



## Unregistered drivers scrutinized after woman's death

Following the brutal murder of a young girl by a minibus driver in the southern province of Mersin last week, the head of a drivers' union has called into question the vocational competence of drivers across the country, noting that two-thirds of public transportation drivers in Turkey are unregistered workers.

Speaking to the *Hürriyet* daily, Fevzi Apaydın, the president of the Turkish Drivers and Automobile Federation (TŞOF), argued that there are currently 1.7 million individuals working in public transportation, of which 1.1 million are not registered in the official records of the federation.

While bus drivers and other public transportation employees in developed countries such as the US and in EU countries are given periodic training and are required to pass certain physiological tests regularly, Apaydın said: "There is no set criteria to become a driver in Turkey. Those who obtain a driving license and a SRC document -- a must to be able to carry passengers in traffic -- can do so. Regular training and medical examinations do not exist [in the sector]."

Underlining that most drivers do this job as a secondary occupation, Apaydın said only 600,000 drivers are registered with the TŞOF. The other 1.1 million, however, are shift drivers.

Apaydın said the TŞOF undertook several studies on multiple occasions in the past in order to overcome this problem of informal employment but have not yet reached a solution.

Condemning the killing of 20-year-old Özgecan Aslan, who was murdered by a minibus driver in Tarsus district of Mersin last week, Apaydın said: "The TŞOF is closely following the incident. ... We have launched initiatives to prevent such an incident from happening again. Panic button-like practices which have been implemented for taxis to deter abductions and kidnappings should be considered for bus passengers as well. We will work on this in the coming days."

Apaydın maintained that the TŞOF has determined that the murderer is not a driver by profession but sometimes works as a driver.

The current situation of the sector in which there are no set criteria for becoming a driver and carrying passengers in traffic is unsustainable, Apaydın said, stressing that the Vocational Qualifications Authority (MYK) had recently released a national criteria list for drivers in the country which was prepared by the TŞOF, but the requirements in the list could not be put into practice due to some loopholes.

Among the vocational criteria released by the MYK is the ability to remain calm in cases of emergency and stressful incidents, paying attention to passenger needs, ensuring the safety of themselves and their passengers and maintain job discipline. **Istanbul Today's Zaman**