

Coal Mining in Turkey: State and Private Sector Interactions Subcontracting and *Redevance*

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Abstract

In this introductory report, coal mining accidents in Turkey, the historical perspective of the subcontracting and redevance system, and its effects on coal mining accidents are briefly reviewed.

KEYWORDS: Coal mining, mining accidents, subcontracting, redevance, Turkey

Mining industry is a business in which all tasks are dependent on each other, and any negative situation triggers an interconnected chain of dangers. Hence, mining is included among the most dangerous businesses in the Law number 6331 on Occupational Health and Safety [1]. To reduce the risks that are specific to that business to a minimum, experience, proficiency, and continuous control are required. Recent embarrassing and thought-provoking incidents in this non-technological sector based on human labor and exploitation are the direct indicators of the presence of great deficiencies in the chain of knowledge, experience, proficiency, and inspection. As in Soma and Ermenek disasters, coal mining is placed on the top among fatal accidents.

Characteristics differentiating mining from other industries [2]:

- The sources cannot be replaced and they are completely depleted.
- Each stage is very risky.
- The duration of gaining profits from investments is long.
- There is no probability for the selection of a place; the mines must be processed where they are found.
- It is a business with a high level of employment and labor, creating added value.
- It prevents migration because it is usually performed in rural areas.
- The regions where mining is carried out develop faster.
- It is too costly for a mine to resume action again after a pause in production process.

In Turkey, it was stated in the 4th article of the mining law that the mines would be under the authority and possession of the government until 2004, and the principle of the indivisibility of the rights was accepted in the 5th article. In accordance with this law, the mines cannot be handed to a third party. However, the holders of mining license, namely the government, transferred the rights of mining and franchise to private persons with contracts governed by private law for a certain sum of money. With this method called royalty, the holders of mining license signed a 5–10-year agreement with third parties making production as subcontractors. In the present literature, royalty is defined as the payment that private or legal persons, who have the privilege of running the mine, commit to pay to the real owner of the license, namely the government, per a ton of mineral [3]. In privatization literature, this is called leasing, which is exactly the same as royalty. The word “royalty” originated from French (*redevance*) was also used to mean extortion in feudal age. With an amendment carried out in the mining law in 2004, the implementation of royalty was based on a legal regulation. In brief, for a person to gain profit, the government must extract much more minerals than that extracted previously. We do not want to think about the effect of this condition on workers; however, we have seen the following results beyond our imagination: Workers whose lunch breaks have been stolen, a mindset focusing only on the profit, floods, which we have seen in the mines of the previous centuries, different shift workers stuck to the same place for saving work time, etc. Indeed, the number of fatal occupational accidents per a million ton of hard coal is higher in private sectors than in government enterprises in Turkey (Table 1). The most common cause of accidents is firedamp explosion.



Table 1. Fatal occupational accidents per million ton of hard coal [2]

	THA*	Private
2000	3.98	59.25
2001	2.12	94.82
2002	3.56	80.38
2003	3.98	229.44
2004	2.66	76.78
2005	6.00	3.91
2006	1.97	3.77
2007	2.98	18.36
2008	4.41	11.50

* Turkish Hardcoal Authority

Destroying existent accumulated experience in mining enterprises through royalty system, mines being run by unqualified, unequipped, and inexperienced persons or commissions, production projects prepared for gaining high profit in short time, and promoting incapable and unqualified per-

sons to key positions with political aims have made accidents inevitable. We wish that these embarrassing and painful massacres are stopped as soon as possible and decent working conditions are provided in mining industry.

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