A – Subject:

A fact-check report comprising field research, exploration, detection and interviews, focusing on the claim that two citizens, **Servet TURGUT** and **Osman ŞİBAN**, were thrown off a military helicopter on 11 September 2020. **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** were detained in Sürik (Yoğurtlu), a hamlet connected to Çığlıca Village within the rural region between Çatak district of Van and Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak, during a military operation and were then taken into a helicopter. **TURGUT** died on the 30th after 20 days in coma, and **ŞİBAN** survived with injuries.

B – Method:

To research this subject, independent deputy for İstanbul and journalist **Ahmet Şık**, and his colleague **Yılmaz Ruhi Demir**, have chronologically proceeded as follows:

On Thursday, **22 October 2020**, an exploration into the hamlet of Sürik and the region was made together with lawyers and a villager.

On Friday, **23 October 2020**, interviews were conducted in the city of Van with the legal representatives of individuals who had knowledge concerning the allegations, along with many witnesses and victims.

The requests to speak to the authorities, among which are the Governor of Van, the Regiment Commander of Van Gendarmerie, the Chief Public Prosecutor of Van, and the prosecutor working on the case, were all rejected.

On Tuesday, **27 October 2020,** interviews were conducted with witnesses and individuals with knowledge of the case, and with **Osman ŞİBAN**, who was taken by his relatives to Mersin after surviving the detention with injuries.

C – The Conduct of Authorities

Requests to speak to officials including **Mehmet Emin BİLMEZ (Governor of Van)**, **Brigadier General Yüksel YİĞİT (Commander of Van Gendarmerie)**, **Oğuzhan** **DÖNMEZ (Chief Public Prosecutor of Van)** and the prosecutor working on the case **İsmail KÖKER**, were rejected.

In response to the appointment requests, the private secretary of **Governor Mehmet Emin BİLMEZ** wanted to know how long **Ahmet ŞIK** would stay in Van, and he later phoned to tell that the Governor was going to be in Erciş the entire day and therefore was not available.

The request to meet the **Chief Public Prosecutor Oğuzhan DÖNMEZ** was made through his private secretary, but was left unanswered. On 23 October 2020, Ahmet Şık attempted to visit **DÖNMEZ** in his office, but he was turned away by the prosecutor's private secretary who claimed that "the prosecutor was busy" and that they would call Ahmet Şık later. No calls were made.

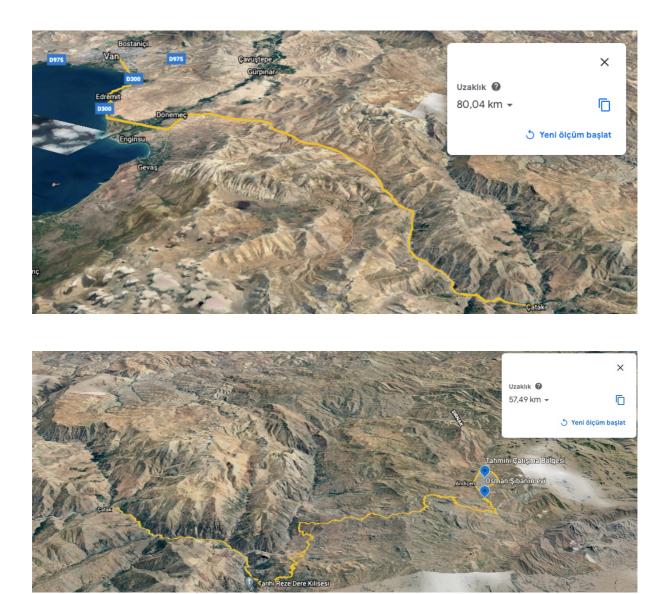
İsmail KÖKER, the public prosecutor working on the case, responded to the appointment request by saying: "I am currently in a deposition, call me in the afternoon". However, he did not answer further attempts to contact him on his phone. On 23 October 2020, Ahmet Şık attempted to visit **KÖKER** in his office, but he was not there.

The request to survey the hamlet of Sürik, where the detention took place, was rejected by the **** on the grounds that "the region was not safe".

On 23 October 2020, **Brigadier General Yüksel YİĞİT (Commander of Van Gendarmerie)**, was contacted through his sergeant by Ahmet Şık's parliamentary secretary for an appointment. Later on, Şık's secretary was contacted in the belief that Şık was a deputy for either AKP or MHP, and was asked about his arrival details and whether he would need a car at the airport. Half an hour after being informed by Şık's secretary that he was already in Van, the sergeant called to say that the **Brigadier General** was not in his post, and therefore was not available for an appointment.

D – The Location of the Incident

The location from where the two citizens were detained by soldiers during an operation is the hamlet of Sürik (Yoğurtlu), connected to Çığlıca Village between Çatak district of Van and Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak. The road from Van to Sürik is through the Bitlis-Van main road to the south of Van. Continuing in the direction of Gevaş, 80 kilometres of tarmac road, then after the centre of Çatak District, another 20 kilometres of broken road, and then 57 kilometres of unpaved dirt road and dented mountain paths are travelled to reach Sürik.



According to the villagers, the hamlet of Sürik consisted of 30 related households before their forced eviction in 1989.

While those who lived in the immediate region of Sürik and its neighbouring village, Andiçen, and the *koçerler* (nomads), used to live on agriculture and livestock, a new

system of village guardship was introduced in 27 June 1985. After the villagers in Sürik and in neighbouring villages refused the imposition of this new system in 1989, all the villages were forcefully evicted and homes and shelters were damaged. Subsequenty, access to the plateaus was banned.

On 29 September 2016, following a slight improvement in the conditions, **Servet TURGUT** and his relative **Tajdin KAYA**, applied to the Beytüşşebap Disctrict Governorship for a special permit to rebuild shelters and to work their land at their own cost, without knowing what would eventually come out of this.¹

	KAYMAKAN	T.C. ILIK MAKAMINA
	BE	Y T Ü Ş Ş E B A P
KONU	: Köye Dönüş Projesi kapsı Bulunulması Hususunda ger	amında tarafıma izin verilerek yardımda eği dileğimizdir.
İZAHI etmekte ike terk etmek güne kadar r	: Ben Şırnak ili Beytüşşebaj n Terör olaylarından dolayı 1990 y	o ilçesi Çığlıca Köyü Yoğurtlu Mezrasında ikamet lında güvenlik sebebiyle köyümüz Boşaltılarak yetimizin giderileceği vaat edilmesine rağmen bu
ekenek ve bi altı aile kend	Yaklaşık 25 yıldan beri köyü içeneklerimizden faydalanamadık. Ev li imkanlarımız çerçevesinde barınaca	müz olan Çığlıca' da bulunan tüm tarlalarımız lerimiz yıkılmış oturulamaz durumda idi. Bizler k ev inşa ettik.
köyümüze g	Köve Donis un put un	yon Projesi kapsamında gönüllü olarak
için gerekli yapılmasını	Köyde Öncelikle Hayatın y Tarım Hayvancılık gibi Faaliyetlerin ı talep etmekteyiz.	eniden başlatılması ve kalıcı hale getirilmesi slahına yönelik gerekli çalışmaların
yapmamiz j yardımda bi	Köyde geçine bilmek için ge gerekir. Bu kapsamda Devletimizce Kö	çim kaynağı olan hayvancılık ve tarımcılık iyümüze dönüşümüzün sağlanabilmesi için urumda Mağduriyetimiz söz konusu iile reisiydim. Kendime ait mal varlığım
giderilmesi -	Yukarıda arz ve izah ettiğimiz	nedenlerle mevcut mağduriyetimizin afıma izin verilerek ,Geçim kaynağı olan ınulması ve dönüşümün sağlanması 6
T.C. Kimlik M		
ADRES :		
	3	TALEPTE BULUNAN Servet TURGUT

¹ https://serbestiyet.com/ozel-haber/ozel-haber-helikopterden-atildigi-iddia-edilen-servet-turgutun-ogluotlarini-bicmeye-gitti-simdi-yogun-bakimdaa-41602/

Following the consideration of this application by the Beytüşşebap District Gendarmerie, villagers were granted a special permit to work their land from the end of May to the end of October.

JANDARMA GENEL KOMUTANLIĞI İLÇE JANDARMA KOMUTANLIĞI BEYTÜŞŞEBAP/ŞIRNAK ASYS : 0410- 10636 -16/Asys Ks. KONU : Tajdin KAYA ve Servet TURGUT BEYTÜŞŞEBAP KAYMAKAMLIĞINA ILGI : Beytüşşebap Kaymakamlık Makamının 29.09.2016 gün ve 2883-2884 sayılı yazısı İlgi sayılı yazı gereği: Komutanlığımız sorumluluk sahasında bulunan Çığlıca köyü nüfusuna kayıtlı Tajdin KAYA ve Servet TURGUT isimli şahısların Beytüşşebap Kaymakamlığına yazmış olduğu dilekçe hakkında tanzim edilen tutanağın EK'te gönderildiğini arz ederim. ndarma Binbas EKLER EK-A (1 Adet İlgi Sayılı Evrak) EK-B (2 Adet Tutanak) HIZMETE ÖZEL Bağlantı Noktası: Asyş.Ks.A.J.Asb.Üçvş Ş.TANRIVERDİ Tel:311 26 05 (5020)

Servet TURGUT and his relatives stated that they have been working these lands for the past 4 years, and that they have also rented out the lands they inherited to the koçers who raised livestock.

E – The profiles of the citizens

Osman ŞİBAN is 50 years old and has 8 children. After the forced eviction of their village, he moved with his family to Mersin, where he works as a tradesman.

Servet TURGUT, although it is said in his identity registry that he was 55, he was actually 64 years old and had 7 children and 3 grandchildren. After the forced eviction of their village, he first moved with his family to central Van, then to Mersin, and a few years later to Van Edremit.

F – Background to the event

On 8 September 2020, Ministry of Interior announced that 70 task forces with a total of 1040 personnel employed by Van Gandermarie Command, comprising Village

Guards, Gendarmerie Commandos, Gendarmerie Special Forces (JÖH), Police Special Forces (PÖH), started conducting an operation called "Yıldırım-10 Norduz" in the rural areas surrounding Van.²



On **10 September 2020**, Governor of Van announced that during the operations, weapons, ammunition, and life supplies belonging to the PKK members were captured in the shelters near Van's Gülpınar district.³



² https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/vanda-yildirim-10-norduz-operasyonu-baslatildi/1966122

³ https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/yildirim-10-norduz-operasyonunda-teroristlere-ait-silah-ve-muhimmat-ele-gecirildi/1969196

On **11 September 2020**, the Ministry of Interior announced that following the airsupported operations in the rural areas surrounding the Çatak district of Van, a search was carried out in the region and a clash began which resulted in Gendarmerie Special Forces killing three PKK members.⁴

On **11 September 2020** at 09.25, the Ministry of National Defence's Twitter account released a message of condolence⁴ for the soldiers **Gendarmerie Lieutenant Commander Mahmut TOP and Gendarmarie Special Sergants Yusuf UYAR and Sezer UÇAR,** who were martyred in the same clash.⁴



On 24 September 2020, Minister of Interior Süleyman SOYLU attended a television programme on TGRT Haber and announced that bombings by F-16s were carried out in the region where the soldiers were martyred, and that the following morning a search was conducted in the belief that there may be killed individuals. During the search, PKK members were found in a cave and clashes began. SOYLU said: "Our three martyred friends neutralized two terrorists in the cave, but there was a third in the corner of the cave and he martyred our three friends: our Staff Sergeant,

⁴ https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/vanin-catak-ilcesi-kirsalinda-cikan-catismada-3-terorist-etkisiz-hale-getirildi/1969864

⁵ https://twitter.com/tcsavunma/status/1304486246014689280

⁶ https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/msb-vanda-sehit-olan-askerler-icin-bassagligi-mesaji-yayimladi/1970708

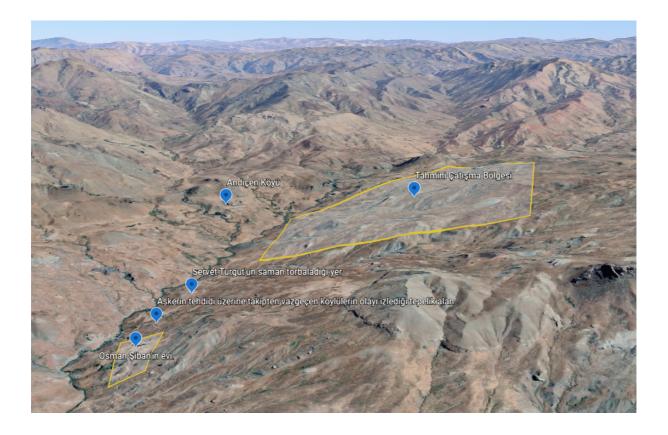
Sergeant, and Lieutenant. Then the terrorist escapes and the operations widen. He is caught in the riverbed, clashes continue, and he is killed".⁷

G – The Development of the Event / Records:

Servet TURGUT and **Osman ŞİBAN**, were detained following these clashes which resulted in the deaths of three PKK members and three soldiers. On the day of the incident, 13 people, including children, were present in the village.

H – The events according to the witnesses

The villagers said that on **11 September 2020** at around 05.00, they woke up for the morning prayers and heard a big explosion that shook their homes. Half an hour after the explosion, when the sun began to rise, they saw many helicopters, some flying, some landing in the region, which is approximately 1.3 kilometres away according to Google Earth (All locations, distances and regions are visible in the interactive map in the related link)^s.



⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuNcw-iwzXs

⁸ <u>https://bit.ly/2TBbEn2</u>

Later, the villagers began carrying out their day-to-day work. Around noon, a helicopter landed near **Osman ŞİBAN**'s home and dropped off 20 soldiers fully equipped with camouflages and weapons. After the helicopter took off again, villagers said that the soldiers *"have gathered all the villagers and made them kneel on the ground. While checking our identification, they asked as questions like: 'Do terrorists come here?', 'Who comes here?', 'Are you assisting the terrorists?'. They said: 'We are angry. We are in pain. Our Lieutenant is martyred. We'll take it out on you'. And they smacked a few people. We offered our condolences, we said: 'You are soldiers and we are citizens, but the Lieutenant was our commander too. Your martyr is our martyr. No one comes here. We are minding our own business' but they still acted with rage."⁹*

The villagers said that the after making threats, the soldiers have dispersed on foot into the region and the villagers returned to their work. **Servet TURGUT** parted from the villagers and went to the plateau (which is approximately 700 meters away according to Google Earth) to put his hays in sacks.



The villagers were confronted again by the soldiers around 16.00-17.00

⁹ https://demokrasiicinbirlik.com/2020/10/23/demokrasi-icin-birlik-van-raporu/



Osman ŞİBAN, who was interviewed by Ahmet Şık, recounts the events as follows:10

"I was in front of my own home, together with the kids, having tea. I don't fully remember but I think it was around 4-5 in the afternoon. I saw that they were bringing Servet Turgut. Two soldiers were in his two arms, and another soldier was pointing his gun at Servet's back. They had put something like a sack on Servet's head. Speaking to myself, I said: 'These are very dangerous soldiers. Why have they done this?'. I was afraid, they were coming at me. At a distance of about 100-150 meters, they started yelling: 'Who is Osman ŞİBAN?'. I was having tea outside. I dropped the glass upon hearing my name and seeing Servet like that. I raised my hand: 'I am Osman ŞİBAN'. 'Come here', they said. I stood up when they came to me. They removed the sack from Servet's head. They asked 'Servet TURGUT, is this Osman ŞİBAN?'. Servet said 'Yes'. They continued yelling: 'Tell the truth, is this Osman ŞİBAN?'. They asked this for three times. Later they asked for my identity card, I gave it. He looked at the card, and pointing to Servet TURGUT, he asked me if I knew him. I said 'Yes, he is Servet TURGUT, he is my nephew, how can I not know him'. They told me to go with them, and 4-5 soldiers caught me in the arms. I turned

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p-DUddPfbQ (Osman Şiban's narration was recorded with the knowledge and consent of himself and his family).

to my kids and said: 'Don't be afraid, they'll send me back, I'll come back'. They took us to where the hays were."

When asked about why the soldiers detained him only after asking specifically for his name, Osman ŞİBAN said:

"There were koçers (nomads) around the region where the clashes happened. The soldiers asked the koçers: 'Where did you come from, who brought you here?'. And the Koçer said 'Osman gave this land to me'. That's how they knew my name. I am the owner of this village, I am a homeowner here. These are my grandfather's lands. I won't be disrespectful to the place. We own the title deeds. Koçers told: 'We rented this land from Osman, and paid him. We are not here without permission. The land belongs to Osman'. They gave my name. And when the soldier asked 'Where is Osman?', they directed him to our village. The soldiers break up in two groups, one group goes across this deep river, and the other one comes to our village. They see Servet on top of the hill near our Village. Servet was sewing his sacks with his needle, his 'sujin' as we call it. He was sewing the mouth of the sack. I don't know what they did to him, maybe they beat him up, and then said 'Show us Osman', and they brought him to the village."

Some villagers who witnessed these events started following their relatives who were being detained by the soldiers. After about 300 metres, they were threatened by the soldiers and they went up on a hill at the end of the village, which is about 400 meters from the village, and they started watching from there. The soldiers took **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** to the place where the hays were stacked, and where other soldiers were waiting. The villagers said that "The soldiers made a fire, they created some smoke", which means that the soldiers were signalling to the helicopters for their evacuation. The villagers said that the soldiers were beating **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** while waiting for the helicopter.

Cengiz Şiban, who witnessed his brother's detention, said that the soldiers first arrived in the village on 11 September 2020 at noon time:

"A helicopter landed to the back of Osman's house. All of the village and its surrounding areas were full of soldiers. They asked us 'Who comes here?', 'How many people live in this village?'. We are two or three families here. We said we come here every May and leave in September or October. They asked us if there were other people coming. We said: 'We don't know. There are nomads and dairy farmers everywhere. They come in Spring. They come here in March and May and they stay around until Autumn'. They hit some of us in the meantime. Then they left. At around 5 in the afternoon, they brought in Servet. Two soldiers were in his two arms, and another soldier was pointing his gun at Servet's back. There was a white cloth on his head, which they removed when they brought him to the village. A soldier said: 'Who is Osman?', and he (Osman) was drinking tea. He raised his hand to say 'It's me', and they brought Servet next to him. They asked Servet and Osman to identify each other for a few times. Osman said 'Yes, he is my nephew'. After looking at his identity card, they forcibly detained him. They pushed him, kicking him on the way. They were about 200 meters ahead of us. I followed them. I said 'come, these soldiers furious'. On the hill near the end of the village, the soldiers told us to turn away. We were four people. Osman's wife, me, and their two kids. When we reached the hill, they reached where the hays stood. We watched them from the hill. They made a fire, a signal. In less than 10 minutes a helicopter landed there. They circled Osman and Servet, there were about 15-20 soldiers. Some of them got into the helicopter, and they threw *Osman and Servet in there too. Many soldiers remained outside. The helicopter took* off after taking them. Then it started to get darker and we couldn't see anything clearly. No other helicopter arrived. Some soldiers stayed there, on those hills, across from our village. On the third day the operations finished. It was the 14^{*}. I mounted on a horse to go to a nearby settlement where I could have cell phone reception, it takes about two to three hours. I talked to my brothers on the phone and they told me that 'Both Servet and Osman are in intensive care units in Van Training Research Hospital'. I was shocked. I said 'How could this be? They were healthy before being taken. They took them from us.' I wanted to go to Van from there, but I decided against it thinking that the family would become anxious and sad. I returned to the village to gather the people. We arranged for a car which arrived at midnight. We went to the hospital in Van. They didn't let us see them. There were civilian soldiers, *police. Our relatives were there as well'*"

The helicopter which took **Servet TURGUT** and **Osman ŞİBAN** is believed to have flew in the direction of Van Gendarmerie, which is approximately 90 kilometres from the village according to Google Earth in terms of air distance.



It is understood from a delivery receipt report dated to 02 October 2020 that Şiban was taken to the Gendarmerie and his personal belongings were delivered to his lawyer **Jında Rugeş KOÇAK**.

TESLIM TESELLÜM TUTANAĞI

14 Eylül 2020 tarihinde Van II Emniyet mudurläga görevlilerince tarafimiza teslim edilen Osman ŞIBAN (TCKN: 40493146540) isimli şahsın üzerinden çıkan malzemelerin Cumhuriyet Savcısı İsmail KÖKER' in talimatıyla kendisine yada avukatına teslim edilmesi talimatı alınması üzerine, aşağıda yazılı malzemelerin;

1 Adet Osman ŞIBAN'a ait kimlik,

1 Adet Osman ŞİBAN'a ait sürücü belgesi,

1 Adet san renkli darky marka kol saati,

1 Adet üzerinde Medine Puk Kodu 19903847 Pim 2424 yazılı not kağıdı,

1 Adet metal cimbiz,

1 Adet anahtarlık ve üzerinde takılı İTO ve Made İn China yazılı 2 anahtar,

1 Adet italyano marka kalem pil,

1 Adet Duo marka ilaç.

1 Adet Tarak,

1 Adet siyah renkli kırık tükenmez kalem,

1 Adet üzerinde exercise note yazılı 27 sayfadan oluşan not defteri,

1 Adet üzerinde Osman ŞİBAN ve Sibel BAŞAK isimli şahısların adları yazılı kira sözleşmesi,

1 Adet yırtık üzerinde Bişar ÖZLÜ ile başlayan not kağıdı,

1 Adet üzerinde çeşitli yazı ve rakamların bulunduğu 13.11.2019 Whatsapp yazılı A4 kağıdı,

1 Adet üzerinde Adil OKAN ve Osman ŞİBAN isimlerinin bulunduğu 155.000.00TL yazılı 24.05.2017 tarihinde düzenlenmiş senet,

1 Adet yırtık üzerinde Sibel BAŞAK yazılı not kağıdı,

1 Adet üzerinde 40433148580 yazılı not kağıdı,

2 Adet üzerinde cengiz ŞIBAN yazılı elektrik faturası,

1 Adet A-003388 seri numaralı bulgu poşetinde bulunan ve incelemesi tamamlanan Nokia marka 359990055316425 IMEI numaralı cep telefonu, 512 MB hafiza kartı ve 1517230075610 ibareli simkart ile bunlara ait kopyaların bulunduğu usb belleğin tam ve eksiksiz olarak Osman \$IBAN' in avukatı olan Jinda Rugeş KOÇAK' a teslim edildiği/teslim alındığına dair;

lş bu teslim tesellüm tutanağı tarafımızdan tanzim edilerek hazırda bulunanlarca okunup

imza altına alınmıştır.02.10.2020

442721 Phik Nolu J.TEM Görevlisi.

4170031 Pbik Nolu J.TEM Görevlisi.

Jinda Rugeş KOÇAK Avukat

J. Jugs

Osman ŞİBAN recounts what happened in the helicopter following his detainment as follows:

"They took us to the hays. Then I saw a helicopter landing. They beat us and took us into the helicopter. A few soldiers got into the helicopter but many of them remained outside. I don't remember clearly but there were around 20 soldiers in the helicopter. Neither at the village, nor in the helicopter have they charged us with anything. I was looking at one of them when he punched me in the face. 'You can't look. You can't speak. You can't look around'. He continued hitting me in the face. They were hitting Servet too. They punched me in the face many times in the helicopter. There were two corpses in the helicopter; PKK members. They were put in something like a sack (corpse bag). They uncovered one of them and showed his face to me, saying to me: 'You know him'. I didn't know him, I said 'I don't know who this is'. They started beating me again. They beat me so hard that my head fell on the body bag. They were speaking on radio transmitters and I heard a voice saying 'Bring them to the military post'. We didn't talk with Servet in the helicopter. I saw that he was being punched too. I didn't see much of the rest because our heads were looking down, they beat us so hard in the helicopter. I heard that a soldier, I don't know if he was the commander, was telling the others that they shouldn't beat 'this old man, this old man will die', they were speaking of Servet."

According to **Osman ŞİBAN**, after being beaten in the helicopter they were taken to the Van Gendarmerie Military Post, and there was a large group of soldiers waiting for them.





ŞİBAN says that they did not see the 100-150 soldiers waiting for them on the ground until they were pushed off the helicopter, and that was when the lynching, which killed **Servet TURGUT**, and put **ŞİBAN** in a coma, began.

"The helicopter landed. All of the soldiers got out. I looked around, we weren't off the helicopter yet. I looked outside and saw a lot of soldiers, maybe around 100-150. They were fully equipped, waiting for us. They were armed. One of them said 'Bring those terrorists here'. Two soldiers came in, they first threw off the corpses, and then they threw us off too. They pushed us behind our back. Servet and I fell on the concrete ground. We were on the ground. One of the soldiers said 'This terrorist is alive'. And then those 100-150 soldiers came at us. Punches, kicks... I swear, they dragged us on the ground. There were 10, 20 soldiers for each of us. All of them were beating us. I don't know what they did to us. I don't know what they did to me. They threw us on the ground, and they came up on us. They stamped my head. They beat us both in and out of the helicopter. While beating, they were telling us that we were terrorists. We are villagers, we are citizens. But we are called terrorists too. I don't know how much time passed. They stamped over my head when I was lying on the ground. I don't remember the rest. I lost consciousness there. I don't know how I was brought to the hospital. When I opened my eyes, I saw a lawyer. I was very scared. I was crying.

There were policemen too. I said 'Don't give me to the soldiers. They will kill me'. The lawyer said: 'Don't be afraid. I am here. Your relatives are here. They can't beat you any more'. This is all I remember, nothing else. This is what they have done to me.'



The lawyer **Osman ŞİBAN** saw when he regained consciousness in the hospital was **Jinda KOÇAK**, his aunt's daughter. Lawyer **KOÇAK** recounts what's happened in the hospital as follows:

"Osman ŞİBAN is my uncle's son. I call him uncle. He started crying when he saw me. I asked him if he recognized me. He said 'Yes'. He was crying without pause, his memory was cloudy. While crying, he said 'I have been here for three months. Why did you leave me? Why did you not look after me?'. I said 'Don't be afraid. We are all here. You are not alone. Your relatives are outside, your lawyers are here. You are not alone. They can't do anything to you'. He was crying like a child. I asked him 'What happened to you, uncle?'. He said 'They took me, tens of soldiers, gendarmeries were hitting me. They beat me. They hit me so much, so much, so much'. He was repeating: 'They beat me so much'. I asked him if they were thrown off the helicopter. He started crying again. 'If I say yes, they will do worse things. They will do bad things again'. *There were a lot of police officers in the hospital room. My uncle was scared of them* too. He was saying 'Save me. Get me out of here'. We were both crying. I told the police officers to leave. I said 'Leave us so that we can at least cry in peace'. They didn't leave. I told them that they cannot be here because there were no arrest orders. *They told me that they were ordered to be here, they can't leave. After some quarrels,* their chief phoned the prosecutor, and then they left the room. When they left, my uncle started recounting the same things as he cried. He was continuously saying that 'They beat us. They beat us too hard. Tens of gendarmeries beat us.' Crying, he told me that he wanted to see his family, his children. After more quarrels with the officers, we managed to bring his wife, Medine SIBAN, into the room with prosecutor's approval. He was continuously crying, and I couldn't ask anything else".

I – AFTER HIS DISCHARGE FROM THE HOSPITAL, IT WAS REVEALED THAT A DELEGATION FROM HDP WOULD BE COMING, SO OSMAN ŞİBAN WAS TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL AGAIN FOLLOWING A RAID TO HIS HOUSE:

On 20 September 2020, Osman ŞİBAN was discharged from the hospital to be taken to his relatives' home. Relatives were told the next day that an HDP delegation would visit ŞİBAN on 22 September. However, before the delegation could arrive, the family was confronted by the police in their home. Following a morning raid at about 05.00, ŞİBAN was taken back to the hospital. The police officers claimed that there was an order from the prosecutor to take ŞİBAN back to the hospital for the completion of some medical procedures, however, ŞİBAN was taken to the military hospital instead of Van Training and Research Hospital. ŞİBAN was held in the hospital until late into the night, and was discharged on the condition that he would be taken to Mersin by an ambulance. ŞİBAN, who was brought to Mersin, is under treatment in his home.

J – SERVET TURGUT'S AUTOPSY:

After twenty days in coma, **Servet TURGUT** died on **30 September 2020**, and his corpse was taken to Forensic Medicine Department of Van Hundredth Year University for an autopsy. According to those who have seen **TURGUT**'s body, his entire body was stamped on, and almost all of his bones were broken. There were lot of bruises on his body. His fingers were broken, and his front teeth were missing. According to one witness who has seen the body: *"It was as if a truck had piled excavations on his body"*.

According to the witnesses who were present in the Forensic Medicine Department at the time of **TURGUT**'s autopsy, the following events occurred:

1^{*w*} **Witness:** "They did not let us in. The prosecutor was coming out at that time. There was an imam among us, we asked the prosecutor to allow our imam to wash **TURGUT**'s body but he didn't allow it. In an area across the Forensic Medicine Department, we spoke to the prosecutor while we smoked cigarettes. The prosecutor pointed towards some people waiting there and he said: 'This is Corps Commander, this is the Brigadier General'. There were two colonels but they were in civilian attire".

2^{••} **Witness:** "The prosecutor İsmail KÖKER was present during the autopsy. There was an independent doctor from Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, and a lawyer; they observed the autopsy. What's interesting is that during the autopsy, during those 3-4 hours, Major General of Van Army Crops Hüseyin KURTOĞLU and Van Gendarmerie Commander Brigadier General Yüksel YİĞİT were waiting around the Forensic Medicine Department in civil attires. I think there was also another commander with them.

K – The uncovering of the events and the allegations about the throwing of the citizens off the helicopter:

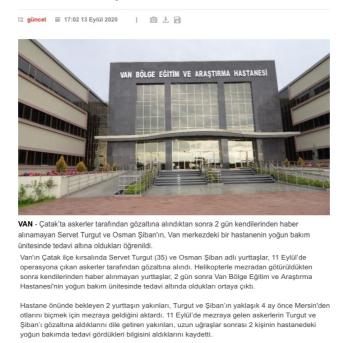
It was journalists from **Mezopotomya Ajansı (MA – Mesopotamia News)** who first revealed that **ŞİBAN** and **TURGUT** were in intensive care following their detainment and they were in coma; these journalists were arrested for this news. Because of their determined pursuit and the news pieces they wrote, journalists **Cemil Uğur** and his colleagues **MA News Director Adnan BİLEN** and **Jin News** reporter **Şehriban İBA** were taken into custody on 6 October 2020, and on 9 October they were arrested on the grounds of previous investigations.

The first news piece about the event was published on 13 September 2020, with the headline: **"They surfaced two days after their detention"**. During the next few days, news pieces revealing that **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** were hospitalized as a result tortures, and that they were beaten and thrown on the ground from a distance, were published."



¹¹ http://mezopotamyaajansi25.com/search/content/view/109348

Gözaltına alındıktan 2 gün sonra hastanede çıktılar



Yoğun bakım ünitesinde tedavileri süren 2 kişinin durumunun ağır olduğu öğrenildi.

Hastanede nöbet tutan polisler, yakınlarının 2 kişiyle görüşmelerine izin vermiyor.

MA / Cemil Uğur

On 13 September 2020, the day on which the news started circulating, **HDP Van Deputy Murat SARISAÇ** released a statement from his Twitter account, and claimed that **Servet TURGUT** and **Osman ŞİBAN** were thrown off a helicopter. **SARISAÇ**, who said that this claim was backed by some eye witnesses, argued that although the details are unclear, two citizens who were taken healthy ended up in intensive care units after heavy torture.¹²

¹² https://twitter.com/muratsarisac/status/1305183465021804546



On 17 September 2020, Following **SARISAÇ'**s statement, MA reporter **Cemil Uğur** revealed that **Servet TURGUT**, who was registered as "unnamed patient" in Van Training and Research Hospital, sustained injuries caused by 'falling off' according to a forensic report.¹³ A similar epicrisis report which highlighted the 'falling off' and 'beating' was written for **Osman ŞİBAN** in Private Lokman Hekim Hospital and Van Training and Research Hospital.

¹³ http://mezopotamyaajansi25.com/search/content/view/109689

LOKMAN HEKIM

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On 20 September 2020, MA reporter **Cemil UĞUR** wrote a news piece with the headline: **"Hospital reports are confirmed: They were thrown off the helicopter"**¹⁴, which revealed that the epicrisis report written for **Osman ŞİBAN** in Van Training and Research Hospital showed that **ŞİBAN** sustained "**injuries caused by falling off a helicopter**".

'Helikopterden atıldı' denilen kişinin darp raporu: Yüksekten düştü

🔚 güncel 📑 12:15 17 Eylül 2020 | 🚺 🛃 📄



VAN - Gözaltına alındıktan 2 gün sonra yoğun bakımda oldukları ortaya çıkan yurttaşlardan Servet Turgut'un darp raporunda, "İsimsiz hasta yüksekten düşme sebebiyle getirildi" denildi. Görgü tanıkları, "Helikopterden atıldı" iddiasında bulunmuştu.

Van'ın Çatak ilçesinde operasyona çıkan askerler tarafından 11 Eylül'de gözaltına alınan ve 2 gün sonra Van Bölge Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi'nde yoğun bakımda oldukları ortaya çıkan 7 çocuk babası Servet Turgut (55) ve 8 çocuk babası Osman Şiban'ın (50) tedavileri halen devam ediyor. Ailelerin de hastane önündeki bekleyişi sürüyor.

YÜKSEKTEN DÜŞME' RAPORU

Öte yandan, Şiban'ın işkence gördüğüne dair darp raporunun ardından Turgut'a dair hazırlanan darp raporuna da ulaşıldı. Askerler tarafından önce özel bir hastaneye ardından Van Bölge Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi'ne götürülen Turgut'un darp raporunda, "İsimsiz hasta yüksekten düşme sebebiyle getirildi. Entübe hasta" notu yer aldı. "Yüksekten düşme" bilgisinin, bilinçleri kapalı bir şekilde 2 kişiyi hastaneye getiren askerler tarafından verildiği tahmin ediliyor.

GÖRGÜ TANIKLARININ İDDİASI

Söz konusu "yüksekten düşme" ifadesi, Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP) Van Milletvekili Murat Sarısaç'ın görgü tanıklarına dayandırarak yaptığı "helikopterden atıldı" iddiasını güçlendiriyor.

HDP'li Sarısaç, olaya dair yaptığı paylaşımda, "Ailerlerle hastanede yaptığımız görüşmede, Servet Turgut ve Osman Şiban'ın tarlalarında çalışırken askerler tarafından tartaklanarak helikoptere bindirilmiş ve iki gündürde haber alınamıyordu. Ailelerin yoğun çabaları sonucu ikisinin de Van Bölge Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesinin yoğun bakım ünitesinde, birinin entübe olduğu diğerinin de bilincinin açık olduğunu ve görgü tanıklarına göre bu iki kişinin helikopterden atıldığını aktardılar. Helikopterden atılsın veya atılmasın gerçek şu ki, ikisi de köyünde, arazilerinde çalışırken askerler tarafından alınıp, işkenceyle bilinçlerini kaybedip yoğun bakıma alınacak hale getiriliyorlar" ifadelerini kullanmıştı.

RAPORUN DEVAMI

Darp raporunun devamında ise, her iki gözde ve her iki kulakta deri altındaki kılcal damarların zarar gördüğü, kanın deri altına sızdığı, her iki el ile göğüs ön duvarında derinin en üst tabakasının kalktığı ifadelerine yer verildi.

MA / Cemil Uğur

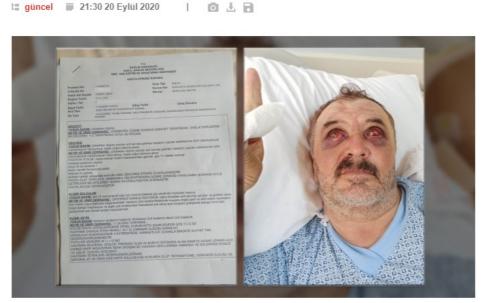
¹⁴ http://mezopotamyaajansi25.com/tum-haberler/content/view/110025

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Hastane raporuyla doğrulandı: Helikopterden atıldılar



VAN - Van'da gözaltına alındıktan sonra işkence gördüğü ortaya çıkan Osman Şiban ve Servet Turgut'un, helikopterden atıldıkları hastane raporuyla kanıtlandı.

After the confirmation of allegations by hospital reports, many representatives of opposition political parties, from within and outside the Parliament, along with rights organisations, released statements of condemnation and requested for the perpetrators to be uncovered. Governorship of Van, which remained silent in the face of torture allegations until that day, released a statement on 21 September 2020, refuting the allegations. The statement claimed that a PKK member was killed during the operations on 11 September 2020, and **Servet TURGUT** was detained for spying on the operations and acting suspiciously: *"The person did not obey the police officer's warnings, he attempted to escape and then fell on a rocky ground and was hurt. Despite his resistance, he was appropriately taken into custody"*.

In the same statement, it is claimed that **Osman ŞİBAN** was detained on the grounds that he "**helped and assisted**" PKK members: "*The person resisted detention in the same region, but he was appropriately taken into custody. For the detention procedures, these* (2) *suspects and a neutralized PKK member were taken into a helicopter and brought to Van*

Gendarmerie Command Post at around 19.00. The suspects were taken to the nearest private hospital by ambulances, and then were sent to Van Region Research Hospital". It was also stated that legal and administrative investigations were underway in response to the allegations.¹⁵

T.C. VAN VALILIĞİ	VALİLİK V VAN İL	ÇELERİMİZ HİZMETLERİMİZ G	GÜNDEM ~ ILETIŞİM 🕌 🔍
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Kamuoyuna saygiyla duyurulur.

On 24 September 2020, in a television programme on TGRT Haber, Minister of Interior Süleyman SOYLU said that the helicopter's doors cannot be opened until it is very close to the ground, and he refuted allegations about the citizens being thrown off. SOYLU reiterated the claims of Van Governorship: Servet TURGUT fell on a rocky ground, and Osman ŞİBAN was assisting the terrorists. He said that "*The clashes were ongoing*. Soldiers saw another person. They saw that he threw something into the water. They started chasing him. During the chase the soldiers did not kill him because he was unarmed, and he fell of on rocky ground and was injured... They were also followed by drones. Because these people, the terrorists, came out of their homes to this spot. They were previously found in a home. Their connection to this house is clear. Then they are taken into the helicopter, the helicopter lands with everyone in it. You claim that they were thrown off, but have you ever been on a helicopter? I frequently use helicopters because of my work. It is

¹⁵ http://www.van.gov.tr/van-valiligi-basin-duyurusu

my work. The doors cannot be opened before it lands. The helicopter lands and then the doors will open " $_{16}$

Despite **SOYLU**'s claims, some news pieces published by the state's official news agency Anadolu Ajansı (AA – Anadolu Agency) contain certain images which show that **SOYLU**'s claims are false.



On 17 May 2020, a news piece was published which showed that a military helicopter returning from an operation in the rural areas of Tunceli could fly on high altitude while its doors were open.¹⁷

A video record used for a news piece dated 16 July 2020, detailing the fall of a helicopter which resulted in the deaths of 7 soldiers, shows that the military helicopter can fly with its doors open, and a soldier stands upright on a platform outside the helicopter.¹⁸

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuNcw-iwzXs

¹⁷ https://www.anadoluimages.com/p/kahraman-helikopter-pilotunun-kayaliklardaki-mehmetcigi-tek-tekerletahliyesi-nef/19806239

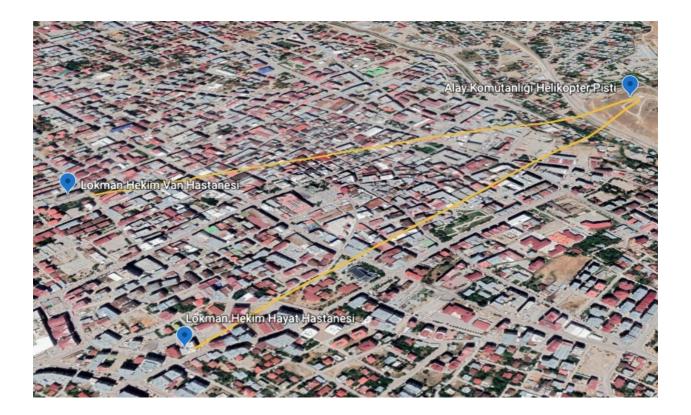
¹⁸ https://www.anadoluimages.com/p/vanda-kesif-ucagi-dustu-7-sehit-3/20144584



On top of these, interviews with witnesses in Van city centre reveal that the allegations about **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** originated from the soldiers. According to the statements of the villagers, **Servet TURGUT** and **Osman ŞİBAN**, who were detained at around 16.00-17.00 and taken into a helicopter, were tortured by being beaten during their entire flight.

Following the helicopter's landing in Van Gendarmerie Command Post, the villagers were thrown onto the concrete ground and the torture continued. **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN** were lynched by many soldiers.

The conditions of the villagers worsened due to the tortures, and on 11 September 2020, at around 19.00, they were taken by civilian looking gendarmeries in separate cars to the two different branches of Private Lokman Hekim Hospital in Van. **TURGUT**, whose condition was worse, was taken to the Lokman Hekim Van Hospital on Zübeyde Hanım Avenue in Cumhuriyet Neighbourhood, which had better facilities, and **ŞİBAN**, who was relatively in better condition, was taken to Lokman Hekim Life Hospital on Milli Egemenlik Avenue in Serhat Neighbourhood.



According to the registries, **Osman ŞİBAN** was handed over to the hospital staff by **Fuat A.**, who was employed in Van Gendarmerie

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According to the witnesses, emergency doctors carried out an immediate medical treatment on **ŞİBAN**, who sustained heavy bruises to his face and body; however, they suspected of cerebral bleeding and transferred **ŞİBAN** to Van Training and Research Hospital, which had better facilities.

The witnesses recounted that the civilian looking gendarmeries who brought **ŞİBAN** to the hospital addressed the hospital staff and other people and said: *"These are terrorists. We caught them during a clash, but they tried to escape by jumping off the helicopter"*. Following on from these statements, we can say that the allegations about

"falling of, or being thrown off" originated from the perpetrators. The soldiers thought that a true statement about the tortures and lynching which resulted in heavy injuries could not be made. Their words which were spoken to the hospital staff and other people around, were heard by the families which found their relatives in intensive care units, and the relatives then passed these words on to lawyers, journalists, and HDP Deputy Murat Sarısaç.

L – Arresting of Journalists

It was **Mezapotamya Ajansı (MA)** which revealed to the public the details of **ŞİBAN** and **TURGUT**'s detention and their following resurfacing in coma in a hospital. MA's reporter **Cemil UĞUR**, wrote many news pieces about the events starting from 13 September 2020, and News Director **Adnan BİLEN** serviced these pieces. **Şehriban İBA**, who is a reporter for **Jin News**, is another journalist who worked on the same case. The determined pursuit of these three journalists kept the torture allegations in public discussion, and they ensured that political parties and representatives from rights organisations would react to the events.

Helikopterden atılan Şiban zorla askeri hastaneye götürüldü



Hastane raporuyla doğrulandı: Helikopterden atıldılar



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Gözaltına alındıktan 2 gün sonra hastanede çıktılar



Helikopterden atılanların yakınları: Ölümle tehdit edildik



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'Helikopterden atıldı' denilen kişinin darp raporu: Yüksekten düştü



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AN - Askerler tarafından gözatlına atındıktan 2 gön sonra yoğun bakında olduktar öylünün tədavisi sürüyer. Kardeşinin yanında gözatlına atındığını ve bir şeyinin olm ölçünün ölmenin filiken, ölkenem yılı yeni terili göne enveninen ile ile bir şeyinin olm ölçünün ölmenin filiken, ölkenem yılı yeni terili göne enveninen yılışır.

On 6 October 2020, **Cemil UĞUR, Adnan BİLEN** and **Şehriban İBA** along with the former MA editor **Nazan SALA** who was also working for Van Municipality, and former MA distributors **Fehim ÇETİNER** and **Şükran ERDEM** were taken into custody on the grounds of investigations from 6 months ago.

The prosecutor **İsmail KÖKER** led the case against these journalists on the grounds that they were **"Members of PKK/KCK and they assisted terrorists through institutions of news and culture". KÖKER** also leads the case about the military personnel who have tortured **TURGUT** and **ŞİBAN**.

Adnan BILEN, who was tried in 2018 resulting with the decision of non-prosecution, along with other journalists Cemil UĞUR, Şehriban İBA, the former editor Nazan SALA were questioned by the prosecutor about their news sources, some voice records of their phone calls, and their news memos. On 9 October 2020, the journalists were arrested by the order of Van 3rd Criminal Court of Peace, on the grounds that they were PKK members. The distributors **CETINER** and **ERDEM** were released on probation. It was stated by the court that these journalists were "frequently, diversely and densely" involved in news writing, and their profession was utilized in the service of PKK/KCK to the detriment of the Turkish state. The court claimed that "these journalists were reporting public incidents and conducting interviews in alignment with KCK 's perspective and orders, and they were spreading propaganda and agitation in the service of KCK/PKK". The judges wrote in the arrest warrant that the identity cards of these journalists were "not official", and since "valid press cards could only be given to those who satisfy the conditions of Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications, these people, who cannot satisfy the conditions, are not actually journalists".

M – In place of a conclusion

Why these journalists, who, despite the government's annoyance, reported on the allegations concerning the helicopter and the torture, were arrested on the grounds of prior investigations requires further explanation.

It is apparent that the allegations concerning the "throwing off of the citizens from the helicopter", which shaped public discussion and were taken up by the opposition, rights activists, and the media, have originated from the perpetrators who have tried to hide the real story by inventing an "official lie".

The gendarmeries' claim that "they have jumped off the helicopter", has gone into medical registers as "falling off from a distance", and therefore "falling off from the helicopter". This crime committed by the soldiers, and the tortures and lynching which resulted in the death of one citizen and serious injuries sustained by the other, was tried to be covered by the claim that "they have jumped off the helicopter", and

therefore it is established by the families, and by Turkey's public discussion that following tortures and beatings, these citizens were "thrown off from the helicopter".

So, the lie of the perpetrators has turned into the truth of the defendants, and the mass beating, torture, and lynching of these citizens, which form the basis of the whole event, are overshadowed. It is clear from **Osman ŞİBAN's** statement that **"falling off, or being thrown off"** the helicopter is just one detail of an entire night of tortures and lynching, and it is these heavy tortures and lynching which killed one citizen and seriously injured the other