TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS LOST A HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY

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On November 8th, 2022, elections for the House of Representatives and Senate took place in the United States (US). In the midterm elections, in which the Republican and Democrat candidates competed vehemently, there were some important developments that also concern Turkey. In the past weeks, we have written that there have been out-of-context developments, such as measuring the degree of hostility against Turkey among the candidates who are campaigning for the mayors office of Los Angeles[1]. The midterm elections that have taken place give an idea of □□□□□□□□ President Joe Biden will maintain his seat firmly for the next two years or will lose confidence. As it is seen, the Democrats have not experienced a substantial defeat. One of the swing states, Pennsylvania, was won by Democratic Party candidate John Fetterman. Republican Party candidate Dr. Mehmet Öz was behind Fetterman by %3. In this analysis, we will draw attention to Republican candidate Dr. Mehmet Özs campaign process.

The American candidates have been working for the midterm election campaigns for a long time. One of the hardest working of these candidates is undoubtedly the Republican Party's Pennsylvania Senate candidate Dr. Mehmet Öz, who is also supported by former President Donald Trump. Dr. Öz campaigned intensely against his opponent, Democratic candidate John Fetterman. Dr. Öz had to put in much more effort in his campaign than the other candidates. This effort is not just because Pennsylvania being a key state in the US election. Dr. Öz has become a salient name due to his Turkish nationality. As a matter of fact, as the election date approached during the campaign process, the intensity of protests against Turkey and Turkishness increased.

In mid-October, the intensity of these protests began to increase. In a news report dated October 14th, 2022, the protesters, referring to senator candidate Dr. Mehmet Öz, claimed that his election to the Senate would be a blow to democracy[2]. Dr. Özs rival, Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman, also acted in solidarity with the protesters. Essentially, as Fetterman is a Pennsylvanian, he gained the upper hand

against Dr. Öz. There is no doubt towards the fact that Dr. Öz only recently moved to Pennsylvania and this also contributed to his loss of the election.

In addition, the fact that he should not take part in the elections because he has dual citizenship (American and Turkish) has been profusely underlined by American Armenians [3]. Dr. Öz, in March 2022, had announced that he would renounce his Turkish citizenship if he won the elections[4]. Dr. Öz has cited his mothers health condition as the reason he has kept his Turkish citizenship up to now. Senate historians, on the other hand, could not find any information on whether there has been anyone with dual citizenship in the Senate, only stating that there was the example of Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who renounced his Canadian citizenship in 2014[5].

On November 6th, 2022, former President Donald Trump, organized a support rally for Dr. Öz. At the rally in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Trump said that Dr. Öz would change the balance in the US and shift the 50-50 seat distribution in the Senate in favor of the Republicans[6]. President Biden and former President Barack Obama sought votes for Fetterman, who had recently suffered a stroke and was observed having difficulty answering questions during the televised debate[7]. Obama has urged voters to cast their votes for Fetterman, saying lets make sure our country doesnt get set back 50 years.[8] Dr. Özs recent residence in Pennsylvania, as well as Fettermans stroke and the undecided voters reaction to Trump, have brought both candidates to a questionable state in the eyes of the electorate. The questionable situation continued until the last votes were counted.[9] Another important competition concerning Turkey took place in Ohio. Steve Chabot, one of the Co-Chairs of the Caucus on US Türkiye Relations and Turkish Americans of the US Congress, also lost the elections against the Democratic candidate Greg Lansman[10]. Chabot had been in the House of Representatives for 28 years. [11]

In the midterm elections, both Dr. Mehmet Öz and Steve Chabot, Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on US Türkiye Relations and Turkish Americans would undoubtedly have created a suitable opportunity for resisting and responding to anti-Turkey initiatives in the US Senate. In this respect, the midterm elections would have been an important turning point in the context of the Türkiye US relations. From this point of view, it can be stated that bilateral relations have lost a historical opportunity, since it will not be possible to express Turkish views in the US Congress.

*Photo: *https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/decision-2022/oz-fetterman-both-target-suburbs-in-key-pa-senate-race/3364118/*

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