

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

TUR 002 / 1011 / OBS 119

Arbitrary arrest / Raids
Arbitrary detention / Harassment

Turkey

October 25, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (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 a new wave of arbitrary arrest and detention which targeted in particular members of associations of families of victims of abusive anti-terrorism policies, which struggle for the right to obtain the truth on enforced disappearance cases and for a peaceful settlement of the Kurd issue in Turkey¹.

According to the information received, on October 4, 2011, several members of the Association for Solidarity and Support of Relatives of Disappeared People "Yakay-der", an association member of the Euromed Federation Against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED), Messrs. **Kemal Aydin**, Spokesperson, **Selahattin Tekin**, member of the Board Council, were arrested in Istanbul as part of a vast operation in which more than 105 activists, mainly Kurdish political activists, were arrested. On October 11, 2011, Mr. **Cemal Bektas**, President of the same organisation, who had been away from Istanbul at the time, was also arrested as he was leaving Yakay- der's offices. On October 15, 2011, Ms. **Nahide Ormanci**, a member of the "Mothers for Peace" association, also member of FEMED, was arrested in the District of Silopi.

Mr. Cemal Bektas' family was only informed two days after his arrest about his situation and whereabouts. The four were later charged with "being a member of an illegal organisation" and have been placed in provisional detention in Istanbul and Silopi.

This campaign of arrest and judicial harassment is part of a wide ranged anti-terrorist operation intended to dismantle an alleged terrorist network - the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) - an organisation said to be the "urban branch" of the armed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that in fact target peaceful activists from the Kurdish community who are not related to any terrorist activities.

The Observatory denounces the continuing policy of arbitrarily arresting human rights defenders in Turkey, and particularly İHD members, members of trade unions and those fighting against the impunity of serious crimes and calling for a peaceful resolution of the Kurd question, which seems to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities. To that extent, the Observatory recalls that several İHD members are in pre-trial detention, notably Mr. **Muharrem Erbey**, İHD General Vice Chairperson and Chairperson of its Diyarbakir Province branch who had been detained since December 2009, Mr. **Arslan Özdemir** and Ms. **Roza Erdede**, İHD members in Diyarbakir, as well as members and executives of İHD Şanlıurfa Branch, the Education and Science Workers Trade Union (Egitim-Sen), the Health and Social Service Workers Trade Union (SES). Other human rights

¹ Yakay Der and Mothers for Peace are working for many years for Truth and Justice on enforced disappearances in Turkey. Their representatives are victims of daily harassment by the authorities against them. These associations seek to clarify the circumstances of disappearances and extrajudicial executions occurred in Turkey and this, by conducting research with families of victims, organising conferences and other outreach activities. Last July, the associations have organised a major conference on the existence of mass graves in Turkey asking the authorities to proceed with the exhumation of the bodies in order to return them to their families.

defenders remain in provisional release pending the outcome of criminal trials on alleged terrorism charges.

Accordingly, the Observatory calls upon the Turkish authorities to put an end to the continuing harassment against human rights defenders and urges the Turkish authorities to release all human rights defenders currently held in detention immediately and unconditionally, since their detention is arbitrary as it only aim at sanctioning their human rights activities.

Actions requested:

i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. Kemal Aydın, Selahattin Tekin, Cemal Bektas, Ms. Nahide Ormançı, as well as Mr. Muharrem Erbey, Mr. Arslan Özdemir and Ms. Roza Erdede as well as all other members of İHD, Egitim-Sen and SES Şanlıurfa Branch and, in general, all human rights defenders in Turkey;

ii. Release Messrs. Kemal Aydın, Selahattin Tekin, Cemal Bektas, Ms. Nahide Ormançı, as well as Mr. Muharrem Erbey, Mr. Arslan Özdemir and Ms. Roza Erdede as well as all other members of İHD, Egitim-Sen and SES Şanlıurfa Branch offices, immediately and unconditionally since their detention is arbitrary as it only aim at sanctioning their human rights activities;

iii. Put an end to all acts harassment, including at the judicial level, against Messrs. Kemal Aydın, Selahattin Tekin, Cemal Bektas, Ms. Nahide Ormançı, as well as Mr. Muharrem Erbey, Mr. Arslan Özdemir and Ms. Roza Erdede as well as all other members of İHD, Egitim-Sen and SES Şanlıurfa Branch offices and, in general, all human rights defenders in Turkey;

iv. Comply with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, as well as Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration” ;

v. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Turkey.

Addresses:

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- Foreign Minister Mr. Ahmed Davudoglu , Office of the Prime Minister, Başbakanlık, 06573 Ankara, Turkey; Fax: +90 312 287 88 11

- The Governor of Şanlıurfa Province, Celalettin Güvenç phone: +90 414 313 19; E-mail: sanliurfa@icisleri.gov.tr
- Ambassador, Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva, Ch. du Petit-Saconnex 28b - CP 271, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland, E-mail: mission.turkey@ties.itu.int, Fax: +41 22 734 08 59
- Diplomatic Mission of Turkey to the European Union in Brussels, avenue Louis Lepoutre, 99, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 340 98 79

Please also write to the embassies of Turkey in your respective country.

Paris-Geneva, October 25, 2011

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

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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