



INTERNATIONAL

**JOURNAL of HUMAN Studies**

Uluslararası İnsan Çalışmaları Dergisi

ISSN: 2636-8641

Cilt/VOLUME 7 Sayı/ISSUE 14 Yıl/YEAR: 2024 ALINDI/RECEIVED: 11-05-2024 – KABUL/ACCEPTED: 28-12-2024

## The Podium of Injustice Set Up in Social Memory: The Case of Uğur Mumcu

*Toplumsal Bellekte Kurulan "Adaletsizlik Kürsüsü": Uğur Mumcu Örneği*

Vecdi Olgaç Över<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

When concerned people feel justice has not been achieved, they try to find ways to adapt, and a fundamental tool in their process of adaptation is social memory. In this context, this article focuses on the assassination of Uğur Mumcu and the communities that commemorate him, and seeks to reveal how the perception of injustice dominant in human groups builds structures in social memory. On 24 January 1993, Uğur Mumcu, one of Turkey's well-known journalists and writers, was assassinated, and despite the decades that have passed since his murder, some communities have continued to commemorate him. In these events, rituals,

### Öz

Adaletin gereği gibi sağlanamadığı fikrinin hâkim olduğu kimi olaylar, o olaylardan etkilenen insan gruplarını "uyarlanma" çabası içine sokar. Bu uyarlanmada toplumsal bellek temel bir araç olarak kullanılır. Bu bağlamda makale Uğur Mumcu suikastını ve Uğur Mumcu'yu anan toplulukları merkeze alarak, insan gruplarında egemen olan adaletsizlik algısının toplumsal hafızada ne şekilde yapılar inşa ettiğini ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. 24.01.1993 günü Türkiye'nin tanınmış gazeteci ve yazarlarından biri olan Uğur Mumcu bir suikast sonucu öldürülmüş, bu cinayetin ardından geçen on yıllara rağmen, kimi topluluklar onu anmayı sürdürmüşlerdir. Bu

<sup>1</sup> Vecdi Olgaç Över, Antropoloji uzmanı, Serbest Avukat, Antropoloji, overolgac@gmail.com , 0009-0000-8916-8456

symbols, discourses, memory spaces, some of which are unique to Uğur Mumcu commemorations, have emerged, and a calendar, sentiment and organization of the events have emerged. In the process, social memory was instrumentalized by those who were deprived of the restorative or, in other words, soothing aspect of justice. The perception of injustice creates a ground that nourishes the identities of social actors and a ground on which they can disclose those identities. This ground derives its legitimacy from the social justification of the search for justice and can be conceptualized as a "podium of injustice." Through the activities, performances, attitudes and rituals practiced here, communities display their identities to themselves and to society. In this framework, the discourse on the search for justice and on Uğur Mumcu as a social figure have acquired new meanings and functions in the process. As a result, society uses social memory in an effort to adapt to injustice, and over time, the same social memory turns into a space where groups can make their identities visible. This article attempts an "ethnography of injustice" on the basis of social memory, and an analysis of the reflections and social structures created by the perception of injustice in the social life of communities

**Keywords:** *Social memory, Justice, Crime, Adaptation, Identity*

etkinliklerde, bir kısmı Uğur Mumcu anmalarına özgü ritüeller, semboller, söylemler, "hafıza mekânları" ortaya çıkmış, etkinliklerin takvimi, duygudaşlığı ve örgütlenmesi meydana gelmiştir. Süreç içinde toplumsal bellek, adaletin onarıcı veya bir başka söyleyişle teskin edici yönünden mahrum kalan kişilerce araçsallaştırılmıştır. Adaletsizlik algısı, toplumsal aktörlerin kimliklerini besleyen ve o kimlikleri ifşa edebilecekleri bir zemin yaratmaktadır. Bu zemin meşruiyetini, adalet arayışının toplumsal haklılığından almakta ve makalede "adaletsizlik kürsüsü" şeklinde kavramlaştırılmaktadır. Burada ortaya konan etkinlikler, performanslar, tutumlar ve uygulanagelen ritüeller ile topluluklar kimliklerini kendilerine ve topluma sergilemektedir. Bu çerçevede adalet arayışına dair söylem ve bir toplumsal figür olarak Uğur Mumcu, süreç içinde yeni anlam ve işlevler kazanmıştır. Sonuçta toplum, adaletsizliğe uyarlanma çabası içinde toplumsal belleği kullanmakta, zamanla aynı toplumsal bellek grupların kendi kimliklerini görünür kılabilecekleri bir alana dönüşmektedir. Bu makale ile araştırmacı tarafından toplumsal hafıza temelinde "adaletsizliğin etnografisi" oluşturulmaya çalışılmış ve bu bağlamda toplulukların adaletsizlik algısının toplumsal yaşamda yarattığı yansımalar ve sosyal yapılar incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Toplumsal hafıza, Adalet, Suç, Uyarlanma, Kimlik*

## INTRODUCTION

*It was a Sunday morning, Ankara was covered in snow*

*It was frosty, the summer sun was in her bosom*

...

*The oppressors were in ambush, my body shattered*

*It was a market of cheap lives, my pen fell in blood*

...

*May sad clouds be your companion*

*A sharp pencil, a broken pair of glasses*

*May it be your memento to the brave<sup>2</sup>*

The main purpose of this study is to understand the strategies formed by people struggling with the crisis of injustice on social memory and to identify the reflections of injustice in that field. In this framework, the murder of Uğur Mumcu, his funeral, and the subsequently organized commemoration ceremonies have been taken into focus. Following the murder of the journalist and writer on 24 January 1993, the meaning of Uğur Mumcu<sup>3</sup> in social memory, the attitudes and behaviors of the groups commemorating him, the symbols that emerged, and the identity shared by the communities participating in the commemorations are examined. In order to understand how society struggles with the sense of injustice and how social memory is instrumentalized for this purpose, the subject has been evaluated using anthropological methods and concepts.

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<sup>2</sup> The song in question, an elegy for Uğur Mumcu, was performed by Selda Bağcan, a singer known for her political struggles, and is played at all Uğur Mumcu commemorations. The lyrics of the song, which are known by all the participants, who sing along, belong to the poet Ali Çınar. The song tells the story of what happened “that day”.

<sup>3</sup> Born in 1942, Mumcu entered the Faculty of Law at Ankara University in 1957, and after his graduation, he began to publish research articles and essays in publications such as *Türk Solu* magazine and *Akşam* newspaper. As his articles continued to be published, detentions and arrests followed. In 1975, he started writing columns for *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. In 1976, he married Güldal Mumcu. In 1977, he wrote *Sakıncalı Piyade* and the following year he adapted the same book for the theater. In the same period, he opposed the rising right-left conflicts and terrorism in the country, and wrote important books one after the other on the deep connections of certain groups within the state, the efforts to influence politics through these connections, and the rents and corruption obtained through these connections. In both his books and columns, he included striking information and documents on corruption, the mafia, religious communities, the deep state and the Kurdish problem. On 24 January 1993, he was killed by a bomb that exploded while he was getting into his car in front of his house. His column published on the same day was again about corruption. Uğur Mumcu had two children, Özgür and Özge (UMAG, 2021).

The research area was based on the people who participated in Uğur Mumcu's commemoration events in Ankara and the memory spaces<sup>4</sup> created in Uğur Mumcu's name. Within this framework, the Uğur Mumcu Investigative Journalism Foundation (UMAG), which was established by Uğur Mumcu's family after his assassination and is still managed by his wife, was contacted. UMAG is central to the commemoration of Uğur Mumcu and coordinates the commemoration events. Since 24 January is the assassination date of Uğur Mumcu and 31 January is the anniversary of the murder of lawyer and intellectual Dr. Muammer Aksoy<sup>5</sup>, every year the days between 24 January and 31 January are recognized as "Justice and Democracy Week." During the week, conferences are held, theatrical works about Uğur Mumcu are staged, and concerts and exhibitions are organized. In addition, on 24 January, commemorations are held in front of the house where the writer was killed and which is still used by his family, as well as at his grave.

During the preparation of this article, interviews were conducted with participants and people involved in the organization of the commemoration events. Particular preference was given to people who knew Uğur Mumcu personally. In this framework, the information provided by these people was used to understand to what extent the "real" Uğur Mumcu and the figure of Uğur Mumcu in memory correspond to each other. In addition, the researcher participated in the commemoration events in front of Uğur Mumcu's house, attended the meetings held in preparation for the event and examined the brochures, posters, programs and similar documents created by UMAG and the civil society organizations participating in the commemorative events. Data were collected using the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews using the snowball technique, and both emic and etic approaches.

## 1. THE "UNWRITTEN CONSTITUTION" IN MEMORY

The antidote to the destruction caused by crime is justice. While in some cases crime irreversibly affects the lives of individuals and in others the lives of entire communities, this impact can only be limited or eliminated by the establishment of justice. If justice is not achieved, these effects continue: People suffer, fear the recurrence of the crime, lose trust in official institutions and even perceive them as a threat, build new networks of solidarity among themselves, construct unique identities and form structures against hegemony within their own groups, and finally, even in the most ordinary routines of their daily lives, the "shadow" of that

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<sup>4</sup> This term is used as the equivalent of Nora's "*lieu de mémoire*".

<sup>5</sup> He was a Turkish thinker and writer known for his Atatürkist and secularist views, who served as a member of parliament, president of the bar association, and representative to the Council of Europe. He was shot dead in front of his house on 31 January 1990, three years before Mumcu.

crime becomes a determining factor in the decisions they take. An "unwritten constitution" is formed.

Crimes that society considers to be directed against itself and that find a place in the collective memory politicize the masses and intimidate certain groups of people. The unwritten constitution is also binding for these people. Although these communities are not the subject of this article, "rituals of violence" can create a climate of fear in which many people prefer to remain politically silent. Therefore, the transformative effect of crimes that concern society is also manifested in the depoliticization of certain groups of people, positioning them outside political action and decision-making mechanisms. The sense of threat created by the crime becomes decisive in their outlook on life and in their decisions. An individualistic lifestyle, devoid of a sense of solidarity, where social goals are not taken into account, becomes dominant. Within the political system, an attitude in favor of the powerful develops, and within this attitude, it is thought that they are away from the threat of crime.

Based on the hypothesis that social memory is instrumentalized in coping with injustice, the concept of social memory should undoubtedly be discussed first.

### 1.1.Social Memory

Forgetting and remembering are ultimately individual processes. However, it can be said that very few of our memories, such as a painful moment or a smell we heard for the first time, have nothing social about them. Indeed, Maurice Halbwachs (1992), one of the pioneers of this field, argues that individual memory cannot be separated from social memory. Therefore, the individual remembers or forgets in the form and content indicated by the community in which he or she lives. This is an aspect of culture, which is fundamentally an effort to bring order to life, which is ultimately chaos.

Embedded in the story of every individual who speaks of his or her life story is the culture of the community in which he or she lives and the value set that guides it. Just as a person's grave is not only the grave of that person but also a representative of the burial tradition of the society to which he or she belongs, similarly, a person's memories are part of the culture of the society. In other words, the social group to which a person belongs creates a framework for the person's memories and the act of remembering (Sancar, 2016:42).

On the other hand, social memory is in reality a concept related to the past but belonging to the present. This characteristic is not only due to the fact that the past is perceived and created through the conditions of the present. At the same time, the pragmatic function of collective memory is to shape the present behavior, attitudes, imaginations and ideologies of community members. In this respect, collective memory is also political.

It should be stated in this context that social memory provides a kind of cultural control. In some cases, the control of the behaviors and attitudes of community members is carried out through internalized beliefs and values (Haviland et al., 2008:605). This cultural control, which ensures that community members abide by the rules of the community without an explicit provision of law or the threat of sanctions, undoubtedly depends on the existence of a social memory. Social memory tells the individual how to behave through stories, memories, lullabies, and fairy tales, and in most cases the individual feels that one way of behaving is right and the other is wrong, without knowing why or how it was first told or felt. Giving that feeling to that person is a kind of self-control, a kind of control of that person's mind. Although the expression "mind control" has other connotations, according to Foucault, it is easier to control the human mind than the body (cited in Kottak, 2016:333).

Social memory, like many other different elements and dimensions of culture, is to a certain extent implicit. This is because "culture, with all its norms, values, institutions, meanings of the world and life, is a normality, naturalized as a world order accepted by all, as a world order without alternatives, and its uniqueness and conventionality become invisible to individuals" (Assmann, 2015:145). This invisibility is a natural consequence of culture. Therefore, social memory is rarely thought about in everyday life. Like all the myriad institutions and concepts shaped by culture in the world in which we find ourselves at birth, memory is not questioned unless it is specifically reflected upon. This is not to say that there is a reluctance to question memory, or that questioning it is not interesting. Culture, by its very nature, throws a cloak of invisibility over this concept that is much simpler than these and derives its power from this simplicity; it is unthinkable to question it. However, studies on social memory open a new window for a holistic understanding of culture within a new paradigm and from a different perspective (Sancar, 2016:63).

What is remembered is often a small part of the truth, distorted and given a different meaning in people's minds. This is where social memory, like other cultural institutions, gains function. In this context, Connerton (2018:40) gives the following striking example: The memories of the war in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s are often embellished with stories of heroes. However, the stories of millions of soldiers who returned from the wars maimed, some of whom suffered from chronic depression, some of whom became alcoholics and even committed suicide, were not included in the social memory.

In this context, it should finally be stated that "flash memories" have a strong influence on the shaping of social memory. Flash memories are memories that people can remember personally and very vividly, and that they continue to recall in minute detail for a very long time (Roediger et al., 2015:192). These are often significant, very surprising or shocking events. Moments of learning about events such as the assassination of a leader or the September 11

attacks will produce such memories. In the case of flash memories, it has been an emotionally charged event for the recollector and, as stated, the event can be recalled in full detail with unusual accuracy. The concept of "flash memory", which is important for this article, has been repeatedly encountered by the researcher in the memories of Uğur Mumcu's murder. The fact that the memories of the days of the murder and funeral are relatively protected from "distortions" is undoubtedly due to the fact that these events are "flash memories".

## 1.2. Relationality of History and Social Memory

Social memory contains elements of the past, but it is not history; unlike history, it does not claim objectivity. History, on the other hand, presents a story about the past and claims that this story is an objective reality. With their contrasting natures, history and social memory can be thought of as two separate sides of a tension. Nora states that "History is always suspicious of memory and its main mission is to suppress and destroy it" (cited in Wertsch, 2015:160).

In contrast to the dullness of history with its emphasis on neutrality, social memory is alive and dynamic, in constant transformation. Social memory, whether it is formed by the people of a village, often shaped by legends and gossip, or by majestic ceremonies in front of national monuments in the capital of a country, has a far more dominant impact on the lives and cultural existence of individuals than the narrative of history. Ultimately, historical literature can only reach the individual as much as its impact on social memory. As a matter of fact, Assmann explains this situation as follows; "For cultural memory, remembered history is important, not real history. It can even be said that in cultural memory, real history turns into remembered history and then into legend" (Assmann, 2015:60).

Social memory narrativizes the past. Instead of holding fast to the truth, it places in memory some of the elements found in each story: heroes, good and bad people, time jumps, struggles, myths, legends, lessons to be learned, symbols, and emotions. Schudson (2007:179-182) sees this narrativization as a form of distortion of memory. Indeed, as Schudson points out, we often remember the past in the form of stories. Good people are good, bad people are bad. The heroes in historical narratives are always brave, honest, dedicated to their values, infallible and endowed with good qualities. In contrast, the villains and enemies in the same stories are similarly full of pure evil.

Historian Peter Novick summarizes the difference between history and social memory thus:

*To understand a phenomenon historically means to be aware of its complexity, to have the objectivity to see it from a variety of perspectives, to accept the ambiguities (including moral ambiguities) in the motives and behavior of the protagonists. Collective*



*memory simplifies; it devotedly sees events from a single perspective; it is intolerant of any ambiguity, reducing events to mythical archetypes (cited in Wertsch, 2015:159).*

Nora includes the concept of "democratization of history" in his work. Peoples, communities, ethnic groups and even individuals have engaged in a strong struggle for emancipation, and in this struggle they have sought their own past as a constitutive element of their identity. In this way, they have created their own "small histories" that cannot be included in the "big history". Collective memory emerged as a part of this emancipatory paradigm and gained the mission of representing a deeper truth than the truth of history, the truth of memories. According to Nora, this is a revenge of the humiliated and insulted groups (cited in Sancar, 2016: 65).

Finally, in this context, it should be noted that the difference between history and collective memory is often a complexity that is difficult to understand. For example, according to Roediger and colleagues (Roediger, Zaromb, & Butler, 2015:182), a very convenient source for the study of collective memory is history textbooks. In fact, this is not surprising, since history textbooks contain narratives that are constructed with many objectives, such as the formation and strengthening of national identity and the realization of solidarity in the face of a possible "danger." So, while they are called "history", in most cases, they are an attempt to construct collective memory.

### **1.3.Social Memory and Identity: Remembering and Forgetting Together**

People's identity is formed by their memories. People with the same identity have the same common past and similar memories. Similarly, people with the same identity can be considered to be people who have reached a consensus, even if implicit, on what to remember and what to forget. Anderson (2020:226) gives an example of what members of a community should agree to forget: "Every French citizen must have forgotten the Saint-Berthelemy massacre, the massacres in Mide in the 13th century".

Talking about people who are similar by sharing the same memory and identity will undoubtedly mean that these similar people are separated from the "masses of people" who are different. In this context, in the alliance between people, stories that anger others will be emotionally appealing (Boyer, 2015:19). The stronger the perception of "others" as enemies or rivals, the more identity will be nurtured. This feeling of competition and even hostility is the basic emotion needed in the construction and continuity of identities. According to Assmann (2015), the greatest threat to the existence of a nation is when there is no threat at all. Likewise, it would not be surprising to find in the memory of a community a large number of items not only about themselves but also about other people who are explicitly or implicitly seen as a threat.



As mentioned above, whether it is a group of supporters, a religious group, fellow citizens of a city, a nation or a tribe, community members all have a "sense of the past" that distinguishes them from others, and this sense also goes back to a founding history. According to Nora (2006:27), all communities are in search of their origins. In Assmann's approach, this is a kind of recollection of origins. In this originary recollection, we encounter myths. As Barthes (1957) puts it, "a myth constructs a world without contradictions... a world rolling in the obvious...a delightful clarity" (Blight, 2015:302). The mythological stories of those primordial times are simple, the narrative is clear, the messages are unambiguous, the good and evil characters are obvious, and the winner of their struggle is clear. They respond to the regularity required by culture at the most basic level, and are often closed to interpretation and questioning.

Rituals have a special place in the transmission of social memory from one generation to another. Wendy James (2013:142) in her book *The Ceremonial Animal* quotes Herbert Fingarette: "The human part of our lives is lived through ceremony". According to Assmann, rituals exist for a group to maintain its identity, enabling participants to acquire knowledge about their identity (Assmann, 2015:152). Turner (2018:22) also gives an interesting example in this regard. The word used for ritual by the Ndembu natives, about whom he conducted an ethnographic study, also means "obligation". In other words, for individuals, participating in rituals and acting in accordance with their requirements is a social obligation rather than a preference or desire.

Clifford Geertz (2007), in his well-known ethnographic study of cockfighting in Bali, notes that the Balinese told him that cockfighting is "like playing with fire but not getting burned". Such a feature is also present in rituals that carry social memory. Based on the same analogy, when commemorating a murder, a war, a case of heroism or a miracle that is thought to have happened in the past, a fire is lit somewhere, and while the heat of the fire is felt, no one is actually burned. Just like a work performed on a theater stage, certain emotions and memories are portrayed and the representation ends.

#### **1.4. Pragmatics of Social Memory: The Past Written for the Present**

The construction of memory for current purposes is the foundation of culture. In some cases, this construction process becomes much more visible. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis (2002) in his monograph *Tepoztlan: Village in Mexico* devotes a part of his monograph to the religious history and myths of the village of Tepoztlan. With the beginning of overseas colonization, Christianity came to the village with the Spanish. Over time, Catholicism merged and mixed with local and earlier religious elements. For example, the local god Ometochtli was also considered the son of Mary. There are also elements in the local myths about the conversion to Christianity that the god of the village accepted Christianity as superior. As in this example, it can be said that

the social memory created is based on pragmatic values and in some cases even facilitates the adaptation of communities in the face of oppression.

Within the pragmatics of social memory, a kind of pool of past events will be utilized in the process of determining which data, event or person from the past will be extracted from the past and "processed". In that pool, all the events and heroes will be included. At this point, it would be appropriate to mention Aleida Assmann's (as cited in Sancar, 2016:48) concepts of "stored memory" and "functional memory". Stored memory is a "mass of unprocessed memories" in which all the past is stored and which is essentially passive. On the other hand, "functional memory" selects certain events and people from this "storehouse", extracts them, updates them and puts them at the service of the present and the future. Functional memory is active in contrast to the passive character of stored memory. It makes conscious choices from the "repertoire" offered to it by the stored memory, focuses on certain people and events within an agenda, and reinterprets them in order to put them at the service of current goals. In a reciprocal exchange, stored memory and functional memory take and return events and heroes from each other.

### 1.5. Dynamics of Memory Distortion and Memory Wars

The distortion of social memory is undoubtedly due to the fact that memory is susceptible to manipulation. Mark Twain's observation is sufficiently explanatory in this regard: "In my youth I remembered everything that really happened and everything that didn't happen, but now I'm old and I only remember things that never happened" (cited in Blight, 2015:303). It is this fragility of memory that allows it to be instrumentalized. On the other hand, according to Schudson, "Underlying the idea that memory can be distorted is the assumption that there is a criterion by which we can calculate or judge what a fully accurate memory should be" (Schudson, 2007:179). With this statement, Schudson speaks of the difficulty of identifying the reality of the past and keeping it alive in all its purity in social memory. Therefore, it can be considered that distortion is already an integral feature of memory.

In some cases, the state seeks to construct social memory in line with its own contemporary aims. In the face of this intervention by the state, some groups will undoubtedly resist. The struggle between the state, society and groups with different identities that make up society over how social memory will be shaped is referred to as "memory wars". The state first and foremost instills in society the common memory and values it wants to adopt through formal education. Resistance movements challenge this common memory by producing their own social memories. These groups do not participate in the commemoration ceremonies of the state and even create their own ceremonies. "The aim is to build an oppositional memory against the official memory" (Garibian, 2014). Thinking that an identity will disappear into oblivion,

communities of people are in resistance against the central government and the dominant identity.

Following this theoretical framework, we can now go back to that "first day", the day of the assassination, and begin the archaeology of the traces left in memory by what happened that day.

## 2.THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY: 24 JANUARY 1993, 13:25

*"I put on my coat. I went into the kitchen. The oven clock said 13:25. I had already put on my boots. I took my bag from the cloakroom.... As I was pulling the door open, out of the corner of my eye I saw a white car pass by on the right, I turned and took a step... There was a big explosion!!!. I took another step. Another explosion!!!! I took a step back towards the house. Another explosion....The ground shook three times under my feet... First I saw the car, a wreck at the foot of the wall. "What happened to Uğur!!! Where is Ugur!" I shouted. Someone said, "Don't look..." I wanted to see him, I was looking around for him. Finally I saw him!..." (Mumcu, 2013:16)*

This is how Uğur Mumcu's wife Güldal Mumcu<sup>6</sup> describes that first day. Social memories are based on a "founding past". In the case of Uğur Mumcu, this founding past was the day of his assassination. The history of a community's memory began that day. In rhetorical terms, the moment of the assassination is the first day of the calendar. What happened that day in Ankara resulted in the community, in the shock wave of the crime, taking a break from daily life and organizing for a collective, ceremonial gathering. With many emotional states and cultural phenomena such as solidarity against crime, equality, embracing common goals, experiencing sorrow and anger together, togetherness, anonymity, the performance of old rituals, the first struggle against crime and injustice for Uğur Mumcu began.

Güldal Mumcu, Uğur Mumcu's wife, has included the following anecdote in her book about the funeral<sup>7</sup> held a few days later: At the funeral, after the burial, a plainclothes policeman

<sup>6</sup>In the following years, Güldal Mumcu was elected as an opposition MP in the general elections held in 2007 and 2011 and served in parliament.

<sup>7</sup>The funeral took place in Ankara on 27 January 1993. During this mass ceremony, which was crowded to a degree rarely seen in Turkey's recent history, the cortege moved along the main boulevards of the city and daily life was largely suspended. The narrative of an interviewee who is a banker can be used to express this break in routine life. According to L. (female, 60), banks have a room called "dealing room". In this room, the bank's foreign exchange, deposit and share exchanges are carried out instantaneously with the participation of investment experts. In order to enable instant follow-up, exchange rates and similar financial information are displayed on the screens in the room. L. said that in those rooms, not only in the

came up to her and told her that he was in charge of protecting her and that it would be easier to ensure their safety if they left before the crowd started to disperse. Güldal Mumcu looked at the flowers being thrown on the grave, at the "cameramen in the trees," as she called them, at the "sea of umbrellas"<sup>8</sup>, at her children, and said, "OK, let's leave". Then she leaned towards her children and said the following;

*... They came from all over Turkey. Today, let's leave them here alone with your father, let them see him off, give him their love, do their last duties. We can always come back later. Besides, hundreds of thousands did not come to share the grief of anyone. They shared your grief, you no longer have any grief. You only have his honor, your father's honor (2013:35).*

When the interviewees were asked about the same events by the researcher, it was observed that the interviewees generally remembered how they received the news of Mumcu's murder and the funeral ceremony afterwards in detail.

Most people mentioned that it was Sunday, that the weather was very cold, that Uğur Mumcu was killed by a bomb in his car and that his car was smashed. A. (male, 70, artist) provides an example of these memories:

***I remember the day Uğur Mumcu was killed. It was a Sunday, our neighbor downstairs was cleaning his car, he called out to me, "Did you hear that?". I said, "Hear what?". He said, "Uğur Mumcu". Of course we ran to the house. I worked on a picture of Uğur Mumcu that day... I worked on a portrait in a way that could be described as a sketch.... Later I took that picture to Cumhuriyet newspaper. The director was a friend of mine, he had asked me to see the painting, he took it from me, pasted it on the board behind him, and told me to keep it for a few days. When I went back later, the painting was gone. I said, "Where is the painting?". He said, "if she had asked you, you wouldn't have said 'no'". I didn't understand at first, it turned out that Ms. Güldal had come and asked for it.***

In the interviews, it was observed that the people who received the news of Mumcu's murder were able to elaborate on the conditions they were in if asked by the researcher. For

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bank where she worked, but also in all the other banks, the screens suddenly began to read "Uğur Mumcu" instead of financial information.

<sup>8</sup> It rained intermittently during the funeral. For this reason, most of the participants at the funeral opened their umbrellas, which were usually black in color. Given the sheer number of people attending the funeral and the fact that the cortege traveled along an entire boulevard, including the sections reserved for vehicular traffic, anyone looking down on the city streets from above was confronted with a sight they had never seen before: A sea of umbrellas!

example, the room they were in at home, who was with them at the time, who they talked to and what they talked about immediately afterwards, if they had learned the news on television, were expressed with surprising clarity. As mentioned above, the elements that come to the fore in the narratives are Uğur Mumcu's wrecked car after the explosion, the fact that it was Sunday and that it was a cold day. Some interviewees mentioned the sad state of Mumcu's family, especially his wife and children.

Some of the memories of the day of Uğur Mumcu's assassination, on the other hand, were seen to contain the impression that the fragments scattered by the explosion were swept away in a sloppy manner, almost as if the evidence had been destroyed<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, this is one of the elements identified with Uğur Mumcu's murder in social memory. After the explosion, the house was flooded with Mumcu's colleagues, readers, curious people and politicians, and the scavengers swept away the scattered remains, which were thought to constitute crucial evidence in a possible investigation. In this regard, similar to other participants, F. (male, 60, civil society organization director) stated the following;

***An investigative, successful, versatile journalist of Turkey is killed. He leaves his house, tells his family 'you wait, come when I give the signal' and then starts his car and dies<sup>10</sup>. For some reason, the police started cleaning up the place without collecting the evidence. Garbage men came, the evidence was destroyed, the place was cleaned before the evidence was collected.***

The following statement summarizes the general opinion of the interviewees on the subject:

***The evidence is being swept, but nothing would have changed even if it wasn't.***  
***(U, male, civil servant, 24)***

On the other hand, the name of the interviewee quoted above has a special meaning for this article. Apart from his surname, the interviewee has two forenames. These are Uğur and Mumcu. These names were given to him by his family, inspired by Uğur Mumcu. Therefore, the

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<sup>9</sup> Another anecdote shows how careless the initial investigation following the assassination was: After the assassination, the authorities stated that the car was blown up when the ignition key was turned, and when the key was later found in Mumcu's pants pocket, it was thought that a remote-controlled explosive device had been used. Then the truth came out: An officer who found the key in the pieces scattered on the ground had put it in the pocket of Uğur Mumcu's pants so that it would not get lost (32. *Gün* program, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Uğur Mumcu had anticipated that he might be get into his car first, inviting his family to join him afterwards.

interviewee is a memory bearer who engraves the act of remembrance into society in the most everyday moments of life.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.1. The Meaning of Commemoration

Participants were asked why Uğur Mumcu should be commemorated. The answers to this question were used to analyze the motivations behind participation in commemoration ceremonies. First of all, in some cases, embracing Mumcu may mean being part of an identity, while in other cases, it may mean attributing one's own values to Mumcu – in other words, saying "he was one of me" and thus including Mumcu in an identity. In fact, T. (male, 30), himself a journalist, expressed his thoughts on this situation as follows:

***Atatürkists attending the commemorations see him as an Atatürkist, socialist participants see him as a socialist. People are actually trying to say that he is from me, he is the same as me. However, he criticizes many things cleverly. For example, I am a communist, but I agree with his criticisms of communism. In fact, it's just journalism, we are not used to it as a society, that's why society cannot understand him.***

Some participants stated that Mumcu was idealized after his murder and that even if he had flaws, no one could talk about them. Regardless of the specific case of Uğur Mumcu, one interviewee stated that:

***Human communities need the dead to set an example for themselves. 35-40 years ago I was stationed somewhere for compulsory service. A kaymakam (district governor) came there. He immediately began a research, trying to find out if there were any important people who had died in these neighborhoods. Later I realized that his aim was actually to build a tomb.... Having such a person is important in terms of keeping the community together. (S, male, 55, psychiatrist)***

On the other hand, it was observed that the emphasis on murder and injustice was always at the forefront of the discourse.

***I think there are two reasons why Uğur Mumcu has been commemorated for so many years; firstly, the murder has not been solved, and secondly, Uğur Mumcu's***

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<sup>11</sup> The author encountered another "Uğur Mumcu" during the research process. Although he was not able to interview the person in question, he became aware of a meeting that assassinated and, in order to prevent his family from being harmed in the event of an attack, he would leave the house alone and fairly summarizes Turkey's recent history. In the hours of the 10 October 2015 bombings at the Ankara central railway station, Uğur Mumcu, whose words are quoted above, was very worried about his friends attending the rally which was the target of the attack. He was trying to determine whether his friends were alive or not from the lists of the dead and wounded. In the meantime, his namesake's name caught his eye in the list of the wounded. Thus, three Uğur Mumcu's meet at that moment. One is the journalist who was assassinated in 1993, another is the young man who was named after him and was injured in the train station massacre, and finally the interviewee who examines the names on the list.



*warnings and predictions have always been right, and his ideas are still relevant." (F, female, 55, civil society organization director)*

*If Uğur Mumcu had died of natural causes and not as a result of a murder, there would still be these commemorative events... but they would not have this power. Imagine everyone coming and planting candles in front of his house. It's like a shrine. A shrine has meanings such as comforting, seeking help, overcoming something, getting strength from it. Uğur Mumcu is like a saint. But this is also wrong, of course, but it is inevitable. (I, male, 65, writer)*

In fact, Ö. (male, 55, hairdresser) summarized the above thoughts with the following sentences in the interview:

*If Uğur Mumcu had died naturally, he would still be remembered, but without this drama. He would be remembered with respect, as a master.*

Another interviewee summarized the emotional state created by injustice in the community in this way:

*Injustice makes it harder to forget. It hurts more. ...If the killers are found, the mourning process will be shorter, and repair and healing will be achieved. The fact that these murders are not forgotten is also a comforting factor for the families... When they shout slogans for justice, they are saying "Let's not let this happen again". They also want them to feel that the perpetrators are being sought. They want them to live with the fear that the perpetrators will one day be exposed... In such deaths, there is the inability to do what could have been done if the deceased had been alive. For example, the mother of one of those who died on October 10<sup>12</sup> lamented: "My son died there, his friend got married last week, but my son won't be able to get married." Of course, maybe if that person had lived, he would never have gotten married... We can think of the situation of impunity as a blood feud. Societies with a tradition of blood feuds no longer pursue blood feuds. Instead, they expect punishment from the state. Because the state says "The monopoly on the use of violence belongs to me". But when this is not fulfilled, justice is not fulfilled either in the traditional way or in the modern way. This time the mourning process becomes unhealthy, they start to think about the murderer all the time. Thinking that the murderer continues his normal life makes people rebel. (S, male, 55, psychiatrist)*

<sup>12</sup> The participant is referring to the event that took place on 10 October 2015, which is popularly known as the "Train Station Massacre". In this explosion, bombs were detonated in the middle of the crowd gathered for a rally in front of Ankara central train station and 107 people were killed.



Ultimately, crime transforms the individual and society. As a result of this transformation, the intensity and persistence in commemorating the murdered person increases. When the community is deprived of the calming aspect of justice, it mobilizes social memory in order to cope with injustice, and with the instrumentalized memory, it attempts to fight against the injustice that it thinks has been done to Mumcu and, in his person, to itself. However, it would be incomplete to think that the only motivation for participation in these commemorative gatherings is to "ensure justice" or "call for justice". The emphasis on justice is ultimately a form of discourse and includes other motivations in the background. Moreover, considering that nearly 30 years have passed since the murder, it comes to mind that the demand for justice is, in reality, a rather vague demand. This is examined in more detail below.

More concretely, when trying to understand why participants attend Uğur Mumcu commemoration events, it was observed that according to the data obtained from the interviewees, one of the main motivations was to pay back the debt they owed to Uğur Mumcu. Such participants feel indebted to Uğur Mumcu because they believe that he sacrificed his life for them.

***There are some people; they prefer to act politically instead of being political. They are afraid to put forward certain ideas themselves, they don't take risks. They are happy when someone else puts forward these ideas in their place. If someone who courageously defends that idea is killed, then people are told: Look, this person was defending your rights and he left. (A, female, 20, student)***

However, it is observed that participants also have other motivations. One of these motivations involves a set of goals and designs for the future, which can be defined with the motto "never again", and is fed by the fear of repeating the same events. Therefore, it has been observed that a person acts with two different emotional burdens (and in some cases both) when commemorating Uğur Mumcu. While the attitude that can be summarized as the fulfillment of a debt is retrospective and focuses on Uğur Mumcu, the attitudes and behaviors that can be expressed with the phrase "never again" symbolize Uğur Mumcu and include forward-looking designs. These designs basically consist of strategies to prevent new unsolved murders, to be strong against hegemony and even to build a new social order. Ö. (male, 55, civil servant) gave a typical example of this last emotional state:

***When we Alevis go to condolences, we say 'Let your pain last<sup>13</sup>...' This means 'Let this be the final grief, let there be no new pain (greater sorrow) after this'. When we commemorate Uğur Mumcu, we are continuing this pain, we are trying to prevent new pain from occurring.***

<sup>13</sup> Original in Turkish: "Acın devam etsin."

***This call for justice also includes a call for a new social order. Uğur Mumcu is the symbol of a fairer, more equal and freer society. This is why the issue has gone beyond the commemoration of Uğur Mumcu. It is both commemorating Uğur Mumcu and saying "I will fulfill the principles and freedom you died for". This is what happens at the meetings. (I, male, 65, journalist)***

***I think they are trying to create an awareness of justice in society with the mass call for justice at Uğur Mumcu's commemoration ceremony. They want to prevent new ones. The issue has gone beyond Uğur Mumcu. They want society to change. They want it to turn into a society where the state protects its citizens and where the murderers are punished if a murder is committed. (B, female, 45, private sector)***

As stated above, those who "pay their debts" to Uğur Mumcu look to the past, while those who say "never again" look to the future. In this context, some people at the events complained that some others were only crying in focusing on the past, but that they were not taking the necessary steps towards understanding Mumcu and his ideals. As an example, the following views of I. (65, male, writer) can be cited:

***When we organize the ceremonies, we do not want it to turn into a wailing wall, a place of venting; on the contrary, we want it to be a place of hope, empowerment and questioning. Otherwise it would be wrong...***

As the interviews progressed, the researcher was confronted with people who focused on their own reputations or interests rather than Uğur Mumcu and the public goals symbolized in his personality, and who participated in the commemoration events in this way and were criticized for this reason. A. (female, 20, student) stated that there were such people who were not sincere in their participation in commemoration events as follows:

***If a person posts Uğur Mumcu pictures on social media without knowing Uğur Mumcu's ideas or reading his books, they are advertising themselves. Thus, they are saying 'There is such a thing in society, let me be accepted by the same group'. People don't want to be excluded, they want to be part of a group, they want to say 'I'm here too, see me too'... Sometimes they say "Let them call me an Atatürkist too".***

***Another group comes there to show themselves, they want to become MPs, they want to become city council members – being seen there can do that... Some also come to post pictures on Instagram. Most of the people who come there have never read a single book by Uğur Mumcu. (S, male, 55, academic)***

As a result, it is understood that participants took part in commemoration events with different goals. From a man who went to Mumcu's house on 24 January and cried there and never remembered Mumcu again, to a woman who participated in the rehearsals of the theater performance to be held on the night of 24 January for months, or a politician who left a carnation at the monument built at the site of the explosion after ensuring that the cameras were filming him, to a person who was looking for the right moment and place to appear to the chairman of the party he belonged to with his carefully worn suit... Undoubtedly, all of these people have different motivations. Within the framework of this study, these different motivations can be summarized as repaying the debt owed to Mumcu, preventing new murders, saying "never again" in the context of imagining a country where the law is effective, or pursuing individual private goals. On the other hand, it should be noted that these groups undoubtedly do not take part in the event in a way that is strictly separated from each other. As stated earlier, it is possible for a participant to have two or even all three of these moods/motivations to a certain extent. However, it should not be forgotten that the phenomenon that provides this ground for people is injustice. Injustice is both the reason for the existence of this ground and the source of its social legitimacy. On that ground, participants reveal their identities to the public and to themselves, and put forth their performances shaped by the motivations listed. Therefore, the injustice experienced gives the community a key. Which door will be opened with this key depends on the groups' preferences.

## 2.2.Mumcu's in Social Memory and History

In the interviews, it was observed that there was a consensus that Uğur Mumcu's appearance in the public memory and the personality he presented while he was alive were exactly the same, and that the Uğur Mumcu they knew personally was the same as the one remembered in the public memory after the murder.

***I think there is no difference between the Uğur Mumcu that society remembers and the Uğur Mumcu that I personally knew. Although 28 years have passed, his revolutionary, patriotic essence has not been emptied. Sometimes they strip someone of his ideology and create an empty hero. This is not the case with Uğur Mumcu. (N, male, 70, retired)***

On the other hand, a small number of interviewees stated that the ideas that Uğur Mumcu actually defended had been softened over the years and that his social image had been positioned in a more central place.

Although there is a great similarity between the Uğur Mumcu who lives in the collective memory and the Uğur Mumcu described by people who met him in person when he was alive, in other cases the social developments following his death can take a completely different turn. In

such developments, society cannot agree on who the deceased person is, and different groups engage in a struggle to shape memory. In this context, one participant gave an example of a "struggle for memory".

***Neoliberals tried to use Uğur Mumcu... But he is diametrically opposed to them... One or two years ago, the neoliberals who took over Cumhuriyet newspaper tried to commemorate Uğur Mumcu through the Gazeteciler Cemiyeti (Association of Journalists) and we opposed it... We prevented it... We said; "This team cannot symbolize Uğur Mumcu, it cannot be his continuation"... That is a kind of misuse of Uğur Mumcu. (I, male, 65, journalist)***

So what would happen if justice were in fact done? Would Uğur Mumcu continue to be remembered? This section can be closed with the words of an interviewee (I, male, journalist, 65) who described Uğur Mumcu as his older brother:

***Folk heroes who become symbols continue to live in the hearts of the people. Like Lorca. When democracy came to Spain, Lorca continued to live.***

## CONCLUSION

Uğur Mumcu, who is passed down from generation to generation through commemorative events, has the founding quality sought in a story in social memory, he has a founding past. The day of his assassination was the founding past. The history of a group memory began to move forward that day. A community memory was built on this crime. In all of the commemorative events organized after the murder, the anger generated by the crime, the search for justice, and the effort to understand the causes and perpetrators of the crime are clearly dominant.

Unlike a historical record, the collective memory of Uğur Mumcu predominantly focused on certain symbols and senses. Almost all interviewees mentioned the cold weather on 24 January 1993 when the assassination took place, the "sea of umbrellas" at the funeral, the carnations, the candles or specific songs sung at commemoration events. On the other hand, the memory created by society about Uğur Mumcu is, as Nora (cited in Sancar, 2016: 65) puts it, "small history" in the face of "big history". What is meant here is that this memory emerges as part of the emancipatory efforts of groups outside the hegemony.

The moment when the news of Uğur Mumcu's murder is received is the "flash memory" mentioned above (Roediger et al., 2015:192). On every death anniversary, "that day" is re-enacted again and again.

As in many stories that constitute social memory, in the case of Uğur Mumcu, there is an instrumentalization of memory towards certain contemporary goals. These contemporary goals

can vary according to the participants' statements. As mentioned, some of the participants stated that the reason for being there was to repay society's debt to Mumcu, while others aim to contribute to the design of a future in which similar assassinations could be prevented from occurring or, if they did occur, justice could be achieved through a fair investigation, which can be expressed with the motto "never again".

Aleida Assmann's (as cited in Sancar: 2016) concepts of stored memory, as the mass of unprocessed memories, and functional memory, as that which selects some specific memories from the mass based on the current interests of the community and makes them part of the social memory, cannot be used in the case of Uğur Mumcu. Therefore, the process of constructing a new social memory by removing it from the stored memory with a special effort did not take place in the case of Mumcu. When the data obtained from the field is analyzed, the reasons for this can be listed as follows:

1) Uğur Mumcu was, while still alive, already on society's agenda, with his ideology, his books, his speeches in panels and television programs, and his columns. After his assassination, such a figure was included in the functional memory without the need to remove him from the stored memory.

2) It has been 30 years since Uğur Mumcu was murdered. Even though it has been a relatively long time, the people who knew him closely during his lifetime are still alive. Mumcu's books continue to be read and his interviews continue to be watched. All this has ensured that Uğur Mumcu's place on the public agenda has continued uninterruptedly, almost as a continuation of his life when he was alive.

3) Uğur Mumcu's murder is etched in people's memories as a flash memory. This situation keeps Uğur Mumcu's place in the social memory alive. Therefore, Uğur Mumcu was not brought to the social agenda and memory with a special design and goal. The fact that the day of the assassination is remembered so strongly also has prevented possible distortions about the assassination.

4) Immediately after the assassination, there were groups of people who organized and persistently embraced Uğur Mumcu. These groups prevented him from being forgotten, so there was no need for him to be reintroduced into public memory with entirely new meanings and messages. Since the core cadre directing these groups consisted of Mumcu's journalist colleagues and intellectuals, they were highly recognized and influential in society. Their sensitivity towards Mumcu and their efforts to protect him from "distortions" also shaped social memory.

5) Official institutions did not or could not make a special effort to determine how Uğur Mumcu should be remembered. Uğur Mumcu in memory was relatively protected from the distortions that the state could create in social memory.

6) The ideas and principles that Uğur Mumcu put forward in his lifetime are clear and consistent. They have not changed in principle according to circumstances and time. As such, the clear traces left by Mumcu in social memory were less affected by the manipulative aspect of memory.

Because of these reasons, the Uğur Mumcu figure in social memory and the Uğur Mumcu who actually lived overlap to a great extent, unlike other examples in social memory. Therefore, it can be said that the history-memory dualism is weakened in the case of Uğur Mumcu, and that the gap between the Mumcu who is kept alive in memory and the Mumcu who history writes or will write is smaller than in the case of other social figures. Undoubtedly, the manipulative and pragmatic-political aspect of memory that focuses on symbols and perceptions is also present in the developed social memory of Mumcu. However, the answers to questions about who Uğur Mumcu was, how he practiced journalism, what kind of perspective he had on life, and how and why he died will find similar answers in the windows of social memory and history.

## EPILOGUE: THE PODIUM OF INJUSTICE

Oh, I'm far from clearnesses

That undissolving repose in my head.

I haven't died, though, but I live

Listen, look: it beats, the pulse of the soul

Orhan Veli (2021)

In an interview he gave during his lifetime, Uğur Mumcu stated that he saw journalism as the podium of a political fight (BBC Turkish, 2021). There are two main functions of the podium: It determines the content of speeches and gives a certain legitimacy to the speaker. Mumcu was murdered, but this time a podium in his name was set up in the public memory. Instead of Uğur Mumcu, people who claim that they want to remember his memory and the injustice that took place speak at this podium. Sometimes in the sharing of a photo on social media, sometimes in the anger of a young person shouting slogans with his fist in the air on 24 January, appears this podium built in memory: This is the podium of injustice. The Uğur Mumcu produced in social memory continues to speak from that podium.

Indeed, this podium in social memory is used by people with different motivations. The source of legitimacy for the actions, identities, temperaments and cultural structures put forward on that podium is the injustice that has been experienced. The "podium of injustice" rises above the legitimacy and moral inviolability of the search for justice, creating a space for people who want to make their identities visible in the public sphere. Moreover, the "podium of injustice" does not only appear in the case of Uğur Mumcu, but also in other communities deprived of a sense of justice: when commemorating the memory of a unjustly executed person, when protesting against police brutality, or when speaking at a gathering for the disappeared people.

The above-mentioned structures and performances created and nourished by injustice carry both the hope for the future and the darkness of the past on their public faces. Like two sides of a coin, they relentlessly bring these two opposite realities to the public agenda. The juxtaposition of these realities makes them each more visible: The reality that a writer, beloved by the community and constantly threatened for his writings, yet not properly protected, was killed in a car that exploded a minute or two after leaving his home in the capital of the country, in front of his family, and that his killers (or at least their instigators) have not been found; and the belief in an idealized future where everyone can live in security and freedom.

It should be noted that in most cases, the reaction to injustice is limited to injustices done to people belonging to the ideology to which the participants feel they belong. In fact, one of the interviewees, S. (male, 55, psychiatrist), stated that a fundamental problem in Turkey is that groups of people are only sensitive to their own suffering and cannot empathize with people who experience similar suffering but have different identities. This undoubtedly prevents the creation of wider and more effective solidarity networks and the contribution to the establishment of a universal standard of law through these networks. Therefore, while the podium of injustice is constructed by injustice and crime, perhaps over time it becomes the podium of an identity.

As the anthropologist Hertz (2019) points out, a healthy society would never allow an important individual to perish and life would have the last word. In the case of Uğur Mumcu, life continues to speak, sometimes shouting, sometimes whispering, sometimes crying in pain, sometimes with a smile full of hope for the future. It may not always be possible to decipher the meaning of those speeches, but those voices are the echoes of the beating pulse of society.

It is finished, but it is not complete.



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