

# The roots of a new anti-Semitism in Turkey

Friday 13 February 2009, by [Ihsan Dagi](#)

**The latest row over the Israeli attacks on Gaza and the ensuing public reaction in Turkey has raised questions about the rise of anti-Semitism in Turkey. The recent rise of anti-Semitism is in fact related to the activities and ideology of neo-nationalist (Ulusalçı) groups, some of which are associated with the Ergenekon case.**

Let me explain. A near witch-hunt of people of Jewish origin was started in early 2004 with the publication of a series of books on Sabbateanism. The authors of these books are Yalçın Küçük, an academic with a Marxist background, Soner Yalçın, a leftist journalist currently working at the Hürriyet daily, and Ergün Poyraz, a freelance journalist. The profiles of these authors are indeed interesting: Küçük, who accuses almost everybody of having Jewish origin, was arrested last month accused of being part of the Ergenekon gang and later released.

Yalçın started his journalistic career at 2000'e Doğru and worked until 1994 at Aydınlık. Both are weeklies published by Doğu Perinçek, who is under arrest for being part of the Ergenekon gang. Poyraz is also being tried as part of the Ergenekon gang.

## A mental climate

These authors' books have shifted hundreds of thousands of copies in recent years. The books were available not only in bookshops, but in almost all newspaper kiosks throughout Turkey. Yalçın's book "Efendi," published by Doğan Yayıncılık, had been reprinted 82 times by April 2008. Poyraz's books sold over 150,000 copies just in 2007, a phenomenal success by any measure.

These publications have created a mental climate in which being a Jew or having a Jewish background is something to be ashamed of, and enough to be anti-Turkish, a mindset which prompts hatred. The picture that emerged out of these publications was that Turkey was and has always been under the influence of Jews. These books popularized the view that almost all important public figures, past and present, were Sabbatean, of Jewish origin; that the Turkish republic was a "Jewish project"; and that the Turkish economy and political and cultural life were under the control of people of Jewish origin. These were not unknown ideas. But the important thing was that through these books, anti-Semitic sentiment was introduced to new segments of society; people who were urban, educated, professional and secular. An idea that was hitherto popular among a very small number of radical Islamists has spread into new social and political environs.

The underlying theme was that Turkey has been controlled by a Jewish conspiracy, and, as such, a new struggle for national independence was required. Poyraz's books, entitled "The Children of Moses" and "The Rose of Moses," even went as far as to claim that President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are of Jewish origin. This kind of writing was part and parcel of creating a siege mentality, provoking anti-Semitism and justifying a neo-nationalist popular uprising.

Those books and the authors' TV appearances normalized anti-Semitism, camouflaged as Sabbatean "research" that turned into a campaign to discredit all influential public figures who are pro-reform and take a pro-EU stand.

This new anti-Semitism is part of an attempt to spread the neo-nationalist position into the grassroots,

where the neo-nationalists have tried to forge alliances with conservatives. On Feb. 28, 2005, in an interview I gave to Neşe Düzel from the Radikal daily, I warned that anti-Semitism was being used to scare a diverse array of people, including leftists, rightists, Islamists and socialists, and bring them together under a militarist ideology. The anti-Semitism provoked in 2004 and afterward has been part of an attempt to create the support base in society for a nationalist/militarist march to power, whether legally or illegally.

So the new anti-Semitism is the child of nationalist-militarist formations, like Ergenekon.

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## **Sources**

Source : TDZ, 09 February 2009