

23rd of April: A Day Dedicated to the Children

by Ümit Altar Binici

23rd of April is a special day known by every single people living in Turkey. It is a day to commemorate the establishment of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) in Ankara on the 23rd of April 1920, which also marked the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. However, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal - later to be given the surname Atatürk, which means "father of Turks," wanted this day to be dedicated to the children. As a result, from that point onwards, the 23rd of April has been celebrated as Children's Day.



Turkey's Children's Day, celebrated on the 23rd of April, is a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the father of the Turkish Republic, addressed the 23rd of April to all children worldwide to demonstrate that they are the future's successors. The Grand National Assembly assembled in Ankara during the War of Independence and laid the groundwork for a new, autonomous, secular, and modern

republic to rise from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. After the Allied invading powers were defeated on the 9th of September, 1922, and the Treaty of Lausanne was signed on the 24th of July, 1923, Atatürk began the process of creating the new state institutions. For the next eight years, Atatürk and his allies introduced sweeping changes in order to establish a new Turkey free of the Ottoman tradition. In an extraordinary gesture, he devoted the day of sovereignty to the children and delegated the preservation of this sovereignty and freedom to the youth. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)



Turkey's children observe National Sovereignty and Children's Day as a national holiday every year. Children's Day celebrations, among other April activities, are often held outside. Schools take part in week-long celebrations that include performances on all fields in front of a national audience. On this day, the children send delegates to replace state officials and high-ranking civil servants in their offices, among other activities. The President, cabinet ministers, governors of provinces, and mayors all hand over their offices to representatives of children. These children then sign executive orders regarding educational and environmental issues. On this day, the children also take over the Grand National Assembly from the parliamentarians and hold a special session to address topics involving children.



The Turkish Radio and Television Company (TRT) held the first TRT International on the 23rd of April Children's Festival after UNESCO declared 1979 as the International Year of the Child. The festival's first celebration attracted a total of five nations. This number has gradually increased over the years, with children traveling to Turkey from about 50 countries each year to take part in the festival. The foreign children are housed in Turkish homes during their stay in Turkey, where they can communicate with Turkish children and learn about their countries and cultures. The foreign children's groups also take part in the Grand National Assembly's special session. [\(3\)](#) [\(4\)](#)

Although last year's Children's Day celebrations weren't held outdoors due to the ongoing pandemic, children from all over the world published their regards over the internet. Their videos featuring them waving hands and flags besides delivering a short speech regarding the importance of the day were aired on the TRT EBA TV. Despite having to stay home on this year's the 23rd of April, we will continue to celebrate it and have our children, our future, cherish the spirit of this undying day.