

PRESS RELEASE – THE OBSERVATORY

Turkey: Pinar Selek acquitted for the third time but proceedings are not over

Paris-Geneva, February 9, 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), welcomes the acquittal of Ms. Pinar Selek, a defender of women's rights and the rights of minorities.*

Concerned by the unfair prosecution of Ms. **Pinar Selek**, a writer and sociologist who is an active defender of the rights of women, disadvantaged communities and the victims of discrimination, including street children and the Kurd and Armenian minorities, who today, February 9, 2011, again appeared on trial before the Twelfth Chamber of the Istanbul High Criminal Court, the Observatory had sent an observer to attend the opening of the trial¹.

The Court heard the preliminary observations of the defence lawyers and the prosecution called again for the conviction of Ms. Selek and her condemnation to a 36-years prison sentence without providing any argumentation. After recess, the Court announced that it had decided to acquit Ms. Selek. This decision will again have to be reviewed by the High General Criminal Council of the Court of Cassation.

The Observatory recalls that the criminal proceedings against the human rights defender have been ongoing since 1998. Lastly, on February 9, 2010, the High General Criminal Council of the Court of Cassation had called for a 36-years prison term against for Ms. Selek. The Observatory recalls that the rights of Pinar Selek have been flouted for the last twelve years and that she consequently has neither been able to lead a normal life nor to continue her human rights defence activities.

Our organisations welcome Ms. Pinar Selek's acquittal, and thanks all the persons, institutions and organisations who have intervened in her favour.

The Observatory calls on the authorities of Turkey to put an end to this 12-year long judicial harassment against Pinar Selek in reprisal of her legitimate human rights defence activities. The Observatory also urges the Turkish authorities to order a thorough, immediate, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts, and to comply in all circumstances with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders as well as international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Turkey.

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¹ See the Observatory's Press Release, January 18, 2011.