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Reference: **B1834**

**Mr Donald Tusk,**  
President of the European Council  
Rue de la Loi Wetstraat 175  
B-1048 Brussels  
Belgium

6 October 2017

Dear President Tusk,

## EUROPEAN COUNCIL MUST VOICE SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN TURKEY

I write to you to again raise Amnesty International's concerns on Turkey ahead of the next European Council meeting on 19 October and request that you show leadership in ensuring strong Council Conclusions on Turkey that reflect the dire human rights situation in the country.

The remanding in pre-trial detention of Amnesty International Turkey Chair Taner Kılıç in June, and its Director Idil Eser together with seven other human rights defenders in July marked a new low in the deterioration of the human rights situation in Turkey. Since the failed coup of July 2016, over 100,000 people have been dismissed without due process, over 50,000 people including journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders and academics have been imprisoned pending trial, 150,000 people are facing criminal investigations in the context of a massive crackdown on human rights and freedoms. Over 180 television and radio outlets, magazines and printing houses have been closed down, and thousands of journalists and other media workers have become unemployed.

The state of emergency first declared on 20 July 2016 has been renewed four times since, enabling the government to rule by decree and bypass parliamentary scrutiny. The draconian restrictions on rights of detainees under the state of emergency include the limitation of lawyers' visits with their clients to one hour per week under surveillance, undermining the right to a fair trial. Some individuals detained under anti-terrorism laws are unable to receive letters from their loved ones and can only receive visits from first degree relatives, also limited to one hour per week. Appeals for their release from pre-trial detention are routinely refused, without any reasoning. Allegations of torture and ill-treatment in police and prison detention continue to arise.

In light of these pressing issues we urge the EU, in line with its own human rights foreign policy by raising the following concerns in the next European Council meeting:

- Council Conclusions should make clear that progress on issues that Turkey wants, is highly conditional on improvements in the human rights situation, for which the end of the crackdown on human rights defenders (HRDs) should be a clear marker;
  - We urge for the immediate and unconditional release of Amnesty Turkey Director, Idil Eser and other seven HRDs currently detained with her, as well as that of Amnesty Turkey Chair Taner Kılıç and that charges against all 11
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rights defenders are dropped;

- We also urge the EU Special Representative for Human Rights to go on a mission to Turkey as soon as possible to raise the question of Human Rights Defenders in particular and to request visits with HRDs as per the EU Guidelines on HRDs;
- The EU must keep Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA) funding to Turkey under strict review, and in line with its own Treaty obligations not to fund human rights violations, and should as a precaution in this regard suspend all funding to projects managed by the Turkish Ministry of Justice.

Thank you in advance for taking our calls into your immediate consideration. We stand ready to provide any further information you may require on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Iverna McGowan  
Head of European Institutions Office and Advocacy Director