

The Origin Story of the Medallion Campaign*

While The Society for Assistance to Darülaceze was responding to all kinds of needs of the institution, it also initiated an endeavor that aligned with one of its founding objectives: the establishment of nursing homes.

Around 1960, one of our esteemed female artists, painter Melek, visited Mr. Refik Tulga, who was then the Governor of Istanbul. She presented a medallion model she had designed in 1938 in Paris, moved by the deep sorrow she felt upon Atatürk's death, which occurred while she was working on medallion sketches.

She expressed her heartfelt wish: "I created this medallion to symbolize the gratitude of Turkish women toward Atatürk. If this medallion is minted and sold by women, I will have a monument built in Atatürk's honor."

Since she had not been able to realize this idea since 1938, she requested Governor Tulga's support. He, in turn, recommended that she speak with us. We eventually met and shared our thoughts.

We said: "Let's mint the medallions. But instead of a traditional monument, let's use the proceeds to establish a nursing home. Let this home itself become a living monument of gratitude to our Leader, symbolized by a large replica of the medallion placed on the front of the building."

We added: "On the medallion are written the words 'Atatürk, the Turkish Woman You Saved Offers Her Loyalty to You,' along with his birth and death dates. Everyone who sees it will understand its significance."

The artist found our proposal appropriate. We also met with the Governor again, and he supported our ideas. Thanks to the interest and efforts of the State Mint, thousands of medallions were minted.

From that point onward, Ziraat Bank, as well as women from Istanbul, Ankara, and other provinces, sold the large medallions for 50 TL and the small ones for 10 TL, helping us succeed in our nursing home initiative.

Establishing a nursing home was no easy task. On one hand, we were negotiating to allocate a fully equipped clinic suitable for the purpose, and on the other hand, we were making our utmost efforts to raise the remaining funds needed for its purchase.

Today, small medallions have been distributed to all of Istanbul's neighborhood mukhtar, making it possible for every household to participate in and contribute to the nursing home project.

Our honorable Governor Mr. Niyazi Akı has also supported us in this cause. By accepting the honorary presidency of The Society for Assistance to Darülaceze, he has provided his kind and enthusiastic support for our efforts to establish the nursing home.

* "This text is a summary of İffet Halim Oruz's speech broadcast on Istanbul Radio on April 7, 1964."