



*TÜRKAN SAYLAN*





**"Her eęitimli kadının  
bu Cumhuriyet'e  
borcu var!"**

**Trkan Saylan**

- **EVERY EDUCATED  
WOMAN OWES THIS  
REPUBLIC.**

Professor Dr Türkan Saylan (1935-2009) was a Turkish dermatologist and activist.

She was born in Istanbul, the daughter of a Turkish father and a Swiss mother. While studying medicine at the University of Istanbul, she suffered from spinal tuberculosis, and was forced to spend thirteen months lying face down in bed as she recovered. She graduated from the University of Istanbul School of Medicine in 1963, still wearing the steel corset for her spine that she had worn for two years. She became one of the first female dermatologists in Turkey, and began working at the University of Istanbul School of Medicine in 1968. She was made Associate Professor in 1972 and Professor in 1977.

She began working with leprosy in 1976, and founded the Turkish Leprosy Relief Association. She worked in both medical research and humanitarian projects in leprosy, and worked as a consultant in leprosy for WHO. She founded the Istanbul Leprosy Hospital in 1981, and continued to work there voluntarily as director until she retired in 2002. Under her direction, the hospital incorporated an outpatient clinic, specialised eye care, a shoe workshop, surgery, physiotherapy and dental units serving both inpatients and outpatients. She received the International Gandhi Award for her work with leprosy in 1986.

Although she continued to work on leprosy throughout her career, she began in 1989 to concentrate her efforts primarily on advocating for secularism and women's rights in Turkey. It is for this work that she is best remembered. In 1989, with Aysel Ekşi, she cofounded the Association for the Support of Contemporary Living (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği, or ÇYDD), a non-profit NGO devoted to promoting women's rights, education, and the modernisation principles of Kemal Atatürk.



ÇYDD is staffed by over 20,000 volunteers, with 95 branches around the country; its projects include building schools, donating resources such as books and musical instruments, and awarding scholarships to male and female students at all educational levels. Saylan remained the chairperson and public face of the society until her death.

In Istanbul in 1997, she organised the 4th International Leprosy Meeting in collaboration with colleagues from the Istanbul Leprosy Hospital and the Turkish Association for Leprosy Relief Work. The theme of this meeting was ‘Where are we in the fight against leprosy while approaching 2000?’.



"Ben sadece, yüređi insan sevgisi dolu bir hekimim. Ülkemi, insan haklarına ve hukuka saygılı, demokrasiye inanan hükümetlerin idare etmesini isteyen bir vatanseverim."

"Hayat sana teşekkür ederim, bana güzel işler yapma gücü verdiğin için!"

*Türikan Saylan*

**I'm just a physician whose heart is full of human love. I love a country that respects human rights and law, and wants governments to believe in democracy.**

**Life thank you so much for giving me the power to do good things**



Her bibliography includes well over 400 articles and books, including studies and research reports published in medical journals, articles on political and social topics published in newspapers, a textbook on dermatovenereology, and two memoirs. Horse Girl (At Kız) is a memoir of her childhood, while The Sun Rises Now Out of Hope (Güneş Umuttan Şimdi Doğar ) details her life's work in activism as well as the challenges she faced in her private life.



"...Her çocuk  
okumalı.  
Mücadelemin  
sebebi bu."  
Türkan Saylan

**Every child should read.  
That's why I struggle**

She remained politically active until her final days. Under the governance of the Islamic Justice and Development Party, which was investigating an alleged planned coup, she was placed on a watch list due to her secularist principles and involvement with ÇYDD, and her home was raided by police only weeks before her death. She condemned the police's actions and publicly stated her opposition to a coup, saying 'We want democracy and contemporary values to rule. Therefore, we are ready to fight for this cause as long as it takes.'



After a 19-year fight with breast cancer, she passed away in 2009, survived by two sons, Cinar Orge, a physician, and Caglayan Orge, a graphic designer, and two grandchildren.