trying to legitimize anti-homosexual positions with *Western* discourses:

I think it is interesting and worth pondering that Muslims immediately jump to the conclusion of “sickness” and adopt the Western terminology with respect to the issue of homosexuality [...] According to the Islamic law, homosexuality is a sin and a perversion. However, if we want to give a consistent answer to the question that from which ‘norm’ it is deviated, we have to base our answer on Islam [...] Homosexuality is not a sickness but a sin; the fact that it is a sin is sufficient to stand up against its socialization and legitimization [...] Do the severity of the concept of “sin” and/or its discursive sphere of legitimization not satisfy us?²²⁷

Presenting the argument of sickness as an influence of Western power relations, Kaplan refuses to use Western terminology while discussing a problem which is intrinsic to Islam. She also argues in this article that due to the “transformation of power relations”, “rise of capitalism” and “increase in the number of homosexual doctors”, homosexuality is no longer classified as a sickness from the Western point of view:

Homosexuality, which was once thought to have a potential to create problems with respect to the relations of power, could be excluded from the category of abnormal/pathological owing to both the increased power of homosexual doctors and the acknowledgement of the fact that including homosexual life styles into the societal life does not pose a threat to capitalist system of production and power relations. In this respect, neither identifying homosexuality as a “sickness” nor excluding it from this category

²²⁶ Hilal Kaplan is one of the major actors of both “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate and the minor debate among Muslims about how homosexuality should be classified.

²²⁷ Hilal Kaplan. 03 April 2010. İslam ve Eşcinsellik Meselesi. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/islam-ve-escinsellik-meselesi.htm> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

do not go beyond the arbitrariness of the power holders in determining what is abnormal/pathological.²²⁸

Kaplan, as a sociologist, considers exclusion of homosexuality from the limits of medical discourse as an effect of unstable power relations. According to her, this does not change the fact that homosexuality is still an anomaly which does not disturb the capitalist economic order any longer. Thus, this should not mean that it loses its “abnormal” position within Islamic discourse. However, using Western terminology (instead of religious one) prevents one from discussing its abnormality and danger. For this very reason, she insists that Islamic doctrine should be the only reference point for Muslims while making comments on homosexuality. This line of argumentation does not only preserve homosexuality’s place as a sin but it also eliminates any other ways of discussing homosexuality from an Islamic perspective. In this way, she re-defines Islam within the discursive space of the debate as a religion which requires a resistance against socialization and legitimization of homosexuality and a Muslim subjectivity whose choices are limited to the possibilities provided by what religious discourse prescribed. Put differently, she presents homophobia as a fundamental element of the definition of Islam and an intrinsic characteristic of Muslims. On the other hand, framing homosexuality as a sin, she automatically underlines that homosexuality is about making a choice between the order of god and one’s bodily pleasures. Choosing the latter is what renders homosexuality a sin. However, sticking to the sickness argument eliminates the choice element in it and renders it indispensable.

²²⁸ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

This argumentation of Kaplan is strongly challenged by other columnists. Murat Kapk ner, a Muslim writer and a freelance columnist, was among the fiercest critiques of Kaplan’s position. In the arguments which are based on the idea that homosexuality is a sickness, it is defined as something more than a sin,²²⁹ a “serious sickness” which is against the “creation of human beings”. In this manner, homosexuality is framed as an *extreme threat* posed by LGBTs, which cannot be compared to the threat posed by ordinary sins of normal people. Murat Kapk ner reveals this idea very clearly in his article entitled “E cinsellik G nahtan Fazla Bir  eydir (Homosexuality is Something More Than a Sin)”:

All sicknesses are not sins; however, certain sicknesses are more than sins. In this case, the matter of concern is not a sin but a sickness which can be identified by the experts [...] All the sins are familiar to us, we might even experience them if they would not have been forbidden; none of them is inconsistent with our creation; we (most of the people) might commit them if we were not believers [...] If you identify homosexuality only as a “sin”, you insult the healthy but adulterous people, equating them [to homosexuals]... If you call homosexuality a sin you insult honorable men and women and imply that they are potential homosexuals. (You imply that they are prone to this).²³⁰

Here, Kapk ner strictly defines the line between sin and sickness and emphasizes over and over that the discussion of homosexuality cannot be limited to religious discourse. Sins are part of the creation of *normal* people regardless of how grave they are. On the

²²⁹ How homosexuality is attributed the position of sin will be discussed in detail below. Before dwelling into the discussion of sin, this section aims at underlining the disagreement among the actors of the Muslim party of the debate about how to interpret homosexuality from the Islamic perspective.

²³⁰ Murat Kapk ner. 03 August 2010. E cinsellik G nahtan Fazla Bir  eydir. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/escinsellik-gunahtan-daha-fazla-bir-seydir.htm> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

other hand, he attributes an “extreme” characteristic to homosexuality which cannot be a result of “normal creation”. It should be noted here that the concept which is referred to, while explaining that homosexuality is “something more than a sin”, is *yaratılış-fıtrat* (“creation”) which means the way in which and the purpose for which human beings were created by god. This concept refers to the norm of “being what one is meant to be”.²³¹ Since *fıtrat* includes both good and bad, sins cannot be regarded as deviations from god’s creation. In the same article, for instance, Kapkırer argues that, normal people can commit murder; however, they cannot be homosexuals since the former behavior is a normal one while the latter is an anomaly which cannot be apprehended by normal people. Thus, a normal person’s reaction to homosexuality could only be “disgust” rather than understanding:

Individuals may commit crimes but none of them are sadists. While murder is a sin which was initiated by Kabil, sadism is an anomaly, a deviation from creation [...] For a Muslim to call homosexuality a sin or a *sevap* [a deed which is good from religious perspective], she should understand and be acquainted with that behavior. Let alone understanding it, a person whose creation is not distorted disgusts it in the first place.²³²

Thus, using a combination of religious and medical discourses, Kapkırer precludes the possibility of homosexuality to be regarded as a normal “behavior”. Mobilizing the discourse of “sickness” he also legitimizes that homosexuality is “something more than a sin” since the category of sin is not capable of explaining the extremity of deviation of

²³¹ A detailed discussion of *fıtrat* (“creation”) will be provided below.

²³² Kapkırer. Eşcinsellik Günahtan Fazla Bir Şeydir. See Appendix for the original quote.

homosexuality from the path of creation by god. In in yet another article,²³³ Kapkiner exemplifies what he meant by “something more” and argues that homosexuality can also be regarded as a *küfür* (blasphemy).²³⁴

It is worth noting that, in this second article which he published in his blog as a response to critiques, Kapkiner argues that homosexuality cannot be defined as a sin since it is *din dışı* (something or someone that rejects religion):

It is true that homosexual is something more than a sinner as long as he advocates homosexuality and claims that he is the “same thing” with healthy individuals; he leaves the boundaries of Islam. That is, the surah says that [god] created women for men and men for women and (sexual) love between them. In this respect, whoever claims that homosexuality is a normal thing which is similar to healthy people rejects Islam. This is similar to the following: If a person who commits adultery and drinks alcohol but says that “what I do is not right”, he only becomes a sinner. However, if he advocates [his deed] he rejects the religion for he defends something which is decried by Koran and contradicts it.²³⁵

He argues that if a homosexual “claims” that he²³⁶ is the “same thing” with a healthy person he cannot even be called a sinner because at the moment he does this he rejects Islam. If he does not have a claim of “equality” he becomes just an anomaly. In this way, Kapkiner, does not only position himself as the authority who decides whether LGBTs are sinners or sick people; he also decides that they cannot be Muslims. Defining

²³³ Kapkiner refuses to name his writings as articles, he prefers to use the term essay due to their depth.

²³⁴ Murat Kapkiner. Eşcinsellik Üzerine (Tarihte İlk) Benden Son Yazı. Available [online]: <http://www.muratkapkiner.org/makale%20dosyasi/murat%20kapkiner%20escinsellik%20uzerine%201400.htm> [23.06.2012].

²³⁵ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

²³⁶ He discusses the issue with regard to male homosexuals since he is a “man” who is not oriented to “somewhere” that god created to “defecate”.

homosexuality in this way, he also redefines Islam as a religion which essentially excludes LGBTs who believe that they should be equals to the heterosexual Muslims.

This minor discussion demonstrates that the discursive space of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate is productive of different even contradictory Muslim subjectivities. What is in common regarding these subjects is their homophobia which is coded as an essential characteristic of Muslims and their definitions of homosexuality and Islam as necessarily antagonistic concepts. On the grounds of medical and religious discourses, existing objects and subjects have assumed new forms and positions which preclude other possibilities of speaking and thinking about them. Certain possibilities such as an understanding of Islam which does not necessarily condemn homosexuality or an understanding of homosexuality as something other than a deviation and abnormality are systematically excluded.

A Venial Sin or a Deadly One?

Despite the fact that certain Muslim actors of the ‘homosexuality debate’ do not agree upon the extent to which other discourses should be integrated into the debate, the majority of them agree upon the idea that homosexuality is a sin and definitely a perversion from the path of god. However, there is no consensus on the degree of sinfulness which is an “automatic” outcome of being a homosexual. In fact, the identification of homosexuality as a sin has become another big discussion topic among Muslims who chose to be a party to the debate. According to one line of argument, which is considered to be a moderate position, it is a sin like all the others; while,

according to another, it should be regarded as a grave sin. One of the most mentioned and criticized figures of the debate, Hilal Kaplan, advocates the former position and argues that homosexuality is no different than sins such as adultery:

The fact that Muslims confront people's inclination to homosexuality with more indignation than their inclination to alcohol, gambling and especially to adultery does not make sense to me. Because, fifteen centuries-old Islamic law (fıkıh) tradition concludes that homosexuality (which goes under the names of "livata" or "sihak" in the literature) is equal to adultery.²³⁷

Similarly Süheyb Ögüt argues that even though homosexuality is a *zulüm* (cruelty)²³⁸ from the Islamic perspective, it does not differ from other kinds of sins such as charging interests and slander:

There is no definition of homosexuality in Koran. Sodomy is mentioned as an issue along with many other types of sins. Thus, this is a topic that we acknowledge as a violation. On the other hand, charging interests and slander are also mentioned as necrophagia [...] For instance, Prophet Ali says that a petite sin which is committed over and over again is a grave sin. Thus, sins are also relative phenomena. There is no need to create a hierarchy. Even the smallest sin constitutes a rebellion against god and it is a *zulüm*. There is no differentiation in the terminology fiqh [Islamic law].²³⁹

This attempt to present homosexuality as an ordinary sin might be understood as an Islamic position which aims at preventing bad treatments against LGBTs. In fact, both

²³⁷ Kaplan. İslam ve Eşcinsellik Meselesi. See Appendix for the original quote.

²³⁸ Zulüm can be translated as cruelty. However, within Islamic discourse it is used with religious connotations, meaning "being cruel to Muslims" or "rebellious against god". A detailed discussion of the specific use of the concept will be provided below.

²³⁹ Fadime Özkan. 22 March 2010. Eşcinsellik Hastalık Değil Günah ama Zulüm Yasak. Available [online]: <http://www.stargazete.com/roportaj/yazar/fadime-ozkan/escinsellik-hastalik-degil-gunah-ama-zulum-yasak-haber-251180.htm> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

Kaplan and Öğüt argue that Muslims should stand up against violence, that is, LGBT murders and physical violence inflicted on LGBTs. They are criticized for their compromising position. Despite the fact that position of Kaplan and Öğüt are challenged for being tolerant, in this line of argument homosexuality is continuously compared to sinful “acts”, such as “drinking”, “adultery”, “taking interests”, etc., which are not tolerated from an Islamic point of view. Thus, this discursive strategy involves religious condemnation of LGBTs rather than *toleration*.

In addition, the discourse of sin systematically denies the fact that homosexuality is a state of *being* rather than an *act* such as drinking. This is not considered even as a possibility and homosexuality is reduced to an act. Zeynep Gambetti criticizes this discursive strategy arguing that an analogy between “being” homosexual and drinking which assumes that both are about individual choices is a problematic one. She concludes that “through this strategy homosexuals could be accused of their actions and they would be open to interference in order to discourage them from acting in this way”.²⁴⁰

These discriminatory claims and their effects have been strongly criticized by anti-homophobic individuals, columnists and human rights organizations (as expected). However, the arguments which equalize homosexuality to ordinary sins are also challenged by the other Muslim actors of the debate, not because it is discriminatory but because it is “tolerant” and legitimizing:

I think, the major problem of this point of view is the danger that it might legitimize the tolerability of homosexuality by Muslims

²⁴⁰ Zeynep Gambetti. 25 May 2010. Eşcinsellik, İçki ve Diğer Benzeri Günahlar Üzerine. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/escinsellik-icki-ve-diger-benzeri-gunahlar.htm> [23.06.2012].

as if it is an ordinary sin as the other “sins”. In addition, this perspective bears a great danger because it has a “neutral” position regarding the privateness of a sin and the position which Muslims should determine against the danger that that sin might become a widespread one. Henceforth, homosexual relations are not “petite sins as all the other petite sins”. It is a sin which is dangerous enough to endanger human species and requires Muslims to oppose factors and arrangements which popularize this phenomenon, even in a democratic society.²⁴¹

Contrasting homosexuality to petty sins, Enver Gülşen defines the position of homosexuality as a grave sin; in this manner, he assures its position as an *intolerable* deed from Islamic perspective. Despite the fact that the sins are “individual matters”, if they constitute a danger for others, “Muslims” cannot stay neutral. Even if they live in a democratic society, they are supposed to oppose this threat which endangers human generation. As can be observed in these arguments, there is a constant interplay between religious and liberal values. Opposing homosexuality challenges the “non-intervention between god and his subjects” principle of Islam and pluralist values of liberal democracy. However, the position of Muslims is re-conceptualized within the debate in such a way as to demonstrate the essentiality of intervention. Since what is at stake is the prevention of homosexuality from “spreading to the rest of the society” these self-contradictions are incorporated into the religious discourse;²⁴² and they are legitimized with the dangerous position attributed to homosexuality. Within the religious discourse the position of homosexuality is determined as a deadly sin and an extreme threat since regarding it as an ordinary sin bears the risk of undermining the fundamental ground of

²⁴¹ Enver Gülşen. 02 June 2010. ‘Demokrat’ Bir Müslüman’dan Zeynep Gambetti’ye Cevap. Available [online]: <http://envergulsen.wordpress.com/2010/06/02/demokrat-bir-muslumandan-zeynep-gambettiye-cevap/> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁴² The discourses of threat and duty will be discussed in more detail below.

religious discourse, and presenting it as a *normal* state of being. In this way, Muslims' homophobic acts are legitimized as a *necessary condition of Islam* and a *duty of Muslims* through defying the possibility of thinking about homosexuality as a normal form of *being*.

Why is homosexuality regarded as a sin?

As can be observed in the examples of the discursive strategies of Muslim actors of the debate, regardless of different positions they assume, there is one issue that is not open to discussion of any kind for the majority of the actors: the status of homosexuality as a sin. As long as one speaks and acts within the Islamic discourse of the debate there is no other possibility than assuming this position of homosexuality as the *truth*.²⁴³ For that reason, the discursive strategies which exclude any other way to think about homosexuality within the Islamic discourse are worth taking into consideration.

It can be argued that one of the strategies which are used in the debate and that legitimize homophobia is to emphasize that homosexuality is decried not only by Islam but also by all divine religions. Fatma Kutluoğlu, who is one of the main architects of the coalition which supported Kavaf and the president of the Research and Culture Foundation's Women's Commission (Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı Hanımlar Komisyonu),²⁴⁴

²⁴³ It can be argued that only Murat Kapkır challenges this position regarding homosexuals who claim to be equals to normal individuals. As argued above, their position is not even regarded as a sin since it reflects a total rejection of Islam.

²⁴⁴ Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı (Research and Culture Foundation) is a religious foundation based in İstanbul. For detailed information about the foundation see its official web site. [Available online]: <http://www.akv.org.tr/> [09.08.2012].

declares that all divine religions “cursed” and “prohibited” adultery and “perverted relations”:

Homosexuality is a version of adultery. Not only Islam but also all divine religions define it in this way. All divine religions curse adultery and perverted relationships and deem them haram [a deed forbidden by Islam]. Let me give an example from the Bible. Leviticus 18/22. “Do not sleep with a man as if you are sleeping with a woman”. This is disgusting!”. Leviticus 20/13. “If a man have intercourse with another man, both are rendered disgusting”. It is possible to find a great deal of similar information in the divine religions.²⁴⁵

The emphasis on the fact that homosexuality is “cursed by all divine religions” might be among the most telling discursive strategies which are mobilized to legitimize and politicize homophobia. In this way, homophobia or, at least, an understanding of religion which reproduces itself over hostility against LGBTs is presented as a “universal truth”. This perception of universality is built upon the truth of sexuality which defines same-sex relations as “disgusting” acts. The main reference points of the above mentioned argument are the verses which are common to three divine religions and refer to how Sodom and Gomorra (*Lut Kavmi*) were ruined due to their homosexual life style:²⁴⁶

We send Loth as the prophet. He spoke to his tribe: “Are you committing a type of adultery which any other people before you had never done? Because you leave women and approach to men to satisfy your lust. Strictly speaking, you are an outrageous people.” His tribe’s answer was nothing more than saying: “Clear them (Loth and his followers) out of our country because they are

²⁴⁵ Cahide Hayrunnisa Yağcı. 21 April 2010. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. Available [online]: <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2010/04/21/bütün-semavi-dinler-escinselligi-lanetliyor.html> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁴⁶ Kaos GL, “Homoseksüellik: Cinsi Sapıklık”, Kaos GL Eşcinsel Kültür/Yaşam Dergisi 103 (Kasım-Aralık 2008), p. 30. The verses which refer sodomy are Araf 7 / 80-84, Hud 11 / 77-83, Neml 27 / 160-174, Ankebut 29 / 28-35; See also M. Körükçü, *Livata Olayının (Homoseksüellik – Eşcinsellik) Haramlığının Ayet ve Hadislerle Açıklanması* (Konya: Damla Ofset); For references to sodomy in Bible see Genesis 19:4-8, Judges 19:22-24, Jeremiah 49:18, Ezekiel 16:49, Lev. 18:22 and 20:13.

too pure! Thus, we saved him and his family except his wife; because his wife was one of the others (impious). And we pelted them (with stones). See, how their sins resulted.²⁴⁷

At this point, it should be noted that the way in which the verses about Sodom and Gomorra are interpreted is a matter of disagreement among Muslims. However the Muslim actors of the debate have never mentioned the alternative and more *tolerant* ways to interpret them. There are Muslims who argue that what was punished is not homosexuality *per se* but rape acts of the people of Sodom and Gomorra. For example, Nermin Aycan, from Başkent Kadın Platformu, argues that “these tribes were ruined not because they were homosexuals but because they were forcing other men to have sex with them”.²⁴⁸ Muhsin Hendrix, a homosexual theologian, also argues that the story of Sodom and Gomorra is one of rape not homosexuality.²⁴⁹ Ayhan Bilgen also supports this reading of Koran:

Loth’s people, who were mentioned in Koran, is the major reference point for the anti-homosexual statements. However, in that narrative, the issue is not of sexual orientation but of rape. To relate the sodomy instance in Quran to the homosexuality issue in Turkey is a real fallacy of comparison.²⁵⁰

Murat Kapkır also declares that the Islamic verse about Sodom and Gomorra openly condemns sodomy however there is not a concrete verdict regarding how homosexuals

²⁴⁷ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. El-A’RÂF. Available [online]: <http://www.kuranikerim.com/mdiyanet/araf.htm> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁴⁸ Nermin Aycan, interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 11 March 2011.

²⁴⁹ Muhsin Hendrix, “İslam ve Eşcinsellik”, Kaos GL Eşcinsel Kültür/Yaşam Dergisi 103 (Kasım – Aralık 2008), pp. 24-25.

²⁵⁰ Ayhan Bilgen qtd. in Yıldırım Türker. 12 April 2010. Müslüman'a En Büyük İmtihan. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=991007&Yazar=YILDIRIM%20T%DCRKER&Date=12.04.2010&CategoryID=97> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

should be treated. Thus, the decision has to be made by *içtihat* (interpretation in line with Islamic doctrine):

In the Loth surah, sodomy is clearly condemned. The Loth anecdote is told because what was at stake was a social epidemic, and also because they are rapists [...] It is difficult to define homosexuality with respect to that surah. If it was the case, than in the time of Prophet Ali, this issue would not have been decided through looking at precedents.²⁵¹

However, the above mentioned interpretations of the verse did not take place within the discursive framework of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. Muslim actors of the debate chose to interpret the scripts as parables (*kıssa*) which inform people about the fate of LGBTTs and reconstituted Islam as a religion which necessarily and automatically curses homosexuality.

Condemnation of sodomy is also linked to other Islamic rules mobilized as further discursive strategies in order to prove that homosexuality is a sin according to Islam. One can argue that one of the most effective of these strategies is the reference given to *fitrat* (natural disposition/creation):

“*Fitrat*”, coming from the Arabic “f-t-r” root which stands for “invention”, “breaking the fast”, means creation and to create. In Quran and hadiths, *fitrat* is mainly used for the orientation to Allah, for the belief in the oneness of the God and for protecting the core of the religion: “(My Prophet) You turn your face towards the religion, towards the way (*fitrat*) Allah has created the man. There is no change in Allah’s creations.” (Rûm, 30/30) As it is seen, the Almighty Allah has asked people, through the persona of the Prophet, to orient themselves towards Allah and to

²⁵¹ Murat Kapkîner. Eşcinsellik Üzerine (Tarihte İlk) Benden Son Yazı. See Appendix for the original quote.

obey the laws of the religion which are beneficial for the humanity, and that the true creation cannot be changed.²⁵²

It is a characteristic of discourses to create their own possibilities and to limit alternatives. Thus, they determine the possible meanings of their objects (what can be said) while ruling out other possibilities. As an effect of Islamic discourse, the actors of the debate mobilized the concept of *fitrat* in such a way as to define homosexuality as an “act against the creation of god”. It can be observed in the statements of each and every Muslim actor of the debate that they believe that god created human species as man and woman and any aberration of this natural duality is also a deviation from the path of god. Fatma Kutluoğlu’s statements exemplify this approach to a significant extent:

What do not exist in ‘fitrat’ are the perversion, depravement, ugliness, evilness and impudence of man. We take this as deviance. It is something faulty, not natural. There must be attraction between the opposite sexes and repulsion between the same sexes. Thus, it is normal for an appeal to exist between opposite sexes, and it is equally abnormal for the same thing to exist between the same sexes, it is deviance and abolishment of the *fitrat*. The Quran, revelation, does not let the pure *fitrat* be violated.²⁵³

There is a constant articulation of “degeneration”, “deviation” and “perversion” against which the “Muslim party” of the debate assumes the role of the articulating what is “normal” and “pristine”. It is the “pure” *fitrat* of humanity which is “polluted” by the same-sex relations. Thus, defining homosexuality through “pure” and “vicious” dichotomy, religious discourse eliminates the possibility of even questioning whether

²⁵² Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. Fitrat. Available [online]: <http://www.diyanet.gov.tr/yayin/basiliyayin/ycinikavramlaryazdir.asp?id=509> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁵³ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. See Appendix for the original quote.

homosexuality can be a feature of *fitrat* on the grounds that it represents the exact opposite of “good creation”.

As Foucault argues discourses bring about their own points of resistance and contradiction. Regarding the discourse of *fitrat*, one can question how homosexuality can be regarded as a sin if all people are created by god in a certain way. The way in which the concept of *fitrat* is used within the debate precludes questioning the possibility of a homosexual creation except for hermaphrodites (*hünsa*).²⁵⁴ Hidayet Tuksal, from BKP, explains why Muslims do not admit this argument, reminding that *fitrat* is not only about creation but it is also about not challenging it through one’s *practices*:

Fitrat is actually the nature itself. Hormones of the female [are created] in order for her to become a mother, for her body to be fancied by men; [hormones of the male are created] in order to achieve hard tasks in the world. This is imperative for Muslims because it is correlated to the natural phenomena. It may be the case that if woman deviates, if [for example] she becomes a prime minister, she would reach to better positions. However, it is thought that she would not be happy because this would not fit to her *fitrat*. She would be happy when she looks after her mother-in-law. As an individual, you do have the will to change your nature but what is expected from you is not to change it. Duties are discussed as matters of division of labor. Not merely as nature. Nature does not matter for itself. In this respect, you cannot label homosexuality as a disease. Let us say you did not give birth. You have the natural potential to do so. There is that potential, but you should not follow it. You struggle with your nature as well. Animals should obey their nature. Human beings may transcend their nature, but they should not.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. Kutuoğlu argues that according to Islamic law, being an intersexed individual (*hünsa*) is accepted as a hormonal problem. For that reason their situation is not regarded a sin as long as they make a choice between two sexes.

²⁵⁵ Hidayet Tuksal, interview by author, field notes, İstanbul, Turkey, 7 November 2010. See Appendix for the original quote.

Thus, *fitrat* does not only refer to the way people are created. It also requires them to conform to “how they are meant to be”. Regarding sexuality, they are meant to orient to the opposite sex and procreate. In this respect they are expected to conform their nature and deny same sex desires. In other words, LGBTs are expected to make a choice between the god’s path and their desires. Thus, the above mentioned question is automatically excluded from the possibilities of discourse. As discourses are discontinuous, discursive space is not a fixed area. In this respect, one can argue that discourses can reconstitute themselves, depending on the context, in order to defy potential resistance points. The fact that homosexuality is regarded as a “choice” of individuals instead of a feature attributed by god can be considered as a matter of such discursive strategies.

Deliberate choice for a sinful act

Despite the fact that the above mentioned use of *fitrat* is dominant in the debate, alternative readings of *fitrat* also exist within the Islamic tradition. Even though it has not been one of the major discussion points in the homosexuality debate, a certain reading of Islam acknowledges that same-sex desire might be a natural orientation. For instance, the Directorate of Religious Affairs’ advice hotline (*Alo Fetva*) does not consider same-sex desire as a sin as long as it is not realized in action form. LGBT individuals who call the advice hotline are advised to fight with it – i.e. to do military

service or to get married.²⁵⁶ In other words, they are expected not to follow their bodily desires which would lead them to deviate from the path of god. This, discourse has also been embraced by certain actors of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate:

According to Islam, two brothers are not allowed to sleep side by side after their puberty. This is a criterion, and it means that we all have the virtual inclination to homosexuality and incest.²⁵⁷

As it is revealed by Süheyb Ögüt, homosexual desire *per se* does not automatically make one a sinner. However, being a natural characteristic does not make homosexuality *normal*. It is still an anomaly which should be resisted by both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Through this discourse, it can be argued that homosexuality is presented as a bad “behavior” which could be resisted but continually repeated. At this point the concept of ‘choice’ is mobilized as a discursive strategy. If a person does not *choose to be a sinner* s/he cannot be blamed for having same-sex desires:

If the person is a lesbian but gets married with a man and lives with him, and meanwhile does not have a wish to be with a woman, then it means that she manages to restrain herself. I do not think there is anything wrong with this [...] What really matters is thus not to reach to a level of perversion.²⁵⁸

From this second perspective which includes homosexuality as a matter of *fitrat* into the discursive possibilities, it can be argued that the category of sin refers to homosexual acts, not to homosexuality *per se*. In other words, to be a sinner (or not) depends on the personal choice and homosexuality is reduced to an action from which people can stand

²⁵⁶ Caner Kaya, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, 01 November 2010.

²⁵⁷ Özkan. Eşcinsellik Hastalık Değil Günah ama Zulüm Yasak. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁵⁸ Nermin Aycan, interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 11 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

back as their religion commands this way. Pellegrini and Jacobsen assert that similar dynamics can also be observed in the Catholic tradition in the US. They argue that homosexuality is presented as “a choice, but a bad choice”.²⁵⁹ In their book which has the same name, this approach is identified as the strategy of “love the sinner hate the sin”. They brilliantly argue that this strategy is mobilized in order to give the impression that religion is not a hateful position. Nevertheless in practice, it turns out to be a punitive one. As it is also mentioned above homosexuality frequently reduced to a sexual practice/adultery within the debate, as a means to emphasize that LGBTs deliberately chose to have sexual intercourse with same-sex individuals, while otherwise is possible; thus they deserve to be punished:

Our reference, Quran, defines this situation as “*Fahşa*” [prostitution]. It calls men and women who conduct this act as “prostitutes” [...] This is a word also used by the society but generally for women. But religion does not differentiate between men and women. If it is a man who does this, he is a prostitute, if it is a woman, than she too is a prostitute.²⁶⁰

With regard to this strategy, Caner Kaya from Kaos GL argues that “the term ‘choice’ is politicized on purpose, as if you could give up homosexuality and choose Islam”.²⁶¹ The politicization of this concept which forces a choice between religion and homosexuality refers to a specific politicization of homophobia which excludes the possible contiguities between Islam and homosexuality (such as Muslim LGBTs). In this way homosexuality

²⁵⁹ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and Limits of Religious Tolerance* (New York: NYU Press, 2003), p. 82.

²⁶⁰ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁶¹ Caner Kaya, interview by author.

and Islam are positioned as two poles of a binary opposition; and, homosexuality is reframed as an act which poses a threat to Islam even if it is a “god-given” characteristic.

The Linkage of Religious Discourse with Other Discourses

Discourses can “overlap and intersect as they change historically”.²⁶² Since a discourse is not a fixed formation its rules and effects can change through its interaction (in terms of complementarity or opposition) with other discourses. It can also be argued that such an interaction might be required for a discourse to have practical effects on its objects. For instance, in his discussion of madness, Foucault argues that this practice goes beyond the limits of scientific discourse and also finds its manifestation “in operation of legal texts, in literature, in philosophy, in political decisions and in the statements made and opinions expressed in daily life”.²⁶³ From that perspective, it can be argued that a discourse might need to be complemented by other discourses and legitimated in other discursive grounds. The resistance points which are created by one discourse might be closed with the intervention of others.

A similar interaction of discourses can also be observed within the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. In the process of politicization of homophobia, homosexuality is publicized and defined as a “dangerous threat”. However, the danger which is supposedly inherent in homosexuality cannot be proven solely with religious references. In addition to that, being hostile to a group whose rights are regularly violated is not

²⁶² McHoul and Grace, p. 32.

²⁶³ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 198.

compatible with the rights and equality discourse of the Muslim party of the debate. As an effect of this context, religious discourse is combined and supported with other discourses which also points to the threat posed by homosexuality. In this way, the dangerous position of homosexuality is assured and actions of certain Islamic CSOs and columnists are legitimized.

The discursive strategies which are used for this purpose can mainly be classified under two major headlines: Scientific discourses which refer to the biological abnormality of homosexuality and present homosexuality as a threat thanks to the authority position of science as a body of knowledge, and the socialization discourse which presents society as a vulnerable entity that is threatened by LGBTs.

Scientific/Medical Discourse: Abnormalization of Homosexuality

Following the above-mentioned function of intermingling of discourses, this section will demonstrate how the boundary between normal and abnormal is determined through scientific discourse; thus, how Islam and homosexuality are positioned as natural antagonists. In other words, the Muslim subjectivity which is acquired throughout this debate provides certain Muslim actors with the opportunity of defining the boundaries of normal and abnormal speaking from the position of scientific authority. It is a well known fact that since 1987 homosexuality has no longer been listed among the psychological disorders by American Psychiatric Association (APA). Nevertheless, the Muslim actors of the debate still recalled scientific discourse, as can be observed in the above illustrated examples. Despite the fact that the contrary is approved by the

scientific *authorities*, in a paradoxical way, in the specific context of Turkish civil society scientific discourse enabled reclaiming the abnormal position of homosexuality.²⁶⁴

Scientific boundaries of normal and abnormal

During the debate, the fact that *scientists* no longer deem homosexuality as a psychological deviation was constantly invalidated. To put it more clearly, they argued that this recent developments (scientific verification of LGBTs as healthy individuals) do not have a scientific value due to the fact that it is a modern political strategy. For instance, columnist Fuat Türker argued that it is a political tactic, aiming to change the “norms of exclusion”:

There is no scientific base for many of the statements made in newspapers, television, or any of the science journals, regarding homosexuality. Statements which argue that homosexuality is harmless, that it exists in human nature, and even the attempts to present it as something normal, are products of a worldview which limits the existence to the nature. This view belongs to advocates of naturalist philosophy which argues that rationale of all human behaviors should be sought in human biology. This group aims to reform the society according to the role model they have created. And this is all part of a plan that seeks to change those values in society which ostracize homosexuality.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ The aim here is not to announce science to be the authority which determines whether homosexuality is normal or not but to emphasize the paradox of strategies of scientific discourse which is mobilized within the framework of the debate.

²⁶⁵ Fuat Türker. 11 April. 2011. Bilinmeyen Numaralar. Available [online]: http://www.habervaktim.com/yazar/36559/bilinmeyen_numaralar.html [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

Here, the transformation of the norms of scientific discourse is criticized on the grounds that they are reflections of a false scientific reading. In his article, Türker refers to a document –written by a trans-gender researcher - which argues that homosexuality is as natural for human beings as it is for animals and tries to falsify it with counter arguments from “heterosexual and faithful scientists”. Thus, he criticizes counter-scientific arguments for being a tool of a corrupted plan which aims at eliminating “societal values that ostracize homosexuality”. In this manner, he presents exclusion as a normative requirement. Ironically, scientific discourse is re-mobilized in order to repudiate inclusionary scientific norms by referring to abjecting others. On the other hand, the claim that science is a political tactic does not explain why the exclusionary values should be preserved. It is the religious discourse which clarifies the reason behind this necessity and essentially classifies homosexuals as the abjects. Thus, what is at stake is the interpenetration of the norms of scientific discourse with those of religious one.

Accordingly, the Muslim actors of the debate refer to scientific data in order to emphasize the “abnormality” of homosexuality. This data that is presented by “scientists” (who also write columns regarding the issue) mainly refer to the exclusion of LGBTs by their families and suicide rates in the LGBT community as a proof of homosexuals’ perversion. Pedagogue Adem Güneş argues that if homosexuality would have been a normal way of life it would not cause “self-disgust” for LGBTs and they would not be excluded by their families and spouses:

If homosexuality were something normal, then homosexuals would not complain about their situation. However, therapy sessions show that people who display homosexual behaviors are disgusted by their own situation and they ask for help in vain. If homosexuality were a normal behavior, parents of homosexuals,

upon the news of their children's being homosexual, would not be devastated as if they were shot by guns, and the rest of their lives would not turn into a nightmare. If homosexuality were a normal behavior, then a woman would not be bothered to learn that her husband is homosexual; she would accept him in that way.²⁶⁶

As a therapist who has the authority to speak of the mental conditions of his patients, Güneş declares that homosexuality is an abnormal condition which makes the lives of both LGBTs and their families unbearable and miserable. To prove his position, he argues that “homosexuals themselves” beg for help to be recovered from their disgusting situation. Similarly, Dr. Ahmet Emin Seyhan, emphasizing the degree of abnormality of homosexuality, refers to suicide rates among LGBT individuals and argues that “since life becomes unbearable for many homosexuals, they commit suicide”.²⁶⁷ In these statements, the boundaries of normality are defined by *scientifically* identifying what the abnormal is. Within the discursive frame of science, the problems experienced by LGBT's are presented as consequences of their abnormality. It can be argued that such a discursive tactic totally denies the possible negative effects of “norms of exclusion” on LGBTs. Thus, arguing that if they would have been normal individuals they would not be excluded or commit suicide, homophobia is both justified and reproduced as a norm of scientific discourse.

²⁶⁶ Adem Güneş. 16 March 2010. Eşcinsellik ile ilgili haberler çocuk ruh sağlığına nasıl tesir eder?. Available [online]: <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=962034&title=yorum-adem-gunes-escinsellikle-ilgili-haberler-cocuk-ruh-sagligina-nasil-tesir-eder&haberSayfa=1> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁶⁷ Seyhan, Eşcinsellik Tedavisi Mümkün Olan Bir Sapkınlıktır.

Position of Scientific Authority

A further point which should be taken into consideration in the above mentioned arguments is that scientific discourse is either used by doctors, therapists, pedagogues who occupy the position of expert or other Muslim actors who justify their arguments with reference to the former. Since the arguments that refer to abnormal status of homosexuality are effects of a specific discursive formation, the issue at stake is a matter of who does the speaking and who has the right to use this language gains more importance.²⁶⁸ Foucault argues with regard to scientific discourse that “[s]cience is not linked with that which must have been lived, or must be lived, but with that which must have been said if a discourse is to exist”.²⁶⁹ With regard to the way scientific discourse is used within the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, it can be argued that the position of expert does not only provide the Muslim actors with the possibility of determining what is normal and abnormal. It also provides them with the opportunity of stretching and changing the meanings of concepts creating new pseudo-scientific categories and presenting them as the *scientific truth*. With respect to the mobilization of pseudo-scientific conceptions, Agamben argues that this is a deliberate strategy developed with the aim of “political control”.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 56.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 202.

²⁷⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, pp. 8.

This authority position which stems from the strategic engagement with scientific discourse can be observed in the attempts to redefine concepts such as homosexuality and homophobia in accordance with the discursive space of the debate. The tendency to define homosexuality and homophobia in heteronormative ways which are disguised under the impression of scientificism can especially be observed in the declarations and articles of Muslim columnists with an academic title. Neuro-psychiatrist, Prof. Dr. Nevzat Tarhan's definition of homosexuality and homophobia might be illuminating to show how the question of 'who does the speaking?' is linked to 'what can be said':

Homosexuality is a deviant sexual choice; there is no homosexuality gene, just like there is no pedophilia (sexual interest in children) gene. Homosexuals who say "I have been raised this way" would be more legitimate than those who say "I have been created this way". It is not homophobia to argue that homosexuality is not a natural choice, nor to discuss the social problems that would occur in the case the majority of the population would have been homosexuals. To struggle with those who are sexually appealed to same sex kids is not homophobia. But to humiliate homosexuals is homophobia and it is wrong.²⁷¹

These statements by Tarhan were quoted by various actors of Islam vs. homosexuality debate.²⁷² Here, Tarhan, thanks to his expert position, defines homosexuality as a 'choice' which is the result of "social learning" and limits the definition of homophobia to humiliating LGBTs, keeping various discriminatory statements against LGBTs exempt from homophobia. From this perspective, it would not be misleading to argue that this scientific strategy has a double effect in the process of the debate. Firstly, it *proves* that homosexuality is not a natural state of being but a bad choice; and secondly,

²⁷¹ Nevzat Tarhan. 15. May 2009. Eşcinsellik, Kazıklı Voyvoda ve Şiddet. Available [online]: <http://www.haber7.com/haber/20090515/Escinsellik-kazikli-Voyvoda-ve-siddet.php> [23.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁷²Fuat Türker. Bilinmeyen Numaralar.

it confirms that the Muslims who are involved in the debate are not homophobes but rather responsible individuals.

Scientific/medical discourse: Pathologization of homosexuality

Despite the disagreement between certain actors of the debate, it can be argued that the majority of them believe that in order to analyze the level of abnormality of homosexuality the reference points should be both religion and science. Since the scientific discourse is mobilized in order to present homosexuality as a “sickness”, medical discourse is the most used scientific discourse. Even though religion and medicine function through different terminologies which may also contradict each other, medical discourse was mobilized by Muslim actors of the debate in a way complementary to religious discursive strategies. From the Islamic perspective sin is a wrongdoing which only affects the person who commits it. However, the concept of sickness might have broader connotations. The sick person is not the only one who will be affected; thus, she can endanger a broader group of people.

With regard to this commonality of the object of religion and medicine, Foucault mentions that perverted sexuality ceases to be a concern of religion only; it also enters into the domain of medicine.²⁷³ He concludes in the *History of Sexuality* that the “sexual domain was no longer accounted for simply by notions of error or sin, excess or

²⁷³ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 67.

transgression but was placed under the rule of normal and pathological”.²⁷⁴ Thus, it becomes a pathology on which medicine can use its expertise and cure it.

Since the source of medical knowledge cannot be an ordinary person and the doctor has a special position,²⁷⁵ medical discourse has an effect on “who we can be”.²⁷⁶ In other words, it might be functional in the formation of new subjectivities and objects. Within the homosexuality debate it is used to reproduce homosexual subjectivity as an “abnormal and extraordinary threat” which directly confronts the ‘heterosexual-healthy-normal’ Muslim subject.

An extraordinary and dangerous sickness

Even though they complement one another, each and every discursive strategy used in the debate has its own individual effects. However, they have one effect in common which is also the major function of the discursive space created in the process of homosexuality debate: emphasizing the “extraordinary abnormality” of homosexuality or its distance from the *normal*. As it is illustrated before, the position of sickness is attributed to LGBTs for this purpose. What is important here is that it is not regarded as an ordinary sickness just as it is not categorized as an ordinary sin (by the most of the actors of the debate). In fact, the sicknesses to which homosexuality is compared and equalized are mainly the psychological illnesses which involve a “great perversion”

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 57.

²⁷⁶ McHoul and Grace, p. 31.

from normal human behavior and cause “great damage” for both the sick person and the rest of the society. In this regard, homosexuality is classified within the group of mental disorders such as zoophilia, fetishism, kleptomania, narcissism and it is directly equalized to pedophilia.²⁷⁷ In order to point to the excessive perversion of LGBTs, it is argued by Prof. Dr. Nevzat Tarhan that homosexual pedophilia is the most observed type of homosexuality.²⁷⁸

The danger caused by homosexuality is also emphasized by aligning it to sadism. Ali Bulaç (who is a Muslim columnist and writer, known by his critiques of discrimination and support for equality) was one of the first public figures who publicly announced that homosexuality is inclined to sadism. Even though, he did not personally take place within the debate that took place in 2010, his arguments were referred by various Muslim columnists. Even the question whether he was right or wrong constituted one of the minor discussion topics within the debate.²⁷⁹ He declared the sadism argument in a live TV show “Reha Muhtar’la Çok Farklı” in 2009:

As homosexuality *develops*, mass murders increase. There is a correlation between homosexuality and civilian killings in wars. When they cannot take the chance to fight in legitimate ways, they resort to mass murder. It is said that majority of those who kill the civilian population in Iraq and Afghanistan are

²⁷⁷ For examples of how homosexuality is equated to various mental illness see Yağcı; Erdeğer. Ahmet Özsöz from MAZLUMDER also refers homosexuality as a sickness. Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author.

²⁷⁸ Nevzat Tarhan. Eşcinsellik, Kazıklı Voyvoda ve Şiddet. (My emphasis)

²⁷⁹ For an evaluation of Bulaç’s declaration see Yıldırım Türker; Serdar Arseven. 10 April 2010. “Nereye, nereye?..”. Available [online]: <http://www.habervakti.com/?id=3198&page=articles> [25.06.2012]; Mehmet Hüsrevoğlu. 14 April 2010. “Eşcinsellik”. Available [online]: <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/medya/escinsellik/> [25.06.2012].

homosexuals. And they get special pleasure from this. This is an issue related to deep mental traumas.²⁸⁰

From this perspective it can be argued that by the mobilization of medical discourse LGBTs are not only presented as sick people. The homosexual as an object of discourse is recreated as a “violent” person whose nature is “extremely distorted” and who is inclined to “sadistic murders”. Referring to medical discourse and framing LGBTs as mentally distorted people, Bulaç grounds his assumption that LGBT’s are prone to violence on scientific grounds. In this manner, one can argue, the position of the Muslim columnists and Islamic CSOs is rendered necessary and the essentiality of standing up against homosexuality which possibly leads to violence is justified.

In a cyclical way, this pseudo medical diagnosis (the linkage of sodomite pleasure and the one taken from killing) is used to blame the murders and harassments in Abu Ghraib on LGBTs. In contrast with these arguments, Judith Butler brilliantly concludes that the torture that took place in Abu Ghraib prison is the reflection of “a situation in which the Islamic taboo against homosexual acts works in perfect concert with homophobia within the US military”.²⁸¹ She argues that neither the “missiles launched against Iraq on which American soldiers had written ‘up your ass’” nor the fact that US soldiers forced the “prisoners into acts of sodomy” show that these soldiers were homosexuals. These acts rather reflect homophobia of Western soldiers who use Muslim homophobia as a provocation and torture strategy. It should also be noted that in these acts US soldiers always framed themselves as the “penetrator” who is “on top”. Thus,

²⁸⁰ Radikal, 14 April 2009. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=935866&Date=14.05.2009&CategoryID=77> [25.06.2012]. (My emphasis). See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁸¹ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 90.

what was at stake is not sadistic homosexuals but homophobic heterosexuals who attempted at degrading Muslims by implying that they are “penetrable”.

However, this line of argument is excluded within the debate. As an effect of the linkage of religious and scientific discourse, how homosexual intercourse is used as a means to “degrade” captive Iraqis is denied and the homophobic American soldiers are presented as “homosexual psychopaths”. This line of argumentation demonstrates that discourses do not only create their objects. Since they determine the possible ways of thinking and speaking about certain objects, they also manipulate the perception of reality and create their own truths. In this way, Muslim subjects can speak about the instances of violent torture as the deeds of homosexuals in the US army rather than considering these instances as effects of homophobia.

A sickness Which can be Fixed

The last, but not the least effect of scientific/medical discourse which will be discussed in this section is that pathologization of homosexuality provides the expert with the opportunity of suggesting treatment to this “problem”. In other words, regarding it to be a sickness, rather than a natural inclination, enables efforts to bring LGBTs back to normal. The most prominent reference point of Muslim columnists who claim that homosexuality can be treated through “scientific methods” is the book, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*, of Dr. Joseph Nicolasi, founder of National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality. Nicolasi claims that through therapy he can cure homosexuality, diminish a person’s “unwanted homosexuality” and

develop his “heterosexual potential”.²⁸² Similarly, Turkish psychologist Cem Keçe argues in his book *Eşcinsellik Kader Değildir* (Homosexuality is No Destiny) that homosexuality can be cured through therapy just like smoking addiction.²⁸³ These arguments have also been referred within the homosexuality debate. Following “reparative treatment” thesis of Nicolasi, Ahmet Emin Seyhan argued that reparative treatment can be the solution for the homosexuality “threat” in Turkey:

The presence of ‘National Association for Research and Treatment of Homosexuality’ in USA is a proof of the necessity to rehabilitate those who were caught to this abnormal situation. Psychologists and psychiatrists should be educated in order to treat these people, and the therapy should become widespread.²⁸⁴

Here, homosexuality turns out to be an object of medical discourse, on which experts have to have a say; and cyclically the existence of “experts” on treatment of homosexuality proves that they are sick and have to be cured. Interestingly enough, homosexuality is presented as a sickness from which one can recover through medical help, rather than a permanent condition. However, to argue that the medical discourse is turning LGBTs into patients who need immediate medical treatments would not be sufficient to illustrate its effects. In order to develop a full-fledged understanding of this expert-patient relationship, it is necessary to analyze the concepts around which it is built. It can be argued that the word “reparative” might shed light upon the dynamics of this relationship. In order to be repaired, something has to be deformed, distorted. In

²⁸² Joseph Nicolasi. December 2009. Living in Harmony with One’s Biological Design: Interview with an Ex-Gay Man.. Available [online]: <http://www.josephnicolosi.com/living-in-harmony-with-ones/> [24.06.2012].

²⁸³ A. Cem Keçe, *Eşcinsellik Kader Değildir* (Ankara: Ütopya Grafik, 2009), p. 10.

²⁸⁴ Seyhan. *Eşcinsellik Tedavisi Mümkün Olan Bir Sapkınlıktır*. See Appendix for the original quote.

other words homosexuality is perceived as a deformation which has to be re-formed in a way which would not disturb the perception of “normal and healthy person”. The diagnosis of deformation gives other people the opportunity to intervene and correct the wrong.

The rehabilitation argument is also used as a means to ground abjecting arguments which propose “punishing” LGBTs until they “give up” homosexuality. Put differently, the assumption that homosexuality can be rehabilitated by medical experts, paves the path for apartheid, at least until they are rehabilitated. In fact, one of the main proposals of a number of members of Islamic CSOs and media members is to keep LGBT individuals somewhere in refuge, which was a very common Nazi tactic used for populations casted as useless,²⁸⁵ until they are recovered:

Punishment for being lesbian is home arrest for women. In a sense, it is a material and spiritual rehabilitation through putting the woman in a setting of surveillance and control that would prevent her from acting in this way. If they repent, then this situation would dissolve. There would be no problem, she would become normal and she would have a normal relationship. That is, getting married with a man. This is what the normal is. In Islam, there is both physical and verbal harm to be done to those who committed sodomy. The goal is to make them to give up their disgusting deeds.²⁸⁶

This discursive strategy perfectly exemplifies the extent to which religious and medical discourses can be interpenetrated. What is interesting here is that even though the discourse of rehabilitation belongs to the realm of medical discourse, neither the method of rehabilitation nor the end decision belongs to medical experts. Kutluoğlu concludes

²⁸⁵ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 141.

²⁸⁶ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. See Appendix for the original quote.

that methods such as “imprisonment” and “hurting both physically and spiritually” should be used. She also proposes that rehabilitation would be effective if the homosexual “repents and asks for god’s forgiveness” and “gets married”. From that perspective, it can be argued that medical discourse does not only frame LGBTTs as individuals who need to be saved but it also provides its heterosexual subjects with the possibility to determine *the ways* of saving them. In this way homophobia of the “Muslim party” of the debate is reformulated as a necessary “rescue” strategy.

Protection of Society as a Discourse: Criminalization of homosexuality

Regarding the above mentioned discussions, it can be argued that both bodies of arguments (presenting homosexuality as either a sin or a sickness) emphasize the “perverted”, “distorted” nature of LGBTTs. However, the discursive redefinition of homosexuality does not only concern the ‘true nature of human beings’ or “biological normality”. In fact, it would not be misleading to argue that, within the framework of homosexuality debate in Turkey, the good old ‘nature vs. nurture’ binary ceases to be a matter of discussion. It can be observed in the discourses used by Islamic civil society and Muslim columnists that homosexuality is regarded as a biological anomaly which is also shaped by nurture and that it effects society. Thus, not only a biological hierarchy is established between LGBTs and heterosexual members of the Turkish society. Since LGBTs are framed as the exact opposite of normal (in terms of fitting into the main sexual categories in which god created human beings) and healthy individuals, a social hierarchy is established between them and the rest of the society as well.

Sedgwick argues that in the distribution of hierarchical relations, symmetrical binary categories are created through discourses and one category of this binary opposition is valorized at the expense of the other.²⁸⁷ It can be argued that the binary opposition established between gay and non-gay individuals does not only degrade LGBTs but it also turns them into a threat for the normal and healthy portion of the society. They become a source of fear since it is believed that their existence and visibility might cause harm to the rest of the society unless it is protected. Julia Kristeva concludes that this kind of fear results in abjecting the threatening other by the normal and valorized.²⁸⁸ In accordance with Kristeva's theory, it can be observed in the discursive framework of the debate that LGBTs are presented as threats to social norms, and finally, as criminals.

A Dangerous Threat to Society

Homosexuality is not defined as an ordinary abnormality but an extraordinary perversion. This excessiveness which disregards the boundaries of norms is identified as a serious threat for the norms of the society. Considering the violent acts against LGBTs in Indonesia, Tom Boelstorff argues that such a perception of threat is one of the characteristics of homophobia. According to him "homophobia links Western

²⁸⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 10.

²⁸⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Rodrigues (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 17, 45.

conceptions of shamed self and threatened society”.²⁸⁹ From that perspective it can be argued that such a specific conceptualization of threat is a discursive strategy which reproduces non-homosexual subjects as the victims; and thus, legitimizes homophobia as a protection strategy. In the course of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, homosexuality was directly formulated as an “attack” to Muslim society. Kenan Alpay, the vice-president of Özgür-Der,²⁹⁰ presented this perception as the reason why Muslims cannot accept homosexuality:

It is impossible to ignore, let alone defend, these immoral publications and relationships which try to turn women, men, children and all of the society into sexual objects and sex addicts. What is rational and moral is to fight with these irrational and immoral attacks [...] They want us to consent to the disgusting attack against Islam, morality and human ‘*fitrat*’. To expect us to show respect, love and tolerance to disgusting sins, irrational deviances, addictions that hurt conscience, which are propagated under such names as gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., even to force us to do so, is an extreme act of inelegance.²⁹¹

As can be observed in the above mentioned discussions reframing homosexuality as “a disgusting attack on Islam, morality and *fitrat* of humanity” was a common strategy in the course of the debate. What is worthy of further attention in Alpay’s declaration is his call for “struggling against homosexuality rather than accepting it” and the presentation of this call as “the reasonable and moral way” to deal with homosexuality.

²⁸⁹ Tom Boellstorff, “The Emergence of Political Homophobia in Indonesia: Masculinity and National Belonging”, *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 69, no. 4 (August 2006), p. 472.

²⁹⁰ Özgür-Der is one of the signatory CSOs which supported Kavaf’s declaration. For information about activities of the organization see Özgür-Der’s official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.ozgurder.org/v2/index.php> [27.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

²⁹¹ Özgür-Der. 10 March 2010. İnsan ve Fitratına Yönelik Ahlaksız Bir Tuzak Kuruyorlar!. Available [online]: http://www.eminesenlikoglu.org/14594_OZGUR-DER--%E2%80%9CEscinsellik-Lobileri-Insan-Fitratina-Tuzak-Kuruyorlar!%E2%80%9D.html [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

In the above mentioned article, he defines homosexuality as an “irrational addiction” and LGBTs as “enemies of reason” who try to make the whole society “sex addicts”; thus, they cannot be “respected”, “loved” or “tolerated”.

Thus, the liberal conceptions of “reason” and “morality” are invoked and any other way to approach the “threat” posed by homosexuality is deemed unreasonable. Scottish enlightenment thinkers idealized civil society as a sphere grounded on the rational response to the despotism of the state. Tocqueville similarly projected that individuals’ rationality will lead them to cooperate.²⁹² Thus, individuals are expected to be limited with ‘rationality’. Therefore the legitimacy of people’s actions relies upon their rationality. However, liberal theoreticians do not concretely explain what is meant by “reason”. On the other hand, it is made clear that “morality” is intrinsic to the functioning of rational civil society.²⁹³ This dimension gives civil society its rational and collective consciousness. In the case of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate the very same values are mobilized in an exclusionary way to frame homosexuality as the exact opposite of rationality and morality. As Meeks argues “moral codes offer universal inclusiveness in principle but not in reality”.²⁹⁴ In fact, these values help us to interpret “activism, autonomy, rationality, and sanity, for example, as qualities connoting

²⁹² De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

²⁹³ Alexander, Jeffrey. "Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society." In *Cultivating Difference: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequalities* edited by Michele Lamont and Marcel Fourier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 289-308, qtd. in Meeks, p. 333; Can, p. 21; Perez Diaz, p. 95.

²⁹⁴ Meeks, p. 333.

citizenship and democracy, whereas passivity, dependence, irrationality, and madness are characteristic of enemies”.²⁹⁵

Even though many actors of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate are critical about liberal ideology, it can be argued that the conceptions of reason and morality are mobilized within the discourse of society in the same way as Alexander explains. Alpay does not explain what he means by reason. But within the whole discourse of society it appears that what is moral is also reasonable. Through this discursive strategy both the object and subject of discourse gains a new form. On the one hand, homosexuality is presented as the materialized form of immorality; thus, it is positioned in contrast to reason. It is defined as “an attack on social order, human rights and nature” and “a threat for mental health of young population”. In other words LGBTT individuals are considered to be the natural enemies of the society and ‘normal’ population. Thus, while the “Muslim party” of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate assumed the position of threatened victims, LGBTs are left with the forced status of criminals. In fact, homosexuality is very often compared to such crimes as theft²⁹⁶ and use of illegal drugs.²⁹⁷

In *Frames of War*, Butler argues that “[i]f one is “framed”, then a “frame” is constructed around one’s deed such that one’s guilty status becomes the viewer’s inevitable conclusion”.²⁹⁸ She explains that a certain “way of organizing and presenting

²⁹⁵ Alexander qtd. in Meeks, p. 333.

²⁹⁶ Fuat Türker. Bilinmeyen Numaralar.

²⁹⁷ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor.

²⁹⁸ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 8.

a deed leads to an interpretive conclusion about the deed itself”.²⁹⁹ From that perspective, it can be argued that the discourse which is built upon an “assumed threat” posed by homosexuality, reflects a logic which first announces LGBTs as possible criminals than decides that they are, in fact, criminals who should be struggled against.

In this manner, any other ways of “dealing with” homosexuality is excluded from the possibilities that discourse provides its subjects with. In fact, it is argued that anyone who does not accept homosexuality as a threat, is also a threat since she fosters immorality in society. In this way, anti-homophobic individuals are blamed for legitimizing a dangerous threat and the state is criticized for not taking necessary precautions and opening the path for legitimization of this threat.³⁰⁰ For instance, according to Kutluoğlu the issue of homosexuality is presented “from the perspective of human rights, individual rights and freedoms in order to achieve legitimacy; thus, it juxtaposes *halal* and *haram* (something forbidden by Islam)”.³⁰¹ Similarly, from Ahmet Özsöz’s (from MAZLUMDER) perspective, legitimization of homosexuality means embracing a defect, which turned out to be an identity, as if it is a normal life style.³⁰² Thus, it can be argued that the discourse of threat establishes a hierarchical relationship between the “victim” and the “enemy”; thus, legitimizes the mechanisms of abjection.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author.

Value loss

It can be argued that in order to analyze the effects of the discourse of ‘protection of society’, it is worth paying attention to what is meant to be “conserved” by protecting the society, what kind of a society is trying to be defended and whether there is a cost of doing that. In this way, how the “society” is reconceptualized in discursive framework of the debate as one of the objects of the discourse might be understood.

One of the most important characteristics of the specific definition of society in the debate is that it is regarded as an entity which is “open to degeneration”. The “loss of spiritual values” is regarded as the reason behind this degeneration. Thus, the declared reason behind the necessity of protecting the society is meant to conserve the “traditional” values and norms of the society. Fuat Türker expresses his preoccupation with the possibility of degeneration of society arguing that value loss is confused with freedom in such a way as to endanger society:

Even though homosexuality is considered to be a liberty, especially among the youth, it is not; it is the loss of certain values. While sexual freedom is supported in the name of science, social and psychological norms should not be violated.³⁰³

When the concept of value loss is considered within the discursive framework of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, it can be argued that what is feared is not actually *loss* of the values but their *replacement* with new ones. It is believed that acceptance of homosexuality would replace the traditional values and allow other norms to penetrate

³⁰³ Fuat Türker. Bilinmeyen Numaralar. See Appendix for the original quote.

into the society - such as freedom and equality which can be understood and practiced in ways challenging the discursive possibilities of thinking about society.

The value loss is usually associated with internalizing “European values” and the effect of media; and legitimizing homosexuality is associated with betraying one’s own spiritual values. This understanding presupposes that homosexuality is the key for value change. Fatma Kutluoğlu underlines the specific place of homosexuality in Western values:

In the issue of smoking-ban, Europe raised up, saying that “smoking is extremely harmful to health”. This was a fair reaction to smoking which of course threatens human health. But very interestingly, the same Europe does not even show a thousandth of these reactions to any of the hideousness, perversion that destroys the continuation of human race and ‘*fitrat*’. On the contrary, it tries to legalize these.³⁰⁴

Brian Whitaker claims that the tendency to attribute existence of homosexuality to Western influence is a general phenomenon in Muslim societies. He argues that “the existence of homosexuality is either denied or it’s treated as a subject for ribald laughter or a foul, unnatural, repulsive, un-Islamic, Western perversion”.³⁰⁵ This way of thinking implies that homosexuality is not a feature which can be found in Muslim societies but it is the emulation of European life style. In this way, Muslim and homosexual subjects are categorized as mutually exclusive groups. Thus, a subjectivity which combines Muslimhood and homosexuality in itself is excluded.

³⁰⁴ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁰⁵ Brian Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, (University of California Press, 2006), p. 9.

In this discursive framework, homosexual subject is reproduced as a tactic to attack Islam and a means of commodifying sexuality. This subject poses a threat to the “privacy” (*mahremiyet*) in the society and “family”. Such a definition of homosexual subject also brings about the redefinition of Muslim subject as the protector of the institutions of family and society. Thus, this situation invests Muslims with the responsibility to warn the society about dangers posed by the Western values such as secularism and capitalism which use homosexuality as a conspiracy strategy. The position of Kutluoğlu within the debate can be read as an effect of this subject formation:

The fact that Europe has a secular mentality makes it consider all issues from the perspective of human rights and liberties, and commodifies people. Individuals, becoming sexual objects, think that they can do whatever they want under the name of freedom. However, when Abrahamic religions are considered, fundamental criteria and values are set forth by Allah. Allah is the one who creates, who sets the fundamental balance for the human beings to sustain their ‘*fitrat*’, and this is our reference in our actions. In a secular mentality, however, it is not Allah who sets the criteria. The individual sets the framework, the parameter. Then she may idolize her desires; that is the very depravement, rottenness and deviance of the self.³⁰⁶

In a similar way to Kutluğlu’s conclusion, Ahmet Özsöz argues that what is at stake is a secular dehumanization which is supported by capitalism and puts women’s and men’s sexualities into the service of capitalist consumption.³⁰⁷ From that perspective, it can be argued that the discourse of protection of society goes beyond the limits of “Islam vs. homosexuality” dichotomy. The concern, here, are the rules through which society functions and the authority that determines these rules. What is to be protected is not the

³⁰⁶ Yağcı. Bütün Semavi Dinler Eşcinselliği Lanetliyor. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁰⁷ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author.

existing society with all its complex elements but an “understanding of society whose rules are determined by god”. What is interesting here is that the liberal values such as rights and freedoms, which are invoked to a great extent with regard to the rights and freedoms of Muslims, are abandoned as they are perceived as possible legitimization mechanisms of the rights claims of LGBTs. Since homosexuality and its “legitimization” are regarded as the most advanced types of commodification of sexuality, LGBTs’ rights happen to point to the limits of rights discourse.

Süheyl Ögüt, on the other hand, reads the story of commodification as a tactic of bio-politics rather than as a result of liberal rights and freedoms discourse. He argues that homosexuality is created by secular democrats through strategies of bio-politics and people are transformed into a biological bulk, ‘zoe’:

State, via biopolitics, intruded to our bedrooms, our private spheres. Homosexual, feminist, liberal movements tried to take the bedroom, the private into the public sphere. It was always the privacy that got wounded. Now, in a general setting of concentration camps, our privacy has no meaning. The hegemonic power created a category named “homosexual”, in order to suppress it. However, those who resist this [suppression], make politics through the same identification [...] When you identify yourself with your bedroom, you end up identifying yourself with your biological attributes, with your sexuality, with your naked self. Its counterpart in Greek philosophy is ‘zoe’, it is used for animals in the political theory. The man in the concentration camp, the Armenian in deportation are cases of zoe. Thus, what we suffer from the hegemonic power is basically that it reduces us into zoe. When you fight against this, you should say “No, I am not zoe”.³⁰⁸

Despite the fact that the actors’ approaches to the issue might change with regard to their theoretical references, their statements are framed around two common concepts:

³⁰⁸ Fadime Özkan. Eşcinsellik Hastalık Değil Günah ama Zulüm Yasak. See Appendix for the original quote.

secularism and capitalism. The emphasis put on these concepts demonstrate that the existence of LGBTs is thought to be manipulated by different types of power. Ögüt also tries to show this to the LGBTs themselves. They are invited not to become the objects of secular and capitalist discourses.

It can be argued that Ögüt's argumentation is problematic in two ways. First of all, the escape strategy (from discourses of secularism and capitalism) that he offers LGBTs directly makes them objects of religious discourse. Thus, his critique of discursive formations points to a selective resistance strategy rather than a comprehensive one. Secondly, from a theoretical perspective, it might be argued that such a reading of Foucault and Agamben is a misleading one. First of all, Foucault argues that it is homosexuality as 'perverted category' that is *created* by bio-politics, not homosexuality *per se*. He argues that "[s]odomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species".³⁰⁹ Accordingly, Agamben concludes that zoe is a deliberate politicization of "*always already* bare life"³¹⁰ through an "intimate symbiosis not only with the jurist but also with the doctor, the scientist, the expert and the priest".³¹¹ In other words, bio-politics invented neither the homosexual nor zoe. However, it *politicized* them - with the help of medical, scientific and religious discourses - as categories whose homicide is not punishable. It included them into politics in an exclusionary way. Thus, it can be argued that such a protection strategy which relies upon Ögüt's reading of Foucault and Agamben tends to totally deny the

³⁰⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 43.

³¹⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 7.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122. (My emphasis)

existence of homosexuality in order to fight with bio-power. Rather than questioning the argument of perversion he aims at making it invisible through bio-power since he also thinks that homosexuality is a “perversion from the path of God”.³¹²

The authoritarian other

The discursive formations affect not only their objects but also the subjects and subject positions. How the categories of “Muslim” and “Islam” had to be reformulated (along with homosexuality and LGBTs) within the discursive possibilities of the debate has been discussed in this chapter from several different aspects. It can be argued that a new Muslim subjectivity is also formed, which I call the “authoritarian other”.

The political subjectivity of the *Muslim party* of the debate is reconstructed as the victims – those who have been abjected and suppressed by the republican elite and Kemalists - of power relations. However, the victim status is not accorded to every Muslim individual. The debate affected an inside/outside dichotomy within the Islam. Muslims, who refuse to take part in the process of politicization of homophobia as an element of Islam, are regarded as representatives of a distorted version of Islam. In this way, the “real Muslims” secure two positions which are expected to be in conflict with each other: the position of victim/other and the authority that decides upon the true definition of Islam as well as those of homosexuality and homophobia. While the first position gives this Muslim subject the opportunity to criticize the discriminatory

³¹² Fadime Özkan. Eşcinsellik Hastalık Değil Günah ama Zulüm Yasak.

practices of the secular regime, the second one puts her in a position which is no less discriminatory than the secular elite which she is criticizing.

As a result of this second position, boundaries of “real Islam” are determined in a specific way which excludes certain Muslims, such as Ayhan Bilgen, the former president of MAZLUMDER. It is argued that the like of Bilgen are liberalized and are exempt from the discrimination exerted by the secular regime against Muslims. For that reason, “they do not have a say” on the issue of homosexuality as a matter of religious concern. For example, İsmail Yaprak argues that it does not make any sense to cite Bilgen as proof of the fact that Muslims can also support homosexuals because Bilgen is not a Muslim “in that sense”:

Homosexuality is prohibited also in this world (as much as you try to stretch it, your main target is those who does not show any stretching). Those who make new interpretations on Quran, people with heterodox piety are not “Muslims” in that sense. Yıldırım Türker’s example of Ayhan Bilgen is quite meaningless and empty. Because Ayhan Bilgen is not a Muslim in that sense, he stretched Islam, he interpreted it in a heterodox way. In a sense, he turned it into something Türker would want... That is why we should not look at Bilgen, or at Büşra who kisses in front of the Atatürk statue, but to Hilal Kaplan. For she is our cockroach, our shadow, our Other, our id. In the moment we say “OK, from now on Muslims too will swim naked and they will not disrupt the scenery”, she is the thing that appears as Jaws... It is the call of “Allahuekber” in the moment you shout “Freedom to homosexuals!”.³¹³

In this text, Yaprak explains why Bilgen should not be regarded as a real Muslim. Since Bilgen stretched Islam, and interpreted it in a heterodox way, he is respected by “liberals” such as Yıldırım Türker (a columnist in Radikal, who also involved in the

³¹³ İsmail Yaprak. 31 May 2010. Zor Metin Eğlencelidir. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/zor-metin-eglencelidir.htm> [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

debate to criticize homophobic positions). Thus, he does not suffer from discrimination as “real Muslims” do; he is not the “other” of society starting from the moment he interpreted Islam in a way that supported homosexuals. For this reason, Yaprak suggests discussing the position of Kaplan instead of Bilgen’s in order to understand the Muslims’ real position on the issue of homosexuality, because she is the one who speaks with the words of “real Islam” and the one who became the “other”, the “cockroach” of society for this reason.

Thus, Yaprak assumes a self-proclaimed position thanks to which he can decide who is the real Muslim, what is real Islam, and who is the one discriminated against, ‘the other’, in the society. He is being critical of the state because Muslims are abjected from ‘modern society’ because of their devotion to Islam. However, he does not realize that the practices of the “Muslim party” of the debate coincide with those whom they criticize for being discriminatory.

Such a political subjectivity might seem paradoxical. However, as long as it is considered from the perspective of power relations, it ceases to be an oxymoron. According to Foucault, power is not something that is invested in a certain authority or a group while certain others are deprived from it. It may emerge everywhere. Thus, the subjects might reverse the relations of power and open new discursive grounds which affect these relations. Considering the example of the “authoritarian other” it can be argued that the very discourse of “victimization” is used in such a way as to alter the positions of the subjects of the power relations. The victims re-operationalized the conception of “victim” to create hierarchical positions between “Muslims”, “homosexuals” and “pseudo-Muslims”.

CHAPTER V

CHALLENGES TO A PRE-DEFINED ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The previous discussions attempted to demonstrate that discourses and relations of power/knowledge are productive of new subjectivities within the realm of civil society. As opposed to the dynamic and contextual understanding of civil society as a site of power relations, the liberal paradigm prompts a definition of it which is always already cooperative. This conception of civil society ensures empowerment and mutual help among its actors.³¹⁴ According to thinkers such as Tocqueville and Habermas, such values as communication and solidarity are cultivated through participation in voluntary organizations.³¹⁵ Thus, the liberal tradition presupposes that CSOs have predetermined interests which lead them to act in accordance with universally accepted values which serve both individual and collective interests. However, the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate demonstrates that neither the identities nor the actions of CSOs are predictable. Their identities are dependent upon the context and upon actors in this context; thus their actions might be both cooperative and abjecting.

This chapter has two aims. My first aim is to show that CSOs’ actions regarding other groups in society are effects of power relations. Thus, their relations with other

³¹⁴ Fisher, p. 442.

³¹⁵ De Tocqueville, p. 510.

civil society actors cannot solely be explained with reference to solidarity established as a response to state and civil society opposition. In addition, even if solidarities can be established among them, this cooperation might not necessarily be a result of secular values such as pluralism and democracy. As we see in Islamic CSOs' organizational patterns, such solidarities can be based on other unifying concepts such as "justice" or "faith". The grounds of solidarity might be even more complex. They might be taking actions with direct reference to the liberal concepts such as human rights and freedoms; but, they define these concepts in a selective way as can be observed in the definition of human rights and lives in line with relations of bio-power and principles of governmentality. Briefly put, while we are analyzing CSOs, all these complexities have to be taken into consideration, instead of picturing voluntary organizations as "essential elements of equality" or "enemies of democracy". This discussion will be conducted in the first section of this chapter, referring to MAZLUMDER.

The second aim of this chapter is to discuss the productive capacity of discourses in more detail. As discussed earlier, the productiveness of discourses is not limited to subjects which are similar to each other; on the contrary, they produce a variety of opportunities including oppositional ones. Accordingly, the discursive space of the "Islam vs. homosexuality" debate demonstrated that similar discourses might affect different, even oppositional subject positions even if these subjects belong to the same historical and ideological backgrounds. An important characteristic of discourses is that they provide subjects (CSOs in this case) not only with limits, but also the possibility of choice. In this respect, the actors who speak and act from within the same discursive

formation might adopt different behavioral patterns. From this perspective I argue that picturing subjects as caught up in pre-established cultural conflicts, looking at different subjects in a never-ending conflict is as a misleading analysis of CSOs. In the second section of this chapter, I will engage into this second discussion with reference to two other Islamic CSOs, BKP and AKDER and Diyarbakır branch of MALZUMDER.

I argue that the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate illustrated that CSOs’ organizational attitudes are far more complex than the liberal “participation + cooperation = pluralism + freedom + democracy” equation. This equation harbors its own paradoxes such as creating a “good” and “bad” civil society dichotomy. Judith Butler, brilliantly argues that the liberal uses of democratic rights and freedoms can be mobilized to increase the precarity of groups who have already been exposed to arbitrary violence by others. Operating on these notions, groups who are presumed to be necessarily in conflict with each other, such as “sexual progressives” and Muslim immigrants, can be mobilized against each other for the sake of wider goals and with the aim of war.³¹⁶

By discussing Islamic civil society actors’ responses to homosexuality, I do not aim to support the largely accepted, but rarely questioned, Islam versus homosexuality dichotomy. First of all, as Deniz Ak from Kaos GL warns ,when asked about the relations between Muslim CSOs and LGBTs, that “we cannot classify Muslims and LGBTs as if they are essentially distinct entities, ignoring the intersections between

³¹⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 26.

them”.³¹⁷ Secondly, even if it is possible to mention two distinct civil society groups such as Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations, the encounters between these groups reveal a much more complex structural setting than the simple Islam versus homosexuality binary. Since the relations between Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations are a result of various power mechanisms and discourses, Islam is not the only defining factor. In other words, Islam cannot be singled out as the solely responsible factor for the discrimination against LGBTs. Such an approach would be jumping into the conclusion that there is an essential practical antagonism between “LGBTs” and “Muslims” from a taken for granted ideational antagonism. However, the debate demonstrates that a specific religious discourse, not religion *per se*, is still used by certain Islamic CSOs such as MAZLUMDER as a means for abjection.

The organizational identity of MAZLUMDER

MAZLUMDER was among the prominent actors of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. Indeed, due to the fact that MAZLUMDER members publicly supported the claims that took place in the letter addressed to Kavaf,³¹⁸ the homophobic activism of Islamic CSOs was mainly associated with this organization. The criticisms regarding the discriminatory attitude of CSOs mainly targeted MAZLUMDER due to the fact that it was known as a non-discriminatory organization which defends the rights and equality

³¹⁷ Deniz Ak, interview by author, İstanbul, Turkey, 10 November 2010.

³¹⁸ Bianet, 25 March 2010. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/biamag/bianet/120894-mazlumderde-insan-haklari-escinsel-deyince-bitiyor> [24.06.2012].

of all discriminated communities. It was thought as an Islamic CSO which does not determine its position according to the religious identities of the victims. For this reason, argues Yıldırım Türker, the fact that MAZLUMDER cooperated with other Islamic CSOs in discriminating against LGBTTs was heartbreaking:

The only disappointing point is the fact that Mazlum-Der, which has progressed so far both in its organization and its ability to make contact and alliance with different groups, and which we see as an assurance for the people of this country, has participated (first by its İstanbul branch, than by its president) in the letter that supports the Minister.³¹⁹

Similarly, Ümit Kıvanç asserts that the establishment of MAZLUMDER was a “historical moment” for a civil society which promises peaceful co-existence of differences.³²⁰ For this reason and owing to the fact that their human rights and solidarity discourses seem to fit the liberal characterization of CSOs, I have deliberately chosen MAZLUMDER among other signatories of the text as an example of a complex and context dependent CSOs. However, before discussing this hypothesis, it will be fruitful to illustrate the organizational characteristics of MAZLUMDER in order to analyze its general behavioral patterns and the shifts in these patterns depending on the context and other actors.

MAZLUMDER, established in 1991, defines itself as a human rights organization. While the head office of the association is in Ankara, it also has offices in Ağrı, Afyon, Akyazı, Batman, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hatay, İstanbul, İzmir,

³¹⁹ Yıldırım Türker. Müslüman’a En Büyük İmtihan. See Appendix for the original quote.

³²⁰ Ümit Kıvanç. 24 July 2010. ‘Günahtır ‘Derken On Kere Düşünmeli. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/umit-kivanc/makale-gunahtir-derken-on-kere-dusunmeli.htm> [23.06.2012].

Kayseri, Kocaeli, Konya, Kütahya, Malatya, Sakarya, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon, Uşak and Van. Thus, it is one of the oldest and most widespread religion-based organizations. In addition to its own offices, it collaborates with other domestic and foreign organizations in the field of human rights.

The foundation of the organization is based upon the principle of supporting human rights of all people without any double-standards.³²¹ According to the association's self-presentation, its basic mission can be defined as the protection and improvement of human rights and freedom inside and outside of Turkey, and the struggle for the termination of all kinds of human rights violations. In addition to these fundamental objectives, the aims of the organization are summarized as follows:

MAZLUMDER considers working in order to end all cruelties and all injustices on the earth, as a prerequisite for existing as human beings and living in a humane way. In this respect, it believes in the importance of a human rights struggle, with no double standards, no discriminations and standing up against any kind of unfair treatment, torture, humiliation, and rape, regardless of the identities of the oppressor and the victims.

With this understanding, MAZLUMDER adopts the motto "Whoever the oppressor is, we side with the oppressed whoever they are" as its principle, and it ignores the religious, ethnic, cultural, sexual, etc. identity differences of those who violate human rights (oppressors) or those whose rights are violated (oppressed). For MAZLUMDER believes in that "the identity of the oppressed may not be questioned"; and no matter who, with which goals, and against whom did it, "consent to oppression is also oppression".³²²

³²¹ MAZLUMDER. Biz Kimiz?. Available [online]: <http://mazlumder.beyaz.net/main/pages/hakkimizda-biz-kimiz/65> [24.06.2012].

³²² Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

In accordance with the above mentioned aims of the organization, MAZLUMDER claims that its actions are based on the principles of “equality and justice” and it believes in the “universality of human rights”. At this point it is worth noting that even though it mobilizes these liberal values, the organization makes a particular reading which assigns different meanings to them. For instance, its understanding of the universality of human rights constitutes a significant criticism of Eurocentric rights discourse, rather than accepting it as the ideal.

Different Conceptualizations of the Same Values

MAZLUMDER claims that definition of human rights must not be limited to their Western version since this understanding omits cultural differences and provides Western countries with the so-called right to interfere in the Muslim world and Far East. As a result of this critique they develop an understanding of human rights which is based upon “Islamic values” which should not be limited to traditional understandings of religion:

We also choose a different path as an organization that adopts viewpoint of its own civilization [...] When we observe human rights violations, when we fight against them, we think that our civilization forms the background of our actions. MAZLUMDER is an organization that conducts its human rights struggle in line with the civilization of the revelation [...] In this framework, we think that it is necessary to understand the revelation correctly and not to limit it to the traditional conception of religion.

Whole human rights acquis are valuable to us [...] We take it as our own. But we also have a reservation: Human rights violations are not limited to those you list. And we do not agree %100 with

this list, but we do agree %99 for we do not think that some of the actions you list are violations. However, we do regard many other actions [as human rights violations] while you do not.³²³

It can be argued that this specific definition of human rights presents a direct challenge to the liberal definition of civil society as a ground which harmonizes particular and universal interests.³²⁴ This is not only because harmonization of interests is not always possible as can be observed in the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. It is rather because “the cultural and normative underpinnings of civil society itself were thought to be relatively given and unproblematic”.³²⁵ Thus, liberal thinkers did not consider the possibility of a non-liberal definition of notions such as “universality” and “interest”. Put differently, they disregarded the possibility of attributing different values to liberal universal rights. Ahmet Özsöz exemplifies this possibility by arguing that the MAZLUMDER’s understanding of “equality” and “resistance” is significantly different from their meanings in the Western context:

The religious statement of the Muslim world is “lailahe illallah” [“there is no God but Allah”] It means that all people are equal, only Allah is great and he is the one and only [...] Today people in Africa say “Allahuekber” [“God is the greatest”] while shouting for their labor, for their bread, for their honor, and for their freedom [...] By saying “Allahuekber”, they say to Mubarek, Binali, Kaddafi, who had formed dictatorships over them, that “Even though you had patronized so far, only Allah is great [...] We are all equal”.³²⁶

³²³ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³²⁴ Lewis, p.1; Perez Diaz, p. 95; Tocqueville, pp. 510-517.

³²⁵ Meeks, p. 332.

³²⁶ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

What is interesting here is that Özsöz formulates both “equality” and “resistance” as responses to state despotism just as Scottish thinkers did. However, even though they serve the same end, their sources and definitions differ from the secular liberal conceptualization. For instance, equality is defined as “equality before god” while resistance is based on faith rather than a cooperative public sphere. However, it can be argued that the major difference of MAZLUMDER’s definition of human rights is that they base their rights claims on “justice” and “religious morality” rather than on “freedom” and “secular morality”:

We are talking about an understanding which considers human rights from the paradigm of justice, rather than the paradigm of liberties conveyed by the Western human rights discourse. If it is the window of liberties you are looking from, our conception of liberty is different than that of the West. Western civilization is a secular one [...] They compose the 2-3 percent of the world population [...] So we are talking about the conception of a society [...], whose percentage to the world population would not be higher than 3 percent, that is imposed on the remaining 97-88 percent. This is because they hold the financial resources in their hands [...] The rest has their beliefs, moral values, different conceptions. And they are human beings [...] If we ignore the conceptual world of the rest and take the conceptualization of the 3 percent as the absolute truth, it would not be fair.³²⁷

According to Ayşe Kadioğlu, “a sort of moralism [...] seemed like a barrier to MAZLUM-DER’s stance as an international human rights watch group and a civil society organization”.³²⁸ My aim here is not to demonstrate the extent to which

³²⁷ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

³²⁸ Kadioğlu, p. 36.

MAZLUMDER's understanding of human rights differentiates from the "Western ideal". On the contrary, I believe that the liberal definition is context-blind as Özsöz exemplifies. Moreover, different readings of human rights are possible and they might be quite comprehensive. In fact, MAZLUMDER's definition of human rights paves the path for various types of solidarities which makes it one of the prominent human rights organizations in Turkey; whereas it can also announce certain groups as the abject.

MAZLUMDER's understanding of solidarity

As can be expected from the missions it undertakes, MAZLUMDER has a very wide policy agenda dealing with human rights problems faced by minorities, children, women, refugees, prisoners, consumers, sick and disabled people, in addition to violations of freedom of conscience.³²⁹ As was discussed in Chapter III, the organization does not hesitate to take action if there is a human rights violation with regard to these groups. With respect to the organization's interest in such a variety of human rights violations, the motto of MAZLUMDER is 'Kim olursa olsun zalime karşı mazlunun yanında' (Whoever is the oppressor, we side with the oppressed).³³⁰ Thus, they have a universal claim regarding the rights of all downtrodden groups, no matter who the violator is. It can be argued that the subtext of this motto declares that MAZLUMDER

³²⁹ See MAZLUMDER's official web site for the areas of action: <http://mazlumder.org/>.

³³⁰ It is difficult to provide direct translations of concepts such as 'zalim' and 'mazlum' since they depend upon the notion of 'zulüm' which basically means cruelty but defined in religious terms. This notion will be discussed below.

would stand against anyone (even against its ideological or religious proponents) and defend the rights of any oppressed person or group; even if they happen to constitute a challenge to the ideology of the organization. However, the claim to support a universal human rights struggle appears to be a self-defeating one with respect to the rights of LGBT individuals. On this regard Melek Göregenli argues that “[i]n certain instances, representatives of Islamic civil society play an important role in the reproduction of discriminatory discourses”.³³¹ This is what is meant by arguing that CSOs do not have predetermined behavioral patterns or organizational identities. Even though they reproduce the human rights discourse and stand for the rights of all minorities, they might leave certain groups out in a way as to contribute to their precarity. That is why we have to problematize MAZLUMDER’s attitude with regard to LGBTs from a context and actor-dependent perspective rather than taking the CSOs for granted as the essential insurance of “human rights”.

In this respect, it is worth considering the recently gained strength of the LGBT movement in Turkey. Doğu Durgun draws attention to this characteristic of the Turkish context which led Islamic CSOs to take action against LGBTs:

These recently increased reactive attitudes, in a way, proves the power of the LGBT activism, which began to develop in 1990s and has become more visible in public sphere in 2000s thanks to the prides. Conservative-Muslim faction [of the society], who are concerned about the acquisitions of this power, feel compelled to produce a counter-discourse.³³²

³³¹ Göregenli and Özer, p. 222.

³³² Doğu Durgun. 14 August 2010. Ortaklaşamadığımız Gerçekte Ortaklaşmak. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/ortaklasamadigimiz-gercekte-ortaklasmak.htm> [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

Even though LGBTs are exposed to both institutional and social discriminations in the Turkish context, LGBT movement is very active in terms of taking action against discriminatory political and social developments. Since their establishment, they gained significant visibility; thus their existence cannot be denied any more. These developments are telling in that Islamic CSOs decided to take action against LGBTs in this context. Before the declaration of Kavaf which coincides with the gained visibility of LGBT movement, the CSOs which sided with the former minister were not supporters of the LGBT rights either. Nevertheless, in contrast with their former silent attitude regarding the issue, they decided to politicize their religious claims after Kavaf's declaration. From that perspective, I argue that as opposed to the expectations of liberal civil society analysts, CSOs do not have fixed and primordial identities with regard to other actors; the identity of the actors does matter. More importantly, they do not even have a predefined relationship or reaction form regarding other actors because the context in which they face this actor matters.

Critique of the Paradox: Problematic Aspects of MAZLUMDER's Human Rights

Discourse

Thus, as was discussed previously, when the position of MAZLUMDER is considered from the perspective of power relations it is not a surprising one. On the other hand, when it is taken into consideration from the perspective of human rights discourse it is self-defeating. The position it took in the context of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate was criticized by a number of civil society actors for being self-contradictory and not serving justice upon which they ground their human rights struggle. In fact, this letter also made certain activists question the fundamental rights activism of these organizations, if not the legitimacy of their cause. The majority of these actors draw attention to the fact that MAZLUMDER's human rights understanding is a selective one which points to the relations of power. These critiques can be summarized under two main headlines: MAZLUMDER's differential definition of “zulüm” (cruelty) and its justification of a discriminatory approach via a “victimhood” discourse.

As was mentioned above, the notion of “zulüm” basically means “cruelty”. However, it is a word with strong religious connotations. From the religious perspective it refers to “sin”, opposing the rules of god. Süheyb Ögüt defines it by arguing that “even the smallest sin constitutes a rebellion against god and it is a zulüm.”.³³³ With regard to such a definition of *zulüm*, Hilal Kaplan defines the rights demands of LGBTs as *zulüm* against Muslims:

³³³ Özkan. Eşcinsellik Hastalık Değil Günah ama Zulüm Yasak.

In short, the requisitions ranging from inclusion of homosexuality into the constitution under the name of “sexual orientation”, to the approval of gay marriages and adoption are matters of *zulüm* for Muslims.³³⁴

From the perspective of MAZLUMDER’s human rights discourse it can also be translated as a “rights violation” which also constitutes a sin. In this respect, the organization establishes its human rights struggle upon the notion of “opposing *zulüm*”.

Ahmet Özsöz explains how fundamental this principle is for MAZLUMDER as follows:

No matter who it is [...] We stand against the Muslims who oppress [...] You can find many examples of this [...] [For instance] Hrant Dink’s speech... He says in a MAZLUMDER conference that, “I would never think that a Muslim from the majority could concern with problems of ours, Armenians, who are a Christian minority”. Minorities also suffered in the February 28th process. They were kicked out of their schools. The chairman of MAZLUMDER [...] calls Hrant Dink [...] Yılmaz Ensaroğlu... [Says:] “We want to stand by your side in your struggle [...] What can we do? We would like to be in contact with you.” This is very fundamental.³³⁵

From the perspective of the above mentioned approach, it can be argued with regard to human rights violations that *zulüm* refers to both physical violence cases and any other non-physical types of discrimination. However, regarding discriminations against LGBTs it only includes cases of physical violence and excludes non-physical forms of violence which eventually leads to physical ones. On this issue, Zeynep Gambetti criticizes the Muslim party of the debate for pursuing a discriminatory attitude for the sake of not legitimizing a sin:

³³⁴ Hilal Kaplan. 22 July 2010. İslam ve Sekülerizm. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/islam-ve-sekulerizm.htm> [25.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

³³⁵ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

It is well-known that in a society as homophobic as Turkey, no one encourages homosexuality. On the contrary, whenever possible, it is forbidden, even actually wiped out. Yet “*zulüm*” is not limited to this. Humiliation of and discrimination against homosexuals have become internalized aspects of everyday life. Such discriminatory practices remain to be legitimate due to the fact that homosexuals are deprived from the legal and social rights that heterosexuals are provided with. Homosexuals are stonewalled in their families, in the streets, at work, at school and in many other environments. Are we not going to consider these exclusionary practices which do not involve physical violence as “*zulüm*”? If we are to reduce *zulüm* to violence, should we not exclude all the ordinary exclusion mechanisms which do not involve physical violence against headscarved women - at least for the sake of consistency - from the category *zulüm*? For instance, should we not say “Let the headscarved wait at the university entrances, as long as the incumbents do not use physical violence”? What would we look like if we had said that?³³⁶

Elvan Aysan from İHOP (Human Rights Joint Platform-İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu)³³⁷ similarly criticizes this selective reading of *zulüm* as follows:

With respect to their religious references, the organizations have certain [reservations]. For example, MAZLUMDER recognizes their victimhood, and it opposes to the murders and violence against them [...] However, when it comes to organizational rights, their Islamic references are mobilized. They consider getting organized as an effort to make it [homosexuality] widespread.³³⁸

³³⁶ Zeynep Gambetti. Eşcinsellik, İçki ve Diğer Benzeri Günahlar Üzerine. See Appendix for the original quote.

³³⁷ İHOP is an umbrella human rights platform which is composed of Turkish branch of Amnesty International, Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği (Helsinki Citizens Association) and İHD (Human Rights Organization). MAZLUMDER also used to be a member of the platform. Recently, it is not but two organizations do cooperative regarding many human rights issues. For detailed information about İHOP, see the organization’s official web site. Available [online]: <http://www.ihop.org.tr/> [27.06.2012].

³³⁸ Elvan Aysan, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, 10 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

On the other hand, this approach is not only criticized by civil society actors who approach the issue from a secular perspective. The ex-president of MAZLUMDER, Ayhan Bilgen argues that opposing only physical violence cannot be a solution to discriminations in Turkey:

When they are exposed to torture and ill-treatment, everyone says “yes, we must react”. However, when it comes to freedom of expression and freedom to get organized, in other words when it comes to being visible in the public sphere, then the debates and reservations start. After all, if you can say that “I am opposed to your preference but I defend your freedom”; that would work at least partially [...] It could at least create a environment of trust towards the solution.³³⁹

It is also worth noting that MAZLUMDER is also criticized for not taking action and keeping silent even in physical violence cases such as LGBT murders or police violence against LGBTs. With regard to such instances, a transsexual feminist activist narrates that despite the fact that they report such violence in their rights violation reports, MAZLUMDER avoids giving public support to LGBTs even when they are asked for it:

Once I invited MAZLUMDER to an event related to the police [she was beaten by the police for no reason]. I invited all NGOs [non-governmental organization], I invited them [MAZLUMDER members] too. They said that they would not be present during the press statement but they supported, and they would sign the statement. They did not sign either.³⁴⁰

In this regard she argues that MAZLUMDER’s opposition to zulüm does not really contribute to eliminating it:

³³⁹ Ayhan Bilgen, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, 08 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁴⁰ Elif Tez, interview by author, İstanbul, Turkey, 13 April 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

It means to say “kill” [LGBTs] in a gentle way, “you are perverted, live like a cripple”. The truth is, the imposed mentality is sick.³⁴¹

Another LGBT activist similarly interprets the approach of MAZLUMDER as an attitude signaling a selective rejection of violence that paves the path for all kinds of human rights violations:

This is the problem with defining the issue in terms of human rights. On the one hand you reproduce hate speech and support someone like Kavaf, on the other hand you say that you are against *zulüm*. What is the worth of being there when people are tortured and murdered? Can there be a right to not to get killed? This is the most fundamental human right; can it be open to discussion?³⁴²

Another line of criticism directed to MAZLUMDER is that, as opposed to such a limited understanding of “rights violations” regarding LGBTs, they define each and every kind of otherization practice against Muslims as *zulüm*. In this way, they justify their discriminatory attitudes via a victimhood discourse. Regarding the issue of victimhood, MAZLUMDER is among the fiercest critiques of the republican project which created an “ideal secular citizen” model and lead to discrimination against Muslims, violating their religious liberties. They challenge the enforced laicism of the republican project which regarded Muslims as abnormal and dangerous members of the population who do not fit into the ‘modern citizen’ prototype. Özsöz narrates the discriminations that Muslims face in Turkey as follows:

³⁴¹ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁴² Evren Görkem, interview by author, İstanbul, Turkey, 31 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

It is for sure that discriminations stem from the fact that certain ideologies and life styles are forcefully clothed to the society like a straightjacket [...] I am a person who lived with serious discriminations for fifty years. My family was reactionists [...] bigots [...] I lived with this reactionism label during my high school and collage years [...] I was seen as a member of a reactionist family because of the newspaper that my father had been buying. Since my mother was headscarved I was the son of the bigot. Today, I speak as a person who personally heard these from his teachers [...] Our memories of February 28 is still fresh [...] The elections were completed [...] There were many women MPs [...] However, only one of them was headscarved, Merve Kavakçı... The prime-minister of the Republic of Turkey said “throw this woman out” [...] They said that in an insulting way. In what other way can we speak of discrimination? A headscarved MP is still not a matter of discussion in Turkey.³⁴³

The actions of the state and society which are affected by dominant Kemalist ideology exposed Muslims, especially veiled women, to a number of discriminations. They were forced to choose between their jobs and their faith. Their right to education was violated since they refused to give up their headscarves. Thus, members of MAZLUMDER construct themselves as victims of power relations; and for this reason they argue that they are sensitive to every kind of victimization. However, as soon as Kemalists are replaced with LGBTs, totally different dynamics can be observed in the relations between two different actors of civil society. With the replacement of Kemalists with LGBTs, the actors of the equation change. So does the definition of normal and norm. From a Foucauldian perspective this actor and context based shift shows that power relations are not static and they can be reversed and reutilized by the *victims* themselves. With this conceptual and contextual shift, it can be argued that in relation to LGBTs

³⁴³ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Islamic CSOs become “conventional” citizens who represent the “normal” of the society.

This time they play the role of Kemalists and define how an ideal citizen should be.

Doğu Durgun verbalizes his criticism by arguing that MAZLUMDER and other signatories made the same mistake and discriminated against LGBTs just as they themselves were discriminated against by the official secular ideology:

Such attitudes reveal that the Islamic faction, which is critical of the official history writing in Turkey, also builds its historical development on narrowing the public sphere down and otherization; and they cause the political legitimacy of this group to be questioned.³⁴⁴

In a similar way, Güven Songurtekin argues that MAZLUMDER also creates a hierarchical position similar to the one established by Turkish state:

Is not what the powerful “secular” faction does to the headscarved today exactly the same? Is not it this power which tries to make Kurds live as if they are Turkish? Or is not it the same mentality which eliminates the living space of minorities? The power holders’ efforts to protect homogeneity in the country are understandable in terms of protecting their own power. However, how are we going to make sense of the fact that the individuals, who suffered from the oppression and despotism of the same power and who could not claim their identities, act as if they are the power against the individuals who are different but suffer from the same problems? How are we going to make sense of their alliance with the power against homosexuals?³⁴⁵

Answer to the Critiques: Denouncing Secularism

³⁴⁴ Durgun. Ortaklaşamadığımız Gerçekte Ortaklaşmak. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁴⁵ Güven Songurtekin. 25 August 2010. Hakim Kitle ve Eşcinsellik. Available [online]: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/hakim-kitle-ve-escinsellik.htm> [25.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

As critiques questioning the human rights understanding and sincerity of these organizations continued, MAZLUMDER published a response on the website of the organization. In this response, signed by Cihat Gökdenir (the former president of the İstanbul office of MAZLUMDER), the criticisms were ruled out for being inconsistent, non-scientific and not true. MAZLUMDER's text renders the critiques, which argue that the signatories exposed LGBTs to more danger and casted them disposable, as a problem of "secular minds which choose to criticize the sacred".³⁴⁶

It is argued in the text that "it is understandable that a secular mind would not accept the references to sacred texts". In addition, the critiques perceive counter-criticism as simply focusing on the subjective sacred references and ignoring the objective "scientific" data which asserts that "homosexuality is an anomaly and homosexuals are a threat for the human race":

It is understandable that a totally secular mind would not accept the references to sacred texts. The fact that the common text [the letter to Kavaf] refers to the "sacred texts" has been the major point that is criticized. It is for sure that such a subjective reference is not meaningful for a secular mentality; however, the text has not been criticized in terms of its objective claims which also speak to secular minds. We expect from a secular mind not to take the easy way and criticize the sacred but to answer these claims [objective/scientific].³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Cihat Gökdemir. Eşcinsellik Açıklamasını Haksızca Eleştirenleri İnsafa Davet Ediyoruz!. Available [online]: http://www.mazlumder.org/haber_detay.asp?haberID=8181 [25.04.2012].

³⁴⁷ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

This text demonstrates that MAZLUMDER reduces the issue to a criticism of secularism implying that secular critiques are obsessed with Koranic references while believers also refer to scientific data. However, it can be argued that responding in terms of a secularism criticism is problematic since it results in the omission of non-secular critiques. For example, Yaprak Açıkel from AKDER explains why AKDER did not support the campaign from both a religious and critical perspective:

We did not sign [the letter addressed to Kavaf] on purpose. Because we deliberately do not regard homosexuality a sickness. If it were a sickness, you should tolerate it even more. Do you ask people why they got cancer? Thus, that text is nonsense also from this perspective. Neither did we support Kavaf's declaration [...] Aliye Kavaf was not right. She said something wrong. Neither does Islam identify homosexuality as a sickness, why should I? It is considered equal to adultery in Islam. It is similar to lying. So, why do we lie so easily? It is equally forbidden. There is something traditional and sexist here; and it is tried to be presented in disguise of Islam. Back then, we declared that we would not sign. Everybody was calling us to ask whether AKDER would sign or not. We would sign if we wanted to, we are not signing it ... [AKDER] was criticized also at that time. AKDER became the advocate of homosexuals again. But that text was wrong. It was entirely discriminatory. I do not expect this of a human rights organization. Even if I say that Islam is of the first priority for me, does Islam approve this? That you sign a discriminatory text... It was discriminatory, homophobic and threatening. This is why we did not sign.³⁴⁸

With regard to the attitude of religion-based organizations that supported Kavaf, Ayhan Bilgen argues:

I believe that there is another worrisome aspect of the incident in which NGOs made a declaration and supported the minister with respect to civil society. It is not civil society's duty to support the

³⁴⁸ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author, İstanbul, Turkey, 21 June 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

government party [...] If it were a debate between two independent parties, if one of the parties would not have had the power; for instance, if it were a debate between a member of JDP [Justice and Development Party – Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi] and a member of Greens, it would be more understandable for conservative NGOs to take sides. For they would be supporting the more religious party. However, if one of the parties is in power, every single step it takes and every position it takes bear inequality. Accordingly, the moment you make a preference among the two, you automatically categorize the other as a threat. That is, it is easier for the police to beat something which is defined as a sickness by a minister. How she is treated at the police station, at the court or at other environments, even how she is treated by her neighbor on the street, might be much more dangerous. If they would have said, at least with this concern, that “it is not up to the minister, if there is a sickness definition to be made, we do that”; I would consider it more ethical [...] I would consider it more compatible with Islamic sensitivity. In my opinion, even this is better in terms of civic consciousness and independence of civil society [...] In that case, they would at least expose LGBT individuals only to peer pressure.

I believe that it is quiet problematic to side with a position which involve both state oppression and peer pressure. It is no different from the secular reflex [...] In the period of February 28 during which religious individuals were exposed to both social pressure and blacklisted by the state. I consider this as exposing people to the same psychology to which they [Muslims] were exposed in the period in which the state established persuasion rooms. It is worrisome that a group of people, who were exposed to all these, forget how bad and hurtful it was and take such a position.³⁴⁹

This discussion exemplifies that CSOs might not always-already stand for predefined values. Their identities and positions are negotiable depending on the context of their encounters with other actors of the society. The MAZLUMDER case shows that this organization positioned itself as a “human rights organization” whose rights discourse justifies homophobia. However, it should be remembered that MAZLUMDER’s is not

³⁴⁹ Ayhan Bilgen, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

the only, although dominant, subjectivity which was affected by the discursive framework of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate.

Different Subject Formations

As was discussed previously, “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate prompted the formation of a specific Muslim subjectivity which both stands for equality and human rights and adopts an abjecting attitude regarding LGBTs. The majority of organizational and individual actors of Islamic civil society (who were involved in the debate) reproduced a Muslim identity which is necessarily defined as an anti-homosexual one.

However, the discourses which circulated in the course of the debate were not productive of a single type of subject. As Foucault proposes, they also created different choices and resistance points. Thus, the very same discourses were also productive of a different Muslim subjectivity which did not reproduce itself through the politicization of homophobia and did not consider LGBTs as their predetermined and permanent antagonists. Islamic CSOs such as BKP, AKDER and the Diyarbakır office of MAZLUMDER can be considered as examples of this subject formation.

First of all, they chose to not to get involved into the debate (they did not sign the letter addressing Kavaf) for they believed that it was discriminatory. Secondly, when they were asked for opinions about the debate they opposed the actions of MAZLUMDER and other signatories even though they were also referring to the same religious principles. Their position regarding LGBTs was also telling since it

demonstrated that an analysis of actors of civil society from the perspective of power relations precludes thinking with binary dichotomies. Subjects can neither be assumed as primordially progressive or pluralist nor traditional and discriminatory. The variation in the approaches of Muslim civil society actors to homosexuality demonstrated that the presumed antagonism between Islam and homosexuality is not a valid one. This is not to say that religion does not have a role in the abjection of LGBTs. I rather argue that what politicizes homophobia as a necessary element of the public sphere is not religion *per se* but a specific mobilization of religious discourse.

This section will discuss these arguments through the example of two Islamic CSOs: BKP and AKDER. These two organizations are chosen as cases due to their difference vis-a-vis the majority of Islamic CSOs involved in the debate. In addition, these two organizations represent a portion of Islamic civil society which occasionally engages in solidarity activities with LGBTT organizations and support the latter's rights claims, including their right to association,³⁵⁰ which is an attitude that is not very common, not only within Islamic civil society, but also among the rest of civil society organizations. This is not to argue that BKP and AKDER supports "homosexuality" *per se* or they do always publicly support LGBT movement. However, regardless of their

³⁵⁰ When the LGBT rights are of the concern, actors of civil society are inclined to define these rights only as right to life, right to possessions and freedom from torture. All of them, including the "Muslim party" of the debate agree that these are fundamental rights and should not be violated. However, the "Muslim party" of the debate refuses to accept other human rights claims of LGBTs as demands that should be respected and protected. For instance, LGTTs right to association is considered as a means to legitimize homosexuality and assure its expansion to the rest of the society. For that reason, it is not defined as one of the human rights by these actors.

religious position with respect to homosexuality, they do not take discriminatory actions against LGBTs and criticize the one's that do.

Organizational Structure of BKP

Başkent Kadın Platformu (BKP) was established in 1995 as a women's platform which includes a number of women's organizations. Today, despite its name, it is no longer a platform but rather is an individual civil society organization which consists of Muslim women. The organization was established with the aim of fighting against problems faced by women and caused by both the traditional reading of religious doctrine and 'modern' impositions on religious women.

Accordingly, the organization defines its vision as finding a “solution to problems which stem from religious interpretations, understandings and concessions that reinforce the traditional image of woman and discriminate against religious women in the modern society”.³⁵¹ Relying on this main aim, BKP has determined its missions as follows:

- Locating women's current situation and problems;
- Generating theoretical and practical solutions that will enhance women's political, legal, social and economic assets within the framework of universal human rights of women, justice and rule of law;
- Securing dialogue, communication, solidarity and cooperation among women;
- Gathering with women from all segments of society in the form of a platform on the common ground of an honorable life,

³⁵¹ Başkent Kadın Platformu. Available [online]: <http://www.baskentkadin.org/tr/?cat=6> [27.08.2012].

conducting all kinds of activities and studies in accordance with the law.³⁵²

As can be observed in BKP's self-description, although it is classified (by its own members) as an Islamic CSO, it targets a broader group of women. This tendency can be observed in both the speeches of the members and the coalitions they form with other women's organizations. For instance, BKP is a member of local platforms such as the Turkish Criminal Law Women's Platform (TCK Kadın Platformu), the Permanent Women's Platform for Peace (Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın Platformu) and international platforms such as the International Council of Awkaf and other non-governmental organizations. In such platforms, the organization works with various women's organizations and mixed organizations especially on women's problems.

Organizational structure of AKDER

AKDER identifies itself as a human rights organization established in 1999 by women who have been excluded from educational and professional life on the grounds of their style of dress; and a civil society organization, based on the principle of voluntarism, which is active at both the local and international level.³⁵³ The main aim of the organization is to increase social sensitivity with regard to human rights violations and especially to struggle against violations of women's rights, such as the right to

³⁵² Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁵³ Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği. Available [online]: <http://www.ak-der.org/dernegimiz.gbt> [24.06.2012].

education, employment and enjoying health services. Relying on such aims AKDER defines its activities as follows:

- We identify the social and legal obstacles that preclude women from enjoying their rights and generate suggestions to struggle with these obstacles;
- We work for securing that individuals can be employed and educated without making concessions in terms of their faith;
- We organize trainings, seminars and campaigns with the aim of developing the social consciousness regarding human rights and freedoms and support the related projects;
- We provide legal support to women in their rights struggle.³⁵⁴

Although such formal information tells a lot about the principles of AKDER, it is also important to consider how members of AKDER perceive its missions as a civil society organization. For instance Yaprak Açıkel defines AKDER, in a manner that is not perceived from explanations on the official web site: as a religious organization that also uses secular strategies for the purpose of communicating their objectives to the rest of the society. She explains:

AKDER started out with the idea of religious freedoms... Moreover, we also started with the claim that we can also explicate this in a secular way to people who are out of this aura. For sure, AKDER was criticized both at that time and later for its activities and discourse. However, we claim that there are no obstacles in Islam before presenting this in a secular way. If [Turkey] were an Islamic state, I could claim that headscarf is an Islamic obligation and I cannot meet it; it is violated. Given that this is a secular order and we search for our rights in a secular legal system [...] It is not sufficient to say that 'this is a religious freedom'. It is true that this is a reason [...] However, it alone cannot be one. Thus, AKDER emerged with this claim; however, we did not emerge as an organization which internalizes secular

³⁵⁴ Ibid. Available [online]: <http://www.ak-der.org/misyon.gbt>. [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

discourse. We also adopted Islamic values in each and every activity of ours, in our whole struggle.³⁵⁵

Thus, despite the fact that AKDER is a religious organization by definition, it does not exclude secular, liberal norms such as human rights and freedoms. A similar strategy can be observed in the official declaration of BKP as well. As a CSO, it constantly emphasizes the importance of solidarity, cooperation and rule of law. However, this does not mean that BKP and AKDER, just as MAZLUMDER, represent the liberal vision of an ideal voluntary organization. The reason behind that is not that these organizations diverge from the secular pluralist norms of civil society. It is rather that there have no such ideal and even if these organizations mobilize the same concepts in their action strategies, they attribute meanings and values to these concepts which are functional in their own context.

Compared to the aims and principles of MAZLUMDER, those of BKP and AKDER might not seem significantly different; with the exception of their areas of operation. All three are human rights organizations that rely on Islamic principles. The most significant and visible difference between them is the fact that the BKP and AKDER are women's organizations; thus their main focus is on women's problems. On the other hand, MAZLUMDER is a mixed organization and does not limit itself to any population and it claims to defend the rights of all minorities. Does this difference explain why their actions and discourses differ to a great extent regarding certain issues, such as LGBT rights? It seems that the answer to this question is not sufficient to explicate such a difference due to the fact that the "Muslim party" of the debate was

³⁵⁵ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

constituted of both men and women. Thus, a more detailed scrutiny is required in order to analyze such fundamental diversity in Islamic civil society.

What differentiates BKP and AKDER from MAZLUMDER

As proposed above, based on the official declarations of these three organizations with regard to human rights and their critical reconceptualization of liberal values, it seems that there are no significant differences among them. In fact, they cooperate with one another in many areas and initiate common projects most of the time. Especially interviewees from the BKP point out that MAZLUMDER is one of the organizations with which they cooperate most. In addition, there are organic links between the BKP and MAZLUMDER, such as common members and common directors. For instance, one interviewee explains that one of the presidents of the BKP was also a member of the board of directors of the Ankara office of MAZLUMDER.³⁵⁶ It is obvious that such commonalities are worth paying attention. However, despite active support between the two organizations, they significantly differ from each other in terms of organizational actions and discourses regarding certain phenomena such as “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. Given that BKP does not support all of the actions and discourses of MAZLUMDER and reacts differently on critical issues such as women’s rights and LGBT rights, it can be argued that such intersections do not affect the overall policy and mindset of the organization.

³⁵⁶ Even though AKDER also engages in collective actions with MAZLUMDER, this is not emphasized as a definitive feature of the organizations in the interviews.

However, such linkages may still represent important venues in the research. In order to understand to what extent the previously mentioned commonalities influence organization discourses and to analyze the organizations from a comparative perspective, the members were asked about their differences vis-a-vis other Islamic civil society organizations.³⁵⁷ The interviewees generally did not dwell upon the similarities and just narrated that they cooperate on many issues and are partners in many campaigns. They emphasized the differences such as membership profile, areas of operation, and approach to women's rights and feminism.

Taking the answers of the interviewees into consideration, it can be argued that the first and foremost difference between MAZLUMDER and the other two is that while the former is a mixed organization, the latter are women's organizations. However, such organizational choices might be misleading when put in this way. Despite the fact that BKP and AKDER limit their scope of action to women's problems, this does not mean that they have a limited area of interest. In fact, women's problems refer to the discriminations faced by women in every minority group. In this respect, they attempt to be supportive (or at least non-discriminatory) of issues that seem to be out of their organizational missions such as the Kurdish issue and LGBT rights. Yaprak Açıklık (from AKDER) explicates this critical detail, arguing that:

³⁵⁷ At this point, I have to clarify that the interviewees I talked consist of a random sample which by chance included members which work for both organizations. This helped me a lot to see whether common membership has a significant influence on the organizational acts and discourses. The interviews showed that the most important difference between common members and those who work only in BKP is that the former emphasize the differences between the two organizations less than the latter. And the latter is more critical about MAZLUMDER's approach especially to women's rights. However, both kinds of members acknowledge the differences between the organizational policies and declare that BKP do not always support MAZLUMDER's actions.

We cannot deal with all human rights violations but it does not mean that we do not care about them. We focus on women's issues.³⁵⁸

Betül Yılmaz (from BKP) defines limiting the scope of their activity as a shortcoming which they try to overcome through cooperation with other CSOs:

Of course there are disadvantages [of limiting the scope of our activities]. We limit ourselves in terms of subjects [...] But when we think of it, we do not limit ourselves in terms of our mentality. We limit our radius of action when we set ourselves as a women's association [...] But we need a framework to act [...] In order to move beyond this limitation, we cooperate with various human rights associations without any hesitations. We definitely do not ignore other issues just because ours is a women's association.³⁵⁹

In addition, BKP and AKDER's organizational choices do not rule out specific groups such as feminists and LGBTs; while MAZLUMDER refuses to become involved in issues related to these two groups. This separation raises two critical differences which cannot be defined simply in terms of organizational choices since they are related to the discursive frameworks through which these organizations function: the understanding of women's rights and the approach to problems of LGBTs. Betül Yılmaz, from BKP, very clearly explains the difference emphasizing MAZLUMDER's "allergic" attitude with regard to feminism and women's rights:

When it comes to MAZLUMDER, it is an organization which is completely a human rights' advocate. And it does not limit itself in any ways. For that reason, we are related more [than other civil society organization]. However, unfortunately they are allergic to feminist discourses. We differentiate from MAZLUMDER in this respect. While they lead a totally modern rights struggle on every

³⁵⁸ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁵⁹ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author, Ankara, Turkey, 19 October 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

issue without compromising their oppositional position, they do not prefer to mention [the problem] under the name of women's rights when the matter of concern is women. At this point, they are under the influence of Islamic tradition. As oppose to all other issues, they are disturbed when we openly mention the term 'woman' and talk about empowering women and their independence. We do not even think about mentioning women being in possession of their bodies.³⁶⁰

Yaprak Açıkel from BKP, mentions another feature of being an Islamic women's rights organization, and argues that this make them more open to criticism from other Islamic CSOs. This is an attitude that cannot be observed in the case of mixed organizations which do not refer directly to women's rights. She argues that this results directly from the fact that they are a women's organization.³⁶¹

The above-mentioned differences are the ones personally mentioned by the members of the BKP and AKDER when they were asked whether they differ from other Islamic CSOs. In addition to these, it is also possible to discuss differences that are not directly mentioned but can be observed in the discourses and deeds of the organizations and their members. Perhaps the most glaring example is the difference in their approach to homosexuality.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁶¹ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author.

How the Evaluation of Homosexuality Differs among Islamic CSOs?

Before discussing how Islamic organizations' attitude differs with regard to homosexuality, it should be clarified that none of them approve of homosexual relations from an Islamic perspective. Homosexuality is regarded to be "*haram*" (a wrong doing according to Islam) and something that should not be encouraged within society. Thus, all three are speaking from within the same religious discourse. However, they significantly diverge on questions such as whether LGBT rights are among human rights, whether they should enjoy their rights equally and freely, and what should be the response of "Muslims" to the rights claims of LGBTs.

As opposed to MAZLUMDER, whose members with whom I spoke emphasize that they either do not believe that LGBT rights are among human rights or refuse to mention them among human rights (without specifying whether or not they are human rights), members of BKP and AKDER believe that LGBT rights are sacred human rights as much as those of any other group. In addition, it should be clarified that the "rights" mentioned here do not refer only to the right to life and to be free from violence. They believe that LGBT individuals and groups should enjoy all their rights, including the right to association and to be equal members of society. Thus, as expected, none of the interviewees from the BKP and AKDER reject LGBT rights on grounds that they are not human rights. Nermin Ayca from BKP explains her ideas about rights claims of LGBTs as follows:

It is wrong to speak on behalf of BKP [...] Everyone thinks differently [...] I am totally against the violation of the rights of

homosexuals, especially their basic human rights such as rights to live, to study, and the violence targeting them just because they are homosexuals.³⁶²

From this perspective, her approach does not differ from that of MAZLUMDER officials. She also thinks that especially the “rights which are related to humanity” should not be violated. What differentiates her approach is her attitude towards rights which directly refers to the rights of LGBTs, such as the freedom of association:

All groups must enjoy the freedom of organization. All communities, groups... There should not be any single obstacle before the freedom of organization. I mean, if people may support each other in somewhere, they should be able to do so. I do not have any discomfort with respect to them [homosexuals] getting organized.³⁶³

In addition to such differences it can be argued that another crucial difference between BKP, AKDER and MAZLUMDER is where they position themselves with regard to their capacity to speak for Islam and in the name of god. Yaprak Açikel from AKDER explains their attitude as follows:

Even if a person practices [homosexuality], it does not mean that she rejects religion. This is something else. Only if she tries to present homosexuality as an element of Islam, it becomes perilous. Besides, it is not up to us to decide who is impious [tekfir etmek]. A person can both say that she is a Muslim and practice homosexuality. This is also something else... This is the world in the end and nobody dominates it. If we are Muslims then we believe in the after life and everybody will be brought to account [for their deeds][...] As long as you believe in this you are responsible for that person, at least due to the fact that you live in the same society. First of all, these people are murdered on the

³⁶² Nermin Ayca, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁶³ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

streets. You should consider this first. Is this an Islamic practice?
It is not.³⁶⁴

In order to clarify the extent to which certain Muslim approaches to homosexuality are discriminatory, she adds:

Nobody has to be a Muslim. Even if they are, nobody should accept everything in the way I want them to [...] But we have the sickness of *tekfir* [to decide who is impious]. [We say] she is not a Muslim if she does this or that. For instance, interest is clearly haram [forbidden]. A person who charges interest can be a Muslim. We do not discuss her Muslimhood. Adultery is haram. A person who commits adultery can still be Muslim. But if she is homosexual, if it is something which contravenes tradition, we discuss these people's Islam. But we do not discuss that of *zalim* [oppressor] ones or interest chargers. We say that she recited the kalima shahadah³⁶⁵ then she is Muslim. There is sickness at this point.³⁶⁶

Thus, from a religious perspective she believes that it is not up to human beings to decide in the name of God and to judge other people even if they are sinners according to Islam. On the other hand, as was mentioned previously, using a totally different Islamic reading, the representative of MAZLUMDER decides that homosexuality is a grave sin since homosexuals do not fit god's classification of human beings as men and women. Given such a diversity of the use of religious discourse, it is worth discussing how such different subject positions are established within the same discursive space.

³⁶⁴ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁶⁵ Its Turkish reading is "eşhedü en lâ ilâhe illallah ve eşhedü enne Muhammeden abdühü ve rasûlühü". This reciting phrase is the first condition of being Muslim. Reciting that phrase, the one declares that he/she witnesses that Allah is the only god and Mohammad is his prophet.

³⁶⁶ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

*How BKP and AKDER's subject positions are formed as non-discriminatory ones
regarding LGBT's?*

Working from information obtained in interviews conducted with members of the BKP and AKDER, it appears that one of the main features of these two organizations which lead them to support LGBTs' rights or not to adopt discriminatory positions is their definition of "human" and "human rights". They define 'human rights' as a concept which has to serve all populations regardless of their ideologies or lifestyles. Thus, they believe in the rightfulness of the LGBTs' rights struggle and oppose discrimination against them. Put differently, BKP and AKDER refuse bio-political definitions of human and human rights those abject LGBTs and their rights. However, this does not indicate that their evaluation of the issue is exactly the same. BKP and AKDER's subjectivities also differ from each other with respect to LGBT rights.

Members of BKP with whom I spoke, evaluate the issue in terms of similarity of the discrimination and abjection to which both the LGBTs and Muslim women are exposed. Thus, they seem to understand the problems LGBTs experience and refuse to treat them in the way that they themselves are treated. Since veiled women are also defined by other groups in discriminatory ways such as 'enemies of the regime', they refuse to speak for someone else in the same way. Tuksal explains how she experienced this similarity between means of discrimination, narrating that [in a women's rights platform]:³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ The name of the platform is withheld for ethical reasons.

[Aylin] from Kaos GL came to me and said “See Hidayet? We are in the same situation”. Because both parties are ignored in the same way. Headscarf [issue] is tried to be ignored but [this attitude] gets reactions. [Ayşe Tatar] says that “this is not a human rights violation or an issue of discrimination”. They [women representing other civil society organizations] didn’t comment also on [Aylin’s presentation]. They ignored her with silence [...] The relations of power between Islam and homosexuality are not the only determinant facts. Both are treated in the same way. Headscarf and homosexuality are discussed using the same terminology. It is said that “okay we shall defend but what is going to be the limit?”³⁶⁸

Similarly, Betül Yılmaz declares:

I believe that the reason why BKP and homosexuals can establish a relationship relies on certain similarities very deep inside. I have not wrote or told that before but it is about existing as you are and being able to find a place in the society in the way you exist. The problems of both headscarved women and LGBTs can be defined in this way. That is why we are similar. I am not defending homosexuality. But I am defending rights of homosexuals. I believe that the issue has to come to a conclusion at this point. I can say that we try to convince Islamic organizations to think in this way but to succeed it is very difficult.³⁶⁹

In addition to their shared emphasis on the necessity of communication, it can be argued that the interviewees from AKDER evaluate the issue of support to LGBT rights more from the perspective of the requirements of religion. Yaprak Açıklık from AKDER declares through and through that homosexuality is a sin according to Islam similar to the other sins, such as lying, adultery or charging interest in economic transactions. However, she adds that Islam does not condemn homosexuality in a different way and definitely does not command violence towards homosexuals. She also declares that

³⁶⁸ Hidayet Tuksal, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁶⁹ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

discrimination against LGBTs generally stems from sexism and traditionalism. Islam does not condone violations as such:

From an Islamic perspective protecting human life is one's fundamental duty. Their houses are busted. There are cases of forced entry. They commit different kinds of crimes in those houses. These actions are taken by the government itself and by different people. For one thing, this is *zulüm*. Name it from an Islamic perspective. You do not have to define it secularly. For what are you fighting against these people while they are exposed to *zulüm*?. You should finish that *zulüm* first [...] For instance, there are some examples about this issue. One is the story of how the homosexual community used to live outside of Mecca. Our prophet Muhammad did not [order] to kill Jews, slay Christians or homosexuals – God knows what will happen to them– when he started to spread Islam publicly.³⁷⁰

Here, it is worth noting that she directly takes Islam as the only reference point just as interviewees from MAZLUMDER and Muslim columnists do; and, criticizes *zulüm* from the very same perspective. However, she argues that from a religious perspective if one characterizes something as *zulüm* and a group as *mazlum* (exposed to *zulüm*) she cannot take any action against this group. From such an Islamic perspective, Muslims have to stand up against any kind of *zulüm*, otherwise they would be no different from *zalim* (oppressor) people. In this respect, Açıkel believes that since it is obvious that LGBTs are exposed to cruelty, a Muslim can do anything that exacerbate their situation. For that reason, she strongly criticizes the CSOs which supported Kavaf. Thus, her position differentiates from those of others for she does not limit 'opposition to *zulüm*' to criticizing physical violence.

³⁷⁰ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Based on these comments it is clear that AKDER and BKP seem to support the idea that LGBT rights are violated and that such discrimination must be opposed. This distinguishes them from other Islamic CSOs such as MAZLUMDER. This distinction also spills over into another arena; cooperation and association with LGBT organizations which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Possibility of Intra-group Differences Regarding “Islam vs. Homosexuality” Debate

The above mentioned discussions demonstrate even the CSOs which are mobilized with reference to the same discourses can differ from one another in terms of their position within the relations of power and knowledge. At this point it is worth mentioning that the structural paysage of civil society might be even more complex due to the fact that even a single CSO cannot be regarded as a unified entity. As we can observe in the case of MAZLUMDER, even different branches or individuals from an organization can assume different or oppositional subject positions within a discursive frame. The position of the Diyarbakır office of MAZLUMDER regarding the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate exemplifies this variety to a great extent.

The research conducted by Suavi Selim Akan illustrates that although the narrative of actors from different branches may diverge, their approach to LGBTs do not significantly differ from the above mentioned position of MAZLUMDER.³⁷¹ However,

³⁷¹ Akan.

his interviews with members of the Diyarbakır office demonstrate that this branch directly challenges the general position of MAZLUMDER:

Here when you look at Islam, homosexuals, homosexuality or homosexual tendencies are completely prohibited. While these have no place in religion, MAZLUMDER in Diyarbakır advocates the rights of homosexuals in the field of human rights. Here a form of conflict is taking place. A door of critique opens to you. Where should be the position of MAZLUMDER? Members or religious communities here, these are actually a community but called themselves as civil society organizations, criticize MAZLUMDER on this issue. How can MAZLUMDER do such a thing? Moreover they say let's leave the concept of human rights produced by the West and develop our own discourse. Where does this discourse take us? This takes us to "we should defend only religious people".³⁷²

This internal criticism of the interviewee points to two important problems concerning Islamic civil society. First of all, he refers to members or groups that oppose the Diyarbakır office's approach to LGBTs as a community "are only nominally called a CSO". Obviously, the interviewee has an idea of CSOs that does not conform to the discriminatory attitudes of these groups. This shows that not only CSOs but also individual actors differ in terms of their understanding of the meaning and purpose of civil society. Thus, the identities of civil society actors are negotiable rather than being framed in terms of universal human rights and opposition to violation of these rights. The second important point which this quote points to is that MAZLUMDER's general critique of "universal human rights" can be regarded as a local resistance to the universality claim of Western human rights discourse. However, as Mitchell argues, resistances can also be moments which harbor power relations. They do not have to be

³⁷² Interview with a MAZLUMDER- Diyarbakır official in Akan, p. 52.

necessarily egalitarian and anti-discriminatory. MAZLUMDER's critique of Western human rights discourse does not necessarily function in such a way as to establish a less exclusionary definition of human rights. The critiques directed to the Diyarbakır branch reflects that MAZLUMDER itself also has a universal discourse, although a locally produced one. The official discourse of the organization is a difference blind one which does not accept internal, more local, criticism. Accordingly, MAZLUMDER's moralist re-conceptualization of human rights eventually leads to a human rights struggle which is conditional on the religious affiliation of the victims of rights violations. In this respect, it excludes different ways of conceptualizing human rights activism. This is an attitude for which MAZLUMDER's members strongly criticize the West for not taking diversities into consideration.

This critical stance of Diyarbakır office can also be observed in their reaction to the support from Islamic civil society to the declaration of Kavaf:

Few days ago, we condemned our president's speech³⁷³ about homosexuals, supporting minister's speech on television. We do not care about individuals' choices. As long as that action does not constrain the others' freedom or does not contain violence, we evaluate it under the freedom concept. There will be demands of homosexuals and we respect them. Moreover if there were an interference to their association or to the individual, we would immediately take an action whether there is an application or not... For instance there are times of when we cooperate with LGBT Türkiye (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) in Diyarbakır, we are much more moderate when compared to other branches.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ CNN Türk Ekranlarında Eşcinsel Kavgası Yaşandı...!. Available [online]: <http://www.sivilmedya.com/cnn-turk-ekranlarinda-escinsel-kavgasi-yasandi...-8463h.htm> [24.06.2012].

³⁷⁴ Interview with a MAZLUMDER- Diyarbakır official in Suvavi Selim Akan, p. 56.

These discussions challenge two major lines of arguments, both of which are based on the liberal conceptualization of civil society. First of all, the above mentioned variety, even among presumably similar CSOs strongly challenges liberal idealization of CSOs organizations. They neither necessarily define themselves over liberal values nor assume predetermined emancipatory missions which are attributed by liberal thinkers. The roles they assume vary historically and contextually. Secondly, the same diversity among and within CSOs invalidates stereotyped dichotomies, such as Islam and homosexuality, which function so as to conserve “ideal types” of liberal theory and announce certain types of CSOs as threats to values of democracy. Challenging these ideal types, such an approach to civil society defies the other abjection mechanisms which are established through such dichotomies, such as Islamophobia which Butler insistently warns about. Lastly, above illustrated lines of discussions provides one with the possibility of questioning a further essential dimension of liberal civil society paradigm: the cooperative nature of civil society actors.

CHAPTER VI

ARE ALLIANCES BETWEEN ISLAMIC CSOs AND LGBT ORGANIZATIONS IMPOSSIBLE?

The last issue that will be problematized in this thesis concerns the liberal idea of cooperation within civil society as a means to “harmonizing particular interests”. As was discussed previously, the liberal literature on civil society is mainly established on the basis of cooperation and communication. The thinkers of the liberal paradigm conceptualized civil society as an arena in which individual and collective interests can be compromised through rational and moral solidarity of free individuals and their participation in CSOs. They did not totally deny the fact that there might be conflicts within civil society. However, they believed that these conflicts are soluble within the pluralistic atmosphere through interaction based on equality before law and morality.³⁷⁵ However, as can be observed in the case of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, the liberal paradigm fails to explain systematic exclusion of marginal groups. In this respect, liberal tradition either disregards the instances in which all interests cannot be harmonized or announce the non-cooperative groups enemies of democracy.

Accordingly, as the discussion of cooperation is limited to the ideal of liberal democracy, the possibility of horizontal relations which are not based on harmonized individual interests is not taken into consideration. However, the case study conducted in this study illustrated the possibility of collective action which does not require

³⁷⁵ See. Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge, massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 160. Author’s emphasis.

reconciliation of interests or ideologies. It also demonstrated that such solidarity practices can fail due to power relations within civil society which cannot be explained with reference to pluralist virtues of subjects of these relations.

From this perspective this chapter has a three-fold aim, all of which attempts to explicate the possibility of alliances (among CSOs) which do not require reconciliation of conflicting ideologies but based on the apprehension of precariousness, as Butler suggests. In the first section I will elaborate the approach of MAZLUMDER to alliances which do not rely on a mainstream common ground. In fact, the organization's comprehensive "opposition to *zulüm*" reflects an understanding of cooperation which aims at decreasing precarity of subaltern groups. However, the discursive framework of "Islam vs. homosexuality" debate which provides its subjects with options regarding what is sayable, thinkable and doable, showed that LGBTs might not be welcomed to such coalitions as much as their precariousness is acknowledged. Bio-political subject positions that characterize Muslims as "the victims to be protected" and LGBTs as the "threats to population" disabled such alliances between the signatories and LGBTs. Such an objectivization of subjects is not only problematic for it brings about a hierarchy between LGBTs and Muslims, and leads to abjection of the former by the latter. It is also problematic because it systematically ignores any intersections between the two. Even though it is never directly mentioned by the interviewees and most of the columnists, discussing the problem through the opposition between "LGBTs" and "Muslims" implies that a "Muslim homosexual" cannot exist. In this way, the existence and

criticisms of LGBTs who define themselves as Muslims are ignored within the framework of the debate.

On the other hand, incorporating CSOs, which refused to get involved in the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate - such as BKP and AKDER, into this study revealed that power relations are also productive of various types of resistances and horizontal coalitions. Despite the fact that these organizations and LGBT organizations do not agree on each other’s fundamental life styles and ideologies, they are willing to cooperate thanks to each group’s acknowledgement of one another’s problems as having been caused by similar discriminatory, abjecting, racist and sexist practices. In addition, the interviews conducted with the members of BKP and AKDER and their organizational stance showed that alternative ways to discuss relations between “Muslims” and “LGBTs” do exist. For instance, while evaluating the possibility of alliances they do not classify Muslims and LGBTs as necessarily distinct groups. They rather discuss the issue as a relational one between two types of CSOs (namely, Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations) rather than two societal groups. Moreover, they deliberately avoid identifying Muslims as a unified entity. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that a person can be both Muslim and homosexual.

The last minor discussion, of this chapter, which attempts to provide an understanding of complexity in the solidarity practices within civil society, concerns the challenges that existing coalitions between Islamic CSOs and LGBTTT organizations face. I argue that even though alliances which are not conditional to compromise are possible they are not free from power relations. Since all this discussion is inspired by

Butler's idea of coalitions, it is worth revisiting her theory before presenting the data and discussions which reflect the context of "Islam vs. homosexuality" debate.

Coalitions Based on Antagonisms Rather than Compromise

Butler does not directly engage in the theorization of civil society. Dwelling upon the problem of arbitrary state violence and shared precariousness of human life, she proposes a specific theory of civil struggle against abjection and violence. She suggests an activist strategy which does not function through the notions of "human rights" and "recognition". These concepts function only in favor of a limited group of people. In order to both overcome the limits of these liberal notions and so as not to create new normative frameworks, she claims that the apprehension of a very fundamental feature equally shared by all people, i.e. precariousness, is essential. Precariousness refers to the fact that "life is injurable" or that "it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death".³⁷⁶ Being precarious implies that we do not have total control on our lives since it is at the hands of others. In other words, actions and decisions of strangers might have a hold on our lives.³⁷⁷

According to Butler, precariousness which is an ontological feature of human life results in precarity - a political condition which refers to maximization of precariousness of some people by social and political organizations, norms and other people, while that

³⁷⁶ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 13.

³⁷⁷ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, New York, London: Routledge, 2004), p. 23.

of certain others is minimized.³⁷⁸ She asserts that through such an arbitrary allocation of precarity certain populations became the target of exploitation, as their lives are deemed “destructible” and “ungrievable”.³⁷⁹ From Butler’s perspective, this problem can neither be solved by asking protection from the state nor by embracing liberal democratic values such as “human rights”, “recognition” and “toleration”. According to Butler, these liberal democratic notions are also normatively created and leave certain groups out while protecting, recognizing and tolerating certain others.

From this point of view, liberal human rights notion does not bring about the equality that it promises. In addition, “rights” discourse itself might turn into a means of abjection due to the fact that certain individuals might not be recognized as subjects of rights since their “humanness” is not recognized.³⁸⁰ Thus, from a Butlerian point of view, it is clear that the problems resulting from the differential distribution of precarity cannot be overcome by integrating more people into the current norms such as recognition and freedom. According to her, analyzing precarity with reference to such notions undermines more egalitarian and less exclusionary solutions to its differential allocation. Thus, a new strategy which would challenge the existing norms and question their exclusionary construction is required. With this aim, she proposes a different activist strategy which is cultivated, instead of the “liberal conception of personal freedom”, focusing “on the critique of state violence and the elaboration of its coercive

³⁷⁸ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 2.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 2, 31.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 19, 76.

mechanisms” which may result in an “alternative political framework”.³⁸¹ She argues that such a strategy would achieve success if it takes the form of alliances or coalitions which are not rooted in (the reconciliation of differences among) subject positions, desires, beliefs or self-identifications but “overlapping aims” and “active antagonisms”.³⁸²

The Butlerian idea of alliances should not be understood as an effort to find an all-embracing common ground for all minorities. The aim here is not to unify all abjected populations but to direct them to think through the category of minority – rather than identity. In other words, what is suggested by Butler is an opposition strategy which aims at minimizing the precarity of all oppressed groups – even one’s ideological opponents.

As can be observed above, the problem that Butler seeks to find a solution to is not one of co-existence. Neither, does it refer to the widely accepted ideal of living together despite our differences. It rather means a new way of thinking about politics which enables simultaneous questioning of arbitrary violence against groups that are supposed to be antagonists. In other words, the problems which are to be solved are the ones exemplified, for instance, in the general presumption that anti-homophobic struggle and struggle against cultural and religious racisms are mutually exclusive ones which necessarily contradict each other. Her effort grounds on the fact that such frameworks

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁸² Ibid., p. 147

are the keys to mobilization of these groups in order to contribute to each other's precarity.

The aim, here, is not to argue that Muslim civil society actors and LGBTs are pitted against each other by the state or any "powerful" institutions; thus, totally deprive the "Muslim party" of the debate of its agency. I rather aim at drawing attention to the spectrum of possibilities that power creates. Even though the practices of Islamic civil society actors that involved in the homosexuality debate reflect their choices, the options regarding what is sayable, thinkable and doable is determined by discourses.

Nevertheless, power should not be understood only in its negativity. It is also productive of different types of possibilities for resistance. In this respect, in order to elucidate different aspects of relations between Islamic civil society actors and LGBTs without framing them in a permanent opposition, it is worth questioning the possibility of resistances formed in a way that Butler suggests.

MAZLUMDER, Antagonism and Coalitions

It can be argued that MAZLUMDER's discourse of "opposition to *zulüm*" bears similarities with the notion of "alliance" in the Butlerian sense. In fact, the organization is known for its inclination to collaborate with other CSOs in common human rights platforms. In addition, in many instances, it engages in temporary or permanent alliances with individual organizations in order to strengthen their influence in the field of human rights. On the other hand, what really makes these alliances similar to what Butler

proposes is the fact that they include groups which are known to be antagonists. For instance, organizational actions of MAZLUMDER demonstrate that discriminatory binary dichotomies, which are among the main elements of discursive framework of Turkey - such as Kurdish-Turkish or Muslim-Non-Muslim- do not affect the possibility of cooperation. What matters for MAZLUMDER is whether someone is exposed to violence, or not. On the other hand, as was discussed previously, acknowledging that someone is discriminated against does not necessarily bring about solidarity. On the contrary, as the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate demonstrated, groups which define themselves as precarious can contribute to the vulnerability of others.

On this matter, Judith Butler argues that the apprehension of precariousness *per se* might not be a sufficient motive to cooperate with every oppressed group. “[I]t does not follow that if one apprehends a life as precarious one will resolve to protect that life or secure the conditions for its persistence and flourishing”.³⁸³ On the contrary, as one apprehends that her life is precarious by definition, she feels threatened and asks for more protection at the expense of the lives that are deemed “destructible” and “ungrievable”, thus “lose-able”. The letter addressed to Kavaf can be regarded as a perfect example of this situation. The bio-political position of “victim” attributed to Muslims and as the “social threat” attributed to LGBTs exclude such alliances between the signatories and LGBTs from the list of what is discussable.

³⁸³ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 2.

When Ahmet Özsöz was asked about MAZLUMDER's approach to the idea of alliance with other groups within the civil society, he directly clarified that MAZLUMDER is open to any kind of coalition except with LGBTs:

Within the framework of our principles we work in solidarity with all human rights organizations in Turkey [...] With pretty much all of them. We just do not work with homosexuals who we consider fundamental human rights violations and with [people/organizations] who struggle for defining homosexuality as an identity for humanity [...] Because we think of homosexuality as a rights violation. However, we still are in certain endeavours regarding the problems of homosexuals and the human rights violations that they are exposed to. However, we do not take part in efforts which attempt to legitimize homosexuality.³⁸⁴

Here, Ahmet Özsöz defines LGBTs in a paradoxical way as “a population whose rights are violated and whose claims for rights constitute a violation of human rights”. In this respect, he apprehends the precariousness of LGBTs. In fact, the organization allocates place to physical violence cases against LGBTTs as human rights violations in its journal called *Violation Report*.³⁸⁵ In addition, it is also known that in the past MAZLUMDER and LGBT organizations such as Kaos GL were co-signatories of certain texts regarding human rights.³⁸⁶ On the other hand, equality and rights claims of

³⁸⁴ Ahmet Özsöz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁸⁵ MAZLUMDER. 2005 Eylül Ayı İhlal Raporu. Available [online]: <http://www.mazlumder.org/yayinlar/detay/raporlar/3/2005-eylul-ihlal-raporu/779> [25.06.2012]; MAZLUMDER. 2004 Mayıs Ayı İhlal Raporu. Available [online]: <http://www.mazlumder.org/yayinlar/detay/raporlar/3/2004-mayis-ihlal-raporu/766> [25.06.2012]; MAZLUMDER. 2006 Ekim Kasım Aralık İhlal Raporu. Available [online]: <http://www.mazlumder.org/yayinlar/detay/raporlar/3/2006-ekim-kasim-aralik-ihlal-raporu/792> [25.06.2012].

³⁸⁶ Fırat News, 18 July 2011. Available [online]: <http://firatnews.com/index.php?rupel=nuce&nuceID=46775> [24.06.2012].

LGBTs are equated to an attack on “human” rights. In this respect, it can be argued that the distinction between human beings and LGBTs is mobilized once more as an impediment to coalitions. As long as the rights of LGBTs are at stake, MAZLUMDER refuses to be a part of any coalition while it openly acknowledges the precarity of LGBTs and publicize this. It justifies its position by defining Islam as a religion whose believers can never legitimize homosexuality. Ayşe Kadioğlu, relying on her interview with an ex-president of MAZLUMDER, points out that even in international human rights platforms, the organization might react negatively with regard to the protection of LGBT rights.³⁸⁷

This line of argument also mobilizes a further problematic pseudo-dichotomy which complements the one between human beings and LGBTs; namely Islam versus homosexuality. Differently put, arguing that Muslims cannot legitimize homosexuality implies that Muslims and LGBTs are mutually exclusive groups. This discursive strategy systematically disregards the existence of LGBT individuals who consider themselves as believers. From the Foucauldian perspective the silences are as important as what is said. What is not mentioned in the above mentioned arguments of Özsöz is that a Muslim homosexual is not envisageable for the certain subjects of the “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate. Nevertheless, there is a significant number of LGBT Muslims who challenges the assumption that Islam and homosexuality are incompatible.

³⁸⁷ Kadioğlu, p. 36.

For instance, the president of İnsanca Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği (Organization for Humane Life)³⁸⁸ argues that there is a significant number of homosexuals who define themselves as “religious” people and they perform their religious services on a regular basis.³⁸⁹

Homosexuals in Turkey are generally Muslims. But they cannot perform their religious service in the mosques freely. That is why we demanded mosques and religious functionaries from the state.³⁹⁰

Muslim-LGBT groups which claim that these identities are compatible with each other and can be united in a single body are also quiet abundant internationally. For instance, with the aim of challenging the presumption that Muslims and LGBTs are always already antagonist groups, Butler also gives significant examples of such organizations. She emphasizes that “there are numerous networks of Muslim lesbians and gays (consider the Kreuzberg bar, SO36, in Berlin) that undo the necessity of the opposition between sexuality and religion”.³⁹¹

However, within the discursive framework of the debate this opposition is deemed not undoable. The fact that Muslim and homosexual remain as categories which excludes each other, although it is not relevant, indicates that the Muslim party of the debate abjects LGBTs from the category of believers. Given that even the heterosexuals

³⁸⁸ İnsanca Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği is a TT organization established in Ankara. For detailed information about the organization see İYDD’s official web page. Available [online]: <http://www.insancayasam.org.tr/en/index.asp> [27.06.2012].

³⁸⁹ Eflaton. Eşcinseller Özel İmam İstiyor. Available [online]: <http://gayislam.blogspot.com/2008/01/ecinseller-zel-imam-istiyor.html> [27.06.2012].

³⁹⁰ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁹¹ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 146.

who support LGBTs are not regarded as real Muslims, the Islam of the “perverted” ones who insistently disobey god’s orders does not even within the limits of what is discussable. Thus, the possibility of organizational cooperation is also excluded from the possibilities of discourse of “Islam vs. homosexuality”.

At this point, it is also worth acknowledging that each and every organization within civil society might not be able to work in cooperation with all other groups; nor are they required to. However, one should differentiate between choosing partners with whom you can build a stronger rapport and deliberately abjecting certain others in a manner that would contribute to their precarity. The particular use of a religious discourse by MAZLUMDER that rejects all rights related to homosexuality serves the second end.

It is worth remembering that MAZLUMDER and its ideological proponents are not the only representatives of religion-based civil society organizations. Their voice does, however, generally dominate the field. For this reason, according to certain Muslim human rights activists, MAZLUMDER’s approach precludes possible future interactions and mutual support, even if certain members of the Muslim organizations might desire such contact. In fact, the majority of the interviewees from BKP and AKDER believe that a direct alliance between LGBTs and religion-based CSOs is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Considering this general approach of religion-based civil society, a significant number of interviewees declared that Islamic civil society does not welcome LGBTs into such collectivities for a number of reasons. Among these reasons, Islam and a particular reading of its rules comes to the fore as the

most influential. They believe that, as long as the majority of Muslim groups continue to act on such a reading of religious doctrine, the chances for a functioning and successful alliance is slim. Nermin Aycan from BKP explains why:

There are friends [of ours] who think that it is a problematic issue from the religious perspective to accept something which is forbidden by god. This approach is generally dominant in the religious community. As long as this remains to be the common approach it is impossible for them [religious organizations] to work together with [LGBT organizations] since this is not something to be changed. This is faith and it does not change. There is a prohibition. If you accept it, then it is what it is [...] There is no in between positions. It is impossible to find a common ground in these kinds of situations [...] One way or another, these people [LGBTs] are exposed to violence, they are murdered. They should at least be supported in this regard [...] They say “I get that but I cannot solve this [problem] on my own”. You do not have to solve it yourself. It is enough that you join the cause, there are associations for this [purpose]. Nobody expects you to help them on your own and rescue them from that life [...] It takes time to care about other people [...] To empathize... For example, if something like this happens to a relative [if a relative happens to be homosexual], how are they going to react? Does not it happen? It happens.³⁹²

As can be observed above Aycan emphasizes that certain Muslims’ religious affiliations preclude even the possibility of defending LGBTs’ right to life. On the other hand, such a coalition with certain groups or individuals might not be desired by LGBT organizations and individuals, as well. Despite the fact that LGBT movement in Turkey functions as a platform which concerns many types of problems and tries to suggest solutions to a significant spectrum of inequalities, from time to time its members chose not to align with certain Muslim figures. In this way they indicate their criticism to their

³⁹² Nermin Aycan, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

discriminatory attitudes. Sarphan Uzunoğlu's interview with Umut Güner, from Kaos GL, both exemplifies the comprehensiveness of LGBT movement's anti-discriminatory attitude and indicates the reasons behind their rejection of certain forms of solidarity:

In the interactions and cooperations we had formed so far, we have tried to establish alliances on the grounds of anti-militarism, anti-violence, anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia, not to be sexist, and to make these notions visible [...]

For example, when the matter concern is the Kurdish question, we say we also are a party [to the debate]. We want to be a party also to the question of social peace. However, we try not to side with the oppressor but with the oppressed. It is not just the society that will face its homophobia and transphobia; if LGBT individuals wish to liberate themselves, they should also face their own nationalism and conservatism [...]

It is impossible to side with Mazlum-der and other civil society organizations that it cooperates with. I think, it is impossible for me to side with an organization that is capable of making a statement which directly violates my right to live. But they will eventually have to give up defining the existence LGBTs through the notion of sin. If Mazlum-der is to continue to define itself as a human rights organization, it has to do this; or rather it can go on saying "We are a human rights organization only of Muslim men".³⁹³

Here, Umut Güner explains why it is not acceptable to form a coalition with MAZLUMDER on the grounds that it is impossible to side with an organization which can make a declaration that aims directly at depriving LGBTs from their right to life. He argues that in order to enable such an alliance MAZLUMDER has to reconsider its mission as a "human rights organization" since its current position renders it a "human rights organization of Muslim men". This approach can also be observed in the critical

³⁹³ Sarphan Uzunoğlu. 13 April 2011. Muhafazakar, Milliyetçi, Militarist ve Heteroseksist Yapıdan Etkileniyoruz. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=6755> [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

stance of LGBTT organizations against Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe Dur De! (Stop Racism and Nationalism!) and Sosyal Değişim Derneği (Organization of Social Change) which invited Hilal Kaplan to be one of the moderators of the International Hate Crimes Conference in 2011. When it was found out that Kaplan, who announced LGBTs to be “sinners” and the LGBT movement as a “pornographic bedroom politics”, LGBT organizations and academicians such as Melek Göregenli withdrew from the conference.³⁹⁴ Protestors established a Facebook group entitled “Uluslararası Nefret Suçları Konferansı'nda Hilal KAPLAN'a DurDe!" (Stop Hilal Kaplan in International Hate Crimes Conference!). As a result of these protests Hilal Kaplan withdrew from the conference and announced in her Twitter page that she is withdrawing from her moderator position due to the reactions of “certain groups”. She also added, “but homosexuality is still a sin”. Umut Güner explains the reasons of the protest attitude of LGBTs and opponents of homophobia as such:

When the idea of a conference was put forth before the Dur De conference, we expressed our concern. The fact that Hilal Kaplan was invited without taking our criticisms into consideration is a great disgrace, not to us, but to the LGBT individuals who were exposed to hate crimes.³⁹⁵

In another article, he criticizes the attitude of the organizers³⁹⁶ of the conference for considering Kaplan’s declaration about LGBTs within the limits of freedom of

³⁹⁴ Bawer Çakır. 11 April 2011. LGBT’lerin Tepkisi Hilal Kaplan’a Geri Adım Attırdı. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=6738> [24.06.2012].

³⁹⁵ Uzunoğlu. Muhafazakar, Milliyetçi, Militarist ve Heteroseksist Yapıdan Etkileniyoruz. See Appendix for the original quote.

³⁹⁶ I interviewed a member of Sosyal Değişim Derneği (Organization of Social Change) regarding the discussion that took place due to Kaplan’s invitation to the conference. Nevertheless, for ethical reasons I am not able to share his ideas and answers to the critiques, here.

expression. However, Güner argues, her ideas cannot be deemed simple matters of freedom of expression since the position who declares homosexuals sinners is no different from that of murderers of LGBT individuals:

Not even in our own activities, we have fallen to the “victimhood hierarchy”. But we have also never rendered bringing a “Saturday Mother” with a torturer police officer together a freedom of expression [...]

Problems are not solved bringing “a Muslim (headscarved woman), a homosexual, a Kurd” together over a table. If we are to sit around a table, we should all face with the prejudices regarding the other, with the dogmas nourished by the system, the religion, etc [...]

Today there is the court case of Ahmet Yıldız. Ahmet Yıldız’s father, his murderer, and Hilal Kaplan, interpret Islam from the same perspective and homosexuality from the same point of view. That is what we say. We have always supported the struggles of Muslim feminists and we will continue to do so. We will not allow you to put us into a vicious circle of comparing the freedom to headscarf and LGBTs’ freedom, as the conservative media which spreads the hate discourse does.³⁹⁷

Thus, it can be argued that if one of the groups who claim to be precarious appropriates a position which directly increase precarity of another, an alliance in Butlerian sense is neither possible nor desired. It is worth remembering here that Butler suggests coalitions, which include conflicting groups whose interests cannot be reconciled, as a mobilization strategy against the discriminatory systemic problems which discriminate against both parties. She believes that this can be a successful activist strategy since the opposition between minority groups is manipulated in a way serving discriminatory state

³⁹⁷ Umut Güner. 16 June 2011. DurDe ve Sosyal Değişim Derneği’nin Açıklaması Gerçekleri Yansıtmıyor. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=7161> [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

ideologies. However, she also underlines that certain actors might increase others' precarity, framing them as threats to their existence. MAZLUMDER's and Kaplan's approach to homosexuality can be considered from this second perspective. In this case, neither the attitude of MAZLUMDER nor that of Kaplan can be explicated in terms of a pitting against strategy of the state or any other "powerful" actor. Among the possibilities provided by discourses of truth about homosexuality, these actors chose to politicize their homophobic position as a means to protect their own existence and values. Thus, they became the very sources of increased precariousness of LGBT individuals. In this way, the minimum requirement (mutual apprehension of precariousness), and accordingly, the possibility of such alliance is eliminated.

Moments of "Unexpected" Alliances

Despite the fact that MAZLUMDER's attitude is dominant in the Islamic civil society it would be wrong to disregard the counter examples which underline the possibility of establishing 'improbable' alliances.³⁹⁸ In fact, interviews with members of BKP and AKDER and their organizational practices demonstrated that there are also Islamic CSOs which are willing to form coalitions with LGBTs. The enabling factor at stake in these cases is each group's acknowledgement of one another's problems as having been caused by similar discriminatory, abjecting, racist and sexist practices. Relying on

³⁹⁸ Alliances between Islamic civil society and LGBT organizations are deemed "improbable" because such a coalition is not expected (and sometimes not desired) by these actors; and, they are regarded to be two antagonistic poles whose reconciliation is not possible. Thus, they are presumed to necessarily be in conflict.

empirical data and interviews conducted with the members of these groups, I argue that although LGBTs, BKP and AKDER do not agree on each other's fundamental life styles and ideologies, an alliance including both is not impossible since they do support each other on many occasions. In fact, a unified struggle or at least a temporary alliance between the LGBT community and Islamic civil society is not unprecedented. There are a number of common platforms in which many civil society organizations, including certain religion based groups and LGBT organizations, take part. The recent Kürtaj Yasaklanamaz (Abortion cannot be Prohibited) initiative³⁹⁹ and former initiatives such as 301. Madde Kaldırılsın (Article 301 Should be Annulled),⁴⁰⁰ Daha İyi Bir Dünya için Askeri Harcamaları Durdur (Stop Military Spending for a Better World),⁴⁰¹ Darbeye Karşı Ses Çıkart (Make a Sound Against Military Interventions)⁴⁰² are among the examples of platforms which include Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations as co-signatories. In addition to these, BKP's participation in Nefret Suçları Mağduru Trans Bireyleri Anma Buluşması (Meeting for Commemoration of Trans-gender Victims of

³⁹⁹ Kürtaj Yasaklanamaz. Başbakanın ve Hükümetin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliğini, Kadın Bedenini Doğurganlığını ve Cinselliğini Hedef Alan Politikalarına Sonuna Kadar Hayır Diyoruz!. Available [online]: <http://kurtajyasaklanamaz.com/> [24.06.2012].

⁴⁰⁰ Bianet, 09 February 2007. Available [online]: <http://bianet.org/bianet/bianet/91735-20-bin-insan-100-orgut-301-kaldirilsin> [24.06.2012].

⁴⁰¹ Kaos GL. 10 April 2012. "Daha İyi Bir Dünya İçin Askeri Harcamaları Durdur!". Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=11084> [24.06.2012].

⁴⁰² Zaman, 18 June 2008. Available [online]: <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=703789> [24.06.2012].

Hate Crimes) can be counted as an example of few incidents in which Islamic CSOs take direct action with regard to LGBTs' problems.⁴⁰³

In this respect, such collectivities might be regarded as examples of Butlerian alliances, which do not require the reconciliation of different, even conflicting, ideologies. First of all, in such moments of solidarity, groups, which do not share the same ideologies, come together for a common purpose without seeking to compromise their ideological differences. For instance, homosexuality preserves its forbidden position for BKP and AKDER, but they do not act so as to turn this doctrine into a source of rights violation and still criticize the violations that LGBT individuals are exposed to. On the other hand, a number of LGBT activists assert that they do not personally support veiling and the Islamic doctrine from the perspective of women's rights and equality, but they do support the cause of headscarved women since acting otherwise would be discriminatory.

Secondly, such platforms unify different groups with the purpose of fighting against the same system which usually functions through the discriminatory, patriarchal and sexist practices of the state. Such a unification demonstrates that the groups involved acknowledge that other groups in the coalition are exposed to discriminations and rights violations for different reasons but in similar ways.

⁴⁰³ Pembe Hayat LGBTT Dayanışma Derneği. Nefret Suçu Mağduru Trans Bireyleri Anma Buluşması. Available [online]: http://www.google.com.tr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&ved=0CGEQFjAH&url=http%3A%2F%2Fpanel.stgm.org.tr%2Fvera%2Fapp%2Fvar%2Ffiles%2Fn%2Fe%2Fnefret-suclari-program.doc&ei=gT7mT6mSC8bDtAa0qPzfAQ&usg=AFQjCNFiiQ_tj0RUQ5BPp6l3zxhMLBdfg&sig2=bIx65bOHypHo1I-PubmRRQ [24.06.2012].

Support to the Idea of Alliances

Regarding the instances which have enabled coalitions, it can be argued that both LGBT organizations and religion based ones appreciate the idea of solidarity between minority groups in society. In fact, they do not hesitate to emphasize their support for such solidarities and express their value. Coalitions are generally regarded to be of great importance for protesting against rights violations which concern all of these organizations. Common platforms are also evaluated as tactical means to pursue one's human rights agenda; in terms of asking for solutions from official authorities for problems such as discrimination and hate crimes.

The interviews conducted with the members of BKP and AKDER showed that coalitions are deemed important since they enlarge the scope of struggle and emphasize their causes' legitimacy for different groups even if they do not share the same ideas on every issue. For instance, Nermin Aycan explains how:

Take us for example [...] When we as headscarved women struggle for ourselves, we can only get to a certain point [...] However, regardless of whether they believe [in religion] or not, whether they accept it or not, the fact that both homosexuals and feminist groups support that headscarf is a women's right puts emphasis on the legitimacy of our cause [...] We seem to be more legitimate to the public.⁴⁰⁴

The belief that discriminated populations need one another's support leads BKP and AKDER to support alliances which also involve LGBTs. It is not a conditional support. The members of these two organizations whom I interviewed consider the LGBTTT

⁴⁰⁴ Nermin Aycan, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

movement as an existential struggle which cannot be opposed either from a human rights perspective or a religious point of view. Betül Yılmaz, from BKP, explains the dynamics of such solidarities between BKP and LGBT organizations, arguing that even though they do not agree upon each other's positions they still provide support for each other:

Even though they [LGBTs] do not subjectively experience our problems and we do not think that their lives are acceptable; we still support these people's struggle for existence as human beings. This does not mean that we believe that homosexuality is legitimate from a religious perspective. We do not think that the issue of legitimacy is something that we can decide. These are personal choices and they have to enjoy all their rights as equal individuals. Actually when we speak with other Islamic organizations, they state that they are also sad about the fact that homosexuals are being murdered or exposed to violence [...] But they think that they would legitimize [homosexuality] from a religious perspective if they side with them [LGBT organizations]. We believe that we moved past this legitimacy issue in this way. We are not to decide. If the matter of concern is religion, the judgment belongs to God.⁴⁰⁵

As it can be understood from the above mentioned statements, the demands of the LGBT individuals are not completely normalized from the BKP's points of view. However, they still open a space for collective action while recognizing antagonisms and refusing to compromise from the basic religious principles. Another important aspect of this position is that the interviewees from BKP totally strip themselves of the decision making capacity regarding the "sinfulness" of homosexuality. Asserting that it is up to god to decide the discussion ground is left active; yet, it does not turn into an antagonism which violate the rights struggle of neither LGBT organizations nor Muslim women's organizations. In this way, BKP develops an ethical approach to the issue

⁴⁰⁵ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

which also has strategic value. In this respect, their position indicates an anti-discriminatory approach which includes not only one's own rights or those of similar groups, but also others with whom one may not agree. Another member of BKP expresses that heterosexuality should be accepted as the "normal" type of relationship, but the problems that LGBT individuals face should be paid attention. She argues that the "abnormality" of homosexuality should not result in exclusion:

I believe that heterosexual relations are the 'normal' which we should teach our children. But there are other realities in life. There are people who become homosexuals as a result of rape. We should deal with such matters in different ways. And the solution should not be murdering or ostracizing [...] I believe that this is an issue which should be evaluated from a spectrum of various perspectives [...] Actually, our religious tradition is also very diverse on this matter. It is said that they have place in prophet's *mescit* [room for prayer].⁴⁰⁶

Here, Ayşe Altın makes it clear that from her perspective homosexuality can never be a normal sexual relationship. Besides, she grounds her "anti-discriminatory" position on the belief that certain people "might have become homosexuals as a result of rape". Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that her position directly challenges the fundamental cores of LGBT movement. She announces LGBTTs as "abnormal" individuals and regards homosexuality as a matter of unfortunate experience rather than a sexual orientation. What is of importance here, considering Butlerian coalitions, is the fact that these ideas, which are open to strong criticism from LGBTs and anti-homophobic heterosexuals, do not take form of personal (or organizational) discriminatory action against LGBTs. Despite the fact that members of BKP can

⁴⁰⁶ Ayşe Altın, interview by author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 19 October 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

sometimes *think* in the exact opposite (and discriminatory) way with LGBTs, they do not *act* in that way.

On the issue of solidarity, interviewees from AKDER differ from BKP members in that they emphasize more the need for communication; rather than elaborating the issue from the perspective of rights' defense and collective action. Aynur Temel from AKDER, who is also a lawyer who works especially on juridical problems of headscarved women, evaluates the issue as follows:

Homosexuals and conservatives do not always have to be together. They might be in different compartments. But the problem is that the doors of these compartments are strictly shut. There are no passes allowed in between.⁴⁰⁷

This attitude can also be observed in organizational actions of AKDER which does not involve in issues which are directly related to LGBTs but organize round table discussions with them in order to assure communication and understanding between AKDER and LGBT organizations. Another member of AKDER explains this position, arguing:

I do not believe that homosexuality is halal [allowed] from an Islamic perspective. However, we can come together and talk about these issues. As I told you before, we do not have to be together all the time.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁷ Aynur Temel, interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 15 April 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴⁰⁸ Yaprak Açık, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Is the LGBTTT movement merely about LGBTTs?

Considering the LGBT organizations' approach to the idea of alliance with Islamic CSOs, it would not be misleading to say that they generally seem to be willing to become involved in the struggles against discrimination with regard to any population that suffers from rights violations, including religious organizations, and especially headscarved women. The interviews with members of LGBT organizations also show that they strongly support such alliances and emphasize their necessity for the struggle against discrimination; despite the fact that they are critical about certain aspects of Islamic civil society. A feminist LGBT activist from Kaos GL also underlines the struggles in which LGBT organizations and Islamic CSOs participated side by side and emphasizes that such an alliance is "necessary and possible as long as the groups do not stick to the issues which separate them"⁴⁰⁹. A member of Kaos GL expresses her ideas regarding a coalition with religion based civil society groups as such:

Relying on my personal experience, I strongly believe that I can get organized with women who wear headscarves without any discomfort. At the end of the day, bodily integrity and women's body politics are the basis of my perception of feminism. I believe that I would contradict myself if I do not advocate the freedom to wear headscarf. Why not [to for an alliance between LGBT organizations and Islamic CSOs] on the grounds of feminism? In fact let me say this: What are we waiting for? Of course it would be surprising not to mention men when the matter of concern is religion. This is why the issue collective organization is related to the position of ones who are the most vocal regarding the issue.

I also believe that there are some slippery slopes. We should have such an argument with which we do reproduce the same

⁴⁰⁹ Deniz Ak, interview by author.

statements with the people who embrace religious discourse the one and only. What we say about Palestine should differ from what Felicity Party [Saadet Partisi] says; what we say about Mavi Marmara should differ from what IHH [Human Rights and Freedoms Humanitarian Relief Foundation - İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı] says; should not it?⁴¹⁰

In addition to above mentioned reasons that enable coalitions and emphasize their importance, it is also understood that Islamophobia and homophobia function through similar dynamics. Thus, dialogue among groups within the society, even if they are in ideological conflict, appears to be a way to struggle against discriminatory practices.⁴¹¹

As mentioned above, LGBT rights are supported by the BKP and AKDER at least at the ideological level for various reasons. In addition, a coalition grounded on the defense of human rights, or at least communication are seen as necessary so as not to violate the rights of another minority group which is facing discrimination from the society and the state. However, in order to understand the level and dynamics of relations between the two groups of organizations it is worth analyzing how such ideological and vocal support is realized. Such an analysis also helps highlighting the dynamics of BKP and AKDER's relationship with LGBT organizations. In this way, we can also scrutinize how these organizations' attitudes regarding LGBTs differ from simple lip service to minority rights. The interviews conducted for this project demonstrate that unlike MAZLUMDER, BKP and AKDER do engage in direct organizational contact with LGBT organizations.

⁴¹⁰ Yelda Atak, interview by author, e-mail interview, İstanbul, Turkey 23 March 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴¹¹ Nermin Aycan, interview by author.

Cases of Successful Cooperation

With regard to practical cooperation with LGBTs, BKP members point out that “they have been present in all LGBT platforms”, “do attend to the meetings organized by LGBT organizations when they are invited”, they openly criticize the fact that “LGBT individuals are killed, prevented from finding mainstream jobs and punished unfairly within society” and “they work and walk side by side especially with Kaos GL with regard to women’s rights”. Ayşe Altın expresses the relation of BKP with LGBT organizations as such:

[Relations between BKP and LGBT organizations] are generally in good terms. Our platform is a spectrum. There are people who say that they agree with them on every issue related to LGBTs. My personal opinion about LGBTs is that we should admit in the first place that people cannot work and even get murdered because of their sexual orientations. They can only work in the marginal sectors. They are pushed there. Then for doing this they are punished again. You compel them to prostitution and punish them for prostituting themselves. This means being punished two-three times. This is nothing but ignoring the reality. Such a person do exist.⁴¹²

Another member of BKP explains the organizational policy of BKP as such:

We are also related to the sex workers as much as LGBTs. We prefer to listen to sex workers’ problems and demands and side with them when they are articulating these [problems and demands]. We do the same with regard to LGBTs. When I think about human rights, I guess nobody would say that demands of LGBTs are not among human rights.⁴¹³

⁴¹² Ayşe Altın, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴¹³ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Similarly, an interviewee from AKDER declares that they engage in communicative organizational relations with LGBTs since their existence cannot and should not be ignored:

We have had an explicit position regarding the issue of homosexuality. We have hosted many homosexual individuals in AKDER so far. We even organized workshops twice and discussed homosexuality and Islam together. Instead of saying I will not sit at the same table with them, one should say “what do you want?” There are homosexuals in this society. What do you suggest them? Even, saying ‘burn them’ is an offer. You can criticize it by articulating that it is a fascist attitude. Even this is better. Refusing to establish any kinds of relations would mean ignoring them. Say, we ignore these people; we ignore the buildings out there. Then, would we assume that there is a landscape there?⁴¹⁴

This vocal support for interaction with LGBTs is realized on various grounds such as women’s rights, anti-war campaigns, and Muslim women’s right to wear the headscarf. For the purposes of this research, it is worth mentioning the relations established on such grounds in more detail because the question of which grounds these two groups of organizations can establish a rapport, is indicative of the dynamics of the existing alliances and power relations regarding LGBT organizations and Islamic CSOs.

⁴¹⁴ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Women's Rights as an Area of Solidarity

Given that BKP and AKDER are women's organizations, women's problems are determining issues for them to decide in which platforms and campaigns they participate and with whom they will cooperate. This organizational characteristic is also among the main factors that differentiate them from other mixed Islamic CSOs such as MAZLUMDER, since the latter tends to consider women's issues as a problem of family and commodification, and prefer to discuss the issue within the Islamic framework.

On the other hand, BKP and AKDER approach the issue as a matter of the equal rights and freedom of women. They are not only interested in religious rights and freedoms, but they also defend other rights of women, such as job equality and equal representation. They insist that the headscarf is a women's problem that should be discussed and questioned not only within the Islamic framework, but also as a matter of women's rights. This is why they have aimed to work in collaboration with other women's organizations from the very beginning. In other words, they regard the issue from a relatively feminist perspective despite the fact that they say they are not feminists. Such an approach has rendered them open to cooperation with other organizations sharing similar mind-sets and similar objectives for the solution of women's problems. The organizations that they cooperate also include LGBT organizations which have problematized the situation of women from the very beginning

of the LGBT movement in Turkey. Ayşe Altın expresses the organizational policy of the BKP on this issue as such:

We have always supported cooperation with women's movement [...] We have always been invited [...] Even if we might not have produced anything in common. We have always had common grounds. As a matter of fact, we have not applied [to join], we have been invited [to the meetings]. Our perspective might not have been considered as a legitimate one. Even though we might not have taken common steps, we have always been at the same table [...] This is important as well [...] However, we unfortunately could not have a common say.⁴¹⁵

On the other hand, feminism has also been one of the buildings stones for the LGBT movement in Turkey which, from the very beginning, gained the support of anarchists and feminists. Deniz Ak, who is both a member of Kaos GL and Amargi Kadın Kooperatifi (Amargi Women's Cooperative) explains the relation of the LGBT movement with other groups as such:

LGBT [movement] was alone when it first started. It was supported more by anarchist movement than feminist movement. Its founders were coming from anarchism. However, almost from the very beginning there was an alliance with feminism even if it was not a mass coalition. There is a significant alliance almost each and every women's organization. [Assuring communication] with leftists was slow and difficult. Kurdish movement also supported at the early phases. They had invited us to a DEHAP [Democratic People's Party – Demokratik Halk Partisi] congress. It was not allowed in İHD [Human Rights Association – İnsan Hakları Derneği]. Today they are supporting.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Ayşe Altın, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴¹⁶ Deniz Ak, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Despite the fact that feminist and LGBT movements in Turkey harbors their own tensions and discussions they generally act together on many issues.⁴¹⁷ Most of the members of LGBT organizations define themselves as feminists; thus, women's issues have been of central importance for LGBT organizations as well.

The common interest in women's rights is one of the major factors that lead BKP and AKDER to form coalitions with LGBTs. International Women's Day parades, on the 8th of March, appear to be one of the main occasions that bring Muslim women's organizations and LGBT organizations together. Nermin Aycan explains that 8th of March is of significance for them and also a permanent platform for standing together:

Years ago we joined the march on 8th of March and many other times [...] BKP and LGBTs always stand side by side. They always follow us in the march [...] Or, vice versa. I do not know, whether this is arranged on purpose. I have never felt uncomfortable about this.⁴¹⁸

Regular general meetings, such as 8th of March are not the only examples of standing together. Platforms such as Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz (We Look after Each Other)⁴¹⁹ and Barış İçin Kadın Platformu (Permanent Women's Platform for Peace),⁴²⁰ and

⁴¹⁷ Yasemin Öz. 30 May 2012. Hangi Feminizm, Hangi LGBTT Hareketi. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=11502> [24.06.2012].

⁴¹⁸ Nermin Aycan, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴¹⁹ Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz (BBS) was an initiative which unites Islamist, leftist, liberal, lesbian women - who were discriminated against or commodified by the same patriarchal system which functions through the state - regardless of their ideologies. For a full identification of platform's principles see BBS blog Available [online]: <http://birbirimizesahipcikiyoruz.blogspot.com/> [24.06.2012].

⁴²⁰ For the main text of call for platform see İnsan Hakları Derneği's (Human rights Organization) web site Available [online]: http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1066:-baris-icin-surekli-kadin-platformu-cagri-metni&catid=30:ortak-baslamalar&Itemid=80 [24.06.2012].

campaigns such as Kız Kardeşim İçin (For My Sister)⁴²¹ are among the most mentioned examples of such collective action. Regarding campaigns such as Kız Kardeşim İçin, aiming to defend the rights of every group of women, including veiled women and lesbians, Hidayet Tuksal declared that “they do not support *each other* but they do support *each other’s causes*”.⁴²² In other words, as argued above they do not seek the reconciliation of different and conflicting ideologies in order to defend a cause that is of common interest, and to fight against the same oppressive state practices.

Solidarity on “Neutral”⁴²³ Grounds

The above-mentioned mutual support for collective action is not only observed in struggle areas regarding women’s rights. In fact, these organizations collectively take action regarding a broader range of issues. To put the argument more clearly, women’s rights are not the only occasions in which LGBT organizations and Islamic CSOs perform a collective struggle. Interviewees from the LGBT movement, Islamic CSOs and third party groups, all argue that the easiest way to unite powers of these groups is to deal with a totally different issue which concerns neither LGBT rights nor religious

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Hidayet Tuksal, interview by author. My emphasis.

⁴²³ The term ‘neutral’ is used for platforms which are initiated neither by LGBTTT organizations nor by Islamic civil society organizations. Thus, these platforms are not specifically established in order to defend the rights of a single group.

rights directly. Accordingly, Ayhan Bilgen, declares that for such a collectivity a

“common enemy” happens to be functional, although it is inefficient:

What seems to be a solid but insufficient factor is a common enemy [...] People can come together on the grounds of opposing the despotic government, militarism [...] but this only works as a starting point. However, at the end of the day, there is no place for the others in people’s country or world utopias.⁴²⁴

It is also frequently noted by other interviewees that these groups get involved in collective campaigns against militarism, racism, state oppression, etc., as signatories or direct participants. Anti-war campaigns appear to be the grounds on which almost every civil society group wants to unite, regardless of their ideologies or original activism grounds. For instance, Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın Platformu which was established in order to criticize the increased density of the state of war under the name of the “war against terrorism” after 9/11 and brought feminists, socialists, LGBT’s and Islamic CSOs together is one such prominent example of solidarity.⁴²⁵

Expressing the will of these organizations to stand together, Betül Yılmaz argues that “these are issues which hurt everyone” regardless of their ideologies and concern whole country:

We have a stronger voice when we cooperate with organizations which are sensitive to the same issues [...] For instance, woman question is one of these issues. Or, the desire for peace, for example, opposing the existing terror [...] Regardless of people’s

⁴²⁴ Ayhan Bilgen, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴²⁵ Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın Platformu. 25 December 2000. *Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın Platformu Çağrı Metni*. Available [online]: http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1066:-baris-icin-surekli-kadin-platformu-cagri-metni&catid=30:ortak-baslamalar&Itemid=80 [24.06.2012].

ideologies, these [...] are issues which hurt everyone and concern the whole country.⁴²⁶

Though less mentioned than Barış İçin Kadın Platformu, coalitions against judicial problems in Turkey are further occasions that include a number of organizations regardless of their main fields of action. For instance, Uluslararası Ceza Mahkemesi Koalisyonu (International Criminal Court Coalition), which brings 20 different organizations together in order to invite states (including Turkey) that are not parties to the Rome Statute to sign it, is one of them.⁴²⁷

As these examples demonstrate, areas which are of common interest for parties, while not concerning any of them directly and specifically, happen to be grounds which enable coalitions among CSOs from different and supposedly conflicting back grounds. However, the “neutrality” of the purpose of the coalition might not be necessarily required for establishing coalitions and solidarity.

The Headscarf as a Unifying Area of Struggle

The struggle for equality and freedom of headscarved Muslim women is one of those grounds that do not require the so-called “neutrality” of the subject. Although it is not a common concern as binding as the issue of women’s rights, nor a ground that concerns everyone, the struggle for the freedom to headscarf is a pertinent issue upon which LGBTs and Islamic CSOs take the same position. Since it is an area of struggle that is

⁴²⁶ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴²⁷ For the demands of Uluslararası Ceza Mahkemesi Koalisyonu (International Criminal Court Coalition) see coalition’s web site. Available [online]: <http://ucmk.org.tr/> [24.06.2012].

directly linked to Islamic women's organizations but still supported by LGBT organizations without any conditions, solidarity on this issue is of central importance for the purposes of this work.

LGBT organizations' support to Islamic CSOs, despite the fact that a number of these organizations contribute to the abjection of LGBTs, demonstrates that the acknowledgement of the precarious position of a group might be sufficient to engender an understanding of responsibility towards them. Considering the attitude of LGBT organizations, Nermin Aycan from BKP argues that LGBTs unconditionally support the rights of headscarved women; while unfortunately conservatives do not do the same for LGBT rights:

For instance, both headscarved women and homosexuals are groups which suffer from otherization. Actually, regarding this issue, homosexuals are much more [...] supportive of the rights headscarved women [...] they provide [...] direct [...] support [...] Conservatives, though not all of them, remain distant to the issue of homosexuality because of their religious beliefs. [This is a] problem.⁴²⁸

In fact, a significant number of LGBT activists insistently declare that the veil is a women's right and do support this cause in all possible instances. Yasemin Öz explains Kaos GL's approach to the issue underlining that opposition to discrimination cannot be conditional:

Discrimination against women regarding the issue of headscarf is not an issue that Kaos GL advocates only as a supporter. We consider it as a part our own policy, like all the other types of discriminations [...] It is not possible for Kaos GL to internalize the fact that women are excluded from educational and

⁴²⁸ Nermin Aycan, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

occupational lives and are discriminated against; while men who also fulfil their religious obligations can exist across the whole public sphere since they do not have to wear headscarfs; thus, they cannot be marked.⁴²⁹

On the other hand, unconditional support from LGBTs as opposed to the hesitation of Islamic CSOs, demonstrates a significant problem about existing alliances. Even though it is possible to establish coalitions between certain Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations, these alliances might not be exempt from problems and power relations.

Obstacles Faced by Existing Alliances between Islamic CSOs and LGBT Organizations

The actions and discourses of BKP and AKDER demonstrate that Islamic CSOs are not necessarily hostile to the idea of collaboration with LGBT organizations. However, the fact that these organizations do communicate and participate in temporary alliances does not mean that these alliances are free from problems such as lacking equal representation and being prone to be disturbed by intra-group pressures. Thus, I argue that regarding the existing level of association between civil society groups, two main problematic aspects can be observed. First of all, LGBT rights *per se* might not be defended in such collective struggles on par with those of other discriminated groups such as Muslim women or Kurdish minority. Secondly, support from religion-based organizations for LGBT rights (and support of LGBT organizations for Muslim's rights) might be prevented through intra-group pressures within the religion-based civil society.

⁴²⁹ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. 05 March 2010. *Birlikte Pişmeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var*. Available [online]: <http://www.kaosgl.org/sayfa.php?id=4413> [24.06.2012]. See Appendix for the original quote.

Lack of Direct Support for LGBT Rights in the Form of Action

The interviews conducted in this study showed that one of the problematic aspects of the existing alliances between religion-based civil society and LGBT organizations is that the grounds on which a collective struggle can be conducted are chosen selectively. In other words, LGBT rights are not one of the issues which are defended collectively. Even in neutral platforms LGBT rights might not be one of the primary matters of concern unlike problems of other discriminated populations. For instance, Barış İçin Sürekli Kadın Platformu is among the most mentioned examples by the interviewees in order to underline that Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations can collaborate. However, Caner Kaya from Kaos GL emphasizes that even this platform is not without problems of representation. LGBTTT rights have little place in the platform when compared to other human rights movements such as Kurdish movement:

Take the Permanent Women's Platform for Peace for example. As usual Kurdish issue will be discussed mostly. LGBTs will be mentioned less... In order to form an alliance as Judith [Butler] calls for, there have to be very few problems.⁴³⁰

The recently established constitutional platforms might be regarded as a further example of problematic aspects of common platforms. It is widely accepted among Turkish civil society that the 1982 constitution is an anti-democratic one which limits a great number of rights and freedoms. For that reason, CSOs permanently draw

⁴³⁰ Caner Kaya, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

attention to the necessity of a new constitution. Especially after last national elections in which AKP promised a new, more democratic constitution and the constitutional referendum in September 12, 2010 which resulted in amendment of a number of articles of Turkish constitution, Turkey entered into a period of discussion and negotiation in order to influence the constitution making process. With this aim, a number of constitutional platforms (Anayasa platformları) which include representatives of a variety of civil society organizations have been established. The main objective of these platforms is to assure contribution of a wide range of societal groups to the constitution-making process. In this way, they aim at enabling that the rights of every group in the society to be protected by the new constitution. However, also in these platforms which are supposed to allow expression to the voices of all groups in the society, LGBT rights occasionally became the deadlock. LGBT activist Mehmet Tarhan narrates his experience in one of these platforms as such:

10 days ago, the principles of attendance [to the constitutional platform] was going to be determined in a meeting of 50-60 NGOs. At first, Mazlum-der objected the sexual orientation article. But it took one and a half hour for them to say what they were objecting. They do not even mention it. IHD [Human Rights Association], ecologists and women resisted, even before LGBTs. They were saying that the existing article is totally discriminatory. Other people were negotiating for something that we ask for. Or, they were negotiating with us, asking whether we would sign the text if it [sexual orientation] is written in round figures. So we left. Rainbow Coalition was established.⁴³¹

⁴³¹ Mehmet Tarhan's speech in the panel called "Yasalardaki Yasak Kelime" organized during 19. LGTTT Pride Week. 20 June 2011. See Appendix for the original quote.

From this perspective, it is questionable whether such collective platforms can be considered as alliances in Butlerian sense. It is true that conflicting groups do take place in them and they work against the inequalities established by the Turkish state. However, it can also be argued that they might fail to be active discussion grounds which are productive of efficient systemic critiques as they also inherit the relations of power.

Another problematic aspect about the existing coalitions between Islamic civil society and LGBT organizations is the fact that an active alliance which is established to support the LGBT movement or oppose violations against LGBTs does not exist. In fact, in the case of campaigns initiated by LGBT's, Islamic CSOs (which declare their support for equality of LGBTs) might not provide the campaign with organizational support. It can be argued that speaking up for LGBTs and defending their rights stand as taboos in the society and this understanding can also be observed in the hesitation of organizations which do verbally support LGBT rights. Even though it is mentioned by a number of LGBT interviewees that there have been personal support especially from headscarved women, it is also underlined that there has never been support at the organizational level.

Given the lack of substantial organizational support for the LGBT movement from Islamic CSOs, the dynamics of the alliances between Islamic organizations and LGBTs appear to have a puzzling nature. Religious organizations such as BKP and AKDER declare their support for equal rights of LGBT individuals despite the fact that such a support has not been realized in the form direct organizational partnership when

the issue is only about LGBT rights.⁴³² Indeed, members of BKP and AKDER admit that even though they are always in contact with LGBT organizations, it involves limited support.

It is declared by the majority of interviewees from BKP and AKDER that Muslim women should support LGBT rights more; however, this is *too difficult to manage*. One of the reasons behind this phenomenon might be the fact that the level of organizational contact does not represent the ideas of all members in these organizations. Each and every member of BKP and AKDER declared that there are many people who think differently within the organization and everyone does not support LGBT rights to the same degree. The majority directly declared that they do not support homosexuality, but they do support LGBT individuals' rights struggle. Certain other interviewees declared that they would neither be advocates of homosexuality nor oppose any regulations which would ameliorate homosexuals' situation. However, they also mentioned that they have friends who do not support any claims of LGBTs in order not to legitimize homosexuality. In short, despite the fact that they do not oppose the LGBTT movement's struggle for equality, certain members of these organizations hesitate to provide direct support. On this matter Nermin Aycan asserts that:

There are friends even in our group who think that we should not legalize homosexuality. There are friends of ours who think that it [homosexuality] shall not become widespread; they [LGBTs] shall not be visible. There are friends who think that accepting something which god forbids is problematic from the religious

⁴³² It is worth noting here that especially BKP representatives attend to conferences (as exemplified in the above mentioned example of participation in the conference regarding hate crimes against trans-gender individuals) which are organized by LGBT organizations. However, this type of support is not realized, for example, in terms of organizational participation in a campaign which is directly linked to discriminations against LGBTs.

perspective [...] However, there is no one who rejects to be in the same place with a homosexual. There are no problems about being together. Acquaintances and conversations do happen. The problem is rendering them visible, standing by them to support [...] Because people get stuck on religious dimension of the issue. They say that “how can I admit something that is forbidden by God?”⁴³³

Such a differentiated membership profile can be regarded as one of the reasons of limited organizational support in the form of public action. On the other hand, given that members of these organizations also criticize their own attitude with regard to standing for LGBT rights, internal opposition *per se* might not be sufficient to explain the low levels of direct organizational support. Accordingly, the members, who argue that there should be more support for the LGBT movement or that the existing support should be more actively declared, point to the structural and contextual problems –rather than the intra-organizational objection. The interviewees mostly assert that the main reason behind the low level of association lies in the difficulty of supporting ‘homosexuality’ as a “Muslim” in the traditional mind set, and the responses and criticisms they get from other Islamic CSOs. Betül Yılmaz from BKP clarifies and criticizes this problem in the following manner:

Standing upright by them is a feat of bravery in our country. It requires courage especially in Islamic community [...] We do defend [LGBT rights]. And, we do not refrain from articulating that. But we cannot do that recklessly. Neither can we do it as actively as we want to, because we also live in the same social structure, surrounded by the traditional values.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Nermin Ayca, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴³⁴ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Yılmaz's self criticism indicates another reason behind the lack of direct visible support for LGBT rights: the pressure exerted by other Islamic CSOs on women's organizations such as BKP and AKDER.

Intra-group Pressure

One of the axes which differentiate BKP and AKDER from other Islamic CSOs is their approach to homosexuality. However, this difference is not an explicit one, given the incoherency between individual vocal support and organizational active support. One of the reasons, mentioned by the interviewees, behind limited action capacity is the reactions that they get from other CSOs. Despite the fact that BKP and AKDER are independent organizations whose decision-making procedures involve only their own members, they cannot totally ignore the criticisms of the community to which they belong. Since religious freedoms are among the main concerns of Islamic CSOs, these organizations generally work as partners in many projects and campaigns. In order not to jeopardize these campaigns they sometimes limit themselves with regard to sticky issues such as collaboration with LGBT organizations. Hidayet Tuksal criticizes such intra-community relations within civil society saying that "when groups speak they pay attention to their community of approval [onay çevresi]. The power of their community of approval influences people".⁴³⁵

⁴³⁵ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, interview by author.

Tuksal's claim is also acknowledged by certain other interviewees. They feel uncomfortable about this intra-group pressure and try to stand against it. However, given that projects led in the form of coalitions are thought to have much more potential to succeed, these organizations need each other to be more efficient. Thus, even though they do not want to, they do have to reconsider and reform their actions and statements about critical issues. In other words, power relations among Islamic organizations might lead to a certain kind of self-censorship in the form of minimizing or decreasing organizational linkage with LGBTs. Betül Yılmaz says that they experience such power relations in terms of social pressure:

There is nothing open and visible. However, we feel the societal pressure. Actually, there are times that we think how appearing in news in this way [supporting homosexuals] would influence other projects of ours. Even though we do not count on this idea a lot, when we want to be partners in a project with these organizations again, they might approach us saying that they will not ally with us if we do that [support LGBTs]. Of course you can carry out different works with LGBTs in one project and with Islamic organizations in another. It is not a pressure which interrupts a project. However, it [the criticisms regarding cooperation with LGBTs] is mentioned.⁴³⁶

She also mentions that these relations might lead to self-censorship despite the fact that they try to resist it:

I cannot say that there is no self-censorship at all. I wish there were not; this is the most horrible dimension of censorship [...] However, within the organization we always talk about this and encourage each other. It is for sure that all of us do not think about [homosexuality] in the same way but we try to overcome self-censorship within the organization.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. See Appendix for the original quote.

This intra-group pressure from other Islamic organizations diminishes the possibility of solidarity between Islamic organizations which are willing to establish coalitions and LGBT organizations. On the other hand, the extent to which intra-group pressure affects the possibility of forming alliances might not be directly inferred from the declarations of members of BKP. In addition, the influence of this pressure is questionable since BKP and AKDER still associate themselves with LGBT organizations on certain occasions. In order to clarify the effects of the pressure and the extent to which Islamic civil society precludes solidarities, it is worth paying attention to another aspect of intra-group pressure.

How Does an Alliance Fail?

Intra-group pressure is not only influential at instances in which Islamic organizations want to support LGBTs. It can also be observed in certain Islamic CSOs' objection to LGBT support for religious rights. These instances also demonstrate the degree of hostility to any association with LGBT organizations and the attempts to abject LGBTs within civil society. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in the reactions of certain Islamic civil society actors when LGBT organizations speak up for the rights of Muslim women.

As mentioned above, LGBT organizations and individuals occasionally support the rights struggle of headscarved women. They do participate in campaigns against the headscarf ban and publicly support the majority of projects regarding this issue.

However, their support is not always welcome by religion-based organizations despite the fact that it is appreciated by certain individual headscarved activists and members of organizations such as BKP and AKDER. Certain Islamic CSOs do not only interfere in the decision making processes of BKP and AKDER regarding with whom they will ally, but also interfere about whose support they will accept. A significant number of examples show that what is opposed is not only the idea of forming coalitions with LGBT organizations but also LGBTs' support for issues regarding Muslims' rights struggle. Ayhan Bilgen criticizes this attitude as follows:

The syndrome of arguing that “we do not side with them in the field even if their objectives are totally compatible with ours; even though the purpose of their activities meets our demands, we do not want to be seen with them” is not a concern related to the values. It is a societal concern. Let me explain this through a more ironical example. For instance, Cemil İpekçi declared his opposition to the headscarf ban during the discussions. Even his opposition to headscarf ban disturbed certain Islamic circles. There were diverse approaches ranging from people who said “is it [advocating headscarf] up to him?” to the ones who said “this is what happens if you define headscarf as a matter of human rights rather than a religious right”. People start to think that “even the people whose support we desire the least support us and destroy us while supporting.”⁴³⁸

One might expect that such a rejection of support observed in the individual case of Cemil İpekçi would not take place in the field of human rights since the greater the support, the higher the chance of a campaign to be successful. In fact, all of the interviewees who took part in this research think in this way. However, such a state of mind does not prevail all the time even if it might endanger the possibility of the success

⁴³⁸ Ayhan Bilgen, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

of the campaigns. In fact refusal to stand side by side with LGBTs is not limited to rejection of their support. Certain Muslim civil society actors do not even want to appear in the same page or sentence with LGBTs. Tuksal exemplifies this attitude, narrating the approach of certain Muslim figures during the preparation of one of the CEDAW Shadow Reports.⁴³⁹

In the presentation [of one of the CEDAW reports], lesbian and headscarved women were used in the same sentence. People reacted, arguing that it would be better not to mention headscarved women instead of mentioning them with lesbians.⁴⁴⁰

This discriminatory attitude against LGBTTs does not only curtail the possibility of strategic collective action but it also endangers the success possibility of campaigns initiated by Islamic CSOs and supported by LGBT organizations. The unfortunate experience of AKDER and Kaos GL can be considered as a significant example of the latter.

The AKDER Campaign Case

It can be argued that the exclusionary tendency of religious CSOs can best be observed in the signature crisis which AKDER and Kaos GL faced. In 2010, AKDER started a campaign against the veil ban under the title of “February 28 cannot last for a thousand

⁴³⁹ CEDAW’s Shadow reports are documents in which civil society organizations report the activities in accordance with CEDAW principles. See, for example, CEDAW Shadow Report 2010. Available [online]: http://arsiv.ucansupurge.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=821:cedaw-golge-raporu-2010&catid=51:diger&Itemid=115 [24.06.2012].

⁴⁴⁰ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

years- 28 Şubat 1000 Yıl Süremez”.⁴⁴¹ The campaign was an attempt to protest the February 28 - rulings of the National Security Council, which constituted a governmental action plan enforced by the military.⁴⁴² The military action plan was actually an ultimatum through which the government was asked to stand against “reactionary forces” and to take necessary precautions, including the headscarf ban, in order to protect laïcité. Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, the chief of the general staff of the time said: “The impact of February 28 will last for a thousand years”.⁴⁴³

Following the National Security Council rulings, in the period which is known as the February 28 process, a significant number of headscarved women were forced to take off their headscarves in order to be able to retain their jobs at public offices. Public officers who refused to do so were fired. Students were prohibited from entering universities with a headscarf. Those who insisted were banned from entering classes or examinations. In its call for the 2010 campaign, AKDER declared that one of the building stones of February 28, the headscarf ban, remains; despite the fact that Turkey is in a restructuring period in which military interventions are condemned and the parties who are responsible for these interventions are prosecuted. Hence, the organization called for support of all people who think that “February 28 cannot last for a thousand years”.

⁴⁴¹ See campaign blog for the main discussion lines. Available [online]: <http://28subat1000yilsuremez.blogspot.com/> [24.06.2012].

⁴⁴² This military intervention is also known as the post-modern coup d'état.

⁴⁴³ Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Derneği (Women' Organization Against Discrimination). “28 Şubat 1000 Yıl Süremez” mi Diyorsunuz: Kaldırın Başörtüsü Yasaklarını!”. Available [online]: <http://28subat1000yilsuremez.blogspot.com/> [24.06.2012].

Within the framework of the campaign, AKDER issued an open call to CSOs and individuals to participate by publishing their signatures on the web site of the campaign.⁴⁴⁴ Kaos GL was one of the organizations that declared its support and signed the text with the name of the organization. AKDER published the signature with those of other organizations in the blog of the campaign. However, certain religion-based organizations and ‘faithful’ individuals were disturbed by the support of an LGBT organization to a campaign regarding religious freedoms.⁴⁴⁵ Despite the fact that members of AKDER opposed such criticisms, they were worried about the fate of the campaign and let Kaos GL know the problem they faced. Kaos GL then decided to withdraw its organizational signature in order not to jeopardize the success of the campaign. Yasemin Öz from Kaos GL explains the reason behind their decision in the following manner:

Following Kaos GL’s support to the campaign against the headscarf ban, Lawyer Fatma Benli from AK-DER called me on behalf of Kaos GL. She said that certain groups, who cannot stand siding with LGBT individuals even in terms of opposing such a ban, withdrew their signatures due to the fact that we signed the text as well; and, they are under great pressure... Then I listened to the process they went through and how they suffered. I said “you can remove our signature if it causes such trouble; we signed the text in order to support you, not to create polemics or disrupt [the campaign]. If it does not work for supporting you, there is no reason for our signature to remain”. Fatma was very upset about this situation and she was not comfortable. However, as far as I

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ The interviewees did not want to mention the names of these organizations and individuals for ethical reasons. Despite the fact that knowing who they were would be very helpful for the analyses in this work, I also preferred not to ask about their identities. I only asked about the general characteristics of this community and learned that the majority of the protestors were men. However, it is worth emphasizing that the reactions that AKDER and BKP get due to their alignment with LGBT organizations also come from women.

am concerned, they were weary of struggling with this oppression. She said “if you are going to withdraw your organizational signature, we can put your personal signatures and write Kaos GL next to them”. I answered that that was also possible but the problem is greater than this.⁴⁴⁶

Deniz Ak also elaborated this issue in one of my interviews and argued that Kaos GL’s decision to withdraw the signature was criticized a lot. However, she thought that it was necessary not to put emphasis on the problems that LGBTs face, as they really wanted to support the rights of headscarved women in that case,:

I was strongly criticized for this decision. Not with the purpose of disrupting the campaign but because of the fact that I withdrew the signature. Feminists, not Kaos [GL], criticized me asking “how could you accept that?”. But how could we establish any kind of relations if we had acted otherwise?⁴⁴⁷

This incidence points to a direct hostility to the existence of LGBTs in common platforms. However, on the other hand, the attitude of Kaos GL demonstrates that the will to ally against a greater enemy, an authoritarian state in this case, might be more influential than organizational antagonisms. It would not be wrong to claim that AKDER’s approach to the issue also supports this argument. Yaprak Açikel explains how they experienced the signature crisis as such:

Islamic organizations [...] have an extremely homophobic structure which has nothing to do with Islam. There are even people who leave the places where they see a homosexual. This is exactly what Kemalists do to us. “I do not even sit at the same table with you.” Actually, there are certain people who create the trouble. They organized others to protest AKDER for defending freedom to headscarf together with homosexuals. Starting from

⁴⁴⁶ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. *Birlikte Pişmeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var*. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴⁴⁷ Deniz Ak, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

the moment you open this text to signature, everybody can sign it. However, we got such reactions due to the situation which could not be overcome in Turkey. Certain organizations said that they would withdraw their signature if homosexuals do not. We answered them arguing that we do not put a gender option to the text; neither do we ask people on the phone about their sexual choices, whether they are homosexuals. At last, they said that [the problem] was Kaos GL's signature. Then we started to discuss within the organization what to do in order not to make the text to remain idle. Then my friends decided to call Kaos GL and ask what to do. I totally opposed this. Even this was extremely unethical. "What should we do with your signature? What else would you say? "Okay, remove it".⁴⁴⁸

Betül Yılmaz from BKP, which is also one of the signatories of the February 28 campaign, also criticizes these developments saying:

There were people who said "if LGBTs are in, we are out" and wanted to withdraw their signatures; some of them did this. There were also people who said that we were doing a mistake even though they did not withdraw their signatures. What happened after all? LGBTs said "we care about your problem and do not want it to be jeopardized because of us" and they withdrew their signatures. We were too embarrassed and they were magnanimous. This is horrible [...] Islam is based on deciding according to the deed not the doer. There is a deed, opposing to a ban which causes a lot of suffering for Islam. Saying "I do not like that person so I do not sign the same text with her" means that you are not that uncomfortable with living with that ban.⁴⁴⁹

It is worth noting that this case can be evaluated in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand, it indicated that the struggle of LGBTs and Muslim women do not necessarily exclude each other. Thus, it also shows that ideological differences might not be an obstacle for a struggle against the oppressive practices of the Turkish state.

⁴⁴⁸ Yaprak Açıkel, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

⁴⁴⁹ Betül Yılmaz, interview by author. See Appendix for the original quote.

Yasemin Öz's elaboration of the possibility and necessity of such alliances in an e-mail, which Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal refers in her column, is telling:

The discrimination from which women suffer [...] is an issue that Kaos GL considers as its own policy, as it does for other discriminations. For that reason Kaos GL supported the campaign that AKDER organized to oppose the headscarf ban without any hesitation [...] Even if we have perspectives and life styles which can never be reconciled with each other, we believe that we can live together without hating, discriminating against, trying to change each other and without exposing each other to violence.⁴⁵⁰

Thus, even though the crisis can be regarded as an example of a failed attempt for collective action, it also showed that such pressures might not be able to wipe out the willingness to abolish inequalities. Thus, it would not be wrong to claim that Kaos GL's continued support and AKDER's self criticism demonstrates that their alliance was not truly broken. The parties still acknowledge that struggling against discriminatory actions of the state should not be precluded due to ideological differences and they can still be partners in this struggle without trying to reconcile their differences.

On the other hand, despite the fact that there is mutual understanding between AKDER and Kaos GL, this case demonstrated that when a greater number of actors join into the discussion, the possibility of establishing coalitions might diminish to a significant extent. Even though these two organizations acknowledge each other's precarity and act in solidarity for the cause of AKDER, certain religion-based organizations still codify LGBTs and Muslims as two oppositional and mutually exclusive camps. In addition, they attempt to maintain this binary opposition by

⁴⁵⁰ Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. *Birlikte Pişmeye Kuşkusuz İhtiyacımız Var*. See Appendix for the original quote.

abjecting LGBT organizations from the platforms which include Islamic CSOs. Taking the pressures against AKDER into consideration, it can also be argued that the fraction of Islamic civil society, that refuses to be seen on the same page with LGBTs, let alone being in the same collectivity, might be quiet influential on the actions of organizations which do not share this exclusionary and discriminatory perspective.

The major importance of this discussion is that it paved the path for a different understanding of solidarity within civil society. Significantly, this solidarity is not defined in liberal terms. Thus, it provides an opportunity to analyze and problematize the relations within civil society beyond the limits of democratization and harmonization of interests.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study is an endeavor to explain the complexity of dynamics of civil society in Turkey with reference to the debate on homosexuality which was initiated by the discriminatory declaration of the Former Minister of Women and Family. Claiming that there is no Power as such vested in definite institutions, groups or individuals and it is existent in every aspect of the social, I suggested that the notion of civil society needs to be re-conceptualized in the light of this complexity.

The literature concerning civil society generally, in accordance with liberal civil society theory, points to the positive outcomes of a fully-fledged civil society in terms of political liberalism, pluralism and democracy. These studies disregarded the possibility of “irreconcilable differences” and “power relations” among the actors of civil society. The critiques directed to these studies, on the other hand, underlined the argument that there might be actors within civil society who contradict with such values as equality, anti-discrimination and solidarity. Thus, they are destructive of democracy rather than strengthening it. However, both accounts of civil society, considering its capacity for democratization, failed to grasp the importance of contextual conjunctures. In this respect, they pictured actors of civil society, especially CSOs in a predefined manner as “agents for empowerment and democracy” or “enemies of democracy”. The literature regarding Islam and civil society generally draws on the latter argumentative line following Gellner’s conceptualization of Islamic societies as incapable of cultivating secular,

democratic values of civil society. On the other hand, this approach also faced criticisms, challenging universality claims of Western democratization. The common problem in all these branches of literature is their tendency to attribute constant characteristics to civil society and failure to analyze the dynamism and negotiability of its actors' identities.

Contemplating on this gap in the literature, I suggested that the sub-groups in civil society (CSOs or its individual actors) cannot be captured in static behavioral patterns or identities. Depending on the context, the same actor might take place in solidarities against despotic state or groups; while they might also be discriminatory with respect to certain other actors. As an effect of discourses which are productive of all subjectivities, they might support the discriminatory discursive practices of the state. On the other hand, they might also resist to these practices and refuse to get involved. Thus, this complex dynamics should be considered while analyzing Turkish civil society and relations among its actors.

A re-conceptualization of civil society, emphasizing the centrality of power relations, provides one with the opportunity to discuss the diversities, contingencies and contradictions in the *practices* of its actors. Subjectivities, as well as the object of the discourse, are results of discursive formations. As discourses are not static, the subject positions transform along with them; thus, we can speak of "relational identities".

This particular study focuses on the variety of subject positions affected by the discursive space of "Islam vs. homosexuality" debate in Turkey. Relying on a Foucauldian understanding of relational subject positions, my aim was to scrutinize the

relations of power within civil society, as well as the critical context and actor-dependent shifts in these relations. The debate affected various Muslim subjectivities. What was in common, despite their differences, regarding the Muslim actors of civil society who involved in the debate is the fact that they provided support for homophobic position of a state official. They either agreed with her and announced homosexuality to be disease and offered help to cure it or presented homosexuality as another type of threat which should necessarily be opposed. Here, I do not ignore the capacity of these actors to challenge the state. On the contrary, except for their cooperation in this very specific conjuncture, they have been fierce critiques of discriminatory actions of Turkish state. I suggest that exactly this shift renders this specific debate important and shows that the identities of civil society actors are negotiable and they do not have pre-determined behavioral patterns. Keeping in mind that power is relational, their practices should be captured within the specificity of the context in which they appear and in relation to other actors that they encounter.

In this work I consider the declaration of Aliye Kavaf as a specific moment which shifted the conjuncture and opened up a discursive space, in 2010. It, primarily, revealed the level of official homophobia in Turkey. More importantly, it shed light on the fact that the discrimination that LGBTs face is not only a matter of dominant heterosexist state ideology. A number of CSOs and individual actors, who stand for anti-discrimination, assumed an extremely homophobic position and presented this position as an essential one for the sake of protecting human life, traditional values and social order. Reconstructing themselves as protectors of normal population in a necessarily

anti-homosexual manner, they risked criticisms which argued that their human rights discourse is a self-defeating one. However, as a result of bio-political definitions of “human” and “human life”, these actors reconciled human rights discourse with homophobia. In fact, homophobia is accepted to be an essential element of defending human rights.

With the aim of explicating the dynamics of the debate which transformed into one about Islam and homosexuality, I chose MAZLUMDER as a case study along with the Muslim columnists involved in the “Islam vs. homosexuality” discussions. MAZLUMDER is an Islamic organization which has a claim to stand for each and every type of discriminations; thus, it does not limit its human rights discourse to religious rights and freedoms. For this very reason, it was the most criticized CSO among 21 signatory organizations. Despite the fact that the signature on the text belongs to the İstanbul office of MAZLUMDER, in response to the criticisms the head office of the organization also clarified that it appropriates the same position. The responses of MAZLUMDER officials and the interviews conducted throughout this research were telling about how homophobia is incorporated into Islamic discourse and reconciled with rights and freedoms discourses.

These declarations and articles of Muslim columnists that were mentioned in this study exemplified the discursive practices of bio-power. From the very beginning of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate, Islamic CSOs defined homosexuality as something (but definitely not a “sexual orientation”) which is contrary to the “creation of human beings”. It is regarded as an extreme threat to the normal population and the existence of

human race on the grounds that it endangers social and religious values which assure the continuation of human generation. Thus, homosexuality is problematized as a societal concern which invests the actors of civil society with the “responsibility” of protecting human life and health of population. Since humanity is constructed in a way so as to refer only to heterosexual individuals, and any claim for “LGBT” rights is regarded as an attack to “human” rights, LGBT s are abjected from both definitions. Their lives are positioned as less-than-lives; thus loseable. Another, characteristic of the debate which models on the functioning mechanisms of bio-power was that bio-political discussion of homosexuality also incorporated juridical power of the state and its disciplinary institutions as a means to fight with this “threat”.

Within this framework of discussion, theory of bio-power provided me with the analytical tools to understand the dynamics of the relations between Islamic civil society and LGBTs and to problematize them, avoiding the limits of liberal civil society understanding. A type of civil society, which celebrates life and human rights and simultaneously threatens the existence of a discriminated group - *in cooperation with the state* to which it is supposed to resist - is an oxymoron from liberal perspective. In this respect, an analysis of the practices of Muslim party of the debate from liberal perspective would lead us to declare Islamic CSOs and “Muslims” enemies of democracy that are incapable embracing pluralist secular values. Thus, the diversity within Islamic civil society (as can be observed in cases of BKP, AKDER and Muslim activists such as Ayhan Bilgen) and conjunctural variations of practices of signatories and their individual supporters would be failed to notice. However, from the perspective

of bio-politics the supposed state - civil society boundary and cooperation of the ruled for the sake of human rights cease to be the only ways of elaborating civil society. Indeed, Foucauldian account of power indicates that dichotomies such as Power vs. powerless, ruler vs. ruled are not valid ones since power is not something to be possessed by an all mighty institution. Yet, state and civil society are regarded as distinct entities in this study. It does not mean that I appropriate a definition of civil society which is based upon individual interests positioned against the juridical power of the nation-state. But I rather refer them as distinct entities in terms of being different sites of power. Power is intrinsic to the functioning of social sphere; and, context dependent interpenetration of different types of power blurs these supposed distinctions due to the fact that actors of both entities are affected by the same discursive formations.

In fact, the discourses which defined what is “sayable” and “thinkable” in the course of the debate are of great importance for this thesis. A Foucauldian analysis of these discourses enabled me to elaborate *how* the actors of civil society are positioned within the discursive space of bio-politics and *how* homosexuality became an object of discourse. The Muslim party of the debate did not only mobilize the strategies of religious discourse as a means of politicizing homophobia. The position that present homophobia as an essential element of maintaining human life and social order is justified with reference to discourses such as biology, science, nature, medicine and society. Linking these discourses with a specific use of religious discourse, the signatory CSOs and individuals who carried the discussion to the media became subjects of a discursive space which does not require them to stand for LGBTs. Thus, the debate

showed that practices of civil society actors do not necessarily rely on anti-discriminatory, pluralist discourses. The discursive sphere of the debate positioned Islam (which represents normal, healthy, rational heterosexual individuals) and homosexuality (which represents perversion, danger and irrationality) as mutually exclusive, antagonist categories. What is worth emphasizing here is that the discursive formations, which affect the debate and subjectivities of its actors, also objectivized Islam along with homosexuality. Islam is divided and classified affecting inside/outside dichotomies. Anti-homosexual attitudes are constructed as norms intrinsic to real Islam while religious positions such as that of Ayhan Bilgen and Hidayet Tuksal, which contradict these discursive practices are abjected.

In fact, one of the most telling effects of the debate is that it shed light on the different subject positions within Islamic civil society. Discursive practices of BKP and AKDER indicated the possibility of a Muslim subjectivity which is not necessarily framed in antagonism with LGBTs, despite the fact that it still relies on the Islamic doctrine. On the other hand, the differentiation of the Diyarbakır office of MAZLUMDER illustrated that not even one single CSO can be attributed a primordial identity. Emphasizing that discourses do not only limit but also provide their subjects with options, especially of resistance, this work aimed at both challenging liberal definition of CSOs and going beyond the limited understanding of Islam in a “never-ending conflict”, with homosexuality. In fact, “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate indicated that CSOs’ practices cannot only be explained with reference to solidarity

established as a response to state despotism. Civil society is a site of power which harbors various types of CSOs, a diversity of resistances and solidarity practices.

Accordingly, taking CSOs such as BKP and AKDER into consideration, this study questioned the possibility of cooperation which does not rely on “harmonizing particular interests” as liberal thinkers expected. The practices and discourses of members of these two CSOs and those of LGBT organization indicated that establishing alliances, which do not aim at mainstreaming marginal aspects of their members and contain elements of conflict, are possible within Turkish civil society. Thus, problematization of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate showed that active coalitions, in Butlerian sense, can be formed between Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations. Despite the fact that they suffer significant obstacles such as personal ideological differences and intra-community power relations, having common interests is not the only path to solidarities which aim at resisting discriminations.

I suggest that this study would have presented an even more complex and comprehensive outlook of the relational dynamics among civil society actors if I had included the other signatory Islamic CSOs and the branches of MAZLUMDER other than İstanbul and Ankara. Even though all these CSOs united in their public support for the former minister’s declaration, they do have organizational and local particularities which effect their individual subject positions. Nevertheless, for the sake of developing a detailed analysis of my cases I limited my work to three organizations which are located in İstanbul and Ankara (which also happen to be two major branches of MAZLUMDER that involved in the debate). In addition, my analysis would have been more complete if

I had attended to the common platforms which include both Islamic CSOs and LGBT organizations – such as constitutional platforms. It was not in my power since I was a member of neither these platforms nor the organizations.

In fact, the literature on civil society in Turkey seems to be in need of more studies which focus on different aspects of its diversity, different moments which are affected by relations of power and, most importantly, a different spectrum of actors. Actors of civil society are important elements of the modern political milieu, despite the fact that the notion of civil society and the values that are assumed to be intrinsic to it should be problematized. They come to the fore as outstanding actors of political movements in Turkey as well. Even though their practical effect on Turkish politics is a matter of discussion, they become more and more visible and loud every day. Thus, the complexity and diversity of their practices should be of interest of more studies, rather than attributing them fixed roles such as consolidation of democracy or condemning them for undermining pluralist values.

For this very reason, this research aimed at re-conceptualizing civil society, offering a context dependent and dynamic analysis of its internal relations. The relational dynamics of “Islam vs. homosexuality” debate demonstrated that liberal conceptualization of civil society which relies on the state-society opposition and cooperation lacks explanatory capacity. The debate also shed light on centrality of power relations in the practices of civil society actors. What was at stake in the debate is interpenetration of a particular definition of humanity which leaves certain groups out of the category of “human” and a human rights discourse which has a universal anti-

discrimination claim. For this very reason, encounter of Muslim subjects (that emerged out of the critical conjuncture of the debate) with homosexuality within the discursive space of the debate deserved critical attention.

APPENDIX – ORIGINAL QUOTES

1:

“Ben eşcinselliğin biyolojik bir bozukluk, bir hastalık olduğuna inanıyorum. Tedavi edilmesi gereken bir şey bence. Dolayısıyla eşcinsel evliliklere de olumlu bakmıyorum. Bakanlığımızda onlarla ilgili bir çalışma yok. Zaten bize iletilmiş bir talep de yok. Türkiye’de eşcinseller yok demiyoruz, bu vaka var.”

134:

“Fıtrata aykırılık teşkil eden "eşcinsellik" in, doğal tercihlerden bir tercih gibi gösterilerek "cinsel yönelim" olarak kabul görmesi ve yaygınlaşmasının meşru görülmesi, zımnen insan neslinin yok olmasını istemekle aynı şeydir [...] Hayatı toptan imha etmek ne kadar meşru ise, bu normal(!) tercih de o kadar meşrudur o halde.”

135:

“İnsan nesliyle ve dünyanın geleceğiyle oynayan lobi/zihniyet/oluşumlar tarafından da beslenen ve desteklenen eşcinsellik, bize göre de bir anomali durumudur. İnsanlığın geleceğini ve nesil emniyetini tehdit eden eşcinselliğin bir anomali olarak görülmemesi, sorunu yaşayanların tedavi/terapi talebini köreltecek ve durumun yaygınlaşmasına sebep olacaktır. Bu durumun meşrulaştırılması ve doğal bir durum gibi kabul edilmesi hayatın kendisine karşı bir ihanettir.”

136:

“Müslümanların *-İslam barış ve müsamaha dini olmakla beraber her iki normun da sınırları vardır-* ve diğer ilahi inanışlara sahip insanların, inanışlarına göre ayıp ve günah olana karşı durmaları çok normal ve sorumlulukları gereği olup bu sorumluluk sadece Müslüman toplumlar için değil tüm insanlık içindir. Bu nedenle ahlaki olmayanın ve günahın hukuki kural olmasına ve meşruiyet kazanmasına asla destek verilemez.”

137:

“Geçtiğimiz günlerde medyaya da yansıyan "Eşcinsellik bir hastalıktır" sözünüzün üzerine başlayan tartışmalar ve gelişmeler karşısında konunun toplumsal boyutunun önemine binaen bu mektubu kaleme alma ihtiyacı hissettik.”

142:

“Birçok İslam ülkesinde de "eşcinsellik" yasal olarak yasaktır ve bu yasaktan amaç toplumun ve insan neslinin korunması ile bu anomalinin yaygınlaşmasının önüne geçilmesidir.

144:

“[G]elecek kuşaklar arasında eşcinsel tercihlerin artmaması için sağlık ve eğitim politikalarında doğru duruş gösterilmelidir [...] Çeşitli şekillerde, farklı materyallerle, çeşitli ortamlarda meşru ve doğal bir durum gibi gösterilen bu arızı durumun yaygınlaşması, aile yapısının bozulmasına ve neslin imhasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu durumu yaşayan kişilerin alabilecekleri her türlü tedavi ortamını kolay ulaşılabilir bir şekilde sağlamak ve eşcinselliğin yaygınlaşmasını engellemek gerekmektedir. Bunun için Sağlık, Kadın ve Aileden Sorumlu Devlet Bakanlığı, İçişleri ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlıkları olmak üzere, ilgili tüm birimlerin *-gerek duyulan hallerde sivil toplum kuruluşları ile işbirliği halinde-* yapacağı çalışmalar hayati önem taşımaktadır.”

153:

“İnsan hak ve hürriyetlerine aykırı olan uygulamaları çeşitli benzetmelerle eleştirmek günümüz demokrasilerinde tabii karşılanmalı ve saygı gösterilmelidir. İnsan haklarına aykırı mevcut düzeni eleştirenlerin "Sünni / Müslüman / Türkler" olduğu hallerde bunu tabii gören demokrasimiz, aynı anlayışı gayrimüslim cemaatlara ve vatandaşlara da göstermelidir. Bu tür eleştirileri getiren gayrimüslim vatandaşlara ve bazı aydınlara ilişkin "hainlik" imalı tepkiler ve haberler geçmişte acısını yaşadığımız pek çok olayı hatırlatmakta ve bizleri endişelendirmektedir [...] İçerisinde gayrimüslim cemaatlerin hak ve hürriyetlerini temin etmeyen ve ifade hürriyetini tehdit eden bir açılımın "demokratikliği" tartışmalı olacaktır. Bu sebeple kamu otoritesinin ve hükümetin bir an evvel ülkedeki bütün ayrımcılık konuları ile birlikte gayrimüslim cemaatlerin de hak ve hürriyetlerini teminat altına alan düzenlemelere gitmesi ve her türlü düşünceye saygı göstermesi zorunludur.”

158:

“Yeryüzünde canlı varlıkların soylarının devamı üreme faaliyetine, bu da genel olarak erkek ve dişi olmak üzere iki farklı cinsin ortak faaliyetine bağlıdır.”

165:

“[S]ebebi şimdi biz bunu insan hakkı ihlalinden saymayalım veya biz buna fazla giremeyeceğiz düşüncesi değildir. İnsan hakkı ihlaliyle ilgili, insanla ilgili çok temel tanımlamalardır [...] Biz eşcinsellikle alakalı [konuda], insan tanımını kadın ve erkek olarak iki cinsten oluşan ve akleden canlı türü olarak yapıyoruz. Allah ilk insanla birlikte kendi vahyini de iletmiştir ve insana rehber olarak peygamberini göndermiştir. O yüzden insan yeryüzünde nasıl bir hayat yaşayacağını o vahyin rehberliğinde gözlemler ama bu bir imtihan dünyasıdır dolayısıyla ona verilen özelliklerin bir kısmı iyi bir kısmı kötüdür. O kötü özelliklerini yenip iyi özelliklerini öne çıkararak bir hayat yaşarsa onun için gelecekte daha farklı bir hayat olacağına inanıyoruz biz Müslümanlar olarak [...] Çünkü biz yeryüzünde insanın iki cinsle yaratıldığına ve insanın devamının da bu iki

cinsten olduğuna inanıyoruz. [Eşcinselliği] insanlığın geleceğine yapılan bir saldırı, tam bir insan hakkı ihlali olarak görüyoruz.”

166:

“Her eşcinsel bir insandır. İnsan hakları mukaddestir. Biz onların tamamının savunucusuyuz. İnsan olarak haklarının savunucusuyuz. Ama eşcinselliğin bir yaşam biçimine dönüştürülmesiyle ilgili süreçlerin hiçbirisine katılmıyoruz doğru bulmuyoruz. [Eşcinsellik] insan hakkı ihlalinin başladığı noktalardan biri.”

173:

“[E]şcinsellik insan türüne ve onuruna apaçık saldırı özelliği taşıyan ve hayvanların bile yapmadığı iğrenç ve çirkin bir sapkınlıktır [...] *Bu kimselerin iğrenç bir davranışı* sevimli ve doğru gösterme hakları varsa, *bizlerin* de İslâm'ın meseleye nasıl baktığını ortaya koyma ve bu çirkin fiili eleştirme hakkımız vardır [...] Zira Müslüman bir toplumun bütün değerler sistemini alt üst etme tehlikesini içinde barındıran eşcinsellik gibi bir sapkınlıkla mücadele etmek her mü'minin asli görevlerindendir [...] Elbette insanoğlunun istediği gibi yaşama hakkı ve özgürlüğü vardır. Ama bu özgürlük, başka insanların ve özellikle insan *soyunun* geleceğini ilgilendirecek kadar tehlikeli boyutlar kazanmışsa bu hal özgürlük olma özelliğini kaybedecektir.”

175:

“Hiçbir doğal-dışı realitenin irademizle teşvik edilmesi ve beslenmesi insanî hak içine giremez. Aksine bu insanın doğasına ve toplumsal düzene yapılmış bir saldırıdır. Mutasyon ürünü ortaya çıkartılan virüslerin beslenmesi nasıl bir hak değilse eşcinselliğin de meşrû görülmesi ve teşvik edilmesi bir hak değildir.”

186:

“Kendilerinin kimseyi küçültücü ve hakaret içeren söz ve davranışlarda bulunmadığını tamamen düşünce açıklama amaçlı samimi ve sorumlu saptamalardan ibaret açıklama olduğu, kimseyi suç işlemeye tahrik etmediği, tamamen Aileden Sorumlu Devlet Bakanı Selam Aliye Kavaf’a destek mahiyetinde bir açıklama olduğu beyan edilmiş. Bu nedenle müşteki dernek yetkililerinin iddiaları sadece soyut iddia olup, Türkiye’de düşünce hürriyeti de bulunması nedeniyle; düşünce eyleme dönüşmemiş olması nedeni ile şüpheli dernek yetkilileri hakkında kamu davası açılmasını gerektirir nitelikte delil elde edilmemiş olmasına binaen, kamu adına kovuşturmaya yer olmadığına karar verildi.”

198:

- Eşcinselliğin insanın doğasına aykırı olduğu tartışmaları, kadın-erkek ilişkilerinin üreme fonksiyonu itibarıyla zorunluluğu
- Eşcinselliğin bir hastalık olduğu (hem biyolojik, hem patolojik olarak)
- Eşcinselliğin kapitalizmin artığı olduğu ve insana yabancılaşma ürünü olduğu
- Eşcinselliğin toplumun üst katmanlarında, gelir düzeyi yüksek katmanlarda yaygın olduğu ve cinsel bir sapma olarak açığa çıktığı.

201:

“[Bilgimiz] bu tür kaçaklıkları üç, beş bilemediniz 10 kişilik grupların yaptığı yönünde. 40 kişilik bir grubun olması daha önce Gediktepe ve Hantepe baskınlarında silahların katırlarla taşınmasını hatırlatıyor. O zaman da niye bunlara müdahale edilmemişti denmişti. Bu sefer de güvenlik güçlerimizin böyle bir yanlışa düşmemesi isteniyordu ama Uludere'deki köylülerden 35 vatandaşımız ebediyete intikal etti.”

204:

“Yakınlarını kaybetmiş insanların ve kamuoyu olarak bizlerin bu geçen süre içerisinde her adalet talebimize karşılık, Roboski’de ya bir gözaltı ya da bir tutuklama gerçekleştirilerek Roboski köyü açık bir cezaevine dönüştürüldü. Bizler devletin emir komuta zinciri içerisinde işlenmiş olan bir cinayeti aydınlayabilecek imkanlara sahip olduğunu biliyoruz. Bilmediğimiz ise devletin suçluları bulup, adalet önüne çıkarıp çıkarmayacağıdır. Devlet Roboski katliamının aydınlatılması için hantal davranmaktan vazgeçmeli, katliamın bütün sorumlularını adalet önüne çıkarıp yargılamalıdır. Devlet mekanizmaları, adaletin kendilerine karşı farklı işlediğini bizzat müşahade eden yurttaşlarından, soruşturmanın neticelenmesini beklemeden özür dilemeli suçluları bir an önce adalet önüne çıkartmalıdır. Roboski ailelerin acısı ortak acımızdır ve adalet tesis edilinceye kadar bu acı azalmayacaktır. Adalet tesis edilinceye kadar unutursak kalbimiz kurusun.”

208:

“Önemli bir kısmı depresif kişilikleri ile uyuşturucu bağımlısı haline gelmiş, güçlü intihar eğilimi taşıyan, şiddete meyyal bir kesimin "iç sorunu" olan olaylar neden başkalarına fatura ediliyor sorusu zannedildiği gibi anlamsız değil. Travesti Esmeray’ın yediği dayakla veya Eşcinsel Ahmet Yıldız’ın öldürülmesi ile diğer Müslümanların ve bizim ne alakamız var? Kimseyi dayak atmaya, cinayet işlemeye teşvik etmiyoruz. Kaldı ki bu tip karakterlere sahip olanlarla ne arkadaşız, ne komşu, ne aile dostu, ne yoldaş ne de sırdaşız. Ne öğrencimiz, ne müşterimiz ne de personelimiz olmadığı için herhangi bir irtibatımız da yok zaten. Bizler Müslümanlar olarak toplumu bu çirkin günaha sürükleyen düşünce ve ilişki biçiminin doğal olarak karşısındayız.”

227:

“Müslümanların eşcinsellik meselesinde hemen “hastalıktır” sonucuna atlayarak Batılı terminolojiyi sahiplenmelerini ilginç ve üzerine düşünmeye değer buluyorum [...] Eşcinsellik İslâm hukukuna göre günâhtır ve sapkınlıktır. Ancak hangi ‘norm’dan bir sapma olduğuna tutarlı bir cevap vermek istiyorsak cevabımızı İslâm’ın içinden temellendirmek zorundayız [...] [E]şcinsellik bir hastalık değil, günâhtır; günâh olması onun toplumsallaşması ve meşrulaşması ile mücadele etmeye yeter delildir [...] “Günâh” kavramının ağırlığı ve/veya açtığı söylemsel meşruiyet alanı mı bize kâfi gelmiyor yoksa?”

228:

“[B]ir zamanlar iktidar ilişkileri açısından sorun yaratabilecek potansiyelde görülen eşcinsellik, hem tıp alanında eşcinsel doktorların gittikçe güç kazanmasıyla hem de eşcinsel yaşam pratiklerini toplumsal hayata katmanın kapitalist üretim biçimine ve iktidar ilişkilerine herhangi bir tehdit unsuru oluşturmadığının anlaşılmasıyla anormal/patolojik olan kategorisinden çıkarılabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla eşcinselliğin “hastalık” olarak adlandırılması da bu kategoriden çıkarılması da iktidara sahip olanın anormal/patolojik olanı belirlemekteki keyfiyetinden öteye gitmez.”

230:

“Her hastalık günah değildir ama kimi hastalıklar günahtan daha fazlasıdır. Bu durumda artık günahtan değil, ileri derece, uzmanların konuşabileceği bir hastalıktan bahsedilir [...] Bütün günahlar tanıdığımız, hatta yasak olmasa çoğumuzun gerçekleştirebileceği tanıdık şeylerdir, hiçbiri yaratılışımıza aykırı değildir; inanmamışsak (çoğu kişi için) yapabileceğimiz eylemlerdir [...] Eğer eşcinselliğe salt ‘günah’ dersiniz, zinakâr ama sağlıklı insana hakaret etmiş olursunuz, aynı kefeye koymakla... Eşcinselliğe günah dersiniz afife kadın ve afif erkekleri aşağılamış olur, onların da potansiyel birer eşcinsel olduklarını söylemiş olursunuz. (Sen buna müsaitsin demiş olursunuz).”

232:

“İnsanlar cinayet işleyebilir ama bunların hiçbiri sadist değildir. Cinayet, çığırını Kabilin açtığı yalnızca bir günah iken sadizm bir anomali, bir fitrî sapmadır [...] [M]üslümanın eşcinselliğe günah ya da sevap diyebilmesi için o fiili anlaması, bilmesi gerekir. Yaratılışı bozulmamış insan, anlamak bir yana ilkin tiksinti duyar.”

235:

“Eşcinsel, eşcinselliği savunup, sağlıklı insanlarla ‘aynı şey’ olduğunu söyledikçe, evet günahkârdan daha fazla bir şeydir; İslam dairesinin dışına çıkar. Şöyle: Ayet, kadını

erkek, erkeği kadın için yarattığını, aralarında (seksüel anlamda) meveddet (sevgi) yarattığını söylüyor. İşte bu açıdan kim ki eşcinselliğin normal, sağlıklılarıntı gibi bir şey olduğunu iddia ederse İslam Dininin dışına çıkar. Bu şuna benzer. Kişi zina eder, içki içer ama ‘bu yaptığım doğru değil’ derse sadece günahkâr olur. Savunursa Kur’an’ın kötü dediğine ‘iyi’ dediğı, Kur’an’ı yalanladığı için Din dışına çıkar.”

237:

“[B]ir Müslümanın, insanların eşcinselliğe temayülü [inclination] olmasını içkiye, kumara ve özellikle de zinaya temayülü olmasından daha infialle [indignation] karşılamalarını da anlayabilmiş değilim. Zira on beş asırlık İslâm hukuku (fıkıh) geleneğinde eşcinselliğin (literatürdeki adıyla “livata” ya da “sihâk”) hükmü zinayla aynı görülmüştür.”

239:

“Kur’an’da eşcinsel diye bir tanımlama yok. Livata konusu bir mesele olarak vardır ama başka pek çok günah konusuyla birlikte. Dolayısıyla bu bizim şuurumuzda olan bir konu, bir ihlal olduğı. Ama mesela faiz ve gıybetten de leş yemek olarak bahsediliyor [...] Mesela Hazreti Ali, ısrar edilen küçük günah büyük günahdır, diyor. Zina etmemiş olabilirsiniz ama her gün sigara içiyorsanız bu artık büyük günahdır. Dolayısıyla günah da izafi bir şey. Bir hiyerarşi kurmaya gerek yok. Günahın en küçüğü de Allah’a isyan demektir ve zulüm demektir. Fıkıh terminolojide bir ayrım yok.”

241:

“[B]u bakıştaki ana sorun, eşcinselliğin, diğer bütün “günahlar” gibi sadece bir günah olarak Müslümanlar açısından tolere edilebilirliğine meşruiyet kazandırma tehlikesidir bence. Bu bakış, günahın ferdiliğı ile o günahın yaygınlaşma tehlikesi karşısında Müslümanların belirlemesi gereken tavır konusunda “tarafsız” bir noktada durarak, büyük bir tehlikeye gebe bir bakış aynı zamanda. Zira eşcinsel ilişki “bütün küçük günahlar gibi bir küçük günah” değil, insan neslini tehlikeye sokacak kadar tehlikeli bir durum olarak, demokratik bir toplumda dahi Müslümanların, bu durumu yaygınlaştıracak faktörler ve düzenlemeler hakkında karşı-söz söylemelerini gerektiren bir günahdır.”

245:

“Eşcinsellik zinanın bir türü olarak karşımıza çıkar. Bu tanımlama sadece İslam dininde değil bütün semavi dinlerde de böyledir. Tüm semavi dinler zinayı ve sapkın ilişkileri lanetlemiş ve haram kılmıştır. Onunla ilgili olarak kitabı mukaddesten bir örnek vereyim. Leviller bölümü 18 de 22. "Kadınla yatar gibi bir erkekle yatma! Bu iğrençtir." Leviller bölümü 20'de 13. "Bir erkek başka bir erkekle ilişki kurarsa ikisi de iğrençlik etmiş olur." Bu meyanda birçok bilgiyi semavi dinlerin içinde bulmak mümkündür.”

247:

“Lût’u da (peygamber gönderdik). Kavmine dedi ki: “Sizden önceki milletlerden hiçbirinin yapmadığı fuhuşu mu yapıyorsunuz? Çünkü siz, şehveti tatmin için kadınları bırakıp da erkeklere yaşıyorsunuz. Doğrusu siz taşkın bir milletsiniz.” Kavminin cevabı: Onları (Lût’u ve taraftarlarını) memleketimizden çıkarın; çünkü onlar fazla temizlenen insanlarmış! Demelerinden başka bir şey olmadı. Biz de onu ve karısından başka aile efradını kurtardık; çünkü karısı geride kalanlardan (kafirlerden) idi. Ve üzerlerine (taş) yağmuru yağdırdık. Bak ki günahkarların sonu nasıl oldu.”

250:

“Eşcinsel karşıtı açıklamalarda Kur’an’da sözü edilen Lut Kavmi referans alınıyor. Oysa orada bir cinsel yönelim değil tecavüz vakası var. Kur’an’da sözü edilen livata olayını getirip Türkiye’deki eşcinsellik meselesiyle ilişkilendirmek ciddi bir kıyas sakatlığıdır.”

251:

“Lut suresinde lutîlik açıkça kınanmıştır [...] Lut Kıssası’ndakiler ortada bir sosyal epidemi, sosyal salgın olduğu için, üstelik tecavüzcü oldukları için anılmıştır [...] Bu Sure’ye bakıp, ‘eşcinsellik şudur, budur’ demek zor. Eğer öyle olsaydı Hz. Ali döneminde bu işe ‘icthâat’la karar verilmezdi.”

252:

“Bir şeyi yapmak, bir işi ilk defa îcat etmek; orucu bozmak, açmak anlamlarındaki "f-t-r" kökünden türeyen fitrat, yaratılış ve yaratmak demektir. Kur’ân ve hadislerde fitrat; ağırlıklı olarak Allah’a yönelme, tevhid inancı ve dinin özünü koruma şeklinde geçmektedir: "(Rasûlüm) Sen yüzünü hanif olarak dine, Allah insanları hangi fitrat üzere yaratmış ise ona çevir. Allah’ın yaratışında değişme yoktur." (Rûm, 30/30). Görüldüğü gibi Yüce Allah, Hz. Peygamber’in şahsında insanlara yüzlerini dosdoğru Allah’a yöneltmelerini ve beşer için yararlı görülen dinin yasalarına uymalarını hatırlatarak, gerçek yaratışın değiştirilmeyeceğini bildirmiştir.”

253:

“Fıtratta var olmayan, insanın sapması, azgınlaşması, çirkinliği, kötülüğü ve hayasızlığı yol edinişidir. Biz bunu bir sapkınlık olarak addediyoruz. Arizi bir durumdur, doğal bir durum değildir. Karşı cinsler arasında bir cazibe ve çekim kuvveti aynı cinsler arasında ise itme kuvveti vardır. Dolayısıyla karşıt cinsler arası bir çekimin olması normal bir durum iken aynı cinsler arası bir çekimin olması anormal bir durumdur, normalden

sapma ve fitratın bozulmasıdır [...] Bu temiz fitratın kirletilmesine Kuran, vahiy müsaade etmez.”

255:

“Fitrat aslında doğa. Kadının hormonu anne olabilsin diye, bedeni erkek hoşlansın diye; erkeğin güçlü olması dünyada da zor işler yapabilsin diye. Doğada karşılığı olduğu için Müslümanlar için bağlayıcı. Belki kadın sapınca, başbakan olunca daha iyi pozisyonlarda olacak ama fitratına uygun olmadığı için mutlu olacağı düşünülüyor. Kayınvalidesine bakınca mutlu olacak. İnsan olarak doğanı değiştirme iradesine sahipsin ama senden beklenen değiştirmemen. Görevler iş bölümü olarak tartışılıyor. Salt doğa olarak değil. Kendi başına doğa önemli değil. Böyle olunca homoseksüelliğe hastalık diyemezsin. Doğurmadın diyelim. Doğanda bu imkan var. Olabilir ama yapmaman gerek. Potansiyel var. Kendi doğanla da mücadele ediyorsun. Hayvan doğasına uygun davranmalı. İnsan aşabilir ama aşmamalı.”

257:

“İslam’da iki erkek kardeş ergenlik çağından sonra yan yana yatamazlar. Bu bir ölçüdür ve hepimizin bilkuvve eşcinsel ve ensest temayülümüz var demektir.”

258:

“Kişi lezbiyense fakat evlenmek isteyip de erkekle evleniyorsa ve nikahlı bir şekilde onunla yaşıyorsa, öbür taraftan da bir kadınla olmak gibi bir derdi yoksa bir şekilde kendisini dizginlemenin yoluna bakıyor demektir. Bir sakıncası olacağına inanmıyorum [...] Yani mesele sapıklık boyutuna getirmemek.”

260:

“Referansımız Kuran bu durumu "Fahşa" olarak tanımlar. Yani bunu yapan kadına da erkeğe de fahişe der [...] Bu toplumda da kullanılan bir kelimedir ama genelde kadınlara kullanılır. Ama din kadın ve erkek ayrımı yapmaz. Bunu bir erkek yapıyorsa da adı fahişedir, bir kadın yapıyorsa da adı fahişedir.”

265:

“Eşcinsellikle ilgili olarak gazete, televizyon ya da herhangi bir bilim dergisinde yapılan pek çok açıklamanın ise bilimsel bir dayanağı yoktur. Eşcinselliğin zararsız olduğu, insan doğasında bulunan bir özellik olduğu yönünde yapılan açıklamalar, hatta normal bir özellik olduğu telkini verme çabası, her şeyin doğayla sınırlı olduğunu kabul eden görüşün ürünüdür. Bu görüş, insanın tüm davranışlarının nedenini biyolojisinde aramak gerektiğini iddia eden naturalist felsefe savunucularına aittir. Bu kesim, toplumu kendi

tasarımları olan rol modele göre şekillendirme amacı taşır. Ve yapılanlar toplumdaki, eşcinselliği dışlayan değer yargılarını değiştirme planının bir parçasıdır.”

266:

“Eğer eşcinsellik bir normal davranış olsa idi, eşcinsel kişiler bu hallerinden şikâyetçi olmazlardı. Halbuki, terapi görüşmelerinde ortaya çıkan bir gerçek var ki, eşcinsel davranış sergileyen kişiler kendi hallerinden iğrenmekte ve "ne olur lütfen yardım" diyerek yardım istemektedirler. Eğer eşcinsellik normal bir davranış olsa idi, eşcinsellerin anne-babaları çocuklarının durumlarını öğrendiği an kurşun yemiş gibi yere yığılmaz ve hayatlarının geri kalan kısmı kâbusa dönüşmezdi. Eşcinsellik normal bir davranış olsa idi, bir bayan kendi eşinin eşcinsel olduğunu öğrendiğinde, rahatsız olmaz, onu o hali ile kabul eder[di].”

271:

“Eşcinsellik sapmış bir cinsel tercihtir, çocuklara Pedofili yani cinsel ilginin nasıl geni yoksa eşcinselliğin de geni yoktur. Ben böyle yaratılmışım demek yerine ben böyle yetiştirilmişim diyen eşcinseller daha doğruyu söylerler. Eşcinselliğin doğal bir tercih olmadığını ve toplumda nüfusun çoğunluğunun eşcinsel olması durumunda çıkacak sosyal problemlerin neler olduğunu tartışmak homofobi değildir. Hemcinsi çocuklara cinsel ilgi gösterenlerle mücadele homofobi değildir. Ama eşcinselleri küçük düşürme homofobidir ve yanlışır.”

280:

“Eşcinsellik *geliştikçe* insanların kitlesel olarak öldürülmeleri hızlanıyor. Eşcinsellikle sivillerin savaşta katledilmesi arasında bir orantı var. Meşru yollardan savaşı göze alamadığın zaman kitlesel olarak öldürüyorlar. Şu anda Irak ve Afganistan’da kitleler halinde sivil halkı öldürenlerin çok önemli bir kısmının eşcinsel olduğunu söylüyorlar. Bundan da özel bir zevk alıyorlar. Bu *derin ruhsal travmalarla* da ilgili bir konudur.”

284:

“ABD’de ‘Ulusal Eşcinsellik Araştırma ve Tedavi Birliği’nin bulunması; bu anormal hâle yakalananların rehabilite edilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koyan bir delildir. Bu tür kimselerle ilgilenecek psikolog ve psikiyatristler bu konuda eğitilmeli ve onarım terapisi daha yaygın hale getirilmelidir.”

286:

“Lezbiyenliğin cezası kadınları evlerde tutmaktır. Bir nevi bu fiili yapmaya fırsat bulamayacak bir ortamda gözetim ve denetim altında tutarak maddi ve manevi bir rehabiliteye tabi tutulmasıdır. Eğer tövbe edip durumlarını düzeltirlerse bu durum

ortadan kalkar. Hiçbir sorun yoktur veya tabii bir duruma gelir, normal bir ilişki boyutu yaşar. Yani bir erkekle evlenir. Bu da tabii bir şeydir. İslam'da livata fiili işleyenlerin hem fiili, hem de sözel olarak incitilmesi vardır. Böylece bu iğrenç fiili işlemekten vazgeçmeleri amaçlanmıştır.”

291:

“Kadını, erkeği, çocuğu ile bütün bir toplumu cinsellik nesnesi ve bağımlısı haline dönüştürmeye çalışan bu ahlak dışı yayın ve ilişkilerin değil savunulması görmezden gelinmesi dahi mümkün değildir. Akla ve ahlaka uygun olan; bu akıldışı ve ahlak dışı saldırılarla mücadele etmektir [...] İslam'ın, ahlakın ve insan fitratının iğrenç bir saldırıya maruz kalmasına rıza göstermemizi istiyorlar. Gay, lezbiyen, biseksüel vs gibi isimlendirmelerle propaganda edilen iğrenç günahlara, mantık düşmanı sapmalara, vicdanları kanatan bağımlılıklara karşı bizlerden saygı, sevgi ve hoşgörü beklemek dahası bizleri bu yola zorlamak terbiyesizliğin dik alasıdır.”

303:

“Eşcinsellik, bilhassa gençler arasında özgürlük gibi zannedilse de, özgürlük değil, bazı değerlerin yok olmasıdır... Cinsel özgürlük bilim adına desteklenirken, toplumsal ve psikolojik normların dışına çıkılmaması gerekir.”

304:

“Bir sigara yasağında Avrupa "sigara sağlığa son derece zararlıdır" diyerekten ayağa kalktı. Tabi ki insan sağlığını tehdit eden unsurlardan biri olan sigaraya haklı olarak bu tepki gösterildi. Ama çok enteresandır aynı Avrupa insan neslinin devamını imha eden ve fitratı bozan iğrençliğin, sapkınlıkların hiçbirine bu tepkilerin binde birini dahi göstermiyor. Bilakis bunları legalize etmeye çalışıyor.”

306:

“Avrupa'nın seküler bir zihniyete sahip olması bütün bu olayları insan hakları ve özgürlükler bağlamında düşünerek insanı metalaştırır. Cinsel bir obje haline gelen insan özgürlük adı altında her şeyi yapabilme hakkını kendinde görür. Oysa semavi dinlere baktığınız zaman onlarda ölçüleri ve temel değerleri Allah koyar. Yani varlığı yaratan, varlığın fitratını bozmadan idame ettirebilmesi için fitratına koyduğu asli dengeyi Allah koyar ve biz referansımızı buradan alırız. Seküler bir zihniyette ise ölçüyü koyan Allah değildir. Temel çerçeveyi, parametreyi belirleyen kişinin ta kendisidir. Yani kişi nefisini putlaştırıp Tanrılaştırabilir ki o da azgınlığın, bozulmanın ve sapkınlığın bizzatıhi kendisini ifade eder.”

308:

“Devlet biyosiyasetle yatak odalarımıza yani mahremimize girdi. Eşcinsel, feminist, liberal hareketler de yatak odasını yani mahremi kamusal alana taşımaya çalıştı. Sonunda olan hep mahremiyete oldu. Şu anda toplama kampı düzeni içinde mahremiyetimizin hiçbir anlamı kalmamış durumda. Egemen iktidar tarafından eşcinsel denilen bir kategori kuruldu, üstelik de bastırılması için. Ama buna itiraz edenler de bu kimliklendirme üzerinden siyaset yapıyor [...] Kendinizi yatak odasıyla kimliklendirdiğinizde kendinizi biyolojik yönünüzle cinselliğinizle yani çıplak halinizle kimliklendiriyorsunuz. Bunun Yunancadaki karşılığı zoe'dir, hayvanlar için kullanılır politik teoride. Toplama kampındaki adamın, tehcir edilen Ermeni'nin durumu bir zoe durumudur. Dolayısıyla egemen iktidardan çektiğimiz ne varsa temel olarak bizi bir zoe'ye indirgemesidir. Bununla mücadele ederken de “Hayır ben bir zoe değilim” demeniz gerekiyor.”

313:

“Bu dünya üzerinde de eşcinsellik yasaklanmıştır (siz ne kadar esnetmeye çalışırsanız çalışın, asıl hedefiniz hiç esneme olmayanlardır). Kuran'a yeni yorumlar getirenler, heteredoks dindarlar filan zaten o anlamda “Müslüman” değillerdir. Yıldırım Türker'in Ayhan Bilgen'den örnek vermesi son derece anlamsız ve boştur. Çünkü zaten Ayhan Bilgen o anlamda Müslüman değildir, Müslümanlığı esnetmiş, heterodoks bir şekilde yorumlamıştır. Yani, Türker'in istediği şekle sokmuştur [...] İşte bu yüzden Bilgen'e, güzel güzel Atatürk büstü önünde öpüşen Büşra'ya değil, Hilal Kaplan'a bakmalıyız. Çünkü bizim hamamböceğimiz, bizim gölgemiz, bizim Öteki'miz, bizim id'imiz aslında o. Bastırıp bastırıp “hah oldu, Müslümanlar da artık cırılçıplak denize girip görüntüyü bozmayacaklar” dediğimiz anda bir Jaws olarak gelip görünen şey [...] “Eşcinsellere özgürlük” diye bağırmanın anda “Allahuekber” denmesi aslında.”

319:

“Yalnız, aralarında şimdiye dek gerek örgütlenme gerek farklı kesimlerle ilişki ve ittifaka açıklık konusunda çok yol kat etmiş, bu memleket insanının güvencelerinden olarak gördüğümüz Mazlum-Der'in (önce İstanbul Şubesi'nin, akabinde Genel Başkanı'nın) Bakan hanıma söz konusu destek mektubu eylemine canı gönülden katılması yegâne incitici nokta.”

322:

“MAZLUMDER, her türlü zulmün kaldırılması ve yeryüzünde tüm haksızlıkların son bulması için çalışmayı, insan olarak var olmanın ve insanca yaşamının bir gereği olarak kabul etmektedir. Bu konuda hiçbir ayrıma gitmeksizin, kim tarafından ve kime karşı yapılırsa yapılsın, her türlü haksız muameleye karşı çıkmanın, işkence, aşağılama ve tecavüze karşı mücadele vermenin gerekliliğinden hareketle çifte standartsız bir insan

hakları mücadelesinin önemine inanmaktadır.

Bu anlayışla MAZLUMDER, tüm çalışmalarında ‘kim olursa olsun zalime karşı mazlumdansa yana’ olmayı temel ilke edinmiş olup, insan haklarını ihlal edenlerin (zalimlerin) ya da hakları ihlal edilenlerin (mazlumların) dini, etnik, kültürel, cinsel ve benzeri kimlik farklılıklarına bakmamaktadır. Çünkü MAZLUMDER inanmaktadır ki, ‘Mazluma kimliği sorulmaz’ ve kim tarafından, hangi amaçla ve kime karşı yapılmış olursa olsun ‘Zulme rıza zulümdür’.”

323:

“Biz insan hakları bakış açısını kendi medeniyetinden alan bir dernek olarak farklı bir yön de çiziyoruz [...] İnsan hakları ihlallerini belirlerken, mücadele verirken bu medeniyetimizin arka planı oluşturduğunu düşünüyoruz [...] MALUMDER insan hakları mücadelesini vahiy medeniyetinden hareketle yürüten bir dernek [...] Bu çerçevede, vahyin doğru algılanmasını, geleneksel din algısı içerisinde bunun sınırlı kılınmamasını gerekli görüyoruz.

Bütün insan hakları müktesebatını değerli buluyoruz [...] Kendi alanımız olarak görüyoruz. Ama bir de not düşüyoruz. İnsan hakkı ihlalleri şu saydıklarınızdan ibaret değildir. Bu saydıklarınız çerçevesinde de %100 mutabık değiliz ama %99 mutabıkız. Çünkü sizin hak ihlali gördüğünüz bazı şeyleri bir görmüyoruz ama sizin hak ihlali görmediğiniz birçok şeyi de [insan hakkı ihlali olarak] görüyoruz.”

326:

“Müslüman dünyanın imani ifadesi ‘lailahe illallah’ [“there is no God but Allah”]. Diyor ki bütün insanlar eşittir büyük olan Allah’tır ve tektir [...] Bugün Afrika’daki insanlar emekleri, ekmekleri, onurları ve özgürlükleri için bağırırken “allahu ekber” [“God is the greatest”] diyorlar [...] Allahu ekber derken onlar üzerinde diktatörlük kurmuş Mübarek’e, Binali’ye, Kaddafi’ye diyorlarki siz bu zamana kadar büyüklük tasladınız. Ama büyük olan Allah’tır [...] Eşitiz diyorlar.”

327:

“[İ]nsan hakları perspektifine özgürlük paradigmasıyla bakan Batılı insan hakları söyleminin dışında adalet paradigmasıyla bakan bir anlayıştan bahsediyoruz. Özgürlükten baktığınız zaman Batı’yla bizim özgürlük algılarımız da farklıdır zaten [...] Batı medeniyetinden bahsettiğimiz zaman seküler bir medeniyetten bahsediyoruz [...] Yeryüzünde yüzde 2’lik, yüzde 3’lük bir insan topluluğu [...] [Y]ani yüzde iki, üçü geçmeyecek bir insan topluluğunun algısının yüzde 98’e yüzde 97’ye baskılanmasından bahsediyoruz. Bu da mali kaynakları ellerinde tutmalarından [...] Geri kalan yüzde 95’in inanç değerleri var, ahlak değerleri var, farklı algıları var. Bunlar insan [...] Yüzde 95’in

algı dünyasını bırakıp yüzde 3'ün algı dünyasını mutlak doğru olarak yansıtırsak bu adil olmaz.”

332:

“Son dönemde artan bu reaktif tutumlar, bir bakıma, 1990’larda filizlenmeye başlamış ve 2000’lerde onur yürüyüşleriyle, kamusal olarak görünürlüğü artmış bir LGBT aktivizminin gücünü ortaya koyuyor. Bu gücün kazanımlarından endişe duyan muhafazakâr-İslami kesim, LGBT’lere karşı bir söylem üretme zorunluluğunu hissediyor.”

334:

“Hülasa, eşcinselliğin ‘cinsel yönelim’ ibaresiyle anayasaya girmesinden tutun da evliliklerinin ve evlat edinmelerinin devlet tarafından kabulüne kadar savunulan talepler Müslümanlar için ‘zulüm’ niteliği taşıyor.”

335:

“Kim olursa olsun [...] Müslüman birisi zulüm yapıyorsa onun karşısındayız [...] Çok örneklerimizi bulursunuz [...] [Mesela] Hrant Dink’in konuşması... MAZLUMDER konferansında. Diyor ki, ben hiç çoğunluk olan Müslüman kesimden birisinin azınlık ve Hristiyan olan biz Ermeniler’in problemlerini dert edineceğini düşünemezdim. 28 şubat sürecinde azınlıklara da çok zulüm yapıldı. Onları okullarından dışarı atmış okullarını gasp etmiş. MAZLUMDER Genel Başkanı [...] Hrant Dink’i arıyor [...] Yılmaz Ensaroğlu... ‘Mücadelenizde yanınızda olmak istiyoruz [...] neler yapabiliriz? Görüşmek istiyoruz [diyor]’. Çok temel bir şey.”

336:

“Türkiye kadar homofobik bir toplumda kimsenin eşcinselliği zaten özendirmediği, tam tersine, mümkün olan her fırsatta men ettiği, hatta fiilen yok ettiği herkesin malumudur. Ama ‘zulüm’ burada başlayıp burada bitmez. Eşcinsellere karşı uygulanan ayrımcılık ve aşağılama günlük hayatın kanıksanan bir parçası olagelmıştır. Bu tür ayrımcı pratikler; heteroseksüellere tanınan yasal veya toplumsal haklardan eşcinsellerin mahrum bırakılması yüzünden meşru olmaya devam etmektedir. Ailede, sokakta, işte, okulda ve birçok başka yerde eşcinsellerin karşısına engeller, duvarlar dikilmektedir. Fiziksel şiddet içermeyen bu dışlama pratiklerini ‘zulümden’ saymayacak mıyız? Ama eğer zulmü şiddete indirgeyeceksek, başörtülü bir kadına şiddet uygulamak dışında tüm sıradan ayrımcılık mekanizmalarını da zulüm kategorisinin dışında bırakmamız gerekmeyecek mi, en azından tutarlılık adına? Varsınlar başörtülüler üniversite kapısında beklesinler, yeter ki görevliler fiziksel olarak şiddet uygulamasın dememiz gerekmez mi örneğin? Böyle desek neye benzerdik?”

338:

“Dini referanslar bakımından bakıldığında bir takım şeyleri var örgütlerin. MAZLUMDER örneğinden gidersek mesela mağduriyetlerini tanıyor, öldürülmelerine şiddete uğramalarına karşı [...] [A]ma örgütlenme alanına girdiklerinde kendi İslami referansları çalışıyor ve bunun yaygınlaştırılması gibi algılıyorlar örgütlenmeyi.”

339:

“Burada işkenceye uğradıklarında, kötü muamele gördüklerinde herkes zaten, evet tepki göstermeliyiz diyor. Fakat iş ifade ve örgütlenme özgürlüğüne geldiğinde yani kamusal alanda... görünür olmaya geldiğinde genellikle tartışma yaşanıyor ve rezervler, çekinceler ortaya çıkmaya başlıyor [...] Ama sonuç itibarıyla şunu yapabiliyorsan, yani senin bu tercihin karşıyım ama özgürlüğünü savunuyorum diye bir ayrım yapabilirseniz belki sorun yine biraz çözülür [...] Kısmen en azından çözüme doğru bir güven ortamını sağlayabilir.”

340:

“MAZLUMDER’i mesela ben bir polisiye olaya [she was beaten by the police for no reason] çağırmıştım. Bütün STK’ları [sivil toplum kuruluşları] çağırmıştım, onları da çağırdım. Biz basın açıklamasına katılmayız ama destekliyoruz imza veririz dediler. İmza da vermediler.”

341:

“Aslında o kibarca öldürün demek. Sapıksın, sakat gibi yaşa demek. Aslında dayatılan zihniyet hasta.”

342:

“Olayı insan hakları üzerinden tanımlamanın problem bu. Sen bir yandan nefret söylemi üretiyorsun, Kavaf gibi birine destek veriyorsun, sonra zulme karşıyım. İnsanlar işkence görüp öldürüldüklerinde desteklesen orada olsan ne olur? Aradaki bağlantıyı, o söylemin sonradan travesti cinayeti olarak döndüğünü görmek gerek. Yoksa öldürülmeme hakkı diye bir şey olabilir mi? En temel insan hakkı bu tartışılabilir mi?”

343:

“Tabi ayrımcılıklar ideolojilerin, yaşam biçimlerinin bir deli gömleği gibi topluma zorla giydirilmesinden hareketle doğmuştur [...] Ben 50 yıl ciddi ayrımcılıkla yaşamış [...]

olan birisiyim. Benim ailem gericiydi [...] yobazdı [...] lise ve üniversite çağımı tamamen gerici yaftasıyla yaşadım [...] 5, 6 yaşındayken İstanbul’da Türkiye’nin en gelişmiş kentinde, Bahçelievler’de ben ilkokula giderken babamın eve aldığı gazetelerden dolayı okulda gerici aile olarak görülüyordum. Annemin başı tesettürlü olduğu için de yobazın oğluyduk. Bu tanımlamaları öğretmenler tarafından birebir işitmiş bir kişi olarak bugün konuşuyorum [...] 28 Şubat sürecinde anılarımız tazedir [...] Seçim yapıldı [...] Bir çok kadın milletvekili de vardı [...] Fakat bir tane kadın millet vekilinin başı örtülüydü, Merve Kavakçı... Türkiye Cumhuriyeti başbakanı ‘atın bu kadını dışarıya’ dedi [...] Yüzlerinde karşılarındakini tahkir eden bir eda içersinde bunu söylediler. Başka nasıl bir ayrımcılıktan bahsedelim? Ve hala Türkiye’de başörtülü bir millet vekilini konuşulabilir bile görmüyoruz.”

344:

“[B]u gibi tutumlar, Türkiye’deki resmî tarih yazımına kızan İslami kesimin, kendi tarihsel gelişimini de kamusal alanı daraltma ve ötekileştirme üzerinden yaptığını gösterir ve grubun politik meşruiyetini sorgulamaya neden olur.”

345:

“Bugün bu erki ve iktidarı elinde bulunduran ‘laik’ kesimin de başörtülülere karşı yaptığı tam da bu değil midir? Kürtlere Türk gibi yaşama çizgisi çizmeye çalışan yine bu erk ve iktidar değil midir? Ya azınlıklara yaşam alanı tanımayan zihniyet? Bu erki ve iktidarı elinde bulunduranların ülke içinde homojenliği koruma çabası kendi erk ve iktidarlarını koruma bağlamında anlaşılır bir tavidir. İyi ama aynı erk ve iktidarın baskı ve zorbalıkları altında ezilen, kimliklerini yansıtamayan insanların aynı sorundan mustarip olup da kendisi gibi olmayanlara karşı iktidar gibi davranmalarını nasıl anlamlandıracağız? Onların eşcinsellere karşı iktidarla ortaklaşmasını nasıl anlamlandıracağız?”

347:

“Tamamen seküler çalışan bir zihnin kutsal metinlere yapılan atıfları kabul etmemesi tabii ki anlaşılabilir. Ortak metnin [the letter to Kavaf], “kutsal metinler”e atıf yapması başlıca eleştiri konusu olmuştur. Bu subjektif atfın, elbette seküler bir zihinde anlam değeri yoktur; ancak metin, objektif kriterler bakımından, yani seküler bir zihne söyledikleri bakımından ortaya koyduğu iddialarına dönük herhangi bir eleştiri almamıştır. Biz seküler bir zihinden, kutsalı eleştirme kolaycılığını değil şu yaklaşımlara neler dediğini öğrenmek isteriz.”

348:

“Biz bilinçli olarak [Kavaf’a yazılan mektuba] imza atmadık. Çünkü biz eşcinselliği bilinçli olarak hastalık olarak görmüyoruz. Yani hastalık olsa bir kere daha mazur görmen lazım. Niye kanser oldun diyor musun? Bir kere o metin böyle de bir saçma. Aliye Kavaf’ın açıklamasını da desteklemedik [...] Aliye Kavaf isabet etmedi. Yanlış bir şey söyledi. Eşcinselliği İslam da hastalık olarak tanımlamıyor, ben niye öyle diyeyim. Bu nasıl ki birisi zina yapıyor derse onun gibi değerlendiriliyor İslam’da. Yalan söylemek gibi. Niye kolayca yalan söylüyoruz? Aynı şekilde yasaklanıyor. Burada örfi ve cinsiyetçi bir şey var; buna da İslam kılıfı büründürölmeye çalışılıyor. Biz o zaman dedik biz imza atmıyoruz. Herkes bizi arıyor AKDER imza atmıyor mu? Arkadaşlar imza atsak metin burada, atmıyoruz [...] O zaman da eleştirildi. AKDER yine eşcinselci oldu. Ama o metin yanlıştı. Baştan aşağı ayrımcılık kokuyordu. Ben bir insan hakları kurumuna da yakıştırmıyorum. Ne kadar ben desem de İslam benim için öncelikli. İslam bile buna razı olur mu yani? Sen kalkıp ayrımcı bir metne imza atıyorsun [...] Ayrımcıydı, homofobikti, tehditkardı. Biz de bunu için imza atmadık.”

349:

“STK’ların bakanı destekleyen açıklama yaptığı [...] sahip çıktığı olayda ben sivil toplum açısından başka kaygı duyulması gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Sivil toplumun görevi iktidar partisin[e] [...] sahip çıkmak değildir [...] [B]urada bağımsız iki tarafın tartışması seyrediyor olsa, birinin elinde güç olmasa iktidar olmasa, bir AK partiliyle [...] bir Yeşiller mensubu bu konuyu tartışıyor olsa, muhafazakar STK’arın da orda taraf tutması daha anlaşılabilir bir şey. Onlar da daha dindar [...] partiden yana duruyorlar diye. Ama birisi iktidarsa, onun yaptığı her tarif ve onun durduğu her yer eşit olmayan bir yerdir sizin için. Dolayısıyla orda siz birini tercih ettiğinizde bile aslında diğerini otomatik olarak tehdit kategorisine sokmuş oluyorsunuz. Yani bir bakanın hastalık diye tarif ettiği bir şeye polisin copu indirmesi çok daha kolaydır. Ne bileyim karakolda göreceği muamele ya da mahkemede başka zeminlerde sokakta komşusundan göreceği muamele bile daha tehlikeli olabilir. Orda hiç olmazsa onun kaygısını duyarak [...] şunu söyleselerdi ben daha etik bulurdum. İslami hassasiyetle de daha bağdaşır bulurdum [...] Deselerdi ki bu bakanın işi değildir, hastalık tarifi yapılacaksa biz yaparız... Bu bile sivil bilinç ve sivil toplumun bağımsızlığı açısından daha iyi bir yerdi diye düşünüyorum [...] Hiç olmazsa sadece mahalle baskısıyla karşı karşıya bırakırlardı LGBT bireylerini.

Hem devlet hem mahalle baskısının birlikte seyrettiği bir pozisyonda taraf olmak bence çok sıkıntılı bir şey. Bu aynı laikçi refleksle, [...] 28 Şubat döneminde dindar insanların hem toplumsal baskıya maruz bırakılması [...] hem de aynı zamanda fişlemelerin, devlet açısından ikna odalarının falan kurulduğu dönemdeki psikolojiyi kendilerinin başkasına uygulaması olarak görüyorum. O dönem buna maruz kalan bir çevrenin [...] bunun ne kadar kötü [...] incitici bir şey olduğunu unutup, böyle bir pozisyon almaları kaygı verici.”

352:

- Kadınların mevcut durum ve problemlerini tespit etmek
- Kadınların evrensel insan hakları, adalet ve hukukun üstünlüğü ilkesi çerçevesinde siyasi, hukuki, sosyal ve ekonomik varlıklarını geliştirecek teorik ve pratik çözümler üretmek
- Kadınlar arası diyalog, iletişim, dayanışma ve yardımlaşmayı sağlamak
- Toplumun tüm kesimlerinden her gruptan kadınlarla onurlu bir yaşam ortak paydasında bir platform olarak bir araya gelip, yasalara uygun her türlü faaliyet ve çalışmalar yapmak.

354:

- Kadınların birey olarak sahip oldukları haklarını kullanmanın önündeki hukuki ve toplumsal engelleri tespit ederiz ve bu engellerle mücadelede öneriler geliştiririz
- Bireylerin inançlarından ödün vermeden yaşayabilmelerini, çalışabilmelerini ve eğitim alabilmelerini sağlamak için çalışmalar yaparız
- İnsan hak ve özgürlükleri alanında toplumsal bilincin gelişmesi ve yerleşmesi için eğitim, seminer ve kampanyalar düzenler, bu alandaki projelere destek veririz
- Kadınlara hak arama mücadelelerinde yasal destek sağlarız.

355:

“Dini özgürlükler bağlamında AKDER yola çıktı başta [...] Bir de bunun dışında, bu auranın dışındaki insanlara da bunu seküler olarak da anlatabiliriz diye bir iddiayla ortaya çıktık. Yani o dönemde de, sonraki dönemde de çok eleştiriler oluyor tabi ki, AKDER’in faaliyetleri üzerine, AKDER’in söylemi üzerine. Ama biz diyoruz ki İslam’da bunu seküler olarak sunmanın önünde de bir engel yok. Bugün burası İslami bir devlet olsaydı, ben gidip şeyi iddia edebilirdim işte, başörtüsü İslami bir vecibe, bunu yerine getiremiyorum ihlal ediliyor. Ama bu seküler bir düzen ve bir seküler hukuk sistemi içinde ben eğer hak arıyorsam [...] bu dini özgürlüktür demek yeterli olmaz. Evet bir gerekçedir [...] Tek başına bir gerekçe olamaz. AKDER de işte böyle bir şeyle yola çıkan bir dernek oldu; ve dediğim gibi biz doğrudan seküler insan hakları söylemini benimseyen bir kurum olarak çıkmadık [...] Biz yaptığımız her işte, bütün mücadelemizde, İslami değerlerle de o işe baktık.”

358:

“Bütün insan hakları ihlalleriyle ilgilenemeyiz ama ilgimiz olmadığı anlamına da gelmiyor. Biz kadın odaklı çalışıyoruz.”

359:

“[Aktivite alanımızı daraltmanın] dezavantajları var tabi. Konularda kendimizi sınırlamış oluyoruz [...] Fakat düşündüğümüz zaman zihniyet olarak kendimizi sınırlamıyoruz. Hareket alanımızı kısıtlamış oluyoruz kadın derneği olduğumuzda [...] Ama tabi bir iş yapabilmek için bir çerçeve oluşturmak zorundayız [...] Biz bunu yıkabilmek için çeşitli insan hakları dernekleriyle tereddütsüz işbirliğine giriyoruz. Biz kadın derneğiyiz bu konuya karışmayız gibi bir yaklaşımımız yok kesinlikle.”

360:

“MAZLUMDER’e gelince MAZLUMDER de tam olarak hak savunucusu bir dernek. Ve hiçbir şekilde kendini sınırlandırmıyor kendini. Onun için daha çok ilişkilerimiz var. Fakat orda da feminist söylemlere karşı bir alerji var maalesef. MAZLUMDER’le o noktada ayrışıyoruz. Tamamen çağdaş, her türlü alanda hak savunuculuğunu gerçekleştirirken muhalif duruşlarından hiç taviz vermezlerken kadın söz konusu olduğunda kadın haklarının ismini koyarak kullanmayı tercih etmiyorlar. Onlar da İslami geleneğin çok etkisindeler bu noktada. Diğer bütün alanlarda öyleyken kadın alanında kadın isminin açıkça zikredilmesinden ve kadının güçlendirilmesi kadının geliştirilmesi kadının bağımsızlığı dediğimizde kadının kendi bedenine sahip olması demeyi yanlarında düşünmüyoruz bile mesela.”

362:

“BKP adına konuşmak yanlış [...] Herkes birbirinden farklı düşünüyor [...] Eşcinsellerin özellikle insani olan haklarının, yaşama, okuma haklarının sırf eşcinsel oldukları için, şiddete uğramalarının tamamen karşısındayım.”

363:

“Her grubun örgütlenme özgürlüğünün olması gerekli. Cemaatlerin, bütün grupların... Örgütlenmenin önünde en ufak engel olmaması gerekiyor. Yani insanlar birbirlerini bir yerde destekleyebiliyorlarsa, oraya gidebilmeliler. Onların örgütlenmelerinden yana en ufak bir sıkıntı ve rahatsızlık duymuyorum açıkçası.”

365:

“Bir kere insan bu pratiği yapsa bile dinden çıkmaz. O ayrı. Sadece eşcinselliği İslam’ın içinde göstermeye çalışırsa o teklikeye giriyor biraz. Kaldı ki tekfir etmek bize kalan bir şey değil. Hem Müslüman’ım deyip hem eşcinselliği yaşayabilir o da ayrı [...] Burası sonuçta dünya ve dünyanın hakimi de kimse değil. Biz eğer Müslümansak inanıyoruz ki bir ahiret var ve burada herkes hesaba çekilecek [...] Buna inanıyorsan zaten senin bir kere o insan üzerinde, ya, bir kere aynı toplumda yaşadığın için bir sorumluluğun var.

Bir kere nedir, bu insanlar sokak ortasında öldürülüyor. Buna bakarsın bir kere, bu İslami bir uygulama mı? Değil.”

367:

“Kimse Müslüman olmak zorunda değil. Kimse Müslümanlığı noktasında da her şeyi benim istediğim şekilde kabul etmek zorunda değil [...] Bizde işte bu tekfir hastalığı var. Hayır işte şöyle yapıyorsa Müslüman değil. Mesela faiz açık haram. Adam faiz yiyor, Müslüman oluyor. Onun Müslümanlığı’nı tartışmıyoruz. Zina haram. Adam zina yapıyor Müslüman oluyor. Ama bir eşcinsel olduğunda ya da toplumsal örfle uyuşmayan bir şey olduğunda [...] bu insanların İslamiyet’ini tartışıyoruz. Ama zalim olanın, hak yinenin, faiz yinenin İslamiyet’ini tartışmıyoruz. Diyoruz ki, ‘kelimeyi şahadet getirdi o Müslüman’dır’. Bu noktada işte kaypaklık var.”

368:

“Kaos’tan [Aylin] yanıma yaklaşıp dedi ki: “Görüyor musun Hidayet aynı durumdayız”. Çünkü iki taraf da aynı şekilde görmezden geliniyor. Başörtüsünü yok saymak için uğraşılıyor ama tepki görüyor. [Ayşe Tatar] ‘Bu bir insan hakkı ihlali bir ayrımcılık konusu değil’ diyor. [Aylin’e de] yorum yapmadılar. Sessizlikle yok saydılar [...] İslam-homoseksüellik iktidar ilişkisi tek belirleyici değil. Aynı şey ikisine de yapılıyor. ‘Tamam savunalım ama sınırı ne?’ deniyor. Türban ve eşcinsel evlilik aynı sözlerle tartışılıyor.”

369:

“[E]şcinsellerle BKP arasında ilişkinin kurulabilmesi, böyle çok derinlerde, diplerde bazı benzerliklerden kaynaklandığını düşünüyorum. Bunu hiçbir yerde yazmadım, söylemedim ama olduğun gibi görünmek ve görüldüğün şekliyle toplumda kabul bulmak yer edinebilmek. Başörtülü kadının sorunu da böyle tanımlanabilir; LGBT’nin sorunları da böyle tanımlanabilir. O nedenle benziyoruz birbirimize. Ben eşcinselliği savunmuyorum. Ama eşcinsel haklarını savunuyorum. Mesele burada bitmeli bence. İslami dernekleri bu yola çekmeye çalıştığımızı söyleyebilirim ama başarmak zor.”

370:

“[C]anın korunması en temel görevin senin İslami açıdan da. Evleri basılıyor. Haneye giriliyor. O hanede türlü türlü işler yapılıyor. Yani bu bizzat devlet eliyle yapılıyor, farklı insanlar tarafından yapılıyor. Bir kere bu bir zulümdür. Bunun adını İslami olarak koy. Seküler olarak koymak zorunda değilsin [...] Zulüm dediğin noktada sen bu insanla neyin mücadelesini veriyorsun. Önce o zulmü bitireceksin ondan sonra da yani, kaldı ki mesela şey örnekleri var. Eşcinsel topluluğun Mekke’nin dışında bir yerde yaşadığını anlatan. Kalkıp da peygamber efendimiz İslam’ı açıktan da yaymaya başladığı andan

itibaren kalkıp da Yahudileri öldürün, Hristiyanları kesin, eşcinseller zaten Allah’a emanet, böyle bir şey yapmamış.”

384:

“Biz bugün Türkiye’de bulunan bütün insan hakları örgütleriyle [...] ilkelerimiz çerçevesinde ortaklaşan çalışmalar yapıyoruz [...] Aşağı yukarı tamamıyla. Sadece temel insan hakkı ihlali gördüğümüz eşcinsellerin sorunlarıyla değil, eşcinsel kimliğin insanlık için bir kimlik olarak tanınması mücadelesi verenlerle çalışmıyoruz [...] İnsan hakkı ihlali gördüğümüz için. Ama eşcinselliğin sorunları, yaşadığı insan hakkı ihlalleriyle ilgili konularda yine [...] gayretler içersindeyiz ama bunun meşrulaştırılması yönünde yapılan çalışmaların dışındayız.”

390:

“Türkiye'deki eşcinseller genellikle İslam dinine mensup. Ama ibadetlerini camilerde rahatça yapamıyorlar. Bu yüzden, devletten ihtiyacımıza göre cami ve din adamı istedik.”

392:

“Allahın yasakladığı bir şeyi bizim kabul ediyor olmamızı dini açıdan sorunlu gören arkadaşlar var. Genel anlamda dindar kesimde bu görüş yoğunlukta. Bu görüş yoğunlukta olduğu sürece onlarla ortak bir şey yapmaları imkansız hale geliyor çünkü değiştirilebilecek bir şey değil. Bu inanç ve değişmiyor. Orada öyle bir yasaklama var. Onu kabul ettiysen etmişsindir [...] Ortası yok. Bu şekilde ortası olmayan noktalarda bir araya gelmek imkansızlaşıyor [...] Kardeşim öyle veya böyle, bu insanlar [...] şiddete uğruyorlar, hayatlarından oluyorlar. En azından bu konuda destek verilmesi gerekir [...] “Tamam ya ama ben bunu kendi başıma halledemem ki” diyor. İyi de sen halletmeyeceksin ki. Örgütlü bir şeysi var bir şekilde bir ucundan tutacaksın. Al elinden tut onu o hayattan kurtar demiyor kimse sana [...] Kendinden başkasını düşünebilmek biraz zaman istiyor [...] Empati kurmak [...] Mesela onu düşünen biri eskaza kendi ailesinden birisi geldiğinde acaba ne yapacak [...] Olmuyor mu oluyor.”

393:

“Şimdiye kadar kurduğumuz iletişimlerde ve işbirliklerinde hep antimilitarizm, şiddet karşıtlığı, homofobi ve transfobi karşıtlığı ve cinsiyetçi olmama üzerinden ortaklıklar kurmaya ve bu değerleri görünür kılmaya çalıştık [...]

Örneğin Kürt meselesi söz konusu olduğunda, bizler de tarafız diyoruz. Toplumsal barış için biz de taraf olmak istiyoruz. Ancak iktidardan yana değil ezilenden yana taraf olmaya çalışıyoruz. Toplum sadece homofobisiyle ve transfobisiyle yüzleşmeyecek,

LGBT bireyler de aynı zamanda özgürleşmek istiyorlarsa onlar da milliyetçilikleriyle ve muhafazakârlıkları ile yüzleşmeleri gerekecek [...]

Mazlum-der ve beraber hareket ettiği sivil toplum örgütleri ile yan yana gelmemiz bugün için imkânsız. Benim doğrudan yaşama hakkımı elimden alacak bir açıklama yapabilen bir örgütle yan yana gelmem imkânsız diye düşünüyorum. Ancak eninde sonunda onlar da LGBT varoluşunu günah üzerinden tanımlamaktan vazgeçmek zorunda kalacaklar. Eğer Mazlum-der kendini İnsan hakları örgütü olarak tanımlamaya devam edecek ise bunu yapmak zorunda, ya da ben sadece Müslüman erkeklerin insan hakları örgütüyüm diyerek de yoluna devam edebilir.”

395:

“Dur De konferansı öncesinde konferans fikri ortaya atıldığında biz endişemizi dile getirmiştik. Halen buna rağmen bizim eleştirilerimizi dikkate almadan Hilal Kaplan’ın davet edilmesi gerçekten büyük bir ayıp. Hem de bize karşı değil, nefret cinayetlerine maruz kalan LGBT bireylere saygısızlık.”

397:

“Biz kendi yaptığımız etkinliklerde bile hiçbir zaman “mağduriyet hiyerarşisine” düşmedik. Ancak, bir Cumartesi Annesi” ile işkenceci polisi yan yana getirmeyi de demokrasi ya da ifade özgürlüğü olarak tariflemedik [...]

‘Bir Müslüman (başörtülü bir kadın), bir eşcinsel, bir Kürt’ gelsin bir masada otursunlar ile sorun çözülmüyor. Eğer bir masaya oturacaksak eğer her birimizin diğerine ilişkin önyargılarıyla, sistemden, dinden vs.den beslendiği dogmalarla yüzleşmesi gerekir [...]

Bugün Ahmet Yıldız’ın duruşması var. Ahmet Yıldız’ı öldüren babası ile Hilal Kaplan İslam’a aynı pencereden bakıyor ve eşcinselliği aynı yerden yorumluyor. Biz bunu söylüyoruz. Bizler şimdiye kadar, Müslüman feministlerin mücadelelerini hep destekledik ve desteklemeye devam edeceğiz. Nefret söylemi yayan muhafazakâr basının yaptığı gibi başörtüsü ile LGBT özgürlüğünün kıyaslanması gibi kısır bir döngüye bizi sokmanıza izin vermeyeceğiz.”

404:

“Mesela kendi açımızdan [...] başörtüsü konusunda sırf başörtülüler olarak mücadele ettiğimizde sadece belirli bir yerlere ulaşabiliyorsunuz [...] ama [...] inansa da inanmasa da kabul etse de etmese de, hem eşcinsellerin başörtülülerin haklarını savunuyor olması, hem diğer feminist grupların başörtüsünün bir kadın hakkı olduğunu savunması haklılığınızın üzerine vurgu yapıyor [...] Kamu oyuna karşı daha da haklı duruma geçiyorsunuz.”

405:

“[O]nlar bizim sorunlarımızı öznel olarak içlerinde hissetmeseler de, biz onların hayatlarını kendimize göre uygun görmesek de, biz insan olarak o insanların varlık mücadelesini destekliyoruz. Bu eşcinselliği dinen meşru gördüğümüz anlamına gelmiyor. Meşruiyet sorununu biz bizim karar verme alanımız olarak görmüyoruz. Kişisel tercihlerdir ve onların her türlü haklarını, eşit bireyler olarak, sahip olarak yaşaması lazım. Aslında başka İslami derneklerle de konuştuğumuz zaman öldürülmeye, yaşadıkları şiddete kesinlikle hepsi de üzülmüyorlar. Fakat yanlarında durdukları zaman dinen onları meşrulaştırmış olacaklarını düşünüyorlar. Biz bu meşruiyet sorununu bu şekilde aştığımızı düşünüyoruz. Karar verici biz değiliz. Dinse söz konusu olan hüküm Allah’a aittir.”

406:

“Bir normalliğin heteroseksüel ilişki olduğunun kabul edilmesi gerektiğini, çocuğumuza da aktarırken bir değer olarak buna inanıyorum. Ama çok çeşitli tecrübeler neticesi bazen tecavüz sonucu, bazen başka türlü gerçeklikler var. Bu gerçekliklerle çeşitli şekillerde uğraşmalıyız. Ve bu kesinlikle öldürme olmamalı, kesinlikle dışlamak olmamalı [...] Yani çok çeşitli bir yelpaze içinde değerlendirilecek [...] bir konu olması gerekir bana göre [...] Bizim aslında dini geleneğimiz de çok çeşitlidir bu konuda. Şöyle derler peygamberin mescidinde yeri vardır.”

407:

“Eşcinseller ve muhafazakarların sürekli bir arada olması gerekmiyor. Hepsi ayrı kompartmanlarda olabilirler. Ama sorun o kompartmanların kapılarının çok sıkı kapalı oluşu. Arada geçişe izin verilmiyor.”

408:

“[E]şcinselliğin İslam açısından helal kabul edilen bir şey olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Bunları oturup da konuşabiliriz. Başta dedim ya sana, illa hep bir arada durmamıza gerek yok.”

410:

“Kendi özel deneyimimde, türban/başörtüsü takan kadınlar ile ıkmıdan ve sıkılmıdan örgütlenebileceğime inancım büyük. En nihayetinde beden bütünlüğü ve kadın beden politikası kendi feminizm algımın temeli. Başörtüsü takma özgürlüğünü savunmaz isem, kendimle çelişeceğimi düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle feminist bir zeminde neden olmasın. Hatta şöyle söyleyeyim: Neyi bekliyoruz? Tabii din isminin geçtiği yerde erkeklerin adının geçmemesi şaşırtıcı bir şey olur. O nedenle, ortak örgütlenme/örgütlenememe

konusu, o alandaki sözü en çok üretenin kendisini nerede konumlandığına bakıyor her şeyden önce.

Tabii bazı zeminlerin kaygan olduğunu da düşünüyorum. Öyle bir söz üretmeliyiz ki, dini zemini tek düsturu olarak kabul etmişlerle aynı cümleyi üretir hale gelmeyelim. Filistin konusunda söylediğimiz, Saadet Partisi'nin söylediğinden, ya da Mavi Marmara konusunda söylediğimiz İHH'nin [İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı] söylediğinden azıcık farklı olsun yani değil mi?"

412:

"[BKP ve LGBT organizasyonlarının ilişkileri] genelde iyidir. Bizim de platform bir yelpazedir. Her konuda aynı fikirdeyiz diyenler de vardır LGBT ile ilgili olarak. Benim kişisel kanaatim. Şunu bir kere kabul etmemiz gerekiyor, sadece cinsel yönelimi dolayısıyla insanlar öldürülüyor, doğru dürüst iş yapamıyorlar. Sadece marjinal sektörlerde iş yapabiliyorlar. Oraya itiliyorlar. Ve öyle oldukları için tekrar cezalandırılıyorlar. Fuhuşa itiyorsun ondan sonra fuhuş yaptığı için cezalandırıyorsun. Bu iki üç kere zaten cezalandırmak... Gerçeği kabul etmemek. Böyle bir insan var."

413:

"LGBT ile olduğu kadar biz hayat kadınlarıyla da ilişki içindeyiz. Hayat kadınlarının sorunlarını taleplerini dinlemeyi dile getirmeyi onlarla, dile getirirken yanlarında olmayı tercih ediyoruz. LGBT de aynı şekilde. Yani insan haklarını düşündüğümde LGBT taleplerinin insan hakları içerisinde olmadığını söyleyebilecek kimse yoktur herhalde."

414:

"[E]şcinsellik konusunda da bizim net bir duruşumuz vardı. Bu güne kadar AKDER'de de eşcinsel pek çok kişi ağırlandı da. Hatta iki defa atölye organize ettik, ve oturup eşcinsellik ve Müslümanlık üzerine konuştuk. Masada şu varsa ben kalkarım demek yerine şunu söylemek gerekiyor. Sen ne istiyorsun? Bu toplumda eşcinseller var. Bunlara ne öneriyorsun? Şu bile bir öneri toplayalım yakalım. Bunu koysun masaya, dersin ki bu senin dediğin faşist bir şey. Bu bile daha iyi. Öte taraftan hiçbir ilişki kurmamak onları yok saymak. Şimdi bu insanları yok sayalım, şu binaları yok sayalım, önümüzde manzara mı var sayalım?"

415:

"Biz de kadın hareketiyle beraber olma taraftarıydık [...] Hep çağırılıyorduk [...] Beraber bir iş çıkarmasak bile, belli zeminlerimiz olmuştur hep. Yani biz kendimiz çalmamışızdır [kapıyı], çağırılmışızdır doğruyu söylemek gerekirse. Görüşümüz belki meşru görülmemiştir. O konuda bir adım atamamışsak bile her zaman masada olmuştur [...] O da önemlidir [...] Ama tek bir ses çıkartamamışızdır maalesef."

416:

“LGBT [hareketi] ilk çıktığında yalnızdı. Feminist hareketten çok anarşist hareketten destek aldı. Kurucuları anarşizmden geliyordu. Ama neredeyse en başından beri feminizmle kitlesel olmasa da ittifak var. Hemen her kadın örgütüyle iyi bir ittifak var. Solcularla zor ve yavaş ilerledi. Kürt hareketi de erken destek verdi. DEHAP [Demokratik Halk Partisi] kongresine çağırmışlardı. İHD’de izin verilmemişti. Şimdi destekliyorlar.”

418:

“[B]undan seneler önce 8 Mart’ta yürüyüş yapmıştık ve bir çok sefer [...] BKP ve LGBT’ler, mutlaka yan yanayızdır. Biz öndeyizdir onlar arkamızdan gelir sürekli [...] Ya da tam tersi. Onu nasıl yapıyorlar özellikle mi yapıyorlar nasıl yerleştiriyorlardı bilmiyorum. Ben bundan hiç [...] rahatsızlık duymadım.”

424:

“Yetmeyen ama tutar dal [...] gözüken şey ortak düşman... Baskıcı yönetime karşı buluşulabiliyor, militarizme karşı [...] ama bu yola çıkmak için yeter. Ama sonunda herkesin kafasındaki ülke ya da dünya ütopyasında çok da ötekine yer olmayan fotoğraflar çıkartıyor.”

426:

“[B]elli konularda aynı hassasiyeti taşıyan derneklerle ortak hareket ettiğimizde daha güçlü bir ses çıkarabiliyoruz [...] Kadın konusu mesela bunlardan bir tanesi. Ya da barış arzusu mesela, mevcut teröre karşı duruş. Bunlar [...] hangi idolojiye sahip olursa olsun herkesin canını yakan tüm ülkeyi ilgilendiren meseleler.”

428:

“[M]esela eşcinsellerle başörtülüler, ikisi de ötekileştirilen gruplar. Eşcinseller bu konuda aslında çok daha [...] başörtülülerin haklarına sıcak bakıyorlar [...] direkt [...] destek [...] imza veriyorlar [...] Muhafazakar kesim [...] tamamı olmasa bile çoğu eşcinsel olayına maalesef dini inançlarından dolayı mesafeli yaklaşıyor. Sıkıntı.”

429:

“Kadınların başörtüsü konusunda yaşadıkları ayrımcılık, Kaos GL’nin yalnızca destekçi olarak karşı çıktığı bir durum değil, her türlü ayrımcılık biçiminde olduğu gibi, bizzat kendi politikası olarak algılayacağı bir durumdur [...] [B]ir kadın başörtüsü giymeye karar verdikten sonra onun eğitim ve iş yaşamından dışlanması ve ayrımcılığa uğraması,

üstelik dini vecibelerini yerine getiren erkekler başörtüsü takmak zorunda olmadıkları ve bu anlamda işaretlenemedikleri için kamusal alanın her yerinde var olabilirken, bu dışlama pratiğinin kadınlar üzerinden rahatlıkla yapılabilmesi, Kaos GL tarafından benimsenebilecek bir durum değildir.”

430:

“Barış için Kadın Dayanışmasına bak mesela. Yine çoğunlukla Kürt mevzu konuşulacak, LGBT yine az... Judith’in [Butler] dediği gibi bir ittifak kurulabilmesi için çok az sayıda sorun olmalı.”

431:

“10 gün önce 50-60 STK’nın katılımıyla, sürece katılım ilkeleri belirlenecekti. Mazlumlar başta cinsel yönelim maddesine itiraz etti. Ama itiraz ettikleri noktanın cinsel yönelim olduğunu söylemeleri 1.5 saat aldı. Ağızlarına bile almıyorlar. İHD, ekolojistler, kadınlar, LGBT’lerden önce direndi. Şu anki hali her türlü ayrımcılık diyordu. Bizim istediğimiz bir şey üzerinden diğerleri pazarlık ediyordu. Ya da peki yuvarlak yazsak siz de imzalar mısınız diye pazarlıklar oluyordu. Biz ayrıldık ve Gökkuşağı koalisyonu kuruldu.”

433:

“[B]izim kendi grubumuzdan arkadaşlar bile [...] o kadar da legalleştirmeyelim [diye düşünüyorlar]. Yaygınlaşmasın, görünür olmasınlar diye düşünen arkadaşlar var. Allahın yasakladığı bir şeyi bizim kabul ediyor olmamızı dini açıdan sorunlu gören arkadaşlar var [...] ama [...] bu arkadaş homoseksüel [...] ben onla bir arada bulunmayayım. Yok öyle bir sıkıntı aslında... tanışıklılar konuşmalar yapılabilir... mesele onların şeylerini görünür kılmak, savundukları şeylerin arkasında durup destek vermek sıkıntı [...] Çünkü onun inanç boyutu var ve o inanç boyutuna takılıp kalıyor. ‘Yok’ diyor, ‘ben nasıl söyleyeyim ki, Allah [...] haram kılmışken ben nasıl kabul edebilirim’ diyor.”

434:

“[S]öylemlerinde onların yanında dimdik durabilmek bizim ülkemizde cesaret istiyor. Hele hele İslami kesimde cesaret istiyor [...] Biz savunuyoruz bunu söylemekten de çekinmiyoruz ama çok da pervasız yapamıyoruz bunu. İstedığımız kadar aktif de olarak yapamıyoruz bunu. Biz de çünkü aynı sosyal yapı içerisinde aynı geleneksel değerlerle kuşatılmış haldeyiz.”

436:

“Açık görünür bir şey yok. Fakat bir toplumsal baskı hissediyoruz. Bir gazete haberinde bu şekilde çıkmak, bilmem ne, acaba diğer çalışmalarımızı projelerimiz nasıl etkileyecek

diye düşündüğümüz oluyor aslında. Fakat onu çok hesaba katmasak da o derneklerle tekrar bir iş yapmak istediğimizde, bir projede ortaklık yapmak istediğimizde bunu yapacaksanız olmaz gibi bir yaklaşım gelebiliyor. Yani işte LGBT ile aynı çalışmada bir de diğer taraftan farklı bir İslami dernekle bir başka çalışmada aynı anda farklı kollardan çalışmalar yürüyebiliyor tabi. Aynı anda bunu yaparken bunlar bize getirilebiliyor. Ha çalışmayı sekteye uğratacak ölçüde bir baskı değil. Ama dile getiriliyor.”

437:

“Otosansür hiç yok diyemem. Keşke olmasaydı zaten sansürün en feci boyutu [...] ama sürekli tartıştığımız konuştuğumuz ve birbirimizi bu yönde cesaretlendirdiğimiz vaki bu konuda dernek içi olarak. Her birimiz aynı şekilde düşünmüyoruz elbette ama bu otosansürü, dernek içindeki otosansürü kırmak için çaba sarf ediyoruz.”

438:

“Burada biz alanda da onlarla birlikte olmayız, yan yana durmayız, amaçları hatta tam bizimkine uygun olsa bile, eylemin amacı bizim tam talebimizi karşılıyor bile olsa biz onlarla gözükmek istemeyiz sendromu zaten değerler eksenli bir kaygı değildir. O toplumsal [...] eksenli bir kaygıdır. Daha ironik bir örnek üzerinden söyleyeyim. Mesela işte bu Cemil İpekçi tartışmalarında başörtüsü yasağına karşı birtakım söylemler kullandı. Onun başörtüsü yasağına karşı çıkışı bile bazı İslami çevreleri rahatsız etti. ‘Yani ona mı kaldı bu’ diyen söylemlerden tutun, ‘işte siz bir dini hak değil de insan hakkı gibi tarif ederseniz bakın böyle olur bu iş, işte böyle en savunmasını istemediğimiz insanlar bile bizi savunur ve savunurken mahvederler’ gibi bir algı gelişmeye başlıyor.”

440:

“Sunumda [the presentation of one of the CEDAW reports] lezbiyen ve başörtülü kadınların uğradığı ayrımcılık aynı cümle içinde geçti. Aynı cümlede geçmesindense hiç bahsedilmesin dendi.”

446:

“Nitekim, Kaos GL’nin başörtüsü yasağına karşı imza kampanyasına imza vermesinin ardından AK-DER’den Av. Fatma Benli Kaos GL adına beni arayarak, vermiş olduğumuz imza nedeniyle, böyle bir yasağa karşı çıkma noktasında dahi LGBT bireylerle yan yana gelmeye tahammül edemeyen kesimlerin, bizim imza vermiş olmamız nedeniyle imzalarını çektiklerini ve yoğun bir baskı gördüklerini belirtti... Onun üzerine yaşadıkları süreci ve ne kadar hırpalandıklarını dinledim biraz. ‘Bu kadar sorun yaşıyorsa imzamızı kaldırabilirsiniz, biz size destek olmak için imza verdik, polemik yaratmak veya engellemek için değil, imzamız sizi desteklemeye yaramıyorsa imzamızın olmasının anlamsız olduğunu’ söyledim. Fatma bu durumdan çok üzgündü ve

içine sindiremiyordu ama bu baskıyla mücadele etmekten de yorulmuşlardı anladığım kadarıyla. Bana ‘Kurum olarak imzanızı çekecekseniz şahsi imzanızı atıp yanına Kaos GL yazalım’ dedi. Bunun da mümkün olduğunu ancak sorunun bundan büyük olduğunu söyledim.”

447:

“Ben çok eleştiri aldım. Eşcinsellik polemiği kampanyaya gölge düşürsün diye değil, imzayı çektiğim için. ‘Nasıl kabullenirsin’ diye eleştiri geldi feministlerden. Kaos [GL]’tan değil. Ama o zaman nasıl ilişki kurulacak?”

448:

“İslami örgütler arasında [...] tam homofobik bir yapı var aslında. Hiç İslami olmayan. Eşcinsel gördüğü yeri terk eden falan. Halbuki o terk etme meselesi tam da Kemalistlerin yaptığı şey. Ben seninle aynı masada dahi oturmam. Aslında birkaç insan var ortalığı karıştıran. İşte gidip bir yerlerde bir şeyler organize etmeye çalışıyorlar. Hadi AKDER’i protesto edelim, işte başörtüsünü eşcinsellerle beraber savunmaya çalışıyorlar. Sen bu metni imzaya açtığın andan itibaren herkes imzalayabilir. Ama işte Türkiye’de hala aşılamayan durumdan dolayı bize böyle bir tepki gelmeye başladı. Eşcinseller imzasını çekmezse biz çekiyoruz diyenler oldu. Bizim cevabımız şu oldu, biz buna cinsiyet şikkı açıp da birileri ben eşcinselim, ya da telefonda cinsel tercihiniz nedir, eşcinsel misiniz yoksa... bunu zaten teşhis etmiyoruz. En sonunda dediler Kaos GL’nin kurumsal imzası... Sonra bizim kurum içinde bu konuşulmaya başlandı. Bu metin atıl kalacak nasıl bir şey yapalım diye. En son benim onayım olmadan, ben tam muhalif bir yerde yer alıyordum... arayıp biz ne yapalım diye soruldu. Halbuki ne yapalım diye sormak bile çok ahlak dışı bir şey. Senin imzan var napalım? Sen ne dersin yani. İyi çekin o zaman.”

449:

“‘LGBT varsa biz yokuz’ deyip imzasını çekmek isteyenler oldu, çekenler de oldu. İmzasını çekmese de bu konuda yanlış yaptığımızı söyleyenler de oldu. Ve neticede ne oldu? LGBT ‘biz sizin sorununuzu önemsiyoruz sırf bizim yüzümüzden sizin sorununuz baltalanmasın’ dedi ve o çekti imzasını. Yani biz onlara karşı çok mahcup olduk onlar çok büyüklük yaptılar. Bu korkunç bir şey [...] İslam’ın temeli, faile değil fiile göre hüküm vermektir. Bir fiil var ortada, o fiil bir yasağa hem de İslam’ın canını çok yakan bir yasağa karşı çıkış. Ama ‘ben o insanı beğenmiyorum, o zaman onunla aynı metni imzalamam’ demek, o yasakla yaşamaktan çok da rahatsız olmuyorsun demektir aslında.”

450:

“Kadınların başörtüsü konusunda yaşadıkları ayrımcılık, Kaos GL’nin [...] bizzat kendi politikası olarak algılayacağı bir durumdur. Bu nedenle AK-DER’in başörtüsü yasağına karşı çıkmak adına düzenlediği imza kampanyasına Kaos GL tereddütsüz imza vermiştir [...] Bizler, birbirimizle asla uzlaşamayacak görüş ve yaşam biçimlerine sahip olsak da, birbirimizden nefret etmeden, şiddet göstermeden, ayrımcılık uygulamadan ve birbirimizi değiştirmeye çalışmadan barışçıl bir şekilde bir arada yaşayabileceğimize inanan insanlarız.”

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