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# Danger, Docility and the Denial of Death

## On Productive Forces of Violent Practices in Prison

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## Abstract

This thesis establishes an understanding of violence as discourse in the setting of Turkish prisons, during the death fast in the early 2000s. It uncovers discourses embedded in the acts of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding, each able to produce certain kinds of subjects. Investigating the interplay between power logics that underpin these violent practices, the thesis contests the idea of violence as something exclusively constraining. Torture is theorized as part of a discourse of security, producing prisoners as dangerous bodies, whereas a medical discourse covered in the use of force-feeding shapes docile and legible bodies. Disrupting this order, hunger striking resembles an attempt to bring about contestation over these forced identities, which in the case of Turkey tend to reproduce stereotypes by associating religious, ethnic or racial affiliations with terrorism. Exploring the distinct logics of sovereign power and biopower, the thesis observes their intersection in the event of death.

*Keywords: Bare life, biopower, discourse of security, force-feeding, F-Type prisons, hunger strike, medical discourse, sovereign power, torture.*

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# 1. Introduction

One cannot be too concerned with what happens behind prison walls. Its culture of confidentiality, the overarching aim of correcting criminal behaviour, and the undeniable prevalence of corruption, are among the conditions that stipulate a serious challenge for the construction of a prison system considered legitimate by both inmates and citizens. Regardless of the shape of the penal rule, the existence of any type of prison system requires, or generates, certain penal practices, which are attached to relations of power, layering matters of legality with questions of morality and ethics.

Studying relations of power should, but does rarely, pay attention to the persons inhabiting the positions from which they exercise, or are hindered from exercising, power. These persons should not, in turn, be regarded as fixed subjects pre-existing the appeared context since every context relies on a structure whose inherent legitimacy is reproduced by social and political practices. Rather, the subjects, embodying varying degrees of agency, are under constant construction and reconstruction, as is the very structure according to which they act. The notion of subjects subsequently actualizes the centrality of the human body, without which the understanding of power as something exclusively constraining must be said to persist. Contesting this articulation, this thesis will propose an understanding of power as productive, addressing embodiment via the phenomena of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding.

The issues addressed above engender the intersection of my theoretical and empirical focus in this thesis: the notion of violence-as-discourse, able to produce the bodies it damages, in the setting of Turkish prisons in the early 2000s, where took place the so called death fast and the Operation Return to Life.

## *1.1. Purpose and research question*

The purpose of this thesis is to create an understanding of the power logics underpinning the legitimization and exercise of political violence in the prison setting, namely during the so called death fast that took place in Turkish prisons in the beginning of the 2000s. In order to

do so, it identifies a chronological process of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding, following which tensions between disciplinary power, sovereign power and biopower are made visible. Regarding power not as a property possessed by actors, but rather as a productive force able to produce what it names, the thesis builds upon a Foucauldian conception of subjectivity as under constant construction and reconstruction (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 57).

The research question I have formulated is thus the following: *How can we understand the construction and reconstruction of subjectivity during the Turkish prison death fast, engaging in the uncovering of discourses embedded in the practices of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding?*

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Prison

#### 2.1.1. *Relations of power*

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (1975) serves as an indispensable source for understanding the development of the prison regimes of modern time. In short, the penitentiary system is analyzed not as suddenly emerged, antedating its own punitive, disciplinary and correcting functions, but as the opening up of penalty to mechanisms of coercion already elaborated outside the legal apparatus (Foucault, 1975, 231). The focal point for his theorizing is the operations of power, or more precisely *relations of power*, situating prisoners in an intricate, and somewhat ambiguous, state of agency.

#### 2.1.2. *Disciplinary power and bodies of knowledge*

Foucault uses the Benthamite model of surveillance, the so called Panopticon, in order to demonstrate the individualizing of the penitentiary system. By continually observing and documenting the behaviour of prisoners, placed in separate cells from which the supervisor cannot be seen, the sovereign exercises disciplinary power. Within this matrix of apparently asymmetric power relations, a body of knowledge is constituted. That is, the administration monitors the prisoners in order to gain knowledge necessary for regulating and

individualizing the exercise of the penitentiary practice, varying the treatment of prisoners in ways that increase the utility of incarceration, i.e. decreasing the risk of repetition of the crime.<sup>1</sup> Continuing his reasoning on bodies of knowledge, Foucault suggests that knowledge must simultaneously be extracted from the prisoners; tracing the causes for their crimes beneath the mere circumstances under which they were committed establishes the *criminal* as existing outside the crime. In doing so, the prisoner becomes an “individual to know”, an object of knowledge (ibid, 251-252).

What such a practice also entails, is the autonomy of the prison administration, that is, those who execute the control over prisoners. In a sudden deviation from a previous value neutral position, examining the physical outcomes of torture in an almost naturalist manner, Foucault stresses the illegitimacy of the “useless violence” exercised by autonomous prison personnel (ibid, 246).

What is an object of knowledge, then, and how are we to discover its existence within the setting of a prison? Or, rather, internalizing the use of language suggested by the discourse analysts whose work is built upon in the thesis: how are we to uncover the discourses and practices through which such objects are constituted?

As a matter of fact, the useless violence mentioned by Foucault – perhaps near what we today mean when we speak of the modern practices of torture – is closely tied to the objects of knowledge, produced by discourse, of whom we are interested. The word “useless” thus appears semantically inaccurate, since it is precisely the practice of violence that succeeds to produce what it names: dangerous bodies; bodies from which information can be gained; bodies that are useful. Already having defined disciplinary power, I will throughout the thesis circle around two other types – sovereign power and biopower – in order to theorize torture, hunger striking and force-feeding as embodiments of power in different aspects.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken for granted here is an embedded utility imperative which one is not obliged to accept. We are yet to investigate why, deconstructing and reconceptualizing the role of sovereignty.

## 2.2. Torture

### 2.2.1. *Sovereign power and the world of pain*

How then, does the issue of torture fit into these regulatory schemas of power? Let us begin by proposing a solution appealing to the logics of sovereign power. In this sense, the prison administration can be said to pursue torture in order to demonstrate the unlimited power of the sovereign. Severely humiliating and painful, the exercise of torture deprives prisoners not only of their fundamental rights as human beings, but of their status as subjects. Yet there are slightly different ways of arriving at this somewhat uniform position; in *The Body in Pain* (1985) Elaine Scarry theorizes the intense pain inflicted upon bodies as a power that destroys the victim's subjectivity, moving him or her to a world of pain. Her argument rests on the identifying of a torture three-step sequence: first the infliction of pain, then the amplification and objectification of pain within the body and made visible outside of it, and lastly the denial of pain, instead translated into power (Scarry, 1985, 28). This translation is made possible by the modulating of agency; within the physical events of torture, Scarry writes, the torturer has nothing, he has only an absence of pain. The absence of pain though constitutes the presence of world, whereas the presence of pain is the absence of world. Hence logically the torturer's power increases as the pain within the tortured body increases; the world of the former grows larger as the pain of the latter escalates (ibid, 37). And the disclaiming of pain, translated into power, is the part that permits the sequence to shift back to the infliction of pain (ibid, 57).

The locus of pain is the body, whereas the locus of power is the voice, thus the translation of pain into power is a transformation of body into voice. Having his or her world destructed, the torture victim is displaced outside of the very realm of language; the severity of the pain has no external equivalent, hence it cannot be articulated. The disintegration of the victim's world leads to the disintegration of his or her language, in turn disintegrating the mere self (ibid, 35). In a stylized model, consisting only of a torturer and a victim, Scarry explains how the sovereign becomes present in the verbal part of torture: the voice of the sovereign is spoken by the torturer, who forces the victim to speak not the truth, but what the sovereign wishes him or her to. Thereby the sovereign arises within the body of the victim. Disabled of speech, the victim of torture is reduced to *bare life*. The same concept is a central component

in the work of Giorgio Agamben, substantially discriminating between bare life (zoê) and qualified life (bios).

### *2.2.2. Homo sacer and bare life*

Defining bare life, as opposed to qualified life, requires the location of its physical dominion: the surface upon which such a label is eligible. Approached like this, bare life is defined as the life of *homo sacer*, a figure whose life is situated in a convergence of a capacity to be killed, yet not sacrificed (Agamben, 1995, 74). What gives *homo sacer* this distinguishable status, is the notion of rendering his killing unpunishable, at the same time banning his sacrifice. When the concept first appeared, as early as 1679, it addressed suspects as pure bodies, physically present before the court, rather than juridical subjects to whom rights and liberties apply (Agamben, 1995, 122-124). At the time of the birth of modern democracy, the political subject was thus no longer the free man, but his body (ibid, 125). Agamben argues that modern politics has undergone a transformation during which it has become closely interlaced with life, thus giving bare life a political meaning. Ascribing to this reasoning a degree of plausibility, though, one cannot avoid the question of what type of power is being exercised in the process of reducing subjects to bare life. In order to tackle this, I will describe Agamben's "state of exception", ask the question of whether the prison setting can classify as such, whereafter I will explore the concept of biopower and its possible limits on sovereign power.

In short, biopower is defined as the aim to foster the life of populations, whereas the sovereign power imperative is formulated as the right to take life. Still concentrating on torture, I do not doubt Agamben's urge to contest Foucault on his note of a total replacement of sovereign power by biopower. Rather, it is on this exact position that Agamben starkly deviates from Foucault, accepting the shift to biopower but defining his "state of exception" as a zone in which sovereignty persists (Agamben, 1995, 123).

### *2.2.3. The state of exception*

The state of exception emerges as Agamben deplores the so called paradox of the sovereign, that is, that the sovereign exists simultaneously inside and outside the juridical order. The



argument goes as follows: if the sovereign is the juridical unit holding the power of proclaiming a state of exception, then the sovereign stands outside the law. But, having the legal power to suspend law, in other words, deciding on the validity of law, the sovereign is placed inside the juridical order too. The state of exception is then defined as a situation of indistinction, between inside and outside, serving to include what is excluded. Hence it is a form of exclusion, but not in the sense of an absolute lack of relation to the rule; “the rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it” (Agamben, 1995, 19).

How then, does the notion of bare life relate to the state of exception? In a realized state of exception, which is outside the juridical order, the sovereign is granted the arbitrary power of “decision over life”, that is, deciding on who can be killed, yet not sacrificed. The counterpart to the principle of every individual’s sovereignty of his or her own existence, is thus the sovereign’s power to determine a threshold beyond which life is deprived of its juridical value – a limit that allows the killing of the homo sacer (ibid, 140). This limit is set independently of the normal legal order, why Agamben rejects prison as a state of exception. The prison is inside the juridical order, whereas concentration camps are not; homicide committed in concentration camps renders its executors unpunishable, since the lives of the victims have been placed beyond this threshold, decided on by the same executive authority (ibid, 139-141). Keeping with the subject matter, one should henceforth keep in mind Agamben’s notion of biopower applying to nearly every domain, even prison, as prison does not count as a state of exception.

Moreover, the accuracy of Agamben’s argument depends on the type of power being exercised in reality: if one sees not the killing of bodies, but rather the torturing of bodies, does this indicate a cease in the applicability of the sovereign power logic? In other words, are Foucault and Agamben right that the sovereign’s right to take life is being replaced with some other power logic? Both Agamben and Foucault suggest that the use of violence in prison is subjugated to the biopolitical aim to foster, and disallow, life, in a word: biopower.

The biopower logic allows, although its ambition to foster the life of populations, or perhaps exactly because of it, the sovereign to kill. What legitimizes the killing of a few is, in short, the survival of the majority. One can illustrate with an example from the “war on terror”; if

the sovereign logic had been entirely ruled out by a biopower logic, it should be regarded legitimate to kill those who pose a risk – “a biological danger” – to society as a whole, in order to decrease the risk for similar deeds being committed in the future. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1980), the shift toward a new power logic is portrayed mainly as an attempt to rectify a legitimacy shortage for capital punishment, as the use of death penalty decreased. To sustain legitimacy, the administrative function of state power shifted its focus from the severity of the crime, to the “monstrosity of the criminal” (Foucault, 1980, 139). What Agamben explains as legitimate killing, that is, the sovereign power to take bare life, should not be confused with Foucault’s proposal that in order to go on living, one has to be capable of killing. These two logics are rather each others’ opposites, as they invoke incompatible conceptions of power, or, if not incompatible, intersect precisely in the exercise of penal violence.

#### 2.2.4. *Useful bodies*

Let us return to the notion of prisoners as “bodies of knowledge”, from which information is extracted. Torture must not necessarily be theorized as an attempt of making the sovereign present within the victim’s body via the victim’s loss of voice (Scarry, 35). Such an articulation builds upon the logic of sovereign power, whereas from a biopower perspective, torture helps to gain information without which the state pictures itself as more vulnerable to further crime, than with it. The bodies upon which torture is inflicted, are thus “produced” by the use of violence. Whether or not the torture victim in reality holds information crucial for the state’s crime prevention is not the dilemma that directs the behaviour of the torturer (ibid, 36).

Lauren B. Wilcox notes, in her recent work on political violence in the prison setting, that the irreversible step from torturing to killing, is not being taken. If the biopower logic is fully applicable in prison, as suggested by Agamben, how come killing is not authorized? Precisely because the prisoners must speak (Wilcox, 2015, 59). The exercise of violence produces dangerous, or *useful*, bodies. Interestingly, the term “useful” indicates a certain subjectivity, ascribing to the victim a knowledge-producing role, although simultaneously stripping him or her of that same subjectivity, by the ultimate displacement into – returning to Scarry’s

topology – a world of pain. Biopower alone is thus insufficient for explaining torture in prison; the preservation of life, despite the strategic deprivation of life, intricately situates the treatment of prisoners in a tension between sovereign power and biopower (ibid, 58). We have now arrived at the nexus of power logics: biopower has imposed a limit on the unlimited sovereign power, that is, the power to kill.

#### *2.2.5. Sovereign power – biopolitical techniques?*

Concerning the hypothetical question of how to interpret a parallel decrease of death and increase of torture in the prison setting, in relation to what type of power is being exercised, we are arriving at a possible answer. Torture makes present the sovereign within the bodies of prisoners, if we are to believe Scarry, through the deprivation of subjectivity via the intense pain eliminating language. These same bodies, upon which violence is exercised, do not pre-exist the subjectivity ascribed to them by the mere torture, if we are to believe Judith Butler (to whom I will return), and Wilcox. Rather, the bodies are produced by violence, and made useful, by the assumption that they hold certain knowledge that can be extracted and that the sovereign needs. According to such an assumption, torture should be seen as a mechanism of biopower, aiming to foster the life of populations. But, as noted earlier, this is not exactly what an unlimited use of biopower would result in. Biopower rather allows the killing of some, to secure the majority. Could it possibly be, then, that the shift toward biopower is not as apparent as Foucault and Agamben argue? I suggest that is the case. The unwillingness to kill, despite the willingness to inflict physical pain, rather demonstrates the limit that biopower imposes on sovereign power: a limit constituted by death. Such a notion upends the conception of the sovereign's power to construct the subjects who can be killed, in other words, distinguishing between bare life and qualified life. In Lauren B. Wilcox' words, torture can be seen as "a practice of sovereign power, exercised through biopolitical techniques" (Wilcox, 2015, 55).

#### *2.2.6. A discourse of security*

The refusal to kill resembles the refusal of allowing death, yet such refusals do not correspond to the same logic (Wilcox, 2015, 55). The biopower logic allows for the torturing of prisoners to reinforce its own legitimacy, as it reproduces prisoners as dangerous, although

the potential threat they pose is primarily a consequence of discourse. This can thus be theorized as part of a discourse of security. If the superior goal was for the sovereign to secure either its state borders, or the survival of the population living within these borders, such a discourse of security would stand rather unchallenged – intentionally killing prisoners would remain illegitimate, due to the limit imposed by biopower. However, letting prisoners die, out of free will, should not be prohibited, according to such a logic.

## 2.3. Hunger striking

The hunger striker, who has previously endured torture, challenges the liberal conception of the subject as a self-preserving, rather non-relational unit. Within the field of discourse analysis however, adjacent manners of theorizing pain reveal a certain relationality embedded in the act of hunger striking. This is formulated either as a performative act aiming at recognition (Butler, 2004, 131), or as a visual spectacle of nonconformity, that without the use of language serves to communicate a message of resistance to a pre-existing audience (Fierke, 2013, 71).

### 2.3.1. *Communication as recognition*

In *Undoing Gender* (2004) Judith Butler defines recognition as “a process that is engaged when subject and Other understand themselves to be reflected in one another, but where this reflection does not result in the collapse of one into the Other” (Butler, 2004, 131). This requires the Other to be separate from oneself, yet constructed psychically in ways that lay a common ground for identification. Communication between subject and Other constitutes both the vehicle for recognition, and the recognition itself. As such, recognition shall not be interpreted as an act that can be performed, before a fixed audience, but rather as a phenomenon taking place within communication, which is in Butler’s words “primarily but not exclusively verbal”. Engaging in this communication, subjects transform by virtue of communicating. Hunger strikers can thus be said to produce their audience through invoking a reversed impression of pain, by repositioning an imagined pain in the body of the Other. Thereby the *idea* of a collective that deserves recognition is invoked. From this perspective, the ambient gaze plays a significant role in the striking collective’s process of becoming.

This theorizing provides a possible understanding of the productive capacity of the body, and in particular the body in pain, allowing hunger striking to be viewed as communication. The thinking of self-directed violence as inscribed with productive power, provides a valuable contrast to biopower which, applied in the prison setting, primarily focuses on power as constraining bodies (Wilcox, 2015, 70).

### *2.3.2. Warden's dilemma and nonconformity to the rule*

Karin Fierke, author of *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations*, reasons slightly different on the notion of agency and productive power. Regarding the social, cultural and religious context in which rational choice is embedded, her argument goes that prisoners who engage in hunger striking act within a “warden’s dilemma”: a model attempted to illustrate the relation between self-interest and self-sacrifice. For prisoners, whose individual sovereignty is incisively circumscribed, the choice structure in which they are situated is limited: what remains of agency or autonomy is formulated as a “refusal to conform to the rules of the dominant game.” (Fierke, 2013, 66). To conform, or not conform, to the rules constituting the structure within prison, thus rests on an asymmetrical power relationship, which has four components: compulsory, institutional, structural and productive power (ibid, 68). Conforming to the rules contributes to the constant reproduction of structural power through the roles of dominance and subjugation, whereas productive power relates to the diffuse processes of discourse. Within such processes take place contestations over identity and agency; through nonconformity to the rule, the act of hunger striking challenges the productive power of the dominant game. Simultaneously, the act brings about an alternative set of identities.

Prisoners are according to Fierke expected to adapt their behaviour to the rules established by the prison regime (Fierke, 2013, 70). However, she discriminates between three options for how to behave: first, one can accept one’s role as a criminal, and conform to the rules, perhaps hoping for an early release; second, one can take part in a prison riot, or in other ways use violence to resist what one sees as unjust prison conditions; and third, one can deny

one's role by refusing the rules.<sup>2</sup> These paths stipulate different consequences. The second alternative is likely to reinforce the image of the prisoner as a dangerous criminal, and thereby reinforce the legitimacy of the system which he or she wishes to battle. The third alternative requires of the prisoner not to fight back, if punished by the prison personnel. Thus, the decision of refusing to conform to the rule might cause the prisoner harm, but demonstrates that in hierarchical relations physical strength is not always the best way of exercising power (ibid, 71).

Nonconformity triggers a series of decisions by both prisoner and prison authority, resulting in an interaction process, in which the prisoner cannot deviate from his or her initial stance. The culmination of this process is reached when the only non-cooperative move left, is to refuse food. At this point, the goal of the non-conformity is presented as of higher value than the cost of one's life.

## 2.4. Force-feeding

### 2.4.1. *Reconstructing subjectivity*

Having approached the issue of prisoner agency from a few different angles, we now face the phenomenon of force-feeding, the third component of the three-part-process identified in the prison setting. Emanating from the interaction process suggested by Fierke, culminating when the prisoner refuses food, we return to the tendency of refusing to allow death. In this section I will also return to the medical discourse, contributing to legitimize the practice itself, and corresponding to the production of *docile bodies*.

In the presence of force-feeding, the attempt to reenact one's individual sovereignty is disrupted. Empirically, the matter of controversy between medical ethicists and state officials consists in the former alleging that force-feeding violates the principle of informed consent, and the latter claiming that it is a state responsibility to ensure human life (Oguz & Miles, 2005). Whatever the argument for defending the practice, the fact that it is directed at, or produces, a kind of subject quite different from the tortured subject persists.

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<sup>2</sup> Fierke uses the example of political prisoners refusing to wear prison uniforms, since such uniforms is a symbol of "the criminal", a category whose status is distinct from the political prisoner's.

#### 2.4.2. *Docile bodies or bare life?*

Butler theorizes force-feeding as having performative effects, in the sense that it produces incompetent political subjects, subjects that must be managed. Through the production of subjects who are outside rationality, the force-feeding can thus be upheld and further legitimized (Butler, 2004). As opposed to the useful bodies produced by torture, which presuppose and reinforce prisoners' dangerousity, force-feeding produce dependent, or docile, bodies (Wilcox, 2015, 79).

The concept of docility appears frequently also in *Discipline and Punish*; in Foucault's words a docile body is a body that can be "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1975, 136). Primarily concerned with the disciplining of bodies, in terms of their political obedience and economic utility, Foucault fails to recognize its inevitable attachment to gender. Force-feeding, as far as it qualifies as an exercise of disciplinary power, is namely argued to be a gendered type of violence, because the dependency it locates in the subject, in turn puts him or her in a feminized category. Torture and force-feeding can therefore be said to appear as each others' opposites in terms of the discourses by which they operate; a security discourse produces masculinized, dangerous bodies, whereas a medical discourse produces feminized, dependent bodies (ibid, 52). As the process of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding proceeds, I argue that the prisoners' political subjectivity is reconstructed, rather than destructed, by discourse and the use of violence.

Returning to the terminology established when theorizing torture, force-feeding also invokes the articulation of bare life. The question to ask oneself is upon what kind of subject force-feeding can be considered legitimate (aside from the docile body asserted above), or possibly, what the act of force-feeding tells us about the person upon which it is used? Although introducing coercive medical treatment does not follow the logic of deciding on who can be killed and yet not sacrificed, it is a matter of decision over life. The coercive aspect indicates the hunger strikers' deprivation of juridical value, which demonstrates on which side of Agamben's threshold they are located. Put like this, one can discern a pattern of fluctuations around the bare life/qualified life dichotomy throughout the whole process of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding, although such a pattern might result in aggravating

simplifications. The point where prisoners hold the largest amount of agency, likewise not resembling the *homines sacri* (plural form of *homo sacer*), seem to be during a far-reaching hunger strike. Regardless of what reasoning we find the most appealing for understanding prisoner subjectivity connected to the use of violence, the non-intervened hunger strike is the act that enables reenactment of individual autonomy, serves as communication, and challenges the dominant game in the prison setting (that is, challenges rather than reproduces the structural hierarchies). These do all signify a withdrawal from the status as *homo sacer*; however one must remember that hunger striking in itself can be considered a violent practice, which leads to the question of what this increase of status really implies, as it simultaneously destructs life.

### 3. Method

#### *3.1. Methodological premise and ambition: CDA or discourse theory?*

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is critical in the sense that it aims not only to uncover the ways in which discourse contributes to the reproduction of unequal power relations, but also to reduce those inequalities. Thus it does not supply for a value neutral analysis. It sheds light on the discursive-linguistic dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity, and sees, unlike other types of discourse analysis, discourse as both constituted by and constitutive of social practices (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 55). It does, though, distinguish between discursive and non-discursive aspects in analyzing the social world. On that note, *discourse theory* makes a different claim, and goes as far as to view social phenomena as discursive (ibid, 27). Its wide-reaching empirical application possibilities thus enables violence in the prison setting to qualify as practice-as-discourse. The task at hand is thus the uncovering of competing discourses in which torture, hunger striking and force-feeding are embedded.

How then, shall we uncover the discourses whose presence we theoretically assume in each prison setting? Previous research has, as argued throughout the thesis, interpreted the process of torture proceeding to force-feeding as a security discourse being replaced by a medical discourse. In order to estimate their validity in the case of the Turkish prison death fast, the



work began inductively. The material likewise has been thoroughly analysed for its validity, as the suggested discourses appeared quite clear in it.

I do not claim that the two discourses observed in the thesis provide for a perfect discursive coverage of any prison setting, but I do assert, with regards to case specific determinants, that they make visible an important conflict between medical ethicists and governments making punitive decisions. Even more crucially, the two discourses together contribute to the scientific rearticulation of the prison setting, hitherto leaving the human body comparatively undertheorized. These two notions render the thesis contemporary relevant, and extend its application to other contexts in which the process of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding can be identified.

### *3.2. Material*

A couple of factors guided the selection of material: the time period during which the events occurred, the limited space for an empirical analysis in the thesis, and the supply of available material written in English. In addition the time span for researching was restricted by the time consuming project of setting up a theoretical framework, with which I started.

Reading previous research articles in the field, in order to better understand the ontological and epistemological starting points, I went through the lists of sources used there. Among these, Human Rights Watch (HRW) appeared to be a dominating source, thus I chose to take that as an indication of its suitability for my thesis. Said articles were retrieved from international academic journals, dealing with medical ethics, cultural studies and sociology. They served mainly as a foundation that at times also helped legitimize my own interpretations of news material, since this type of analysis requires a considerable amount of “reading between the lines”.

The news articles were in turn collected from the HRW, as said, and from BBC, both providing information published close in time to violent interventions and the deaths of hunger strikers. The time period chosen was from the December 19, 2000 (when Operation Return to Life began) until the end of 2003, for pragmatic reasons. Although the last hunger

strikers declared they would stop as late as in 2007, it culminated during the first years, in terms of the number of strikers and the attention in the media.<sup>3</sup> Since the end of the death fast does not constitute an event of violence, corresponding to the theoretical framework, it has not been examined in the thesis.

In addition, the thesis depends on the following legal documents: the Turkish Law No. 3713 of 1991, Law to Fight Terrorism; the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the World Medical Association Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers. Reading the legal documents outlined the conventional understanding of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding, necessary in order to understand the ways in which political actions contravene international values and, thereafter, their discursive meaning.

A report authored by Silvia Casale, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), after two fact finding visits to Turkish prisons in 2000 and 2001, was read in depth and provided for in detail information of its conditions. It also contained a translated response from the Turkish government, submitted in November 2001, whose reliability is assured by the appearance of the same information in the 2001 Human Rights Report of Turkey, published by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT) in 2003. These two reports, and a third one, co-authored by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), all deal with the treatment of prisoners from a Human Rights perspective, perhaps seeming to streamline the analysis. However, studies inspired by CDA do not claim to be politically neutral. The ambition is rather to make structural inequalities visible, in order to reduce them (Jorgensen & Phillips, 58). Nonetheless, the issue of reliability should be addressed; I cannot guarantee that my selection of material provides for the most exhaustive and nuanced analysis. Throughout the analysis linguistic carefulness must therefore disallow for interpretations to be read as truths.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Wikipedia on F-Type Prisons. Unfortunately I have not been able to find sources confirming this fact. Human Rights organizations to this day report on hunger strikes in Turkish prisons. This should not undermine the analysis of the period during which the occurrence of the death fast is confirmed.

### 3.3. *Analytical strategy*

In the following part, I have made an attempt to gather the main characteristics of each discourse. The set-up is in part constructed deductively, since it is inspired by Wilcox' analysis of Guantanamo Bay, in which she does not explicitly construct a similar formula but do interpretations that resemble the ones I do here. It is also constructed inductively, since I went through parts of the empirical material in order to find relevant characteristics. The idea is that in order to find, and uncover, the expected discourses, the empirical material will be read *through* these stylized constructions; the indicators listed below are focal points, the assumed discovering of which will guide my current interpretation. The "physical acts" below mean acts that state or prison officials execute and that reportedly damage prisoners' health, may it be physically or psychologically. Thus prisoner to prisoner-harm do not count as discursive indicators here, although accordingly being part of a discourse in itself, an internal discourse between prisoners. The "verbal indicators" mean motivations, explicit statements made by state officials, in order to defend a certain practice or conversely, neglect its occurrence.

#### 3.3.1. *A discourse of security*

**Physical act:** Prisoners are held in isolation.

**Verbal indicator:** Isolation is motivated in terms of security. The prisoners

- (a) must be protected from each others' violence,
- (b) have too much influence over their incarceration,
- (c) encourage each other to maintain criminal behaviour after their release.

**Physical act:** Prisoners are subjected to torture.

**Verbal indicator:** Torture is motivated in terms of security: the torture victims

- (a) must confess,
- (b) threat or hurt the prison authorities.

**Verbal indicator:** The use of torture is denied by prison or state officials.

**Verbal indicator:** The use of torture is defended according to necessity and proportionality principles.

### 3.3.2. *A medical discourse*

**Physical act:** Force-feeding is used on hunger striking prisoners.

**Verbal indicator:** Force-feeding is motivated in medical terms:

- (a) the prisoners' right to life must be ensured,
- (b) hunger strikers cannot decide for themselves/are irrational,
- (c) it is a health care concern, thus a state responsibility.

**Further indicators:** State and/or prison officials

- refuse to seek a solution with the hunger strikers before turning to force-feeding,
- deny impartial medical experts.

Rather than corresponding to these formula in turn, the empirical analysis must be written freely, following the chronology by which events appear to occur. The formula constitutes a guide, a spine to which interpretations will be more or less closely attached.

## 4. Empirical analysis

In October 2000, prisoners held under the Turkish Law to Fight Terrorism coordinated a hunger strike campaign, in 20 prisons across the country (Casale, 2001). Initially, the numerous strike engaged over 1,000 prisoners in total (Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001). Protesting not only against the conditions of their detention in general, the strikers' primary objective was a penal reform intended to introduce a new kind of high-security prison model: the F-Type prison (Casale, 2001). The F-Type prisons differed from Turkey's previous facilities in the separation of prisoners into one or three-person cells, compared to the dormitory-style system which had been in practice since the birth of the Turkish Republic, allowing for up to 60 prisoners to inhabit the same ward (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

Worth noting is that through this penal reform, Turkey adopted a European/US prison design, not least interesting with regards to Turkey's steps toward a EU-membership during the 1990s (Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001; Anderson, 2004). The World Organization Against Torture though called into question Turkey's combination of solitary confinement and the

climate of impunity<sup>4</sup>, fearing an increase of torture and maltreatment (Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001). Interviews held with prisoners reveal a similar fear (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001), whereas some prison officials claim that prisoners were more vulnerable in the ward system due to violence acted out between inmates. The Turkish Medical Association (TMA) opposed the new cell system on the note that its isolatory nature in itself constituted a degrading premise, having adverse psychological consequences, regardless of the prevalence of physical torture (Oguz & Miles, 2005).

In the beginning of December 2000 the Turkish Government invited a mission from the CPT in order to reach a solution for how to end the hunger strikes (Casale, 2001). The visit, aiming not to negotiate but to mediate from an impartial, international perspective, began on December 10, and was interrupted on the 16th. Only three days later, on December 19, a violent operation took place by which approximately 1,000 prisoners were transferred to three F-Type prison establishments: the Edirne, Kocaeli and Sincan prisons. The so called Operation “Return to Life” was performed by 10,000 members of the security forces<sup>5</sup> who intervened simultaneously in 20 prisons (HRFT, 2003). The CPT delegation stated that, in relation to the security threats posed by the hunger striking prisoners, the force with which the intervention was executed aggrieved the principles of necessity and proportionality, establishing law enforcement officials’ use of force legitimate only to the extent to which it is required to perform their duty (the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (article 3); Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (rule 50); the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials).

Counterintuitively, one might suggest, Operation Return to Life, lasting until December 22, rendered the deaths of 30 persons (HRW, 2001). The autopsy report presented to the CPT delegation in the aftermath of the operation, states that ten people’s deaths were caused by gunshot wounds, whereas one died from skull and base bone fractures (ibid, 18). The variety of violent methods, and death causes, makes the uncovering of discourses difficult, as a

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<sup>4</sup> According to Amnesty International the climate of impunity is underpinned by practices such as blind-folding of torture victims, making identification of torturers difficult (Amnesty International, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The term security forces allude to the military, gendarmerie, police and anti-riot units, all employed by the state. They are responsible for violent interventions on public demonstrations and political meetings throughout the 1990s, with the intention to restrict legal activities (HRFT, 2003).

gunshot immediately killing a prisoner means something else than the suffering caused by beating him or her. However detailed examinations of medical files revealed, according to the CPT, that a majority of injuries resembled those from beatings, and that meetings with transferred prisoners confirmed the consistency between their visible injuries and their allegations of security force maltreatment (ibid).

How then, are we to regard the violence inflicted on prisoners' bodies during the transfer to F-Type prisons, taking place between December 19 and 22, in terms of the types of power being at play? First of all, we might be interested in the fact that Operation Return to Life – which does qualify as acts of torture according to the definition set up in the UN Declaration against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – occurred during the death fast, rather than caused its outbreak. This inverts the proposed order of the stages in the three-part-process established earlier in the thesis. Rather than observing a high degree of sovereign power during a period of torture, abating as the hunger strikers perform their subjectivity along the way of achieving it; reclaiming personal autonomy while simultaneously dissolving into a common identity – we observe a sovereign aggression *against* this performance. Surely though, Operation Return to Life was not the first violent action performed by Turkish security forces; both Turkish and international Human Rights organizations are aware of the long standing use of torture and ill-treatment in Turkish prisons (HRFT, 2003). Reportedly though, the conduct of violent actions by security forces is a common feature also elsewhere in the Turkish society.<sup>6</sup>

Keeping in mind the “violence as usual” exercised by security forces, Operation Return to Life invokes an intersection between sovereign power and biopower, somehow contravening Lauren B. Wilcox' suggestion on death constituting the limit of sovereign power. The fact that the security forces reacted with extreme violence to the “passive” or “peaceful” protests performed by hunger strikers, uncovers the distinct logics by which they operate.<sup>7</sup> Operation

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<sup>6</sup> At the time, an intolerant rhetoric within government level discussions resulted in formula that constituted for oppressing strategies against ethnic, religious and political groups belonging to the opposition. Security forces repeatedly conducted violence in order to restrict legal activities of these groups (HRFT, 2003). Although not necessarily being cases of torture, this demonstrates the use of violence as repression, upon the bodies of dissidents.

<sup>7</sup> Quotation marks are used to clarify that hunger striking can well be theorized as a form of self-directed violence.

Return to Life can be seen as having contributed to reinforcing the self-image of the state as powerful, in terms of physical force, but useless for ending the hunger strike. On April 16, 2001, the Counselor of the Ministry of Health declared that 222 prisoners remained on death fast, whereas 569 were on hunger strike (Oguz & Miles, 2005). Karin Fierke's observation of physical strength not always being the best way to exercise power, thus seems applicable here. Although the killing of 30 people during the operation can be read as the sovereign executing its right to take life, hunger strikers' progression indicate its indecisive capacity of determining power relations and the subjects within it.

Corresponding to the theoretical framework, I interpret the operation as to show that the political prisoners held under the Law to Fight Terrorism were located beyond the threshold which reduced their lives to the materiality of their bodies, that is, to bare life, rendering their killings unpunishable. This requires an extension of Agamben's state of exception, since it originally does not cover prisons and other institutions inside the juridical order (Agamben, 140). In general one should engage with such concept modifications very cautiously. In this case though, one could argue that the diversification of prisoners into different categories, which allows for persons to be deemed as terrorists without actually having committed a terror crime (Law No. 3713, 1991), somehow place suspects in an ambiguous state outside the "normal". The deadly violence used during the Operation Return to Life, and the impunity of torturers (Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001; Amnesty International, 2001) can subsequently be theorized precisely as an expression for the sovereign's arbitrary power of "decision over life". Additionally, admitting the state of exception is spatiotemporally unlocalizable, Agamben should not be too reluctant to a reformulation like this.

If the biopolitical logic held sway, the superior ambition of preserving the life of populations would render legitimate the intentional deaths of a few, seemingly dangerous persons. One can be tempted to explain Operation Return to Life in such terms. Such a claim, though, immediately raises the question of why one would kill death fasters, whose spelled out ambition was to starve themselves to death? Could they not, according to the biopower logic above, be allowed to die out of free will – would it not even lie in the interest of decision makers, trying to prevent future events of terror? Apparently, this reasoning is insufficient. What we can see, rather, is death lying at core, but that the meaning of allowing someone to

die out of free will is distinct from the meaning of intentionally killing that person, in terms of power. Killing a hunger striker, who will eventually die from his or her fasting, is to demonstrate the sovereign power to take life. The conversed order of events can be interpreted as an attempt to rob the strikers of their reenacted subjectivity through the infliction of immense pain. However, if the goal of inflicting pain was to gain information (as is required in the definition in the UN Convention against Torture), the force of the sovereign logic undermined itself in the moment of death, I argue; the prisoner could no longer be made to speak the voice of the sovereign, that is, be *useful*, and thereby amplify the sovereign's "verbal" power. As the torturer inflicts pain upon the prisoner's body, his power grows since his absence of pain and the prisoner's presence of pain occur simultaneously, and the voice with which the victim is requested to speak reaches its auditive climax at a certain point of maximum physical suffering. But this voice-as-power reasoning means that in the event of death, by taking the irreversible step from inflicting pain to killing, the security forces cut off a part of the state's maximum capacity. What we expected to see, setting up the theoretical framework, was the sovereign reconstructing hunger strikers' subjectivity by making their bodies docile and legible, shaping a medical discourse, rather than clinging onto their assumed danger.

The term "death fast" means consuming only water, salt, sugar and vitamin B1, and explicitly committing to fast to death unless demands are met (Oguz & Miles, 2005; Howland, 2013). The death fasters across Turkey, among whom political prisoners constituted a great majority, protested not only against the construction of F-Type prisons as constituted in its Article 16, but also against other parts of the Law to Fight Terrorism, enacted in 1991 (HRFT, 2003, 5). The law had allowed for and led up to widespread arrests of persons who based on their religious, ethnic or racial affiliation were subject to partial suspicion for terrorism (Anderson, 2004; Howland, 2013). One can possibly discern here a productive pattern of certain bodies, using Butler's topology, by which the legal framework constituted a part of a discourse of security. Its presence of course appears more clearly when one observes the admittedly high prevalence of torture in Turkish prisons, which has been subjected to international attention, particularly since the enactment of the 1987 European Convention for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Casale, 2001). Only in 2001, starting with the December 19 outburst, 643 torture cases occurred (HRFT, 2003, 113). In a



response to the CPT (2001), the Turkish government though denied the allegations of the occurrence of torture. Predominantly, the approach appears to have been one of neglect through blame. The government claimed that prisoners themselves were responsible for the injuries observed by the CPT mission, and explained it as a result of the competitive environment between illegal organizations and the hierarchical pecking order within them:

“Experience in dormitory-system prisons has shown that members of terrorist organisations who confess to their offences, give information about their organisation or fail to observe the organisation’s discipline during police interrogation or during trial are interrogated under torture by their organisations, killed or forced into acts such as hunger strikes.” (Casale, 2001).

Of course, one can never see on the shape of a bruise who beated, on the severity of a burn who started a fire. I mean, one cannot completely refuse the possible validity of the claim above, or similar claims about internal hierarchies within prison, undermining the efficiency of corrective treatment. What one should consider though, are the motives behind such claims. An appealing interpretation is that the state experienced a lack of control, a lack of disciplinary power, that did not conform to the high degree of sovereign power embedded in the sometimes arbitrary incentives for holding prisoners under the Law to Fight Terrorism.

According to the Human Rights Watch, the dormitory-style prisons did indeed leave the discipline in the hands of prisoners (HRW, 2000). This reveals an interesting linkage between the logics of sovereign and disciplinary power: maintaining sovereign power required disciplinary mechanisms by which sovereign power could be practiced in reality, here in the shape of an isolation regime. Therefore the veracity of the Turkish government’s claim that prisoners torture each other, is of less importance here, than the fact that such an accusation in itself becomes a means in the legitimization of the F-Type prisons, and equally part of the discourse of security.

As noted earlier, if the violent methods used to transfer prisoners into F-Type facilities were intended to put an end to the death fasts, it failed. Many prisoners remained on hunger strike after the operation took place, now in the new facilities (Casale, 2001). I am tempted to

suggest though, that what the failure really consisted in, was an underestimation of productive power within the act of hunger striking. Continuing to fast, despite the pain inflicted during the transfer, and the fear of painful implications of deviating from the expected behaviour, can be read as a serious attempt to bring about contestation over identity (Fierke, 2013).

The identity ascribed to prisoners held under the Law to Fight Terrorism not only uncovers the asymmetrical relations of structural power between prisoner and ward, nor produce prisoners' bodies as dangerous, but associates danger with different aspects of "un-Turkishness" (Howland, 2013), thus reproducing patterns of prejudice legally inscribed in punitive decisions. Examining Operation Return to Life as a somewhat illogical move for strengthening common faith in the Turkish prison system, the widespread death fasts can be analyzed as having disrupted the order of the dominant game in Turkish prisons – not only as it aroused military aggression, but also in its ability to extend its magnitude (Howland, 2013). This indicates a communicative nature of hunger striking, the understanding of which requires attention to a unique feature of the Turkish death fasts in the early 2000s: its capacity to reach across prisons and beyond prison walls (Anderson, 2004; Howland, 2013).

The fact that families, community members and human rights activists joined the death fast, raises the concern of recognition with an Other – not as the attempt to evoke emotion in a fixed, pre-existing audience, but as constructed within the communicative act (Butler, 2004). Considering the Istanbul "resistance houses" in which relatives and community members organized hunger strikes in support of the prisoners (Mügge, 2010, 117), it appears as if the prisoners succeeded to invoke the idea of themselves as a collective deserving to be recognized.<sup>8</sup> The death fasters were supported also by TAYAD, the Association for the Support of the Families of Prisoners, an anti-government NGO reporting on prisoner abuse, founded in 1986 (ibid). This speaks in favor of Butler's suggestion of a common psychical construction that makes communication possible. However, one faces the question of what

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<sup>8</sup> According to the OMCT, police broke into private resistance houses in November 2001, using lethal weapons, throwing gas bombs, and using tear gas. Four people died during the intervention, another ten were seriously injured and many were arrested (OMCT, 2001). This I interpret as to confirm the power of hunger striking's communicative nature. No longer being a prison phenomenon only, the resistance house-intervention can be seen as to express an extended aim of disciplining bodies.

the communication consists of. According to Butler communication is primarily a verbal act, yet hunger striking has a non-auditive nature. I suggest that this stresses the idea of the body as textualized, so that the loudness of hunger striking lies within the bodies engaging in it, that communication takes place within the very performance.<sup>9</sup> Regarding the *in prison* engagement across the country, Patrick Anderson notes in his work on embodiment as resistance, that the ability to coordinate the hunger strikes despite being held in isolation, resymbolizes the meaning of the isolation regime. Surely constituting a physical boundary, the prison walls became a line of affiliation rather than a block to it (Anderson, 2004, 819). The physical separation of bodies seems insufficient for limiting their communication, rather exactly this makes visible the communicative, still non-verbal, power embedded in the act of hunger striking; the language of resisting, of doing nothing, written by and upon the body, shared by everyone participating in the hunger strike but impossible for the state to translate.

Due to the limited scope, I will now have to leave the matter of bodies' quiet communication, and turn to the attempts to disrupt that communication. As we have already seen, the security forces' violence has at times been deadly, intentionally or not. In order to pursue the chronology of the torture, hunger strike and force-feeding process, and explore further the interplay between disciplinary power, sovereign power and biopower, I will now approach the act of dying from hunger striking.

On March 21, 2001 the first death of a hunger striker occurred (HRW, 2001). By that time a majority of strikers were physically weak, many on the verge of death (BBC, 2001), but sources assessed that the strikers showed no sign of ending the fast. Neither did the Turkish government take steps toward a solution with the strikers, despite pressure from Human Rights organizations (BBC, 2001; Le Pennec & Eberhardt, 2001). In total, approximately 100 prisoners are reported to have died from the hunger striking, making it one of the most deadly prison hunger strikes ever conducted (Casale, 2001; Anderson, 2004; Howland, 2013). However, this notion should not be considered to contradict the disallowance of death. Guided by the fundamental principle of the right to life, at least explicitly presented as so,

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<sup>9</sup> As it is not the task of this thesis, I will not explore the notion of textuality further than defining it as a linguistic materialist term, suggesting that the embodied is textual and vice versa. Surely though it could make important contributions by paying even more attention to embodiment in the field of international politics.

Turkish authorities forwarded two directives from the Ministry of Health in April 2001, both indicating that the treatment of hunger striking prisoners should build upon a doctor/patient relationship (Casale, 2001). This use of language locates hunger strikers within a medical discourse, or, perhaps more adequate, inscribes the power by which they are produced with a medical meaning. In itself, the ambition appears rather unproblematic. But the methods corresponding to this model have been controversial, severely violating the guidelines of the Declaration of Malta, adopted by the World Medical Association in 1991, in order to guarantee the security of hunger strikers (WMA, 2017). Rather than seeking solutions via deliberation, with prison representatives and national and international Human Rights organizations, the Ministry of Health repeatedly turned to artificial feeding (Le Penne & Eberhardt, 2001; Howland, 2013). The establishment of a medical discourse via the patient/doctor relationship accordingly contributed to the reconstruction of prisoner subjectivity, disrespecting the key concept of individual autonomy, in the Declaration of Malta stating that “Hunger strikers should not forcibly be given treatment they refuse. Applying, instructing or assisting forced feeding contrary to an informed and voluntary refusal is unjustifiable.” (WMA, 2017).

Nonetheless, the facts above are matters of legality, or ethics, or the intricate entwinement of them two, not to be confused with the power of discourse somewhat existing regardless of whose arguments are morally or legally superior. What persists is the fact that the Turkish government’s defence of force-feeding, as a response to the productive power embedded in the performative act of hunger striking, certainly expresses an unwillingness of letting prisoners die. Are we possibly returning to the concern of the different meanings of death, the differences between killing and letting die? As reasoned earlier, the killings related to Operation Return to Life seemed to follow a logic of rather killing than letting die. When examining the use of force-feeding, the logic is another: rather preserving life than letting die. Shining through though, does the sovereign logic underpinning them both. Regardless of the action to be taken, it is to be taken by the Turkish authorities.

Here I would like to dwell for a moment, asking what kind of life the ethically questionable act of force-feeding is concerned with? Prisoners held under Turkey’s Law to Fight Terrorism can in some senses, as discussed earlier, be theorized as *homines sacri*, taking into

account security forces' members not being brought to justice after having killed some of the death fasters, and the arbitrariness with which the categorization of suspects takes place (equating ethnic and religious affiliations with danger etc.). Does the Turkish state's use of force-feeding thus preserve life, while simultaneously reinforcing the distinction between qualified life and bare life? If so, we subsequently face a paradox of power, I suggest, entailing that sovereign power is being exercised in a necessarily biopolitically structured habitat.<sup>10</sup>

Neglecting the legal notion of informed consent when it comes to force-feeding, touches somehow immediately the alleged irrationality of hunger strikers, as it is suggested in the method section above. By simply proposing that hunger strikers cannot decide for themselves, legitimizing force-feeding (an expression of sovereign power) in terms of physical and/or psychological deterioration, hunger striking is deprived of its political value, and hunger strikers of their juridical value. Further, assuming irrationality among hunger striking prisoners is empirically inaccurate; studies show that depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are common diagnoses among them, but not that they for this sake are incapable of making decisions (Oguz & Miles, 2005). Nonetheless, claiming that so was, facilitated a treatment that required legible and docile bodies. Considering this, one arrives not far from regarding the medical doctor/patient relationship as a mere tactic for legitimizing a practice that once again strips hunger strikers of their recently reenacted subjectivity.

I keep coming back to the idea of state officials and hunger striking prisoners engaging in practices which operate by distinct logics, thus limiting each party to convey their message to the opponent. Or, more accurately perhaps, are the messages clear, but the responses constructed according to their own, separate, logics. In quantitative terms, the state, or the sovereign as repeatedly formulated in the thesis, holds the majority of power, the power that can be executed over someone else's body. Needing only the materiality of one's own body

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<sup>10</sup> This interpretation renders a little inconsistent the term power; sovereign power resembles a property that can be possessed by and stolen from actors, whereas biopower appears as an "invisible" force determining life conditions and restricting behaviour, ascribed to rather than possessed by actors. The thesis tries to avoid the former conception, although in this case I argue that the inconsistency is a matter of degree, not kind, and that the collision between sovereign power and biopower illustrates a certain complexity of violence-as-discourse.

to neglect that expression of power, though, the hunger striker reconstructs him- or herself by performing power in a distinct manner, resulting in a number of dichotomies difficult to bridge: passivity versus aggression, silence versus voice, pain versus world and self-directed violence versus external violence. In terms of disciplinary power, one can thus conclude that the possible ambition of not only demonstrating who has the right to decide over life and death, but also *how* this right could be exercised, engenders force-feeding a last resort for state officials who realized what would be the eventual consequences of the death fast, that is, death.

## 5. Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to create an understanding of the power logics underpinning the legitimization and exercise of political violence in Turkish prisons in the early 2000s. It thus took on the task of uncovering discourses, assuming violence to be discursive, and discourse a productive force able to produce what it names. With the human body as its focus, this thesis has drawn attention to operations of power by which states can amplify their legitimacy, and, as discovered along the way, reproduce national stereotypes. By considering bodies as produced, and productive, the thesis has been able to deviate from the dominant reading of violence as exclusively constraining. It asked the question of *how to understand the construction and reconstruction of subjectivity during the death fast, engaging in the uncovering of discourses embedded in the practices of torture, hunger striking and force-feeding?*

The findings throughout the empirical analysis, confirm the accuracy of the interplay between the two suggested discourses, although Operation Return to Life disturbed the expected order of events. This particular event was interpreted as an expression of sovereign power, the use of which appeared to dominate the examined practices of violence in general. The death fasting contributed to the reconstruction of subjectivity, of which the immense infliction of pain stripped prisoners held under the Law to Fight Terrorism, and dissolved thereby the Turkish state's threshold beyond which they were reduced to bare life. Unable to translate the silent communication of death fasters, deciding not to conform to their ascribed identities, the continuation of torture indicated an attempt to reproduce prisoners as dangerous bodies.

However the death fasters' ability to engage participants outside the isolation regime, clearly demonstrates the human body's productive force. The death fasting as a means to bring about an alternative set of identities appeared quite evident, with regards to the prejudiced labeling of political prisoners because of racial, ethnic or religious affiliations. Establishing a doctor/patient relationship for the treatment of death fasting prisoners though indicated a withdrawal from the discourse of security, instead constituting a medical discourse according to which death fasters were considered irrational, and force-feeding considered legitimate.

Unlike Foucault and Agamben, my analysis of the death fast in Turkish prisons indicate that sovereign power persists in prison, although it does not, strictly speaking, qualify as a state of exception. It appears as if the sovereign power, though, is exercised in a biopolitical climate; preserving bare life, after having distinguished between bare life and qualified life, appears to legitimize the ambition of simply disciplining bodies, in order to demonstrate sovereign power.

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