

Democracy and Human Rights as Challenges to “Turkish” National Identity

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Received Date: 10/09/2019 - Accepted Date: 08/12/2019

DOI: 10.22096/hr.2020.121763.1204

Abstract

This presentation centres on the problematic of “identity” and the extent to which the republican Turkey has managed to gather the people around the state-imposed identity of “Turkishness”. This theme is explicated by reference to the two main challenges to the privileged role that Turkishness was accorded since the foundation of the republic in 1923: the upsurge of Islamic identity, and the manifestation of Kurdish identity. This paper argues that human rights violations in Turkey are not simply to be blamed on bad laws, ruthless governments and bad bureaucracy, but are the outpourings of a deeper malaise reflecting the politics of identity therein. It is argued that the more the individual and collective identities are “liberated” from the much-politicised homogenizing identity that idolizes the “nation” and the “state”, the more tensions and human right violations will subside through accommodating practices.

Keywords: Democracy; Human Rights; National Identity; Turkish Identity.

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