



# The Day Turkey Stood Still, The: Merve Kavakci's Walk into the Turkish Parliament

*Richard Peres*

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On May 2nd 1999, Merve Kavakci walked into the Turkish Grand National Assembly to take her oath of office as a member of Turkish Parliament, wearing her Islamic headscarf (hijab), which is banned for civil servants in secular Turkey. A near riot ensued, and the Prime Minister told the crowd to 'put this woman in her place'. Since then, Kavakci has become an outspoken critic of Turkey's secularization policy, travelling the globe in support of Muslim women's rights, especially regarding the hijab, which she promotes as a symbol of female empowerment. *The Day Turkey Stood Still* is a unique behind-the-scenes story of the first headscarved woman to be elected into the Turkish Parliament, and the harsh reaction against her election. It reveals for the first time what happened behind closed doors to prevent Merve Kavakci from taking her oath of office, and deconstructs her vilification by the government, military, media and political parties. Richard Peres also uses this fascinating true story to promote greater general understanding of contemporary Turkish politics, and to illustrate the ongoing tension between Turkey's military-secular bloc and its predominantly Islamic population. This highly accessible book will resonate with Western readers who want to know more about this fundamental issue and gain a greater understanding of women's issues, religious conflicts, political Islam, human rights and the struggle for democracy in the Middle East. *The Day Turkey Stood Still* is required reading for any academic who wants to understand the dynamics and undercurrents of Turkish politics today.

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