Abstract

The ongoing war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish guerrilla organization PKK has transformed Turkey’s mostly Kurdish-populated southeast into a conflict zone, and a state of emergency (OHAL, Olağanüstü Hal) rule was implemented there between 1987 and 2002. This thesis is about the involvement of the pro-state paramilitary organization JİTEM (Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele, Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism) in the conflict.

The main focus of this thesis is to rethink structure-agency relations in the context of the emergency region and JİTEM. While the OHAL rule in the Southeast provided an extra-legal structure that gave an additional agency to the paramilitaries to facilitate state-sponsored crimes, perpetrators of these crimes were generally recorded as “unknown.” The main motivation behind this thesis is to reveal the agencies of “unknown actors” through their own words (published memoirs, interviews, confessions).