

Sign Letter to President Trump on Human Rights Defenders in Turkey

Sending Office: Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Sent By: Kimberly.Stanton@mail.house.gov

Dear Colleague,

We write to invite you to join us as the Co-Chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission in sending a letter to President Donald Trump regarding charges faced by Amnesty International Turkey's Chair and Director as well as other leading human rights defenders in Turkey. For questions or to sign on, please contact Kimberly Stanton at Kimberly.Stanton@mail.house.gov or 5-3599 (for Rep. McGovern) or Jamie Staley at Jamie.Staley@mail.house.gov or 6-1516 (for Rep. Hultgren). ***The deadline is noon on Wednesday, November 15th.***

Sincerely,

/s/

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC

November ##, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our deep concern regarding Turkey's ongoing politically motivated persecution of human rights defenders.

Last June 6th, Turkish authorities detained Mr. Taner Kiliç, the Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, and remanded him to pre-trial detention. On July 5th, Turkish police detained Amnesty International's Turkey Director Ms. Idil Eser, along with nine other human rights defenders, while

they were participating in a routine human rights workshop. This is the first time that a Chair and Director of a national Amnesty International branch have been arrested in the history of the organization.

Those arrested on July 5th are collectively known as the Istanbul 10 and include some of Turkey's leading human rights figures: Günel Kursun (*lawyer, Human Rights Agenda Association*), Ilknur Üstün (*Women's Coalition*), Nalan Erkem (*lawyer, Citizens Assembly*), Nejat Tastan (*Equal Rights Watch Association*), Özlem Dalkiran (*Citizens' Assembly*), Seyhmuz Özbekli (*lawyer*), and Veli Acu (*Human Rights Agenda Association*). In addition, two foreign trainers were also arrested, Peter Steudtner, a German national, and Ali Gharavi, a Swedish national. Eight of the ten were remanded to pre-trial detention.

All those arrested are indicted on the charge of "membership of a terrorist organization." If convicted, they face sentences of up to 15 years imprisonment.

On October 25th, after more than 100 days of pre-trial detention, a court ordered the jailed Istanbul 10 rights defenders to be released on bail. But the next day, Taner Kiliç's pre-trial detention was extended in a separate hearing.

The charges against the two senior Amnesty International officials and other human rights defenders are baseless. They were arrested merely for doing their work protecting the rights of others who are imprisoned and tortured. Their arrests represent a dangerous escalation in the ongoing attacks on fundamental human rights and civil society in Turkey following a failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016.

To date, at least 50,000 people have been imprisoned pending trial and more than 100,000 public sector employees have been summarily dismissed since the coup attempt. The authorities have targeted critical voices in the media and civil society: at least 130 journalists and media workers have been detained, and more than a hundred media outlets have been closed. Hundreds of NGOs have been shut down.

If these prosecutions are allowed to move forward without a clear response from the United States government, a precedent will be set that will not only threaten the legitimate work of Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, but will also embolden authoritarian regimes around the world. The Turkish government must understand that business as usual cannot continue under these conditions. The costs for human rights in Turkey – and for human rights around the world – will be immensely and unacceptably high.

Together, we urge you to publicly call on the Government of Turkey to halt the prosecution of these human rights defenders, drop all charges against them, and immediately and unconditionally release those still in detention, including Mr. Kiliç.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Members of Congress

Cc: Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

Selected legislative information: Civil Rights, Foreign Affairs

Deadline Title: Sign-on Letter to President Trump on Human Rights Defenders in Turkey

Deadline Start: 11/15/2017 12:00:00 PM

Deadline End: 11/15/2017 12:00:00 PM



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