

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN TURKEY

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Makale İlk Gönderim Tarihi / Recieved (First): 05.05.2021

Makale Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 21.06.2021

Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic has affected social life in different ways in the countries. Managing the state of emergency caused by the pandemic is among the main duties of states. For this reason, the form of the state and its organization on its territory have a direct impact on its capacity to fight the pandemic. This study undertakes to review the fight against Covid-19 in Turkey. The purpose of the study is to reveal the functioning and effectiveness of the struggle against this pandemic. In this context, the decisions taken by the central administration are adapted to all provinces and districts and implemented nationwide. Implementation and supervision of the measures are coordinated by governors in provinces, and district governors in the districts. Thus, the decisions and measures taken can be implemented quickly and effectively. As a result, the provincial administration system stands out as a strength of Turkey in the fight against Covid-19.

Keywords: Turkey, Pandemic, Provincial administration, Governor, District governor.

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1. Introduction

The coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic that emerged in Wuhan City, China in late 2019 became a global pandemic in a very short amount of time. The emergence of such a pandemic, its impact on a global scale and the measures taken against the pandemic showed that States were faced with a phenomenon that they were not prepared for. The World Health Organisation declared a “global pandemic” on 11 March 2020. The first coronavirus case in Turkey was announced on 11 March 2020 and the first case of loss of life to Covid-19 in Turkey was recorded on 17 March 2020.

This virus outbreak is carefully monitored in Turkey. Crisis management was carried out against the pandemic within the Presidential Government System, which had come into effect in Turkey in 2018. The decisions for measures were taken by the executive power represented by the President of the Republic of Turkey in the central administration. In this process, while the Ministry of Health was overseeing the preparation of health infrastructure, monitoring of the cases, suggestion of measures to be taken; the Ministry of Interior came to the fore in regard to making public announcements and implementing the measures in the context of protecting public order. In the process managed by the President, the Ministry of Treasury and Finance took roles in the announcement of economic support packages, while the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Security in the provision of social assistance, and the Ministry of Education in ensuring the continuation of education remotely in an e-environment. Other ministries also supported the pandemic combat process in relation to their respective areas of responsibility. Legislative power fulfilled its responsibilities in the enactment of laws related to the pandemic, as so the judiciary in matters such as the postponement of non-urgent trials.

Administration of territory in Turkey is based on a provincial (territorial) administration system. This system represents the strong side of public administration against the pandemic. In this context, the measures taken by the central government were implemented and monitored throughout the country under the coordination of provincial authorities. In the Turkish provincial administration system, governors and district governors act as the representatives of the central government in 81 provinces and 922 districts and are responsible for the crisis management of disasters and emergency situations. Provincial and district governors serve as the head of the provincial and district administration. State territorial representatives undertake the functions of implementing, coordinating and supervising measures in the fight against widespread epidemics.

This study covers the period between 11 March 2020 (on which the first coronavirus case was detected in Turkey) and 03 May 2020. In this study, the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis management in Turkey is examined. The purpose is to examine the operation of the process of the fight against Covid-19 in Turkey in the central administration and Turkey in general. In the second part of the study, the conceptual framework will be explained. In the third part, the function of the central administration, and in the fourth part, the function in the provinces and districts will be discussed. The research outputs will be evaluated in the conclusion section.

2. Contextual Framework

2.1. Covid-19 Pandemic

The 2019-20 coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak was first detected on 01 December 2019 in Wuhan City, the capital of China's Hubei Province. It followed a rapid spreading course and became a global pandemic in a short period of time. The World Health Organisation declared the global coronavirus pandemic on 11 March 2020.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), approximately three criteria are sought to be met for a disease to be a pandemic. These criteria are: (1) being a new virus, (2) being easily passed

on to humans, (3) being easily transmitted from person to person and continuously (Idarecinin Sesi, 2020:9).

The Secretary General of the World Health Organisation, Tedros Adhonam Ghebreyesus, held a press conference on 12 March 2020. During this press conference, Ghebreyesus announced that, as of 11 March 118,000 cases of coronavirus was seen in 114 countries and that 4,291 people had died. Ghebreyesus said, “The speed and severity of the virus and the authorities' failure to take the necessary precautions brought us to alarming level. Therefore, we declare Covid-19 as a pandemic” (Idarecinin Sesi, 2020:9).

As of the morning hours of 04 May 2020, the number of cases of Covid-19 seen on a global scale was 3,581,870; the number of deaths was 248,555; and the number of patients recovered was 1,159,500 (Worldometers, 2020). On the same date, the number of cases and deaths in various countries were reported as follows: 1,188,421 cases and 68,602 deaths in the USA; 210,717 cases and 28,884 deaths in Italy; 186,579 cases and 28,446 deaths in the UK; 247,122 cases and 25,264 deaths in Spain; 168,693 cases and 24,895 deaths in France; 165,664 cases and 6,866 deaths in Germany (Worldometers, 2020).

Developments related to the virus outbreak was carefully monitored in Turkey. Preparations were made and measures were taken against the epidemic. The first case was detected on 11 March 2020. The first loss of life was recorded on 17 March 2020. According to the figures announced on 03 May 2020, the number of cases was 126,045, while the number of deaths was 3,397 and the number of patients recovered was 63,151 (GAMER, 2020b).

2.2. State Structure in Turkey

According to the 1982 Turkish Constitution, the form of government of the State is a republic (Article 1). Each state essentially carries out three activities: “setting rules”, “enforcing the rules” and “imposing sanctions in case of violation of the rule”. In order to carry out these three activities, three separate powers, namely legislative, executive and judicial powers, are envisaged.

Legislation in Turkey is conducted by Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). TBMM consists of 600 members of parliament elected by general suffrage. Executive power and duty is vested in the President's office in Turkey. Judicial power in Turkey is conducted by the independent courts on behalf of the Turkish Nation.

Until 2017, Turkey was governed by a parliamentary democracy system, after which a constitutional amendment came into effect and the transition to a Presidential Government (Presidency) was agreed and following the 24 June 2018 election, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was selected as the first President of the new system (Çapar and Yayla, 2019:16).

The administration of the state, organised at the central and provincial level, is a whole consisting of organisations linked to each other in a hierarchical relationship. Central administration essentially consists of the President, the Presidential Institution and the ministries. There are also additional structures that assist the central administration. The provincial organisation mainly consists of the provincial administration and the district administration.

With the Presidential Government System, the central administration was restructured. The President is at the core of this system. The Private Secretary, Administrative Affairs Department and Vice Presidencies are affiliated with the core.

Within the Presidential Institution there are four main offices: Finance Office, Human Resources Office, Digital Transformation Office and Investment Office. In addition, nine policy-making committees were established to determine policies in key areas. The names of these policy committees

are as follows: Science Technology and Innovation Policies, Education and Training Policies, Economic Policies, Security and Foreign Policies, Legal Policies, Culture and Art Policies, Health and Food Policies, Social Policies, Local Government Policies.

Further to this structure, 16 ministries are envisaged to operate in their respective fields. The State ministries are: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Environment and Urbanisation, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Industry and Technology, Ministry of Trade.

The General Staff Administration, National Intelligence Organisation, Presidency of Defense Industries, National Security Council, Presidency of Religious Affairs, State Supervisory Council, Directorate of Communications and Directorate of Strategy and Budget also fulfil their duties under the Presidency.

According to Article 126 of the 1982 Constitution; Turkey, in terms of central administrative structure, is divided into provinces, and provinces are also divided into other graded divisions according to their geographic position, economic conditions and public service needs. The administration of provinces is based on the principle of delegated authority (*déconcentration* in French).

Territorial administration means that sub-units (such as provinces and districts) are established in regions for administrative purposes and are governed by the representatives of the central government (TODAİE, 1998:176). The territorial administration system, which is organised in a centralised and hierarchical manner in line with an understanding of unitary State, is based on a structure as to separate the territory of the nation and to grade these divisions within themselves, and assign provincial governors as the State representative in these divisions (Çapar, 2015:56). Thus, the presence of central state authority is felt throughout the nation. On the other hand, there are also local government units, the municipalities, each of which has a separate legal personality, elected and has assemblies. The territorial administration system in Turkey, based on a deep-rooted tradition of State, remains today with this essence despite having adapted in the face of emerging socio-economic changes (Çapar, 2015:56). It can even be stated that it gives an appearance as being compatible with the Presidential Government System. In this context, it is emphasised that the territorial administration system is an essential and complementary element of the Presidential Government System (Ministry of Interior, 2019:75).

2.3. Duties and Responsibilities of the State During the Pandemic

In Article 2 of the 1982 Constitution, it is stated that the Republic of Turkey is a “democratic, secular and social state of law”. Article 5 of the Constitution imposed on the State the duty of “ensuring peace, prosperity and happiness of individuals and society, protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of the person, independence and integrity of the nation, indivisibility of the country, the Republic and democracy”.

According to Article 56 of the Constitution, “the State, regulates the central planning and service of health care institutions, with the purpose of providing for everyone to live with the continuation of physical and mental health, performing the cooperation by increasing the saving and efficiency of human and material power”.

A provision in Article 1 of Law No. 1593 on Public Health states: “It is one of the public services to correct the sanitary conditions of the country and to fight against all illnesses or miscellaneous agents

that harm the health of the nation, and to ensure that the future generation grows well, and to take the people to medical and social counsel.”

The Law No. 1593 envisaged the establishment of “public sanitation boards” with a participatory approach, including mayors and provincial and district directorates for health, under the chairmanship of provincial governors and district governors. The task of these boards is to ensure that necessary decisions are taken and implemented in the field of health.

3. Coordination and Cooperation in Central Administration

With the transition to Presidential Government System in Turkey in 2018, executive power was vested in Presidential mandate. Thus, the ministries, policy-making boards and other institutions created were envisaged to work effectively under the coordination of the President. In this context, with the Circular No. 2020/2 published by President in the Official Gazette dated 13 March 2020 and numbered 31067, a restriction was imposed on the “travel of public servants abroad” in scope of coronavirus measures that were taken.

With the memorandum referenced 12362 and dated 13 March 2020, the Presidency Administrative Affairs Department issued an announcement regarding “taking administrative leave”. This announcement informed that public servants that were eligible to take administrative leave from work could do so in the scope of measures taken for reducing presence/crowding in workplaces in public institutions. In addition, face-to-face education was suspended at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and higher education institutions. Following this decision, measures were taken to provide distant and online education (CB (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey), 2020d:1). A number of other measures were also taken, such as closing borders, banning flights, quarantine practices, banning use of public places and other social activities (Avşar et al., 2021:129). These measures were complimented with public support and participation in these measures.

In fighting against the pandemic, measures were rapidly put in place in line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health, the related Scientific Advisory Board and the instructions of the President (CB, 2020c:1). The implementation of measures related to public order and security was generally conducted by the Ministry of Interior. Thus, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior were the main actors in the process of fighting against the pandemic. In addition, other ministries supported the process in matters related to their field of duty: The Ministry of Treasury and Finance in the implementation of economic measures; the Ministry of Family Labour and Social Security in the provision of social relief support; and the Ministry of Education in suspending education and transition to online education (Akdemir and Tuncer, 2020:111).

During the process combatting the pandemic, support and measure packages were introduced to keep the economy and production active. In this scope, an economic stability shield to the value of 200 billion TRY was announced (CB, 2020a:1). Support packages for low-income families, tradesmen, employees and companies were introduced. During the coronavirus conditions, advanced digital systems were used to a high degree and requests for public services such as social assistance and travel permits were received through the e-State citizen portal (CB, 2020e:1). In this process, international cooperation was sought with over 75 countries to expedite the return to Turkey of over 40,000 Turkish citizens abroad. Aid was offered to 55-104 countries which made requests for assistance from Turkey (CB, 2020f: 1). By ensuring inter-agency coordination to combat coronavirus, civil society was also able to contribute to the fight against the pandemic (CB, 2020b:1; CB, 2020d:1).

The Turkish Grand National Assembly continued to work as a legislative body and passed legislative amendments on issues necessary to support the fight against the pandemic. The activities of

the judicial body were reduced, and hearings that do not require urgency were postponed to maintain general social isolation, distancing and reducing necessary contact.

During the pandemic, the President regularly informed the public through his addresses to the nation. The President announced that masks would not be sold commercially and that masks would be provided by the State. The decision was also taken for Covid-19 treatment would be free for citizens.

To manage the risks Covid-19 poses to public health, to reduce social mobility and encourage social isolation, several measures taken and put into practice by ministries, governorships, public institutions and organisations. However, the central level coordination by the Presidency and the governors and district governors in the provinces was of strategic importance in the effective execution of these measures.

3.1. Ministry of Health

With the Decree Law No. 663, the organisation, duties, powers and responsibilities of the Ministry of Health and its affiliates were regulated. The duty of the Ministry is to ensure that all citizens live in complete physical, mental and social well-being.

The Ministry of Health continues to fight against the pandemic within the scope of its duties and responsibilities provided by the Constitution, legislation and, especially, on the basis of the "Pandemic Influenza National Preparation Plan" published in 2019 (Ministry of Health, 2020). In this context, the Ministry has established a "Scientific Advisory Board" at the national level in 10 January 2020. Developments regarding the pandemic are carefully monitored and recommendations in this scope are provided by this Board. With the "Operation Centre" established within the Ministry on 10 January 2020, works, processes and developments related to the pandemic are monitored throughout Turkey. At the provincial level, the process is managed by the "Provincial Pandemic Coordination Boards" established under the chairmanship of the governor or deputy governor. The Ministry of Health established filiation teams in the provinces and districts with the aim of monitoring the environment/persons in contact with persons who had contracted the virus (Koca, 2020).

Turkish hospitals, regardless of whether they are state hospitals, university affiliated hospitals or privately owned, were prepared by Ministry of Health in the context of fight against the pandemic (Koca, 2020). In critical regions, the number of hospitals and the capacities such as number of hospital beds, number of intensive care beds, number of respiratory devices has been increased within the scope of measures taken. Rapid action was taken on the provision of medical devices and medication for the diagnosis and treatment of the coronavirus. Thus, with the health care system, Turkey has reached to the status of managing the pandemic effectively.

After detecting the first cases in Turkey on 11 March 2020, the first casualties of the coronavirus were recorded on 17 March 2020. As of 25 April 2020, the total number of cases were 107,773 and the number of people who died as a result of Covid-19 were 2,706. As of 3 May 2020, there were 126,045 cases, 3,397 deaths and 63,151 recovered patients in Turkey. Turkey offers a very good view of success on the detection and treatment of cases. The Minister of Health pointed out that the success of the Turkey in combatting coronavirus is based on effective "measures, detection and prompt treatment" (Koca, 2020).

During the fight against the pandemic, the public was regularly informed by the Minister of Health and members of the Scientific Advisory Board. In addition, the Law No. 1593 on Public Health attributes important duties, authorities and responsibilities to the Ministry, governors and district governors in managing the process.

Turkey was prepared to manage the Covid-19 pandemic with a strong health care infrastructure (hospitals and health institutions) and well-trained health care professionals. Within the fight against pandemic, the role of all health care professionals, especially the Minister of Health performing their duties devotedly has a great importance. In this fight, health care professionals were always supported by the central administration, provincial administration and local administrations, especially the municipalities.

3.2. Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior is an institution directly related to public life with the main duties it undertakes. For this reason, the Ministry of Interior took an active role in the fight against the pandemic.

With the Presidency Decree No. 1 within the state agency, “providing internal security and law enforcement” and “protecting public order” are among the duties of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior carries out these duties through its affiliated institutions, the General Directorate of Security, the Gendarmerie General Command and the Coast Guard Command.

There are also units within the Ministry of Interior for the management of crises and emergencies. The Coordination Centre for Security and Emergency Situations (GAMER) is the central unit of the Ministry (GAMER, 2020a). The Directorate of Disaster and Emergency Management (AFAD), which undertakes the responsibility of disaster management in Turkey, continues its duties as an affiliated institution to the Ministry of Interior.

In line with the mission of the General Directorate of Provincial Administration of the Ministry of the Interior (IIGM), it has come to the fore in the effective management of the fight against the pandemic (IIGM, 2020). The General Directorate of Provincial Administration has undertaken important duties and responsibilities in applying measures taken throughout the country and issuing circulars for the implementation of these measures. At the same time, law enforcement institutions of the ministry, AFAD and GAMER have undertaken important duties and responsibilities in the execution and monitoring of the measures taken.

As of 13 March 2020, the Ministry of Interior issued circulars on taking and implementing measures in a dynamic process (Ministry of Interior, 2020b). These circulars took within its scope a wide range of issues, from cancellation of face to face meetings and ceremonies, referral and transfer of prisoners and detainees, prevention of exorbitant prices of critical products, to the closure of public entertainment and recreational areas and venues, travel and modes of travel, transportation of agricultural workers, care of street animals, travel bans and curfews.

Mechanisms such as travel permit committees, public support groups, e-access systems and call centres were established in order to ensure effective implementation of the circulars issued to ensure social isolation and prevent transmission of the coronavirus.

On the other hand, these circulars were published in accordance with the spirit of the Presidential Government System and the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and in line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Science Board and the instructions of the President. This important point is clearly stated throughout the circulars.

4. Coordination and Cooperation in Provinces and Districts

The territorial (provincial) administration system, which is based on a deep-rooted State tradition, took its final legal form with the Provincial Administration Law No. 5442 enacted in 1949. Unlike other professions, the provincial administration, which undertakes the functioning and coordination of public institutions in ordinary situations and undertakes the function of “lifeguard in

extraordinary situations”, is a professional group based on the effective use of leadership skills on affiliated institutions and organisations and the staff working in these units (Ministry of Interior, 2019:124). It is also a critical duty that requires effective and continuous coordination with other units such as local governments, civil society and the private sector (Çapar, 2011:79). Provincial administrators are in a highly strategic position in the implementation of the decisions taken at the central level, throughout the country, ensuring coordination and supervision.

To this extent, the head of the provincial general government is the governor appointed by the President, who acts as the representative and administrative executive of the State and the President in the province (Çapar and Yayla, 2019:27).

Circulars and instructions published by the central administration are put into practice under the leadership of the governors in the province within the scope of the nation’s fight against the pandemic. In this regard, the provincial general sanitary board, the provincial administrative board and the provincial pandemic coordination board, which are under the chairmanship of the governor, take decisions within the framework of the central government and implement them at the provincial level.

In this context, the “public support organisation” was established in provinces and kept operational in order to meet the needs and demands of those age groups (0-20 years old and those over the age of 65 or who have chronic illness) for which curfews were applied, as well as controlling of the curfews by law enforcement forces are planned and implemented by the governorships in the province. The control of travel bans and the issuance of travel permit documents are coordinated by the governorships. Travels, working and living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers are kept under surveillance of the governorships (Ministry of Interior, 2020a).

Health care institutions and front-line health care professionals in the provinces are working under the supervision and control of the governor. Governors are also involved in the provision of solutions for problems faced by health care personnel.

Similar to the structure in the provinces, the district governors are the head of the district administration. The district governor, who is responsible for the general administration of the district, is appointed by the President and serves as the representative and administrative executive of the President (Çapar and Yayla, 2019:27). District governors are responsible for organising and supervising the general administration and operation of the district under the supervision and control of the governor.

Taking and implementing decisions regarding the implementation of circulars and instructions from the central government and governorship, such as the practices in the province, are undertaken under the duties and responsibilities of the district governors. In this regard, the authorised district sanitary board and district administrative boards meet under the chairmanship of the district governor.

Governors in provinces and districts executes the fight against the pandemic as the only public servants providing cooperation and coordination with the central administrative organisation in the province and district (for example, provincial and district health directorates work under the governor and district governor), local administrations, non-governmental organisations and the private sector (Ministry of Interior, 2019:37). Provincial governors also delegate certain duties and responsibilities in this matter to the elected village and neighbourhood mukhtars.

Quarantine measures are applied in the districts across Turkey, in which the numbers of cases are high. If the provincial and district sanitation boards are deemed necessary, a decision of quarantine conditions can be taken covering the district centres or districts, taking into account the numbers of cases and those in their contact. For example, quarantine measures are implemented in the district centre of Artvin Borcka and in the entire district of Adana Tufanbeyli (GAMER, 2020b). In addition, it was

decided to implement controlled entry and exit between districts by the provincial public sanitation boards in the provinces of Zonguldak and Sinop.

In accordance with the decisions taken by the provincial and district sanitary boards, which were chaired by the local administrative officers; on 10 April 2020, quarantine measures were applied in total of 185 areas of settlement, including 1 full district, 1 district centre, 6 towns, 102 villages, 65 neighbourhoods and 10 hamlets within 54 provinces in Turkey and 124,716 people were taken under quarantine (GAMER, 2020b).

On 15 April 2020 quarantine measures were applied in total of 227 areas of settlement including 58 provinces, 3 districts, 2 district centres, 6 towns, 85 neighbourhoods, 115 villages and 16 hamlets. The total population in the settlements where the quarantine measures were applied was 251,726. Conversely, quarantine conditions were lifted in 41 residential areas in 14 provinces (GAMER, 2020b).

Although there is a decision for a 14-day quarantine period, this may be extended if needed depending on the developments. Quarantine measures were lifted in areas of settlement which were observed to have reach their coronavirus related targets. For this reason, the number of quarantined settlements change daily.

Coordination for meeting the basic needs of people living in quarantined areas is also undertaken by the provincial governors.

Passengers coming from abroad were also subject to quarantine measures. As of 14 April 2020, it was announced that there was a total of 12,912 individuals how had travelled from abroad that were placed in quarantine (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2020). It is possible to categorise the travelling arrivals in four groups: (1) Students (2) Turkish citizens, (3) Returning from Umrah, (4) Foreign nationals coming to Turkey with transit flights but with connecting final flights cancelled. Those coming from abroad are hosted in the dormitories affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports under the coordination of the governorates. Transportation is provided by AFAD under the coordination and supervision of the governorates, and the food and beverage needs are met by the Turkish Red Crescent.

Call centres and hotline numbers were allocated to pandemic related matters in order to effectively meet the basic needs, demands and requests of the people living in quarantined places and the age groups under restriction where the curfews were imposed. Efforts were directed to meet the needs effectively with public support groups established in residential areas.

In addition, planning and control of travels in accordance with social distancing and hygiene rules were also under the responsibility of governors and district governors. In this scope, requests of persons requiring exceptions and permissions during travel restriction and curfew conditions were made via the e-State portal, call centres or personally to the district governorates. The requests were evaluated and a permit was issued to those deemed appropriate. It was also the responsibility of the governors and district governors to make decisions about the rules of traveling via public transport.

Social aid to be provided in the scope of measures for fighting against the pandemic were provided to eligible citizens by the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations established in provinces and districts, in which mayors are also members, and chaired by the provincial governors.

During the pandemic, a total state mobilization was carried out in the provinces and districts under the coordination of the provincial governors. Provincial organisations of the central administration managed and guided the activities in cooperation with the local administrations (municipalities, special provincial administrations and villages), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector with the support of the public.

5. Conclusion

It can be seen that the full-scale fight against the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic was effective, with the support of the public within the Presidential Government System.

From the moment of the first case of Covid-19 was seen in Turkey, pandemic related measures were taken by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, in accordance with the recommendations of Ministry of Health and Scientific Advisory Board and the instructions of President.

Many precautionary decisions were taken and implemented by the Ministry of Interior in order to manage the risk of the epidemic and conditions of contamination in terms of public health and public order, to ensure social isolation, to maintain social distance and to control the speed of its spread. Implementation, coordination and supervision of the measures taken by the central administration, is carried out by the boards under the chairmanship of the province and district governors.

In Turkey, province governors and district governors are considered to be the most powerful elements of the administrative system, especially in terms of managing crises, disasters and emergencies. During the global coronavirus pandemic, the decisions taken by the central administration were effectively implemented through the provincial governors with the board decisions taken at the provincial and district levels. In this scope, it was observed that provincial governors were fully committed to fulfilling their safeguard functions in these extraordinary situations.

Likewise, health care professionals in health care institutions, gendarmerie, police, coast guard personnel in law enforcement forces, affiliated institutions such as AFAD, GAMER and 112 (State emergency hotline) personnel working in the emergency call centres and all the personnel working in the provincial level of the central administration in emergency management performed their duties under the coordination and management of the provincial governors. NGOs were also instrumental in supporting the work conducted to manage the pandemic.

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