**Academic Freedom and Living in Exile: Experiences of Academics in Turkey**

Hasan Aydin[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Florida Gulf Coast University*

Viktor Mak

*Human Rights Activist, Independent Researcher, Hungary*

Kristina Andrews

*Florida Gulf Coast University*

Academic freedom within educational institutions is imperative for the scholarship of academics as well as for the promotion of progressive societies. Therefore, when academic freedom is threatened, a plethora of factors inhibit research and scholarship within universities that hinder the advancement of science and knowledge, and that impacts society. This qualitative phenomenological research study sought to explore the experiences of academics who left Turkey, their reasons for leaving, and their process of integrating into new societies. In addition, it aimed to understand their perceptions of academic freedom in Turkey before and after the July 16, 2016 coup attempt. Fifteen Turkish academics and scholars were purposively selected for this study. Data from multiple sources, including semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews, and field notes, were analyzed. To increase the validity and reliability of the study, the researchers triangulated the data, bracketed themselves, and used member checking and outside readers. The findings of the study indicated that most participants self-identified as apolitical but found themselves victims of a political system in which their academia brought brutal and unjustified repercussions. The events following the coup attempt extinguished their academic freedoms and human rights in Turkey. Consequently, the academic and personal struggles and pressures forced them to flee and become refugees or exiles on a quest to re-establish their lives, identity, and academia in a new country. Their experiences before and after the coup expose the atrocities and unjust and traumatic outcomes that were a result of their identity as highly educated scholars and advocates for a more democratic and peaceful society. Hence, this study reveals the political ramifications on academic freedom and scholarship in Turkey and how this has impacted universities and scholars.

*Keywords;* Academic freedom, living in exile, violations, and qualitative phenomenology

1. Corresponding author; haydin@fgcu.edu [↑](#footnote-ref-1)