

From the Desk of the Editor

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals and governments across the globe have been reminded of the value of human life and the delicacy of human psychology. Societies have been forced to conform to governments' speedy decisions to prevent the spread of the virus, and individuals—from the most vulnerable to the most well-off—were forced to self-isolate. The isolation period involuntarily transmuted into a confrontation period, where we started to question the substance of all what we believed to be true. We questioned the aptitude of certain governments and their leadership. We witnessed fractures in long-standing, ironclad unions. We were dismayed by the helplessness of countries—even the US—in responding to the basic needs of their own people. Now, societies are increasingly questioning their leadership and wondering why their governments had not executed needs assessments, engineered crisis response protocols, or prioritized budgetary spending prior to the pandemic.

With the hardest times behind us, one still wonders: We know that the pandemic will eventually wear off, but will the effects similarly wane? Have we truly been reminded of the value of human life? Or is this just a period which we are temporarily strangled by our emotions? The theme taken up on TPQ's Spring 2020 issue titled *The Economy of Bodies: Human Trafficking, Forced Labor, and Refugees* coalesce perfectly with a time when the entire world continues to question collective values, priorities, and capabilities. While the world is recovering from the staggering effects of the pandemic, TPQ delves into a transatlantic contagion that is nowhere near recovery. The issue highlights a grotesque crime of modern life on a transnational scale—human trafficking—that generates billions in currency annually at the expense of millions of lives.

Throughout the issue, our contributors touch upon the economy of human trafficking, the societal consequences of labor exploitation, child labor, refugee crises, the gendered impacts of COVID-19, and youth's political participation. Despite the entrenched human trafficking networks, our authors point out that with inclusive and collective strategies, governments can effectively turn the tide around in the battle against human trafficking and forced labor. The Spring 2020 issue is a reminder that individuals and governments collectively have the responsibility of safeguarding universal morals and established principals.

On another note, this issue is special due to the contributions of extremely valuable authors and experts, especially Ekrem İmamoğlu, current Mayor of Istanbul, and Abdullah Ayaz, Director of Migration Management at the Ministry of Interior. I would like to extend a special thanks to Mayor İmamoğlu, for contributing to our issue while simultaneously catering to the economic and social needs of Istanbul during the pandemic—a grueling task for such a densely populated city—and to Director Ayaz, for agreeing to contribute while continuing to lead Turkey’s efforts in the elimination of human trafficking and its consequences across the country.

An important acknowledgement goes to our premium corporate sponsor this issue, QNB Finansbank, and also our media partner, Duvar English. In addition, we would like to thank our online sponsor, Monaco Economic Board, and express our appreciation for the continuing support of our other sponsors: Ford, Gordon Blair, Halifax International Forum, Hotel Best, Socar, TEB, and Turcas.

As always, we look forward to your feedback.

Ayşegül Erdem Ventura

AZERBAIJAN'S NATURAL GAS IS NOW AT MILLIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN TURKEY

