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**PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY**

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**TURKEY: Justice at last! Pinar Selek acquitted after 16 years of judicial harassment**

**Paris-Geneva, December 19, 2014. *The Observatory welcomes the long-awaited for court decision to acquit Ms. Pinar Selek, 16 years after her arrest and protracted judicial harassment on fabricated charges of terrorism.***

Today, the Istanbul High Criminal Court No. 15 acquitted Ms. **Pinar Selek**, an academic known for her commitment towards the rights of the most vulnerable communities in Turkey. She was prosecuted for allegedly causing a bomb to explode in Istanbul's Egyptian bazaar on July 9, 1998, and for membership in a terrorist organisation.

In 1998, Ms. Pinar Selek was arrested and accused of supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and then of causing a bomb to explode. On the basis of these accusations, she was detained during two years and subjected to torture and ill-treatment, until her provisional release in 2000. Court's investigations largely confirmed the absence of any bomb and attributed the explosion to a gas leak. In addition the other defendant in the case who had accused her during interrogation withdrew his statement during the trial.

***"Since the outset the police and prosecution have failed to demonstrate that Ms. Pinar Selek had been involved in any terrorism-related activity. We welcome the decision of the court to acquit her at last"***, said FIDH President Karim Lahidji.

Previously, the Istanbul Special Heavy Penal Court No. 12 had acquitted her on three occasions: in 2006, 2008, and 2011. Notwithstanding, the Supreme Court quashed the first two acquittal decisions and requested the lower court to convict her. In, 2013, the Istanbul Special Heavy Criminal Court No. 12 deferred to the Supreme Court's request and sentenced Ms. Pinar Selek to life imprisonment, while the case was still pending before the Supreme Court. On June 11, 2014, the Criminal Chamber No. 9 of the Supreme Court decided to overturn the conviction on procedural grounds.

***"Countless procedural irregularities have been observed during the trial. She should have never been prosecuted in the first place. This decision should now become final"***, recalled Martin Pradel, Lawyer at the Paris Bar, who has been observing the legal process for the Observatory since 2011.

***"The ongoing judicial harassment of Ms. Pinar Selek illustrated Turkey's failure to live up to its repeated pledges to respect and protect human rights. This decision is a positive sign for the future"***, said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

The Observatory welcomes the acquittal of Ms. Pinar Selek and thanks all the persons, institutions and organisations who intervened in their favour. In addition, the Observatory calls upon the Turkish authorities to ensure the protection and a favourable environment for human rights defenders.

The Observatory has been particularly mobilised on this case, through the publication of nine urgent alerts, six trial observations and demarches towards the Turkish authorities and the international community at the highest level. For more information see Observatory mission report published in April 2014, available in English on the following web links:

<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/obsreporttur2014eng.pdf>

[http://www.omct.org/files/2014/04/22642/turkey\\_mission\\_report\\_pinar\\_selek\\_2014.pdf](http://www.omct.org/files/2014/04/22642/turkey_mission_report_pinar_selek_2014.pdf)

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