

## Digital Signature Campaigns in Turkey as a Tool for Political Opposition

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### Abstract

*The existence of competition within democracies is an essential element between individuals and groups, and what is appropriate to the soul of democracy is the peacefulness of this competition. This competition in democracies causes the limitation of the power of the state, and accordingly, the phenomenon of opposition. Opposition can be observed at any level and any period of societal life, starting from the family, which is the smallest unit. The concept of political opposition is generally used in the contexts of criticism of, and sometimes objection to, the applications and policies of the ruling party, by political parties. In this study, change.org platform, which, thanks to the assistance of social sharing networks, has begun to influence large masses worldwide as a digital signing platform, was chosen as the target population, with the aim of revealing the role of digital signing campaigns on questioning the political power. The sample of the study is the digital signing campaigns that are carried out through change.org in Turkey, in opposition to the political power. These campaigns will be investigated via content analysis method, within the scope of the function of change.org, as well as the formation details and results of the campaigns.*

**Keywords:** Government, opposition, political opposition, digital signature campaign, change.org

### 1. Opposing the Power – Political Opposition

When politics is defined as the reconciliation of benefits, it is seen that politics is based upon the phenomenon of opposition. The phenomenon of opposition is also a must for democracy. Opposition bears importance within democratic systems, in terms of its function of supervising the power. Opposition has made a great contribution to the evolution of the meaning of democracy, from ancient times to today. The concept of opposition, which finds place especially in the pluralistic democracy, developed in this understanding. Today, democratic understanding has been adopted by many countries of the world. That is the reason why the concept has come into prominence worldwide. Addressing the political opposition in Turkey by defining the phenomenon of opposition, which is an important concept for politics and the concept of political opposition, will be beneficial for our study.

#### 1.1. Opposition and the Concept of Political Opposition

While it can be explained with concepts such as objection to an attitude and behavior, disobedience, differ, and contradiction; opposition can also be defined as a mechanism with the functions of limiting the absolute power and suggesting alternatives (Mardin, 1992: 179). On the other hand, political opposition can be defined as the role of objector to the political power, which is believed to hinder the pursued goals, and the application of actions and strategies that are to be used, within a specific political time unit (Dahl, 1975: 116-117). At this point, political opposition is observed to meet especially two meanings. With its first and main meaning, it is explained as the objection or hindrance to the politics of the government by the parties that appear before us with the political face of general opposition, and that meet the reflection of various thoughts, whereas, with its second meaning, it indicates the parties themselves that oppose the power (İslamoğlu, 2004: 19). Opposition, with regards to the definition of limiting the absolute power, is also required within the state.

Two stages of limiting the political power need to be pointed out as a requirement of the liberty granted to individuals. The first one is the rejection of the authoritarian, elitist view, which considers the administrators equal with the state, and assumes that the people is subject to the administrators. The second one is, accordingly, the separation of government and state. This separation will ensure that governments can change, while the state remains the same (Lipson, 1973: 316–317). Today, democratic understanding has been adopted by many countries. Development of democratic systems is comprised of three crucial stages. First is the right to choose, second is the right to be chosen, and third is the right to oppose (Tunç, 1997: 9). Political opposition surfaces more explicitly within democratic systems. It is an important element in the development of democratic systems. For democracy to be functional, a ground for the continuance of the existence of a true opposition is a must. If the opposition has no such opportunity, the administrators gain more authority every day, and the influence of the people on politics hits rock bottom. This is the case in one-party states (Lipset, 1986: 25-26).

In this regard, political power takes on important tasks. Some of the major ones can be listed as follows (Evcimen, 1979: 141-142):

- Supervision of political power by the governed,
- Ensuring the involvement of the groups in political decisions by means of the representation of various benefits.
- Sensitizing the political order to majority volition,
- Forming alternative and distinguished gathering tools before the power and state organizations,
- Reaching rationality by providing information, increasing the number of alternatives, and discussing them before the formation of political decisions; and clarifying the reactions and establishing connections that will ensure legitimacy supervision between the power and society after the application.

We can divide political opposition into three, as constitutional and non-constitutional, structural and non-structural, and intra-party and extra-party. If the origin, acts, way of making, and aim of an opponent movement correspond to the legal order, it is called “constitutional opposition;” if it does not, then it is called “non-constitutional opposition” (Nişancı, 2013). According to Sartori (1971: 34), a non-constitutional opposition is a resistance; therefore, it shall not be evaluated as opposition. Another type of political opposition is structural and non-structural opposition. Structural opposition is the type of opposition that aims at making a change in the current regime. In other words, it is the type of opposition that accepts the system it is in, and demands some changes. Non-structural opposition, on the other hand, targets the change of government or a change of government policy, or both. Within the context of the party opposition, first of them is at the forefront in terms of the classical operations of pressure groups, while the second is at the forefront as the principal aim. Almost all of the opposition struggle of an opposition party with no structural aim heads towards overtaking the power (Turgut, 1984: 13-14).

The third separation is the separation based on their position in the parliament. Intra-parliamentary opposition expresses any opposition made by the political parties represented in the parliament and independent deputies, to the politics applied by the political power (Turgut, 1984: 14). Intra-parliamentary opposition shall be made by the political parties within the parliament, shall be continuous, competitive, and shall have a specific alternative (Tunç, 1997: 11).

Extra-parliamentary opposition, however, is comprised of a much larger area. Organized or non-organized, any opposition outside the parliament can be included in this scope. Continuation of the existence of this far and wide opposition type depends on some conditions. Required conditions for the continuation of the existence of extra-parliamentary opposition are as follows (Karadağ, 2002: 34-35):

- Freedom of thought, expression, press and association shall exist.
- Tolerance and dialogue among various societal segments
- Strong civil society based on strong social relationships
- A democratic political culture that does not bring a separatist perspective to opposition movements

Press is an important means of opposition in democratic systems. If the press is to have such a function, it is to be free. Today, press is described as the fourth power after legislative, executive and judicial powers (Gürkan, 1998: 15-17). Press has an important function especially in terms of extra-parliamentary opposition. Nowadays, there have been changes in the understanding and shape of opposition, in parallel with the technological developments. New media technologies have made a great contribution on this issue.

## 1.2. Political Opposition in Turkey

The phenomenon of opposition in Turkey traces back to the Ottoman Empire. A series of reforms were made in the Tanzimat period, and opposition movements started to emerge. West-facing Tanzimat bureaucracy and Ottoman intellectual made a great contribution to them (Heper, 1974: 53). The fact that the modernization efforts at that period were West-facing was the result of the fact that the starters of these movements studied in the Western countries; when they came back home, first signs of opposition surfaced in the Ottoman Empire. "Young Ottomans", who came to sight in 1865 as a group for the first time, drew attention with their criticisms on Tanzimat. First parliament was established in 1876, after Mithat Pasha supported Young Ottomans. Afterwards, again in 1876, first constitution of the Ottoman Empire was formed (Yeşil, 1988: 3). Young Turks created the second wave of opposition in the Empire. Young Turks took the name of "Committee of Union and Progress" in 1889, as a political organization. According to Mardin, who thinks that both movements were not disconnected from the people, Young Ottomans nor Young Turks could be counted as populist. Because both of them advocate, fundamentally, a political understanding that aggrandizes the political elite and is far from the people (Mardin, 1983: 220). Even if such an aspect is accepted, the movements are evaluated in our history as important, with regards to forming an opposition.

Other than the examples of opposition to the power, examples of opposition within the committees were also observed in the Ottoman Empire. The opposition within the Committee of Union and Progress came to existence at the congress in Paris, in 1902. Some of the members of the committee, who were split into two parts, continued their activities at the *Teşebbüs-ü Şahsi ve Âdem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti* (Committee of Individual Initiative and Decentralization), led by Prince Sabahaddin, and others continued their activities at the *Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti* (Committee of Ottoman Progress and Union), led by Ahmed Rıza Bey. Prince Sabahaddin took part in the opposition after the elections (Uyar, 2001: 12-13).

Within this period of the Ottoman Empire, press was another means of opposition. In this period, newspapers and magazines were used as an effective means of opposition by the minorities and public bureaucracy. In the newspapers and magazines which were influential in the process towards Second Constitutional Era, almost all thoughts and beliefs that have a social base within the empire found the opportunity to express themselves in a free atmosphere which lasted for four years after the constitutional monarchy was announced (Ertuğ, 1959: 45-46). Together with the declaration of the republic, one-party state started with Republican People's Party. Attempts of opposition were conducted within this period. The Progressive Republican Party was the first legal opposition party of the Republican era, while People's Republican Party was the first legal opposition party that was founded outside the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) (Kaynar, 2007:52-54). Within this period as well, press was another means of opposition. Within the periods in which attempts to transition to a multi-party system, opponent newspapers were printed, and opponent news were published on the existing newspapers (Avşar, 1998: 93-96).

1946 was a milestone for Turkey, in which the country met intra-parliamentary opposition. Together with the establishment of Democrat Party in 1946, one-party dominance was destroyed, and the phenomenon of opposition came to light. Considering all the progresses above, one can mention three types of opposition, which arose from the opposition tradition of the Ottoman Empire, transitioned to the opposition tradition of Turkey, and reproduced themselves (Özcan, 2001, p.130). Heterogeneous and locally solved public rebellions: Dependent on the economical or sectarian-ethnic motivations, with no extra-orderly perspective. As examples, one can point at the revolts within the Ottoman Empire, and the revolts within the Republican Era between 1925 and 1938. Armed-unarmed opposition movements led by the army or civil bureaucracy: Mainly bearing an intra-orderly perspective, while forcing the order in respect of its method and style of expression, and causing changes as a result. As an example to armed opposition, one can point at the junta movements in the army in the Republican Era, and to unarmed opposition, one can point at the Liberal Republican Party, Progressive Republican Party or Democrat Party.

Organized and violent, militant opposition: Aiming at taking over and seizing the power. As examples, one can point at the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire, and the Marxist organizations in the Republican Era. As Turkey was influenced by the tutelage and public structures of the Ottoman Empire, the concept of opposition became self-enclosed due to the tutelage regime and the precise separation of the relationship between the center and the periphery. In other words, opposition remained at the individual level for a long time, and in cases when it reached the masses, it was embedded in history as local movements.

Because the main aim of all segments is to protect “the continuity of the state” (Uyar, 2001: 12-13). That is the reason why the phenomenon of opposition always had a missing part. Even today, the perspective towards this phenomenon bears negative elements. The main underlying reason of it is our political culture, which comes from the past and is an important element of our political life.

## **2. Digital Society, Digital Opposition**

After generally evaluating the opposition to the power, political power, and sharing the information regarding the Turkey dimension of the issue, one has to mention the new outlook the political opposition has gained in the recent years. Especially the development of communication technologies and the fact that their usage has become widespread influence both the community life and political socialization process. Individuals, who came to a position in which they can produce media content by means of these communication technologies and especially by means of new media channels, face a different dimension of the democratization process within these digital platforms. As a result of the change in the tools of opposition, larger masses gained the ability to move independently of place within a much shorter time period. In addition, different actors, together with political parties, manifested themselves with regards to limiting the political power. Among them, as well as non-governmental organizations, individual campaigns started to attract attention. Especially with the social sharing networks stepping in, digital signature campaigns arouse a substantial interest.

Media, which has the power to affect the attitudes and behaviors of the society, and mostly, to change them, Internet, which is one of the most widely used mass media, and new media platforms and social networks we use via Internet have more influence. The dimensions of this influence are fairly easy to guess, considering the fact that we are in front of our computers within an important timeframe of our daily lives, including the spare time activities, or the fact that we are active online by means of smart phones. Internet, which we use for entertainment, information, shopping, communication, and for many other purposes, started to become influential with regards to political organizations. Within the new media platform, which sometimes gives the opportunity to express a resistance, makes possible the expression of the opposing views. People who are in different places are able to come together through new media within the framework of common views (Demir, 2015: 148-153).

Media, which is considered in many resources of the field as the “fourth power” after legislative, executive, and judicial powers, determines with this role its position in the democratic process. When media, a powerful tool for direction, is evaluated from a different point of view, it is possible to determine that it also became a commercial organism. Broadcasts in accordance with interests can also be made for political purposes. However, this negative situation is seemed to have disappeared, especially thanks to the changes in the recent years, the development of new media technologies and their common usage. New media technologies, which makes possible to uniformly reach the information under equal terms, became a part of the social relationships. New media as the content publisher became an alternative area for its users, and led the creation of civil society and new social movements. The effect of new media technologies increases, due to the fact that it does not have a centralist structure, and that the messages reach any part of the world quickly and simultaneously. Social problems can now be discussed globally (Türk, 2013: 56).

In a speech he gave in Denver, Colorado in 1998, Neil Postman indicated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would make people face more striking and complicated problems that they never faced in the previous centuries, and referred to the effect that technological change would have on social life. Emphasizing that we would experience both advantages and disadvantages after the technological change, that some of us would be affected by the disadvantages, and the others would benefit from the advantages, Postman (1998) actually summarized the change that is observed in social life against technology today. New communication technologies, which draw attention with the problems they create as well as their advantages, formed a new social outlook.

As the societies develop and change under the pressure of new power relations, people continue to live side by side, despite their conflicting interests and values. It is possible to observe today a social and political transition, mainly from political institutions to public rationality. The effect of mass media in this process is remarkable. Social change creates alternative political forms, and the distinctive technical and organizational infrastructure of the digital age gives opportunity to use new communication networks as well. It is now possible to talk about a communication-based “network society” that uses these networks and interactive messages (Castells, 2007:258). Emerging especially with the development of communication technologies, this new social organization points at a society that intensely uses the global networks.

These new technologies, which present an interactive communication platform with their non-simultaneous feature, give their users not a passive, but an active role. “Digital opposition” can be intensely made in these platforms which have the opportunity to present the ideas other than the ordinary political sharing and discussions, and especially the opposing ideas. One person can address to more than one people, discussion platforms can be formed, and everyone is encouraged to be participative and active on an issue (Göker and Doğan, 2011:184). As well as its features mentioned up to this part, different comments are encountered with respect to the effectiveness of digital opposition in the recent years. As an alternative perspective, the facts that the effect of the opposition is exaggerated, that the friendships made on the virtual world are also virtual, that no one will put themselves in danger with such intimacy, and therefore, that the effect of the digital opposition can be questioned are presented in the criticisms made in consideration of the formation of the social movements that occurred in the recent years (Tunç, 2011). In the following part of this study, the concepts of digital activism, digital acts, and digital democracy will be evaluated within the framework of Turkey, starting from the definition of digital opposition.

## **2.2. Digital Opposition in Turkey**

In this day and age, in which there are discussions regarding the transition from published culture to digital culture, as a result of various conceptualizations, the definitions of “internet culture” and “virtual culture” came to sight. The emphasized role of new media within these discussions is that it has the capacity to digitally organize the activist protests. When the acts that start in the new media and reach certain masses are evaluated from different points of view, they can be considered as “ineffective” or “imprecise”, and criticized of remaining limited to digital platform only, while some acts are indicated to be able to create other effects such as signature campaigns. Individuals who want to make themselves heard on digital platforms can increase their effects by globally multiplying (Karagöz, 2013: 141). Opposition movements that are carried from the streets to the virtual world started to benefit intensely from the knowledge-transferring and -sharing structure of the Internet. Organizations formed online gain continuity, while providing the opportunity to easily participate in these acts. These acts, which are carried out online and mostly through new media channels, started to gain a particular status and importance within the scope of the democratic process, as they demand, as to content, in some cases the direction of state operations (Bingöl and Tanrıver, 2011:134). All these developments in communication technologies brought a new perspective to state-citizen relationship, and ensured innovations in the functioning of democratic societies and institutions (Şahin et.al, 2004:261).

With the concept of digital democracy, which can be defined as the usage of new communication technologies in democratic processes so as to increase and extend citizen participation, the current economic, political, cultural and social tendencies in the political system started to be taken into consideration. Digital democracy allows for pluralism by means of online discussions (Zengin, 2013: 275). As a result of this pluralism, various social opposition foci, institutions and groups came together and organized. In order to raise awareness, social movements that enable the citizens to exhibit their opposing stance in democratic societies have a new outlook on digital platform. Social movements, which are more fragmented and focus on the issues on the axis of private issues, can now take place (Sayımer, 2014: 99). These movements with the aim of “mobilizing” should be far from the occupation and violence understanding, and should aim at attracting attention to the issues to which the society is sensitive.

Millions who pour into the streets as a result of the events occurring in the different parts of the world and the organizations on digital platforms, digital activists who add a new dimension to the social movements by announcing their desired social order on social media networks, and people who are of the same mind on different subjects are able to benefit from all the opportunities provided to them by the digital platform. The fact that a similar situation was experienced in Turkey under different titles can be observed in various platforms, in which digital democracy can be applied. Representatives of different social movements online in Turkey state that they actively use the Internet as it provides fast access to extensive information, meets the need for up-to-date political information, and provides communication and collaboration among local and international organizations. The fact that it ensures visibility and that it has an important role in achieving success are effective in the preference of Internet by these social movements (Binark and Löker, 2011:99). These social movements, which can be given as examples to opposition on digital platforms in Turkey, organize under various and special topics, and continue to operate on digital platforms.

Accordingly, women rights and violence against women, mother and child rights, protection of cultural heritage, ecological problems, anti-proliferation, gender identity problems, fighting discrimination and hate speech, fighting the problems of the disabled, studies on youth and children, studies on informatics and new media, and studies on hate crimes can be given as examples (Binark and Löker, 2011). Signature campaign is one the most frequently encountered applications in forming social movements on digital platforms. These campaigns, which are formed on digital platform or transferred to digital platforms from real platforms so as to create public opinion, aim at bringing up the problems to the agenda, fighting them and generating common reaction against them, within the framework of opposing movements. It is possible to convey any issue to relevant authorities when a certain number of signatures are collected on it, by means of these online campaigns or petitions (Yılmaz, et.al. 2015:490). Ensuring contribution to a signature or donation campaign with just a finger movement (Yegen, 2014: 92), Change.org, which is used in the sampling of this study, has become a platform frequently visited by digital activists in the recent years with the signature campaigns it conducts worldwide.

### **2.3. Change org. Turkey**

Change.org, “the world’s platform for change”, which increased its efficiency online, was founded by Benjamin Michael Ratray in 2007. Within this platform, on which a signature campaign can be created by anyone on any subject, the detected issues are enabled to attract global notice. On change.org, which is especially used by non-governmental organizations, signature campaigns about animal rights, inherent rights to life, demands for political arrangements, and other demands can be found. With many campaign administrators from different countries around the world, thousands of campaigns are conducted on change.org. Change.org was inaugurated in Turkey in September 2012, and started its operations (Yegen, 2014:92). Change.org states its object as to provide opportunities for everyone, wherever they are, to realize the change they want to see around them. Emphasizing that no one is helpless, the platform encourages its users to create campaigns with clear demands and convincing reasons, which provide social benefits, are constructive and aim at change (Paktin, 2013). In this study, the signature campaigns on change.org Turkey which are created, completed and ongoing for the purpose of political opposition will be evaluated within the frameworks of political and digital opposition, which were mentioned in the theoretic part of the study, and by way of content analysis method.

## **3. Method and Results**

Under the method topic of the study, a search was made among the signature campaigns on change.org Turkey website, which were formed until January 2016, by using “politics, power” as key words, and the listed signature campaigns revealed as a result of this search were evaluated by means of content analysis method. In the content analysis method, the classification system was being formed by benefiting from Laswell’s model of communication, which was created at the University of Chicago by Harold Laswell and his friends and was developed for the analysis of political messages (Bilgin, 2006:53), and by the five-question list used in communication analysis, and categories were formed in compliance with the content of change.org.

The categories, which were formed within the framework of Laswell’s questions of who, says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect (Bilgin, 2006:53) regarding the content of political texts, and which will be used in the method of the study are indicated in Table 1. (Table 1 Change.org Political Opposition-Oriented Signature Campaigns Content Analysis Categories). As a result of the search made on Change.org Turkey in January 2016, with the key words ‘power’ and ‘politics’, 60 and 58 signature campaigns were found, respectively. Among them, the signature campaigns with the content “opposition against political power” were chosen to be evaluated, in accordance with the scope and limitations of the study. Accordingly, as a result of the search made on change.org Turkey by using ‘politics’ as the key word, 14 signature campaigns were detected to address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Prime Ministry, and Ministries on behalf of the political power, and as a result of the search made by using ‘power’ as the key word, 16 campaigns were detected to address the same institutions. Each signature campaign found according to the search results were investigated by content analysis method, based on 5 different categories (Table 1).

### **3.1. Signature Campaigns Content Analysis Findings According to “Politics “ As Key Word**

As a result of the search made on Change.org Turkey on 7 January 2016 with ‘politics’ as the key word, first campaign with the content of opposition to political power to occur is entitled “Wealth to be announced for clean politics”, which was created on 26 December 2013, and signed by 27,564 people. According to content analysis categories, the source of the campaign is Transparency International Turkey.

The addressees of the campaign, which emphasizes clean politics, are stated as Prime Ministry, ministers and deputies. The campaign with a signature objective of 35,000 could not be concluded due to the passing of time. Transparency International is an international association that emphasizes the fact that it was founded with voluntary endeavors, and that it adopts accountability in all segments of society as a principle, for the democratic, economic, and social development of the country (Transparency International Turkey, 2016). Among the signature campaigns that occur as a result of the search on change.org Turkey website with 'politics' as the key word, and that are evaluated by the method of content analysis, individually-created campaigns draw attention. One of them is the campaign entitled "Non-violent politics, non-violent TBMM", created on 21 September 2015 by Faruk Enes. As one of the content analysis categories, the answer to the question of who the addressee is in this campaign is given as all political parties and media. Aiming at 100 supporters, the campaign was supported by 15 people only.

Another individual campaign was created by Volkan Balaban, entitled "the leaders to arrange a panel, politics to be made mutually in front of the public". This campaign was supported by 84 people since 11 October 2015 and could not be concluded. Addressed to TBMM and created by an individual, the campaign entitled "Stop the smear campaigns against lawyers who are one of the fundamental elements of jurisdiction" was supported by 1660 people since 2 April 2015, but could not reach its target either. Another individual campaign intended for the personnel distribution in public institutions and created on 12 June 2015 addressed the State Personnel Department, Ministry of National Education and Council of Higher Education. This campaign was supported by 1227 people and could not be concluded. As an individual user, Damla Özen created another campaign emphasizing clean and non-violent politics. The campaign, which especially emphasized the demand for politics without hate speech and insult, was created on 3 August 2015, and was only supported by 42 people, thus, not concluded. Another campaign addressed to the Ministry of National Education was created by Emre Kaya with a special content regarding teacher appointments; the campaign was signed by 793 people since 30 January 2015, and could not reach its target. One of the campaigns addressed TBMM, as well as the government and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This individually-created campaign by Umut Erdoğan was entitled "A signature for peace". The campaign was signed by 192 people since 7 September 2015, and could not be concluded due to lack of support.

An individually-created campaign addressing the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and demanding the abolishment of the chambers affiliated to the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey could be concluded and evaluated as successful, as it was signed by 101 people while the target was 100. The campaign entitled "METU is home for science and democracy", created by Feride Yaşar Özdemir on 27 December 2015 and addressed the president and the government officials, was signed by only 19 people in a month and could not be concluded. An individually-created campaign objecting the resolution process was entitled "Terror must be stopped and ended" and addressed TBMM and the Government of the Republic of Turkey. The campaign was signed by 15 people only since 25 August 2015. A signature campaign individually-created by Sabah Deniz Şensoy, entitled "We do not want Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, addressed the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and Akkuyu Nükleer A.Ş. Created on 11 April 2015, the campaign could not be concluded either. It was supported by 27 people only. Aiming at adding a social value to the council, the campaign created by Turkish Foundations Council addressed TBMM, Presidency, Prime Ministry, Cabinet, and Directorate General of Foundations. Created on 20 October 2015, the campaign was supported by 12 people only. An individually-created campaign aiming at criticizing the education system, entitled "We want innovation in Council of Higher Education and Ministry of National Education", addressed the Council of Higher Education, Ministry of National Education, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, President, and Minister of National Education. Created on 6 November 2015, the campaign was supported by 14 people only.

### **3.2. Signature Campaigns Content Analysis Findings According to "Power" As Key Word**

Another concept creating content analysis with respect to opposition to political power is 'power'. With this concept, as a result of the search made on change.org Turkey website, 16 signature campaigns conducted against the power were examined. First campaign within the scope of the examination is concerned with the environment. The title of the campaign conducted against the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization is "Zoning for construction of Datça-Bozburun special environmental area by the Ministry means the destruction of nature". This individually-created campaign was supported by 29,173 people since its creation date, 5 May 2014. However, the campaign could not reach its target.

On the other hand, this campaign has more supporters than other examined campaigns. Nevertheless, it could not reach its target due to the fact that the targeted number of supporters was very high. Another examined campaign was created for the problem of headscarf usage in public space. This individual campaign, entitled "Stop the injustice: We want solution, not postponement", was created on 28 June 2013, when the aforementioned problem had not yet been resolved. The campaign addressed the Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, and AKP Group Deputy Chairmen of the time. It had 18,521 supporters in total. Nowadays, the aforesaid problem has been legally solved as well. That is the reason why it constitutes a successful example for our study, with regards to extra-parliamentary opposition to the power. A campaign created about the Internal Security Resolution, a frequently discussed topic in the Turkish political agenda, is another important signature campaign conducted against the power. The individual campaign was created on 20 February 2015, the period in which the resolution had been discussed. The addressee of the campaign entitled "No to Internal Security Resolution" was the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. With 41,617 supporters, this campaign was not concluded as its target was higher.

Another campaign was about the criticisms towards the educational system. Created by the Turkish Education Association, the campaign is entitled "Pay attention to the call of Turkish Education Association to restore the shattered educational system!" and addresses TBMM, Ministry of National Education and all political parties. With 16,326 supporters, the campaign has not yet been concluded. Another campaign was created for the electoral system. The individually-created campaign was entitled "We demand an implementation that will not allow for our being blacklisted on the basis of the ballot box". The campaign was created on 10 February 2015, before the 7 June 2015 elections, which was important for the Turkish political life with respect to its results, and could not be concluded with 4,294 supporters. Another individually-created campaign was entitled "Ağva to be the 40<sup>th</sup> District of Istanbul". Created on 10 March 2015, the campaign could not be concluded with only 273 supporters. Created on 20 April 2015, one of the examined campaigns was about a personal case, addressed to the Ministry of Justice, and entitled, "We demand the implementation of ECHR decision about the fact that meetings and protest marches are not crimes, and the abatement of the case proceeded against Güven Boğa, a teacher, Human Rights advocate and victim of police violence, to be heard on 30 April 2015." The individually-created campaign could not be concluded with 214 supporters.

Most of the examined campaigns had less than 100 supporters, and could not be concluded. Examined due to their power-opposing content, one of these campaigns, entitled "Increased scholarships not to be affected by student lodging prices!" was created on 4 November 2015, addressed to Credit and Dormitories Institution, Prime Ministry and Ministry of Youth and Sports, and supported by 37 people. Another individually-created campaign had 81 supporters. Created on 20 October 2015, the title of the campaign about terrorism was "DEATH SENTENCE to return as a radical solution to terrorism". Another campaign on terrorist incidents was created on 11 October 2015. Addressed to the Assembly, the campaign entitled "Damn the Terror for Income and Canvassing" was signed by 34 supporters. Created on 27 November 2015, the campaign on the freedom of the press, entitled "Stop the impositions and limitations on press in Turkey", is addressed to the ruling party and the president, and has been signed by 23 people. Another campaign addressed to the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, ruling party and opposition parties had 21 supporters. About divorces, the campaign was created on 20 June 2015 with the title "Divorced spouses and their children shall not suffer. The relationship between the divorced parents and their children shall be cost-free, and shall be carried out without the personal relationship verdict."

Created by Union of All University Personnel (TÜM-ÜNİSEN), the campaign on work safety could not be concluded with 43 supporters. The campaign entitled "Job Security of the Government Employee not to be Abolished! Do not Touch My Job Security!" has many addressees. Addressing Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Prime Ministry, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Ministry of Justice, Justice and Development Party, Republican People's Party, Nationalist Movement Party, Presidency of the Constitutional Court, Presidency of the Council of State, State Supervisory Council, and the Ombudsman Institution, the campaign was created on 20 November 2015. Another campaign addressing the Ministry of National Education was created on 9 April 2015 against mixed-sex education and could not be concluded with 21 signatures. Addressed to TBMM and Ministry of Justice, the campaign created on 18 February 2015 about hate crimes was signed by 6 people only.

The last campaign examined within the framework of 'power' as key word was created on 7 January 2015 against child death, addressed to TBMM, Turkish Armed Forces, and Ministry of Justice, and had 37 supporters.

Excluding a few of them, it is observed that most of the campaigns examined within the framework of ‘power’ as key word were individually-created and could not be signed by many.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The phenomenon of political opposition, indicator of the functionality of democratic institutions in today’s modern states, started in Turkey with the Tanzimat modernization. Since then, it has gone through various phases, and in this day and age, has been carried to a different dimension with technology. Especially with regards to extra-parliamentary opposition, technological developments affected the citizen participation as an intensifier.

The fact that the signature campaigns evaluated in this study, which was conducted so as to evaluate the reflection of the development of communication technologies on political opposition, are mainly individually-created is a remarkable result. The signature campaigns created against the political power were chosen while making searches with ‘politics’ and ‘power’ as key words, however, most of those signature campaigns have not yet been concluded. One can suggest that such a result was affected by the fact that the campaigns were mainly not organizationally-, but individually-created. Organized societies are more powerful than individual endeavors in terms of obtaining more productive results. Some of the campaigns were created by organized societies. Those campaigns were highly supported and could be concluded. This shows us the fact that organization is also important with regards to digital signature campaigns, which are means of political opposition.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the examined signature campaigns is that special topics that concern a specific part of the society were supported by a specific segment. The demand to be employed by the state and the objection to a possible increase in student lodging prices can be given as examples. As they concern a specific part of the society rather than the whole of it, the limited number such campaigns was affected by the anxiety created by sharing publicly available information on a digital platform and the weakness of the belief in their effect on the results. Sharing publicly available information on a digital platform, in other words, the fact that the campaign signers’ profiles are visible can be considered another reason for the failure of finding enough support for the topics about which the society is sensitive. When considered as the common ground for everyone, such campaigns are expected to be supported. However, inability to obtain such a support also shows the fact that the society in this sense does not have the culture of reconciliation.

Expect for a few, many campaigns could not reach the demanded number of supporters, while some of them were supported by very few people. Educational level and political interest of the society have effect on this. Titles and contents of some of the signature campaigns are not adequately explanatory. The fact that some of them target addressees other than their main addressee shows the lowness of the level of political interest. Unsatisfactory signature campaigns can also be explained with the weakness of the opposition culture. When the fact that even intra-parliamentary opposition was tried to be created by the state in the historical process is considered, the weakness of the social opposition is not difficult to comprehend. Arising from our political culture, this problem does not evaluate opposition other than objection. The phenomenon of political opposition, which contains in itself substantially the meaning of participating in administration other than by way of elections - especially by means of the developments in communication technologies, has not yet come into existence in Turkish political culture.

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**Table 1: Change.org Political Opposition-Oriented Signature Campaigns Content Analysis Categories**

1	Source of the Campaign – Who?
2	Addressee of the Campaign – To whom?
3	Subject of the Campaign – Says What?
4	Campaign Turnout – With What Effect?
5	Result of the Campaign – With What Effect?