

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

TUR 001 / 0317 / OBS 026

Arbitrary arrest

Turkey

March 16, 2017

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Turkey**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the arbitrary arrest of Mr. **Raci Bilici**, Vice-President of the Human Rights Association (IHD) and Chairperson of IHD Diyarbakır.

According to the information received, on March 15, 2017, at 6:00 am, Mr. Raci Bilici was arrested in his house by five police men and brought to the Diyarbakır Provincial Security Directorate Anti-Terror Bureau, where he is still being held at the moment of writing this urgent appeal.

His lawyer has been denied access to his file because of a confidentiality order on it, and Mr. Bilici has not been informed upon arrest of any existing charges he might face. Thus, as of publication of this appeal, the existence of charges pending against Mr. Raci Bilici remain unknown. Reportedly, ten individuals would have been arrested in Diyarbakır the same day under the same conditions.

The Observatory would like to recall that Mr. Raci Bilici was amongst the 4'350 teachers who were suspended from duty in Turkey's South-Eastern Diyarbakır province on September 8, 2016 under Decree Law No. 677. The Ministry of National Education alleged that these teachers "joined activities to prevent domestic operations against terrorist organisations from being successful, to fail curfews declared in several districts and cities and to violate the right to education".

The arrest took place against the background of an increased repression against those who have expressed critical views of the current administration, including human rights defenders, following the July 15, 2016 failed coup, and in a particularly tense political climate, ahead of the constitutional referendum set to take place on April 16, 2017.

The Observatory fears that IHD's monitoring of human rights violations triggered the arrest of Mr. Raci Bilici. Indeed, IHD had recently provided information for a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) exposing human rights violations in South-East Turkey in relation to security operations conducted by the Turkish authorities between July 2015 and December 2016¹. IHD's inputs have been crucial, since the OHCHR had been refused access by the Turkish authorities to the South-East region to investigate into allegations of massive destructions, killings and other serious human rights violations.

The Observatory strongly condemns the arbitrary arrest of Mr. Raci Bilici, which appears to only aim at sanctioning to his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities.

Accordingly, the Observatory calls upon the Turkish judicial authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Raci Bilici, and end all forms of harassment against him.

¹ OHCHR, Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey, February 2017 available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities in Turkey, urging them to:

- i. Release Mr. Raci Bilici immediately and unconditionally, as his detention is arbitrary since it only aims at sanctioning his legitimate human rights activities;
- ii. Guarantee Mr. Raci Bilici's right to due process and a fair trial, including access to his lawyer and to information about the judicial procedure against him;
- iii. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Raci Bilici as well as of all human rights defenders in Turkey;
- iv. Put an end to all forms of harassment, including at judicial level, against Mr. Raci Bilici, as well as all human rights defenders in Turkey;
- v. Comply with all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular with its Article 1, 6(a), 9, 11 and 12.2;
- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Turkey.

Addresses:

- President of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Fax: (+90 312) 525 58 31, E-mail: contact@tccb.gov.tr
- Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Binali Yıldırım; Fax: +90 (312) 403 62 82
- Minister of Justice, Mr. Bekir Bozdağ, Fax: +90 (0312) 419 33 70; E-mail: info@adalet.gov.tr
- Minister of Interior, Mr. Süleyman Soylu; Fax: +90 (312) 425 61 30; Email: ozelkalem@icisleri.gov.tr
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Twitter account: @MFATurkey
- Ambassador Izzet Selim Yonel, Diplomatic Mission of Turkey to the European Union in Brussels, Fax: + 32 2 511 04 50, Email: tr-delegation.eu@mfa.gov.tr
- H.E. Ambassador Mr. Ali Naci Koru, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva, Fax: +41 22 734 08 59; Email: mission.turkey@ties.itu.int

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of Turkey in your respective country.

Paris-Geneva, March 16, 2017

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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