



# EARTHQUAKE EXPOSES CORRUPTION

Transparency Challenges for Turkey



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## Introduction

In the wake of the devastating earthquakes that struck Turkey on February 6th, a series of stories are shedding light on systemic challenges within the construction and urban development sectors. From Kahramanmaraş to Hatay, from Malatya to Adiyaman, these cases have exposed the vulnerabilities of our built environment and underscored the urgent need for accountability.

In Kahramanmaraş, Fazilet Apartment, Ezgi Apartment, Ebrar Site and the Palmiye and Hamidiye Sites have all faced allegations of corruption, resulting in tragic collapses and loss of life. Similarly, in Hatay, the Rende Site and the Rönesans Residence have raised concerns about the integrity of construction practices and regulatory oversight.

Elsewhere, in Malatya, the Kırçuval Hotel, and in Adiyaman, the Isias Hotel have been embroiled in allegations ranging from bribery to document falsification, highlighting broader issues of transparency and ethical governance in industry.

Amidst these challenges, efforts are underway to amplify the voices of the victims and their families, ensuring that their quest for justice is heard and addressed. Only through collective action and a commitment to transparency can we prevent such tragedies and safeguard the well-being of our communities.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this report. Special thanks to Families in Pursuit of Justice<sup>1</sup>, Adem Cantepe and Aykut Basderici for their invaluable insights, support, and dedication throughout this project. Their expertise, experience and collaboration have been instrumental in shaping the outcome of this work.

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1 <https://www.adaletariyoruz.com/>

## Kahramanmaraş

### Fazilet

*The collapse transpired within the initial six seconds of the earthquake, resulting in the loss of 18 adults and 2 children, with 14 adults and 1 baby successfully rescued from the debris.*

The construction of Fazilet Apartment commenced in 1995 under the supervision of contractor M. Oktay HARTEVİ, concluding with the delivery of units to property owners in 2000. This residential complex comprises two blocks, denoted as Block A and Block B, each with seven floors accommodating a total of 28 apartments. Tragically, during the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes on February 6, 2023, at 04:17, a seismic event of magnitude 7.8 caused the collapse of A Block, wherein a bakery, named Akin Fırın, operated underneath. The collapse transpired within the initial six seconds of the earthquake, resulting in the loss of 18 adults and 2 children, with 14 adults and 1 baby successfully rescued from the debris. Conversely, Fazilet B Block endured the earthquake series unscathed, exhibiting no structural compromise despite the significant magnitude fluctuations observed during the ensuing 15-day seismic activity.

Prior to the earthquake, legal disputes concerning Akin Fırın had been ongoing. In 2010, proprietors Akin Yağcı and Feriha Yağcı prevailed in legal battles, absolving Akin Yağcı of wrongdoing. However, in



*Fazilet Block A, before the earthquake*





*Fazilet Block A,  
after the earthquake*

2018, three years preceding the earthquake, the bakery was found guilty of operating without requisite permits for bread production. The court mandated rectification of the building, accompanied by a fine of 16,000 TL. Subsequently, the bakery owner failed to adhere to crucial directives stipulated by the court, including the closure of an unauthorized door, enhancement of insulation between the bakery and the building, isolation of the bakery's chimney, and removal of an awning. Despite these infringements, the bakery persisted in non-compliance, prompting legal actions for re-evaluation.

The list of violations discovered encompassed several critical breaches, notably the absence of permits for the bakery's chimney, modifications to structural integrity beneath supporting beams, attachment of the chimney to a supporting column, unauthorized alterations to building facades, inadequate insulation, and excessive load within the bakery premises.<sup>2</sup> Following the earthquake, evidence presented by victims revealed the bakery's contribution to the collapse, including excessive loads and structural alterations. However, despite the diligent efforts spanning a 13-year legal pursuit, intervention from state institutions remained elusive. Moreover, subsequent court rulings, including a post-earthquake expert report, failed to acknowledge the bakery's association with Block A, further exacerbating the plight of the affected parties.

*"As earthquake victims who lost their loved ones in the Fazilet, we presented evidence through photos and videos indicating that excessive loads from Akın Fırın, totaling 70 to 80 tons, stored in the building's mezzanine were a significant factor in the collapse.*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.adaletariyoruz.com/index.php/k2/item/17-fazilet-apartmani-depremdeneden-yikildi>

*We provided visual proof that the bakery cut walls below beams, attached the chimney to a supporting column, and caused burn marks and structural damage. Despite our 13-year-long legal battle, state institutions failed to intervene, and the correct decision in the recent court ruling was disregarded by the duty judge in the subsequent trial. We also witnessed a post-earthquake expert report falsely stating that the bakery was under Block B, not Block A.*

*After enduring processes of irregularities, injustice, turning a blind eye, backing, non-application of punitive measures, and suspension of enforcement, six months have passed since the earthquake, and I still refrain from calling anyone guilty. The perpetrators are still walking free. If the contractor were guilty, Block B would have at least sustained moderate or severe damage in such short intervals of intense earthquakes. However, Block B showed no cracks or significant damage, yet it was swiftly labeled as severely damaged and demolition commenced urgently, despite no immediate necessity. These actions reinforced the image that urgent measures were taken to swiftly eliminate the damage-free evidence in Block B, which clearly pointed to the bakery's culpability."*

## Ezgi

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The Ezgi Apartment project, initiated in 1996 by the landowner under the supervision of contractor Yakup Aktaş through a profit-sharing arrangement, commenced operations in 1999. Consisting of ten floors, including two shops below, an apartment caretaker's residence, a boiler room, and eight residential floors, the building featured a square layout with walls and a central corridor forming a diagonal separation between apartments. Until 2003, the shops housed a paint company and the contractor's office. Subsequently, a renowned bakery assumed occupancy, prompting the closure of the contractor's office, which was subsequently leased to the bakery. In 2017, renovations commenced in the shop area following an agreement between the bakery and apartment residents for shared use of common areas.

However, concerns and suspicions arose among residents regarding the renovation. The protracted and noisy renovation process and post-renovation observations prompted serious apprehensions among the apartment caretaker and management. Despite efforts to monitor the renovations, the exterior panels obscured visibility, impeding a comprehensive assessment of the work.

*During the February 6, 2023, earthquake at 04:17, the building collapsed towards the bakery within 15 seconds, claiming the lives of 36 individuals.*

In 2021, responding to residents' requests for a switch to natural gas heating, officials from the natural gas company identified significant damage requiring inspection. Photographs of these





*Ezgi Apartment,  
before the earthquake*



*Ezgi Apartment, after the earthquake (TRT HABER)*

damages were captured by the manager, alongside an acquaintance and a construction engineer, and submitted as a complaint to the Directorate of Environment and Urbanization in Kahramanmaraş. In response, the Onikişubat Municipality stated that an inspection had been conducted, refuting claims of damage in the boiler room and citing renovation under the 2018 amnesty law. However, no permit for the renovation was found in municipal archives or elsewhere. The surviving building caretaker, unaware of any municipal inspection post-earthquake, questioned the veracity of such.<sup>3</sup>

During the February 6, 2023, earthquake at 04:17, the building collapsed towards the bakery within 15 seconds, claiming the lives of 36 individuals. Despite the building's robust foundation and relatively new construction, suspicions regarding extensive damage attributable to the business below emerged. The contractor's liability is considered diminished due to architectural discrepancies during construction.

*"As families who lost their loved ones in the Ezgi Apartment, we only seek the punishment of those who are criminally or negligently responsible for the collapse of our building. We expect justice to be served. We have no other expectations or thoughts. We simply want justice to be served so that no more mothers, fathers, children, siblings, friends, or innocent people die in the future. We only seek justice."*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cn0new2kp7eo>

## Palmiye and Hamidiye

In the aftermath of the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş, where thousands lost their lives, public officials have notably evaded accountability in various cases, including emblematic ones like the Isias Hotel, Ezgi Apartment, Sait Bey Apartment, and Ebrar Site, where they were considered “secondarily at fault” in expert reports.

However, a precedent-setting expert report on the collapsed blocks in the Palmiye and Hamidiye sites of Konya Technical University highlighted the direct involvement of municipal officials alongside contractors and engineers as the primary culprits. The report underscored significant deviations from engineering standards, inadequate project approval processes, and substandard construction practices that led to the collapse.

Lawyer Ömer Faruk Tütüncüoğlu, representing victims of the Palmiye site, emphasized issues such as poor-quality materials and inadequate reinforcement, attributing negligence bordering on intent to public officials. He noted a shift in expert assessments, indicating a departure from shielding officials based on political affiliations and vested interests.<sup>4</sup>



*Palmiye, after  
the earthquake (X)*

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c2xyv53glz5o>





*Hamidiye, after the earthquake (TRT HABER)*

In the case of the Hamidiye site, the expert report prepared by Konya Technical University identified the Municipal Building Control Unit, along with the contractor and project author, as primarily responsible. The report highlighted numerous areas for improvement in the project, including a lack of ground studies, inadequate structural elements, and non-compliance with seismic regulations. Municipal officials were faulted for approving a project with errors without demanding revisions.

Lawyer Kübra Kirmacı, representing victims of the Hamidiye site, pointed out that the detained contractor, who held a position as zoning director at the municipality during construction, unlawfully delegated signing authority to his brother. Municipal officials approved the flawed project without proper scrutiny, suggesting a systemic failure to uphold regulatory standards.<sup>5</sup>

The collapse of three blocks in the Palmiye Site resulted in a significant loss of life, underscoring the urgent need for accountability and reforms in building regulation enforcement.

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5 <https://www.mykibris.com/haber/hamidiyede-belediye-gorevliileri-asli-kusurlu-sayildi-avukat-kirmaci-olasi-kasti-isaret-etti-38825>

## Ebrar

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In the wake of the devastating collapse of several buildings within the Ebrar Site in Kahramanmaraş, including Reyyan Apartment, Selam Apartment, and L Block, a thorough examination of court files and expert reports has unveiled a harrowing tale of negligence, regulatory failures, and structural deficiencies that resulted in the loss of 1400 lives on February 6.



*Ebrar, before the earthquake (Halk TV)*

The expert analyses conducted by Karadeniz Technical University meticulously detailed the violations present in these structures, ranging from unauthorized structural modifications to inadequate reinforcement measures. Notably, the Selam Apartment, consisting of 44 units, crumbled under seismic activity, claiming the lives of 83 individuals, including Zahide Şeker's husband and daughters. Similarly, the Reyyan Apartment, initially comprising nine floors, collapsed due to unauthorized additions, leading to the tragic demise of 52 occupants. L Block, where 57 people perished, faced legal action against Tefvik T. and others for negligence in overseeing the building's modifications.<sup>6</sup>

The legal proceedings have exposed a complex web of accountability, with contractors, engineers, and municipal authorities all implicated

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.adaletariyoruz.com/index.php/k2/item/13-ebrrar-sitesi-neden-yikildi>





*Ebrar, after the earthquake (ABC)*

in the oversight failures that allowed these violations to persist unchecked. Defendants have attempted to deflect blame onto each other, with contractors pointing fingers at municipal authorities for inadequate inspections, while officials cited resource constraints to justify their lapses in oversight.

However, amid the legal maneuvering, it is evident that the loss of lives at the Ebrar Site was entirely preventable. Expert reports highlighted significant deficiencies in construction materials and adherence to safety regulations, with substandard concrete quality and insufficient structural design emerging as primary contributors to the collapses. Moreover, the absence of proper enforcement mechanisms and regulatory oversight allowed these violations to persist, ultimately resulting in the catastrophic loss of lives.

As the legal process unfolds and accountability is sought, there is a pressing need for systemic reforms to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Strengthening building regulations, enhancing oversight mechanisms, and holding those responsible for safety violations accountable are crucial steps in ensuring the safety and well-being of the public. Only through concerted efforts and decisive action can we prevent such disasters from occurring again and honor the memory of those who perished in this tragic event.

Furthermore, the examination of debris samples led to a criminal complaint filed in June, revealing troubling connections between

some contractors. The amalgamation of different construction dates and floor counts within the Ebrar Site has complicated the legal process, necessitating individual and collective evaluations. Despite this complexity, the paramount objective remains ensuring accountability and justice for the victims and their families.

*"Ensure justice; this area should never have been zoned for construction. You said it wouldn't be zoned, so why was it? Why did you allow the construction of 11-12 story buildings? I lost my parents in the building that collapsed in the first 10 seconds; I emerged from the rubble 9 hours later. I demand accountability from those who granted zoning permission here. I do not accept the expert report; you will issue an expert report, you must. You must ensure justice because you know this area is a riverbed, a lettuce field. It shouldn't have been zoned, couldn't have been, and you shouldn't have allowed it."*



### **Ebrar, after the earthquake (Families in Pursuit of Justice)**

*"They couldn't even find a single finger of my daughter. They tell me to resign to fate, what should I resign to? This isn't fate; it's human error. The earthquake was anticipated."<sup>7</sup>*

*"In the IRAP organized by AFAD in Kahramanmaraş in 2020, it was clearly stated that the main problem in this area was soil liquefaction, and it was not suitable for settlement. It was also emphasized that this area should undergo urban transformation. However, we were not informed or sanctioned about this issue. 1400 of our people were left to die here knowingly. In addition, our problem is not only with the contractors here. We also have issues with individuals in public institutions and organizations who did not inform us about these matters and did not fulfill their duties with competence. What we really want is justice for our families and for what we have lost."<sup>9</sup>*

7 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/ebrar-sitesi-sakinleri-ve-yakinlari-muze-yerine-adalet-istiyor-goz-gore-gore-olumentekedildiler-2122910>

8 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cmlxpp28jp4o>

9 [https://www.evrensel.net/haber/499670/ebrar-sitesinde-olenlerin-yakinlari-imza-atanlar-vicdaniniz-rahat-mi#google\\_vignette](https://www.evrensel.net/haber/499670/ebrar-sitesinde-olenlerin-yakinlari-imza-atanlar-vicdaniniz-rahat-mi#google_vignette)



## Hatay

### Rende



*Rende, before the earthquake (Sözcü)*

The seismic events in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, wrought significant devastation across ten provinces, including Hatay's Antakya region. Among the affected properties was the Farklı Yaşam Rende Site, comprising four blocks, wherein blocks A and B succumbed to collapse during the earthquakes. Tragically, this catastrophe resulted in the loss of 105 lives, while 27 individuals were successfully extricated from the debris.

Regrettably, approximately ten individuals remain unaccounted for, adding to the profound tragedy.

Amidst this calamity, concerns arose regarding the structural integrity of the collapsed blocks, particularly regarding suspicions of column tampering. Residents of the site, deeply affected by the loss and destruction, pursued legal recourse by filing a complaint with the prosecutor's office. However, their efforts were met with disappointment as the prosecutor's office rendered a decision of non-prosecution, effectively halting any further legal actions in the matter.

***This catastrophe resulted in the loss of 105 lives, while 27 individuals were successfully extricated from the debris. Regrettably, approximately ten individuals remain unaccounted for, adding to the profound tragedy.***

The seismic events also shed light on longstanding disputes between landowners, notably Arif Sami Rende and contractor Fevzi Yılmaz. These tensions culminated in an agreement whereby blocks A and B were designated under Rende's ownership, while blocks C and D fell under the purview of Yılmaz. In 2016, legal actions were initiated by Yılmaz's representatives, alleging the unauthorized cutting of columns within Block B to facilitate the construction of a nursery. Despite these allegations, the prosecutor's office opted not to pursue the case in 2017.<sup>10</sup>

The unfortunate collapse of blocks A and B, juxtaposed against the survival of blocks C and D, underscored the complexities and implications of the disputes between the parties involved.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.adaletariyoruz.com/index.php/k2/item/25-rende-sitesi-depremden-neden-yikildi>



*Rende Block A and Block B  
after the earthquake (Sözcü)*

Furthermore, due to the subsequent legal decisions regarding the allegations of column tampering, residents found themselves grappling with unanswered questions and unresolved grievances amidst the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes.

*"After the earthquake, Cuma Yılmaz called my mother and said, 'I noticed that the columns in Block A were broken a month ago.' Upon hearing this, my mother asked, 'If you knew, why didn't you say anything?' He couldn't answer. Meanwhile, the Rende side still claims that these are lies. How do they explain the fact that their blocks collapsed while others did not? We want all responsible parties to be held accountable. We will not give up on this matter."*

*"My father served as the manager in the site. When we heard about the allegation of column cutting, we wanted to investigate, but the Rende side didn't allow it. They said, 'There's no column cutting, only shaving. They're slandering us because of our bad relationship with Yılmaz.' After the earthquake, we asked the demolition operators about the destruction in the debris, and they said, 'It's clear that the columns were cut, then there was some renovation, but only to cover it up.' İbrahim güler, AKP's Candidate for Hatay Metropolitan Municipality Mayor, also lived in this site. He lost his wife, children, brother, sister-in-law, and nephews in the collapsed building. Afterwards, he also called Yılmaz and demanded an explanation, saying, 'I chose this house because I thought it was earthquake resistant.' Then the Yılmaz side announced on social media that they filed a complaint in 2016. The negligence of the Rende side, who cut the columns, is enormous. However, the Yılmaz side also did not disclose this situation in a timely and sufficient manner. The prosecutor says he will conduct a comprehensive investigation. We will also follow up until all responsible parties are punished."<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/105-yurttasa-mezar-olan-farkli-yasam-rende-sitesinin-enkazindan-cikanlar-cumhuriyete-konustu-bile-bile-oldurduler-2052894#google\\_vignette](https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/105-yurttasa-mezar-olan-farkli-yasam-rende-sitesinin-enkazindan-cikanlar-cumhuriyete-konustu-bile-bile-oldurduler-2052894#google_vignette)



## Fuat Koku

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Hatay, particularly the Odabaşı district, the Fuat Koku Site is a somber reminder of the tragedy that befell the community. Comprising two blocks, A and B, each nine stories high with two commercial floors below, these buildings, merely six years old at the time, succumbed to the seismic forces, with Block B collapsing first, followed by Block A crumbling under its weight.



*Fuat Koku,  
before the earthquake*

The aftermath of the earthquake left a profound impact on the lives of many, with the estimated death toll reaching 85 individuals. Among the victims were Fatma Kaya Peksoy, a police officer residing in Hatay, her husband Mahmut Peksoy, who served in the military, and their 9-month-old, Çınar. Döne Kaya's grief is compounded by the

collapse of the building where her family resided, underscoring the dire consequences of the regulatory failures in construction oversight. The collapse of the Fuat Koku Site sheds light on systemic issues within the building regulation framework, with reports indicating the absence of proper oversight and documentation. The collapse of the building has revealed a concerning lack of building permits and documentation, a problem prevalent among many older structures in Hatay.

The culpability for these oversights lies with the contractor, Fuat Koku, and his son Murat Koku, who changed their surname to Fuatoğlu following the earthquake in a move to evade accountability. Murat Fuatoğlu and the building inspector, Onur Çinçin, have been detained pending further legal proceedings. However, despite these arrests, concerns persist regarding the slow progress of the legal process, with delays in accessing critical documents and inconsistencies in expert reports hindering the pursuit of justice.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the Hatay 2021 IRAP report has drawn attention to the alarming parallels between the simulated scenario and the events that

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.adaletariyoruz.com/index.php/k2/item/21-fuat-koku-sitesi-depremde-neden-yikildi>



*Fuat Koku,  
after the earthquake*

unfolded, suggesting negligence or complicity among those involved in the regulatory process. Calls for accountability have intensified, with demands for prosecuting individuals implicated in the regulatory lapses.

The tragedy of the Fuat Koku Site is a stark reminder of the human cost of negligence and the urgent need for robust enforcement of building regulations to prevent such avoidable disasters in the future. As the legal process unfolds, it is imperative that those responsible are held accountable and measures are implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of all citizens. Until justice is served, the memories of those lost in this tragic event will continue to drive the pursuit of accountability and reform.

## Rönesans Residences

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In the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that shook Kahramanmaraş, a critical investigation unfolded regarding the collapse of the Rönesans Residences in Hatay with almost 1000 losses. A second expert report highlighted the structural flaws that led to the tragic incident. It revealed that the creation of window-like voids above the basement floor resulted in the formation of short columns, ultimately leading to the building's collapse. Furthermore, deviations from proper construction practices, such as improperly bent column reinforcements, were identified as contributing factors.

The investigative team, consisting of prosecutors, engineers, and geologists, meticulously examined the debris, uncovering





*Rönesans, before  
the earthquake (Diken)*

***Meanwhile, the collapse of the Rönesans Residences has left 53 individuals unaccounted for, adding to the anguish of their families, who have been awaiting news of their fate for over a year.***

underground water leakage and indicating a saturation of the ground with water. These findings underscored the significance of comprehensive investigations into building practices and ground conditions. Recommendations for further soil analysis and comparison with pre-construction assessments were made to ensure structural integrity and safety in future construction projects.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the Rönesans Residences has left 53 individuals unaccounted for, adding to the anguish of their families, who have been awaiting news of their fate for over a year. In a live TV interview, Lütfü Savaş, the Mayor of Hatay Metropolitan Municipality, defended the integrity of the building process, highlighting the supervision of an idealistic individual who likely adhered to building regulations and earthquake standards. However, he acknowledged the need for scrutiny and evaluation in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Regarding the contractor, Mehmet Yaşar Coşkun, who was apprehended while attempting to flee, Savaş clarified that he was not personally responsible for issuing permits for the building. Coşkun claimed that all necessary permits were obtained, and thorough inspections were conducted. Despite these assertions, questions about who authorized the construction and whether proper protocols were followed.

The collapse of the Rönesans Residences serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of rigorous oversight and adherence to safety standards in construction projects, particularly in earthquake-prone regions like Hatay. As the investigation continues, the quest for accountability remains paramount, offering hope for justice and preventing such tragedies.



*Rönesans, after the earthquake (Gazete Oksijen)*

*“A 12-story apartment and 250 apartments, all completely independent of each other, are difficult to understand. I struggle to comprehend how architects and engineers could permit such a structure. It has been reduced to ruins in this way. In addition, we believe that the municipality has not been sensitive about this issue. Why is there building inspection, for God’s sake? There is. How can you issue this permit then? On the other hand, what could be the reason for such a collapse? Here, 1500 citizens are suffering today, groaning in the rubble. My daughter and two grandchildren are here. We request stringent measures for municipalities, starting with our President. Otherwise, it is impossible for them to issue these permits.”<sup>13</sup>*

*“They said it was an 8–10-year-old building and that it was one of the city’s highest quality buildings. But when I personally came and looked at the main beams after it collapsed, I saw that those iron beams were not as they claimed. I am not an engineer, not an architect, but as an ordinary citizen, when you look, you can see that the connections of those irons are missing.”<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/sahibi-kacarken-yakalanmisti-ronesans-rezidansin-enkazinda-yasam-belirtisi-2050590>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/turkiye/ronesans-rezidansin-enkazinda-yasam-belirtisi,PpHdzZBopky47UIU1IqJqA/cXLuQudgDUOfLC60QMdyww>



## Malatya



### Kırçuval Hotel

*The hotel's collapse resulted in the loss of lives, including six members of the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality men's volleyball team, along with players from the Amputee Football team and numerous other guests.*

The Kırçuval Hotel, located in Malatya's Battalgazi district and boasting 52 rooms, stood as a prominent establishment since its construction in 1997. Tragically, this 3-star, 8-story hotel met its demise during the initial earthquake on February 6th, which was part of the seismic activity in Kahramanmaraş. The hotel's collapse resulted in the loss of lives, including six members of the Malatya Metropolitan Municipality men's volleyball team, along with players from the Amputee Football team and numerous other guests.

Concerns regarding the hotel's structural integrity surfaced as early as 2020 following damage incurred during the Sivrice earthquake. Discussions regarding its demolition ensued, yet tragic events unfolded due to significant negligence. Subsequently, following the Elazığ earthquake, the building underwent inspection and received a structural integrity report, although claims suggest prior utilization of the hotel as a business center. These circumstances led to the arrest of the hotel owner, Zafer Kırçuval, who also serves as the deputy mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality. Despite expert reports, legal proceedings have stagnated over the past ten months.

Zafer Kırçuval, associated with the AKP and holding positions within the Battalgazi Municipality and Malatya Metropolitan Municipality Council, emphasized the hotel's purported damage-free report after the 2020 earthquake. However, discrepancies between official reports and the tragic outcome fueled public outcry. Notably, allegations of political affiliations between the contractor responsible for the building's collapse and the AKP emerged, underscoring the intersection of political influence and construction practices.<sup>15</sup>

The hotel's transformation from old apartments and persistent allegations of structural compromise underscores the complex dynamics at play. Despite assertions of safety, the catastrophic outcome highlights the intersection of political interests and construction practices, underscoring the profound ramifications of corruption within the construction sector.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.adaletariyorus.com/index.php/k2/item/27-kircuval-otel-depremde-neden-yikildi>



*Kırçuval Hotel,  
after the earthquake (AA)*

The owner of Kırçuval Hotel, Battalgazi Deputy Mayor Zafer Kırçuval, along with 44 others, had been arrested. However, following an appeal by Kırçuval's lawyer, he was granted release, and he was discharged from Erzincan Prison where he had been detained.

In the request petition for Kırçuval's release, it was stated that he did not

construct the building that collapsed during the earthquake. The building was purchased by the company of which he was a partner later on. When the building was acquired, it was already an operating hotel, so there were no structural alterations made afterward. Additionally, it was mentioned that Kırçuval had received two separate reports confirming the building's stability after the Elazığ earthquake, which negated the need for further renovations. The petition also noted that annual security tests were conducted on the building by a Safety Company. Zafer Kırçuval's brother, Saffet Kırçuval, remains in custody.<sup>16</sup>

Sarioğlu, the lawyer of the Kırçuval victims, voiced his frustration, emphasizing the slow progress of the legal process and raising concerns about the possibility of evidence tampering. He pointed out that the initial expert report was submitted on June 12, 2023, but the prosecutor deemed it incomplete and requested a supplementary report on November 22, 2023. Sarioğlu questioned why there was a six-month delay without any action taken and highlighted that the expert report lacked specific details regarding responsible parties and the underlying causes of the building collapse.

*"It's unacceptable that suspects remain free after a year, and crucial witnesses have yet to be interviewed," Sarioğlu continued. He emphasized the urgent need for the suspects to be detained, considering the high likelihood of evidence tampering. Sarioğlu also criticized the limited number of universities capable of conducting expert assessments, noting that Karadeniz Technical University alone would take six months to provide a new report due to their backlog of approximately a thousand cases. He urged the establishment of a more efficient system to expedite the legal process"<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.turizmguncel.com/haber/depremde-yikilan-kircuval-otelin-sahibi-zafer-kircuval-tahliye-edildi>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/kircuval-otelde-delil-karartma-riski-2171345>

## Adiyaman

### Isias Hotel

Despite having a permit for up to 5 floors, the collapsed hotel had seven floors, indicating a clear violation of building regulations. Core samples from the building revealed flaws, leading to laboratory studies concluding that a compliance license should not have been granted. Furthermore, the concrete quality could have been more suitable for a multi-story structure, and the connection points of columns and beams were faulty. The iron used in construction did not meet standards, either lacking ribs or being incompatible with cement, prohibited in multi-story buildings. Samples also indicated using inferior construction materials such as creek gravel and sand.

Additionally, the building remained idle for approximately ten years after a workplace accident in 1991, during which time the structure deteriorated. Originally designed as a family apartment, hotel owners' intervention resulted in alterations outside the building's intended use.

Despite these deficiencies, the hotel obtained a license, raising questions about the approval process. The owner, Ahmet Bozkurt, known for his connections with the government, has been pictured alongside members of the AKP on social media. Despite denials,



*Isias Hotel, before and after the earthquake (Rudaw)*



there were mentions of Bozkurt serving on the High Advisory Board of TÜGVA Adıyaman. Additionally, Bozkurt, who ran for office with the İYİP in the 2019 elections, gained attention for displaying a poster of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in his hotel.

The hotel, originally designed as a family apartment and riddled with deficiencies, obtained a license and later expanded its capacity with official approval, highlighting ongoing irregularities in its operational process.

*“Throughout history, this region has witnessed earthquake disasters for centuries, but it is not the earthquake that has killed us alive; it is the immoral individuals who have built mass graves and turned a blind eye to it. Every individual involved in this hotel is guilty.*

*We trust in Turkish justice, as it has been clearly stated that theft of construction materials, inadequate reinforcement, illegal floor additions, and failure to comply with regulations have been definitively established.”*

*We are here for the Grand İsis Otel defendants to be convicted of gross negligence. We are here for the sake of the earthquake victims in Adıyaman, and for our case to set a precedent regarding earthquakes. We will continue to fight until all the perpetrators receive the punishment they deserve.”<sup>18</sup>*

*“We settled our children in their rooms. There were 39 of us at İsis, and I moved to another hotel in Kahramanmaraş with 16 people. If I had stayed at the same hotel, I wouldn't be here. It was a major earthquake, but the building didn't collapse. We came out without anyone even getting a scratch. Adıyaman collapsed, my world collapsed. There was chaos; we walked 1 kilometer to take the children to a safe area. Then I headed to Adıyaman. I could only arrive on Tuesday. The scene I saw was just a pile of sand. 72 lives were lost in the hotel. I can't use the word 'died,' I don't even want to hear it. Our children, aged 11-14, were buried in the sand pile, and we struggled with hope to reach our children. When hope ran out, we wanted to reach them whole. Imagine praying for this. Concrete is a strong material, isn't it? Families dug with their hands to reach their children. We trust in justice; that's why we're here. We believe you will make the best decision. Yesterday at the trial, it was mentioned that the real material loss was unfinished lives. We started crying out for justice before we could even grieve. We trust in the Turkish judiciary. Until the mindset that heartlessly took our loved ones receives the highest penalty, we will be here.”<sup>19</sup>*

18 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cpexqq5jgkvo>

19 <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/isis-oteli-davasinda-soz-sirasi-aillelerin-cocuklarimiz-kum-yigininin-icine-gomulduler,VuR9qm8qj0iABTzGGDndsg>



