

Boğaziçi University Academics: Beginning the 2021 Fall Term Under Assault

Boğaziçi University is under greater threat than ever before as the new term begins.

It has been 10 months since the Turkish [President](#) appointed a rector to Boğaziçi University by a midnight decree on January 1, 2021. As a result of university-wide resistance, the President [retracted](#) the nomination in July. Along with 17 other faculty members, two of the compromised vice rectors applied to the open position. Faculty members rejected their candidacy by a resounding 94% in a “[vote of no confidence](#)” organized among themselves. Very similar results were obtained in separate polls run by students, nonacademic staff, and alumni. Despite this, President Erdoğan decided once again to make a top-down appointment, and nominated vice rector Naci İnci in total disregard of the views of faculty members, staff and students. And as expected, the new rector lost no time in showing that he was predisposed to exponentially increase the [damage](#) hitherto done to the university and to academic freedom.

Riot police flooded the campus twice to brutally take 59 students under custody while mistreating faculty members. The rector himself reported students to the public prosecutor and caused two of them to be [arrested](#). President Erdoğan is planning to augment the powers of the rector, enabling them to take [initiative](#) in restoring public order. Yet another overnight decision lifted the protected status of our central campus, opening it up to speculative private investment. Neither the campus, nor the future of academics or students is in safe hands. The newly appointed rector is trampling on all of the [principles and institutional procedures](#) that made this university a true haven in an increasingly repressed academic environment. Boğaziçi University is no longer governed properly with an understanding of the rule of law; existing boards have become dysfunctional, and common sense has been totally eradicated. The quality of education and research, and the university’s pluralistic and democratic culture are taking blow after blow. (Cf. list below.)

Despite all this, we as faculty members declare that we will defend and maintain with greater determination than ever the values that make this university a *universitas*. We strongly underscore that Boğaziçi is a community with its professors, students, personnel and alumni. We will continually drive home the message that Boğaziçi upholds transparency and participatory governance, is loyal to democratic and academic principles and rejects arbitrary and personal rule.

The treatment that the [actual government](#) inflicts on Boğaziçi University is similar to that which has led to either to the destruction of many institutions and time-honored administrative units in Turkey or to the replacement of cadres with individuals loyal to the government. Boğaziçi is [not the first to suffer](#) from this policy of plunder. We are waging a struggle not only for Boğaziçi, but for all public universities in Turkey and abroad. Many universities around the world today face similar anti-democratic attacks launched by authoritarian and/or neoliberal governments. Our struggle is part of the international struggle for university autonomy and democracy.

We call on international public opinion to support our struggle and to join us in our refrain: WE DO NOT ACCEPT! WE DON'T GIVE UP!

Boğaziçi University Academics

List of damages sustained by Boğaziçi University under the current rector since the beginning of his mandate:

- A first in the history of this institution, one of our [full-time professors](#) was dismissed by a rectoral decision. The concerned department was not consulted and the dismissal was not academically substantiated. Incidentally, the said professor was very active in the Boğaziçi resistance. He was [barred](#) from entering the campus, despite protests by faculty members.
- [Three](#) valuable lecturers, two of whom was exceptionally active in the Boğaziçi resistance, were barred from opening courses this term.
- The rector persistently refuses to recognize institute directors and deans elected by faculty members.
- While the university seems to have ample resources for security cameras, iron gates, barbed wires and additional private security staff, our Sexual Harassment Prevention, Training and Support [Coordinator](#) was dismissed on the pretext that there were no resources to pay her.
- Decade-long procedures and rules concerning meetings, agenda setting, voting, and approval of minutes are being repeatedly violated by the new rector. Senate and Executive Board members are muted during meetings and treated with disrespect, and the rector's team casts multiple votes to obtain favorable results in meetings.
- The rector has not discharged the uniformed police stationed with machine guns and riot intervention vehicles around the campus or the [plainclothes police](#) roaming freely within the campus with his consent.
- Instead of focusing on how best to sustain education and research under Covid-19 conditions, the rector's team left arrangements for resuming face-to-face education to the very last minute. Suggestions and warnings by the Senate and faculty members were systematically disregarded. Both professors and students have been beleaguered by the chaotic consequences of this incompetence.
- 14 students were taken under custody on Oct. 5 for protesting the rector's handling of face-to-face education arrangements. The rector himself chose to file a complaint with the prosecutor's office to punish the students instead of deploying intra-university disciplinary procedures. Two of these students were [arrested](#) and are currently deprived of their right to education.
- Riot police were allowed to invade the campus on Oct. 22 when students insisted on hitching up a vigil tent in front of the Rectorate, as they had been doing for months. Security staff at the university told them that their vigil was no longer allowed. The right to peaceful protest, enshrined in the constitution, was denied to [45 students](#) who were taken into custody by riot police using brute force on grounds that they were unlawfully invading a public area. This happened as the students were about to disperse, after they were promised they would be allowed to leave the campus without police interference. The same strategy was employed once again on October 25th normalizing heavy armed police presence in the campus while criminalizing the presence of students in the campus.
- The rector claimed he was being threatened and took a [restraining order](#) against 14 students using a law designed to prevent violence against women.