

AMERICA'S LARGEST TURKISH-AMERICAN BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

TurkNetwork®

VOL 03 • ISSUE 5

MARCH 2026

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

REŞAT AKINCI & BÜLENT ÇİÇEK

BUILDING SUCCESS ON THE ROAD:
THE STORY OF TURQUOISE
TRUCKING

COMMUNITY STAR

ESRA TALU

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

DR. MUSTAFA KASIMCAN
AND DİLHAN KASIMCAN

CAVİT ÖZTÜRK



SPECIAL ISSUE

THE POWER OF WOMEN



TURKNETWORK MAGAZINE / MAR 26



977276543200102

TPF
INNOVATION &
SOCIAL IMPACT SUMMIT
2026

COME AND SAY MERHABA AGAIN!



Mustafa Kemal
Abadan



Didem
Altop



Dr. Piraye
Beim



Ahmet
Bozer



Pınar
Seyhan Demirdağ



Faruk
Eczacıbaşı



Dr. Wafaa
El-Sadr



Dr. Gökhan S.
Hotamışlıgil



Ayşegül
İldeniz



Dr. Ece
Kamar



Aykut
Karaalioğlu



Yasemin
Koloğlu



Martin
Macik Jr



Hayal
Pozantı



Ülkü
Rowe



Mehmet Ali
Sanlıkol



Dr. Arda
Ural



Ercüment
Tokat



Stacey
Vanek Smith

The Times Center
April 23, 2026

www.tpfsummit.org



More speakers are being added—stay tuned!

GIVE YOUR ZAKAT WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST



Orphan Care
Choose with Love



Rice for Ramadan
Food that Sustains



Water
A Continuous Charity



Scan to Donate



ZAKAT
FOUNDATION
of AMERICA

zakat.org

TÜRKİYE'DEN ABD'YE İHRACATTA REHBERİNİZ

ABD ODAKLI İHRACAT EĞİTİMİ

▶ 4 NİSAN - 9 MAYIS 2026

▶ 40 SAAT

▶ ONLINE
(Saatler New York (EST) zaman dilimine göre dir.)

▶ SERTİFİKA

▶ EĞİTİM DİLİ TÜRKÇE

▶ EĞİTMENLER: TİCARET MÜŞAVİRLERİ VE ATEŞELERİ, ALANINDA UZMAN
PROFESYONELLER İLE ABD'DE BAŞARILI OLMUŞ FİRMA TEMSİLCİLERİ

Bilgi için;

+90 (530) 363 99 89

+90 (533) 256 99 89

www.ihracatakademisi.org.tr

info@ihracatakademisi.org.tr

İA İHRACAT
AKADEMİSİ

ABD Odaklı İhracat Eğitimi Ön Kayıtları Başlamıştır.

KAYIT OL



WE KNOW THE ROUTE

Reliable Transportation and Logistics Solutions Across America

Based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Turquoise Trucking has been delivering dependable over-the-road transportation and logistics services since 2011. From the very beginning, our mission has been simple: to provide outstanding customer service while transporting your freight safely, efficiently, and on time.

With years of industry experience and a dedicated operations team, Turquoise Trucking offers comprehensive transportation and logistics solutions tailored to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Full insurance coverage for high-value freight
- Asset-based trucking services – FTL, LTL, and more
- Dry Van, Flatbed, RGN/Lowboy and Refrigerated (Reefer) trailers
- 20,000 sq. ft. warehouse facility in Iowa
- Rail and ocean freight logistics
- 24/7 dispatch and real-time shipment tracking
- Domestic and international freight consolidation
- Short- and long-term storage solutions
- Cross-docking services
- Oversized and over-dimensional loads
- EDI-integrated Transportation Management System (TMS)

Whether you need a single shipment or a complete logistics solution, Turquoise Trucking delivers reliability you can trust.



REQUEST A QUOTE TODAY

Visit: www.turquoisetruck.com

Call: (844) 799-7900

Email: ra@turquoisetruck.com



**WE'VE BEEN
DEDICATED TO**

**promoting equal opportunities
in youth employment**

**FOR 10
YEARS!**



Join us to create an
impact together in
youth employment
in Türkiye!

esas
sosyal *10 years*

-esas-
25 years



9

FROM THE PUBLISHER
Visibility, Leadership, and
the Future We Are Building
By Sitki Kazanci

10

COMMUNITY NEWS

16

INNOVATE, INSPIRE, AND LEAD
Defining Power Beyond
Appearances Taken Seriously,
On Our Own Terms
By Esra Talu

18

Redesigning Support for Single
Mothers: A Whole-Person Approach
By Senay Ataselim-Yilmaz

20

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Reşat Akıncı & Bülent Çiçek
By Sitki Kazanci

26

HELLO FROM TÜRKİYE
Marking the Third Anniversary of the
“Disaster of the Century”
By Feyzullah Aslantürk

28

COMMUNITY STAR:
Esra Talu
By Oya Bain

34

MARKETING
Visibility Is Currency
Why Being Seen Matters
More Than Ever
By Sitki Kazanci

36

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Dr. Mustafa Omur Kasimcan
& Dilhan Kasimcan
By Sitki Kazanci

42

The History and Significance of
International Women's Day
By Ayşe Derya Kahraman



20



28



36

44

International Women's Day in
the United States: Why March 8
Still Matters
By Sara Jensen

50

FRANCHISE INSIGHTS
The Truth About Franchising
and Real Security
By Kim Daly

52

CULINARY CHRONICLES
Why do we end up saying
“hummus” instead of “chickpea”
By Deniz Orhun

54

ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURE OF FASHION
Design After Automation
By Ece Kilic

58

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Cavit Öztürk
By Oya Bain

62

INSIGHTS
From Family Traditions to
Sustainable Choices
By Nejat Murat Erkan

64

PUBLIC RELATIONS
Trust in Crisis:
The Role of Public Relations
By Suheyla Tayla

66

EAT LIKE A TURK
Winter Kitchen a la Turca in
Sweden
By Erçument Akman

68

IT HAPPENED HERE
Exiles of Halide Edip
By Mehmet Ali Munir

72

ART + CULTURE
The Maritime Heritage of
Türkiye: Iconic Vessels at the
İstanbul Naval Museum
By Erol Güler

76

EDUCATION
Moving Forward in Shifting
Currents: From the United
States to Morocco
By Zeliha Koçak Tufan

80

THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE
Do not Let Curiosity Die
By Beren Kasimcan

82

ECHOES OF THOUGHT
Artificial Intelligence and
Women's Representation:
Confronting Invisible
Inequalities
By Hatice Koç Kanca

84

CAREERS
ADVENTUROUS AT
WORK IN AMERICA:
The Strategic AI Roles Defining
High-Earning Careers for Women
By Kitty Waldorf

86

TRAVEL
Manisa: The City That
Trained Sultans
By Nil Güler

88

**TURKISH CINEMA
NEWSLETTER**
Turkish Films Shine
at Berlinale 2026
By Erçument Akman



90

Threads of Brotherhood
By Feyzullah Aslantürk

92

DRIVING THE FUTURE
New Mercedes-Benz CLA Wins
Another International Award
By Hakkı Gunerkan

96

PUZZLE TIME
Find the Turkish Cities



58



82

LET US TALK BUSINESS



TurkNetwork

Business Networking
WhatsApp group



Join the *TurkNetwork* Business Networking WhatsApp Group!

Connect with like-minded professionals, share ideas, and discover new opportunities to help each other succeed.

Our group offers:

- ▶ **Exclusive Member Events:** Attend members-only events and regular online meetings.
- ▶ **Collaborative Environment:** Exchange insights, support each other, and grow together.

Ready to elevate your business network? Click the link to join our group: <https://shorturl.at/kdhDG>

Upon joining, introduce yourself to the group and share your LinkedIn page if you have one. Make sure your full name is displayed in your profile. Together, we can achieve greater success!

Subscribe to *TurkNetwork Magazine*

Enjoy your free monthly community magazine delivered straight to your email inbox.

TurkNetwork Magazine is the only Turkish magazine published monthly in the US.

<https://shorturl.at/3Wj78>



AMERICA'S LARGEST TURKISH-AMERICAN
BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

TurkNetwork

VOLUME 3, NO 5, MAR 2026

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102
www.turknetwork.us
pr@turknetwork.us
(703) 439-0557

EDITORIAL

**FOUNDER / PUBLISHER
EDITOR IN CHIEF**
Sitki Kazanci

MANAGING EDITOR
Elizabeth Adams

EDITORS
Sara Jensen
Mary McHugh
David N. Smith

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
In Alphabetical Order by Last Name

Ömer Akın
Ercüment Akman
Mehmet Ali Münir
Oya Bain
Nejat Murat Erkan
Erol Güler
Nil Güler
Ece Kılıç
Sibel Kulaksız
Kıvanç Oğuz
Deniz Orhun
Burçin Öğrenir
Esra Talu
Süheyla Tayla
Kitty Waldorf
Aylin Yardımcı
Şenay Ataselim Yılmaz

DESIGN / PRODUCTION

DESIGN

Creative Edge Design Studio

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Jennifer T. Gordon

SALES / MARKETING

Advertising Department
(703) 439-0557
pr@turknetwork.us

TÜRKİYE REPRESENTATIVE

Feyzullah Aslantürk
+90 532 671 4748

TurkNetwork Magazine, published monthly by the Creative Edge, 1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600, McLean, VA 22102.

Creative Edge and *TurkNetwork Magazine*, are not responsible for advertisement content and contributors' articles.

© 2026 by Creative Edge. All rights reserved.



VISIBILITY, LEADERSHIP, AND THE FUTURE WE ARE BUILDING

March marks Women's History Month, and at *TurkNetwork Magazine* we are proud to spotlight outstanding Turkish women who are shaping the future of Artificial Intelligence, Technology, Data Science, Robotics, Cybersecurity, and Digital Innovation in the United States. In this special issue, we feature inspiring leaders whose achievements demonstrate not only professional excellence but also the growing influence of Turkish women across advanced industries. We congratulate each of these remarkable professionals and are honored to share their stories with our readers.

While we celebrate these accomplished women, we emphasize that this recognition is not a competition. There are many more Turkish women across America making meaningful contributions in their fields, and we look forward to highlighting additional success stories in future issues. Visibility is important, and by sharing these journeys we hope to inspire the next generation of leaders.

We also extend our warmest wishes to all who observe the holy month of Ramadan. May this

sacred time bring peace, reflection, and generosity to you and your families. Ramazan Bayramı'nızı şimdiden kutlar, sağlık ve huzur dolu günler dileriz.

This month, *TurkNetwork Magazine* is also proud to announce the launch of the Young Journalism Scholar Program, an initiative designed to support and encourage talented young writers within the Turkish-American community. The TurkNetwork Young Turkish-American Journalism Scholar Award will support undergraduate students pursuing degrees in Communication, Journalism, Media, Public Relations, and Digital Media. We believe that investing in young voices will strengthen our community's future.



Together with our partners and readers, we are creating a stronger and more connected Turkish-American business community.

More information will be shared soon.

Join us as we continue to strengthen the Turkish-American business community through excellence, innovation, and unity. At *TurkNetwork*, we remain committed to building bridges between markets, cultures, and ideas.

We thank our sponsors and partners for their continued support. Together, we will expand horizons and create lasting impact.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sitki Kazancı".

SITKI KAZANCI

"Connecting Turkish Businesses, Empowering Communities"

For inquiries or collaborations:
pr@turknetwork.us



FUAT OKTAY MEETS TURKISH COMMUNITY IN WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Fuat Oktay, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and former Vice President (2018–2023), met with representatives of the Turkish-American community during his February 2026 visit to Washington, D.C. The gathering took place at the Turkish Embassy and provided an opportunity for community members to engage directly

with the visiting delegation.

During his visit, Mr. Oktay also held meetings on Capitol Hill and described the discussions as productive and taking place in a positive diplomatic atmosphere. He emphasized the importance of strengthening Türkiye–U.S. relations through continued dialogue and cooperation, including expanding trade and developing closer parliamentary ties between the Turkish

Parliament and the U.S. Congress.

The meeting at the Embassy reflected the strong connection between Türkiye and its diaspora, highlighting the important role Turkish-Americans play in building bridges between the two countries. The visit was welcomed by community members and underscored the ongoing commitment to strengthening Türkiye–U.S. relations.

TASC HOSTED DINNER IN HONOR OF FUAT OKTAY'S WASHINGTON VISIT

During Mr. Fuat Oktay's official visit to Washington, DC, the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC) hosted a special dinner in honor of the visiting delegation. The gathering brought together representatives of the Turkish-American community and provided an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of ideas.

The evening began with welcoming remarks by TASC President Seyit Şahin, who emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between Türkiye and the Turkish-American community. Following the opening remarks, participants shared their views, suggestions, and expectations regarding community engagement and the future of Türkiye-US relations.

Mr. Fuat Oktay, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, and members of the delegation provided a summary of their meetings and diplomatic engagements in the United States. They highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations and emphasized the importance of maintaining close communication with Turkish-American organizations.

The dinner served as a meaningful platform for community leaders and officials to connect in a warm and constructive atmosphere. The event reflected the active role of Turkish-American organizations in supporting dialogue and building bridges between Türkiye and the United States.



WHERE FUNK MEETS TÜRKİYE: THE SOUND OF EZGI

Ezgi Karakuş's new music project, EZGi, is an emerging Turkish music collective inspired by the vibrant spirit of the 1970s. The group blends rhythmic funk basslines, dance-driven disco beats, and soulful melodies with distinctive Turkish musical influences, creating a sound that feels both fresh and nostalgic.

Their music pays tribute to the golden era of funk and disco while bringing a contemporary energy through original compositions. EZGi's style appeals to listeners who appreciate vintage dance grooves as well as modern global funk, celebrating retro aesthetics with a uniquely Turkish character inspired by Türkiye's rich musical heritage.





MARYLAND-TÜRKİYE SISTER STATE PROGRAM CELEBRATED IN ANNAPOLIS

The Maryland Sister States Program, including the Maryland-Kocaeli, Türkiye partnership, was celebrated at the annual Legislative Reception in Annapolis on February 25, 2026. Representatives from thirteen countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and South America participated in the event. The Türkiye program was led by Co-Chairs Günay Evinch, Esq., and Berker Hazar of the Maryland-Türkiye Sister State Committee. Mr. Evinch also serves as a member of the Maryland Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern-American Affairs. This year's Turkish delegation included representatives of the Turkish Cypriot

community, with the Honorable Damla Güçlü among the distinguished attendees.

Two cultural tables represented the broader Turkish world. One highlighted Türkiye and Northern Cyprus, while a second table featured participants of Azerbaijani-Turkish heritage. Guests enjoyed a variety of traditional specialties, including cigar böreği and other savory pastries, dolma, and sweets such as baklava, walnut-stuffed dried apricots, and Turkish delight. Turkish coffee and wines complemented the offerings. Informational displays, flags, and brochures showcased the natural beauty, archaeological treasures, and

rich historical heritage of Türkiye, Northern Cyprus, and Azerbaijan.

The Maryland American Turkish Association and many other Turkish-American organizations contributed through volunteer support.

The two-hour program opened with remarks by Sister States of Maryland Chair Roger Lawrence, followed by speeches from Maryland Secretary of State Susan Lee and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller.

A highlight of the evening was a performance by the Turkish Children's Folk Dance Team of the DCA Youth Assembly, which received enthusiastic applause. During the ceremony, Co-Chair Günay Evinch recognized attending ambassadors and embassy representatives, as well as Maryland legislators and senior cabinet officials.

Additional cultural performances included folk dances from Estonia and Nigeria. The program concluded with the Kardelen Women's Empowerment Folk Dance Ensemble leading participants in a lively rendition of Erik Dalı, bringing the evening to a festive close.

Türkiye joined the Maryland Sister States Program in 2004 under the leadership of Günay Evinch, with strong support from the Turkish Embassy. The 2026 reception once again demonstrated the strength of Turkish-American community engagement in Maryland. Participants left the event with a deep sense of pride, having successfully showcased Türkiye's culture and heritage in their adopted country.





YOUNG TURKISH WRESTLERS SHINE ON THE MATS IN MARYLAND

Ata Çokgüler has been dominating his matches in the Howard County Wrestling League. Despite this being his first season, Ata has impressed coaches and spectators alike with his outstanding performance. Week after week, he continues to earn podium finishes, showing remarkable promise for a newcomer to the sport.

Selahattin Naz is also experiencing a successful first season with the Howard County Traveling Team. Competing in the Maryland Traveling Teams League, Selahattin has demonstrated significant potential. At the regional championship held today, he secured a top-three finish, earning qualification for the upcoming Maryland State Championship.

Meanwhile, Mehmet Kaya continues to build on the strong performances he has delivered over the past two to three years. At today's regional championship, Mehmet once again displayed excellent form and determination. He will compete next week at the Maryland State Championship with his sights firmly set on the state title.

These young athletes represent the growing presence and success of the Turkish-American community in youth sports. We wish all of our wrestlers the best of success at the Maryland State Championship next week.

TURKISH AMERICANS MEET REP. STEVE COHEN ON CAPITOL HILL

Turkish-American community representatives from several East Coast states and Texas gathered on Capitol Hill for a productive meeting with Congressman Steve Cohen, reaffirming longstanding ties between the Turkish-American community and one of its most consistent supporters in Congress.

For more than 15 years, Congressman Cohen has been a trusted voice for Turkish Americans and a strong advocate for the U.S.-Türkiye relationship. First elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2007, he has served as Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Türkiye Relations and Turkish Americans, as well as Co-Chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus. He is also recognized as the only member of the House of Representatives with Turkish heritage.

The meeting lasted more than an hour and provided participants with the opportunity to engage in open discussions with the Congressman. Congressman Cohen expressed appreciation for the group's enthusiasm and reaffirmed his continued support for the Turkish-American community and for strengthening U.S.-Türkiye relations.

A senior member of both the House Judiciary Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Cohen has played an active role in legislative efforts related to civil liberties and constitutional law. He is widely respected for his balanced perspective on Middle East affairs and his consistent support for dialogue and peaceful cooperation.

The gathering reflected the growing civic engagement of Turkish Americans and highlighted the importance of continued communication between community leaders and elected officials.

The organizers also expressed their appreciation to the Turkish-American political action committees that contributed to the event, including TC-USA PAC, Turkish Heritage PAC, and TC-CAL PAC.



ALPEREN ŞENGÜN LEADS ROCKETS TO VICTORY WITH TRIPLE-DOUBLE

Turkish NBA star Alperen Şengün delivered an outstanding performance as the Houston Rockets defeated the Sacramento Kings 128-97 at the Toyota Center on February 26. The victory improved Houston's record to 36-21, strengthening their position among the top teams in the Western Conference.

Şengün recorded an impressive triple-double, finishing with 26 points, 13 rebounds, and 11 assists in just 32 minutes of play. He also contributed two steals and three blocks, showcasing his all-around impact on both offense and defense. The 22-year-old center, a former Beşiktaş standout, continues to play a key role in Houston's successful season and growing playoff hopes.

Rookie guard Reed Sheppard added a career-high 28 points, including seven three-pointers, providing strong support to the team's offense. The Rockets shot efficiently throughout the game and pulled away decisively in the second half to secure one of their most convincing wins of the season.

Şengün's consistent performances have made him one of the most promising young Turkish players in the NBA and a source of pride for the Turkish-American community.

TÜRKİYE TARGETS US GROCERY MARKET WITH TURQUALITY INITIATIVE

Türkiye is preparing a renewed effort to increase the visibility of Turkish food products in American supermarkets through the government-supported Turquality branding program. The initiative, led by the Istanbul Cereals, Pulses, Oilseeds and Products Exporters' Association (IHBIR) with support from Türkiye's Ministry of Trade, aims to strengthen the presence of Turkish brands in the U.S. market.

The program seeks to move Turkish exporters beyond supplying unbranded or private-label goods and instead establish recognizable Turkish brands with long-term shelf space in major retail chains.

Initial product categories will include confectionery, cocoa-based and flour-based foods, along with Turkish coffee, Turkish delight, tea, chocolate, pulses, and bulgur. The campaign will be supported by professional marketing and digital promotion efforts designed to increase consumer awareness.

Turquality is Türkiye's flagship state-supported branding initiative, focusing on building strong international brands and increasing the global competitiveness of Turkish products. The United States has been identified as the first major target market in this new phase.



KAYSERİ'S TEPSİ MANTISI: A TRADITIONAL TASTE SHAPED BY COMMUNITY

Kayseri, widely known across Türkiye as the city most closely associated with manti, is also home to a distinctive oven-baked variety called tepsi mantısı, a traditional dish that reflects both culinary craftsmanship and community spirit.

Tepsi mantısı is prepared by cutting dough into small squares and carefully folding each piece by hand before arranging them neatly in a baking tray. The pieces are typically placed in a decorative, flower-like pattern, giving the dish its characteristic appearance. Unlike the more familiar boiled manti, tepsi mantısı is baked in the oven and then topped with a rich butter sauce made with tomato paste. It is traditionally served with garlic yogurt and a blend of spices.

In Kayseri's culinary heritage, tepsi mantısı is often associated with the refinement of historical Anatolian cuisine, influenced by Seljuk and Ottoman traditions while remaining firmly rooted in home cooking.

The dish has long been prepared as a collective effort, especially for weddings, holidays, and special gatherings. Women would come together in an imece tradition — a cooperative form of shared work — turning the preparation of tepsi mantısı into a social event as well as a culinary practice.

Today, tepsi mantısı remains one of Kayseri's cherished regional specialties, preserving a tradition that combines flavor, artistry, and community.



IMAGE BY SHUTTERSTOCK

DEFINING POWER BEYOND APPEARANCES TAKEN SERIOUSLY, ON OUR OWN TERMS

“Women deserve the same freedom men enjoy in tech: to be evaluated primarily on their work.”

By Esra Talu

In the tech world, a hoodie and sneakers can read like a manifesto: *I'm here to build, not to perform.* Over time, that casual uniform became part comfort, part protest, part status signal. It says, “Judge my work, not my outfit.” And in many rooms, it works—especially when the person wearing it is already assumed to be brilliant.

But here's the part we don't say loudly enough: women don't always get the same freedom.

A woman can walk into a meeting looking polished—intentional, self-cared-for, stylish—and risk being misread as less serious. As if

competence and aesthetics cannot coexist. As if a thoughtful appearance means a shallow mind. That contradiction isn't in women. It's in the bias.

The contradiction isn't in women. It's in the bias.

And bias doesn't just hurt feelings. Bias changes outcomes. It changes who gets believed, who gets funded, who gets promoted, who gets the benefit of the doubt when things go wrong—and who gets labeled “difficult” for being ambitious, direct, or simply visible.

This is why the March theme matters. “Women's Power” is not an abstract celebration.

It's an everyday question: Do women have the freedom to show up as they choose—and still be taken seriously for what they know and what they've built? And “Fashion apparel,” when seen through that lens, stops being superficial. It becomes part of how power is granted or denied in the first seconds of a room.

Fashion isn't the point—permission is.

I've spent years in founder rooms—pitch rooms, boardrooms, conference corridors, late-night deal conversations—where people decide who you are before you speak. They decide based on patterns: voice, pace, posture, confidence, and yes, what you wear. The

INNOVATE, INSPIRE, AND LEAD

problem isn't that people notice. The problem is that women are often judged by a different rulebook.

In tech, casual dress was framed as a rejection of old hierarchies: less "suit culture," more merit-based culture. The message was, *let the best idea win*. In theory, I love that. In practice, it's uneven.

Because for many men in tech, ignoring dress expectations became a shortcut to credibility. There's even research suggesting that breaking a dress norm—when everyone else follows it—can be interpreted as higher status. In plain language: if you can "get away with it," people assume you must be important. That's how the hoodie can become a crown.

But women face a double bind. If we dress casually, we can be told we're not polished enough. If we dress with care, we can be told we're trying too hard. If we dress feminine, we risk being underestimated. If we dress severe, we risk being judged as cold. Too much, not enough—always measured.

Let's name what sits underneath this: many people still confuse "self-care" with "self-obsession." They confuse style with vanity. They confuse visibility with a lack of substance. And they confuse ambition with arrogance—especially when it comes from women.

Yet the truth is simple. Knowledge and experience are power. Results are power. The ability to build a product, scale a team, win



customers, create revenue, return capital to investors—that is power. If we claim to be modern, we cannot keep using a woman's appearance as a filter for her credibility.

And here's another truth: fashion is not the opposite of seriousness. For many women, style is not decoration—it's discipline. It's intention. It's a form of clarity. Psychology research even suggests that what we wear can influence how we feel and how we perform—not because fabric contains magic, but because meaning and identity shape behavior. When a woman shows up aligned with herself—comfortable, confident, ready—she doesn't lose power. She gains it.

So what do we actually want?

We want the freedom men already enjoy in

tech: the freedom to be evaluated primarily on our work.

We want the freedom to show up in sneakers and not be dismissed as "not executive enough." We want the freedom to show up in heels and not be reduced to a stereotype. We want the freedom to wear a blazer, a dress, a jumpsuit, a hoodie, a headscarf, bold lipstick, no makeup—whatever reflects who we are and what the moment demands—without having our competence negotiated down.

Women deserve the same freedom men enjoy in tech: to be evaluated primarily on our work.

Because the point isn't whether women should dress more casually or more formally. The point is that women should not have to "prove seriousness" through a narrow costume. We are allowed to be brilliant and visible at the same time. We are allowed to be ambitious and like beauty. We are allowed to be founders and still enjoy style. We are allowed to create great businesses and still be women.

On March 8—International Women's Day—people will post quotes and share applause. I'll take the celebration. But I want something more practical after the celebrations fade: a cultural upgrade.

If the hoodie can symbolize freedom from outdated rules, then women deserve that freedom too. Not freedom from fashion—freedom from judgment. Freedom from being misunderstood. Freedom to be taken seriously on our own terms.

Let a woman be brilliant in a hoodie. Let her be brilliant in heels. Let her be brilliant in both. Because women's power isn't a look. It's what we build—and what we make possible for others when we insist on being seen accurately. ■



Esra Talu is the Founder and CEO of GoGlobal, based in Miami Beach, US. Author of *Breaking Boundaries: How I Built a Startup and Paved the Way for Others*, Esra helps emerging market startups grow, scale, and expand into global markets through strategic insight, global connectivity, and founder-first advisory. **GoGlobal.**



IMAGE BY SHUTTERSTOCK



REDESIGNING SUPPORT FOR SINGLE MOTHERS: A WHOLE-PERSON APPROACH

“Strong families create strong communities, and strong communities create a stronger future.”

By Şenay Ataselim-Yilmaz, Ph.D.

When a mother stands alone at the head of a household, she carries not just responsibility but the economic and emotional architecture of an entire family.

In Türkiye today, nearly one in ten households is led by a single parent, the majority of them women. Behind this statistic are mothers facing financial pressure, limited access to stable employment, and profound social isolation. Caregiving responsibilities, the high cost or absence of childcare, and insufficient support systems frequently force single mothers out of the workforce—not by choice, but

by necessity.

Yet programs address their challenges in piecemeal ways. Economic programs focus on employment. Social services focus on children. Mental health initiatives operate separately. In reality, these dimensions are deeply interconnected. Financial insecurity affects emotional well-being. Emotional strain shapes parenting. Isolation restricts access to opportunity.

Recognizing this gap, Turkish Philanthropy Funds launched the Single Mothers Program as a collaborative, whole-person response.

Designed as a 10-week online learning and community-building experience, the program plans to support at least 30 single mothers annually across Türkiye. Rather than treating

financial stability, parenting, and emotional well-being as separate tracks, it integrates them into one cohesive journey.

Implemented in partnership with five trusted organizations—Bekar Anneler Derneği, Kadın Girişimciler Derneği (KAGİDER), Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (AÇEV), Mavi Kalem Derneği, and YenidenBiz Derneği—each contributing deep expertise and local insight, the program is practical, evidence-informed, and grounded in the realities women face.

Participants will strengthen financial literacy and workforce readiness skills while exploring pathways to entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods. At the same time, they will engage in evidence-based parenting and



child development sessions and participate in trauma-informed spaces designed to nurture confidence, resilience, and emotional well-being.

Connection lies at the heart of the program. Through peer circles and lasting networks, women move beyond isolation to solidarity, sharing knowledge, encouragement, and a sense of belonging that will continue long after the program ends.

Investing in single mothers is one of the most powerful multi-generational strategies for social stability. When a mother gains financial footing and renewed confidence, children benefit academically, emotionally, and economically. Families become more secure. Communities become more resilient. The impact compounds.

This work is a strategic investment in long-term resilience. It is about designing systems that recognize women as economic actors, caregivers, and leaders simultaneously. It is about shifting from short-term assistance to long-term empowerment.

On this International Women's Month, we honor the courage and perseverance of single mothers whose labor often remains invisible. And we reaffirm a simple commitment: no woman should have to carry the weight of a family alone.

Supporting single mothers strengthens not only individual households, but the social fabric itself. When we invest in their stability, we invest in the future.

The TPF Single Mothers Program is being supported by the Incoglu Family Fund and others at TPF. To learn more about the program, visit www.tpfund.org.



WHY TPF?

At Turkish Philanthropy Funds (TPF), we believe philanthropy is not just about giving—it is about making a lasting impact. Whether you want to support education, disaster recovery, gender equality, or civil society, TPF is your trusted partner in turning good intentions and vision into meaningful change. With 18+ years of experience, a network of 250+ nonprofit partners in Türkiye and the US, and over \$50 million in grants distributed, reaching more than 3 million, we connect your generosity to the most pressing needs—efficiently, transparently, and strategically. Whether you are an individual, a business, or a nonprofit, we help you create a powerful philanthropic legacy—one that reflects your priorities and amplifies your impact through community-powered giving.

<p>Deep Local Knowledge in Türkiye's Civil Society</p> 	<p>A Platform for Global Giving</p> 	<p>Flexibility in Giving</p> 	<p>Accountability & Impact</p> 	<p>Bilingual & Bi-Cultural Team</p> 	<p>Community-Driven Approach</p> 
--	---	---	--	---	--

About Turkish Philanthropy Funds

For 18 years, Turkish Philanthropy Funds (TPF) has been dedicated to changing narratives and creating equitable opportunities in our community. With the generosity of over 100,000 donors, we have disbursed nearly \$50 million, directly impacting over 3 million lives. As a community foundation, we leverage our intimate knowledge of community needs to fuel innovative solutions to pressing challenges. Our strategic guidance helps donors maximize their philanthropic reach,

ensuring their contributions create sustainable and meaningful change. TPF is a collaborative hub where donors, businesses, and nonprofits unite, pooling resources and expertise to foster resilient and inclusive communities. Together, we have built a legacy of positive change that we are all proud of.

www.tpfund.org

[LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [X](#) | [YouTube](#)

[Read TPF Earthquake Fund Reports](#) | [Read TPF's 2024 Impact Report](#)



Senay Ataselim-Yilmaz leads Turkish Philanthropy Funds as its Executive Director and has been instrumental since its inception. She is a writer, lecturer, and passionate advocate for social change. Recognized with the 2025 Beacon Award presented by the Ellis Island Honors Society, the International Herst Fellow by the Center

on Philanthropy and Civil Society, and as a Young Society Leader by the American-Turkish Society. Senay teaches at Fordham University and the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. She holds a PhD in political science from the Graduate Center, CUNY, and has completed executive education programs at Columbia and Harvard Business Schools. Additionally, Senay is a trained yoga and mindfulness instructor.



Exclusive Interview with REŞAT AKINCI & BÜLENT ÇİÇEK

BUILDING SUCCESS ON THE ROAD: THE STORY OF TURQUOISE TRUCKING

“We built Turquoise Trucking on three principles: safety, customer satisfaction, and long-term relationships.”

By Sitki Kazancı

Entrepreneurship journeys often begin with humble origins and a strong work ethic. For Reşat Akıncı and Bülent Çiçek, the co-founders of Turquoise Trucking, success in the American trucking industry was built on discipline, resilience, and a shared vision. Over the past fourteen years, Turquoise Trucking has grown into a comprehensive logistics operation serving the Midwest and beyond, offering transportation, warehouse, and fleet services.

In this exclusive interview with *TurkNetwork Magazine*, Akıncı and Çiçek share their personal stories, the challenges of building a business in the United States, insights into the trucking industry, and practical advice for entrepreneurs considering a career in logistics.

Could you begin by telling us about your early life? Where were you born and raised, and how did your family background shape your character and work ethic?

Reşat Akıncı: I was born in Birecik, Şanlıurfa, as the second child of a teacher mother and a CPA father. My mother was also my primary school

teacher, and at school I was not allowed to call her “mom.” She was extremely disciplined and made sure no one thought I received special treatment, which meant she was often tougher on me than on other students. That experience helped build a strong sense of responsibility and resilience early in my life.

Starting from a very young age, I also spent time in my uncles’ retail store after school and on weekends. This early exposure to sales and customer service helped shape my entrepreneurial mindset.

Bülent Çiçek: I was born in 1974 in Isparta, Türkiye, and grew up in a small village where my father worked as a truck driver. We also had a small apple farm and raised goats and sheep. My father believed that starting work early in the morning brings blessings, and his discipline strongly influenced my work ethic.

After completing high school, I served 18 months in the military, which taught me discipline and resilience. In 1998, I came to the United States, attended community college to learn English, and worked in restaurants. Later, I attended truck driving school and joined Swift Transportation as a trainee. After the September 11 attacks, I was laid off due to my

background, and until 2005 I worked various jobs before returning to trucking.

Could you share details about your education and professional training? How did your studies influence your career path?

Reşat Akıncı: I attended an Anatolian High School and studied in the foreign language department with the goal of learning multiple languages and eventually building an import-export business. Entrepreneurship has been my passion since high school.

I earned a Bachelor’s degree in Linguistics from Ankara University and an Associate Degree in Foreign Trade from Anadolu University. As part of my long-term goal of completing an MBA, I also took business courses at Harvard Business School.

During my university years, I actively sought international experience. I came to the United States through the Work and Travel program, worked in the United Kingdom as a student assistant at a language school, and studied in Italy as an Erasmus exchange student. These global experiences broadened my perspective and helped define my entrepreneurial vision.



Our partnership works because we complement each other's strengths and move forward with a shared vision.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Please tell us about your journey to the United States. What were your first experiences like, and what challenges did you face?

Reşat Akıncı: I first came to the United States as a Work and Travel student. The American business environment inspired me to pursue my long-term goals here. Later, I was selected in the Green Card lottery during my sophomore year of college.

After graduating at age 22, I started my entrepreneurial journey with a single shopping cart in a mall. Over time, this grew into 18 carts across four shopping malls. However, as retail slowed due to the rise of e-commerce, I began searching for new opportunities.

Bülent Çiçek: In 2005, I returned to trucking with partners who believed in me. In 2010, I founded my first trucking company with one truck. Our goal was simple: to build an ethical company that follows regulations, treats people fairly, and operates with integrity.

You are the President and Co-Founder of Turquoise Trucking. How was the company established?

Reşat Akıncı: After my retail business slowed down, I explored new opportunities and initially considered entering the restaurant industry. Around that time, I connected with Mr. Bülent, who already had experience in trucking. We believed we could build something stronger together.

I became a shareholder, and in February 2012 we founded Turquoise Trucking. Recently, we celebrated our 14th anniversary, which is a milestone we are very proud of.

How did your retail experience help you transition into the trucking industry?

Managing 18 retail locations at a young age gave me valuable experience in operations, staffing, and financial management. Although trucking involves unique challenges such as regulations, equipment breakdowns, and unpredictable conditions, operational discipline and customer focus helped me transition successfully.





What are the biggest opportunities and challenges in the trucking industry today?

The trucking industry has experienced significant changes in recent years. The 2019 ELD mandate reduced operational flexibility compared to paper log systems.

The pandemic created a temporary boom period, followed by rising costs and a historic downturn beginning in 2023 that lasted more than two years. Many companies left the industry during this time.

Fortunately, the market has begun to recover, with growth exceeding 10 percent since December and further growth expected.

Many Turkish immigrants consider entering trucking. Is trucking still profitable today?

This is actually a very good time to enter the trucking industry. After a prolonged downturn, truck prices are at historic lows.

Recently, we negotiated the purchase of a truck from \$81,000 down to \$65,000 with

factory warranty coverage — compared to over \$100,000 just two years ago. With proper management, investors can net more than \$1,000 per week per truck.

We provide full operational management and lease programs, and for some investors these opportunities may also qualify for an E-2 visa.

How do you maintain balance between business responsibilities and personal life?

For drivers, federal regulations limit driving to 11 hours per day. For business owners, however, there are no limits. Owners must be available to both customers and drivers 24 hours a day, year-round.

Although we operate a fully staffed 24/7 office, leadership responsibility extends beyond regular working hours. Maintaining balance requires strong teamwork and trust. Fortunately, we have built a reliable team that allows us to dedicate time to our families when needed.

What are the key factors behind Turquoise Trucking's success?

Reşat Akıncı: Our success begins with our partnership. Mr. Bülent and I complement each other's strengths and work as parts of one system.

During difficult periods, we remained calm and solution-oriented. From the beginning, our priorities have been customer satisfaction, employee retention, and operating one of the safest fleets in the industry.

Beyond transportation, we have built an integrated logistics ecosystem that includes:

- ▶ A 20,000-square-foot warehouse
- ▶ An in-house repair facility
- ▶ US Truck Assistance service operations
- ▶ Our 3PL company, Rota Logistics

Our headquarters in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, places us within a 300-mile radius of six major Midwest cities — Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Omaha, Kansas City, and St. Louis — positioning us at the center of the Midwest logistics network.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



What advice would you give to entrepreneurs starting a trucking business?

Safety and management structure are critical. Purchasing a truck is the easiest part of the business — operating it successfully is the real challenge.

Trucking requires regulatory compliance, financial discipline, and operational expertise. New entrepreneurs should consider working with an experienced company or seeking professional guidance before launching independently.

What have you learned about leadership and team building?

Successful organizations cannot be built by individuals alone. Leaders need teams that complement their strengths and help the organization grow.

Human Resources is one of the most important departments in any company because the right people shape the future of the organization.

Working in the United States has shown us the value of diversity. Strong leadership is about building trust, empowering people,

and creating a culture where different perspectives contribute to a shared vision.

Is there something TurkNetwork readers might be surprised to learn about you?

One surprising aspect of my journey is my role in founding the Cedar Rapids World Trade Center under the leadership of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance. It will be the first and only WTC in Iowa, and I am honored to serve as the first Turkish-American board member. We recently traveled to Türkiye as part of the Iowa delegation for the SelectUSA Roadshow organized by the US Department of Commerce, meeting with Turkish manufacturers interested in expanding into the United States. MOAs were signed between the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance and two Turkish business organizations, UTEP and UEB — where I serve as Iowa State President — to strengthen trade between our two countries.

Through Turquoise Trucking's partnership with Iowa Workforce, we also help individuals obtain CDL-A licenses at no cost by providing letters of intent to hire.

Although I did not complete my MBA, we were selected for the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, a competitive 12-week leadership initiative that has significantly strengthened our growth strategy and business network.

Finally, what message would you like to share with the Turkish-American business community?

Success requires working both hard and smart. Building strong networks is essential — not only within the Turkish-American community but also with academics, students, policymakers, and other business communities.

True success should not be measured only by revenue. We should remain connected, integrated, and committed to strengthening our community together. ■



34 43rd Ave. SW Cedar Rapids IA 52404
Phone: (844) 799-7900 / (319) 289-0707
www.turquoisetruck.com



Every child deserves **a chance at life.**

LÖSEV USA stands with children fighting leukemia, giving hope, care, and a future.

www.losevusa.com



HELLO FROM TÜRKİYE



MARKING THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE “DISASTER OF THE CENTURY”

“We will never forget the lives lost on February 6 – their memories live on in our hearts and our nation’s future.”

By Feyzullah Aslantürk

On February 6th of this past month, we marked the third anniversary of the two devastating earthquakes that struck our country on the same day three years ago. Our grief was rekindled, and we once again felt deep in our hearts the pain of the lives we lost.

The Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, which affected an area nearly the size of several European countries combined, devastated 11 provinces. We lost 53,697 lives, while more than 107,000 people were rescued with injuries. We have not forgotten — and will never forget — those who lost their lives in this tragedy. We remember them with compassion and respect, keeping their memories alive in our hearts and minds.

We experienced one of the greatest disasters in our history. Our pain was immense, yet we are a noble and resilient nation. Determined to rise again, we focused on rebuilding

and renewing ourselves like the mythical Phoenix rising from its ashes.

From the very first moments after the earthquake, our nation of 86 million people demonstrated extraordinary solidarity. We supported one another and continue to do so.

More than 39,000 buildings collapsed in the earthquake zone, while tens of thousands more suffered severe structural damage and became uninhabitable. The direct economic cost of the disaster reached approximately \$104 billion, while the indirect cost approached \$150 billion, placing a significant burden on our national economy.

Despite the enormous destruction across 11 cities, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our state and nation working together, these regions have been largely rebuilt within just three years. The construction and delivery of 455,357 homes and workplaces during this period represents an achievement admired worldwide. This progress

has provided tremendous psychological and moral support for earthquake survivors.

Reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts continue at numerous construction sites across all 11 provinces. With each passing day, we move closer to fully healing the wounds caused by the earthquake.

This level of determination and performance demonstrates the strength of Türkiye and serves as an example of a socially responsible state for the world. This success story is a clear reflection of Türkiye’s confident march into the Century of Türkiye.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mr. Devlet Bahçeli, Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Murat Kurum, all public officials, construction workers, and most importantly our resilient nation, which has shown patience and unity throughout this difficult process. I wish our country continued success on its journey toward the Century of Türkiye.

Two works of art symbolizing our rebirth from the ashes — like the Phoenix — attracted great attention.

Before concluding, I would like to mention an international exhibition organized by Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University (KSÜ) in memory of the earthquake.

The exhibition titled “Four Seventeen-II: Interdisciplinary Juried Group Exhibition,” organized by the Faculty of Fine Arts and curated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rabia Demir, drew significant interest from art enthusiasts.

Artists from all regions of Türkiye, especially from the 11 earthquake-affected provinces, were invited to participate. A total of 277 artists representing different artistic disciplines contributed to the exhibition.

The exhibition, which was also presented online on the Faculty of Fine Arts website, officially opened on February 17, 2026, at the KSÜ Yunus Emre Congress and Cultural Center.

The opening ceremony was attended by KSÜ Vice Rectors Prof. Dr. Ramazan Çetintaş and Prof. Dr. Salih Yeşil, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts Prof. Dr. İrfan Ersin Akıncı, along with many academics, students, and art enthusiasts.



In his opening speech, Dean Prof. Dr. İrfan Ersin Akıncı emphasized that the Faculty of Fine Arts has always supported artistic initiatives. He congratulated the artists, academics, and students who contributed to the exhibition and wished them continued success.

Curator Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rabia Demir stated that organizing the second edition of this meaningful exhibition on the third anniversary of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes was both a sorrowful and proud experience. She thanked all participating artists who came

together with a shared belief in the healing and unifying power of art. She also expressed gratitude to the KSÜ Rectorate, the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Department of Health, Culture and Sports, and the Z-Art Student Community for their support.

Artist Dr. Mutlu Aslantürk, Lecturer and Faculty Member, participated with two works that depict the post-earthquake condition and the rise of the region using textile materials. These works, symbolizing rebirth and renewal like the Phoenix rising from ashes, attracted considerable attention.

Closing Remarks

As we conclude this issue's *Hello from Türkiye* column, I sincerely hope that neither our country nor any other nation or people will ever experience a disaster like the one we endured.

May God grant mercy to those we lost.

I also wish to express my gratitude and respect to all countries and people who stood by with Türkiye and did not leave us alone during this tragedy.

Please forgive the emotional tone reflected in this article, shaped by the personal grief of having lost nine cousins in this disaster.

Until we meet again in the next issue. ■

RISING / YÜKSELİŞ

Artist: Dr. Mutlu Aslantürk

Materials: Textile fibers, thread, plain-weave cotton fabric, interfacing

Technique: Textile installation with machine stitching

Size: A3 (29.7 × 42 cm)

Year: 2026

Rising reflects the collective resilience of Kahramanmaraş after the 2023 earthquakes, portraying the city's symbolic ascent from destruction toward renewal. The work centers on a phoenix-like textile figure whose wings and flowing tail echo both the fractured landscape and the upward movement of recovery. Layers of thread and textile fibers create a strong sense of motion, as if the figure is emerging from dust and

debris. Rather than focusing only on devastation, *Rising* highlights the fragile transition between collapse and rebuilding. By blending traditional textile elements with contemporary materials, the work presents disaster not as an ending, but as the beginning of a renewed existence.



FROM STATE TO STATE / HÂLDEN HÂLE

Artist: Dr. Mutlu Aslantürk

Materials: Textile fibers, thread, plain-weave cotton fabric, interfacing

Technique: Textile installation with machine stitching

Size: A3 (29.7 × 42 cm)

Year: 2026

Hâlden Hâle describes a state that begins at the moment the earth opens and continues in a form that has not yet found its name. It is neither complete destruction nor fully realized rebirth, but a suspended condition between the two.

The figure rising from the ground must breathe even as it emerges from the ashes. Feathers layered through machine stitching create a flowing movement from heaviness toward lightness, symbolizing a fragile yet determined ascent.

This work captures the silent moment between the pain of remembrance and the process of healing — a state of becoming that is still recovering while rising from the ashes.



Fezullah Aslantürk

Türkiye Representative, *TurkNetwork Magazine*

Phone: +90 532 671 47 48

Email: TR@turknetwork.us



Fezullah Aslantürk serves as the Türkiye Representative for *TurkNetwork*. He was born in Kahramanmaraş, where he also completed his primary and secondary education. He earned his undergraduate degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Bursa Uludağ University, majoring in business administration.

He later completed his graduate studies in the Department of Economics, specializing in foreign trade and exchange, at Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University.

He began his professional career in the private sector as a manager while still a student in Bursa and continued in managerial roles within the tourism industry in Marmaris. He later held various executive positions within İhlas Holding. After retiring from his role as the Regional Director for Gaziantep at İhlas Media's Trade Magazine Group, he founded Fora Publishing, Promotion, and Marketing Ltd. Şti., through which he continues his work in the trade media and representation sector.



COMMUNITY STAR: ESRA TALU



*In this month's Community Star feature, we are proud to highlight **Esra Talu** — an entrepreneur and global startup advisor building strong bridges between Türkiye and the United States. We selected Esra as a TurkNetwork Community Star for her pioneering work in entrepreneurship, her support for founders and women entrepreneurs, and her commitment to strengthening the Turkish-American business community. Her story reflects innovation, leadership, and dedication to helping the next generation succeed.*

By Oya Bain

Entrepreneur and global startup advisor Esra Talu has built a remarkable career connecting Türkiye and the United States. From early e-commerce innovation to supporting international startups through GoGlobal, her work reflects a strong commitment to entrepreneurship and cross-border collaboration.

In this TurkNetwork Community Star Interview, Esra Talu shares her journey, insights on startups, and her vision for strengthening ties between Türkiye and the US.

Can you tell us about your early beginnings? Your childhood? Your parents, siblings?

I was born in Istanbul in 1968 and grew up in Kalamış. I come from a proud, deeply rooted Istanbul family—on both sides. My mother is a painter, my father was an engineer, and I have a younger brother with a strong creative streak. Our extended family includes doctors, engineers, architects, judges, teachers, and artists—so curiosity, discipline, and creativity were always part of my “normal.”

What factors influenced you most in your formative years?

Two things shaped me early: my family's cultural foundation and the Western outlook I gained through education. I also explored Atatürk's modernization vision academically and personally—especially what it meant for women to be present, visible, and capable. Traveling abroad as a young Turkish woman made me determined to break assumptions—not with arguments, but with excellence.

Your education and training? Where and what did you study?

In Istanbul, I studied in the French education system. Later, in Lugano, Switzerland, I studied at Franklin University Switzerland, majoring in International Relations and also studying Italian language and literature. Languages gave me cross-cultural confidence early and taught me how to think globally—before “global” became a business buzzword.

How did you choose your career path?

I followed curiosity more than a rigid plan. I started in publishing and then worked within family businesses—always trying to bring

innovation into traditional structures. In the early 1990s, I discovered California, fell in love with its energy, and that spirit stayed with me. Entrepreneurship became the path that fit: a place where I could build, learn, and turn ideas into reality.

That journey also led me to write my book, *Breaking Boundaries: How I Built a Startup and Paved the Way for Others*—because I wanted to document the real, unfiltered lessons of building early in Türkiye, and hopefully make the road a little clearer for founders coming after me.

Can you tell us about DEPPO, Türkiye's first e-commerce site? What is the status of e-commerce in Türkiye?

DEPPO was my entrepreneurial school—built from 1999 to 2014, long before “startup” became a common word in Türkiye. It's often described as one of Türkiye's earliest e-commerce companies, and it truly felt like we were building the road while driving on it.

What I'm proudest of is the people: more than half of our full-time team were women, and many young talents who passed through DEPPO later became leaders across the



*Entrepreneurship
became my path — a
place where ideas turn
into reality.*



ecosystem. I also share many of these early lessons—how we built, what we got wrong, what we learned, and what I would do differently today—in my book, *Breaking Boundaries: How I Built a Startup and Paved the Way for Others*.

Today, e-commerce in Türkiye is far more mature and competitive—yet I still believe the next big leap is building more global category leaders and brands that scale beyond borders.

Please tell us about your journey to the US. What were your initial experiences?

I first visited the US as a student and traveled through iconic cities, but Los Angeles is where I truly “found myself.” In the early 90s, LA felt open, inspiring, and full of possibility. It later became personal—my marriage, my children, and a life that shaped my identity.

The US gave me courage: if you show up prepared and persistent, you can build

something real. And it taught me something I still believe deeply: relationships are the true infrastructure of opportunity.

How did your company, GoGlobal, develop?

I became a Miami resident in 2000, and I founded GoGlobal in Miami in 2019. GoGlobal grew out of a very practical need: founders going cross-border were facing complexity, and they didn’t need more theory—they needed a trusted operator perspective and an execution-minded network.

As the world went more global and remote, the need became more urgent. Today, GoGlobal supports tech startups in scaling globally—especially into the US—through strategic advisory that is grounded in real-world execution. And in many ways, my book, *Breaking Boundaries*, captures the mindset behind GoGlobal: staying resilient, building with integrity, and learning fast—especially

when you’re building in environments where there are no playbooks.

Currently, you are an expert and consultant for start-ups. What does it involve? What is the situation of start-ups in Türkiye compared to the US?

I always say this clearly: I’m an entrepreneur first. I work as an operator-advisor—helping founders turn vision into execution with less risk and more speed. That includes positioning, go-to-market strategy, capital readiness, partnerships, and building the right leadership habits for scale.

The US has deeper playbooks and more “pattern recognition” from past cycles. Türkiye has incredible talent, resilience, and speed. The gap is often access to experience and global distribution—and that gap can be closed faster through mentorship, partnerships, and more cross-border collaboration.

Please tell us about the Arya Investment Platform and Select USA? What is angel investment?

Arya is Türkiye’s first and only gender-balance-focused investment platform, and its fund also carries that mission. I helped establish the Arya Dubai and Arya Americas communities because I believe capital should be paired with community—and women founders deserve more than applause; they deserve access.

I also mentor through SelectUSA’s Global Women in Tech network, supporting international founders who want to expand into the US.

Angel investing, to me, is early-stage capital plus active support—introductions, strategic guidance, and long-term belief. It’s not only about funding; it’s about opening doors.

What is the investment situation in Türkiye? How can it be improved?

Türkiye has world-class founders and a strong technology workforce. What improves investment is predictability: clear rules, stable



confidence, and long-term thinking. We also need more exits and more role models of global success.

Most importantly, we need a stronger “bridge culture”—where founders, investors, institutions, and corporates collaborate more intentionally. When the ecosystem moves together, capital follows.

What do you think of the Turkish and Turkish American investments in the US?

There’s strong potential—especially when investment comes with smart US partnerships and real market understanding. The US rewards teams that can sell, execute, and build trust consistently.

The key is not just “entering America,” but building the right relationships and governance so the business can scale sustainably. That’s how both founders and investors win.

To what extent are you involved with AI, and what is the AI situation in Türkiye?

I’m exploring AI daily, and I see it as a historic tool—when used responsibly. In Türkiye, adoption is strong, and curiosity is high, which is a real advantage.

At GoGlobal, we use AI to accelerate research, organize knowledge, and improve operational workflows. But strategy still requires human judgment. AI helps us move faster; it doesn’t replace thinking.

Please share your new plans and initiatives.

In July 2026, I turn 58. My biggest plan is “more time”—time to read, write, teach, mentor, and live with more presence. I want to slow down without losing momentum.

I’m still ambitious, but more selective: fewer things, done better, with more meaning. I also want to contribute more intentionally to community-building—because that’s where real, lasting impact happens.





Could you tell us about your current family? In the US and Türkiye.

My core family lives in the US, and Los Angeles will always be my second home—my children were born there, and I'm proud of the adults they've become. Istanbul is my forever home: my mother and brother live there, and I lost my father about ten years ago.

Life teaches you that success is wonderful—but family and health are everything. And over time, close friends also become family.

What hobbies and activities do you enjoy in your free time?

Nature makes me happy—green, blue, and sunlight. I love long walks, simple tables with family and friends, calm music, and books. I still love travel, but I now choose quieter places over big cities. If my loved ones are healthy and close, that's my definition of wealth.

Could you describe your daily routine?

I don't wake up early—I rarely start before 8. I work Monday through Thursday, and for the last five years, I've protected Fridays as a no-work day. Coffee, a walk with my dog, focused work, and then time for founders and community when I can.

In the evenings, I follow global news and unwind with international films or series. Culture is fuel for global thinking—and rest is a form of leadership.

What is your favorite quote? What is the proudest moment in your life?

My favorite quote is from Atatürk: "O heroic Turkish woman, you were not meant to crawl on the ground—you are meant to be lifted on shoulders, rising to the skies."

My proudest moments are always connected to my children—their growth, their character, and the lives they're building. Watching them become capable, kind adults has been my greatest joy.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

My parents shaped my values—creativity from my mother, discipline and structure from my father. As a Turkish woman, Atatürk has been my lifelong inspiration—his vision for education, for women, and for a modern civic culture. With time, I understand even more deeply how difficult—and how extraordinary—that leadership was.

Is there something that the readers of TurkNetwork Magazine might be surprised to learn about you?

Yes: I sometimes get uncontrollable giggles in very serious settings. In university, we had an economics professor teaching in English with a strong Italian accent, and certain words would trigger a silent laugh attack—I had to escape the room to avoid ruining the seriousness of the class.

Also, during the perestroika/glasnost years, I spent time in Russia and even studied the Russian language at Moscow University—an experience I'll never forget.

What are your recommendations to the community leaders, business owners, and the Turkish-American Community in general?

Don't underestimate the impact of small actions. One introduction, one mentorship, one shared lesson can change a life. The US can still reward hard work and integrity—so keep building here, but don't lose your roots.

Support the next generation, open your networks, invest in cross-border founders when you can, and show up for local organizations. Communities represent countries—let's represent ours with excellence, unity, and generosity.

Would you like to share any message with our readers?

Thank you to *TurkNetwork Magazine* and to you, dear Oya Bain, for this honor. Being featured in March—around International Women's Day—means a lot to me. Recognition is motivating, but community is bigger than a title; it's a practice.


I believe we will continue building real bridges between Türkiye and the US, and between founders, investors, and opportunity. And for anyone who wants a very honest story of what it takes to build early—and keep going—I hope you'll also check out my book, *Breaking Boundaries: How I Built a Startup and Paved the Way for Others*. From my heart—thank you. ■



Oya Bain is a retired biochemist from Georgetown University Hospital. She has been a long-standing activist in the Turkish community, both in cultural and political affairs. She has served and still does on the boards of many Turkish American organizations.

She believes in strong ties between Türkiye and the US and strives to promote Turkish history and culture at every chance.

We Are Proud
to Announce



**TurkNetwork
Young Journalism
Scholar Program**

TurkNetwork Magazine is proud to announce the launch of the Young Journalism Scholar Program, designed to support and inspire talented young writers and future journalists in the Turkish-American community.

Scholarship opportunities • Mentorship • Publication Experience

STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION

TurkNetwork[®]



PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

VISIBILITY IS CURRENCY

WHY BEING SEEN MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

“If people don’t see you, they can’t choose you.”

By Sitki Kazanci

In today’s business world, many entrepreneurs still believe that success depends mainly on having a good product or service. Quality certainly matters. Experience matters. Hard work matters. But in the modern marketplace, there is another factor that often determines success long before customers evaluate quality:

Visibility.

The reality is simple. If people do not see you, they cannot choose you.

No matter how talented a lawyer is, how skilled a contractor may be, or how experienced a consultant becomes, none of it matters if potential customers never discover them. In a crowded marketplace, the

businesses that succeed are not always the best. More often, they are the ones that are most visible and most trusted.

Visibility has become a form of currency.

Just as businesses invest money to grow, they must also invest in being seen. Attention has value. Recognition has value. Trust has value. Visibility creates opportunities, builds credibility, and ultimately generates revenue.

One of the most common challenges I observe among small businesses — especially within the Turkish-American community — is not lack of talent, but lack of visibility. Many business owners devote all their energy to operations. They improve their service, refine their skills, and work long hours to deliver quality results. Yet outside

their immediate circle, very few people know they exist.

There is still a widespread belief that good work alone will naturally attract customers. While quality work is essential, it rarely guarantees growth by itself. Word-of-mouth remains valuable, but it is no longer enough to sustain a business in a competitive and digital marketplace.

Today’s customers search before they decide. They look online. They compare options. They read reviews. They observe how active a business is and how consistently it communicates. If your business is not visible in these spaces, it may not exist in the mind of the customer.

Twenty years ago, visibility meant having a storefront on a busy street or an advertisement

in a local newspaper. Today visibility is defined by presence. It is reflected in how often people encounter your name, your work, and your ideas. Familiarity creates comfort, and comfort builds trust.

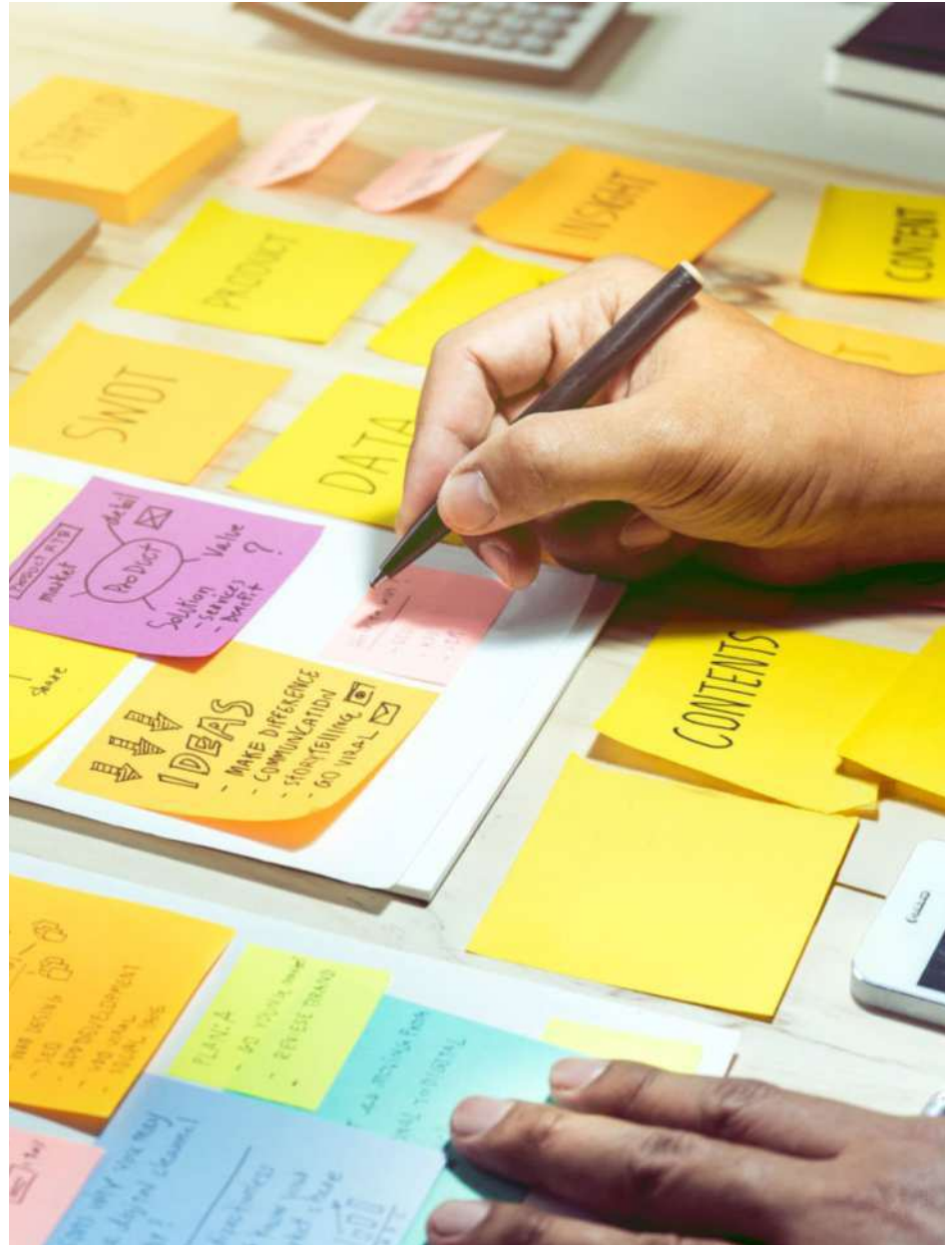
Many business owners feel uncomfortable with marketing because they associate it with self-promotion. In reality, visibility is not about promotion. It is about trust. When people see your business consistently — whether through professional networks, community events, articles, or online presence — they begin to feel confident in choosing you.

Trust rarely develops in a single moment. It grows gradually through repeated exposure. Businesses that remain visible communicate regularly, share knowledge, and stay engaged with their communities. Over time, they become recognized names rather than unknown options.

Some of the most important business opportunities do not come from advertising at all. They come from being known. Partnerships, referrals, invitations, and collaborations often begin simply because someone remembers your name at the right moment. Visibility increases the chances that opportunity will find you.

Many business owners expect marketing to produce immediate results, and when that does not happen, they lose motivation. Visibility does not work overnight. It works the way reputation works — gradually and steadily. Each article published, each event attended, each connection maintained becomes part of a larger story. Over time that story becomes credibility, and credibility becomes growth.

Visibility does not require complicated strategies. What it requires is consistency and intention. Small actions repeated regularly create recognition, and recognition builds trust. Businesses that remain present over time develop a natural advantage. They become familiar, and familiar businesses are easier to trust.



Within the Turkish-American business community there are many highly capable entrepreneurs whose work deserves broader recognition. Increasing visibility is not only beneficial for individual businesses; it strengthens the community as a whole. When Turkish-American professionals become more visible, they gain influence and open doors for others who follow.

The business environment continues to evolve rapidly. Customers have more choices

than ever before, and technology makes comparison easier every year. In this environment, invisibility is no longer a neutral condition. It is a disadvantage.

The businesses that will thrive in the coming years will be those that combine quality with visibility, expertise with presence, and service with trust.

Because in the modern economy, visibility is no longer optional. Visibility is currency. ■



Exclusive Interview with **DR. MUSTAFA OMUR KASIMCAN & DILHAN KASIMCAN**

BOD PAIN MANAGEMENT & WELLNESS CENTER FOUNDERS

“Integrative medicine complements modern healthcare – it does not replace it.”

By Sitki Kazanci

Chronic pain affects millions of Americans, often limiting daily life and diminishing overall well-being. At BOD Pain Management & Wellness Center, founders Dr. Mustafa Omur Kasimcan, an experienced neurosurgeon, and Dilhan Kasimcan, a healthcare entrepreneur, have created a patient-centered practice that blends modern medicine with holistic healing approaches. Inspired by their personal journey and professional experience, the Kasimcans established BOD to provide compassionate, integrative care for patients seeking effective and lasting relief. In this exclusive interview with *TurkNetwork Magazine*, they

share the story behind their American journey, their innovative approach to pain management, and their vision for improving the lives of patients in Northern Virginia.

Could you tell us how your American adventure began and what inspired you to establish BOD Pain Management and Wellness Center in the United States?

Dilhan Kasimcan: Our American journey began when our son was accepted into a science-focused public school in Virginia. Sending him alone did not feel right, so I moved with our children while my husband, then Head of Neurosurgery in Türkiye, remained in his position. During that

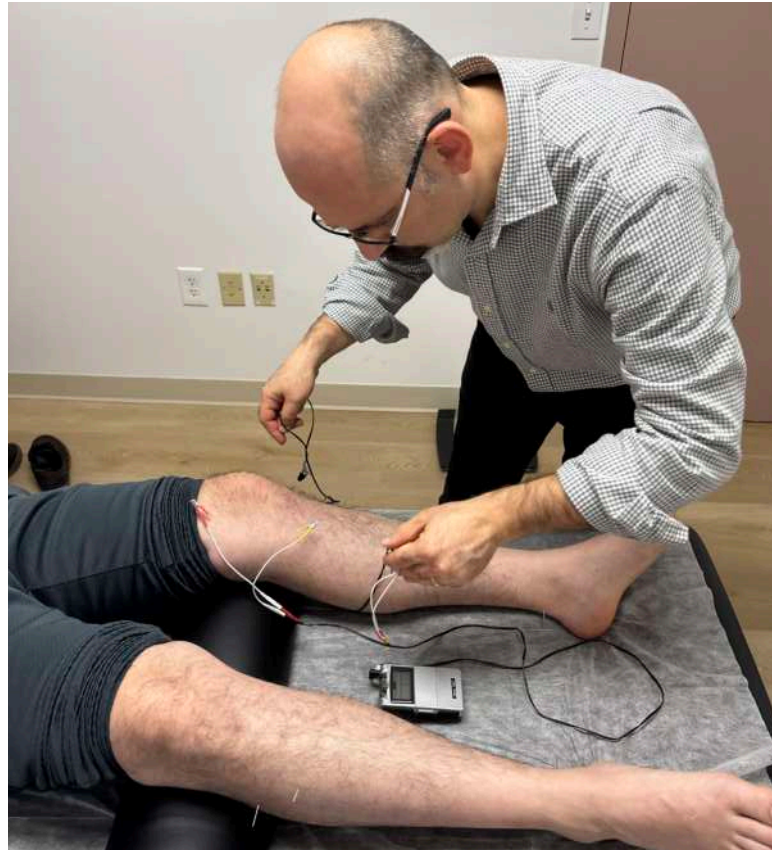
time, I began observing the US healthcare system and noticed how difficult it could be to access specialists and how impersonal some experiences felt. I recognized a clear need, especially within the Turkish community, for care that combined medical quality with compassion.

Pain management became our focus for deeply personal reasons. I have suffered from chronic migraines for years and experienced firsthand how isolating chronic pain can feel. Through feasibility studies, I discovered that nearly 700,000 people in Northern Virginia live with chronic pain. That confirmed our belief that this region needed a center dedicated to integrative, patient-centered pain management, and BOD was born.



*Pain management
should restore hope,
not just reduce
symptoms.*

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



BOD combines ancient healing traditions with modern medical innovations. What led you to adopt this holistic approach to pain management?

Dr. Kasimcan: I have been working with modern medicine for over 25 years, applying it thousands of times both in the clinic and in the operating room. After coming to America, we started thinking about how we could help patients with headaches, spinal diseases, and musculoskeletal problems. Unfortunately, we learned through experience that many patients, for various reasons, do not receive effective medical evaluation or have unanswered questions. Acupuncture came into our lives at that time. It helped us a lot with my wife's severe migraine attacks and torn shoulder. These and similar reasons led us to traditional medicine and acupuncture.

Dr. Kasimcan, with your extensive background in neurosurgery, how has your clinical experience shaped the treatment philosophy at BOD?

Dr. Kasimcan: My neurosurgical background allows me to interpret traditional practices through the lens of modern science.

Understanding the nervous system in detail gives us confidence when applying acupuncture principles. It allows us to “look at both sides of the mirror.”

More importantly, it reinforces individualized care. We treat the patient, not just the diagnosis. When chronic diseases are present, we carefully integrate treatments without disrupting existing medical therapies.

Dilhan, as co-founder, what has been the biggest challenge and opportunity in building and growing this wellness center in the US healthcare environment?

Dilhan Kasimcan: Building BOD was not easy. I previously led the establishment of a training center for a medical device company in Istanbul and later established a genetic research center serving the Middle East and Eastern Europe. However, creating a healthcare center in the United States, with a completely different regulatory and insurance system, was one of the greatest challenges of my career. Understanding the institutions, compliance structure, and operational processes required patience and nearly two years of dedicated planning. What gave me

confidence was realizing the great need for quality pain management in this region. Now, seeing patients leave with hope and relief makes every obstacle worthwhile.

Chronic pain affects millions of people. In your experience, what are the most common misconceptions patients have about pain management and holistic therapies?

Dr. Kasimcan: Many patients expect immediate and complete pain relief. However, chronic pain that develops over the years rarely disappears overnight. Chasing “zero pain” often leads to frustration and aggressive interventions.

A more empowering goal is functional improvement. Can you walk your dog? Sleep through the night? Play with your children? Quality of life matters more than a number on a pain scale.

Another misconception is that imaging will always reveal the source. Many chronic conditions do not appear clearly on scans, while many pain-free people show “abnormal” findings. As I often told my patients: “We are not treating your MRI — we are treating you.” Careful listening and clinical evaluation are essential.



Holistic medicine is also misunderstood. It does not replace conventional care — it complements it. The most effective approach is integrative, where therapies work together.

Your center offers services ranging from acupuncture and cupping to advanced electro-acupuncture. How do you determine the most effective personalized treatment plan for each patient?

Dr. Kasimcan: We begin with a comprehensive assessment that explores not just where it hurts, but also how it behaves, when it began, and how it affects daily life. Most importantly, we ask: “What would you like to be able to do again?”

From there, we design an integrated protocol. Acupuncture forms the foundation of our practice, regulating the nervous system and reducing inflammation. Cupping helps release muscular tension and improve circulation. Electroacupuncture provides stronger stimulation when nerve involvement or muscle weakness is present. Each plan evolves as the patient improves.

You are launching your first workshop on March 7 at 3 PM. What can participants expect from this workshop, and who should attend?

Dilhan Kasimcan: From the beginning, our goal at BOD was to create meaningful impact, not only through effective treatment but through education and empowerment. Having lived with chronic pain myself, recovery requires more than procedures; it requires awareness and educating yourself. That is why patient education is central to our mission. On March 7, we will host our first interactive workshop on migraines, headaches, and neck and shoulder pain, with plans to expand to other chronic conditions. We also provide complimentary talks at senior centers, aiming to guide our community toward healthier, more pain-free lives.

How do you see the future of integrative pain management evolving in the United States over the next five to ten years?

Dr. Kasimcan: Healthcare is increasingly burdened by invasive procedures and high costs. At the same time, patients are seeking natural approaches that reduce dependence on medications. Scientific evidence supporting integrative medicine continues to grow.

I am actively involved in research and clinical studies to further validate measurable outcomes in integrative pain care. Over the next decade, insurance policies, government strategy, and scientific institutions will shape this evolution. I believe integrative pain management will become either a strong complement or, in some cases, a first-line option.

As Turkish-American healthcare entrepreneurs, what advice would you give to other professionals from Türkiye who want to build medical or wellness businesses in the US?

Dilhan Kasimcan: Approach the US system with preparation and patience. It is highly regulated and complex. Master licensing, compliance, and insurance processes before focusing on growth.

Build credibility through excellence and transparency. In the US, structure is as important as clinical skill. At BOD, we learned that strong systems, such as compliance, organization, and financial planning, are essential.

Your education, resilience, and work ethic are strengths. Try to adapt to the culture, stay disciplined, and remain mission-driven. Don't Give up!

Looking ahead, what are your growth plans for BOD Pain Management & Wellness Center, and what kind of impact do you hope to create in the community?

Dilhan Kasimcan: Our growth is guided by our mission: improving the quality of life for those struggling with pain. We aim to expand education, strengthen clinical excellence, and continue research in integrative medicine.

Our vision is to become the most trusted pain and wellness center in our community, a place defined by respect, ethics, compassion, and excellence. For us, success means fewer people living with chronic pain and more individuals regaining their functionality, confidence, and hope. ■



313 Park Ave #203
Falls Church, VA 22046
Phone: (703) 637-3626
[website](#)





WANT TO REACH MORE CUSTOMERS AND DRIVE REAL RESULTS?

At Creative Edge, we take your business to new heights with strategic, results-driven marketing. Our award-winning team handles everything—from **SEO and website optimization to social media marketing and ad management**. Let us focus on growing your reach and engaging your audience so you can focus on what you do best: running your business.

Ready to partner with experts who know how to scale? Reach out to Creative Edge today!



creative **edge** designstudio

BE UNIQUE, BE AWESOME

1751 Pinnacle Drive. Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102

sk@studiocreativeedge.com
www.studiocreativeedge.com
(703) 439-0557 phone

TurkNetwork[®]

**CELEBRATING
WOMEN EVERYWHERE:
A SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S MONTH EDITION**

**TURKNETWORK
MAGAZINE PRESENTS
WOMEN IN AI & TECHNOLOGY
LEADERSHIP 2026**

SPECIAL SECTION



THE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

A LEGACY OF STRENGTH: THE HISTORY AND ONGOING STRUGGLE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

March 8th is more than a celebration—it is a call to action for gender equality, labor rights, and social justice.

By Ayşe Derya Kahraman, PhD

March 8, recognized as International Women's Day (IWD), has its roots in the labor movements of working women fighting for equal rights, fair wages, and improved working conditions. This historical connection has sparked ongoing discussions about whether IWD should be a day of celebration or remembrance and whether its proper name should be International Women's Day or International Working Women's Day.

This article explores the evolution of March 8, shedding light on its social and historical significance. Understanding the journey behind IWD allows us to better appreciate its role in advocating for gender equality and women's rights.

HISTORICAL ROOTS: THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Two key events shaped March 8 as a significant date in history:

► **The 1857 New York Textile Workers' Strike:** On March 8, 1857, approximately

40,000 female textile workers in New York protested for equal pay and shorter working hours. The strike ended with police intervention, leading to numerous casualties and highlighting the injustices faced by women in the workforce.

► **The 1908 Cotton Factory Fire:** On March 8, 1908, another tragic event occurred when 129 female textile workers lost their lives in a factory fire while protesting poor working conditions and low wages. This disaster further emphasized the need for labor rights and workplace safety for women.



Recognizing these injustices, the International Women's Conference in Copenhagen (1910) led by Clara Zetkin, proposed an annual Women's Day to advocate for gender equality. The first mass observance took place on March 19, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, focusing on women's suffrage, labor rights, and equal pay.

In 1921, at a conference in Moscow, March 8 was officially designated as International Women's Day, honoring past struggles and reinforcing women's fight for equality.

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Despite significant strides in gender equality, disparities in employment remain widespread. In leading economies such as Sweden (40%), Denmark (38%), France (31.9%), Germany (35%), and the US (41.6%), women make up a large portion of the workforce. However, most women work in part-time or low-skilled positions, limiting their access to promotions, paid leave, and job security.

Recognizing these inequalities, the United

Nations declared 1976–1985 the “Decade for Women,” promoting equal rights, economic development, and peace. The first UN Women’s Conference was held in 1975, addressing employment, education, and healthcare as fundamental pillars of women’s empowerment.

In 1977, the UN General Assembly officially recognized March 8 as “International Women’s Rights and Peace Day,” reinforcing the link between women’s empowerment and global peace.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY TODAY

While progress has been made, women’s rights advocacy remains essential. Education inequality continues to be a major barrier, with two-thirds of the world’s illiterate population being women. March 8 serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles and a call to action for gender equality, fair wages, and workplace rights.

Each year, the UN sets a theme for IWD. The 2025 theme, announced by UN Women, is: “Rights, Equality, Empowerment for All Women and Girls.”

This theme highlights the importance of equal opportunities and acknowledges the leadership roles of young women in shaping the future.

THE COLORS AND SYMBOLS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

International Women’s Day is symbolized by three colors:

- ▶ **Purple** – Represents justice, dignity, and the strength of feminist movements.
- ▶ **Green** – Symbolizes hope and women’s fight for freedom.
- ▶ **White** – Stands for purity and the ideal of gender equality.

These colors originated from the Suffragette movement in 1908, becoming universal symbols of women’s rights activism. ■



Ayşe Derya Kahraman, PhD is a Turkish graphic designer and photographer, currently a faculty member at Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa and President of the Bilgi Köprüsü and Solidarity Association. She has exhibited internationally, received awards, and served as a jury member in global design competitions. Her expertise spans graphic

design, photography, packaging, and brand management. Currently a visiting researcher at The New School Parsons University in New York, she actively contributes to EU- and government-funded projects in R&D, XR technologies, and education. She also holds memberships in ISOFF, GESAM, and various cultural associations.

THE SYMBOLIC FLOWER OF MARCH 8: THE MIMOSA

Since 1946, the mimosa flower has been the emblem of women’s solidarity and resilience, particularly in Italy.

Why the Mimosa?

- ▶ **Affordability** – It was accessible to all, even after World War II economic hardships.
- ▶ **Seasonal Bloom** – It blossoms in early March, symbolizing renewal and hope.
- ▶ **Resilience** – Despite its delicate appearance, it is a strong and enduring flower, much like women’s strength and perseverance.

In Italy and many other countries, gifting mimosa flowers on March 8 has become a tradition, honoring women’s contributions and struggles.

Final Thoughts

March 8 is more than a day of celebration—it is a day of remembrance and continued advocacy for gender equality, labor rights, and social justice. Although women have gained greater representation in politics, business, and education, disparities still exist.

International Women’s Day serves as a global platform to reflect on past achievements and amplify the fight for women’s rights, ensuring a more equitable future for all.



PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK



PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN THE UNITED STATES: WHY MARCH 8 STILL MATTERS

WHEN WOMEN SUCCEED, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND ECONOMIES GROW STRONGER.

“March 8 is not just about recognition – it is about creating new possibilities for the next generation.”

By Sara Jensen

Every year on March 8, people around the world celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) — a global occasion that honors the achievements of women while also highlighting the ongoing struggle for equality. In the United States, International Women's Day has grown into an important moment for reflection, recognition, and action. Through community events, professional gatherings, educational programs, and social campaigns, Americans mark the day by celebrating the contributions of women in business, science, education, public service, and everyday life.

The Meaning Behind March 8

International Women's Day has roots in the early 20th century, when women across Europe and North America began organizing for better working conditions, voting rights, and equal treatment. March 8 eventually became the internationally recognized date to honor women's social, economic, cultural, and political achievements. More importantly, the day serves as a reminder that gender equality is still a work in progress.

Although women have made significant advances in education, leadership, and professional opportunities in the United States, disparities remain. Issues such as wage gaps, leadership representation, access to

healthcare, and work-life balance continue to shape discussions around women's rights. International Women's Day offers a platform to address these challenges while celebrating progress.

How International Women's Day Is Celebrated in the US.

International Women's Day is not a federal holiday in the United States, but it is widely recognized across universities, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and community groups. Many organizations host conferences, networking events, and panel discussions featuring successful women leaders who share their experiences and inspire others.

Professional organizations often use the day to highlight women's leadership and entrepreneurship. Business associations and chambers of commerce organize breakfast meetings or evening receptions where women entrepreneurs and professionals can connect and exchange ideas. These events emphasize mentorship, collaboration, and career development.

Educational institutions also play an important role in celebrating March 8. Schools and universities organize lectures, workshops, and exhibitions focused on women's history and achievements. Students learn about influential women who have shaped society in fields such as science, politics, literature, and technology. These programs help younger generations understand the importance of equality and opportunity.

Nonprofit organizations frequently organize fundraising campaigns or volunteer activities that support women in need. These initiatives may focus on domestic violence prevention, education programs for girls, healthcare access, or economic empowerment. Many charities use International Women's Day as an opportunity to raise awareness and mobilize community support.

The Role of Businesses and Media

In recent years, businesses have become increasingly active participants in International Women's Day celebrations. Companies highlight the achievements of their female employees through internal communications, social media campaigns, and special events. Many organizations invite guest speakers to discuss leadership, innovation, and career development.

Social media has played a major role in expanding the reach of International Women's Day. Hashtags and online campaigns allow individuals and organizations to share stories and recognize inspiring women. These digital platforms help amplify voices and connect communities across geographical boundaries.

Media outlets also contribute by publishing special features and interviews that highlight women's accomplishments. Stories of



entrepreneurs, scientists, artists, and community leaders help demonstrate the diverse roles women play in society.

Why International Women's Day Matters Today

International Women's Day is not only a celebration but also a call to action. It reminds society that equal opportunities and fair treatment benefit everyone. When women succeed, families and communities grow stronger, and economies become more dynamic.

For many immigrants and multicultural communities in the United States, International Women's Day has special meaning. It provides an opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity and recognize the contributions of women from different backgrounds. Events organized by cultural associations often highlight both heritage and achievement, strengthening community ties.

March 8 also encourages individuals to reflect on the women who have influenced

their lives — mothers, teachers, colleagues, and mentors. Recognizing these contributions helps build a culture of appreciation and respect.

Looking Toward the Future

As the United States continues to evolve, International Women's Day remains an important reminder that progress requires continuous effort. Encouraging girls to pursue education and leadership roles, supporting women-owned businesses, and promoting fair workplace policies are essential steps toward a more balanced society.

International Women's Day is ultimately about recognition, opportunity, and hope. Each March 8 offers a chance to celebrate achievements while recommitting to a future where women and men can contribute equally and reach their full potential.

By honoring the past and working toward a more inclusive future, International Women's Day continues to inspire individuals and communities across the United States. ■



MICHELLE ILKNUR VONAL

Current Role and Organization
Founder & CEO of Harper Seven LLC



Career Journey

My career began in technology and cybersecurity, where I developed strong expertise in network security, infrastructure, and compliance-driven environments. Over the years, I worked directly with advanced firewall architectures, secure system migrations, risk management frameworks, and complex enterprise deployments. This technical background shaped my perspective on technology—not simply as a collection of systems, but as a strategic driver of business growth and resilience.

As cyber threats became more sophisticated, it became clear that traditional security approaches were no longer enough. This insight led me to establish Harper Seven (HP7), a cybersecurity and AI-driven security firm focused on proactive defense, red teaming, and PenTest-as-a-Service (PTaaS). At HP7, we integrate artificial intelligence into security analytics, threat detection, and automation, helping organizations transition from reactive protection to predictive resilience.

My leadership in AI and technology has been defined not by titles, but by building meaningful capabilities and delivering real impact. As the founder of a Woman-Owned Small Business serving federal and enterprise clients, I combine technical expertise with strategic leadership, compliance knowledge, and strong partnerships to deliver scalable, AI-powered security solutions across government and commercial sectors.



BAŞAK ÇAPRAK ŞENZEYBEK

Current Role and Organization
Edge AI Software Technical Marketing Lead / Intel



Career Journey

I began my professional journey with a strong foundation in computer engineering, earning my bachelor's degree from Boğaziçi University and a master's degree in Engineering and Technology Management from the same institution. Early in my career, I gained experience across sales, product management, and technical roles, which gave me a well-rounded understanding of how technology addresses real-world business challenges and how to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively.

My transition into artificial intelligence and edge technologies was a natural progression of this multidisciplinary background. After joining Intel as an engineer, I advanced into strategic roles focused on edge computing and AI. As an Edge Software Architect, I worked on developing Edge AI solutions, creating reference architectures, optimizing models, and benchmarking real-time workloads on edge platforms.

Today, as an Edge AI Software Technical Marketing Lead, I focus on bringing these solutions into real-world applications, particularly in smart city environments. I collaborate with customers and developer communities to demonstrate value, support integrations, and help shape go-to-market strategies.

By combining hands-on technical expertise with strategic vision and cross-functional leadership, I help bridge the gap between technical innovation and practical, scalable AI solutions that make cities smarter, safer, and more efficient.



HANDE KAZGAN

Current Role and Organization
Lead Agile Coach



Career Journey

I have intentionally shaped my career around helping organizations make technology work for people. Beginning in Türkiye and continuing in the United States for the past 25 years, my experience—combined with a background in economics—has influenced my leadership approach, allowing me to balance both the technical systems and the human side of organizational change.

I started my career in quality engineering and testing, building strong technical credibility and a practical understanding of how software is developed and delivered. From there, I moved into roles focused on supporting teams and leaders through complex transformations—establishing clear priorities, creating effective operating rhythms, and strengthening collaboration across product and delivery teams to achieve meaningful results.

Over the past decade, I have worked with Fortune 50 enterprises as well as fast-growing technology companies, including AI-focused organizations. My work has ranged from team-level enablement to portfolio and executive leadership initiatives, including launching programs, coaching leaders at scale, and improving key outcomes such as speed to value, predictability, and organizational clarity. A consistent theme throughout my career has been change leadership—meeting people where they are and building adoption through alignment, capability development, and trust.

Long before earning my AI Native certification, I had already integrated artificial intelligence into my professional practice. I continue to guide leaders and teams in adopting AI thoughtfully, embedding it into decision-making, learning, and daily workflows with responsible guardrails that enhance alignment and improve outcomes.



ESEN AKTER

Current Role and Organization
Consulting/Self



Career Journey

I am a Senior IT Program Leader who believes successful technology transformation begins with people. Over the past decade, I have led enterprise and federal initiatives across infrastructure, cybersecurity, identity management, and cloud modernization, supporting organizations such as Marriott, Western Union, CareFirst, and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

Throughout my career, I have managed multi-million-dollar programs and led diverse teams of engineers, analysts, and operations professionals across highly regulated environments, coordinating both onshore and offshore operations. From enterprise identity modernization initiatives to PMO governance, my focus has consistently been on delivering measurable results while empowering the people behind the work.

I have also served in executive leadership roles — including CEO, COO, and Board Member — within the Project Management Institute, where I gained valuable C-level governance experience in strategy, operations, and organizational leadership. This experience strengthened my ability to lead with vision, accountability, and a strong commitment to service.

My leadership approach is grounded in servant leadership. I emphasize clarity, accountability, and collaboration, creating environments where teams feel supported, trusted, and encouraged to grow. I believe that strong execution is built on alignment, transparency, and meaningful human connection.

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape enterprise IT, I have expanded my focus to include Generative AI and machine learning, helping organizations modernize responsibly and effectively. My goal is to align technology, people, and purpose to build resilient systems and high-performing teams prepared for the future.



GAMZE OZKAN

Current Role and Organization
Principal Product Manager
Technical / Amazon



Career Journey

I have spent over 20 years in product leadership roles, with the past decade at Amazon building large-scale consumer and developer-facing products. Throughout my career, I worked closely with science and engineering teams to apply machine learning to discovery, personalization, and customer experience at scale.

As large language models matured, I shifted my focus toward AI-driven products and productivity applications. Today, I am a Principal Product Manager Technical leading AI initiatives in Amazon's Delivery organization. My work focuses on translating emerging AI capabilities into practical, human-centered systems that deliver real value.

Most recently, I have been leading the development of a multimodal, agentic grocery shopping assistant that integrates vision, language, and commerce workflows to simplify everyday shopping.



ISIL BERKUN

Current Role and Organization
Founder of DigiFab AI



Career Journey

Dr. Isil Berkun is an AI engineer and entrepreneur working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and responsible technology deployment. She holds a PhD in Engineering and has spent over 15 years building and evaluating machine learning systems in both industry and academia.

She previously worked at Intel, where she contributed to large scale AI driven engineering initiatives with measurable business impact. Over time, her focus shifted from building isolated models to designing end to end AI systems that function reliably in production environments.

Today, she is the Founder of DigiFab AI, where she develops intelligent monitoring and control systems for advanced manufacturing. In parallel, she teaches applied AI and generative AI courses to global audiences, emphasizing how systems truly work beyond surface level hype.

Her work bridges research, engineering, and entrepreneurship, with a focus.



TÜRKNUR BRAND

Current Role and Organization
Statistician & Survey
Methodologist, Founder of Data
Power Analytics



Career Journey

I studied statistics at METU as an undergraduate. I then worked for two decades in the Research Department of the Central Bank of Turkey as an economist, as well as for other private and government organizations in other countries. Having obtained a PhD in Survey Methodology, I worked at Facebook, which sparked my interest in technology. In the evolving age of AI, I decided to use my statistical background and skills to share my knowledge with teenagers, inspiring their creativity in this field.



AYŞE DERYA KAHRAMAN

Current Role and Organization
Prof. Dr. – Chairman of the
Knowledge Bridge and Solidarity
Association – President of the
IFAPC Congress



Career Journey

My motivation to pursue a career in artificial intelligence and technology grew from the intersection of my academic background in visual communication design and my professional experience in brand management, strategic communication, and the creative industries.

As a Professor of Graphic Design involved in interdisciplinary research and industry collaborations, I have long been interested in how emerging technologies transform visual communication and creative production. While my early work focused on design education, typography, photography, and advertising, my research gradually shifted toward digital transformation, particularly the role of artificial intelligence, extended reality (XR), and immersive media in shaping new creative and learning environments.

Through my involvement in national and international research projects — including XR technology initiatives, STEM learning infrastructures, and EU-supported social impact programs — I have seen how AI enhances communication, learning, and innovation. In my professional work in brand strategy, AI-assisted visual production, and innovation consulting, I have observed how AI improves decision-making and enables scalable creative solutions.

I view artificial intelligence as a powerful bridge between creativity and technology, helping shape the future of design, communication, and education.



SENA SAHIN

Current Role and Organization
Founding Partner at Capitol Law
Partners



Career Journey

Through my cybersecurity and privacy law certificate program at Drexel Law School, I worked on practical coursework focused on data protection, risk management, and compliance in technology-driven environments. This included analyzing real-world cybersecurity incidents, developing privacy compliance frameworks, and evaluating legal and ethical issues related to emerging technologies and AI.

With a strong foundation in law and public policy, I focus on privacy, data protection, and regulatory compliance in an increasingly digital world. As an active member of the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP), certified in U.S. privacy laws, and a former Young Privacy Professional Leader in the Northern Virginia Chapter, I have developed a deep understanding of data governance, compliance, and ethical technology practices.

As a partner at a law firm, I serve small and medium-sized businesses by guiding them through state and federal regulations while supporting their adoption of emerging technologies, including AI-driven solutions. Through tailored legal counsel and compliance strategies, I help organizations align innovation with ethical and legal standards, contributing to secure, transparent, and inclusive digital ecosystems.

As a Turkish woman in technology, I am committed to advancing diversity, mentorship, and responsible innovation. My work reflects a dedication to empowering businesses and communities to use AI and digital tools in ways that protect privacy, promote trust, and create meaningful impact.



TUBA FIRINCIOGLU

Current Role and Organization
Co-founder, CEO globalMOO



Career Journey

My path to AI leadership began in Turkey. After earning my engineering degree from Istanbul Technical University, I pursued graduate studies at Stanford and completed my Ph.D. at Colorado School of Mines—all in Petroleum Engineering, a field where women were rare.

Throughout my career, I've been passionate about one truth: complex decisions rarely have a single "right" answer. They involve balancing multiple objectives, navigating trade-offs, and making choices with incomplete information.

I spent 25 years at NITEC managing over 100 complex projects for 50+ global energy companies. But we faced a persistent challenge: existing optimization technologies couldn't handle problems with multiple competing objectives. They forced artificial trade-offs and subjective weighting. So, we built our own. Together with my business partner Chet Ozgen, we led research from 2010 to 2018 into agent-based learning and knowledge capture and created the agent-based expert system that became globalMOO. Our technology uses intelligent agents to solve complex decision and optimization problems inversely, providing explainability and trustworthiness that traditional methods cannot.

In April 2025, Chet and I launched globalMOO. Organizations shouldn't have to choose between powerful and trustworthy AI for complex decisions. We hope to transform optimization scene solving problems considered impossible before.



BETUL BASKAN

Current Role and Organization
Software Engineering
Bell Automation



Career Journey

I began my career as a software engineer, building a strong foundation in problem-solving, system design, and scalable application development. Early on, I focused on creating efficient, user-centered solutions and quickly became interested in how intelligent systems can enhance real-world products. Through hands-on experience with modern technologies and continuous learning, I expanded my expertise into AI-driven development and data-informed decision making. Over time, I took on greater technical responsibility, contributing to complex projects and guiding solutions from concept to deployment. Today, I apply my engineering background to develop innovative technology solutions, with a focus on leveraging artificial intelligence to improve performance, automate processes, and create meaningful user impact.

The ability of AI to learn, adapt, and create smarter systems inspired me to deepen my skills in this area. I'm especially motivated by the potential of AI to improve user experiences, optimize complex tasks, and drive meaningful innovation across industries.

I have contributed to several software and AI-related projects focused on building scalable applications and data-driven features. My work has included developing backend services, implementing automation solutions, and integrating machine learning capabilities into real-world products.



MELTEM SONMEZ TURAN

Current Role and Organization
Supervisory Mathematician / National Institute of Standards and Technology



Career Journey

With over 25 years of experience in My career began with a deep interest in mathematics and how abstract ideas can be turned into real-world technology. I pursued degrees in industrial engineering and statistics, which gave me a strong foundation in modeling, optimization, and data-driven decision making. During my Ph.D., I began working in cryptography, focusing on the design and analysis of cryptographic algorithms and discovering how essential strong mathematics is to build trustworthy digital infrastructure.

In 2009, I joined the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology as a guest researcher, marking the start of my long-term career in cybersecurity and cryptographic standardization. Since then, I have contributed to and led multiple high-impact international efforts, including the SHA-3 hash function competition, work on password hashing, and the development of standards for random number generation for cryptographic applications. The resulting standards are widely deployed across government and industry.

A defining milestone in my career was leading the NIST Lightweight Cryptography project, which addressed the security needs of constrained and embedded systems and resulted in the standardization of the Ascon family. Today, I serve in a supervisory leadership role, guiding teams that work at the intersection of research and standardization, with a focus on building secure and efficient technologies that can be trusted in real-world systems.



THE TRUTH ABOUT FRANCHISING AND REAL SECURITY

“Franchise systems provide structure, but individuals create results.”

By Kim Daly

If you are considering franchising, you are probably not just looking for a business opportunity. Most people who explore franchising are searching for stability, independence, and peace of mind. They want a path away from a job they may have outgrown and away from the uncertainty of relying on decisions made by others.

At its core, franchising represents the

desire to take control of one’s future.

Many professionals eventually begin asking important questions: How secure is my job? What happens if the company changes direction? How long can I depend on someone else for my income? These concerns often lead people to explore business ownership, and franchising offers a structured and practical way to make that transition.

However, there is an important reality that should be understood:

Long-term security rarely comes from working for someone else.

Even when a job offers a strong salary and benefits, your future still depends on decisions you do not control. Markets change, companies change, and priorities change. What appears stable today may not remain stable tomorrow.

Franchising has become attractive because it offers a middle ground between employment and entrepreneurship. Instead of

“Franchising is not a shortcut to success – it is a path to independence.”

starting from scratch, franchise owners benefit from established systems, recognized brands, and ongoing support. These advantages can reduce risk and make business ownership more accessible.

Strong franchise systems and experienced franchisors can provide valuable training and guidance. But there is one important truth that is rarely discussed openly:

Franchising Does Not Work the Way Many People Expect

Some first-time franchise buyers believe that once they invest the required capital and follow the system, financial success will naturally follow. In reality, franchising does not operate in such a predictable way.

Within the same franchise system, some owners perform exceptionally well while others achieve only average results. The difference is rarely explained by the system alone.

When growth takes longer than expected, owners often blame the brand, the market, or the economy. While these factors matter, the most important factor is often the individual business owner.

Success Begins with the Individual

Franchise systems provide structure, but individuals create results.

A strong brand and proven model are valuable advantages, but they do not replace discipline, leadership, and consistent effort. Business ownership requires active involvement and long-term commitment.

Revenue grows when business owners consistently solve problems and create value for customers. Owners who focus on service and quality tend to build stronger and more sustainable businesses.

Successful franchise owners share several common traits:

- ▶ They stay disciplined even when results are slow
- ▶ They focus on long-term growth
- ▶ They continue learning and improving



▶ They take responsibility for results
These qualities often make the difference between an average business and a successful one.

Creating Results by Design

Every business owner shapes results through daily decisions. Some operate reactively, while others work with clear goals and direction.

Two franchise owners may operate under the same brand and in similar markets yet achieve very different results. Often, the difference lies in clarity of purpose and personal development.

Franchising provides a framework, but the owner determines how effectively that framework is used. When business owners strengthen their thinking and stay focused on their goals, the same opportunities can produce dramatically different outcomes.

A Path Toward Independence

For many Turkish-American professionals, franchising offers a practical path toward

business ownership and long-term independence. It allows individuals to build equity and create opportunities for their families.

However, franchising is not a shortcut to success. It is a structured form of entrepreneurship that rewards preparation, discipline, and persistence.

When a proven system is combined with the right mindset and consistent action, franchising can provide both financial rewards and personal satisfaction.

Real security comes from developing the skills and confidence to control your future.

Franchising can open the door — but success depends on the person who walks through it. ■



Kim Daly is one of America’s top franchise consultants with more than two decades of experience helping people achieve freedom through franchise ownership. She is the creator of *The Zee Suite™*—a mindset and success platform for franchisees and franchisors—and the forthcoming book *Unemployable & Financially Free*. Learn more at www.TheDalyCoach.com, follow her @TheDalyCoach



WHY DO WE END UP SAYING “HUMMUS” INSTEAD OF “CHICKPEA”

“A single ingredient can support both health and culture when used with diversity.”

By Deniz Orhun

Have you noticed that many healthy eating blogs are now talking about “humus” instead of “chickpea”? The traditional foods have become commercialized. Commercialization is not a bad thing; in fact, it’s one of the main locomotives of the economy. Commercial products help ingredients travel, become visible, and enter people’s daily lives. However, commercialization shouldn’t define an ingredient in its entirety. If we reduce chickpeas to only hummus recipes, or sesame to only tahini, we end up stuck with a narrow market, a narrow food culture, and a narrow economy. When we create diverse, flavor-balanced recipes for the same ingredient, we enhance its richness and, in the long run,

establish a more resilient economy.

In Anatolia, the Levant, the Mediterranean, and South Asia, chickpeas are part of a whole ecosystem of cooking: boiling, drying, grinding, sprouting, fermenting, and stewing. They are ingredients that belong to the land, the season, and the household. But when these foods enter global markets, the logic changes. Industry doesn’t sell techniques, it sells products. So, the most convenient, ready-to-package form becomes the ambassador. For chickpeas, that ambassador is hummus.

The deeper issue is that once an ingredient becomes a commercial product, it becomes vulnerable to reformulation. Additives, stabilizers, various oil blends, preservatives, and sweeteners are gradually added to the recipe. The food still carries the name we know, but not

the same level of health. This is how a dish that once supported gut health and blood sugar stability becomes something that behaves differently in the body. We encounter a similar issue in commercialized yogurt today. Chickpeas are a wonderful health-benefit ingredient; please don’t kill them with a single recipe. It requires cooking, soaking time, and some knowledge, but it is a great challenge to learn different delicious chickpea recipes for our weekly routine, and it should be your pantry staple for healthy living. Chickpeas are not only an agricultural ingredient but also a food name in most cultures.

Here are some facts about chickpea and barley production from the World Agricultural Production Review Report. Idaho, Montana, Washington, and North Dakota are the main



producers of chickpeas in the US, and the USA is one of the top barley producers in the world. Barley has a wider footprint and a stronger structural role in US agriculture, anchoring rural economies. India, Australia, and Türkiye are the world's largest chickpea producers, and Türkiye is among the world's top barley producers.

By choosing what you put on your own plate, you're quietly participating in and even crafting the global food and agricultural economy.

Now we are in March, the season when crops sprout, and nature awakens. In spring, sour flavors take center stage, like fresh herbs. The sour taste increases saliva production, which helps quench thirst.

Just as you adjust your clothing to the weather during March, adjust your meals according to your health: cooling you down, warming you up, not making you thirsty, and keeping you healthy and decreasing hunger for those who are fasting. I hope that the flow of your meal plan changes in a way that takes your health into account. May the blessings of Spring be upon you! ■



Deniz Orhun is an engineer, chef, TV personality, businesswoman, and US-certified multidisciplinary food journalist who seamlessly blends gastronomy with multiple scientific disciplines. She is also an active member of the Community Emergency Response Team. Her journey, from earning a culinary

degree at Kendall College-National Louis University in Chicago to producing more than 1,300 solo TV shows on national and international channels, represents a harmonious fusion of creativity, science, and entrepreneurship. Beyond the kitchen, Deniz collaborates with universities, research institutions, and local authorities, advocating for healthy cooking techniques and the role of nutrition in enhancing individual well-being through thoughtful flavor combinations. Her research spans seasonal natural calendars, celestial observations, unused food resources, and healthy recipes developed for extreme conditions. Deniz is the author of *What You Eat Affects How You Behave/ Yedikleriniz Davranışlarınız Olur*. She has published scientific research papers and, for more than seven years, has written culinary articles for culinary magazines and other publications. Her work sits at the intersection of science, art, and storytelling, inspiring fresh perspectives on food and its role in our lives. / www.denizorhun.com

Here is a chickpea recipe you can eat alongside spring greens or as a seaweed roll.

CHICKPEA SEAWEED WRAPS

There are about 160 types of seaweed used as food worldwide. The taste of chickpeas is fabulous. 13 edible varieties are found along the Black Sea and Türkiye coasts.

Yields 2 servings

INGREDIENTS

- ▶ 2 dried seaweed leaves
- ▶ 300 g soaked and boiled chickpeas
- ▶ 3 cloves of garlic
- ▶ Salt, cumin, hot red pepper, and black pepper
- ▶ Half an avocado
- ▶ Half a leek
- ▶ Cod/haddock/smoked salmon
- ▶ 5 drops of lemon juice
- ▶ 5 Tablespoon of olive oil

SAUCE:

- ▶ 5 tablespoon vinegar
- ▶ 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- ▶ 1 clove of garlic
- ▶ For garnish: breadcrumbs fried in butter in a pan, hot sauce



DIRECTIONS

Blend boiled chickpeas, garlic, and spices in a food processor until mashed. Add olive oil. Place the dried seaweed sheet on your counter with the shiny side facing down. When you roll it up, the shiny side should be on top, like a leaf roll. Add 3-4 drops of lemon juice on top.

Spread the chickpea paste evenly inside the sheet.

Place thinly sliced leeks, diced avocado, and your fish in order, then roll it up.

Slice it, add your hot sauce, sprinkle with toasted breadcrumbs, and serve with the vinegar soy sauce.

Enjoy!

CREAMY MULTIGRAIN PUDDING

A high-protein twist on classic pudding. All grains/legumes should be cooked in advance

Yields 5 servings

INGREDIENTS

- ▶ 1 liter of milk
- ▶ 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- ▶ 1 cup chickpeas (pre-cooked)
- ▶ 1/2 cup barley (pre-cooked) or wheat
- ▶ 1/2 cup raisins
- ▶ 1/2 cup lentils (pre-cooked-about 30 minutes)
- ▶ 1 cup corn (steamed or boiled)
- ▶ 1 teaspoon turmeric
- ▶ 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ▶ 1 cup water
- ▶ Pistachios-optional
- ▶ Cinnamon



DIRECTIONS

Take a pot and start cooking the milk and sugar.

Place the cornstarch and turmeric in a bowl and mix.

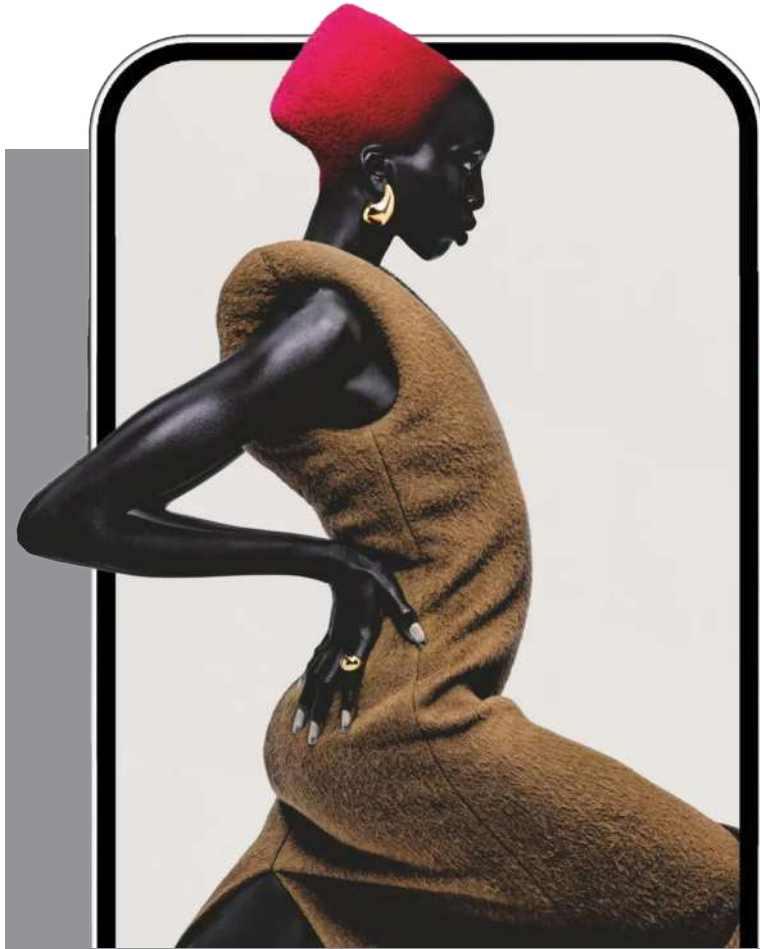
Slowly add the boiling milk to the starch mixture, stirring constantly.

Pour the mixture into the pot, then add the corn, lentils, chickpeas, and barley.

Transfer the cooked mixture to serving bowls and garnish with pistachios.

Serve cold

Enjoy!



ARCHITECTURE OF FASHION DESIGN AFTER AUTOMATION

“The workforce is losing junior production roles, not creative professions.”

PART 12

By Ece Kilic

Design education has always depended on time and repetition. In both fashion studios and architecture schools, students learned by doing the same thing over and over again, trusting that judgment would slowly emerge from practice. Drafting plans, sketching silhouettes, building mood boards, and refining details formed the foundation of how designers learned to think. That structure is now under pressure. Artificial intelligence has entered both disciplines as a working reality, compressing timelines and filtering labor. What’s changing is how

designers are trained and how early they are expected to exercise judgment.

Education is shifting from execution to decision-making

In architecture schools, the impact is already visible. Drafting and modeling were once foundational skills, forming the backbone of studio education. Today, AI-assisted workflows embedded in Autodesk platforms can generate plan variations, massing studies, and early code-aware layouts faster than students can manually produce them. Tools such as Veras, Finch, and Enscape can now take basic plans or massing models and generate renderings, atmospheres, and material scenarios almost instantly. As iteration

accelerates, repetition loses much of its instructional role.

This has forced architectural education to reconsider what it is actually teaching. Philip Bernstein, deputy dean of Yale School of Architecture and former vice president at Autodesk, has been clear that while AI can assist in conceiving ideas, it cannot replace architectural judgment. That distinction is crucial. When software can generate dozens of viable options, the educational focus shifts toward selection, reasoning, and accountability. Critiques are less concerned with line quality or formal novelty and increasingly centered on constraints, priorities, and responsibility.

Professional data reflects this recalibration.



Surveys show that most architects expect AI to take over specific tasks, while very few believe entire roles will disappear. Education is responding by emphasizing systems thinking, ethics, and coordination rather than treating production skills as the primary marker of competence. The studio is evolving from a space of output into a space of decision-making.

Fashion education is undergoing a parallel transition. With tools like CLO3D, students can design, drape, and simulate garments digitally before any physical sample exists. Generative platforms such as Midjourney allow rapid exploration of silhouettes, prints, and visual narratives. Processes that once required weeks of sketching and prototyping can now unfold within hours.

This speed has quietly reshaped expectations. Student portfolios appear more resolved earlier, compressing what used to be a gradual learning curve. In response, fashion schools are placing greater emphasis on concept framing, styling logic, and narrative coherence. A senior technical director at Kate

Spade captured this shift candidly when she observed that AI “only takes you so far” and is “never perfect.” The gap between generation and resolution is where judgment now emerges.

The workforce is losing junior labor, not design roles

These educational shifts mirror changes already underway in the workforce. In architecture, the roles most affected by AI are highly specific. Junior designers who once focused on drafting, redlines, visualization, and early concept exploration are encountering a narrower entry point. Many of these tasks are now automated or accelerated through AI-assisted pipelines. Firms continue to hire architects, but they rely on fewer people to perform repetitive production work.

At the same time, other roles are gaining importance. Architects who can manage zoning, interpret codes, balance budgets, coordinate consultants, and synthesize competing constraints are increasingly central to practice. The American Institute of Architects

reports that a large majority of architects want to learn more about AI, even as they express concern about its implications. That concern reflects a shift in how value is distributed when execution becomes abundant.

Fashion follows a similar pattern. Entry-level roles once centered on mood boards, initial sketches, trend research, and basic pattern development are being reshaped by automation. Brands are restructuring creative teams accordingly. At Tapestry, the parent company of Coach and Kate Spade, leadership has openly discussed using AI to accelerate design iteration, particularly for colorways and variations. Sampling timelines that once stretched for weeks can now be resolved far more quickly.

This shift has intensified demand for creative directors, design editors, and hybrid roles that combine technical understanding with brand strategy. These positions focus less on producing ideas and more on shaping, refining, and eliminating them. AI expands the field of possibilities, but responsibility for choice remains human.



The shared problem no one trained for

Where architecture and fashion align most closely is in the unintended consequence of these changes. Both disciplines relied on a long middle phase where designers developed judgment through repetition. That middle is shrinking. AI accelerates past it, while education still assumes it exists.

The result is a structural gap. Designers are expected to demonstrate judgment earlier, with fewer opportunities to build it gradually. This reflects a misalignment between how expertise has traditionally been formed and how work is now produced. Responsibility does not disappear in this shift; it becomes more concentrated.

What adaptation actually requires

Over time, this changes what it means to be trained as a designer. Students are moving toward roles that prioritize decision-making

and interpretation. Software proficiency has become a baseline expectation rather than a differentiator. Judgment, ethics, and the ability to articulate reasoning now carry greater weight. Discernment increasingly defines expertise.

For firms and brands, teams are likely to become smaller and flatter, with fewer layers separating junior and senior roles. Hiring will prioritize clarity of thinking over output volume. AI will act as a filter, quickly removing weaker ideas and clarifying stronger ones, while creative authorship remains human.

For architecture and fashion as disciplines, the risk lies in failing to adapt educational and professional structures quickly enough. Architecture may drift toward management if design judgment is not actively cultivated. Fashion may lean toward pure editorial control if authorship is not clearly claimed. In both cases, responsibility remains human, even as

tools grow more powerful.

AI is not a threat to design. It is a test of what designers contribute once execution is no longer the bottleneck. The disciplines that adapt fastest will be those that recognize what AI has already filtered out and train the next generation accordingly. ■



Ece Kilic is a seasoned architect with over 27 years of experience, 23 of them in the DC metropolitan area. She holds a Bachelor's degree in architecture from METU/Türkiye and is a Registered Architect in DC, a LEED Accredited Professional, and a member of the AIA.

Her career spans commercial, institutional, and hospitality projects, from her early work at Group Goetz Architects to co-founding her own firm and later leading Streetsense's Interior Architecture studio. She now serves at the Architect of the Capitol, overseeing key projects for the US Capitol, Supreme Court, and Library of Congress.

Ece also serves as a board member at the Diyanet Center of America. Beyond architecture, she enjoys art, jewelry, and fashion design, as well as traveling the world with her family.

GOOD DESIGN

Gets Better Marketing Results

We are a full service, award-winning agency specializing in **brand development, graphic design, social media marketing, website development, and advertising.**

We are devoted to helping our clients shape their brands with intuitive designs and by building effective communication that is market friendly and impactful.

Let us talk about how we can work together to help you get the leads you need to make your sales goals. **Just contact us.**



creative **edge** designstudio

BE UNIQUE, BE AWESOME

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102

sk@studiocreativeedge.com

www.studiocreativeedge.com

(703) 439-0557



Exclusive Interview with CAVIT ÖZTÜRK

FOUNDER OF DIVAN RESTAURANT

“Divan was more than a restaurant — it was a home for Turkish hospitality.”

By Oya Bain

For more than two decades, Divan Restaurant in Georgetown stood as one of the most beloved Turkish dining destinations in the Washington, DC area. Known not only for its authentic flavors but also for its elegant and distinctive design, Divan became a gathering place where Turkish hospitality met fine cuisine. At the heart of this success was Chef and founder Cavit Öztürk, whose lifelong passion for cooking and dedication to quality earned him a loyal following among locals, diplomats, and distinguished guests.

Now, as Divan has closed its doors and Cavit Öztürk begins a new chapter, we sat down with him to reflect on his remarkable journey—from his childhood in Bolu and his early culinary training to building one of the most respected Turkish restaurants in Georgetown. In this exclusive interview with *TurkNetwork Magazine*, Öztürk shares the story of his life,

his experiences as a chef and entrepreneur, and his plans for the future beyond the restaurant world.

Can you tell us about your early beginnings? Your childhood? Original birthplace? Your parents, siblings?

I was born on May 1, 1957, in the village of Karamanlar in Bolu, as the third child of a wonderful family devoted to farming and livestock. The house I was born in, by the standards of the time, was like a small palace — full of life, laughter, and hospitality. Our home was always open to guests, and I spent my childhood in an environment filled with joy, community, and love.

What factors influenced you most in your formative years?

I was an excellent and well-behaved student throughout primary school. We were four siblings — two girls and two boys. My great-grandfather had been a chef at the Ottoman

palace, and perhaps because of that legacy, many people from our village and the surrounding area were drawn to the art of cooking. He was among the founding figures of the famous Abdullah Efendi Restaurant in Istanbul — first in Karaköy, later in Beyoğlu, and finally in Emirgan.

Your education and training? Where and what did you study?

Perhaps it was in my blood, but I, too, found myself drawn to the world of food. Cooking, creating desserts, and crafting pastries fascinated me deeply. My culinary journey began in 1968, first washing dishes, then working as a waiter, and later mastering every corner of the kitchen before starting my military service. I completed my service in Istanbul, at the Harp Academy in 4th Levent, as the private chef to the Commander of the 3rd Army. During the final months of my service, I met the woman who would become my wife, Hamiyet. After a brief engagement, we married.



*America was always
a dream — one night
I decided to make it
real.*

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



How did you choose your career path?

Not long after, we decided to move to London — I wanted to learn English, and as a newlywed, I also felt the weight of responsibility. Life there was demanding, but we worked tirelessly to build our future. I worked days as a chef in a restaurant and spent my nights studying English. During those years, our first son, Serdar, was born. My wife, ever hard-working, took care of our baby while also working as a seamstress. We spent five years in London, immersed in the restaurant business. Yet, I could never quite adjust to the city's cold, gray weather. In 1983, we returned to Turkiye with the dream of opening our own restaurant. Unfortunately, it was a difficult time — the country was under military rule, and the economy was unstable. Around then, our second son, Sercan, was born.

Could you tell us about your journey to the US? What were your initial experiences?

I had always been fascinated by America. One evening in Bolu, I watched a television program about successful Turkish entrepreneurs in the US, and I was deeply moved. That very night, I made my decision — I, too, would go to America.

In 1984, I arrived alone — first in New York, then eventually in Virginia, which I immediately loved. I left my wife and two young sons with my family in Turkiye, spending nearly three years apart from them. During that time, my wife learned the art of hairdressing. In 1987, I finally brought my family to Virginia.

I worked for ten years at a Turkish restaurant there, and whenever possible, I also took on construction work. One day, while

playing soccer with my sons, I fell and broke my arm, forcing me to take a break from the restaurant world. I turned my full attention to construction, but deep down, I always missed the kitchen.

You are known for skills beyond being a chef. Please tell us about them.

Fate intervened one day while I was working on a renovation project in Georgetown. I came across the building that would later become Divan Restaurant. I felt strongly that the area needed an authentic Turkish restaurant. In 2000, I purchased the building, restored it in full, and, after much effort, opened Divan. Together with my talented team, including our head chef, Yücel Usta, who was also my wife's brother, we brought the rich flavors of Turkish cuisine to life.

“Success means sharing good food with good people.”

What are the challenges you've faced, and what memorable experiences have you had owning and running a restaurant?

Over 56 years, I worked in the restaurant business across Türkiye, England, and the United States. My greatest joy was seeing guests leave satisfied— smiling and saying, "Thank you, we'll be back soon." Throughout my career, I have had the honor of serving many well-known figures, including Bülent Ecevit, Süleyman Demirel, Celal Bayar, Mesut Yılmaz, Muammar Gaddafi, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Barack Obama, Harrison Ford, and many more.

The restaurant business is far from easy, but I always strived to give my best — greeting guests with a smile, creating genuine warmth, and never serving a dish I wouldn't proudly eat myself.

Could you tell us about your current family?

After 25 years of success, our family decided it was time to step away from the restaurant business. One of our sons became a dentist, the other a real estate professional. My wife and I continued to run the restaurant for a while, though she also managed her own beauty salon for 18 years.

During these years, our family continued to grow. Our elder son, Serdar, and our younger son, Sercan, both got married — our daughters-in-law, Seda and Yulia, became like our own daughters, filling the absence of girls in our family with their warmth and love. Then came our grandchildren — first Mete, then Boran, and finally our precious granddaughter, Aysu. Their arrival colored our lives in ways words can hardly capture.

Tuesdays became known as "Grandma and Grandpa Day, a tradition that lasted for years. These days, every day feels like "Grandma and Grandpa Day," and I couldn't be happier.

Please tell us your new plans and endeavors.

Now, as my wife and I enter retirement, we don't see it as slowing down — instead, as the beginning of a new chapter. We plan to



spend more time with our family, explore new places, and dedicate more energy to construction projects.

Would you like to share any message with our readers?

After all these years of hard work and blessings, I can genuinely say — life has been a feast, rich with flavor, family, and gratitude.

We thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview. ■



Oya Bain is a retired biochemist from Georgetown University Hospital. She has been a long-standing activist in the Turkish community, both in cultural and political affairs. She has served and still does on the boards of many Turkish American organizations.

She believes in strong ties between Türkiye and the US and strives to promote Turkish history and culture at every chance.





FROM FAMILY TRADITIONS TO SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

“Wherever I travel, I ask for local dishes first – food is the fastest way to understand a culture.”

By Nejat Murat Erkan

My personal connection to the food system has always been multidimensional. When I say “multidimensional,” I mean culture, family traditions, nourishment, health, and community. I was born and raised in Istanbul in a city setup. Both of my grandfathers were forestry engineers. Back then, in the 1970s, we had one acre of land and grew some basic greens for our personal use. From my childhood, I have many memories of large social gatherings and big feasts. I remember many pines, redbuds, fruit trees, many vegetables, and poultry scenes. After the 1980s, Istanbul's culture and living standards changed, and land became more valuable; therefore, people

chose to live in condominiums. So, did we.

When visiting new countries, new places, I would love to try local foods. I love trying new tastes and dishes. Like most people, I have three modes of eating. Firstly, to feed myself as a necessity; secondly, to explore new tastes; and thirdly, to build relationships with cultures. I have been to 60+ countries. Wherever I go, I immediately ask for the local dishes. From time to time, I even try street food to discover new flavors. As I mentioned above, food reflects culture; it is one way to build strong ties with people of other ethnicities. This is the fun part of the food joy. But on the other hand, in our era, food-related diseases have increased tremendously due to the export and import of goods, the use of chemicals, and the widespread consumption

of processed foods across the globe. In the 1960s world population was about 3 billion, and nowadays it is over 8,2 billion. With the “Green Revolution,” governments and food producers were able to meet food demand and feed the hungry. As the author wrote in the book called Food Justice in American Cities, “These achievements were impressive. On a per capita basis, agricultural production increased from 1.13 tons per person per year to 1.67 tons per person – an almost 50 percent increase for every man, woman, and child on Planet Earth”.

Unfortunately, this revolution brought many side effects, such as soil degradation, increased water use, and chemical pollution from fertilizers and pesticides, and serious human health issues like cancer and birth

defects. The revolution also led to socio-economic consequences, e.g. displacement of small-scale farmers and migration to large cities. In 1960, just 36 percent of the global population lived in cities; by 2020, this figure had increased to 56 percent. By 2050, urban living will become more prevalent, with an expected rate of 68% of the world's population living in cities. The overpopulated, modern lifestyle in cities might lead to more health-related issues due to poor eating habits and insufficient physical exercise.

On a personal level, I try to be conscious of what I eat. Over the years, I have become more aware of portion sizes, nutritional balance, and understanding the source of the produce. Sometimes, I struggle with cravings, especially for processed foods high in sugar (chocolate and cookies). I do not consider myself addicted to food; I practice self-control on my junk food eating habits. As a best practice, I stopped buying junk food, I try to eat more organic (I doubt some of the organically marketed produce is organic), and more fruits and vegetables. I have been developing healthier eating habits over the last 3-5 years.

Over the summer, I got involved with hydroponics and aquaponics farming practices. I had hands on working experience with both systems. Now, I understand better where the food comes from and how much it travels. Living in an urban setting, I know that most of the food I consume is transported over long distances before reaching my home. Focusing on the Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment (LCSA) method and understanding its dynamics raises questions about carbon footprints and the impact of industrial agriculture on both people and ecosystems. Now, I am thinking more about supporting local farmers' markets and choosing seasonal produce when possible. These choices help me feel more connected to the natural cycles of food production and make me feel that I am contributing to sustainable food systems.

Culturally, food is tied to family traditions and shared experiences. Meals create connection, celebration, and memories. Developing healthy eating habits supports my energy levels, mental clarity, and well-being. One of



IMAGE BY AI

“Understanding where food comes from changes the way you eat.”

my cultural traditions is not to fill your plate more than you can eat. We don't like to waste food; it is a respect for nature and for the people who face hunger.

Conclusion

We all living beings need food to survive. As human beings, without food, we can only live for 2 to 3 weeks. The quality of the food that we choose brings value and comfort to our lifestyle. Nature and ecosystems are the main components of our existence. Destroying nature or messing with the ecosystem would have a negative impact on our lives. Therefore, as a granular piece of the planet, we human beings should be individually aware of the destruction we are causing (pesticides, chemicals, GMOs, wasted food, etc.) and collectively

eliminate the harm. Personally, I continue to work on aligning my personal choices with my values, recognizing that even small changes can contribute to a healthier self and a safer planet. ■



Nejat Murat Erkan is a seasoned consultant with over 30 years of international experience, specializing in leadership development, digital transformation, strategic planning, and large-scale project execution. He has delivered more than 15,000 hours of consulting services, driving growth across the telecommunications, technology, and public sectors. Currently pursuing a PhD in Urban Leadership and Entrepreneurship, he applies Life Cycle Sustainability Assessment (LCSA) across diverse industries, leveraging his multilingual proficiency, coaching certifications, and project management expertise to lead cross-functional innovation and sustainability initiatives. Nejat Murat Erkan / (980) 298-0515 cell / nejatmuraterkan@gmail.com



TRUST IN CRISIS: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

“Reputation takes years to build – and moments to damage.”

By Suheyly Tayla

Public relations (PR) plays a central role in how organizations, institutions, and even countries navigate crises. Whether the challenge stems from a corporate scandal, a cybersecurity breach, a public health emergency, or a geopolitical dispute, crisis management today is inseparable from effective communication. In an era defined by instant news cycles and social media amplification,

the speed, clarity, and credibility of messaging can determine whether a crisis escalates or stabilizes.

At its core, crisis management in public relations is about protecting reputation while maintaining public trust. Reputation is an intangible asset built over years but vulnerable to rapid damage. PR professionals act as strategic advisors to leadership, helping them assess risks, anticipate public reaction, and craft timely responses. Their work is not limited to drafting

statements; it involves shaping narratives, managing stakeholder expectations, and ensuring consistency across all communication channels.

One of the primary methods PR experts use during crises is proactive communication. Silence or delayed responses often create a vacuum that is quickly filled by speculation. PR teams therefore prioritize issuing an initial holding statement that acknowledges the issue, expresses concern, and outlines next steps. Transparency is critical. While not all

details may be immediately available, communicating what is known and committing to updates, signals accountability and reduces misinformation.

Another key method is stakeholder mapping and targeted messaging. Different audiences such as employees, customers, investors, regulators, and media all have distinct concerns. PR experts tailor messages accordingly. Internally, they work to maintain morale and prevent panic among staff. Externally, they emphasize responsibility, corrective actions, and long-term solutions. In multinational contexts, communication must also be culturally sensitive, especially when crises have cross-border implications.

Media relations is another crucial tool. Establishing trust with journalists before a crisis occurs can significantly influence coverage during difficult times. PR professionals may organize press briefings, provide background information, and ensure that spokespeople are media trained and prepared to answer challenging questions. Consistency in tone and message reduces contradictions that can undermine credibility.

Digital and social media management has become equally important. Online platforms can accelerate both misinformation and public outrage. PR teams monitor conversations in real time, respond to concerns, and correct false narratives when necessary. Listening tools help assess public sentiment, allowing organizations to adjust messaging strategies dynamically.

For companies, effective crisis PR can mitigate financial loss, preserve brand loyalty, and maintain investor confidence. A well-managed response demonstrates leadership competence and ethical responsibility. Conversely, poor communication can deepen reputational damage and prolong recovery.

At the national level, crisis communication shapes international perception. Governments



“Strong crisis communication helps organizations survive – and sometimes emerge stronger.”

rely on strategic communication to manage diplomatic disputes, natural disasters, or public health emergencies. Transparent communication enhances credibility and strengthens relationships with allies and international institutions. In contrast, inconsistent messaging may erode public trust domestically and damage a country's global standing.

The broader public also benefits from effective crisis communication. Clear and accurate information reduces panic, enables informed decision-making, and fosters social stability. During emergencies, the public relies on credible sources to understand risks and recommended actions.

Ultimately, crisis management in public relations is about trust. It requires preparation, ethical judgment, strategic thinking, and empathy. Organizations and countries that invest in strong PR capabilities are better positioned

not only to survive crises but to emerge with strengthened credibility. In times of uncertainty, communication is not merely a support function, it is a leadership function that shapes outcomes and defines resilience. ■



Suheyta Tayla is now Executive Operations and Relations Manager at non-profit World Affairs Councils of America (WACA). Before that for seven years she was Vice President at Mercury Public Affairs in charge of think tank outreach in the international relations unit of the company. While in Türkiye, she worked as Senior Political Specialist for 30 years at the US Embassy in Ankara, advising 10 US Ambassadors on domestic and external politics through significant regional events, including wars and political upheavals. She held roles at the Anatolia News Agency Foreign News Desk and led the Embassy's Local Employees Association. Honored with multiple awards for her exemplary service. An Ankara University Political Sciences Faculty alumna with advanced studies in International Law of the Seas, she is a revered figure in international relations.



WINTER KITCHEN A LA TURCA IN SWEDEN

“Europe is one continent with a multitude of cultures and languages, yet histories that are interwoven tightly together” – Deborah Cater, travel writer, reviewer, and blogger (1970 -)

PART 3

By Ercument Akman

Brassica my Love

Low in calories and an incredible source of fiber, potassium, and magnesium, as well as calcium, manganese, and iron, the brassica vegetable family, which includes cabbage, comes in all shapes, colors, and sizes that can be eaten raw, cooked, fermented, or pickled.

The Silk Road, which connected Asia and Europe, played a significant role in the spread of cabbage dishes from their early beginnings in ancient China. The Mongol conquests of the 13th century, also brought Asian cuisine and cooking techniques to the region.

Similarly, the spread of cabbage rolls to the Americas was aided by European colonization and the transatlantic slave trade, and was influenced by African and indigenous American cuisines, incorporating local ingredients such as cheese and salsa.

Cabbage for Winter

Stuffed cabbage leaves are popular in Azerbaijan and Türkiye, especially in winter when other vegetables are less plentiful. The stuffing usually consists of rice, herbs, and meat, although there is a *yalancı* ‘fake’ *dolma* version that is meat-free. In the Balkans, called “*Sarma*,” cabbage rolls are a culinary standard traditionally made with leaves of brined cabbage simmered for a long time in a paprika-based sauce.

To suit their own tastes, countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine use local ingredients such as pork, beef, and sauerkraut to make cabbage rolls to serve as traditional and symbolic dishes for Christmas and Easter. The introduction of new ingredients, such as tomatoes and chili peppers, from the New World significantly impacted the development of cabbage rolls in Eastern Europe. And for Sweden, there is a different connection.

A Culinary Gain after a Lost Battle

Stuffing vegetables wasn’t a new event when *dolma* came to Sweden, but most of them are bread-based stuffings meant for a whole, hollowed cabbage head.



In 1709, after losing the Battle of Poltava, the wounded Charles XII of Sweden and the remnants of his army escaped to the Ottoman town of Bender, where they were granted refuge by Sultan Ahmed III. Charles XII spent more than five years in the Ottoman Empire, trying to convince the Sultan to help him defeat the Russians. When he finally returned to Sweden in 1715, he was followed by his Ottoman creditors and their cooks. The creditors remained in Sweden at least until 1732; it is believed that Ottoman-style dolma were introduced into Swedish

cooking during this period as a vine-leaf-wrapped dish.

Kåldolmar (Swedish Cabbage Rolls) are considered a variety of the dolma with the earliest known Swedish recipe in the 1765 edition of the famous cookbook of Cajsa Warg, who instructed her readers to prepare the rolls using vine



leaves, lamb, rice, and lemon juice, and over time, the cabbage became the default wrapper.

Some Swedes make a bit more elaborate version and bind every kåldolme with a kitchen string, fry them, and then let them simmer in stock, others trickle some golden syrup on top of the or brush with butter and sprinkle some brown sugar on top.

To celebrate early modern cultural interchange between Sweden and Türkiye, Cabbage Dolma Day (Kåldolmens dag) is held on November 30, the day Charles XII was killed during a military campaign in Norway. ■



Ercüment Akman was born in İstanbul. He studied architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts, Fındıklı, and pursued postgraduate studies in Urban and Regional Planning at the Technical University, Taşkışla. He worked for the Turkish Film Archives and was a film critic for national newspapers. After moving to Canada in 1978 and later

to the US, he worked as an architect and served as an independent film curator. He continues to lecture on cultural issues and writes for the *Turkish Cinema Newsletter*. Now retired from corporate architecture, he is focusing on various book projects.

KÅLDOLMAR / SWEDISH CABBAGE ROLLS

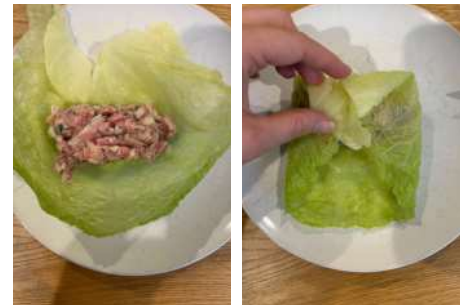
The process of making these cabbage rolls is seriously easy.

INGREDIENTS

- ▶ One head of savoy cabbage (12-16 leaves; you can also use green cabbage!) Savoy Cabbage features crinkly, dark green leaves that are softer than those of green cabbage. Green or white cabbage, best known for sauerkraut, can be substituted.
- ▶ One lb. meatloaf mix
- ▶ Diced one medium onion.
- ▶ 1/4 cup white rice (uncooked)
- ▶ 1/2 cup of water
- ▶ One egg
- ▶ Salt to taste
- ▶ Pepper to taste
- ▶ Dash of allspice
- ▶ 3/4 tsp dried thyme
- ▶ 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley.
- ▶ Splash of milk (optional)
- ▶ 1/2 cup of beef stock or water

RECIPE

- ▶ Preheat oven to 375F. (do not worry it can be pot cooked also)
- ▶ Add water to a large pot on the stove (about two-thirds full) and turn the heat to high.
- ▶ Rinse the rice and add to a small pot on the stove along with 1/2 cup of water. Let this come to a boil, then turn the heat to low, cover, and leave it for 5-10 minutes until all the water has been absorbed. Set aside. (Turkish version fries the rice)
- ▶ Use 12-16 leaves of cabbage and boil for 3-5 minutes, so that the leaves are pliable.
- ▶ Mix the meat filling by adding the ground meat, diced onion, salt, pepper, all spice, thyme, parsley, egg, and the cooked rice. (Turkish versions sauté the chopped onions until translucent.)
- ▶ You can also add a splash of milk at this stage to make it easier to mix.
- ▶ Start assembling by placing a few tablespoons of the meat mixture in the center of the leaf. (Use a plate if hand rolling is not easy for you)
- ▶ Just fold them up like a spring roll – tuck in the ends and then roll it up. Place them in a baking dish, seam-side down.



- ▶ You can optionally fry the cabbage rolls until they get some color before filling your baking dish.
- ▶ Once you have rolled all the leaves, add 1/2 cup of beef stock over the rolls (if you don't have stock, you can use water!).
- ▶ Cover (either with a lid or with foil) and bake for about 30 minutes.
- ▶ After 30 minutes, remove the lid and bake for another 10 minutes.
- ▶ Serve with a side of potatoes (in whatever form you like!) and add a dollop of sour cream! You can also serve with gravy or lingonberry jam for a more traditional meal.

Enjoy.

And... this is how you Eat Like a Turk even in Sweden.



EXILES OF HALIDE EDİP

“The misuse of the suffering of people for political purposes is both ridiculous and inhumane, and harmful to the victims themselves, because it removes the suffering from being a human tragedy. There is no such thing as a guilty nation.”

– Halide Edip

By Mehmet Ali Munir

Halide Edip, a founder of Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti, the first women's association during the Balkan War, a university professor, and who holds a prominent place in Turkish literature, passed away on January 9, 1964, at the age of eighty-two.

At her funeral, neither the University Women's Association nor the Turkish Women's Association sent even a wreath, and no woman honored her as a speaker. In contrast hundreds of

women came to bid her farewell when women did not typically attend funerals.

The Firebrand

Halide Edip was born in 1884 as the daughter of a scribe of Sultan Abdul Hamid II's privy council, Mehmed Edip Bey from Selanik, who converted to Islam when he was 25-30 years old. In her book, Halide writes that her father was raised by Sheikh Mahmud and his wife, who were from a prominent Selanik family. Her mother, Fatma Bedrifem,

is a daughter of Nakiye Hanım of the Nizami family, famous for their Mevlevi affiliation, and a member of a well-known family from Kemah. She returned to Istanbul after divorcing the son of Bedirhan Pasha and married Edip Bey.

Edip Bey was pro-British and forward-thinking and risked his whole career to educate his five daughters from two marriages. Halide Edip graduated from Üsküdar American Girls' College in 1901.

Halide Edip defied tradition by divorcing

her famous mathematician husband Salih Zeki who suggested bringing home a second wife. She remarried, to Dr. Adnan Adivar, in 1917, and the next year took a job as a lecturer in literature at Istanbul's University's Faculty of Letters.

Anatolian Exile

On May 15, 1919, after the occupation of Izmir, Halide Edip participated in the Fatih, Üsküdar, and Sultanahmet rallies as the first woman speaker at a mass meeting in Istanbul, and after the end of the Great War, she and her husband traveled to Anatolia to fight in the War for Independence.

"I brought up the issue of a news agency with Yunus Nadi Bey and with Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Following these discussions, Halide Edip went down in history as the person who named the AA (Anadolu Agency).

"Adnan Adivar, along with friends who were dissatisfied with the one-party regime, founded the Progressive Republican Party. "Halide Edib had declared that she did not support any party that did not grant women the right to vote." (Çalışlar, 2010: 313).

The Big Exile

In 1926, Halide Edib went to Vienna for treatment and just as she was preparing to return to Türkiye, there was another assassination attempt on Mustafa Kemal, and it was claimed that Halide Edib was among those who planned the assassination. This event marked the beginning of Adnan Adivar and Halide Edib's voluntary exile abroad which lasted until 1939.

Halide Edib traveled widely, teaching and lecturing repeatedly in France, England, the United States and in India. She was invited to America by the University of Colombia in 1932 and continued her lectures and conferences at Yale and Michigan Universities. She published abroad; Türkiye Faces West (1930) and Conflict of East and West in Türkiye (1935) and East-West and American Influences in Türkiye (1955).

In 1934, the civil code granted women the



right to vote and be elected, but Halide Edib, , could not attend the World Suffragette Conference held in Istanbul. Following the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, she returned alone on March 6, 1939. Dr. Adnan Adivar also returned a few months later.

In 1950, the Turkish PEN Club was founded under her leadership, and she successfully represented Turkish women internationally. Halide Edib Adivar also defended Nazım Hikmet, describing him as a poetic genius and requesting his pardon.

After returning to Türkiye, Halide Edip Adivar was appointed head of the English Literature department at Istanbul University Faculty of

Literature, becoming Türkiye's first female professor.

This period coincided with one of her least productive periods as a writer. Her novel "Vurun Kahpeye," was adapted into a film by Lütfü Akad in 1949, breaking box office records.

She was elected as a Member of Parliament for Izmir on the Democratic Party list a post she resigned in 1954 and after her husband Adnan Adivar's death in 1955, she returned to her professorship.

The University Women's Association in 1960 finally declared her the "Symbol of Turkish Women," and said that this honor belonged to all women.

IT HAPPENED HERE

“Halide Edip was a pioneer of women’s rights, a novelist, and one of the most powerful voices of modern Türkiye.”



Halide Edip 1928, by Alphonse Mucha (1860 - 1939)

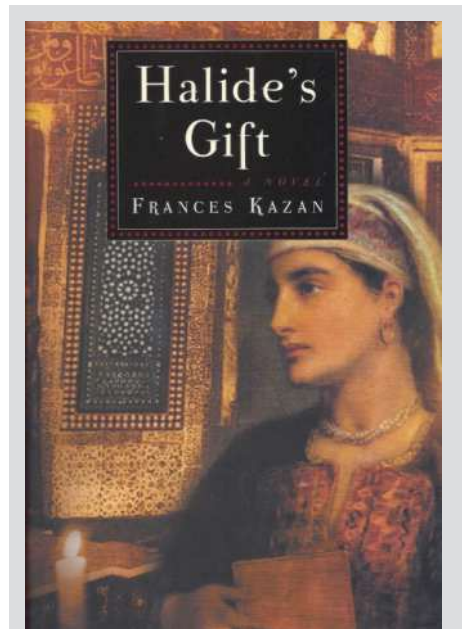
Study for a Portrait of Halide Edip

Halide Halide Edip and her husband, Adnan Adivar, went to Prague in 1925 at Mucha's invitation, who was influenced by Halide Edip as she was one of the first women's rights advocates of the time, took a photograph of her, and then drew a charcoal sketch from this photograph, and later created an oil painting inspired by that sketch.

Meeting Halide Edip

"I noted in my diary, with her soft, languid gaze resembling a gazelle, her tiny upper lip slightly curved upwards, her long, slender nose, and her wavy, copper-colored, dark hair braids, with her slender and extremely elegant figure, she is the most exquisite creature I have ever seen. She was a woman who overwhelmed one; when they left us alone, my face flushed slightly, and we were both a little embarrassed."

Henry W. Nevinson, a supporter of women's suffrage, and his account of the evacuation of Suvla Bay in December 1915, was held up by the censor for four months.



RECOMMENDED

Halide's Gift: A Novel by Frances Kazan

A vibrant fusion of history and fiction of the life of Halide Edip Adivar. British born Frances Kazan has been married to the director and writer Elia Kazan, from 1981 until his death in 2003.

"My husband, Elia Kazan, was born in Istanbul. As he got older, he identified himself with the values of the country and culture of his birth. In 1990, he took me to Kayseri, in central Anatolia, where his ancestors had lived for centuries. Walking in the streets, I was struck by the fact that he blended in like a native. He belonged there. This was his home. Elia had always thought of himself as a Greek—a Byzantine Greek, an Anatolian. Then I knew nothing of nationalist policies and the population exchange, but Türkiye's complex, layered history began to attract me, right there in the bustling streets of Kayseri."

Mehmet Ali Munir is a Balkan Turk who has lived in Canada and the US for 45 years. He researches Turks in America and writes about local history.

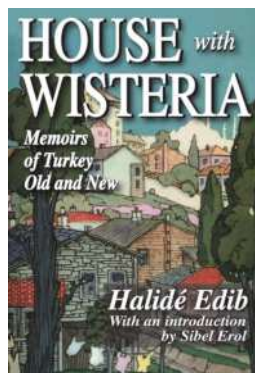
SUGGESTED READING

House With Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edip

Essential reading for understanding the historical and social changes in Türkiye during the early 20th century. Providing a unique perspective on the struggles for women's rights and national identity in a rapidly changing society. Edip's work is celebrated for its candidness and its role in challenging stereotypes about women in the Muslim world.

"The House with Wisteria is a unique memoir for understanding, comprehending, and experiencing the spiritual climate of our recent history." - Selim İleri

Thesis by Frances Kazan "Halide Edip and America"



Based on a speech by Halide Edip to an audience of American intellectuals, journalists, and commentators at Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1928, which for the first time anywhere framed the notion of the new republican history of Türkiye. Despite being forced to live in exile from their country as political outcasts due to serious ideological differences with Mustafa Kemal, Adnan and his comrades continued to live their lives as ardent patriots.



Buy Us a Coffee and Join Our Journey!

Your small monthly support helps us publish quality stories, inspire success, and promote Turkish culture in America. Together, we can make a lasting impact.

Join as a Member Today!

Every Coffee = A Stronger Voice for Our Community



Connecting Turkish Businesses
Empowering Communities



THE MARITIME HERITAGE OF TÜRKİYE: ICONIC VESSELS AT THE İSTANBUL NAVAL MUSEUM

The İstanbul Naval Museum exhibits the world's most extensive collection of historical imperial caiques, which were used by the Sultans and their families for daily travel and grand ceremonies, with 14 out of the 42 known to exist globally in a new and purpose-built complex.

By Erol Güler, PhD

Caique (Kayık): The Ottoman Sea Vessel of İstanbul

In İstanbul, a city characterized by its reliance on sea routes, the term "kayık" refers to an Ottoman-era sea vessel used for transporting people and goods across the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea. The word is derived from the

Turkish verb "kaymak," meaning "to glide." While other maritime cities such as Amsterdam and Venice also had boats, their vessels were generally smaller and more suited to canal travel, lacking the size and grandeur of those used on the open waters around İstanbul.

These sea vessels included imperial boats for sultans and their families, as well as boats used by palace staff and the general public,

such as passenger boats, ferryboats, pleasure boats, and market boats. All shared a sleek, elongated design intended to ensure speed and high maneuverability.

The Galley which is the oldest historical ship in the world

The historical galley (Kadırga) exhibited at the İstanbul Naval Museum is often associated with Sultan Mehmet IV (who reigned from



German Emperor transported by imperial caique from Sirkeci to the Palace, İstanbul.

1648 to 1687), but scientific radiocarbon dating indicates that her construction dates back earlier, likely to the end of the 16th century, during the reign of Sultan Murad III or Mehmet III.

It is widely recognized as the only surviving original galley in the world and possesses the world's oldest continuously maintained wooden hull.

Galley, the biggest ship of the "Çektiri" class, is narrow, long and very fast. While its main propulsion is provided by oars, it also features sails for use during windy weather. Galleys served as the striking force of the Ottoman Navy, prized for their speed and high maneuverability. However, this particular galley served as an excursion vessel for Ottoman sultans, primarily used for ceremonial occasions and travel along the Bosphorus and Golden Horn.

This exceptional galley measures approximately 130 ft (40 m) long and 19 ft (6 m) wide, and weighs about 57 tons. The galley's propulsion system required 24 pairs of oars (48 oars total). Each oar was handled by three oarsmen, resulting in a total crew of 144. It also originally featured two masts for sails, though these are now removed for display. The galley is a masterpiece of woodworking, constructed using nine different types of wood: iron oak, cedar, elm, beech, sycamore, ash, boxwood, black pine, and walnut.

One of the ship's most distinguished features is the ornate pavilion (kiosk) at its stern. This area is adorned with intricate geometric motifs, tortoise shell, and semi-precious stones. Further embellishments include silver plates, as well as carnation, tulip, and mother-of-pearl calligraphy, regarded as some of the finest examples of mother-of-pearl craftsmanship.

The historical galley is a significant artifact, being the only original surviving galley globally, showcasing 16th-century Ottoman maritime engineering and imperial luxury. Its design prioritizes speed and opulent



■ The Inebolu Boat



■ Istanbul Naval Museum Historical Galley

ornamentation over military functions, lacking cannons or warrior stations, reflecting its role as a royal excursion vessel rather than a warship.

Other Featured Masterpieces

Sultan Abdulaziz's Royal Barge stands out with its magnificent decorations and enormous size (over 30 meters in length) and is one of the most magnificent examples of Ottoman palace aesthetics. Sultan Selim III's Royal Barge is among the oldest and most

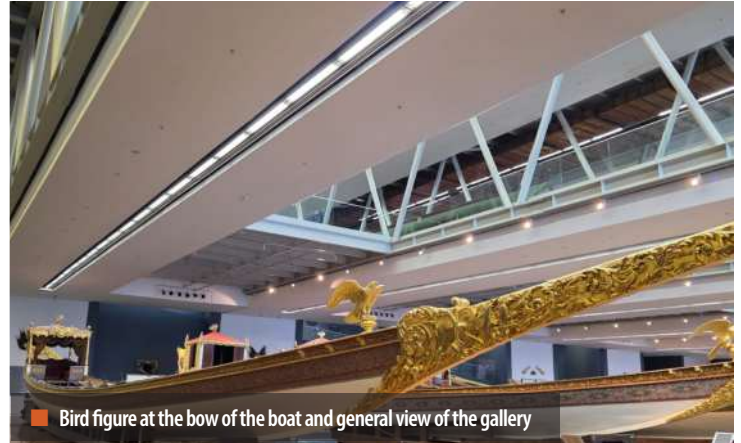
artistically decorated boats in the museum. Sultan Abdulaziz's Barge is known for its fine craftsmanship and detailed carvings reflecting the artistic understanding of the period.

Atatürk's boats

Among the most treasured items at the Istanbul Naval Museum with its collection of 20,000 artifacts, are the boats used by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk, who deeply valued the navy and maritime pursuits, also had a passion for the sea and was actively



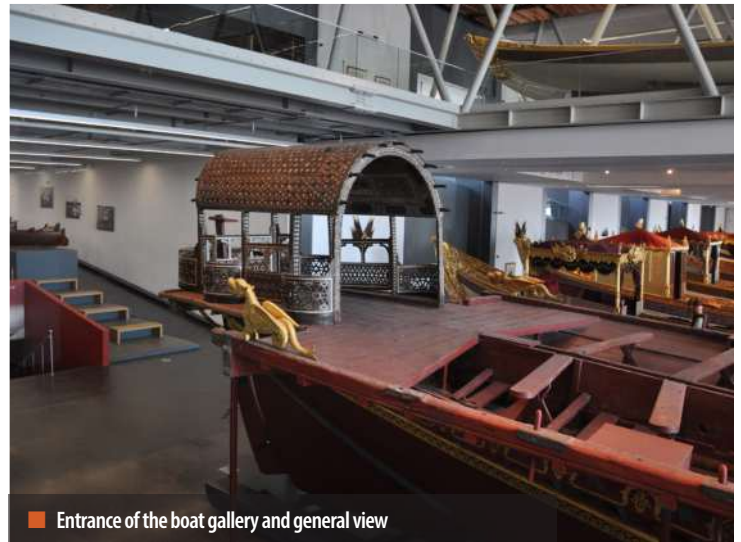
Istanbul Naval Museum Historical Gallery



Bird figure at the bow of the boat and general view of the gallery



Kiosk of a boat



Entrance of the boat gallery and general view

involved in water sports. Considering going to sea as a symbol of civilization, in his leisure time, Atatürk enjoyed rowing.

These boats, which Atatürk himself rowed, are constructed of mahogany wood using the clinker-built technique. Their design is simple and unadorned, focusing on functionality. Within the museum's historical boats collection, three boats used by Atatürk at the Presidential Mansion in Florya, each marked with the initials "MKA" on the oar blades, are exhibited in a dedicated section.

One of the Symbols of the National Liberation Struggle: The İnebolu Boat

Although İnebolu was not occupied by the enemy at the end of World War I, the boatmen of İnebolu earned the "Medal of Independence" (İstiklal Madalyası) for their services behind the front lines. İnebolu Port, one of the logistical centers of the War of Independence

that began with Atatürk's arrival in Samsun on May 19, 1919, served as the main entry point for weapons and ammunition into Anatolia.

Since İnebolu was regarded as a safe location, thousands of tons of military supplies which were smuggled from occupied Istanbul and sourced from other regions were delivered there. Due to the pier's unsuitability for docking, ships had to anchor offshore. The task of unloading these shipments fell to the Boatmen's Guild, a group of over 100 members who worked without pay for three years.

Braving harsh weather and enormous waves, the boatmen used local vessels known as "Denk Kayığı" (cargo boats) to transport ammunition ashore. The enduring legacy of their bravery is exemplified by their selfless service and their names will be remembered "in golden letters."

Over time, most of these distinctive vessels deteriorated and almost disappeared

from history. The final surviving cargo boat is now preserved and displayed at the Istanbul Naval Museum. ■

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Most of the information in this text has been summarized from the books "Istanbul Naval Museum" and "İstanbul'un Kuğuları: Saltanat Kayıkları". I would like to thank Captain (Navy) Kadir Ataseven, Commander of the Naval Museum, and Prof. Dr. Fethiye Erbay, faculty member of the Fine Arts Department at Boğaziçi University, for providing the images.



Erol Guler, PhD, is the co-owner of GT Consultants LLC in Virginia. Previously, he was the co-owner of the ELC Group in Istanbul, Türkiye, for 20 years, which was acquired later by the global consulting engineering firm Royal HaskoningDHV. He has served as the principal geotechnical engineer to more than 200 projects in Türkiye and many different countries. He is also a retired professor from Boğaziçi University where he dedicated 37 years. Since 2017, he has served as an affiliate professor at George Mason University.

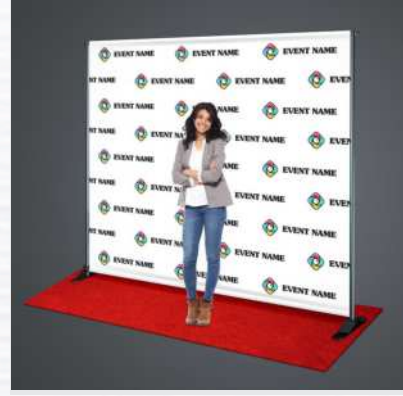
Need Something Fast?



RETRACTABLE BANNERS



POSTCARDS



BACKDROPS



BOOKLETS/CATALOGS



BANNERS



FLYERS



FOAM BOARDS



WINDOW CLINGS



BUSINESS CARDS

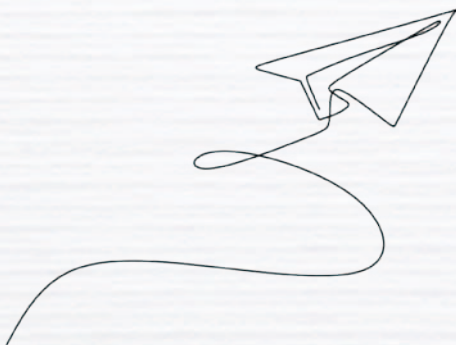
Design+Print

creative **edge** designstudio

BE UNIQUE, BE AWESOME

1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 600
McLean, VA 22102

sk@studiocreativeedge.com
www.studiocreativeedge.com
(703) 439-0557 phone





MOVING FORWARD IN SHIFTING CURRENTS: FROM THE UNITED STATES TO MOROCCO

“Türkiye has a growing role as a regional hub for international higher education.”

By Zeliha Koçak Tufan, PhD

The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, NAFSA; was founded at the Conference on International Student Exchange, at the University of Michigan in 1948. It is still connecting people all around the World. NAFSA Inaugural Global Summit in Tangier in 2026 was a first in its kind. First time out of the United States, first time in Africa. “As the world navigates climate disruption, geopolitical realignments, technological acceleration, poli-crises, in a post-colonial era, international education leadership must lead

with imagination, integrity, and courage. This Summit creates space to examine the dynamic interplay between heritage and innovation; to challenge outdated systems and paradigms; and to co-create forward-looking approaches that honor cultural wisdom, advance equity, and equip learners to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape...” These were the motivations for us to head to Tangier. When I got the invitation from the Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA, Dear Fanta Aw, I couldn’t resist but agreed to join them.

The groundbreaking Summit convened future-focused international education thought

leaders, strategic architects, and innovators, such as from Johns Hopkins University, University of California San Diego, North Carolina at Cahapel Hill, UNESCO, QS, EducationUSA etc. Lokman Hekim University was the only university officially represented from Türkiye, led by its Rector, Prof. Fatih Gültekin. I was the sole panelist from Türkiye, representing both Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University and LHU as a member of the Board of Trustees. It was indeed an honor to speak in a panel with Prof. John Hudzik, Vice President and Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University. Our panel was on “Moving Comprehensive Internationalization

“Higher education must move beyond rhetoric and focus on practical solutions.”

Forward in Shifting Currents”.

The shifting currents: Brain circulation, AI use, wars, immigration... polycrisis in the internet era. One of the most important shift is that, students are taking nonlinear careers anymore, many of them select the easiest, not the most qualified! We have to focus on this issue, we need new models in education that develop highly qualified human capital while maintaining procedural flexibility. Some other perspectives from the field are:

- ▶ AI-assisted essays, admissions and applications: We no longer know students through traditional application processes.
- ▶ Social-media-driven connections: Students reach institutions faster, but the reliability of sources is uncertain. A growing number of platforms redirect students to different centers and institutions, leading to mismatches and loss of time, money, and potential.
- ▶ Rising international mobility and immigration: Documentation is a major barrier. Rapid recognition of qualifications and the ability to continue academic studies without interruption are essential.
- ▶ Visa regimes, documentation requirements, legislation, and regulations do not evolve at the same pace across countries.
- ▶ Brain circulation is faster than ever, but institutional and student preparedness is not. Cultural preparedness also requires time...

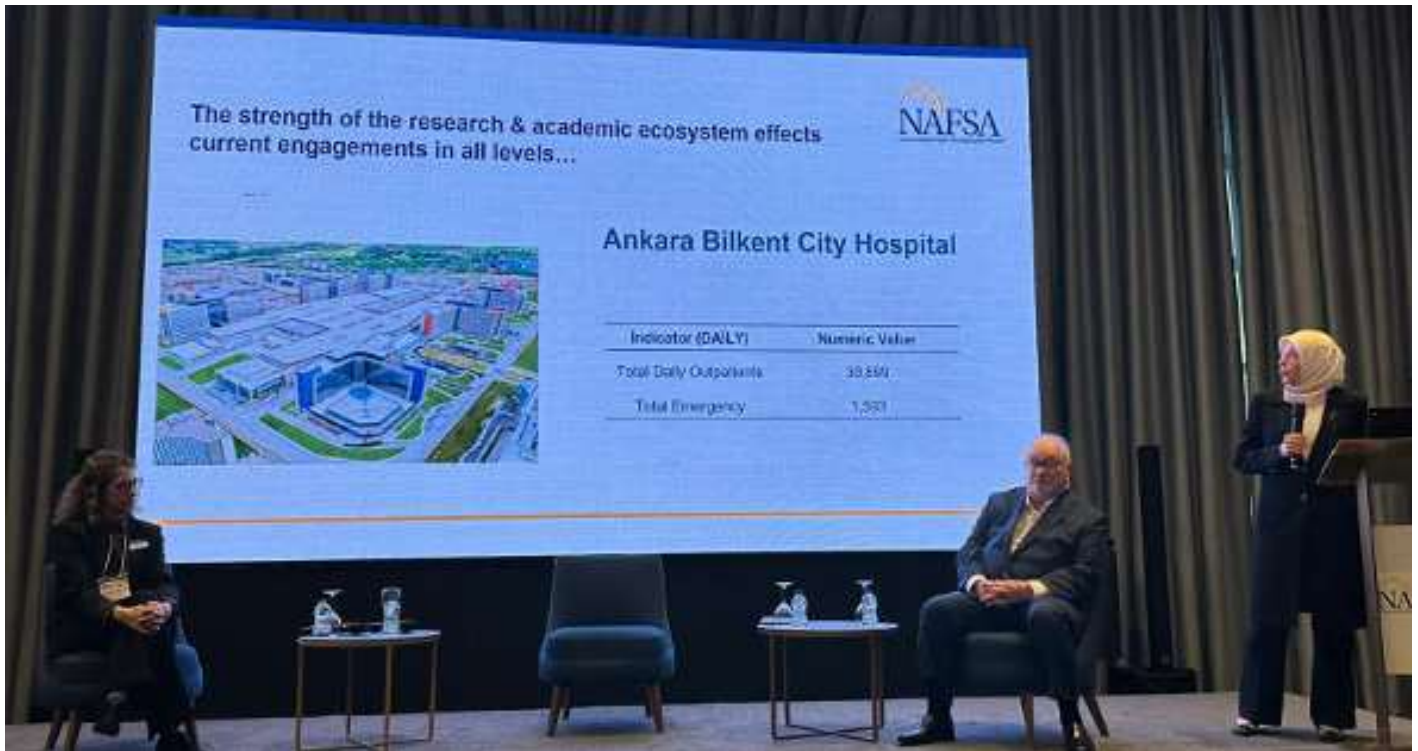
In the panel I also wanted to focus on what is the role of Türkiye to “move forward” in “the shifting currents”. I spoke about the strength and potential of Türkiye’s higher education system in the region; how we host thousands of asylum seekers and migrant students during a period of polycrisis, and how we develop responsive regulatory frameworks. I also addressed the regional research ecosystem, the potential for global partnerships, and the evolving dynamics of internationalization in higher education—focusing on how institutions can move forward amid current global shifts. And also underlined the research potential of Turkish institutions, particularly in health sciences, and the importance of being a partner with Turkish universities.

Partner	Türkiye
US	13,904
UK	6,643
Germany	6,307
Italy	5,507
France	4,605
Spain	4,274
China, Mainland	4,060
Iran	3,171
Netherlands	3,369
Canada	2,837
Saudi Arabia	2,804
India	2,562
Australia	2,491
Pakistan	2,358
Japan	2,171
South Korea	1,958
Malaysia	1,684
Egypt	1,548
Israel	1,436
Tunisia	369

TÜRKIYE’S RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

The number of co-authored international papers published in journals indexed in the Web of Science and international partners of Türkiye (2015–2019) (Source: Adams, J., El Ouahbi, J., Pendlebury, D., & Szomszor, M. (2019). *The changing research landscape of the Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye*).





The other panelist was Prof John Hudzig. He was MSU dean and vice president of international programs for long years and was acting university provost. He is a past president and chair of the NAFSA Board of Directors, past president of the Association of International Education Administrators. Being an expert in the area, we talked about the shifting currents both among international students and in higher education system. Here are some important notes from his presentation:

"Higher education action agenda priorities

1. Energize an institution-wide dialog regarding internationalization

2. Leverage technology in reform.

3. Renew commitment, understanding and attention to advancing internationalization's end goals related to:

- ▶ Teaching/learning; research/scholarship; community problem solving.
- ▶ Refrain from confusing means with goals.
- ▶ Revise means when better methods to pursue goals arise.

4. Focus on goals and measurement of outcomes.

- ▶ Define, measure, and document achievement of outcomes (student learning,

research advances, community problem solving.

- ▶ Suboptimal measures do not justify internationalization (such as money spent, or numbers of students abroad or incoming, or numbers of cross-border MOUs).
- ▶ Suboptimal measures are risky business in times of polycrisis

5. Optimize internal and cross border partnerships.

6. Energize civic engagement and support.

- ▶ Institutions should help the local to prudently engage the global.
- ▶ This is as much to meet a civic obligation as it is to build public support for international engagement..."

Another important event in the Summit was the launch of a publication. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has officially announced the publication and launch of "More Than Welcome": Intercultural Integration of Migrants In and Through Higher Education" in the Summit. "The publication establishes a five-principle framework that places intercultural competence at the centre of institutional practice. It provides concrete entry points for higher education leaders and practitioners to strengthen

governance, teaching and learning, student support, staff development, and community engagement. The framework can be used to assess existing approaches, identify gaps, and guide strategic planning aligned with UNESCO's inclusion, equity, and social cohesion goals."

Moving beyond rhetorical comfort, it is crucial to bring stakeholders together to discuss solutions grounded in real-world field experience. At a time of rapid transformation in higher education, these initiatives provide a hopeful outlook for the future. Sustaining global ties and building bridges is more vital than ever to reinforce international academic partnerships and enable impactful collaboration. ■



Zeliha Koçak Tufan, MD, Prof. Former bureaucrat and diplomat. Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Türkiye
From 2020 to 2024, she represented Türkiye as Education Counselor at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC, where she led bilateral initiatives in education and science diplomacy.

Between 2015 and 2022, she served as a Member of the Executive Board of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), where she played a key role in shaping national strategies on higher education policy. Beside working as a clinical scientist, her current academic work also focuses on international scientific collaboration with first-gen women studies. Recently she was selected to the All European Academies-Research Ethics and Integrity Council.



Support the Voice of Turkish-Americans!

TurkNetwork Magazine is more than just a magazine—it is the voice of the Turkish-American community. Every issue connects thousands of readers with inspiring stories, business success, culture, and community news.

With your monthly support, we can continue to grow, share, and represent our community in the strongest way possible.

[Become a Member Today](#)

*Help us keep TurkNetwork Magazine alive and thriving.
Your monthly membership keeps the stories coming.*



Connecting Turkish Businesses
Empowering Communities



DO NOT LET CURIOSITY DIE

“People are beginning to treat AI like life support for everyday decisions.”

By Beren Kasimcan

AI is one of the most controversial topics for people of my age. There is a huge divide between people who rely on it like it's their right hand, or people who think it's destroying us. But I don't think it's AI that is bad but the people who use it.

One of the first lessons I ever learned from my mom was that don't let anything control

you, or rely on anything that comes to the point of controlling you. Sure this was about bad things like smoking or drinking but for today's world I think that could also apply for AI. People are treating AI like life support, any minor question or conflict is asked to AI. Sure it has great purposes in many big and important industries and makes the production of their work easier, more efficient, and more productive. But when I'm talking about the use of AI I don't mean its use in this topic

but the daily use of it by regular people in their daily life. Especially when people choose AI to guide their life. “Find me the best pasta recipe” or “Give me the summary of Lord of the Flies”. A quick research could grant all this information but instead the majority chooses to use AI which can result in incorrect information being shared and increased usage of water.

I think AI is making our life too easy. To live is to face challenges, to fight, to get confused, to have curiosity. But I'm sure as the use of



Education should inspire questions, not replace them with automatic answers.

AI increases we as a society will no longer be curious, we will no longer wonder as much. And that is one of the scariest thoughts ever. All the things we use today, that we know today, what we need to survive has come from curiosity, imagine a society that no longer needs it. Scary, right?

We have come to a point in school that even teachers have given up and in certain situations encourage AI. What a sad moment for our generation that no longer our creativity isn't challenged. We have made AI so important part of our life that websites have created subscription programs to use more of AI. To read a book in a month has become too much work that most students just look up summaries for their classes. Teachers no longer spend the effort to efficiently teach their students and make asking questions such a gruesome task that we result in AI to teach us. What happened to seeking education and viewing it as a part of life we will miss, instead it has become a task we need to complete in the matrix.

Another not so simple thing is that even in forms of relaxation and to clear our minds we choose social media. An algorithm created and perfected for us, we become bound and linked into AI by not even realizing it. Ever get stuck scrolling on your phone? The apps are set up like that so you don't walk away, that you lose control. No longer we reach for physical media, when that is the actual thing that relaxes the brain. To read a book, to do a coloring book, to go to the park, to walk, to go to the cinema is how we socialize, how we should live. People spill all their feelings on social media but keeping a diary and



writing is a genuine option to speak your truth freely. People who truly use their creativity to create things that excite them lose credit and are invalidated by the normalization of AI because when a genuine piece takes time and effort AI replaces that with unoriginal work presenting it as the "best".

Already the importance in the humanities are decreasing, the noble pursuits have always been STEM related subjects but now more than ever to study the reason why we as the human race live is seemed unnecessary and easy. To be a doctor brings great honor and makes everyone proud but wanting to be a journalist, to study art history, to be a fashion designer is the "easy way out". But literature and language have always been such a complicated topic in our

world, and the oldest thing alive as well. To communicate is what we live for so how could studying that can be "simple". It's our duty to the society we live in that we understand love, language, communications, and literature. Without language how could anything work? Simply put, we are nothing without it.

There are many posts on social media that

use irony to display their hatred for AI, and one I've seen many times is posts that say something along the lines of "before scientists and writers didn't use AI they stole their wife's work and claimed it as theirs". Now this is a crazy concept to even recognize but it just shows how reliant we became on AI has become that people have to protest it with events as obscure as this.

Even if it's by little or taking daily walks, or watching a new movie each week, or opening up a book once in a while, you are making a change against AI, you are breaking free from the control and letting your mind rest. No amount of wanting to create change is too little but it's the initiative one needs to take. ■



Beren Kasimcan is an IB Diploma student passionate about journalism, communications, and fashion. She founded her school's Fashion Magazine Club, serves as Editor-in-Chief of the yearbook program in her school, and has participated in Vogue Summer School to expand her knowledge of Fashion Media. She has also been

training pre-professionally in ballet since she was little and has performed in many lead roles, such as Mercedes in Don Quixote.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION: CONFRONTING INVISIBLE INEQUALITIES

“Whoever was chosen in the past should be chosen in the future – this silent logic shapes many algorithms.”

By Hatice Koç Kanca, PhD

Artificial intelligence is no longer just the stuff of science fiction. It is woven into our everyday lives, from recruitment processes and hospital appointments to LinkedIn suggestions and Instagram feeds. These automated decision-making systems are often marketed as “neutral,” “objective,” and even “fairer than humans.” But are they really? Or is there a layer of inequality hidden beneath the shiny surface of technology, especially for women?

WHY CAN AI BE BIASED?

Think of AI as a very smart student who only looks to the past. The only thing it can learn from is the “big data sets” we feed it. And where does that data come from? From our lives: hiring records, salary distributions, job profiles, social media interactions, in other words, from a world already marked by inequality.

So it is not surprising when a hiring algorithm trained on sectors that historically favored men quietly pushes women applicants to the back of the line. The system operates with an unspoken logic: “Whoever was chosen in the

past should be chosen in the future.” Similarly, when career recommendation tools tend to steer women toward care work, education, or service roles, this is no coincidence. It is simply a digital translation of the roles women have been assigned for decades. In short, AI is not “born biased.” It becomes biased because it feeds on an unjust memory of the world.

WOMEN IN DIGITAL IMAGES: BEAUTIFUL, GENTLE, AND IN “CERTAIN” JOBS

AI not only makes decisions; it also creates

content. It writes text, generates images, and produces synthetic photos. This is exactly where problems around women's representation become highly visible. When you type words like "engineer" or "leader" into AI-powered image generators, you are more likely to see male figures. Type in "secretary," "nurse," or "teacher," and suddenly women appear. Those women are usually young, thin, conventionally attractive, and depicted in passive or background roles. This is not just about what appears on a screen. These images, repeated over and over again in digital spaces, settle into the back of our minds. Over time, quiet assumptions like "women are more suited to these jobs" or "men are more natural in those roles" become part of our collective imagination, and they keep feeding existing inequalities.

SO WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Behind this unequal picture lies another important question: Who is actually designing AI? Across the globe, men still make up the overwhelming majority of those working in software development, data science, and AI research. That means women's perspectives and experiences are often missing from the design table. Yet the questions designers choose to ask, the data they consider "important," and the risks they can see all directly shape how these systems behave. When women and other marginalized genders are not adequately represented in these spaces, AI ends up serving not "everyone," but a narrow idea of a "default user." We have seen this pattern before. From seatbelt designs to medical devices, many technologies were historically built around the "average male body." AI risks repeating the same exclusion in the digital realm if it is developed with a similarly one-dimensional mindset.

DIVERSE DATA SETS: THE FIRST STEP TOWARD FAIRNESS

If we want more just AI systems, we have to start with the data. A system cannot rise above the world it sees. Building balanced and diverse datasets across gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and cultural experience



is one of the most basic ways to reduce algorithmic bias. It is not just about "more data," but about better, more balanced data. That is why: Datasets need regular auditing. Patterns that risk producing discrimination must be identified. When necessary, systems must be retrained. These are not optional extras; they are central to any serious ethical AI effort. Without them, even the most advanced technology is just a highly optimized version of inequality.

ETHICAL AI: NOT JUST A TECHNICAL ISSUE

The social impact of AI can never be reduced to lines of code alone. It is also a political, ethical, and cultural issue. Therefore, tech companies need to commit to transparency and accountability. Universities should integrate ethics and gender perspectives into AI education. Policy-makers must develop legal frameworks that address algorithmic discrimination. Equally important, we need more women in every part of the tech ecosystem: through scholarships, mentorship networks, visible role models, and truly inclusive workplaces. When women are not only users but also designers, researchers, and decision-makers, they can actively shape how they are represented in these systems.

A HOPEFUL, BUT CLEAR-EYED VIEW OF THE FUTURE

Used wisely, AI can become a powerful tool for advancing equality. For example, hiring platforms that hide gender information and use fairness-aware algorithms can help reduce bias. Personalized recommendation systems in education can encourage girls to pursue science and technology, gradually improving

representation in these fields.

But for any of this to happen, we first have to stop treating AI as a naturally "objective" authority. A better question to ask is: "Whose experience does this algorithm center and who does it render invisible?" As women gain more voice and power within the AI ecosystem, the possibility of a more balanced digital representation grows. Future AI systems will only be truly successful if they can genuinely see and hear all segments of society. That is why diversity, ethics, and inclusion are no longer "nice-to-have" add-ons; they belong at the very heart of technology.

Perhaps the whole debate comes down to this: Will we allow technology to remain a polished mirror that reflects and reinforces existing inequalities, or will we turn it into an active tool for building a more just future? How fair tomorrow's AI will be ultimately depends on how many women, today, are able to leave their mark on the language and the trajectory of this technology. ■



Hatice Koç Kanca, PhD, is a scholar of religion, spirituality, and Muslim chaplaincy, with particular interest in the intersections of faith, psychology, and healthcare. She earned her doctorate in philosophy and religious studies and completed postdoctoral research in theology at Georgetown University. She also holds Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) certification from MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. Currently, she is an assistant professor at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University and Visiting Faculty at Wesley Theological Seminary, while pursuing a second PhD in the psychology of religion. Her research engages questions of religious identity, spiritual care, and interfaith dynamics in pluralistic healthcare contexts. She resides with her family in the Washington, DC, area.



ADVENTUROUS AT WORK IN AMERICA: THE STRATEGIC AI ROLES DEFINING HIGH-EARNING CAREERS FOR WOMEN

PHOTO BY JENNIFER KALENBERG

“The highest-paying AI careers today require more than technical skills – they require vision, ethics, and leadership.”

By Kitty Waldorf

Historically, technology and gender discussions focused on underrepresentation and the "wage gap." However, 2026 marks a turning point in Artificial Intelligence. As the industry recognizes that diverse perspectives are essential for ethical development, women are no longer just participants—they are leading, innovating, and securing top-tier salaries in highly specialized AI roles.

In honor of Women's History Month, this article highlights five high-paying AI professions for women in 2026. Beyond exploring responsibilities and educational pathways, we examine how these leaders are reshaping the future of technology through impact, innovation, and diverse leadership.

1. AI ETHICS & GOVERNANCE LEAD

As AI permeates every facet of society, from healthcare to finance, the demand for ethical

oversight has skyrocketed. The AI Ethics & Governance Lead role ensures that AI systems are developed and deployed responsibly, transparently, and without perpetuating harmful biases.

Primary Duties: Developing and implementing ethical AI guidelines and governance frameworks across an organization.

Conducting "bias audits" on AI models and datasets, using explainable AI (XAI) tools to identify and mitigate discriminatory outcomes. Leading internal training and awareness programs on responsible AI practices.

Advising executive leadership on compliance with emerging global AI regulations (e.g., EU AI Act, NIST AI Risk Management Framework). Serving as a liaison between technical teams, legal departments, and external stakeholders on AI ethics.

Essential Skills: Critical thinking, strong communication, legal acumen, data analysis, understanding of machine learning principles, and a deep appreciation for societal impact.

Education: A Master's or PhD in fields such as

Public Policy, Law, Philosophy, Data Science, or Computer Science with a specialization in AI ethics. Certifications in AI governance or responsible AI are highly valued.

Salary: \$180,000 - \$280,000+

Workplace Settings: Large tech companies, financial institutions, government agencies, healthcare systems, and specialized AI consulting firms. Often a hybrid or remote role, requiring significant cross-functional collaboration.

2. MACHINE LEARNING OPERATIONS (MLOPS) ARCHITECT

The MLOps Architect is responsible for designing and managing the entire lifecycle of machine learning models, from development and testing to deployment and monitoring.

Primary Duties: Designing and implementing end-to-end MLOps pipelines for continuous integration, delivery, and deployment of ML models.

Establishing monitoring and alerting systems to track model performance, data drift, and



potential security vulnerabilities in production. Automating model retraining, versioning, and rollback strategies.

Collaborating with data scientists, machine learning engineers, and DevOps teams to streamline workflows and reduce friction.

Ensuring compliance with data privacy and security standards throughout the model lifecycle.

Essential Skills: Deep understanding of cloud platforms (AWS, Azure, GCP), Kubernetes, Docker, CI/CD tools, scripting languages (Python), machine learning frameworks, and strong system design principles.

Education: Bachelor's or Master's in Computer Science, Software Engineering, or a related technical field.

Salary: \$170,000 - \$275,000

Workplace Settings: Tech giants, e-commerce companies, financial services, and any organization heavily reliant on deploying and managing numerous AI models at scale. Often a hybrid work environment.

3. AI PRODUCT MANAGER (SPECIALIZING IN GENERATIVE AI/LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS)

With the explosion of Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) by 2026, the demand for AI Product Managers who can translate complex AI capabilities into valuable, user-centric products is at an all-time high.

Primary Duties: Defining product vision, strategy, and roadmap for AI-powered products, particularly those leveraging LLMs and generative models.

Conducting market research and competitive analysis to identify opportunities for AI product innovation.

Gathering and prioritizing product requirements from internal stakeholders and external users.

Collaborating closely with engineering, data science, UX/UI design, and marketing teams throughout the product development lifecycle. Launching and iterating on AI products, analyzing performance metrics, and gathering user feedback.

Essential Skills: Strong product sense, market analysis, communication, strategic thinking, understanding of AI/ML fundamentals

(especially LLMs), UX/UI principles, and project management.

Education: Bachelor's or Master's in Computer Science, Business Administration, or a related technical/management field.

Salary: \$165,000 - \$260,000

Workplace Settings: Tech startups, established software companies, creative industries, media, and any enterprise developing user-facing AI applications. Often based in tech hubs, with increasing remote options.

4. AI SECURITY ENGINEER (ADVERSARIAL ML SPECIALIST)

This role involves understanding and mitigating unique AI vulnerabilities like data poisoning, model evasion, and model extraction.

Primary Duties: Designing and implementing security measures to protect AI models from adversarial attacks (e.g., data poisoning, evasion, inference attacks).

Conducting penetration testing specifically tailored to AI systems to identify vulnerabilities. Developing "robustness" metrics and adversarial training techniques to make models more resilient.

Monitoring AI systems for anomalous behavior that might indicate an ongoing attack or manipulation.

Collaborating with MLOps and incident response teams on AI-specific security incidents.

Essential Skills: Cybersecurity expertise, deep understanding of machine learning algorithms, programming (Python), cryptography, threat modeling, and reverse engineering.

Education: Bachelor's or Master's in Cybersecurity, Computer Science, or a related field. Specialized certifications in ethical hacking or AI security are highly beneficial.

Salary: \$160,000 - \$250,000

Workplace Settings: Large enterprises (finance, defense, tech), cybersecurity firms, and government agencies. Often involves working in

security operations centers (SOCs) or specialized "red team" environments.

5. DATA SCIENTIST WITH RESPONSIBLE AI FOCUS

While "Data Scientist" is a broad term, the Data Scientist with a Responsible AI Focus has become exceptionally valuable. These professionals not only build and analyze models but also deeply integrate ethical considerations from the outset. They focus on data fairness, model explainability, and mitigating algorithmic bias, ensuring that the insights derived from AI are not only accurate but also equitable and trustworthy.

Primary Duties: Cleaning, preparing, and analyzing large datasets with a specific focus on identifying and mitigating potential sources of bias.

Developing and applying advanced statistical and machine learning techniques to build predictive and prescriptive models.

Utilizing Explainable AI (XAI) tools to interpret model decisions and ensure transparency.

Implementing fairness metrics and debiasing techniques within ML pipelines.

Collaborating with AI Ethics Leads and domain experts to ensure models align with ethical principles and regulatory requirements.

Essential Skills: Strong statistical modeling, machine learning algorithms, programming (Python, R), data visualization, SQL, cloud platforms, and a solid understanding of ethical AI principles.

Education: Master's or PhD in Data Science, Statistics, Computer Science, or a related quantitative field.

Salary: \$155,000 - \$245,000

Workplace Settings: Tech companies, research institutions, healthcare, finance, and any industry seeking data-driven insights with a commitment to ethical AI. ■



Kitty Waldorf is a self-excellence professional with more than 14 years of experience in MENA and US markets, focused on education, healthcare, and security and defense. She has been voted as the Best Life Coach of the Nation's Capital since 2019. In 2023, she was named the Winner of the Best Life Coaching

Category in *Washington City Paper* readers' poll. **Connect with Waldorf.**



MANISA

THE CITY THAT TRAINED SULTANS

“The Ottoman idea was simple: rule a city first, then rule an empire.”

By Nil Güler, PhD

Manisa is an old city—really old. It began as Magnesia in ancient times, passed through Lydian, Persian, Greek, and Roman hands, and later became Byzantine. The Ottomans captured it in the 1300s, and it became well known as the training ground where Ottoman princes learned the art of governing. As a result, it served as a training ground for future sultans. Today, it is a modern city, but with a lot of history baked in.

The city for training Ottoman Princes

From a young age, Ottoman princes (şehzades) underwent rigorous training. First, as kids in the palace, they studied religion, law, languages, history, poetry, and military skills, guided by top scholars and tutors. Strict discipline was enforced, and any kind of luxury was prohibited.

Once they reached adolescence, they were entrusted with the responsibility of governing a city like Manisa. This was the real test. There, they served as local governors, overseeing taxes, justice, armies, and politics. Experienced officials advised them, but the prince made the final calls.

The idea was simple: rule a city first, then rule an empire. The best-trained (and luckiest) prince would eventually become sultan.

During the Ottoman period (particularly the 15th–16th centuries), imperial princes (şehzades) were sent to govern important provincial capitals as part of their administrative training.

Manisa, along with Amasya, Trabzon, and Kütahya, was one of the major şehzade sancaks — meaning a "province governed by a prince." The governor-prince (usually the son of the reigning sultan) ruled the province under supervision, learning leadership, governance, diplomacy, and military skills.

Notable Princes Educated in Manisa

Several future sultans served as governors (and thereby “students”) in Manisa’s princely court, including: Süleyman the Magnificent (Süleyman I); Selim II; Murad III; Mehmed III.

Ancient Lydia and first metal coins in the world

The ancient city of Sardes is located near Manisa. It was the capital of the ancient Lydian Kingdom and one of the most important cities of antiquity. Sardes played a major role

in political, economic, and cultural life, especially during the reign of King Croesus, who was famous for his great wealth. The city is historically significant as the place where the first metal coins in the world were produced, marking an important development in economic history. Today, Sardes is an important archaeological site, known for its impressive ruins such as the Temple of Artemis, the gymnasium, and ancient Roman structures, which attract historians, archaeologists, and visitors from around the world.

Yılki Horses in Manisa

Yılki horses are semi-wild horses. Traditionally, villagers released horses that were no longer used for work into nature, where they formed free-roaming herds.

Manisa is one of the most well-known places in Türkiye for Yılki horses because of:

- ▶ Spil Dağı National Park
- ▶ Its wide plateaus, forests, and water sources
- ▶ Long-standing rural traditions

Today, herds can still be seen around Spil Mountain. In higher, less populated rural areas of Manisa.

They symbolize freedom and wilderness.

Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark

This is a large protected geological heritage area (over ~2,320 km²) in Manisa province, Türkiye.

It showcases volcanic landscapes, such as Kula volcanic cones, peribacalı-like formations, lava flows, and dramatic rock shapes formed over millions of years.

The area also has historical and cultural significance and is sometimes called “Yanık Ülke” (Burnt Land) in ancient sources due to its volcanic terrain.

This geopark is Türkiye’s first UNESCO Global Geopark and remains the only one with that designation so far.

Winemaking

Manisa is one of the most fertile grape-growing areas in the world. Hot, dry summers + mild winters = excellent sugar development and healthy vines.

The star grape group is Sultaniye grapes used mainly as table grapes, and raisins (Türkiye is a global leader here). But also, for white wine, especially light, fresh styles. Historical roots of winemaking in Manisa date back over 3,000 years. Ancient Lydians, Greeks, and Romans all produced wine here. The city of Sardis (near Manisa) was a major ancient wine and trade center.

Today, Manisa is more famous internationally for raisins, but:

Turkish wineries do use Manisa grapes for wine. Mostly white and aromatic styles, sometimes blended wine remains an important agricultural and historical identity for Manisa. Grapes are celebrated in festivals, cuisine, and local pride—even when turned into molasses (pekmez) instead of wine.

Manisa Hot Springs

They have been used since ancient times for relaxation and health.

The water is warm and rich in minerals. People visit the springs to relax and to help with joint pain, muscle pain, skin problems, and stress. There are several well-known thermal areas, such as Kurşunlu, Salihli, and Alaşehir. Today,



visitors can enjoy thermal hotels, spa centers, and traditional Turkish baths.

Manisa Thermal Springs are popular for health tourism, relaxation, and cultural travel.

Manisa Mesir Macunu

It is a traditional Turkish herbal paste from Manisa, dating back to the 16th-century Ottoman period. Made from a mixture of 41 herbs and spices, it was created by Merkez Efendi and is believed to promote health and vitality. It is celebrated every March during the Mesir Macunu Festival, where it is thrown from the Sultan Mosque to the public, a tradition recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Sardis Antique City

One of the most important archaeological sites in western Türkiye, Sardis was the capital of the ancient Lydian Kingdom, thriving from the 7th century BC and known as the place where money was first minted.

- ▶ Lydian Heritage: Capital of the powerful Lydians and a major economic hub.
- ▶ Temple of Artemis: Remains of a grand temple once dedicated to the goddess.
- ▶ Gymnasium & Synagogue Complex: A large gymnasium combined with one of the ancient world’s largest synagogues, with fascinating mosaics now being restored.
- ▶ Theater & Stadium: Roman-era performance and sports spaces.
- ▶ Paktolos (Sart) River: Legendary river from

which gold was panned — connected with King Midas stories.

Today

Today, Manisa is a modern, thriving city in the Aegean Region, involved in agriculture (cotton, grapes, olives) and industry, having expanded significantly across the Gediz River plain. Key historical sites include the Manisa Castle, the Ulu Mosque, and the Muradiye Mosque.

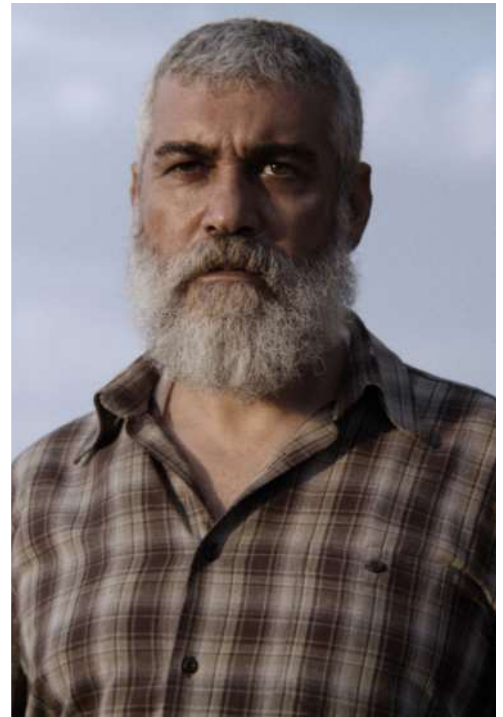
Celal Bayar University

The university received its current name and official status on July 11, 1992, following the merger of several colleges and schools already operating in Manisa.

The university offers over 60 undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs across its faculties and institutes. ■



Nil Guler, PhD, is a graduate of Arnavutkoy American College for Girls (Robert College) and Middle East Technical University in Türkiye where she got her BSc in civil engineering (METU) and her PhD in management from Istanbul University. She has been a visiting scholar to Innsbruck Institute for Informatics, Southampton University and a post doctoral to University of Maryland. She has over 100 scientific articles and papers. She took part in many international and national conferences as a speaker and an organizer. In 2003, she became full professor. Between 2008 and 2015, she served as the Dean of Maritime Faculty of Istanbul Technical University. She retired as a professor from Istanbul Technical University. She also continued as a professor in Bilgi University after retirement. Currently she is a partner in GT Consultants LLC.



TURKISH FILMS SHINE AT BERLINALE 2026

"This is not a performance that couldn't be shown or filmed in Türkiye. We didn't film Yellow Letters here because we couldn't film it in Türkiye, but due to İlker's familiarity with Germany. The point is how these two cultures, so intertwined and organic, managed to convey this to the audience's soul and heart." Özgü Namal's response to a reporter's question at the Press Conference.

By Ercument Akman

Berlinale, the First Major Festival of the Year

Berlinale International Film Festival was originally conceived in 1951 after a suggestion by a film officer of the American High Commissioner for Germany during Cold War, to be a "showcase of the free world" in a divided Berlin. Originally running in June, the festival has been held every February since 1978 as one of Europe's major film festivals alongside Italy's Venice and France's Cannes film festivals.

Türkiye has won the Golden Bear in 1964 with Metin Erksan's "Susuz Yaz" (Dry Summer), followed by another in 2010 with Semih Kaplanoğlu's "Bal" (Honey).

Under Dieter Kosslick's helm from 2001

to 2019, Berlinale became one of the largest public film festivals in the world, with a vision for the future of cinema to include more women filmmakers and rejuvenating festival's unofficial claim to be a political festival with a pledge towards social and gender equality in both the festival and The European Film Market (EFM), held alongside the festival.

A New Challenge

Being able to secure less Hollywood glamor and big budget films for its February dates, Berlinale is now facing new challenges that threaten festival's impact and relevance. The festival's director, Tricia Tuttle, seeks a fine balance between political climate and the festival's power to attract independent films in a volatile distribution market seeking deals and exclusive premiere screenings.

When well-known filmmaker Wim Wenders, Jury president of the heavily German Government funded festival's 76th edition said "We must do the work of people, not the work of politicians and stay out of politics" to preempt incidents, about the conflict in Gaza, and being accused of antisemitism for offering a stage to critical voices, he caused great criticism. In the end, political cinema won out.

GOLDEN BEAR FOR ÇATAK'S "YELLOW LETTERS"

"Yellow Letters," directed by German Turkish filmmaker İlker Çatak, and called "a stirring and surprising political drama" by Variety, won the Golden Bear for best film as the first homegrown filmmaker to take the top prize at Berlin, since fellow German Turkish director Fatih Akin won in 2004 for "Head-On."



Wim Wenders declared the film "a terrifying vision into the future, a terrifying premonition, a look into the near future that could possibly happen in our countries as well." Çatak responded to Wenders as "one of my teachers," adding, "It's such an incredible thing to receive this award from you."

Though set in Türkiye, the film was shot entirely on location, with Berlin standing in for Ankara and Hamburg for Istanbul, with Çatak making no effort to disguise the fact, hinting that what happened elsewhere can also happen in Germany.

"Yellow Letters," is about Derya (Özgü Namal), and Aziz (Tansu Biçer), a celebrated artist couple from Ankara, with their 13-year-old daughter Ezgi. An incident at the premiere of their new play changes everything. Overnight, they find themselves targeted by authorities and lose their jobs and their home. They move to Istanbul to stay with Aziz's mother. Derya searches for a way to become financially independent. Aziz tries odd jobs and holds on to his convictions. They are forced to choose between their values and their future as a family.

The prize confirms the 42-year-old Çatak's entry into the world-cinema major leagues, after his earlier feature "The Teachers' Lounge" broke out of the Berlinale's Panorama sidebar in 2023 and landed an Oscar nomination for Best International Feature.

Gelbe Briefe | Yellow Letters

128' Germany, France, Türkiye 2026, Color.
by İlker Çatak (Director, Screenplay), Ayda Meryem Çatak (Screenplay), Enis Köstepen (Screenplay)

Cast: Özgü Namal, Tansu Biçer, Leyla Smyrna Cabas, İpek Bilgin

World Sales: Be For Films, Paris, France info@beforfilms.com

<https://www.beforfilms.com>

TRAILER

SILVER BEAR FOR ALPER'S "SALVATION"

Emin Alper returned to the Berlinale competition with "Salvation," his fifth film — and his first since the 2022 Cannes Un Certain Regard entry "Burning Days" and won the runner-up Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize. At the Awards Ceremony, Alper took the opportunity to speak up for "the people of Iran suffering



under tyranny" and "the Palestinians in Gaza living and dying under the most terrible conditions." Following up with more references for Kurds and Türkiye.

The screenplay took four years for Alper to write, and stems from a true story involving a land dispute between different families that led to a massacre almost 15 years ago.

"Salvation" is a timely exploration of an atrocity, motivated by territorialism and religious fervor set against a stark mountain village in Türkiye, following two brothers as they slowly entangle, when the return of an exiled clan reignites a decades-old land feud. While dormant resentments resurface, Mesut (Caner Cindoruk), the local leader's brother, is seized by unsettling visions. Believing them to be divine warnings, he challenges his brother's leadership as tensions surge in the community. "Salvation" urges you to consider where one draws the line between religion, community, and beliefs. Who do you follow? Who do you believe? And what do you believe in?

Kurtuluş | Salvation

120', Türkiye, France, Netherlands, Greece, Sweden, Saudi Arabia 2026, Color, Turkish, Kurdish Emin Alper (Director, Screenplay)

Cast: Caner Cindoruk, Berkay Ateş, Feyyaz

Duman, Naz Göktan, Özlem Taş

World Sales: Lucky Number, Paris, France,

sales@luckynumber.fr,

<https://luckynumber.fr/>

TRAILER

With these two major Berlinale awards, we can look forward to seeing Turkish talent and films at many first- and second-tier global festivals, with opportunities to catch them soon at North American Turkish film festivals. ■

See you at the Movies...

Find more articles in the oldest Turkish cinema blog since 2006:

<https://turkfilm.blogspot.com>



Ercüment Akman was born in Istanbul. He studied architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts, Fındıklı, and pursued postgraduate studies in Urban and Regional Planning at the Technical University, Taşkışla. He worked for the Turkish Film Archives and was a film critic for national newspapers. After moving to Canada in 1978 and later to the US, he worked as an architect and served as an independent film curator. He continues to lecture on cultural issues and writes for the *Turkish Cinema Newsletter*. Now retired from corporate architecture, he is focusing on various book projects.



THREADS OF BROTHERHOOD

“The exhibition stands as a cultural tribute to the unity and sacrifice of two neighboring cities.”

By Feyzullah Aslantürk

The second showing of “A Story of Brotherhood,” an exhibition that carries the traditional Maraş Aba into the future through contemporary artistic interpretation, was held in Kahramanmaraş. A special collection of 15 artworks inspired by modern interpretations of Maraş Aba motifs was first exhibited at the Gaziantep Panorama Museum between December 22–29, 2025, in conjunction with the liberation anniversary of Gaziantep, attracting significant public interest.

The enriched collection was presented once again on February 13, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Mehmet Akif Cultural Center, as part of the February 12 Liberation Day celebrations of Kahramanmaraş. This second exhibition was especially meaningful as it took place in the city where the project originated.

Titled “A Story of Brotherhood,” the exhibition pays tribute to the heroic Maraş

militias—civilian national fighters known for wearing the traditional Maraş Aba—who defended Kahramanmaraş during the 22-day struggle that led to the city’s liberation on February 12, 1920. After securing their own freedom, these fighters rushed to support neighboring Gaziantep, standing shoulder to shoulder in the Turkish War of Independence, symbolizing enduring bonds of solidarity and brotherhood between the two cities.

Reviving Historical Memory Through an Artist-Scholar’s Vision

Dr. Mutlu Aslantürk, a faculty member at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, has achieved national recognition by bringing the motifs of the traditional Maraş Aba, one of the finest examples of Anatolia’s weaving heritage, into dialogue with contemporary art.

His widely acclaimed exhibition, now in its second venue in Kahramanmaraş,

demonstrates how regional clothing traditions can be reinterpreted through a strong academic and artistic vision. Drawing on extensive research into regional dress culture, Dr. Aslantürk presents a carefully curated collection inspired by the Aba garments that became symbols of Kahramanmaraş and its surrounding region during the War of Independence.

More than a visual exhibition, the project stands as a cultural manifesto of loyalty and brotherhood, expressing the spirit of national solidarity through the artistic language of Maraş Aba motifs.

“Motifs Are the Language of Identity and Brotherhood”

Dr. Aslantürk emphasized that his work on the traditional clothing culture of Kahramanmaraş will continue under new themes in the future.

“Motifs are the language of our identity and our brotherhood,” he said.

Highlighting that traditional garments serve



as vessels of collective memory rather than merely clothing, Dr. Aslantürk explained the philosophy behind his work:

“The Aba garments worn during the epic resistance of Maraş and Antep are silent witnesses of history. My goal is not to leave these traditional motifs on museum shelves, but to bring them into today’s aesthetic world through the language of contemporary art. These works represent the modern artistic reflection of solidarity, loyalty, and cultural heritage.”

Academic Vision and Institutional Collaboration

This exhibition represents an important milestone in both academic and artistic achievement and was made possible through strong cooperation between academic institutions and local authorities.

Dr. Aslantürk noted that the project will continue to expand and that future exhibitions are planned for Istanbul and Ankara. He expressed his sincere gratitude to all stakeholders who supported the project, particularly the Kahramanmaraş Governorship, the Metropolitan Municipality, and KSÜ Rector Prof. Dr. Mahmut Ak, whose contributions were instrumental in bringing the project to life. ■





NEW MERCEDES-BENZ CLA WINS ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The smartest Mercedes-Benz ever built.

By Hakkı Gunerkan

The new Mercedes-Benz CLA has received another prestigious international recognition, winning the "Large Car of the Year" title at the Women's Worldwide Car of the Year (WWCOTY) Awards 2026. Selected by an international jury of female automotive journalists, the award highlights the model's strong combination of design, innovation, and advanced technology.

The global automotive industry is undergoing a significant transformation driven by electrification, innovation, and digitalization. Reflecting this shift, the Women's Worldwide Car of the Year jury announced the best vehicles of 2026 across eight categories. The

new Mercedes-Benz CLA stood out among 55 competing models, earning the top position in the Large Car category. The evaluation was conducted by 84 women automotive journalists from 54 countries across five continents, making WWCOTY one of the most geographically diverse juries in the automotive world.

Vehicles are assessed based on key criteria such as design, technology, efficiency, safety, driving performance, comfort, and value for money. The jury also considers how well each model responds to real-life needs and everyday usability. Category winners automatically qualify as finalists for the overall 2026 Women's Worldwide Car of the Year Award, which will be announced during the week of International Women's Day on March 8.

A New Benchmark in the Premium Compact Segment

With its elegant coupé-like silhouette and advanced digital features, the new Mercedes-Benz CLA blends style and functionality in the premium compact sedan segment. The model combines comfort and digital innovation to deliver a modern driving experience.

Described as one of the smartest vehicles Mercedes-Benz has ever produced, the new CLA stands out with its advanced technologies, efficiency, and intelligent systems. The fully electric version is expected to be available in late 2025, while the internal combustion engine version is scheduled for release in early 2026.

The fully electric CLA offers a driving range



Hakki Gunerkan is a well-recognized figure in Türkiye's automotive industry and the founder and editor-in-chief of two leading digital platforms: otoruyasi.com and ticariport.com. Through Otoruyasi.com, he delivers the latest news and in-depth reviews of cars that capture enthusiasts' imagination, while Ticariport.com serves as a key source for developments in the commercial vehicle sector.

Reaching both automotive enthusiasts and industry professionals, Gunerkan actively contributes to shaping digital automotive journalism. As a member of the Automotive Journalists Association (OGD), he also takes part in the annual "Car of the Year" competition in Türkiye. Instagram: [@hakkigunerkan](https://www.instagram.com/hakkigunerkan), [@otomobiluyasi](https://www.instagram.com/otomobiluyasi)

THE PUZZLE SOLUTION



of up to 715 kilometers (WLTP) on a single charge, making electric mobility more practical and convenient for everyday use. This extended range significantly reduces range anxiety and supports the wider adoption of electric vehicles.

A New Era of AI-Powered Mobility

One of the most innovative aspects of the new CLA is that it is the first vehicle to operate on the Mercedes-Benz Operating System (MB.OS), developed entirely by Mercedes-Benz. The vehicle features the fourth-generation MBUX infotainment system, which integrates artificial intelligence technologies from both

Microsoft and Google.

This advanced system allows for a more intuitive and personalized interaction between driver and vehicle. By combining multiple AI-powered tools into a single platform, the new CLA introduces a new level of intelligent driving experience.

With its combination of design, advanced technology, and efficiency, the new Mercedes-Benz CLA sets a new standard in modern automotive engineering. The WWCOTY award confirms the model's growing international recognition as a forward-looking vehicle that reflects the future direction of the automotive industry. ■

Unlock Your Dream Home with Turan Tombul: Expert Real Estate Services in DC, MD, and VA

"Real estate is not just about buildings; it is about building relationships and communities. That is the cornerstone of my approach." - Turan Tombul

Introducing Turan Tombul, a dedicated and seasoned real estate professional specializing in the vibrant markets of Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia. With over two decades of experience, Turan has become a trusted advisor within the Turkish community and beyond, guiding clients through the complexities of buying and selling homes with unparalleled expertise and a deep understanding of cultural values.

Born and raised in Kayseri, Türkiye, Turan's journey to the United States began after his early education in hotel management, leading him to roles in prestigious Turkish resorts. His transition to America was marked by a fateful meeting with a US Congressman, inspiring him to pursue further education at the University of DC where he earned degrees in political science and economics.

Licensed since 2002, Turan's approach to real estate is deeply personalized. He excels in market analysis, always aligning his strategies with his clients' needs and budgets to identify the perfect property. Turan's philosophy centers on the belief that purchasing a home is not just a financial transaction, but a pivotal life decision. He ensures every property is scrutinized as if he were the buyer, maintaining an honest dialogue about each home's potential.

During the tumultuous times of the 2008 real estate bubble, Turan's expertise became especially valuable. He adeptly navigated the challenging market conditions, advising clients when to buy and helping them capitalize on opportunities, turning a crisis into a chance for advantageous investment.

Turan's commitment extends beyond property transactions. He is available around the clock, proving his dedication through continuous support in finding tenants, managing properties, and even solving maintenance issues long after the ink has dried on the sale documents. His deep-rooted understanding of the importance of community and home ownership, particularly within the Turkish

culture, drives his success and fosters lasting relationships with his clients.

Additionally, Turan's passion for US politics and community service, inherited from his grandfather, a revered community leader in Türkiye, enriches his understanding of community dynamics and governance, further enhancing his service to his clients.

For those looking to navigate the real estate market, be it buying a dream home or selling one, Turan Tombul offers not just real estate expertise, but a partnership built on trust, respect, and a mutual understanding of the value of home. Connect with him at (202) 423-1423 or via email at ttombul38@gmail.com to begin your real estate journey with a seasoned expert who regards your satisfaction as his utmost priority.



TURAN TOMBUL, REALTOR® - REMAX ALLEGIANCE

5100 Leesburg Pike
Alexandria, VA 22302

(202) 423-1423
ttombul38@gmail.com
www.turantombul.com

FIND YOUR **AMERICAN**
DREAM THROUGH

Franchising



with
Kim Daly

Learn what the DALY
COACH can do for you
THEDALYCOACH.COM

THE *Daly* COACH

PUZZLE TIME

Find the Turkish Words



- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PATLICAN | <input type="checkbox"/> KONYA | <input type="checkbox"/> IZNIK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PERGAMON | <input type="checkbox"/> SIDE | <input type="checkbox"/> ASSOS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SUMELA | <input type="checkbox"/> SAFRANBOLU | <input type="checkbox"/> TRABZON |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TURQUOISE | <input type="checkbox"/> BURSA | <input type="checkbox"/> URFA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TROY | <input type="checkbox"/> MOUNT | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EDIRNE | <input type="checkbox"/> ARARAT | |

Print this page and have fun finding the Turkish words.

The puzzle solution is on page 93.

Get a free subscription and receive a new puzzle in your inbox every week.

Subscribe now.



TURAN TOMBUL
Real Estate Consultant
Notary Public



RE/MAX
ALLEGIANCE

Licensed in DC, MD, and VA

RE/MAX Allegiance

220 7th St SE
Washington, DC 20003

5100 Leesburg Pike, Suite 200
Alexandria, VA 22302

(202) 423-1423

www.turantombul.com
ttombul38@gmail.com



Free home buying or selling consultation.
Contact me for all of your real estate needs.

Washington DC'deki Türkler İçin Yaşam Rehberi Hazır!

Welcome Guide 2026 – Hoşgeldiniz!
isimli rehberimizi gururla sunuyoruz!



REHBERDE NELER VAR?

- ▶ Günlük hayatı kolaylaştıran pratik bilgiler
- ▶ Sosyal çevre kurmak için güncel ipuçları
- ▶ En lezzetli Türk restoranları listesi
- ▶ Görülmesi gereken turistik noktalar
- ▶ Kaza anında ne yapılmalı?
- ▶ Ev kiralama ve satın alma rehberi
- ▶ En iyi okullar hangi bölgelerde?
- ▶ Türkçe konuşan emlakçılar ve profesyoneller
- ▶ Türk ürünlerini bulabileceğiniz marketler ...ve çok daha fazlası!

Yeni bir yerde hayat kurmak heyecan verici olduğu kadar zorlayıcı da olabilir. Ama merak etmeyin—biz sizin için her detayı düşündük!

Ekibimizin uzun süren araştırmaları sonucunda hazırlanan **Hoşgeldiniz!** Rehberi, Washington, DC bölgesine taşınmayı planlayan veya bölgeyi ziyaret etmek isteyen Türk vatandaşları için özel olarak tasarlandı.

Bu dijital rehber, yeni hayatınıza sağlam bir başlangıç yapmanız için ihtiyacınız olan tüm bilgileri tek bir çatı altında topluyor.

[Rehberine hemen ulaşmak için tıklayın!](#)

