

Sovereign Characters of Police in Turkey: Discretionary Use of Force on Criminalized Political Opponents

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Abstract : Policing studies have drawn attention to the changing role of law enforcement in favour of harsh policing strategies throughout the world. Turkey has become part of this global transition process by restructuring its policing through a series of allegedly democratic amendments to Turkish law. Nevertheless, severe violations of human rights continue to be widely experienced phenomena. This paper suggests problematizing the changing judicial framework of policing together with the persistent aggressive policing in Turkey, by considering Agamben's concept of police as a sovereign entity – sovereign police. In so doing, the paper analytically dissects sovereign police into three premises: the criminalization of the (perceived) enemy, the militarization of the police, and finally, the discretionary use of force. This examination of the state's early ethno-racial policies and the history of the Turkish police force, and of the changing judicial framework of police-related laws in the 2000s, demonstrates that certain 'internal enemies' have been criminalized by increasingly militarized police using escalating discretionary use of force.

Keywords : criminalization, discretionary use of force, policing, sovereignty

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