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Resist or Leave: White Illegal Women on a Hunger Strike: An analysis on the experiences of white illegal women going on a hunger strike for 39 days in Amsterdam in 1999.

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RESIST OR LEAVE: WHITE ILLEGAL WOMEN ON A HUNGERSTRIKE

*An analysis on the experiences of white illegal women going on
a hunger strike for 39 days in Amsterdam in 1999.*

Tugba Kilinc

MA Thesis History

Governance of Migration and Diversity

Mayor Patijn was very concerned about our lives. One day he came to me and said: 'You know, I have a daughter. You are also my daughter, don't do it, stop the hunger strike.' I told him: 'What would you do if your daughter and her children sat at home hungry, unable to pay the rent, worried that they could be evicted?' – Elif



It was hard at first, but after two weeks the stomach and body seemed to sleep for a certain period of time. – Esra

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Introduction

On 1 July 1998, the Linkage Act came into effect in the Netherlands, linking the right to social benefits to a residence permit. So-called White illegals, people without a residence status, lost rights right they had had before such as child support, school enrolment, and health insurance. It became more difficult for them to live and survive in the Netherlands.¹ Labour migrants were free to settle and work until 1975, provided they found work and housing. After 1975, there were restrictions to legal settlement and work. The Linkage Act made it impossible for migrants without a residence permit to claim social benefits, or work legally in the Netherlands. A pardon, at the same time as the introduction of the Act, allowed some people to legalise their stay. In order to claim a residence permit via the pardon, you had to prove that you had worked legally in the Netherlands for six years or more. Migrants who were unable to prove this, could not claim a residence permit, and were to be deported. In 1999, fifteen Turkish women, who belonged to the category of so-called ‘White illegals’ occupied the office of the Amsterdam Turk Kadınlar Birliği (ATKB), the Association of Women in Turkey on the Mauritskade in Amsterdam. They went on a hunger strike to protest the Linkage Act and claim a residence permit. The women refused food for thirty-nine days. For centuries, hunger strikes have been used as a form of protest, from the British suffragettes and Irish prisoners in the twentieth century, to asylum seekers and refugees nowadays.² One of the most famous hunger strikers was Indian politician Mahatma Ghandi, who made a major contribution to India's independence. He was detained several times by the authorities, and during his imprisonment he turned to a so-called peaceful protest: the hunger strike.³ A hunger strike is a risky step and can be seen as a last resort in which the body is used as a

¹ Corrie van Eijl, *Tussenland: Illegaal in Nederland, 1945-2000*, (Hilversum 2012) 157.

² Malaka Shwaikh, ‘Engendering hunger strikes: Palestinian women in Israeli prisons’, *British journal of Middle Eastern studies* 49 (2022) 507-525, 508.

³ Megan A. O’Branski, ‘“The savage reduction of the flesh”: violence, gender and bodily weaponisation in the 1981 Irish Republican hunger strike protest’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7:1 (2014), 97-111, 104.

means of protest. The human body can go surprisingly long without food, but a long-term hunger strike does have very severe consequences for the body. A hunger strike has results mainly through media coverage, so that public opinion about the strike puts pressure on the authorities.⁴ The risks and the suffering which is linked to the hunger strike, demonstrates the intensity and the commitment of the strikers to their cause. It attests both the value of the cause itself, as well as their commitment to it.⁵ What makes the case of the fifteen women different and interesting was that all these women were also mothers and they kept up their hunger strike for a long period of time. In order to understand why the women would turn to this specific method of protest and understand the experience throughout the hunger strike, this research will answer the following question: *'How and why did the fifteen Turkish women decided to go on a hunger strike and use it as a method of protest?'* To formulate a thorough answer to the above question, the literature was combined with four interviews of the hunger-striking women. The goal is to understand what the motives are for people to go on a hunger strike and using their bodies and risking the health and live to protest.

Historiography

In the Netherlands, hunger strikes were not a new phenomenon. In 1998, 132 Moroccan men went on a hunger strike for 18 days in the Hague. However, a group of women, who were also mothers, going on a hunger strike was a new phenomenon in the Netherlands.⁶ There are important groups that adopted the hunger strike as a political form of action in the twentieth century, like the British suffragettes and Irish nationalists. For the suffragettes, -

⁴ Shwaikh, 'Engendering hunger strikes: Palestinian women in Israeli prisons', 508.

⁵ Johanna Siméant, e.a., *Bodies in protest: hunger strikes and angry music* (Amsterdam 2016), 98.

⁶ Adriaan van Es and C.C.J.M. van Ojen, 'Honger naar recht, honger als wapen: Handleiding voor de medische en verpleegkundige begeleiding van hongerstakingen', in *Johannes Wier stichting voor mensenrechten en gezondheidszorg* (Amersfoort 2000) 1-70, 39.

advocates for women's voting rights - hunger strikes became an important means of achieving their goals in the early twentieth century. The first woman to start a hunger strike was Marion Wallace Dunlop of the Women's Social and Political Union. After a 91-hour strike in 1909, authorities released her, fearing the health risks and possible consequences if something happened to Dunlop.⁷ Ireland's Thomas Ashe led the prisoners' hunger strike against the British government after being arrested with a group of protesters following the Easter Rising in 1916. Shortly after his first hunger strike, he was released when it was reported that the prisoners were being treated badly. Just three months later, he was arrested again in August 1917, and again he went on a hunger strike. On 25 September 1917, he died after prison guards force-fed him. His death had a major impact on society and opposition to the British government increased.⁸ Following Ashe's lead, Terence MacSwiney, a leader of the Irish resistance, also decided to go on a hunger strike after his arrest in November 1917. After three days, he was set free. In August 1920, MacSwiney was arrested again and decided to fast in protest of his unfair trial. His hunger strike, for which he was joined by 11 other prisoners, received considerable international media attention. On October 20, 1920, MacSwiney fell into a coma, and died five days later. Attempts to force-feed him failed. In total, MacSwiney's hunger strike lasted 74 days.⁹ More recently in the early 1970s, there are also the Red Army Faction (RAF) hunger strikes. The hunger strike of the RAF in Germany was also a collective action, like that of the fifteen women in the Netherlands, and not an isolated struggle. Patricia Melzer explains that hunger and starvation were not the goal itself, but a political strategy that provides political agency that resists the ideological and structural position of the woman.¹⁰ Even though hunger strikes are not the main method that protesters

⁷ Siméant, *Bodies in protest: hunger strikes and angry music*, 19-20.

⁸ George Sweeney, 'Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice', *Journal of contemporary history* 28 (1993) 421-437, 426.

⁹ Siméant, *Bodies in protest: hunger strikes and angry music*, 19-20.

¹⁰ Patricia Melzer, *Death in the Shape of a Young Girl Women's Political Violence in the Red Army Faction* (New York, 2015), 193.

use, it occupies an essential spot in specific action repertoires; that of nationalists, prisoners, or undocumented migrants.¹¹ The Irish hunger strikes and of the suffragette movement led to the hunger strikes being an undisputable weapon of political confrontation for powerless people.¹² Hunger strikers have not received a lot of attention in the literature yet, especially that of women strikers, while there have been female strikers in the past like the suffragettes and the RAF strikers. There is very little information about people's experiences during hunger strikes and why they make the decision to go on a hunger strike. Hans Krikke did follow the hunger strike of white illegal men in The Hague, and wrote a book called '*Valstrik van de hoop*' about their journey.¹³ Schrover does mention the hunger strike of the 15 Turkish women, and explains the risks of the long hunger strike, such as becoming seriously ill, paranoid or comatose in which group pressure and paranoia could have led to a dramatic scenario of the women. She explains that the Amsterdam city council did not want to risk the women dying. She looked into the differences between migrant men and women.¹⁴ People could legalise their stay if they could prove they had worked in the Netherlands. This meant they had to have participated in the formal economy. Women frequently could not provide such proof. Schrover compares the Turkish women to the case of Zekeriya Gumus, a Turkish man who got deported despite a huge positive media campaign and large societal support, and whose wife and children were hardly visible in the campaign.¹⁵ In the case of the Turkish women, the emphasis on gender and motherhood in the press did help.¹⁶ Being a woman and a mother may lead to more sympathy among the audience and the officials that the hunger strike is addressed to. While hunger strikes might seem irrational or pathological, it is a

¹¹ Siméant, *Bodies in protest: hunger strikes and angry music*, 33-34.

¹² Sweeney, 'Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice', 434.

¹³ Hans Krikke, *De Valstrik van de Hoop: Witte Illegalen in Hongerstaking* (Amsterdam 1999).

¹⁴ Marlou Schrover, 'Why Make a Difference? Migration Policy and Making Differences Between Migrant Men and Women (The Netherlands 1945–2005)', in: Marlou Schrover and Eileen Yeo, *Gender, Migration, and the Public Sphere, 1850-2005* (PLAATS 2010) 76-96, 89-90.

¹⁵ "De Turkse Vrouwen Die in Hongerstaking Gingen Om Hun Rechten Terug Te Krijgen.", *Vice* 8-2-2022, 1. <https://www.vice.com/nl/article/akvn44/hongerstaking-turkse-vrouwen-illegaliteit>

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 89-90.

strategic way of using the body to communicate with the public, and bargain for political means with state actors.¹⁷ So far, there is little attention to women hunger strikes, and on the experiences of women, and how mothers go through a strike that might have devastating implications, such as death. The literature focusses on male experiences. This thesis will add to the literature by analysing the decision making before the strike, the motives and emotions before and during the strike and which factors might have led to the continuation of a hunger strike. It will centre the women's narratives, bodies and understanding to hunger striking, by focusing on the personal experiences.

Theory

Hunger strikers weaponise their bodies for a political cause. This protest method is sometimes compared to suicide terrorism since it deliberately leads to self-destruction. Both are subverting the avoidance of pain and the ideal of self-preservation.¹⁸ However, hunger strikes are less susceptible to racial and stereotypical interpretations than other forms of self-harming protests like suicides, or lip sewing, since hunger strikes are also associated with White protesters like the Irish nationalists or the British suffragettes. Nonetheless, hunger strikes are interpreted as a barbaric practice, because of its popularity amongst (political) prisoners and immigrants.¹⁹ While hunger strikers use a method of self-starvation to pressure political authorities, they do not try to incite a terror climate through the strikes. Hunger strikers try not to harm others, but rather themselves.²⁰ They are attacking their own bodies. According to Wilcox: 'Under conditions in which their worlds and subjectivities are being so

¹⁷ Kerry Mackereth, *Bodies at their Limits: Rethinking Political Violence Through Women's Hunger Strikes* (Cambridge, 2021) 1-200, 21-23.

¹⁸ Lauren B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence* (New York 2015), 81-83.

¹⁹ Shwaikh, 'Engendering hunger strikes: Palestinian women in Israeli prisons', 508.

²⁰ Karin M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice* 125 (Cambridge 2012), 84.

destroyed, hunger strikes are the only way of enacting self-government. By harming their own bodies, they attempt to exercise power over meaning. In trying to martyr themselves, they deny the presence of the sovereign and assert their own sovereignty over their bodies.’²¹ While hunger strikes are usually occurring in circumstances in which sovereignty is lost or curtailed, the strikes can be interpreted as a technique that of the ‘weak’ against the ‘strong’. Asylum seekers and prisoners have used this weapon.²²

During the period under study, there were in the Netherlands various ways for undocumented migrants to obtain a residence permit. I will analyse why the women were not able to get a residence permit and if and how their network has had an influence in the decision making of the hunger strike.

A hunger strike is defined here as: ‘*publicly depriving oneself of food to accompany a particular demand, against an adversary or an authority able to satisfy this proclaimed demand, and most often involving putting oneself in danger.*’²³ The women got legal and medical support from lawyers and doctors. The women also received a lot of support from locals and the press. There are few theoretical frameworks that help to understand this form of protest. Hunger strikes are mostly intersecting with political theories like civil disobedience and practices of resistance, in which the body is used. While these theories capture hunger strikes as a form of protest, it fails to capture the hunger striker as the subject of research. Therefore, this thesis will focus on the personal narratives of the women to foreground the experience of the hunger strike and the self-inflicted violence. It is expected that the similar goal of wanting to obtain a residence permit and the similar situation of the women in terms of motherhood and origin, have had an impact on the experiences of the

²¹ Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence*, 65.

²² Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 7.

²³ Siméant, *Bodies in protest: hunger strikes and angry music*, 15-16.

women. It is likely that the women supported each other throughout the strike, because all the women made it through the 39 days, without failure. In the analysis, I will look into how their personal situation, as well as the connections between them may have influenced the continuity of the hunger strike. The following sub-questions will be analysed; Did they discuss their strategy? Was there advice and support from lawyers, and Turkish and non-Turkish organisations? Why did they choose this action repertoire? And did they discuss the strike in terms of success and failure? Furthermore, there will be a focus on how the women spend their time and the hardships during the strike. The answers will be compared to look for patterns and similarities in the experiences of the women and whether this may have influenced how they experienced the strike. First, I expect that motherhood, and the children will have had an influence on how the women experienced the hunger strike, on why they are striking and on how it may have had an impact on their strike. Since the women have children, they probably felt responsibility towards their families. This will also be focused on during the analysis by analysing how many times the children and family are mentioned, and how important they were considered throughout the strike. Secondly, support is expected to have been important. This factor is intertwined with the first factor of gender and motherhood. The women were supported, because they were women and mothers, and because a women's hunger strike was a new phenomenon for the Netherlands. A third factor is political; it relates to the precedent principle and the mayor's commission, that was the outcome of the hunger strike. The precedent principle meant that others can claim a residence permit based on similarities with the hunger strikers. In a previous paper, I did a media analysis on the hunger strike. The solution offered to the women after the hunger strike was a mayor's commission to re-evaluate the cases of the women. I will discuss this later in more detail. This solution was new in the Netherlands

and it was not likely to be used as a precedent.²⁴ In what follows I will test which one of these possible explanations (gender, motherhood, support, and avoiding a precedent) carries the most weight.

Material and Method

This research seeks to answer the question what motivated women to participate in a hunger strike as a last attempt to obtain a residence permit. Through the knowledge gained by answering this question, it is also possible to gain insight into the life of some people who lived in the Netherlands without a residence permit, how a change in the law can affect the lives of families in the Netherlands, how people are willing to use their body as a means of protest and why these migrants were so persistent. Interviews are used as a research method, because it is possible to gather information that cannot be gathered through other methods. While it is possible to conduct research on the hunger strike through media coverage and based on the IND files, it is very difficult to use this data to investigate why the women chose a hunger strike as a means of protest and what happened before and during the hunger strike. By using the oral history method, researchers collect memories. Paul Thompson explains the benefits and pitfalls of oral history in *'Voice of the Past: Oral History'*. He explained how human memory can be impaired without being aware of it. In addition, some of the memory can be lost as time goes on. Moreover, he argues that questions about the past can be answered with the knowledge one has in the present. An individual story can therefore be refined, and aspects can be adopted from collective contemporary memory. It must be taken into account that the women were on a hunger strike, which can be seen as a very traumatic

²⁴ Tugba Kilinc, *An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands*, paper written for the class *History of Migration and Diversity* (part of the MA *Governance of Migration and Diversity*, Leiden University 2023)

experience. Because of this, some memories may not be optimal.²⁵ Also, it is possible that several memories may have been merged into new memory. When perceiving events, people are influenced by opinions, social position, or fatigue. Moreover, interviewees can be influenced by the researcher or the interview environment. These influences determine which memories are or are not recalled.²⁶ In the case of Oral History, it is common to say something about positionality. I know the respondents personally and Esra is my mother and M. is my father. Nadia Bouras also used Oral History as a method to her research, and had respondents she had personal ties with, such as her mother.²⁷ Personally knowing the interviewees can lead to a more complete narrative of the experiences, but can also have a downside because the interviewees assume the interviewers already knows (a lot) about the case. Interviewees might therefore be less forthcoming. I carefully checked the stories of my interviews against each other and against other sources such as media reports and archival material. Archival material and newspaper articles will be used and compared with interviews. The court case of Esra and M. is used to follow the proceedings and events with the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND).

I conducted four interviews with women who participated, out of the fifteen hunger strikers. During the interviews, questions on why they started and continued were asked, what their emotions and feelings were during the hunger strike, as well what happened afterwards. The profile of the hunger strikers who were interviewed is summarised in table 1.

Table 1: characteristics of the interviewed women

	Age now	Age then	Kids then	Kids now	married
Elif	57	33	4	4	yes
Esra	47	23	2	5	yes

²⁵ Paul Thompson, *The voice of the past: oral history*, (Oxford 2000).

²⁶ Jelle Hagen, *Vragen over vroeger: Handleiding voor het maken van Historische Interviews* (Utrecht 1998) 35-37.

²⁷ Nadia Bouras, *Het land van herkomst : perspectieven op verbondenheid met Marokko, 1960-2010* (Hilversum, 2012).

Sevilay	49	24	2	2	yes
Ayse	54	30	2	3	yes

The interviews were done separately, without each of them knowing what others had said.

Apart from the women, one man (the husband of Esra) was interviewed, to gain a better understanding of how the families, husbands in particular, experienced the hunger strike. Esra is the only hunger striker who did not receive her residence permit after the hunger strike.

The interviews with her husband will be indicated with his initial M.

An Overview of Illegality in the Netherlands

‘White Illegality’

According to Corrie van Eijl *illegal alien* is a twentieth-century invention in the Netherlands. Previously, *illegality* was not linked to migration but the term was used in connection with smuggling, gambling or other illegal activities. In her study of Dutch aliens policy between 1840 and 1940, she wrote that the legal position of aliens was first established in the Aliens Act of 1849. In this law, the term '*aliens*' was further defined together with the conditions under which the aliens would be admitted to the Netherlands. The aliens had to have 'sufficient means of subsistence' and possess a valid passport. The Aliens Act was an important step in the process of regulating migration. In practice, however, there was limited regulation in the second half of the nineteenth century. The term illegal changed meaning over time, leading to aliens without valid residence permits becoming illegal migrants. From the second half of the twentieth century, more and more policies were introduced to restrict migration.²⁸ Van Eijl distinguishes the postcolonial migration regime from 1945 to 1955, the guest worker regime from 1955 to 1975 and the asylum regime from the late 1980s to 2000. She distinguishes these periods because, on the one hand, the origin of the migrants and their reasons for coming to the Netherlands changed, but also because on the other hand policies related to migration changed considerably.²⁹ Immigration was encouraged in the 1960s because of the need for low-skilled labour. Part of the labour migrants travelled to the Netherlands on their own initiative, without the mediation of agencies or others. In case they found work and housing, they could get a work permit followed by a residence permit. When migrants did not get a residence permit, very little was done against them, as a rule. In addition to labour migrants, there was family migration. The dependent residence status was

²⁸ van Eijl, *Tussenland: Illegaal in Nederland, 1945-2000*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 20.

applicable to all family migrants that came to the Netherlands. If you had a family relation (spouse, child) to someone who was living in the Netherlands, you could be granted a residence permit. However, if the family ties ended within those three years (for instance because of divorce), the permit could be withdrawn. Restrictions on marriage migration were introduced because the assumption was that part of the marriages were sham marriages. The dependent residence status led to debates in the parliament. The issue started when after 1975, the guestworker era came to an end, and family migration increased. Part of the migrant women were assumed to be victims of the rules regarding dependent residence status, because they could not escape an abusive husband during the three year waiting period. This led to campaigns and a change in policy in 1983. Women had to be married for a minimum of two years, with one year of residence in the Netherlands, to apply for an independent permit.³⁰

In the 1990s, the government decided to take measures against these migrants residing illegally in the Netherlands. Laws were introduced to tackle illegal residence in the Netherlands. In November 1991 it became compulsory to link the social security number, the *sofi*-number, to a valid residence permit. Before this period, it was possible for migrants without resident status to apply for a *sofi*-number and use it to register in the population register. The migrants who did that were called the '*white illegals*', as their registration gave them a semi-legal status.³¹ With the introduction of the Linkage Act in 1998, the White Illegals' regulation ended, and it was no longer possible to legalise long-term residence and labour in the Netherlands by undocumented migrants.³²

³⁰ Marlou Schrover and Deirdre Moloney (ed), *Gender, Migration and categorisation: Making distinctions between migrants in Western countries (1900) 1945-2010* (Amsterdam 2013) 227-249.

³¹ Godfried Engbersen, 'De illegale vreemdeling', in: Jack Burgers and Godfried Engbersen eds., *De ongekende stad 1: Illegale vreemdelingen in Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 1999) 11 – 30, 16.

³² Tweede Kamer 1998, Handelingen 25 juni 1998, 25600-XI

Linkage Act

Via the Linkage Act public benefits were linked to having a residence permit. The Act was introduced in July 1998 and excluded foreigners without residence permits from welfare, health care or other social care. Since the ‘white illegals’ no longer had a social security number, employers could not formally employ them. It was expected that migrants who were not eligible for the residence permit would find it harder to survive and leave. Till 1998, if you had been working legally for more than six years, and had no criminal past, you could obtain a residence permit through pardons. Anyone who did not tick these boxes, was to be deported.³³ There were ‘white illegals’ who worked in the Netherlands for more than six years. However, they could not prove this because they either worked off the books, or did not have their paperwork in order. This led to a lot of disruption for the municipalities. They had to deal with a large group of foreigners without residence permits, who were in need of help. Local governments strongly spoke out against the Linkage Act, as they believed it was unworkable and immoral.³⁴ The Turkish tailor Zekeriya Gumus, mentioned above, became the most famous ‘white illegal’ of Amsterdam in 1997. Gumus had overwhelming public support. For years he had been working in Amsterdam, and even had his own tailor shop in Amsterdam’s Pijp. Gumus could not prove the requested number of years of legal work, and was deported despite a huge supportive media campaign. The case of the fifteen women who went on a hunger strike was weaker than the case of Gumus. Chances were therefore high that the women were to be deported. Gumus also had two small children who were attending school in the Netherlands, however in Gumus’ campaign, this was not highlighted, different from the case of the women’s strike.³⁵ Migration policies became more restrictive and there was more attention to the deportation of unwanted migrants. The creation of the IND in 1994,

³³ van Eijl, *Tussenland: Illegaal in Nederland, 1945-2000*, 151.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 157.

³⁵ Schrover, “*Why Make a Difference?*”, 88-89.

contributed on the increased restriction of migration.³⁶ During a debate in the Dutch Parliament in 1998, a motion was passed to find a solution for exceptional cases for ‘White Illegals’ such as Gumus; the use of discretionary power. The Dutch society also supported this solution. However, Secretary of State Job Cohen, from the Labour Party PvdA, had no intention to use this power. He was under the impression that the humaneness of a policy should be in the rules, and that his discretion should not be used for exceptions.³⁷ Discretion is a sensitive matter in the Netherlands, since through the precedent principle, exceptional cases can be used to make claims in to similar cases, and can lead to more people being eligible for a residence permit.

³⁶ Ibid, 185.

³⁷ Tweede Kamer 1998, Handelingen 25 juni 1998, 25600-XI

Method of Protest

Hunger Strike

Two months before the women's hunger strike, a group of 132 'white illegal' men had drawn attention to this problem in the St. Agnes Church in The Hague through a hunger strike. On 2 February 1999, state secretary of Justice Job Cohen of the PvdA decided that only thirteen of them would be given residence permits. Distraught and furious, fifteen women decided to take over from the men and went on a hunger strike too. On the same day that Cohen's decision was announced, they occupied the office of the ATKB on Mauritskade in Amsterdam. The women were of Turkish origin, the youngest of them was 23 years old, and the oldest 43. All of them were married, except for one woman who was divorced. All women were mothers, and some of them had babies they were breastfeeding. They started the hunger strike to get a residence permit for themselves and their families. Next to that, they also demanded a residence permit for other victims of the Linkage Act and an independent right of residence for women. During the strike, the women were wearing an orange headband with a black dot on it. The orange headband symbolised the Netherlands, and the black dot the Linkage Act. They wanted to wash the 'stain' away. The women were either taking care of the children, or working off the books and that put them outside of the pardon. There were also cases of women who had dependent residence permits, who obtained their permits through their husbands, and whose stay became illegal through divorce. Most of the children of the women were born in the Netherlands and were going to school. Throughout the strike, the women were assisted by the national committee of 'Geen Mens is Illegaal' (No Human is Illegal), the ATKB, and Nederland Bekent Kleur (The Netherlands Admits Color).³⁸ There were no proper facilities for the women during the strike. The building there

³⁸ Amsterdam City Archives, Collectie Archief van de Amsterdam Türkiyeli Kadýnlar Birlidi; Hongerstakende Vrouwelijke Witte Illegalen, 1511 inv.nr. 6.

were in was too small. In Amsterdam, there were around 250 white illegals. The city council did not want these people to join the hunger strike, and almost all political parties argued that something had to be done about the hunger strike. This was more complicated than expected. If in Amsterdam, residence permits would be granted to 'white illegals', other 'white illegals' from other cities could request a permit too because a precedent would have been set. The PvdA of Amsterdam urged the national branch of party to do something about the unacceptable consequences of the new Act. Job Cohen spoke out against the use of his discretion for exceptional cases, but he did use his discretion for thirteen people in the case of the 132 Moroccan men that went on a hunger strike. He did not use his discretion for the fifteen women. The women could count on a lot of support from the Dutch community. Volunteers helped out and there were also financial donations. The press was on the doorstep almost daily. Three confidential doctors closely monitored the women's health. During the day, the women sat on the low benches in a room at the ATKB, chatting with the press and politicians who came by. At night, hunger and weakness dominated. In the end, the women got no more than a promise that their cases would be reassessed. Mayor Schelto Patijn, from the Labour Party PvdA, came with the solution to start a mayor's commission (consisting of mayors of large towns in the Netherlands) that gave binding advice about the cases of the women. Since this was a unique phenomenon, the precedent principle could not be used, because one had to have been part of a hunger strike and be within the same circumstances. The mayors would reassess the cases of the 'white illegal' immigrants and give recommendations to Cohen. After more than five weeks, the women broke off their hunger strike - which was the condition set for the promised reassessment of the files. Fourteen of

the fifteen women were granted their residence permits. The strike ended on 9 March 1999 after 39 days.³⁹

³⁹ '1999 "Witte Illegale" vrouwen in hongerstaking - stadsarchief amsterdam', *Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief* <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/themasites/amsterdam-migratiestad/1999-'witte-illegale'-vrouwen/> [visited 29 mei 2023].

Experiences during the Hunger Strike

Respondents' profile

Elif came to the Netherlands in 1993 and her husband was there already for nine years. Her husband used to work legally for a tailor but later got a WAO invalidity benefit. They could not prove they had worked in the Netherlands for six years.⁴⁰

Esra's husband came to the Netherlands in 1991. She followed two years later. Her husband always worked till 1997: five years legally, and one year off the books. In 1997 he got fired because he did not have a residence permit.⁴¹

Sevilay came to the Netherlands 10 years before the strike. Before that, she lived with her parents in Austria. Her husband was already in the Netherlands for twelve years. He worked legally for three years, and eight years off the books and still had a job during the strike.⁴²

Ayse's husband was in the Netherlands for eleven years. She was in the Netherlands for seven years. Her husband worked legally for two years and was an owner of a company for 1,5 years. She worked two years off the books.⁴³

None of the women could provide the proof for 6 years legal work that was needed to obtain a residence permit.

Start

⁴⁰ Amsterdam City Archives (further ACA), Collectie Archief van de Amsterdam Türkiyeli Kadýnlar Birlidi; Hongerstakinge Vrouwelijke Witte Illegalen (further CAATKB), 1511 inv.nr. 25. Tot het uiterste, 13 March 1999, 9.

⁴¹ ACA, CAATKB, 1511 inv.nr. 25. Tot het uiterste, 13 March 1999, 8.

⁴² ACA, CAATKB, 1511 inv.nr. 25. Tot het uiterste, 13 March 1999, 9.

⁴³ ACA, CAATKB, 1511 inv.nr. 25. Tot het uiterste, 13 March 1999, 8.

On 2 February 1999, the women occupied the office of the ATKB, on the very same day that the announcement was made that only thirteen of the 132 men that went on a hunger strike got their residence permits.⁴⁴ Was this an ad hoc decision, or did the women plan the hunger strike as a last resort? Did they discuss other protest methods. Elif explains that the hunger strike was her idea. However, there was some process before that, as Ayse also explains. Both women knew each other before, and were the brains behind the strike.

‘The hunger strike was my idea. With the 1998 Linkage Act, there were restrictions on our work, we couldn't work. Our child allowances were cut. Even though everything was official. You can stay here, but you can't work. How could we live without an income? In the meantime, I started looking for solutions. Then my husband said, there is an association, people are trying to find solutions. So I went with my husband, and then there were meetings for days there. We had meetings 2-3 times a day. One evening at a meeting I said I want to go on a hunger strike.’⁴⁵

Ayse confirmed what Elif told during the interview; they worked together when it came to organizing the hunger strike. The two of them went to meetings since the pressure was getting higher when it comes to being deported. Did they get any help from professionals? Did they research the risks? Did they discuss how long it would take? It does not seem so. They were going to meetings to discuss what solutions there were, but they did not discuss the idea of a hunger strike thoroughly. Elif proposed the idea, but during the meeting they were opposed to the idea.

⁴⁴ Schrover, *‘Why Make a Difference?’*, 89-90.

⁴⁵ Elif, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 1.

‘Everyone looked amazed. They said, how can you want that? You have a small baby. I said that I wanted to. Instead of me and my children being hungry at home, let me go on a hunger strike myself. A friend and her husband, my friend Ayse, and the associations that were helping us, we started looking for places where we could do it. We talked to some places. Some conditions didn't fit.’⁴⁶

The women could not find a place that agreed to having them stay there during a hunger strike. They tried churches like the Moroccan men, but with no success. Also, the ATKB, the association where the hunger strike took place, did not want the women there. They literally occupied the office according to a plan.

‘While we were researching what we could do to make our voices heard in this country, the idea of a hunger strike came up and I decided to participate.’⁴⁷ Which was Elif’s idea, who brought it up during one of the meetings. ‘There were many women like me who attended the meetings, we decided to do it together. And we occupied the association where we attended the meetings one day and started there with the strike. Of course, the association where we went to this meeting was very opposed to the idea. No, you can’t stay, you can’t succeed, get out of here. They said a lot of things, they tried to get us out, but we were determined to make our voices heard.’⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Elif, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Since the idea was opposed to, everything went pretty much secretive beforehand, when it was decided that the women would do the hunger strike at ATKB.

‘And finally, my friend Ayse and her husband, and my husband and I decided to do it at ATKB. We decided to do it there. But it had to stay a secret. We gathered at a friend's house with people who didn't have a residence permit like us, who were in the association, or who wanted to participate, that we were going to have a hunger strike. We announced the date and time. Nobody knew where it was going to be held except me and my friend and our husbands.⁴⁹

Since they announced the day and time beforehand, it was a coincidence that the strike started on 2 February, on the day that Cohen announced that only thirteen of the 132 men in the Hague got their residence permit. It was not an ad hoc decision or reaction on that decision. Ayse and Elif had a meeting at the ATKB that evening. The building of the ATKB has two doors. Ayse opened one door, and Elif the other. The other thirteen women went inside, and Ayse and Elif announced that the hunger strike has started. Some panicked, and said ‘no, let's not do it now’. However, Ayse and Elif were determined, and the e-mails were sent that the hunger strike had started for the fifteen women.⁵⁰ Ayse and Elif in a way prepared themselves towards the hunger strike. How did it go for the other women who were not active during the meetings?

⁴⁹ Elif, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Esra and Sevilay were the youngest between the strikers. They were only 23 and 24 years old and had two children each.⁵¹ Obviously, both women went on a hunger strike to obtain a residence permit for themselves and their families, but why would one decide to join such an extreme method of protest, while being young and having children?

Sevilay was of Turkish descent, but grew up in Austria. Sevilay seems a bit more hesitant during the interviews. She does not want to share too many details about her past. She fled to her sister in the Netherlands at the age of 14. She had a difficult time at her parents' house because of her father. She got married in the Netherlands at the age of 16. In her case, if she would get deported, she would have to go to Turkey with her husband, while her family was in Austria and the Netherlands. It seems like there is some sort of desperateness and the hunger strike seems like a last resort. Sevilay knew one person who was going to go on the strike. Through that one friend she got to join the strike. No prior meetings or something else happened before.⁵² Same goes for Esra. There was one person that she knew prior to the strike. It was somehow an abrupt decision, without being aware of what was awaiting them. None of them discussed how long it would take. None of them discussed what the consequences could be. They all have children, and left the children with their husband and families and started a hunger strike out of desperation, since even a great media attention of Gumus got him deported.

‘Anyway, we thought it wouldn't last that long, it would be short, I'm young, I'll stay here, it will be two weeks at most. I've never participated in a strike or a protest

⁵¹ ACA, CAATKB, 1511 inv.nr. 25. Tot het uiterste, 13 March 1999, 8-9.

⁵² Sevilay, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 3.

before. I never thought it would last that long. I never thought about it. I started with an excitement, a hope.’⁵³

None of the women had prior protest or strike experience. It was their first time. The husbands were worried about the women. Also M. was worried. He explains that he did propose that maybe the men should go on a hunger strike, since it is a pretty extreme form of protesting, and the women have no experience with striking or media attention. However, it is expected that the success rate will increase when it is about women. Therefore, the women are aware of the fact that their gender and motherhood, will probably give them a favorable factor.

‘The men actually said we should go in. They said no. They said women would be more effective because they were women. In the Netherlands, the queen was a woman. They thought that she would not allow it. Unfortunately, it continued until 39 days.’⁵⁴

Still, there is no proper preparation. The women do not know what is awaiting them. And, there is going to be lots of media attention. And the hunger strike starts.⁵⁵

The first weeks

⁵³ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

⁵⁴ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

⁵⁵ Elif, Esra, Sevilay and Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendices.

Since the women started the hunger strike with no prior research or investigation about the risks and without discussing important things such as duration, it is interesting to look at how they have experienced the first weeks. Were there any regrets?

‘The first days of the hunger strike, of course the feeling of hunger disappears after a few days, then the weakness started, then day by day, more and more weakness.’⁵⁶

‘It was hard at first, but after two weeks the stomach and body seemed to sleep for a certain period of time. After 15 days I did not miss the food, I did not have any power.’⁵⁷

‘The first days of the hunger strike were very difficult. We were hungry for the first time. We did not eat anything, only tea was allowed. We were hungry. We could not take a bath. We did not know the ladies before. TV people, journalists, press people were coming all the time. They told us to stop. It was very busy.’⁵⁸

The first days seems like a period where the women had to get used to the situation, both mentally and physically. The first days it is much about adapting to the situation, the feeling of hunger is more overwhelming, but eventually it seems to disappear which will be elaborated on in the next section. The first weeks of the media coverage were also rather informative. The content was mostly about the Linkage Act, how people ended up in illegality, the office the women were hunger striking, the poor facilities, and of course some

⁵⁶ Elif, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 1.

⁵⁷ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

⁵⁸ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

background information on who the women, and mothers, were.⁵⁹ The women were married, and were greatly supported by their husbands. All of their husbands did check with the women whether they were sure about the hunger strike and if they wanted to participate. They all decided on their own will to do the strike. The husbands were involved and joined meetings, they were frequently in touch with mayor Patijn, and organise protests outside.⁶⁰ The families were not aware about the strike except for the husbands. Sevilay is not in contact with her family. Esra lied to her parents in frequent phone calls about cleaning the house, watching television and dealing with the children. Elif and Ayse's families find out later on during the strike. Ayse's family saw them on Turkish news channels, and begged her to stop, but they were all determined and decided to go on. What is interesting is that none of them questioned their motherhood upon starting the hunger strike. The women were intrinsically motivated because they had children, and wanted to build a future for them in the Netherlands, but this could have ended fatally for them. The children were taken care of by the husbands and other friends and family, and played an important role in the mental state of the women.

During

Although the situation of the women was not desirable in the authorities of the city of Amsterdam, they still get a lot of support, from the press, but also from politicians. The mayor of Amsterdam, Schelto Patijn, is also involved and checks up on the women often. All the women were very satisfied with how involved he was. His name is mentioned often by the women during the interviews, and all are pleased in the way he talked to the women,

⁵⁹ Tugba Kilinc, An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands, paper written for the class History of Migration and Diversity (part of the MA Governance of Migration and Diversity, Leiden University 2023

⁶⁰ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

which can confirm his sincerity. Patijn was not happy with the hunger strike in his city. Obviously, he did not want any fatal case in his city during a hunger strike, so he tried everything to stop the women from striking. However, nothing could really convince the women.

‘Patijn and his wife came to visit us during the hunger strike. He was very sensitive. He cared about us a lot.’⁶¹

‘I was very happy with the people who came by, the press, Patijn. They were very interested.’⁶²

His wife would come by to speak with the women, and he himself would try to relate to the women too, by comparing them to his daughter, and that he sees the women as his daughters too.

‘Burgemeester Patijn was very concerned about our lives. One day he came to me and said I have a daughter, you are my daughter, don’t do it, stop the hunger strike. I said to him, what would you do if your daughter and children sat at home hungry, unable to pay the rent, worried that they could be evicted? He couldn't say anything, but he was very worried about us.’⁶³

⁶¹ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

⁶² Sevilay, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 3.

⁶³ Elif, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 1.

In a way you could also see this as an attempt to convince the women by inviting his wife, and trying to relate to the women in a way by comparing them to his family. However, all women insisted that they were determined and would not stop until a solution was given to them. Since the women were not going to stop, Patijn made sure the circumstances got better.

‘He made us take a bath; we were so dirty. He made sure we have air conditioning. He was very involved in the room we slept in, and thought with us. He realised that we would not quit, we were determined, and he helped us so that our health would not deteriorate in the room we were staying.’⁶⁴

Esra’s husband also speaks fondly of Patijn. He remained involved also outside of the ATKB.

‘In this process, we are constantly in meetings with Patijn, there are meetings. He said ‘I support this situation endlessly, but I cannot do anything about it, and this situation of the women makes me sad. This is happening in my city. This situation makes me very sad.’ Of course, he did not want people to be deported. Patijn said, ‘at the protests, you people are walking on the streets with 200 or 250 people’. He said ‘take thousands of people to the streets’. Patijn supported us there and said that we need to bring thousands of people to the streets, both the ministry and the state should hear you, because they do not hear, they do not understand, they blocked their ears.’⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

⁶⁵ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

Patijn tried to convince the husbands to make their wives stop the hunger strike. He also offered money. However, the women were determined, and also the husbands had no intention of leaving, mostly for the sake of their children. Therefore, attempts by Patijn to stop the hunger strike, despite his support, were unsuccessful.⁶⁶

Not only Patijn, but also volunteers, politicians and the press were involved. The women had five legal advisors, five lawyers and also interpreters who helped them talk to the press.⁶⁷ The women had some sort of routine. They talked to the press. They are lying on the mattress throughout the day to save their energy to be able to talk to them. The women were also supported by doctors, who checked up on their blood pressure daily, but who also explain to them that after 40 days of a hunger strike, it gets dangerous, and encourages them to stop. As long as the person is capable of making their own decisions and judgement, medics cannot force-feed strikers, only explain them about the consequences of refusing food.⁶⁸ Although, the doctors were also troubled since they had to deal with women who were determined to continue the strike if no solution was offered. Regularly, the doctors have told the media about their concerns, that the women's health was deteriorating, and that they will do everything to not let them die, while at the same time they need to respect the women's decisions and judgement.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Tugba Kilinc, *An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands*, paper written for the class *History of Migration and Diversity* (part of the MA *Governance of Migration and Diversity*, Leiden University 2023

⁶⁸ J.K. Gevers, 'Assistance in hunger strikes: legal guidelines', *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* 144 (Amsterdam 2000) 1008–1011.

⁶⁹ Tugba Kilinc, *An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands*, paper written for the class *History of Migration and Diversity* (part of the MA *Governance of Migration and Diversity*, Leiden University 2023

‘I made my position clear to the women from the beginning. They accepted that. There is no agreement, but I prevent casualties. If I feel a woman is dying, I will not hesitate to call an ambulance. Unlike the others, I will try to assert my authority.’⁷⁰

One of their friends got very sick and was hospitalised. However, she returned to their friends and refused the IV at the hospital. The group solidarity was strong, but the friend reminded the women of the consequences the strike might have on their health.

Struggles

Ayse, Elif, Esra and Sevilay all explain that they were very weak. Sevilay even was shaking and had a lot of muscle pain, which scared her a lot that she could get very sick. Esra saw that her friends started to look very pale, and that they had dark circles under her eyes. She checked up on herself to see that she looked exactly like that.

‘What if I get a handicap? What If I die? We haven't eaten for days.’⁷¹

Ayse was even left with kidney problems after the strike. Besides hunger and health, the women are mostly worried about their mental state and the uncertainty of the strike. Since

⁷⁰ Original text in Dutch: 'Ik heb de vrouwen vanaf het begin mijn standpunt duidelijk gemaakt. Dat hebben ze geaccepteerd. Er is geen afspraak, maar ik voorkom dat er slachtoffers vallen. Als ik het gevoel heb dat een vrouw doodgaat, zal ik niet aarzelen een ambulance te bellen. Ten opzichte van de anderen zal ik proberen mijn autoriteit te laten gelden. Volkskrant, 6 March 1999.

⁷¹ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

they did not discuss anything beforehand about the duration, or a certain strategy, they only have a lot of people and press they are talking to, but till when?

‘You're in a closed building. You can't go outside. You can't even walk around the park and swing your child on a swing. It's always the same faces inside that building, get up, sit down, lie down. You're weak, you're powerless, you have nothing to do. You're between four walls. A friend of ours was crying a lot, I'm crying too. You're on a path now, there's no way out. You're adapting. I didn't look out of the window much. People who pass by on bicycles, those who walk, those who take their car or the tram, we can't do that. We are both helpless and in a closed building.’⁷²

The desperate situation of the women and the uncertainty of the strike is what seems to be bothering the women of the most. Whenever the question is asked, what did you struggle the most with during the hunger strike? It is not the hunger, it is not the weakness, or the chance to get sick, it is the uncertainty of the strike. Are they going through this for nothing. Because even after three weeks, there was still nothing said about the women's cases, or any solution given by Cohen. The uncertainty was their biggest struggle. It was true that the women were dealing with uncertainty. Even Patijn was honest, and told media outlets about how desperate he was, with quotes of him such as; *'I don't know what to do anymore. I am getting zero response everywhere.'*⁷³ Patijn did not have an answer or solution, therefore, the women were

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Tugba Kilinc, An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands, paper written for the class History of Migration and Diversity (part of the MA Governance of Migration and Diversity, Leiden University 2023

also without any news about any solution for their case. But how do they cope with these struggles? There is hunger, there is weakness, there is uncertainty and there is no plan.

‘We ask and answer each other questions and go to sleep, but believe me when I say that I couldn’t remember my dreams. I wake up in the morning and there’s no cure. In the evenings we’d tell each other our birth dates, we’d talk about ourselves, we’d talk about food and recipes.’⁷⁴

The women are all from different regions of Turkey, so they have knowledge of different traditions and recipes. During their free time they would share a lot of recipes with each other. They would write it down. They would share stories about awkward situations they were in. In time the women become very close friends. What is interesting, is that they would share their birth dates in the evening before sleeping, like a coping mechanism, just in case they are deteriorating that much that they would forget their birthdays.

‘If the children don't come in the evening, if we don't talk to each other, both our body and brain stops working.’⁷⁵

The women are also aware that, since their bodies are very weak, they need to be strong mentally. In the mornings it is the press and after that they are constantly talking with each other about anything. They are, for instance, sharing stories about their first awkward meeting

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

with their in-laws. One of the women talked about her first kiss, which was not with her current husband. They talked about very intimate stuff, to keep their minds alive. However, their favourite thing during the strike, was the visiting hours where they got to see their children. Therefore, they were building up their energies to be at their best when they were with the children. As if it gave them the boost they needed to get through the strike. Most of the times, hunger strikes happen in circumstances of isolation, like a prisoner, or someone who had a very traumatic experience, like a refugee or asylum seeker. In this case, the women did feel a lot of pressure – the pressure of deportation - but they did the strike in solidarity with fourteen other women, and mothers. And their families got to be part of it, during their visiting hours in the evenings. During the interviews, the children were at the forefront when it comes to the strike.

‘I missed my children the most.’⁷⁶

‘What are the little ones doing? We looked forward to the evening. Hugging them gave us strength.’⁷⁷

The support of the husbands, and of the children were important during the strike. Seeing them, having something to look forward to in times of uncertainty and physical weakness, gave them strength. Some of their children were young enough to not understand what was going on, some understood that their mother was not coming home. While the children would also question them when they were coming home, they were also supporting them through gifts, such as paintings, that they could keep with them.

⁷⁶ Sevilay, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 3.

⁷⁷ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

‘Our husbands brought our clothes to our house and back. During our visiting hours, our children and husbands would come. We would chat, hug and sit and they would ask us when we would come back home. We missed our children and our homes very much. Our children were painting for us. They brought gifts, small meaningful gifts, pictures and so on.’⁷⁸

In the meantime, the husbands are also worried about the women. It is both the health of the women, as well as the uncertainty that scares M. too.

‘Because two weeks, two weeks became four weeks. The days are getting longer. These people are hungry. It's getting very bad. All the time. We're having a meeting with the mayor. There's pressure to stop it. Stop this hunger strike. Now so much time has already passed by. How can we stop it with nothing in our hands? Without a solution? If we ask the women, the women won't accept it anyway. They went for a purpose. They starved for a month. The result is nothing. Nothing. Nothing at all. As the days went by, the husbands, children and supporters of the women inside, of course, were constantly protesting outside.’⁷⁹

But as time went on, the women still did not get to hear anything from the politicians. They were a month into the hunger strike, and a 40-day risk limit was approaching. Also, during

⁷⁸ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

⁷⁹ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

the meetings with their children, the women could feel the physical impact of the strike growing.

‘I was 23 years old, 66 kilos and 1.72 meters tall. On the 33rd day, my youngest daughter came. How much does a 2,5-year-old weigh? How much can she weigh? She ran to me, hugged me. I picked her up and immediately put her on the table. I was afraid she would fall. That's when I was scared the most, when I couldn't hold my daughter.’⁸⁰

It was only on 8 March 1999, when the women got something to look forward to. On international women's day a group of women representatives from nine countries visit the women. Only after 35 days, the women got hope for the first time, because the ombudsvrouw (a female ombudsman) visited the women. An ombudsperson represents you when you have a complaint about the government or an organisation. He or she investigates the complaint and makes a statement about it.

‘She gave us information. She listened to us, talked to us. She said she would look at our files, examine them, and right there, there was a light for us. We were very happy. She was the first official to come to us with such an opinion. Something was going to happen. We were happy. Finally, someone had heard our voice.’⁸¹

⁸⁰ Esra, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 2.

⁸¹ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

It had been a long time, but finally someone was there to give more clearance to the situation. Since the pressure was growing, also for officials in Amsterdam, and the 40 days were approaching, something had to be done. The 132 men in the Hague gave up after two weeks, but it was 35 days and the women were still determined to go on. Mentally they were strong, and had massive support from outside as well as between each other, completely unaware of the devastating effect the strike could have. Therefore, Mayor Patijn had been lobbying with Cohen and other mayors from big cities, and came with the solution to reassess the cases of the white illegal immigrants and give recommendations to Cohen.

‘She (ombudsvrouw) asked when we arrived, about our families. How we lived. She asked if we had official papers. She was really interested in us. And she said she would look at our cases. She took care of us one by one. And in the end, they analyzed our files, and they gave us an application, according to Witte Illegaal regulation. They had certain conditions. They gave the residence permit to those who met those conditions.’

However, the lobbying of Patijn did not go as smoothly in the beginning. Perhaps, the media coverage also put on some weight to the lobby of Patijn. Media coverage was incredibly serious about the hunger strike. Newspapers mentioned that a woman could die any moment and mostly used pictures and title, where motherhood and the children were at the forefront. While the government could be under the impression that the hunger strike was some sort of way to blackmail them into granting people a residence permit, newspapers covered that after 32 days, blackmail could not be the case anymore.⁸²

⁸² Tugba Kilinc, An Orange Headband with a Black Dot: The Resistance of White Illegal Turkish Women in the Netherlands, paper written for the class History of Migration and Diversity (part of the MA Governance of Migration and Diversity, Leiden University 2023

‘ATKB spokeswoman Can is not satisfied with the conversation with the mayor.

Patijn always says that he understands us, but cannot do anything because he has no decision-making power. But we think he can exert pressure. On Cohen, for example, on his party in the House of Representatives. The hunger-striking women demand that the national PvdA, following the example of the capital city PvdA, pleads for a general pardon for all 'white illegals' who stay in the Netherlands for more than three years. We will not stop the hunger strike until we have clarity about our fate.’⁸³

Eventually, Patijn was able to lobby for a solution with Cohen, and the women indeed only stopped the hunger strike when they had more clarity. After the women were presented a solution, and the promise that their cases would be reassessed, they decided to end the strike on 9 March 1999. According to the Witte Illegaal regulation, fourteen out of the fifteen women got their residence permit, a year after the hunger strike. Only Esra, did not receive her residence permit. Eventually, it could be considered a successful strike, since the women would be deported if they would not use this method of protest, and hold on for 39 days.

Looking Back

All the women who participated are still in touch with each other, except for one. They got very close since they shared a lot of stories and memories with each other. Elif and Esra are best friends. Esra and Sevilay used to sleep next to each other and were the youngest. The

⁸³ Original text in Dutch: ‘Woordvoester Can van de ATKB is niet tevreden over het gesprek met de burgemeester. Patijn zegt telkens dat hij ons begrijpt, maar niets kan doen omdat hij geen beslissingsbevoegdheid heeft. Maar wij vinden dat hij wel degelijk druk kan uitoefenen. Op bijvoorbeeld Cohen, op zijn partij in de Tweede Kamer. De hongerstakingende vrouwen eisen dat de landelijke PvdA, in navolging van de hoofdstedelijke PvdA, pleit voor een generaal pardon voor alle 'witte illegalen' die langer dan drie jaar in Nederland verblijven. We zullen niet stoppen met de hongerstaking voordat we duidelijkheid hebben over ons lot.’ *Telegraaf*, 11 February 1999.

women have a group chat on Whatsapp, and talk daily, and meet every month of two. Some of their children got married, and some of beame parents themselves. All the women are still in the Netherlands. Also Esra, who did not receive her residence permit right after the hunger strike. Esra had to live without a permit for nine more years, and only got her residence permit in 2008 together with M. and children. She had one more son by the time. Her oldest daughter was 14, her middle child 12, and her son was 7 years old. Esra had a stronger case than the other women, however she did not get her permit after the mayor's binding advice to Cohen. The reason they gave Esra and her family was that Esra's husband, M., was deported in 1996. Esra was married to M. then, and at the time had one child. She stayed here, while M. was sent to Turkey. One day during a police raid at work, they took him, and sent him away that day, without sending Esra and the child with him. What is interesting, is that M. had an application for a residence permit then already in Amsterdam. He explains that the police deported him unjustified.

'Of course, they are taking my statement. The police said, "What are you doing in Amsterdam? How, I said? He said, what do you have with the Amsterdam police and the foreigners' police there? Of course, they see it in the computer. They see Esra and Tugçe. I cannot talk about them. I cannot say I have a wife, I have a child here. They will take them too. I said I have an application, for a residence permit. When you make an application, they cannot deport you before you receive the answer. They have no such right. I have to wait until the result of the application. He deported me, but he also realised this. He is sending me away. He knows that I have a child and a wife here. Because he said, "I am sending you today. If you can come back tomorrow, come back. I give you the right of entry. I don't put a red stamp on your passport. He said he was

not going to register my name. He said come back tomorrow if you can. And that is because he saw Tugçe and my wife there. Now they used this as an excuse.’⁸⁴

M. comes back after this, and when he comes back, his second child was born. M. is very emotional during this particular part of the interview. Throughout the interview he also says:

‘The more you talk about those things, the more you remember them. You relive it, you relive it again, it is so ingrained in our subconscious that we cannot forget it.’⁸⁵

M. explains that the experiences were so traumatic, that instead of forgetting it, in his case he is reliving it. M. claims that he was deported unjustly, and that was the reason for them not getting the residence permit as the only family from the hunger strike. However, there was another woman at the hunger strike, who had a similar case as the family of Esra. She also had a deportation case, but she did get her residence permit. While Esra’s case was one of the stronger ones, in terms of amount of time residing in the Netherlands, children born and raised there, she was chosen as a victim. And then, M. tells about this particular factor. He said that they knew beforehand that out of the fifteen women they will choose as a victim. They will not grant a residence permit to everyone. Now, the government did not explain this directly to the hunger strikers or the husbands, but the people from the ATKB knew this from meetings with organisations like ‘Geen Mens is Illegaal’ and ‘Stichting Nederland Bekent Kleur’. And the reason is exactly the precedent principle. ATKB prepared the strikers by explaining that the government wanted to prevent that everyone would go on a hunger strike

⁸⁴ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

if it would have a hundred percent success rate. They need a failing case, for them to show that particular case as an example to not grant a residence permit to others in similar cases. And that victim happened to be the family of Esra. Therefore, it did not matter how strong her case was in relation to the other hunger strikers. They took one particular factor and used that against her. Therefore, it always remained somewhat vague for the family why they were the only ones who had to wait till 2008 to get a residence permit.⁸⁶ The interesting part is that one of the aims of the Linkage Act was to discourage illegal residence in the Netherlands by depriving them of social rights. In the case of the respondents for this thesis, discouraging illegal residence cannot be called a success as the women immediately resisted to stay in the Netherlands. Also, in the case of Esra, who had to live as a white illegal for nine more years with her three children. She had to deal with the IND every year, but she insisted on staying as her children also grew up in the Netherlands.

‘You can't take your children on a holiday. You can hardly make a living. These are all negative things. You can't move freely, you are afraid of the police. It was like an open-air prison. The Netherlands was the country of my children, their country. They were born here. My children have no connection with my country, my motherland, their father was born and raised only in that country. But my children were born and raised in this country. It was not easy to take them to a country they did not know at that age. It was not easy at all. We never thought about it. Yes, today was very hard to achieve, but I'm glad we stayed.’⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

On 23 March 2001, the IND wrote to the Chief of Police of Amsterdam to issue an order to deport Esra and her family. However, Esra kept on appealing to reassess her case.⁸⁸ Job Cohen, who was the Secretary of State during the hunger strike, became the Mayor of Amsterdam after Schelto Patijn. Cohen, who was first very hesitant in finding a solution for the women and reassessing the cases of the ‘white illegals’, became very much involved with Esra and her family as a mayor. Esra was living in Amsterdam with her family at the time. He wrote two letters as the mayor to the IND about an integrated family from Amsterdam, in order to help Esra get her residence permit. He could have used his discretionary power, and help her in the first place as the Secretary. However, he did not and chose to use his function when he became the mayor. M. also noticed the change in behaviour of Cohen, when he was the State Secretary, and when he became the mayor.

‘In our last court case, Cohen was the mayor. He was the minister when the women were on a hunger strike. At that time, the person who did not give us a residence permit was the minister, then he became the mayor of Amsterdam and wrote a letter to the court. He said, "I am behind this family" and demanded that the family be granted a residence permit. He supported us. He didn't give it to us then. In the end, of course, he corrected his mistake.’⁸⁹

The first letter that Cohen sent to the head of the IND was on 4 June 2003. He expressed the importance of minor children living long-term in the Netherlands, and that a residence permit should still be considered in such circumstances. The request was rejected by the IND. On 18

⁸⁸ Rechtbank ‘s-Gravenhage, *ECLI:NL:RBSGR:2008:BD9304, De Rechtspraak* (2008) <https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/#!/details?id=ECLI:NL:RBSGR:2008:BD9304>, accessed 4 June 2023.

⁸⁹ M., Amsterdam 2 July 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 5.

July 2007, Cohen, in a letter addressed to the State Secretary of Justice in person, requested that the family should still be considered for a residence permit. In that letter, he mentioned that Esra was the only one of a group of fifteen Turkish women who over six years ago, through a hunger strike in Amsterdam, called attention to their position as women who had been denied residence permits. Furthermore, the mayor pointed out that the family was fully integrated, that the children were born and raised in Amsterdam and that the family should not be expected to be able to resettle in Turkey. In a letter of 28 August 2007, the head of IND responded to the letter negatively on behalf of the State Secretary.⁹⁰ A year later, in August 2008, Esra's family get to know that they get a residence permit, after nine years of waiting.

The women consider the hunger strike as successful. None of the respondents regretted joining the strike. The respondents also did not have a serious injury or illness after the strike, except for Ayse, who needed a kidney treatment for a year. Still, they express that they are glad they went on the strike. They have fourteen life friends now, and live a happy life in the Netherlands. After the strike, before the women heard that they got their residence permit, they were sent to Dutch language classes and an integration course by mayor Patijn. No matter what the result would be, he wanted the women to learn Dutch culture and language properly. He also invited them to the municipality. Elif stayed in touch with Patijn years after the strike, which made her believe that he was genuine in his speech and involvement with the women during the strike.

'I never regretted going on hunger strike. I'm glad I did it. It was for me and my family and I succeeded. Life is full of coincidences. Everything that you have to live, will be

⁹⁰ Rechtbank 's-Gravenhage, *ECLI:NL:RBSGR:2008:BD9304, De Rechtspraak* (2008) <https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/#!/details?id=ECLI:NL:RBSGR:2008:BD9304>, accessed 4 June 2023.

lived. No one can write their own destiny.’⁹¹

Newspaper the *Gelderlander* covers the end of the strike with the following story:

‘They feel many things. Fatigue, joy, and hunger of course, but at the same time they are beaming with energy, they are used to hunger, and they are also angry and sad. They are also pleased with the support from the country, from the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV), Christian National Trade Union (CNV), Trade union federation for Professionals (MHP), the Council of Churches, the Socialist Party (SP) and the women's organizations of GroenLinks and PvdA.’⁹²

Looking at the successful ending of the result, without casualties and major happenings, it seems like the women did write their own destiny by boldly deciding to use this specific method of protest, and supporting each other throughout.

⁹¹ Ayse, Amsterdam 7 April 2023, Tugba Kilinc, Appendix 4.

⁹² Original text in Dutch: ‘Ze voelen veel dingen. Moeheid, blijdschap, en honger natuurlijk, maar tegelijkertijd stralen ze van energie, zijn ze de honger gewend en zijn ze ook boos en verdrietig. Blij zijn ze ook met de steun uit den lande, van FNV, CNV, MHP, de Raad van Kerken, SP en de vrouwenorganisaties van GroenLinks en PvdA.’ *De Gelderlander*, 16 March 1999.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Linkage Act was meant to put an end on undocumented migrants settling and working in the Netherlands. Everyone who was not eligible for a residence permit, was going to be deported. The pressure was increasing, as the women received letters from the IND and the police that they had to get back to their own country. They were also without any income or social benefits since the new law. When it comes to the research question: *'How and why did the fifteen Turkish women decide to go on a hunger strike and use it as a method of protest?'* The aim of this thesis was to understand women's experiences during the hunger strike and why and which factors led to the continuation of the strike. The women did not particularly discuss a strategy. They did know that they had to come up with a bold solution that would put pressure on the government. Since a previous media campaign of Gumus failed, it had to be a different type of action repertoire. Elif proposed the idea of a hunger strike, and fourteen other women followed her in this decision. The husbands of the women did propose to do the hunger strike instead of the women, but the women were also aware that their gender and motherhood would have a benefitting factor. They were under the impression that in a country where human rights are protected, they would not let mothers go on a hunger strike. A previous strike with Moroccan men also did not end up successfully. With that, the women went for the strike, and they did not discuss the length or the risks that a hunger strike could have, and started completely unprepared with the impression that it will not take that long. Eventually, it was a lengthy hunger strike, with great health risks that the women did not discuss beforehand. However, it is exactly the gender and motherhood factor, that helped them get through the uncertainty and length of the strike. The women had immense support from politicians, volunteers and press, with mayor Patijn being very supportive and involved throughout the strike to both the women and their families. The women had a structure, with doctors checking up on them, conversations with the press and

politicians, and timeslots in the evenings that they were longing for, in which their children would visit them. The women describe that them being mothers, and being able to see their children in the evening, helped them get through the days, and forgetting about the hunger. In the women's cases, a great bond and solidarity developed between them, and the conversations they had, had a positive influence on their mental state.

The strike ended after 39 days with a promise to get the women's cases re-evaluated by a so-called mayor's commission. Patijn, together with mayors from other cities, would give State Secretary Cohen binding advice on the cases. This was a new solution for the Netherlands, and different from previous solutions for undocumented migrants like pardons. Therefore, people with similar cases as the women, would not be eligible to use the precedent principle to get their cases re-evaluated too. Fourteen out of the fifteen women got their residence permit within a year after the hunger strike, except for Esra. Esra and her family never got a satisfying explanation to why they did not get their residence permit. Their case was stronger than other families in terms of time of residence and children who were born and raised in the Netherlands. However, the fact that Esra's husband was deported in 1996, was the reason given to them for not being eligible for a permit, despite another hunger striking woman who also had a deportation case, was eligible. Here again, the precedent principle plays an important role: if all fifteen women would have gotten a residence permit, this might have led to all 'White Illegals' going on a hunger strike to get a residence permit. In order to demonstrate that a bold protest method does not necessarily lead to success, one family had to be the victim, to set her case as an example for others not also start a hunger strike.

To conclude, the historical angle of this thesis made it possible to question the women about their experience during the hunger strike. The hypothesis was that gender, motherhood and support throughout the strike would have a significant influence on the experiences of the

women. This thesis adds to the literature, that it is important to make a distinction according to gender and it shows the importance of motherhood. The women were aware that their gender would increase their chances of success, while at the same time their motherhood gave them the mental support and strength to continue the strike. Their motherhood also gave them a favourable factor in media coverage, as this was focused on a lot. Furthermore, this thesis added that support has been an important factor too, also in cases of failure. Despite a failing case, Esra still was supported by Patijn, and also later by Cohen as being the only woman who did not get her residence permit after a lengthy hunger strike. She was however allowed to stay in Amsterdam through the mayors. After his function as a State Secretary, Cohen succeeded Patijn, and became the mayor of Amsterdam. The discretionary power that he refused to use as a State Secretary, he did ask the new State Secretary to use. For some reason, Cohen refused to use it himself, but probably was not against the idea of discretion, since he asked for it to be used by someone else. The true reason remains unknown.

However, the support that Esra and her family eventually got from Patijn, and later from Cohen, led to them being patient and remaining 'White Illegals' till 2008. In 2008, Esra and her family won a court case and were granted their residence permit. The Linkage Act was designed to make life in the Netherlands unbearable for illegals. Though, the supporting factor is what led to Esra and her family holding on for nine more years after the strike.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview 1: Elif

Original version in Turkish.

Ben Elif. Ben Hollandaya 1993, 10. uncu ayinda geldim. Geldigimde 3 cocugum vardi. Bir tane de burada (Hollanda'da) oldu. 4 cocugum var. Aclik grevi benim fikrimdi. 1998 koppelingswet girmesiyle calismamiza kisitlama gelmis, calisamiyorduk. Cocuk paralarimiz kesilmisti. Herseyimiz resmi olmasina ramen. Burada kalabilirsiniz ama calismak yasak. Bir gelirimiz olmadan nasil yasanirdiki. Bu arada careler aramaya basladim. Sonra esim dedi, bur dernek var, insanlar care bulmaya calisiyor. Bende esimle gittim, sonra gunlerce toplantilar yapildi, gunde 2-3 defa toplantı yapıyorduk. Bir akşam yine bir toplantıda ben aclik grevi yapmak istiyorum dedim. Bir cok dernek uyesi vardi. Herkes hayretle bakti. Nasil olur, daha kucuk bebegin var? dediler. Dedim istiyorum. Ben ve cocuklarim evde ac duracagima kendim aclik grevi yapayim. Bir arkadas ve eside, arkadasim Ayse, ve bize yardim eden dernekler arastirmaya basladik nerede yapabiliriz diye. Bazi yerlerle gorusme yaptik. Bazi sartlar uymadi. Ve sonunda arkadasim Ayse ve esi, ve benim esim bir karar verdik. ATKB (vereniging van uit Turkije afkomstige vrouwen in Amsterdam), orada yapmaya karar verdik. Ama cok gizli olmasi gerekiyordu. Bizim gibi oturumu olmayan, dernektekilere aclik grevi yapacagimizi, katılmak isteyen kisilerle arkadasin evinde toplandik. Gunu saati soyledik. Ben ve arkadasimin ve eslerimizden baska kimse bilmiyordu nerede yapilacagini. ATKB de toplantimiz vardi o akşam. Aclik grevi yaptigimiz yerde. Arkadasla anlastik, toplantı anında iki tane kapisi vardi. Binanın bir kapiyi o acti, diger kapiyi ben. Aclik grevi yapacak bayanlar iceri girdi ve biz aciklama yaptik. Su anda aclik grevi basladi diye. Kimisi olmaz simdi dediler. Ama biz kararliydik ve onlarda ikna oldu ve mailler gonderildi. Aclik grevi

baslandigina dair. Esim ve ben biliyordum aclik grevi yapacagimi tabiki. Anne baba kardese onceden anlatmadik cunku tehlikeli oldugu icin belki karsi koyarlardi. Onlar daha sonra ogrendi. Aclik grevinin ilk gunleri, tabiki aclik hissi bir kac gun sonra kayboluyor aa halsizlik basladi ondan sonra gunden güne, daha cok halsizlik. Daha oncesinden bir kisi haric hicbirini tanimiyordum ama zor gunleri beraber atlattik, destek olduk birbirimize. Basın ve politikacılar bizimle cok ilgilendi. Bizde onlarla konusmalar yaptik. Basın aciklamasi yaptik. Burgemeester Patijn cok ilgilendi bizim hayatimizdan endise duydu. Bir gun bana gelip bana benim de kizim var, sende benim kizimsin, yapma durdur aclik grevini dedi. Bende onda kizin ve cocukların evde ac otursa, kirayi odayemezse, evden atilacagi endisesiyle yasasa ne yapardin? dedim. Birsey diyemedi ama bizim icin cok endiseliydi. Tabiki aktiviteler yapiyorduk. Zaten ilk once doktor tarafından her gun sabah tansiyonumuz felan kontrol ediyorlardı. Basın, politikacılar geliyordu. Cocuklarımız, arkadaşlarımız, bir cok kisi ziyarete geliyordu. Tabiki cocuklarımızdan ayri kalmak zordu ama basarmaliydik. Arkadaslarımızdan biri rahatsiz hastaneye kaldirildi, ama serum felan istemedi. Aclik grevimiz bozulur diye geri geldi aramiza. 1999da oturumu aldik aclik grevinden bir kac ay sonra. Aclik grevi yaptigim icin hic pisman olmadim.

English translation

I am Elif. I came to the Netherlands in 1993, in October. I had 3 children when I came. Then I had one here (in Holland). I have 4 children now. The hunger strike was my idea. With the 1998 Linkage Act, there were restrictions on our work, we couldn't work. Our child allowances were cut. Even though everything was official. You can stay here, but you can't work. How could we live without an income? In the meantime, I started looking for solutions. Then my husband said, there is an association, people are trying to find solutions. So I went with my husband, and then there were meetings for days there. We had meetings 2-3 times a day. One evening at a meeting I said I want to go on a hunger strike. There were many

members present of the association. Everyone looked amazed. They said, how can you want that? You have a small baby? I said that I wanted to. Instead of me and my children being hungry at home, let me go on a hunger strike myself. A friend and her husband, my friend Ayse, and the associations that were helping us, we started looking for places where we could do it. We talked to some places. Some conditions didn't fit. And finally, my friend Ayse and her husband, and my husband and I decided to do it at ATKB. We decided to do it there. But it had to stay a secret. We gathered at a friend's house with people who didn't have a residence permit like us, who were in the association, or who wanted to participate, that we were going to have a hunger strike. We announced the date and time. Nobody knew where it was going to be held except me and my friend and our husbands. We had a meeting at the ATKB that evening, where we went on the hunger strike. We agreed with my friend that at the time of the meeting, there were two doors. She opened one door of the building and I opened the other. The hunger striking women went inside and we made a statement, that the hunger strike has started now. Some said no, not now. But we were determined and convinced all the women. Therefore, the e-mails were sent, that the hunger strike had started. My husband and I knew I was going on a hunger strike, of course. We didn't tell our parents and siblings beforehand because they might have resisted because it was dangerous. They found out later. The first days of the hunger strike, of course the feeling of hunger disappears after a few days, then the weakness started, then day by day, more and more weakness. I didn't know any of them before, except for one person, but we went through the hard times together, we supported each other. The press and politicians were very interested in us. We made speeches to them. We made a press statement. Burgemeester Patijn was very concerned about our lives. One day he came to me and said I have a daughter, you are my daughter, don't do it, stop the hunger strike. I said to him, what would you do if your daughter and children sat at home hungry, unable to pay the rent, worried that they could be evicted? He

couldn't say anything, but he was very worried about us. Of course we were doing activities. First of all we had our blood pressure checked every day in the morning by the doctor. The press, politicians came. Our children, friends, many people came to visit. Of course it was hard to be separated from our children, but we had to manage. One of our friends was taken to the hospital sick, but she didn't want an IV or anything. She came back to us to not break the hunger strike. In 1999, our family got their residence permit, a few months after the hunger strike. I've never regretted going on a hunger strike.

Appendix 2

Interview 2: Esra

Original version in Turkish

Ismim Esra. Hollanda'ya 1993, martin 5'de 17 yasinda evlenip geldim. Balayina gezmeye diye vizeyle geldik. Esim benden bir bucuuk yil once gelmistii. Nisanliyidik. O geldi once, sonra dugunu yapip beraber geldik Hollanda'ya. 5 cocugum var. 1999'da acilik grevini esimden duydum, cunku Den Haag'da once erkekler yapmisti. Kadnlarda yapmaya hazirlaniyor dedi. Bende yapacagim dedim. Hayir dayanamassin dedi. Dayanirim dedim. Ben gitmem bu ulkeden dedim, burada yasayacagim dedim. Bu arada 2 kizim oldu. Biri 5 yasinda (1994 dogumlu), biri 2,5 yasinda (1996 dogumlu). Bir yasa cikar, oturum alirim, cocuklarim burada dogdu bir hak kazanabilirim belki diye. 23 yasinda, 66 kilo ve 1,72 boyundaydim. Buyuk kizima esim, kucuk kizima esimim bir akrabasi bakti. 15 kadin hep toplandik, karar aldik. Ailem burada yok zaten, hic demedim onlara. Zaten bu kadar uzun surmez kisa surer, bende gencim, burdada kalirim, en fazla iki hafta olur diye dusunduk. Bundan once hic bir grev veya protestoya katilmadim. Grevin bu kadar uzun surecegini asla tahmin etmedim. En fazla iki hafta olur dedik, ama 39 gun surdu, cunku 40 gunden sonra tehlikeliydi cok, vucudumuz icin cok riskliydi. Evet, doktorlardan duyduk ama bir kere baslamistik, asla birakmayi dusunmedik. Ben hic dusunmedim. Bir heyecan, bir umutla basladim. Aileme hic demedim. Onlari zaten gormuyordum, telefondada evdeymis gibi normal konusuyordum. Evleri supurdum, cocuklar okulda, cocuklar oynuyor. Televizyona baktim. Ilk gunler herkes geldi, baya gonullu bizim gibi insanlar geldi yardim etmeye, cunku biz orayi Avrupa kadinlar dernegini, 15 kadin istila etmistik. 15 kadin oradaydik binada. 39 gunde orada kaldik. Her gun eslerimiz cocuklarimiz yanimiziza geldi, oradaki 15 kadindan hic birini tanimiyordum biri haric. Herkesi orada tanidim. Ilk zamanlar zordu ama iki hafta gecince migde ve vucud uyudu

sanki belli bir donem. 15 gunden sonra aramadim, hic gucum yoktu ama. Zaten yemek yiyememek cok zor, ziyafet degil. Normal bir ogun en basit pizza, ekmek, elma yiyemiyorsun. Kapali bir binadasin. Disari cikamiyorsun. Parkta dolasip cocugunu bir salincakta bile sallayamiyorsun. O binanin icinde hep ayni suratlar, kalk, otur, yat. Aksam cocuklar gelmezse, birbirimizle konusmasak insanin hem bedeni hem beyni duruyor. Halsizsin, gucun yok ki yapicak bir seyin yok. Dort duvar icindesin. Arkadasimizin biri cok agliyordu, bende agliyorum. Artik bir yola girmissin, cikisinda yok. Uyum sagliyorsun. Ajsamlari birbirimize sorular sorup cevaplayip uyuyoruz ama inan ruyalarimi hatirliyamiyorum. Sabah bir kalkiyorum derman yok. Son zamanlarda ayaklarim ve kollarim cok agridi. Camdan bakmiyordum fazla. Bisikletle gecen insanlar, yuruyus yapanlar, arabalara trenlere binenler, biz yapamiyoruz. Hem aciz, hemde kapali bir binadayiz. Tek iletisim telefon. Onunlada yalan soyluyorum anneme babama bilseler cok kizacaklar zaten uzaktayim gormuyorlar. Hasretler. Cok zor. Arkadaslarimin suratlari bir kac zaman sonra bembeyaz. Hemen aynaya baktim, benimkide oyle. Gozlerimin alti siyahlasmis. Hadi sakat kalirsam. Hadi olursek. Kac gundur birsey yemiyoruz. Sacimi taramak, giyinip suslenmek, bunlari zamanla istemedim. Zaten yorgundumda elim kolum kalkmadi. Yatakta uzaniyordum. Politikacilar, belediyeden gelen gelen olursa, cocuklarima aksama gucumu sakliyordum. Gokyuzune bakip bir an once evime yasantima donmek istiyordum. En basit, cocuklarimin elini tutup okula goturmek. Ayni masada aile yemegi yemek. 33. gunde, ikinci kizim gelmistti. 2,5 yasindaki cocuk ne kadardir, kac kilo olabilir ki? Kostu bana, sarildi. Kucagima aliyim dedim, kaldirdim, hemen masaya oturttum. Dusecek diye korktum. Kaldirdim ama tasiyamadim. Bitirmeyi hic dusunmedik ama vucudumuz riske girer diye 40 gunden sonra deyince doktorlar, 39 gunde bitirdik. Aclik grevi esnasinda Patijn ve esi bizi ziyarete geldi. Cok duyarliydi. Bizi cok onemsedi. Zaten grev bitince bize uyum kursu ve okullara gonderdi. Gelenlere biz burada kalmak, yasamak istiyoruz dedik. Evimiz var, cocuklarımız burada

dogdu diyorduk. Kendimizi anlatiyorduk. Ilgileri vardı, en zorlandigim sey, disari cikmak yok. Cocuklar sadece aksam geliyor. Grev sonunda istedigimizi alacakmiyiz? Televizyon yok. Yemek zaten yok. Cocuklarla kendi evinde degilsin. Zor. Kucukler napiyorlar? Aksami iple cekiyorduk. Onlara sarilmek guc veriyordu bize. Kizimi kucagima alamayinca ozaman korktum. Aksamlari birbirimize dogum tarihlerini soyledik, kendimizi anlatirdik, yemeklerden tariflerden bahsederdik. Gunlerimizi hep degerlendirirdik. Son zamanlarda hep yatakta oturup, yada uzanirdik. Hic gucumuz yoktu. Aramızda bir arkadasimiz cok hastalandi, iki defa hastaneye kaldirildi ama birakmadi. Bize gayret dedirtti ama cokda korkuttu. Durdurmayı dusunmedik. Oturumu grev bittikten sonra yasa cikti 14 kadin aldi ben grevden 9 sene sonra aldim. Bekledim. Zor oldu. Patijn oldu, yerine Job Cohen geldi. Ama mahkemede bizim icin mektup gonderdi, destek oldu. Zaten aclik grevindeyken Cohen staatssecretaris'ti, biliyordu durumumuzu zaten. Cok zorluklar cektigimizi, cocuklarımız burda dogup buyudugunu, bu ulkede yasamak icin canimi disime taktigimi. Pisman hic degilim. Iyiki yapmisim, kalmisim. Cocuklarim bu ulkede dogup buyudu. Zordu ama degdi. Ben bu ulkeyi cok seviyorum, cok bekledim. Ailemden uzun sure uzak kaldim, ama burada da cocuklarim vardı, onlari buyuttum. Okudular. Benim zorluklarima degdi. Ben bir pasta yaptim, onlarda kremasi gibi degdi beklemek. Cok zordu 9 sene beklemek. En buyuk kizim 14 yasındaydi, kucuk kizim 12 yasındaydi, ve bir oglum daha olmustu, o 7 yasındaydi. Sonunda oturumumuz geldi, ama ya alamasak? Sukur oldu, amacima ulastim, cektiklerime degdi. Patijn ile grevde ve grevden sonra Elif hep irtibattaydi. Ondan haber alirdik. Biz 15 kadini okullara gonderdi. Uyum kurslarina gonderdi. Bir keresinde belediyede misafir etmistti.

English translation

My name is Esra. I came to the Netherlands in 1993, March 5, at the age of 17. We came on a visa for a honeymoon. My husband came a year and a half before me. We were engaged, to

be married. He came first, then we had the wedding and came to the Netherlands together. I have 5 children. I heard about the hunger strike in 1999 from my husband, because in the Hague it was men first that did the hunger strike. He said women are getting ready to do it too. I said, "I'll do it." He said, "No, you can't. I said, 'I will'. I said 'I will not leave this country, I will live here'. By the way, I had 2 daughters at the time. One was 5 years old (born in 1994), one 2,5 years old (born in 1996). I thought maybe a law would come out, I could get a residence permit, my children were born here, maybe I could get some rights. I was 23 years old, 66 kilos and 1.72 meters tall. My husband took care of my older daughter and a relative of my husband took care of my younger daughter. 15 women got together, and we made a decision. My family is not here in the Netherlands anyway, I never told them. Anyway, we thought it wouldn't last that long, it would be short, I'm young, I'll stay here, it will be two weeks at most. I've never participated in a strike or a protest before. I never thought it would last that long. We thought it would be two weeks at most, but it lasted 39 days, because after 40 days it was very dangerous, very risky for our bodies. Yes, we heard it from the doctors, but once we started, we never thought about quitting. I never thought about it. I started with an excitement, a hope. I never told my family. I didn't see them anyway, I talked normally on the phone as if I was at home. 'I cleaned the house, the children are at school, the children are playing'. 'I watched TV'. During the first days everyone came, people like us who were very willing to help, because we invaded the ATKB, 15 women. 15 women were there in the building. We stayed there for 39 days. Every day our partners and children came to us. I didn't know any of the 15 women there except one. I got to know everyone there. It was hard at first, but after two weeks the stomach and body seemed to sleep for a certain period of time. After 15 days I didn't miss the food, I didn't have any power. It's hard not to eat anyway, it's not a festivity. On a normal day, you can't eat a simple pizza, bread, an apple. You're in a closed building. You can't go outside. You can't even walk

around the park and swing your child on a swing. It's always the same faces inside that building, get up, sit down, lie down. If the children don't come in the evening, if we don't talk to each other, both our body and brain stops working. You're weak, you're powerless, you have nothing to do. You're between four walls. A friend of ours was crying a lot, I'm crying too. You're on a path now, there's no way out. You're adapting. We ask and answer each other questions and go to sleep, but believe me when I say that I couldn't remember my dreams. I wake up in the morning and there's no cure. 'My feet and arms have been hurting a lot lately. I didn't look out of the window much. People who pass by on bicycles, those who walk, those who take their car or the tram, we can't do that. We are both helpless and in a closed building. The only communication is the phone.' Even then, I lie to my mum and dad, they will be very angry if they know. I'm far away, they don't see me. They long for me. It's very hard. My friends' faces are white after a while. I immediately looked in the mirror, so did mine. It's dark under my eyes. What if I get a handicap? What If I die? We haven't eaten for days. I didn't want to comb my hair, get dressed, I didn't want to do it in time. I was already tired, I couldn't do anything. I was lying in bed. If there were politicians, people from the municipality, I was saving my strength for them and my children in the evening. I would look up at the sky and wish to go home to my life as soon as possible. The simplest thing is to take my children by the hand and take them to school. Have a family meal at the same table together. On the 33rd day, my youngest daughter came. How much does a 2,5-year-old weigh? How much can she weigh? She ran to me, hugged me. I picked her up and immediately put her on the table. I was afraid she would fall. We never thought of ending it, but the doctors said after 40 days because our bodies would be at risk, so we ended it in 39 days. Patijn and his wife came to visit us during the hunger strike. He was very sensitive. He cared about us a lot. When the strike was over, he sent us to integration courses and to school. We told them we wanted to stay here, we wanted to live here. We said we had a house, our

children were born here. We explained ourselves. They were interested, the hardest thing for me was not to go outside. The children came only in the evening. Will we get what we want at the end of the strike? There is no television. There's no food. You're not at home with the kids. It's hard. What are the little ones doing? We looked forward to the evening. Hugging them gave us strength. That's when I was scared the most, when I couldn't hold my daughter. In the evenings we'd tell each other our birth dates, we'd talk about ourselves, we'd talk about food and recipes. We'd always evaluate our days. Lately we were always sitting or lying in bed, we had no strength. One of our friends got very sick, she was hospitalized twice, but she didn't give up. It made us try harder, but it scared us too. We didn't think of stopping. The law came out after the strike ended, 14 women got their residence permit, I got mine 9 years after the strike. I waited. It was hard. Patijn left, replaced by Job Cohen. But Cohen sent letters for us in court, he supported us. Cohen was Secretary of State when we were on hunger strike, he knew our situation. That we were going through a lot of difficulties, that our children were born and raised here, that I was working hard to live in this country. I don't regret it at all. I'm glad I did it, I stayed. My children were born and raised in this country. It was hard but worth it. I love this country so much, I waited so long. I was away from my family for a long time, but I had children here too, I raised them. They studied. It was worth my difficulties. I made a cake and they were the icing. It was very hard to wait for 9 years. My eldest daughter was 14, my youngest daughter was 12, and I had another son, he was 7. Finally we got our residence permit, but what if we didn't get it? Thank God it happened, I achieved my goal, it was worth it. Elif was in contact with Patijn during and after the strike. We'd hear from her. He sent 15 of us women to schools. He sent us to integration courses. Once he hosted us at the municipality.

Appendix 3

Interview 3: Sevilay

Original version in Turkish

Benim adim Sevilay. Doğum günüm 11.05 .1974. 14 yasimdayken geldim Hollandaya. Aile sebebinden dolayi gelmistim Hollandaya, ablami ziyarete geldim. Ben Avusturya'da yasiyordum. Ben neden geldim Hollanda'ya? Babam zor bir insandı ve alkol alırdı. Evde zor günlerim oldu. Onun için ablam aslında beni yanına aldı. Hollanda'ya geldikten sonrada Cengiz'i tanıdım. Teyzemin oğlunun arkadaşıydı, ordan tanıştık evlendik. 29. 12. 1990 evlendim. Evlendim iki oğlum oldu burada. Belediyeye yazıldık, evim vardı, herseyim vardı, tek oturumum yoktu. Bu sebepten dolayi greve katıldım. Arkadaslardan duydum grev olacağını, bir kisiyi taniyordum. Gerisini orada tanistim, ve aile olduk. Tabiki zor oldu ama isim olsun diye sabrettim. Bitsin istedim tabiki grev esnasında, ama isiminde olmasını istedim. Gelenlerden, basından, Patijn'dan çok memnundum. Çok ilgilendiler. Uzun surdu ama ulastik istedigimize. En çok cocuklarimi ozluyordum. Evimi ozluyorduk, cocuklarimi ozluyordum. Halimizde yoktu, gucumuzde yokti baska seyler yapmak icin. Ama en çok kaslarim agriyordu. Titriyordum. Çok korkuyordum hastalanacağim diye. Atlattik ama. Aldik ta, mutlu da olduk aldıktan sonra, insallah da bundan sonra daha da çok mutlu oluruz.

English Translation

My name is Sevilay. My birthday is on 11.05.1974. I came to the Netherlands when I was 14 years old. I came to the Netherlands for family reasons, I came to visit my sister. I was living in Austria before that. Why I came to the Netherlands? Well actually, my father was a difficult person and he was drinking a lot of alcohol. I had hard times at home. That's why my sister actually took me in. After I came to the Netherlands, I got to know Cengiz. He was a friend of my aunt's son, that's how we met and got married. 29. 12. 1990, I got married. I got

married and had two sons here. We registered at the municipality, I had a house, I had everything, I only didn't have a residence permit. That's why I joined the strike. I heard about the strike from friends, I knew one person. I met the rest there, and we became a family. Of course it was difficult, but I was patient so I could have a job. I wanted it to end, of course, during the strike, but I wanted to reach my goal. I was very happy with the people who came by, the press, Patijn. They were very interested. It took a long time, but we got what we wanted. I missed my children the most. We missed home, I missed my children. We were in a bad condition, we had no strength to do other things. But my muscles hurt the most. I was shaking. I was so scared I was going to get sick. But we got through it. We got it, we were happy after we got it, and I hope we will be even happier from now on.

Appendix 4

Interview 4: Ayse

Original version in Turkish

Ben Ayse. 53 yasındayim. Iki kizim bir oglum var. Ben Hollandaya 1991 yilinda, aralik ayinda geldim. Hollandaya vizeyle geldim. Gezmek icin gelmistim, oylede kaldim. Aclik grevine katilma sebebim, hayatın bize verdigi zorluklardan dolayi basladi. Bizler Hollandaya gelince calismaya basladik. Bize Sofi numarasi verdiler. Belediyeye kayıt yaptirdik. Is bulmak cok kolaydi, calismaya basladik. Tabi hakkimiz oluncada, hastalik sigortasina da hak kazandik. Kendimize ayit evler kiriladik belediyeden. Cocuklarimiz dogdu, hastanelerde dogum yaptik. Yani, her hakka sahiptik, ve buralardan donemedik. Oturum hakkimiz yoktu, yani ulkemize gelip gidemiyorduk. Hollandada artik oturumsuz olanların hakları ellerinden alınmaya baslanmisti. Zor gunleri bizi bekliyordu. Biz oturumsuzlara, Witte Illegaal dernegi vardi. Oraya bilgilendirmelere gidiyorduk. Ne yapilrsa bu ulkeye, bu ulkede sesimizi duyurabiliriz diye arastirmalar yapilirken, aclik grevi fikri ortaya cikti ve katilmaya karar verdim. Kendim bizzat toplantilarda dinliyerek karar verdim. Benim gibi toplantilara katilan bir cok kadin vardi, birlikte karar verdik. Ve toplantilara katildigimiz dernegi bir gun isgal ettik ve orada basladik. Tabi ki bu toplantiya gittimigiz dernek bize cok karsi cikti. Olmaz, kalamazsiniz, basaramazsiniz, cikin burdan. Cok sey dediler, bizi cikarmaya calistilar, ama biz kararliydik sesimizi duyurmaya. Bundan once hic bir greve veya protestoya katilmadim. Bu ilk ve sondu. Grevin bu kadar uzun surecegini ben tahmin etmedim. Esim bana ama uzun surebilir, kararini iyi ver, eminmisin diye defalarca sordu. Ama ben ailem icin, kendim icin, cocuklarim icin, birsey yapmam gerekiyordu ve kararliydim. Aclik grevini yapanları cogu kez televizyonlardan izlemistim. Cok zor bir surecti, ve donusu olmayan bir protestoydu. Ama mecburdum sesimi duyurmaya, risklerini de biliyordum. Sonradan saglik

problemlerimin olacaginida biliyordum. Ve bir yil boyunca bobrek tedavisi gordum ama simdi iyiyim Allaha sukur. Aclik grevini ailemden hicbirisine soylemedim, cunku izin vermezlerdi. Sonradan soyledik ve cok uzulduler. Her gun ariyorlardi, birakmamiz icin ısrar ediyorlardı. Birak, oleceksiniz, diye yalvariyorlardı. Ama kararliydik ve birakmadik. Turkiyede televizyonda bizi izlediler, cok korktular. Tabi bizde uzgunduk ama yapacak birsey yoktu. Aclik grevinin ilk gunleri cok zordu. İlk defa actik. Hic birsey yemiyorduk, sadece cay serbestti. Actik. Banyo yapamiyorduk. Bayanlari onceden tanimiyorduk. Durmadan televizyoncular, gazeteciler, basincilar geliyordu. Birakin diyorlardı. Cok yogun geciyordu. 15 bayanla tanistik, cok iyi anlastik. Hepimiz bir butun olduk ve hala bulusuyoruz. O gunleri hatirlayip konusuyoruz. 23 yil oldu, ve hala gorusuyoruz, ayrilmadik. Grev devam ettigi durecte ilk gunler cok zordu, ama alismistik. Belirli saatlerde eslerimizi ve cocuklarimizi gorebiliyorduk. Grevi birakmayi hic dusunmedim, ve sonuna kadarda birakamazdim geleceğim icin. Devam etmeliydim. Gercektende hepimiz cok kararliydik ve devam ettik. Burgemeester Patijn cok iyi bir insandı. Politikaci olarak degilde, insan olarak yanimizda durdu cok. Uzgundu. Hep birakin, hastalanacaksınız, cocuklarınız var diye hep ısrar etti. Hatta esini bile getirdi, bizimle konusturdu ama birakmadik. Bize banyo yaptırdi, cok kirlenmistik. Havalandırma yaptırdi. Yattigimiz odayla cok ilgilendi, bizimle. Bakti ki biz birakmayacagiz, kararliyiz, oda bize sagligimiz bozulmasin diye yardım etti. Aclik grevi surecinde en cok zorlandigim kisim, grevdeki belirsizlik. Ne olacak? Grevi bosuna mi yapıyorduk? Sesimizi duyupta birsey yapmiyacaklarmiydi acaba? Sonuc ne olacakti? Cunku her gelen yetkilide, durdurun grevi, bosuna ac kaliyorsunuz, sagliginizi kaybedeceksiniz diyorlardı. Uc hafta olmustu, hala birsey yapmiyorlardı, birakin oleceksiniz demekten baska. Tabiki de gun gectikce sagligimizdan endiseleniyordum. Grevden sonra acaba bir hasar kalirmi bended iye dusunuyordum. Alamzsam oturum hakkimi, piskolojim bozulurmu diye dusunuyordum. Aclik grevini hic birakmayi hic dusunmedim, ama daha nekadar surecek diye

dusunuyordum. Kendi aramızda konusuyorduk. Acaba nezaman biter? Sorunumuz nezaman cozulur. Bize nezaman yardım ederler diye endiseleniyorduk. Acaba bosuna mi bu eylemi yapıyorduk? Zaman gerçekten zor geçiyordu. Saatler uzuyordu. İnsan ac olunca, hayatın tadı ve anlamı da yoktu. Ama bir amacımız vardı, o yuzdende açlığı unutmamıştık. Durmadan yemek tarifleri veriyorduk. Aksamları sohbet ediyorduk. Bazen fıkralar, bazen kendi yaşadığımız komik ve duygusal hikayelerimizi anlatıyorduk. Bazen gülüyorduk, bazen ağlıyorduk. Ama hiç kavga etmiyorduk. Sirasıyla düşüncemizi yapıyorduk. Eslerimiz camasırlarımızı evleri goturup getiriyorlardı. Ziyaret saatlerimizde çocuklarımız ve eslerimiz geliyordu. Sohbet edip, sarılıp oturuyorduk. Anne evimize nezaman geleceksiniz diye soruyorlardı. Çok özlemistik çocuklarımızı, evlerimizi. Çocuklarımız bize resim yapıyorlardı. Hediye getiriyorlardı, küçük anlamlı hediyeler, resimler felan. Arkadaşlarımızdan birisi çok hastalandı, hastaneye kaldırıldı, çok uzulduk. Acaba hepimizi öyle olacağız? Ne olacaktık? Nezaman bitecek diye endiseliydik. Ama arkadaşımız hastanede bile devam etti grevine. Serum bile taktirtmedi kendine. Arkadaşlarımızla gurur duyuyorum. Biz 15 günlük kadindik ve grevi bırakmayı bir saniye bile düşünmedik. Açlık grevindeyken, 8 martta, Dünya Kadınlar gününde, 9 ülkenin kadın temsilcisi bizi ziyarete geldiler. Bize çok destek verdiler. Basaracaksınız bırakmayın dediler. Bize uzuldular, ağladılar. Çok güzel konuştular bizimle. Biz onlardan çok iyi enerji aldık. Ve, devam ettik greve. Bırakmadık. Bide bizim yanımıza, ombudsvrouw geldi. Bize bilgiler verdi. Bizleri dinledi, konuştu. Sizlerin dosyalarınıza bakacağım, inceleyeceğim dedi, ve bize bir işik görünmüştü. Çok mutluyduk. Bize böyle görüşle gelen ilk yetkiliydi. Birseyler olacaktı. Mutluyduk. Sonunda sesimizi birileri duymuştu. Nezaman geldiğimizi, ailelerimizi sordu. Nasıl yaşadığımızı. Officiele kagitlarımızın olduğunu sordu. Gerçekten çok ilgilendi bizimle. Ve bakacağım dosyalarınıza dedi. Tek tek bizimle ilgilendi ombudsvrouw. Ve sonunda bizim dosyalarımızı incelediler, ve bizlere Witte Illegaallara göre, bir uygulama yaptılar. Belirli şartları vardı. O şartlara uyanlara

verdiler. 2000 yilinda, sartlara uyduklari icin oturumlarini aldi. Aclik grevini yaptigimdan dolayi hic pisman olmadim. Iyiki yapmisim. Kendim ve ailem icindi hersey ve basardim. Hayat tesaduflerle doludur. Yasanacak hersey yasanir. Hic kimse kaderini kendisi yazamaz.

English Translation

I'm Ayse. I'm 53 years old. I have two daughters and a son. I came to the Netherlands in December 1991. I came to the Netherlands with a visa. I came to the Netherlands to travel, and that's how I stayed. The reason why I joined the hunger strike was because of the difficulties life gave us. When we came to the Netherlands we started working. They gave us a sofi-number. We registered at the municipality. It was very easy to find work, we started working. Of course, we were entitled to health insurance. We rented our own houses from the municipality. Our children were born, we gave birth in hospitals. In other words, we had every right, and we couldn't leave. We didn't have a residence permit, so we couldn't come and go to our country. In the Netherlands, the rights of those without a residence permit had started to be taken away. Difficult times awaited us. There was an organisation called the White Illegals foundation. We were going there for more information. While we were researching what we could do to make our voices heard in this country, the idea of a hunger strike came up and I decided to participate. I decided by going and listening to all the meetings there were myself. There were many women like me who attended the meetings, we decided to do it together. And we occupied the association where we attended the meetings one day and started there with the strike. Of course, the association where we went to this meeting was very opposed to the idea. No, you can't stay, you can't succeed, get out of here. They said a lot of things, they tried to get us out, but we were determined to make our voices heard. I've never participated in a strike or protest before. This was the first and the last. I didn't expect the strike to last so long. My husband asked me many times, but it might last a long time, make up your mind, are you sure? But I had to do something for my family, for

myself, for my children, and I was determined. I had watched many hunger strikers on TV. It was a very difficult process, and it was a protest with no end. But I had to make my voice heard, I knew the risks, I knew that I would have health problems afterwards, and I had a year of kidney treatment, but I am fine now, thank God. I didn't tell any of my family about the hunger strike, because they wouldn't let me. After we started we told them, and they were very sad. They called us every day, insisting that we should stop, begging us to stop, you will die. But we were determined and we didn't quit. They watched us on TV in Turkey and they were very scared. Of course, we were sad, but there was nothing to do. The first days of the hunger strike were very difficult. We were hungry for the first time. We didn't eat anything, only tea was allowed. We were hungry. We couldn't take a bath. We didn't know the ladies before. TV people, journalists, press people were coming all the time. They told us to stop. It was very busy. We met, fifteen women, we got on very well. We all became friends and we still meet. We reminisce and talk about those days. It's been 23 years, and we still see each other, we haven't broken up. The first days of the strike were very difficult, but we got used to it. We could see our partners and children at certain times. I never thought of giving up the strike, and I couldn't give up until the end, for my future. I had to keep going. We were all very determined and we kept going. Mayor Patijn was a very good man. He stood by us as a human being, not as a politician. He was sad. He always insisted that we should stop, you will get sick, you have children. He even brought his wife to talk to us, but we wouldn't leave. He made us take a bath, we were so dirty. He made sure we have air conditioning. He was very involved in the room we slept in, and thought with us. He realized that we would not quit, we were determined, and he helped us so that our health would not deteriorate in the room we were staying. The most difficult part of the hunger strike is the uncertainty of the strike. What's going to happen? Are we striking for nothing? Would they hear our voices and still do nothing? What would be the result? Because every official who came to us said, stop

the strike, you are being hungry for nothing, you will lose your health. It's been three weeks, they still didn't do anything, except for saying let it go, you'll die. Of course, I was getting more and more worried about our health. I wondered if there would be any damage left after the strike. I wondered if I wouldn't get my residence permit, if my mental health would deteriorate. I never thought about stopping the hunger strike, but I wondered how long it would last. We were talking amongst ourselves. When would it end? When our problem will be solved. When will they help us. Are we doing this for nothing? Time was passing really slow. The hours were getting longer. When people are hungry, life has no taste and meaning. But we had a purpose, so we forgot about hunger. We were constantly giving recipes, chatting in the evenings, sometimes telling ideas, sometimes telling our own funny and emotional stories. Sometimes we laughed, sometimes we cried, but we never fought or argued. We took turns in our showers. Our husbands brought our clothes to our house and back. During our visiting hours, our children and husbands would come. We would chat, hug and sit and they would ask us when we would come back home. We missed our children and our homes very much. Our children were painting for us. They brought gifts, small meaningful gifts, pictures and so on. One of our friends was very sick, hospitalised, we got very sad. I wondered if we would all be like that? How we were going to be? We were worried about when it would end. But our friend continued her strike even in the hospital. She refused to even get a IV. I'm proud of my friends. We were fifteen strong women and we didn't think for a second to give up the strike. When we were on the hunger strike, on 8 March, on World Women's Day, women representatives from 9 countries came to visit us. They gave us a lot of support. They said, 'You will succeed, don't give up.' They felt sorry for us, they cried. They spoke to us very well. We got very good energy from them. And, we continued the strike. We didn't give up. And also, the ombudsvrouw came to us. She gave us information. She listened to us, talked to us. She said she would look at our files, examine

them, and right there, there was a light for us. We were very happy. She was the first official to come to us with such an opinion. Something was going to happen. We were happy. Finally someone had heard our voice. She asked when we arrived, about our families. How we lived. She asked if we had official papers. She was really interested in us. And she said she would look at our cases. She took care of us one by one. And in the end they analyzed our files, and they gave us an application, according to Witte Illegaal regulation. They had certain conditions. They gave the residence permit to those who met those conditions. In the year 2000, because we met the conditions, we got our residence permit. I never regretted going on hunger strike. I'm glad I did it. It was for me and my family and I succeeded. Life is full of coincidences. Everything that you have to live, will be lived. No one can write their own destiny.

Appendix 5

Interview 5: M.

Hollanda'ya ne zaman geldim? 1991, yedinci ayın yirmi ucunde geldim. İlk önce Almanya'ya geldim Almanya'da, bir gün kalıp Hollandaya geldim. Sebebide burda çok akrabamın oluşu. O yüzden geldim. Geldiğim günün ertesinde işe başladım. Fırında, Rotterdam'da ve bir bucuk ay Rotterdam'da çalıştıktan sonra Utrechtte işe başladım. Orada bir fırından teklif geldi. Orada işe başladım. Tek başına geldim. Hollandada ocak 1993'a kadar durdum. Tekrardan Türkiye'ye dönüş yaptım. Orada esimle evlendim. Sonra tekrar onunla beraber Hollandaya geldim.

5 Mart'ta biz de eşimle birlikte on beş günlük evliyken Hollandaya tekrar geldik, 1993'de. Tekrar tabi işe başladım. Bu esnada bir yıl sonra, 1994'te de bir çocuğum dünyaya geldi. En büyük çocuğum Tuğçe.

Bu süre içerisinde tabi çalışıyoruz. Polis korkusu da var çünkü resmi de çalışıyorum. Vergi oduyorum ama çalışma iznin olması gerekiyor, çalışma iznimizin olmadığı için, ne kadar vergini de odesen çalışmana müsaade etmiyorlar. Aslında bir müddet göz yumuldu ve politikalarda ne değişti bilmiyoruz. Bütün işyerleri basılmaya başlandı, aranmaya başlandı.

Tabi açlık grevine girilmeden önce iki çocuk sahibi idim. 1996'da Tuğba da dünyaya geldi. Bu müddet içinde Gümüş ailesini yurt dışı ettiler. Bu baya bir gündeme geldi. Bağlantı yasaları çıktı. Artık elimiz kolumuz bağlandı. Hiçbir şey yapamıyoruz. Çalışmalarımıza da müsaade etmiyorlar.

Şimdi bu müddet içinde her şey zorlaştı. Bir aileyi yurtdisi ettikleri için bunu örnek gösterip tamamen buradaki bizim dışımızdaki aileler yurtdisi etmeyi istediler. Öyle bir karar aldılar. Tüm herkes gidecek. Ne olursa olsun. E tabi o arada açlık grevi başlatmışlar. Bizde, benim abimin hanımı da katılmak istedi. Onlar bana söylediler. Ben de eşime söyledim. Açlık grevi

başlatmışlar. Abimin hanımı da katılmış. 15 bayan olalım. 14 bayan olmuşlar. Açlık grevine başlayacaklar. Öyle bir şey oluşturmuşlar. Bunu eşim ile konuştum. Dedim çok zor öyle açlık grevi yapmak. Kolay filan değil. Karim dedi ki bu ülkeden gidersem benim için en zoru olacak dedim. Sen üzülme dedi. Ben yinede gitme dedim. Hayır gideceğim dedi. Beni dinlemedi. Bensiz ATKB'e gitti. Ben de açlık grevi yapmak istiyorum dedi oradaki kadınlara. Tabii şimdi bunlar toplantılar falan oluyor, devamlı konuşuluyor. Bu işin kolay olmayacağını herkes biliyor. (M. starts crying)

Kolay şeyler yaşanmadı ve iki tane çocuk yanımda, eşin orada aç. Şimdi onlar orada aç. Açlık grevinin süresi belli değil, iki hafta diye gerildi. Ve tabii ki hafta içi gündeme bile gelmedi. Oralı bile olmadılar. Ne olduğu bile çıkmadı habere iki hafta böyle boş boşuna geçti ki ilerledikçe gazeteler haberler vermeye başladı.

Çünkü iki hafta, iki hafta, dört hafta. Günler uzuyor. Bu insanlar aç. Çok kötüye gidiyor. Devamlı. Belediye başkanıyla toplantı yapıyoruz. Durdurun baskısı var. Durdurun bu açlık grevini. Şimdi bu kadar aç kalınmış. Hiç elde bir şey olmadan nasıl durduracağız? Biz sorsak desek kadınlar kabul etmiyor zaten. Biz bir amaç için gittik. Bir ay aç kalınmış. Sonuç Hiçbir şey yok. Hiçbir şey yok. Devamlı günler geçtikçe dışarıda tabii ki içerideki bayanların eşleri, çocukları, destekçileri devamlı protesto yürüyüşleri yapıldı.

Bu süreçte devamlı Patijn ile toplantı halindeyiz, toplantılar var. Ben sonsuz destekliyorum bu durumu ama elimden bir şey gelmiyor bayanların bu durumu da beni üzüyor diyordu. Boyle bir olay benim şehrimde yaşanıyor. Bu durum beni çok üzüyor. İnsanların yurtdışı edilmesini tabii ki istemedi. Biz bile isim listelerini verdik kendilerine. Bizimle aynı durumda olan arkadaşlar. Bu isim listelerinin içinde bir tane arkadaşımızı alıp göndermeye kalktılar. Biz o anda, Açlık grevi destekçileriyle birlikte, Belediye'ye gittik. Hani bize söz vermişsiniz,

isim listesi istediniz. İimizde en gcl dosya sahibi olan bir arkadařımızın bizlerden daha nce gelmiř en saęlam dosyasi olan bir arkadařımızı uaęa attılar, gnderiyorlar diye.

Sonra biz tepkimizi gsterince, bu durumda hemen uaktan arkadařımızı indirdiler, gndermediler. Yesil'di soyadi.

Bunlar ya. ok zor dnemler geti. Orada bizi komple Tutuklayıp otobslere doldurup gnderebilirler de saęolsun Patijn bize gerekten destek verdi. Maddi olarak destek yapalım siz bu řeyi durdurun ne istiyorsanız onu verelim dedi. Biz sadece dedik ki biz bizim ocuklarımız burada doędu, burada okula bařladı. Buraya entegre oldular buraya alıřtılar. řimdi benim iin deęiřen bir řey yok. Ben gideceęim lkeyi biliyorum ama ocuęum bilmiyor. ok farklı bir ortama gireceklerdir. Dnme ihtimalimiz yoktu yani dnemez. Donemezdik sadece kendimiz iin deęil sadece ocuklarımız iin bunu yapmak zorunda kaldık. Yani kolay bir řey deęil. İnsanlar bir gn bile a yařamaz.

Gene 39 gn a kalındı ve bu insanlar kimi 15 kilo, kimi 20 kilo kilo verdi. Ve bir arkadařımızın dayanamayıp bayılması ile hastaneye kaldırılmasıyla ben o durumu grp elimi duvara vurdum. Parmaęım kırıldı. Parmaklarım kırılınca ben ocuklarımla ilgilenemedim. ocuklarıma bařka akrabalarım baktı. Kk kızımızı dayimizin kizina teslim ettik.

Onlar ilgilendi ve tek bir el ile ne bir řey yapamıyorsun? Zor bir dnem geirdik. Onlar, eřim orada a, bizim durumumuz periřan. Bunlar devam etti. En sonunda Protestolarda Patijn dedi ki. Siz o bayanlar orda a sokaklarda 200 250 kiři yryorsunuz.

Binlerce insanı sokaęa dkn dedi. Patijn orada bize destek verdi binlerce insanı sokaga dkmeniz gerekiyor dedi, hem bakanlık hem devlet sizi duysun, cunku duymuyor, anlamıyorlar, kulaklarını tıkadılar dedi.

Eşlerimizin kararlı duruşu. Dik duruşları kesinlikle sonuna kadar biz Hakkımızı almadan pes etmeyeceğiz. Sonuna kadar dediler. Siz bizi görmezden geliyorsunuz ama biz sizi gözünüze sokacağız. Biz bu yasayı çıkartacağız dediler. En sonunda 39'uncu günde. Tabiki son yürüyüş çok kapsamlı oldu. Çok kalabalık vardı. Hem partinin istediği gibi bir yürüyüş oldu. En sonunda Patijn'da de ağırlığını koydu. Bu işi sonlandırmak için. Son da artık 39 gün. Artık ölüme doğru gitme durumu. Ölüm. (M. starts crying again.)

Tekrar o şeyleri anlattıkça o yaşadıklarını hatırlıyorsun. Yaşıyorsun, tekrar yaşıyorsun ki artık bilinçaltımız altına yerleşmiş, unutamıyoruz. Çok korktuk. Sonunda Patijn bir cozumle geldi. 14 bayan aldı. 1999'da direk aldılar.

Cozumden faydalandılar. Benim eşimden daha katı dosyalar vardı. Varken onlar aldı. Biz alamadık. İyi bir dosyaya sahipken bize vermediler.

Bu süreçte on üç bayan aldı. Sonra bir tanesine daha verdiler. Bizden kötü durumda olan dosyaları hep aldı. Benim 1991 den itibaren burada olduğumu kanıtladığım halde çocuklarım burada dogdu. İki çocuğum olduğu halde bizi seçtiler, çünkü Şimdi açlık grevi yapıldığında dediler ki bir iki kişiyi seçme ihtimalleri var. Sebebi de yani verilmeyecek. Sebebi de açlık greviyle hiç kimse bir hak talep etmeye kalkmasın. Dediler ki, Hükümet dedi ki eğer biz on beş bayana on beşini oturma hakkı verirsek o zaman herkes bir hak talep etmek için açlık grevi yapar. Yani biz bunu insanlara göstermemiz gerekiyor demişler. Tabii bize direkt söylemiyorlar da ATKB'deki bizi destekçilerimiz ilgilenenler, Bu görüşmeyi yapanlar bize söyledi. Bir iki tane kurban seçilecek. bir iki tane kurban seçilecek. Sonra birine verildi. Bir tek biz kaldık. E 1999da almamız gereken oturum hakkını eften püften bahanelerle haksız resmi bir kurumun evrağını kabul etmiyor. Ben doksan birde geldiğimi kanıtliyorum ama diyor ki kabul etmiyorum Kabul etmediler. Başvurum varken, başvuru sonucu gelmeden beni

doksan altıda yurt dışı etmelerini bahane gösterdiler. Halbuki açlık grevinde benden çok çok sonra gelen bir iki senelik bayan onun da yakalanmışlığı vardı. Ona direkt verdiler.

Dosyamız çok güçlüyken en güçlü dosya benimki bizi seçtiler. Ta ki dokuz yıl bekledik. 2008e kadar. E tabii bu süreçlerde bayağı bir zorluklar çektik çalışma olanağı verilmedi. sıkıntılar çektik. Bir şekilde ayakta durmaya çalıştık. Sonunda En sonki mahkemede Cohen belediye başkanıydı. Açlık grevindeyken bakanıydı. O zaman bize oturum vermeyen kişi bakan iken sonra Amsterdamin belediye başkanı oldu mahkemeye mektup yazdı. Ben bu ailenin arkasındayım diye ve aileye oturumunu verilmesini talep etti. Destek çıktı. O zaman vermemişti. Sonunda tabii hatasını düzeltti. Ki bilinçli dediler politika bu sizin dosyanız kötü değil ama dosyamız iyiyken seçmelerinin tek sebebi bilmiyorum. neden bizi seçtiler? Neye göre hangi kritere göre düşündüler, Onu da bilmiyoruz. Onu da açıklamadılar, söylemediler. Mahkeme kararıyla 2008de aldık. Tabii aldığımızda bizim oturumumuz 2003 olarak geldi dediler. 2003'de veriliyor olarak gosterdiler, ama biz 5 sene daha, 2008'e kadar mahkemeye ciktik ve red geldi.

Çocuklarınızı rahat gezdiremiyorsunuz. Tatile götüremiyorsunuz. geçiminizi zor sağlıyorsunuz. bunlar hep olumsuz eksi şeyler. rahat hareket edemiyorsun polis korkusu yaşıyorsun. ne bileyim? Bir açık hava cezaevi gibiydi. Saklanıyorduk yani korkuyorduk. O korkuyu biz de yaşadık. Bir gece bize evden alıp götürecekler mi? Mahkeme red geldi. işte hafta içinde terk edin burayı diyorlar. Çünkü Hollanda cocuklarimin, onların ülkesiydi. Orada doğmuşlar. Benim çocuğum benim ülkemle benim anavatanımla bir bağlantıları yok onların babası sadece o ülkede doğmuş büyümüş. Ama benim çocuklarım bu ülkede doğdu büyüdü. Bilmedikleri bir ülkeye o yaşta götürmek şey değil ya hiç kolay değildi. Hiç. Hiç düşünmedik. Zaten gitmeyi hiç düşünmedik. Artık son mücadele neydi? açlıktı. Erkekler aslında dedi biz girelim dedik. Olmaz dediler yani. Bayanlar daha etkili olur, çünkü bayan

dediler. Hollanda'da kraliçesi bayandı. Buna müsaade etmez diye düşünüldü. Maalesef 39 güne kadar devam etti.

Şimdi şey yakalanmışlığı atladık. 1996'da birinci ayda benim bir fırında çalışırken polis baskında beni aldılar. Tabii bu konuda resmi çalışıyordum. Resmi vergimi ödeyerek resmi çalışıyordum. beni aldılar ama benim başvurum vardı Amsterdam yabancılar polisine oturma başvurusunda bulunmuştum. Bunu Tuğçe'yi de bildirmiştik, Eşimi de. üç kişiyiz. Beni aldılar. Yakaladılar. Götürdüler. Tabii ifademi alıyorlar. Doldurdu. şey polis dedi ki, sen dedi, Amsterdam'da ne var dedi? Nasıl dedim? Amsterdam polisiyle yabancılar polisinde neyin var dedi. Tabii onlar kompütürde görüyorlar. Esra'yı da görüyorlar Tuğçe'yi de. Ben bunlardan, eşimden bahsedemiyorum. Ya eşim var, burada çocuğum da var. Onları da alacaklar. Onlardan bahsedemiyorum. Tabii ki sistemde onlar görüyor. Bunu fark etti polis. Dedim başvurum var. Başvuru da, başvuru yaptığım zaman cevabı gelmeden yurt dışı edemiyorlar, etmiyorlar. Öyle bir hakları yok. Mecbur. Başvuru sonucuna kadar sonucunu beklemek zorundayım. Sonucunu bekleyeceksin. Ha bunu bildiği için Polis orada bir haksızlık etti. Beni yurt dışı etti ama şunun da farkındaydı. Burada beni gönderiyor. Burada bir çocuğumla eşimin olduğunu biliyor orada. Onu fark ettiği için dedi ki ben seni bugün gönderiyorum. Istersen yarın gelebiliyorsan çık gel dedi. Ben sana giriş hakkı tanıyorum dedi. hani kırmızı muhurat vurmuyorum pasaportuna dedi. İsmi geçmiyorum dedi. gelebiliyorsan yarın çık gel dedi. Bunun da sebebi orada Tuğçe ve eşimi gördüğü için. E şimdi bunu bahane ettiler. Oturma verirken ama oturma hakkı alanların içinde yakalanmışlığı olanlar vardı. Yurt dışı edilenler vardı. Beni haksız yere gönderdiler. Haksızlık ederek gönderdiler. Benim aanvraag sonucum gelmeden gönderdiler. Ya bunu da yaşadım. E tabii ben gene geldiğim hafta çocuğum dünyaya geldi. Tuğba ikinci kızım dünyaya geldi. Ben geldim, ve O hafta Tuğba doğdu.

Bu böyle bir şeyi Hollanda'da yaşanması çok şeydi, çok kötüydü. Hollanda gibi bir ülke haklarının çok ileri derecede olduğu bir ülkede insanlar hakkını alabilmek için on beş tane anne, on beş tane, kırk gün açlık çekmek zorunda kaldı. Kırk gün hiç kolay değildi ya.

Bu sürece baktığımda pişmanlık duyabileceğim bir şey var mı? Yok. Neden dersiniz çocuklarım okudu, başarılılar. mesleklerini aldılar. onların başarısı tabii bizim gururumuz. O yüzden dedik ki biz doğru yoldaymışız. sebebi de çocuklarımızın başarısı. Eğer onlar başarılı olmasalardı bu ülkede yalan yanlış durumlara düşselerdi tabii pişmanlık duyardık. Onlar açısından duyardık. Keşke biz burada kalmaya kendimizi zorlamasaydık derdim. Ama şu durumda demiyorum çünkü çocuklarımız hedeflerine ulaştığı için. Çocuklarım mesleğini aldıkları için, okudukları için uyumları, iyi ülkede yaşadıkları faydalı bireyler oldukları için gurur duyuyorum yaşadıkları zorluklar boşa değildi o yüzden pişmanlık duymuyorum.

Çocuklarımızın başarılı olduğundan dolayı ve çocuklarımız mutlu olduğu içindi yani.

Sevdikleri bir ülkede kaldıkları için. Aynen öyle. En sevdikleri ülke çünkü Hollanda. Onlar Hollanda'da doğdu. bu ülkeyi de seviyorlar. bu ülkeye de hizmet etmek istiyorlar. Başarılı, faydalı bir birey olmak istiyorlar. O onun için de başardılar.

Yapabileceğimiz her şeyin en iyisini yapmaya çalıştık. Elimizden bu kadar geldi. neyi değiştirebilirdik ki? senin yaşantını, hayatını değiştirecek bir şey yok. Elinde olanak yok. İstedğin işe giremiyorsun. İstedğin işte çalışmıyorsun. bir gün elinde kağıdı o lanlar haftada kırk saat çalışırken kağıt olmayanlar altmış saat çalışıyor. başka şansın yok. sistem seni bu şekilde kabul etmiş. Seçme hakkın yok bulduğun işte çalışabilirsin. Otuz saatse, otuz saat, elli saatse, elli saat değişmez. günde insanlar yedi sekiz saat çalışıyorsa kağıdı olmayanlar on beş saat çalışıyor. Sistem bu, yapacak bir şey yok. Elinden bu geliyor. Hakkını arayamazsın zaten ya. Sen iş bulmuşsun, evine ekmek götürebilecek durumdasın. Ona bakıyorsun. Karnını doyurmaya bakıyorsun. Evet bugün çok zor elde edildi ama iyi ki kalmışız.

English translation

When did I come to the Netherlands? I came to the Netherlands in 1991, on the 20th of the seventh month. I first came to Germany, stayed in Germany for a day and then came to the Netherlands. The reason for it was that I had many relatives here. I started working the day after I arrived. I worked in a bakery in Rotterdam and after working in Rotterdam for a month and a half, I started working in Utrecht. I was offered a job in a bakery there. I started working there. I came alone. I stayed in Holland until January 1993. I returned to Turkey. I married my wife there. Then I came back to Holland with her. On 5 March 1993, my wife and I came to Holland again, having been married for fifteen days. In the meantime, one year later, in 1994, I had a child. Tugçe is my eldest child.

During this time, of course we were working. I pay taxes, but you need to have a work permit, and since we don't have a work permit, they don't allow you to work, no matter how much tax you pay. Actually, it was tolerated for a while and we don't know what changed in the policies. All workplaces started to be raided and searched.

Of course, I had two children before my wife went on a hunger strike. Tugba was born in 1996. During this time the Gümüş family was deported. This was very much on the agenda. The Linkage Act came out. Now our hands are tied. We can't do anything. They don't allow us to work either.

Now everything has become difficult during this period. Since they had expelled one family, they wanted to make an example of this and expel all the families here. They took such a decision. Everyone will leave. No matter what. In the meantime, they started to organize a hunger strike. My brother's wife also wanted to join in. They told me. And I told my wife. They started a hunger strike. My brother's wife joined in. Let's make it 15 women, because it was 14 women. I spoke to my wife about it. I said it's very difficult to go on a hunger strike

like that. It's not easy. My wife said that if I leave this country, it will be the hardest for me. She said don't worry. I said, 'don't go' anyways. She said, 'No, I'll go.' She didn't listen to me. She went to ATKB without me. She told the women there that she wanted to go on a hunger strike. Of course, now there are meetings and things like that, they are discussing things all the time. Everyone knows that it won't be easy.

(M. starts crying)

Things have not been easy, and I have two children with me, my wife is hungry there. All of them are hungry there. The duration of the hunger strike is not clear, it was stretched for two weeks. And of course it did not even come up during the first weeks. They weren't even there. They didn't even know what happened, two weeks passed like that, and as it progressed, the newspapers started to report news.

Because two weeks, two weeks became four weeks. The days are getting longer. These people are hungry. It's getting very bad. All the time. We're having a meeting with the mayor. There's pressure to stop it. Stop this hunger strike. Now so much time has already passed by. How can we stop it with nothing in our hands? Without a solution? If we ask the women, the women won't accept it anyway. They went for a purpose. They starved for a month. The result is nothing. Nothing. Nothing at all. As the days went by, the husbands, children and supporters of the women inside, of course, were constantly protesting outside.

In this process, we are constantly in meetings with Patijn, there are meetings. He said 'I support this situation endlessly, but I can't do anything about it, and this situation of the women makes me sad. This is happening in my city. This situation makes me very sad.' Of course he didn't want people to be deported. We even gave them a list of names. Friends in the same situation as us. Among these lists of names, they tried to take one of our friends and deport him. At that moment, together with the hunger strike supporters, we went to the

Municipality. We said 'You promised us, you asked for a list of names. They are deporting a friend of ours, who had the strongest file, who had the strongest file between us, he is now on the plane, because they are sending him away.' Then, when we showed our reaction, they immediately took our friend off the plane, they didn't send him. His surname was Yesil.

Oh, all of this. It's been a very difficult time. I mean there, at the hunger strike they could arrest us completely and send us on buses, but thanks to Patijn, they really supported us. He said let's support you guys financially, stop this thing and we will give you whatever you want. We just said that our children were born here, started school here. They are integrated here and got used to the country. Now nothing has changed for me. I know the country I am going to, but my child does not. They will enter a very different environment. We had no possibility of returning, so we could not return. We had to do this not only for ourselves but also for our children. I mean, it is not an easy thing. People cannot live without food even for a day. They were hungry for 39 days and some of these people lost 15 kilos, some 20 kilos. 'And when one of our friends could not stand it and fainted during the hunger strike and was taken to the hospital, I saw that situation and hit my hand against the wall. My fingers broke. When my fingers were broken, I could not take care of my children. My other relatives took care of my children. We handed over our youngest daughter to my uncle's daughter.

They took care of them, you can't do anything with one hand. We had a difficult period.' They, my wife was hungry there, our situation was miserable. This went on and on. Finally Patijn said, 'at the protests, you people are walking on the streets with 200 or 250 people'.

He said 'take thousands of people to the streets'. Patijn supported us there and said that you need to bring thousands of people to the streets, both the ministry and the state should hear you, because they don't hear, they don't understand, they blocked their ears.

The determined stance of our wives. Their upright stance was definitely until the end, we will not give up until we get our right. They said until the end. You are ignoring us, but we will put this situation in your eyes if we have to. They said we will enact this law. Finally on the 39th day. Of course, the last march was very comprehensive. There was a huge crowd. It was a march as the party wanted. Finally, Patijn also did his best and to come with a solution to bring this to an end. The end is now near, 39 days. Now it's a case that goes towards death. Death. (M. starts crying again.)

The more you talk about those things, the more you remember them. You relive it, you relive it again, it's so ingrained in our subconscious that we can't forget it. We were so scared.

Finally, Patijn came with a solution. 14 women got their residence permit because of it. They got them directly in 1999. They could benefit from the solution. There were worse cases than my wife. They got it. We didn't get it. They didn't give it to us while we had a good case.

So actually, thirteen women got it in this process. Then they gave it to one more. They gave it to cases that were worse than us. Although I proved that I have been here since 1991, my children were born here. Even though I have two children, they chose us, because when the hunger strike was organised, they said that there was a possibility that they would choose one or two people. The reason for it will not be given. The reason is so that no one should try to demand any rights through a hunger strike. They said, the government said that if we give fifteen women a residence permit, then everyone will go on hunger strike to demand a right. So they said we need to show this to people. Of course they don't tell us directly, but our supporters in ATKB, the parties that are involved, those who had meetings there told us. One or two victims will be chosen. One or two victims will be chosen. First it was two victims, us and another woman, then it was given to her too. We are the only ones left. The residence permit, which we should have received in 1999, they do not accept our official documents with trivial excuses. I prove that I came in 1991, but they didn't accept it. While I had an

application, they made the excuse that they deported me in 1996. However, a woman who was in the Netherlands for two years who came much, much later than me, who also went on a hunger strike, also had a case of deportation. They gave it to her directly. While our file was very strong, they chose us with the strongest file. We waited for nine years until 2008. Of course, we had a lot of difficulties during this time, we were not given the opportunity to work. In our last court case, Cohen was the mayor. He was the minister when we were on hunger strike. At that time, the person who did not give us a residence permit was the minister, then he became the mayor of Amsterdam and wrote a letter to the court. He said, "I am behind this family" and demanded that the family be granted a residence permit. He supported us. He didn't give it to us then. In the end, of course, he corrected his mistake. While they consciously said that our file is not bad, but I don't know the only reason why they chose us when our file was good. why did they choose us? According to what criteria did they think, we don't know that either. They didn't explain that either. We got it in 2008 with a court decision. Of course, when we got it, they said that our residence permit came in 2003. They showed it as given in 2003, but we went to court for 5 more years, until 2008, and it was rejected every time.

You can't take your children on a holiday. You can hardly make a living. These are all negative things. You can't move freely, you are afraid of the police. It was like an open-air prison. We were always living under the radar, I mean, we were afraid. We experienced that fear too. Will they take us away from home one night? The IND rejected again. They said to leave here within a week. The Netherlands was the country of my children, their country. They were born here. My children have no connection with my country, my motherland, their father was born and raised only in that country. But my children were born and raised in this country. It was not easy to take them to a country they did not know at that age. It was not easy at all. We never thought about it. We never thought about going anyway. What was the

last struggle? It was hunger. The men actually said we should go in. They said no. They said women would be more effective because they were women. In the Netherlands, the queen was a woman. They thought that she would not allow it. Unfortunately, it continued until 39 days.

In the first month of 1996, when I was working in a bakery, they took me during a police raid. Of course, I was working officially. I was working officially, paying my taxes. They took me, but I had an application, I had applied for a residence permit to the Amsterdam foreigners police. We had an application, me, Tugçe and my wife. They caught me. They took me away. Of course they're taking my statement. The police said, "What are you doing in Amsterdam? How, I said? He said, what do you have with the Amsterdam police and the foreigners' police there? Of course they see it in the computer. They see Esra and Tugçe. I can't talk about them. I can't say I have a wife, I have a child here. They'll take them too. I can't talk about them. Of course they see them in the system. The police realised this. I said I have an application, for a residence permit. When you make an application, they can't deport you before you receive the answer. They have no such right. I have to wait until the result of the application. You have to wait for the result. The police treated me unfairly because they knew this. He deported me, but he also realised this. He is sending me away. He knows that I have a child and a wife here. Because he said, "I am sending you today. If you can come back tomorrow, come back. He said I give you the right of entry. He said I don't put a red stamp on your passport. He said he was not going to register my name. He said come back tomorrow if you can. And that's because he saw Tugçe and my wife there. Now they used this as an excuse. There were cases who had been deported among those who were granted a residence permit. There were those who were deported. But they sent me unjustly. They sent me away unfairly. They sent me before my application result came back. Of course, the week I came back, my child was born. Tugba, my second daughter was born. I came, and Tugba was born

that week. It was very bad to experience such things in the Netherlands. In a country like the Netherlands, where human rights are very advanced, fifteen mothers, fifteen mothers, had to starve for forty days to get their rights. Forty days were not easy.

When I look at this process, is there anything I regret? No. If you ask why, my children studied, they are successful, they got their professions, their success is of course our pride. That's why we said that we were on the right track. The reason is the success of our children. If they had not been successful, if they had fallen into false situations in this country, of course we would have regretted it. We would have regretted it for them. I would wish we hadn't forced ourselves to stay here, but I don't say that now because our children have reached their goals. I am proud that my children got their profession, that they have studied, that they are happy, that they are integrated individuals living in a good country, the difficulties they have experienced were not for nothing, so I have no regrets. It is because our children are successful and because our children are happy. Because they stayed in a country they love. Exactly. It is their favourite country. They were born in the Netherlands. They want to serve this country. They want to be successful, useful individuals. That's why they succeeded. We tried to do the best we could. That's all we could do. What could we change? There is nothing we could change. You don't have the means, you have no choice. You can't get the job you want. You can't work in the job you want. One day, those with papers work forty hours a week, while those without papers work sixty hours a week. You have no choice. The system has accepted you this way. You don't have a choice, you can't work in any job you find. If it's thirty hours, it's thirty hours, if it's fifty hours, it's fifty hours. If people work seven to eight hours a day, those without paper work fifteen hours. This is the system, there is nothing to do. That's all you can do. You can't claim your rights anyway. You have found a job, you are in a position to put bread on the table. That's what you look at. You're looking to feed yourself. Yes, today was very hard to achieve, but I'm glad we stayed.