RENEWED ATTEMPTS OF THE CURRENT OTSA ADMINISTRATION TO REMOVE THE NAMES OF FUAT KÖPRÜLÜ AND HALİDE EDİP ADIVAR FROM THE OTSA AWARDS

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The Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA) was initially founded in 1971 as the Turkish Studies Association to promote a more scholarly study of the Ottoman and Turkish studies and to initiate dialogue among scholars in the field. The Associations activities include the publication of a journal with short research articles, reports of meetings and conferences, book reviews, and granting of research scholarships and book prizes. Over the years, it has received endowments from the Turkish-Americans and Americans who hoped to contribute to a better understanding of Turkey and its past devoid of stereotypes prevalent in the West and especially in the United States.

Last year, in an announcement to its members made via email, the present administration of the OTSA attempted to remove and change the names of Fuat Köprülü and Halide Edip Adıvar from its book prize and the scholarship award.

Sadly, the main motivation behind the name-change hysteria on the part of the OTSA administration was not so much the achievements or failures of Halide Edip Adıvar or Fuat Köprülü, but the fact that Adıvar and Köprülü were not their ideological prototypes. Consequently, in an online debate that was broadcasted on YouTube and removed from the platform immediately afterwards, some members of the OTSA expressed dissatisfaction at the conduct of the OTSA administration, likening it to a Stalinist show trial for ideological purity. And as a result, the issue was left unresolved for the time being.

It is regrettable to see that at beginning of this year that the current OTSA administration has renewed its unabashed efforts to change the names of the Fuat Köprülü and Halide Edip Adıvar awards in the hopes of remolding the OTSA in line with their ideologies. This is not what the OTSA was founded for, and certainly not what the original donors who agreed to sponsor the Köprülü and Adıvar awards agreed upon. In short, the OTSA administrations current conduct amounts to an attempt to hijack the institution for personal and ideological agendas, which is in gross violation of the principles upon which the OTSA was founded.

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