

Holding a meeting on human rights is not a terrorist conspiracy

10 July 2017

On 5 July 2017, ten participants in a human rights training meeting were detained at Büyükada, one of the Princes' Islands near İstanbul, Turkey. The group consisted of eight representatives of Turkish civil society organisations working on human rights and two foreign consultants on digital security and information management. By the afternoon of July 6, the lawyers of the detained persons learned that their clients are being investigated for membership of an armed organization, a terrorist offense, and will stay in investigative detention initially for seven days.

The undersigned organisations, national and international human rights NGOs from the OSCE region, members of the Civic Solidarity Platform, strongly reject this operation by the Turkish authorities. We appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of the detained persons, participants in a peaceful meeting to advance human rights. Human rights work should not be criminalized. Civil society work for human rights is an important contribution to a healthy society. Holding a meeting on human rights is not a terrorist conspiracy.

The Turkish citizens arrested are Özlem Dalkıran (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly), lawyer Nalan Erkem (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly), İlknur Üstün (Women's Coalition), İdil Eser (Amnesty International Turkey director), Veli Acı (Human Rights Agenda Association), lawyer Günal Kurşun (Human Rights Agenda Association), Şeymus Özbekli (Rights Initiative), and Nejat Taştan (Equal Rights Watch Association). The two consultants are Ali Gharawi, from Sweden, and Peter Steudtner, from Germany.

In the past years, human rights defenders have on several occasions been targeted by governmental repression. This latest attack on human rights defenders comes amidst a wave of repression after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 which has affected a much wider group of persons than those who may have been directly involved in the coup attempt, including journalists, lawyers and politicians. Only last month, Taner Kiliç, the president of Amnesty International Turkey, was arrested together with 22 other lawyers.

Article 19 (international, London)

Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement

Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House

Bir Duino (Kyrgyzstan)

Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)

Center for Participation and Development (Georgia)

DRA - German-Russian Exchange (Germany)

Fair Trials (international, London)

Golos Svobody (Kyrgyzstan)
Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor (Armenia)
Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
Human Rights House Foundation (international, Oslo)
Human Rights Information Center (Ukraine)
Human Rights Matter (Germany)
IDP Women Association "Consent" (Georgia)
International Partnership for Human Rights (international, Brussels)
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (international, Copenhagen)
Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (Azerbaijan)
Kadyr Kasiyet ("Dignity") (Kazakhstan)
Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
Kharkiv regional foundation Public Alternative (Ukraine)
Legal Policy Research Center (Kazakhstan)
Libereco - Partnership for Human Rights (Germany)
Moscow Helsinki Group
Netherlands Helsinki Committee
Norwegian Helsinki Committee
Office of Civil Freedoms (Tajikistan)
Promo-LEX (Moldova)
Protection of rights without borders (Armenia)
Public Verdict (Russia)
Regional Center for Strategic Studies (Azerbaijan)
Solidarus (Germany)
SOVA Center for Information and Analysis (Russia)
Swiss Helsinki Committee
Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Germany)
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (international, Geneva)

[country names added if name of country not included in the name of the organization; for international organisations, the city where their secretariat is located, is added]

The Civic Solidarity Platform is a decentralized advocacy network of independent civic groups committed to improving the human rights situation in Europe, Eurasia and the US,
www.civicsolidarity.org.

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