



Joint NGOs Statement following the arrest of the President of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey

The undersigned organizations, members of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), express their deep concern about the recent arrest of the President of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT), Ms. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, together with MM. Erol Önderoğlu (journalist and Turkey representative of Reporters Without Borders) and Ahmet Nesin (journalist and writer).

According to the HRFT and media reports, Ms. Korur Fincancı and her colleagues were arrested on 20 June on charges of "terror propaganda", following their participation in a solidarity campaign with the Turkish newspaper Özgür Gündem. HRFT informs that following their arrest, they were detained in Bakırköy Women Closed Prison and Metris Prison respectively.

Ms. Korur Fincancı is one of the leading figures of the fight against torture and ill-treatment in Turkey. A well-respected academic and human rights defender, she contributed as a rehabilitation and forensic expert and human rights activist to the support of many torture victims, and to the global prevention of and fight against torture and ill-treatment, in Turkey and worldwide.

Ms. Korur Fincancı's arrest takes place in a worrying context, where intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and other persons who support the fight against torture and ill-treatment in the country is widely reported. These actions have a repressive effect on activities of civil society, which performs essential functions in protecting human rights and upholding democracy and the rule of law in Turkey.

In its Concluding Observations on Turkey of May 2016, the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) expressed that it was "seriously concerned about numerous consistent reports of intimidation and harassment of and violence against human rights defenders, journalists and medical doctors who provide assistance to victims of torture" and "numerous reports received of arbitrary detention of journalists and human rights defenders on terrorism-related charges [...]". The CAT further urged Turkey to "refrain from detaining and prosecuting journalists and human rights defenders as a means of intimidating them or discouraging them from freely reporting on human right issues" and "ensure an independent review of cases in which journalists and human rights defenders are presently on trial or appealing sentences handed down against them for membership in, engaging in propaganda for, or facilitating the activities of a terrorist organization [...]".

Together with the HRFT, the undersigned organizations call on Turkey to:

1. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, Mr. Erol Önderoğlu and Mr. Ahmet Nesin,
2. Release them immediately and unconditionally, and drop all charges against them since their detention is arbitrary and solely aims to prevent freedom of expression and their human rights activities in solidarity with press freedom,
3. Put an end to all acts of harassment, intimidation including at the judicial level, against all human rights defenders and journalists,
4. Put an end to the crackdown on human rights defenders in line with Turkey's international commitments,
5. Comply with all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders,
6. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Turkey.

Brussels, June 24, 2016

Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)

European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AEDH)

EuroMedRights

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT)

International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders