

Women Rights in Turkey: The Reflections of the 1930 Municipal Elections

Ayşe Bedir

Turkish Historical Society/Türk Tarih Kurumu

Abstract

The period between 1923-1938 in the formation of the modern Turkish Republic is an era that notably the political, social, cultural, economic, and judicial institutions rapidly restructured and a wide range of revolutions in many fields implemented. Undoubtedly, one of the most noteworthy revolutions of this period is the political rights that the Turkish women acquired. The foremost of which is the enfranchisement of woman that they gained the right to vote and to be elected by participating in the 1930 Municipal Elections. Naturally, those rights granted to the women in the political sphere were discussed and negotiated in the local and foreign press of the time and especially in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara. At the same time, this issue was also followed closely by the representatives of the embassies in Turkey. According to the US National Archives the American diplomat David Williamson relayed this development by his diplomatic report to the American governments. In this study, the said historical process from the beginning with the Tanzimat (Reorganization) Era to the 1930 Municipal elections will be conveyed in regards to the women's rights in Turkey, and then, the reflections of this achievement in the report of Williamson will be given, and also the aforesaid diplomat's respective evaluations and views will be examined in company with the official sources, newspapers, periodicals, and literature.

Keywords: American diplomatic reports; Atatürk era; enfranchisement of woman; political rights; Turkish revolution