

## **Burçin Gerçek**

Recipient of the Agnes Manoogian Hausrath fellowship and the Charlotte Calfaian research award, Gerçek spent her fifth year of doctoral study in Ankara, Turkey where she collected material on Armenian genocide perpetrators as well as the social and economic life in Angora province before the genocide. A diverse array of sources, including memoirs, newspaper interviews or articles, oral and written depositions from trials, reveal the dynamics of the violence from the perspective of bystanders, observers and some righteous figures. One focus of her research was the collections held at the Vekam Library and Archive (Koç University Ankara Studies Research Center). She also began dissertation writing chapters exploring the mindset of Armenian genocide perpetrators in the Angora Province.

In addition to her dissertation research, Gerçek worked with the director Serge Avédikian on the documentary “Back to Sölöz” focusing on the memory of the Armenian genocide in a town in Western Turkey. She wrote a book chapter on Emin Bey, one of the middle rank perpetrators from Ankara Province whose memoirs present situations where he displayed envy and resentment toward Armenians. His memoirs show how informal relations advanced his radicalization and contributed to his nationalistic and anti-Armenian discourse.

Gerçek also researched an article on Turkey’s use of Holocaust memory to promote a “rescuer country” image, a strategy that furthers the politics of Armenian genocide denial. Her research uncovered documents related to Maria Bauer, a Jewish woman with a Yugoslav background, who lived in Istanbul and played a central role in helping Jewish refugees from the Balkans. Her story is erased from Turkish collective memory as the current official discourse privileges the role of

Turkish diplomats and a Vatican representative in rescuing Jews from the countries under Nazi domination. This approach obfuscates the actions organized by the Jewish community in the face of the Turkish authorities' hostile approach. Gercek seeks to shed a light on Maria Bauer's actions and to challenge the erasure of Jewish communal efforts in favor of promoting Turkey as a "rescuer" nation.

In October 2021, Gercek's book *Against the Current: Rescuers, Resisters and those who Opposed the orders during the Armenian Genocide* had a third edition in Turkey, a sign that despite the oppressive political atmosphere, Turkish readers continue to show an interest in publications on the Armenian genocide.