

# URGENT ACTION

## DETAINED RAPPER ACCUSED OF PROMOTING DRUGS

**Rapper, Ezhel, was remanded on pre-trial detention on 23 May accused of 'publicly promoting drug use' in his lyrics, music videos and social media posts. He faces up to 10 years imprisonment if he is found guilty.**

Sercan İpekciöğlü, better known by his stage name **Ezhel**, was detained by police on 23 May after a second round of questioning over drug promotion allegations. He was remanded in prison on the same day and is currently held at Maltepe prison in Istanbul. Ezhel was previously detained and released after questioning in December 2017 amidst a similar investigation, but was summoned again in May by police after a separate complaint was submitted to the Prime Ministry's [Online] Communication Centre (BiMER) by a private citizen. If prosecuted and convicted, Ezhel could face up to ten years in prison.

Ezhel is a prominent figure on the Turkish rap scene and is known for his dark depictions of street life in urban Turkey. He was questioned over two songs which refer to the use of cannabis and a now deleted social media post displaying a photograph of the rapper holding a cannabis leaf.

The court decision to remand Ezhel in prison contained no material evidence that he has actively promoted the use of drugs.

Ezhel's detention is in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as protected under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) to which Turkey is a state party.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Ensure that Sercan İpekciöğlü (Ezhel) is released immediately and unconditionally as he has been detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, and that any ongoing investigations in relation to his legitimate artistic expression and social media posts are closed;
- Fully respect and protect the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression in Turkey.

**Contact these two officials by 13 July, 2018:**

Minister of Justice

Abdülhamit Gül  
Ministry of Justice  
Adalet Bakanlığı  
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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Ambassador Serdar Kilic, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey

2525 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC 20008  
Phone: 1 202 612 6700 OR 202 612 6701  
Fax: 1 202 612 6744

Email: [embassy.washingtondc@mfa.gov.tr](mailto:embassy.washingtondc@mfa.gov.tr)  
Contact Form: <http://washington.emb.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/Contact>  
Twitter: [@SerdarKilic9](https://twitter.com/SerdarKilic9)

**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 107.18*

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**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Although international human rights law does permit certain restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, these restrictions must meet a strict three-part test: they must be provided by law; and be demonstrably necessary and proportionate to protecting a legitimate aim, such as national security, public order, public health or morals, or the respect of the rights or reputation of others.

Ezhel's detention has occurred within a context of a crackdown on the right to freedom of expression and increasing restrictions on alternative viewpoints and forms of expression in Turkey. Since the July 2016 coup attempt, hundreds of journalists have been prosecuted and over 140 journalists and other media workers are currently in prison in Turkey. Human rights defenders, other civil society actors, and ordinary citizens have faced investigation, detention and conviction for expressing legitimate dissenting views. State broadcasters recently announced that they have blacklisted over 200 songs in response to a question submitted by opposition member of parliament during a State Business Enterprises Commission hearing. The songs have been blacklisted on vague grounds relating to their content, including 'violating the national and moral values of the country'. In March, the Deputy Prime Minister, Bekir Bozdağ, defended the decision to blacklist the songs stating, 'It is immoral to present [this] lawful duty as censorship'.

Name: Sercan Ipekcioglu ('Ezhel')  
Gender m/f: m

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