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President and Justice and Development Party (AKP) Chair Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has defended his decision to appoint Prof. Melih Bulu, a member of his party, as the rector of Boğaziçi University, which has sparked outrage among academics and students.

The appointment was in compliance with the laws and he deemed Bulu worthy of the job, the president told reporters after Friday prayers in İstanbul's Üsküdar.

As for the protests, he said, "Unfortunately, there are terrorists involved in this business and those who don't have any relation with being a student."

Erdoğan also targeted Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the İstanbul head of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), who has been supporting the students, claiming that she is a "militant" of the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C).

After the president's remarks, the students who are continuing their protests at the university campus made a statement, rejecting his claims that they are terrorists.



Setting up a symbolic ballot, they had a vote on whether the rector of the university should be decided by an appointment or elections.

Meanwhile, students who were preparing to hold a demonstration in the capital city of Ankara in support of Boğaziçi students have been detained by police.

After it was announced that a demonstration would be held, police officers waited in front of the homes of students and took them into custody after they went out, according to a Twitter account set up by the students of the Middle East Technical University (METU).

Police officers also took people "who look like students" in the vicinity of Ankara' Kızılay square, it said.

The students detained in Ankara were released three hours later without any formal procedures, Mesopotamia Agency reported.

What happened?

Prof. Melih Bulu has been appointed as the President of Boğaziçi University in a Presidential Decree issued on January 1. The appointment of Bulu has sparked harsh criticisms among both the students and academics of the university as well as in the academic community.

Appointed to Boğaziçi, one of the most prestigious universities in Turkey, from outside its community, Bulu was a candidate for nomination to run in the Parliamentary elections in 2015 for the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is chaired by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The students and several students' clubs of the university have been campaigning on social media under the hashtag #kayyimrektöristemiyoruz (We don't want a trustee university president).

The call of the students was also supported by the faculty members of the university, who released a joint [statement](#) on January 3.

"An academic outside Bogazici University community was appointed as rector (university president), which is a practice introduced for the first time after the 1980s military tutelage," read their statement.

Amid harsh criticisms of students and faculty members, Prof. Bulu has shared a [message](#) on his Twitter account, welcoming his appointment to the position, saying, "We are all in the same boat."

The students protested the appointment of Bulu in front of the South Campus of the university in İstanbul on January 4. However, the police [intervened](#) into the protest with pepper gas and plastic bullets.

Next day, it was [reported](#) that there were detention warrants against 28 people for "violating the law on meetings and demonstrations" and "resisting the officer on duty." Later in the day, 22 of them were detained.

Forty people in total were detained over the protests.

About Melih Bulu

Prof. Melih Bulu was appointed as the President of Haliç University on January 17, 2020. In office in this foundation university for less than a year, he has been appointed as the President of Boğaziçi University.

He was a Dean and University President at the İstinye University from 2016 to 2019. Between the years of 2010 and 2016, he was the Head of the Business Management Department of İstanbul Şehir University's Business Management and Management Science Faculty.

He was the General Coordinator of the International Competitiveness Research Institute (URAK), an NGO working on the economic competitiveness of cities and countries, from the year 2017 to 2019. Since 2011, he has been the Executive Board member of the İstanbul Electric-Electronic Machinery and Informatics Exporters R&D Market.

In 2002, he founded the Sarıyer District Organization of the ruling AKP in İstanbul. In 2015, he was a candidate for nomination to run in the Parliamentary elections from the AKP in the first election district in İstanbul.

He studied Industrial Engineering at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara in 1992. He did his MBA and PhD at Boğaziçi University's Department of Management.

(DŞ/VK)

Erdoğan calls Boğaziçi University protesters 'terrorists' as 15 more people briefly detained
The president's appointment of a rector who is a member of his party has sparked protests among students and academics.

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