

## Four Questions ... we asked Vegan Türkiye about intersectional vegan outreach and Nonhuman Animal Rights within the struggle for a redefinition of what an 'all-encompassing' political freedom would ideally mean

A compact interview N. Eyck (*NiceSwine.Info*) led with the progressive Turkish vegan activist group Vegan Türkiye, with some pressing questions about a country's movement that is bringing impulses for redefining veganism from an activist level as an ethical / political tool.



Visit Vegan Türkiye's blog on: <http://veganturkiye.blogspot.de/>, join them on Twitter: [@veganturkiye](https://twitter.com/veganturkiye).

N Eyck: Do you think that the vegan Animal Rights / Animal Liberation movement in Turkey is in a sense "forced" to be intersectional, i.e. are human rights and environmental justice issues inevitably a core part of the vegan AR/AL movement in circumstances of political oppression on a scale such as you currently face them within Turkey?

**Vegan Türkiye:** First of all, we can say that people in Turkey are under political pressure about what they eat, what they wear, with whom they make love and even how many children they should have. Today in Turkey human rights can be discussed frankly especially after the coups done. However, many people think that the struggle for animal rights should not be started before the end of human rights violations. That is, it should be known that there are human rights instead of "earthlings rights". By referring to Tom Regan we tell them that if we wait for the developments of human rights, time for animal rights will never come.

The Vegan movement in Turkey refuses species and class discrimination, it defends LGBTI rights, opposes each kind of urban renewal done for the purpose of annuity and each kind of ecological destruction. On the other hand, working class and traditional reflexes of the left focusing on labor struggle open their doors to this Vegan movement. Collective consciousness occurred with Occupy Gezi (Gezi Park

Resistance) shows itself also in the vegan movement. For instance, in occupied Gezi Park there was a vegan cuisine, which became both a meeting point of Vegans and a place where some met with veganism for the first time.

Some infirmaries, vets those were open and free for 24 hours were set for the animals affected by tear gas used during the occupation, and also announcements to take the animals in safer places were done during the day. One other bad memory from those days was that, the people supporting the animal rights were taken into custody from the commemoration done for all living beings killed / died during occupation.

Streets, squares, academies are not the places where people talk what kind of groups are marginalized, anymore. Vegans naturally reflect their political ideas to every area of life; but, the matter is actually being able to reach the main idea and giving animals right to be free. Furthermore, it is important to be able to make people believe that it is not only activists' business; it is also each person's business to deal with animal rights invasions.

N. Eyck: Blogging and social networking plays an essential role in the vegan AR/AL outreach work and info exchange and distribution in Turkey. On a parallel level, could a closer international reciprocal exchange (of ideas and about problems faced), create a new momentum and open up new possibilities for our movement's progress everywhere? In other words: is there a need for a "round table" in the global vegan AR / AL community to learn from each others experiences, etc.?

**Vegan Türkiye:** As you said before Internet is a vital tool to make the animal rights movement known all over the country and to share materials related to the movement. By using the Internet animal rights supporters make brainstorming and inform others as an individual, as a group and even as a civil defense organization. Although each of us has different ethics – it is obvious that we have different action and discourse types. There are sometimes misunderstandings and fierce quarrels, but we haven't experienced that those quarrels have turned into scandal, yet. We all follow us as online, and support one another. Animal liberty movement is being continued by ceaseless information shared via Internet. In this context, we will not be wrong if we say that the animal liberation movement is fed by social media and blogs.

Globally, more crowded, radical or creative communities are already being followed. A big form of an entity in which different experiences from different countries are shared can be installed instead of a 'global online' as a single entity; because, animal rights supporters sometimes ignore the local socio-economic and cultural differences, that is, the kind of struggle for animal rights in a place can be harmful in another place, that is why, everybody should be careful about the

movement. Besides having connection via internet, animal rights supporters can also keep in touch face to face even a few times in a year in order to share their knowledge, experiences and problems that they have faced.

N Eyck: Is Animal Rights theorizing and having ones own outspoken (or thought) standpoint about Animal Rights popular within the vegan community in Turkey?

**Vegan Türkiye:** Animal rights movement is so new in terms of organization. Even if some animal liberation activists are in the movement for so long time it can be said that we are now in trial and error period. Some approaches and works done in abroad lead us in this movement. In Turkey we have failed to have a common main discourse and the reason is actually not to be able to create a cultural base. Meanwhile, the first Turkish work written on veganism was published last year. The book written by Zülal Kalkandelen and Can Başkent was made with readers as online. It's not a theoretical book, but it's important for the readers to shed light on animal rights.

N. Eyck: Do you think that a practical and basically political vegan approach can establish a form of veganism that is less convenience foods and less consumerism-orientated? And can veganism become what it wishes to be: a cornerstone for food justice for our entire planet?

**Vegan Türkiye:** Of course, after a while what I wear, what I eat questions bring other questions, such as how much and from where I consume. You start to question the system established on exploitation. There is a growing bazaar for Vegans and corpus is taking advantage of it. As everybody's consumption habits and cultures are not the same, we are offering alternatives for vegans.

Some people think that they can share the movement without giving up their comforts. This side of the movement is definitely open to be questioned but we warn them to use the ecological products. We also remind people that they themselves can minimize the ecological damage of the products that they buy. According to the system that we are in, we have some problematic issues. At that point brainstorming should be done with other political and ethical vegans.

People love statistics. It would be tangible if you talk to people about what percentage of agricultural land planted to feed farm and diary animals or what percent of animal testing worked for humans in fact. It is effective to say that a century ago some rights which were deemed impossible, we have today, and that it is possible to turn into a vegan world, perhaps inevitably.

N. Eyck: Thank you so much for this interview!