

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

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Turkey must release human rights defenders, still in jail after 100 days

- **Global protests mark “shameful milestone” for #Istanbul10**
- **[European Parliament to mark Amnesty Turkey director's birthday](#)**
- **Activists face 15 years in jail on trumped up terrorism charges**

One hundred days after their wrongful arrest, Amnesty International is leading a global demand for the immediate and unconditional release of 11 prominent human rights defenders in Turkey.

Ten activists, including İdil Eser, the Director of Amnesty Turkey, were arrested on 5 June whilst Amnesty International's Turkey Chair, Taner Kılıç, was arrested a month earlier. On 4 October a prosecutor filed an indictment calling for jail terms of up to 15 years for all 11 human rights defenders on absurd and trumped up terrorism charges.

“One hundred days ago our colleagues were locked up for standing up for human rights. Every passing day further exposes the long reach of the post-coup crackdown and the deep flaws in Turkey's justice system,” said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Europe Director.

“The indictment is a toxic mix of innuendo and untruth which does not stand up to the slightest scrutiny. It repeats ludicrous and contradictory allegations which have no place in any self-respecting courtroom.”

After three months the investigation has unsurprisingly failed to provide any incriminating evidence to substantiate the prosecutor's fantastical charges. Nor has it shown how the supposedly secret 'Buyukada meeting' relates to terrorism in any way.

The activists are accused of assisting a variety of 'armed terrorist organisations' with diametrically opposing ideologies and face maximum sentences of 15 years. The charges against them include outlandish claims that standard human rights activities such as appealing to stop the sale of tear gas, making a grant application or campaigning for the release of hunger striking teachers, were carried on behalf of terrorist organisations.

Some of the claims against İdil are based on Amnesty International documents and public communications that predate her appointment at the organization.

In the coming days, Amnesty International activists in more than 25 countries will hold more than 200 parties and stunts to mark İdil's birthday. These will range from a birthday party in the European Parliament to a press conference in a makeshift prison in Madrid. Full-size paper cutouts of İdil will be present at these activities to highlight her absence.

In Brussels, together with Amnesty International, Pier Antonio Panzeri MEP will host a [birthday party for İdil Eser](#) in the European Parliament from 19.30-21.30 on 17 October 2017. A protest will also be held outside the Turkish embassy at 10.30 on the 100 day 'anniversary' - 12 October.

“Rounding up human rights defenders was clearly intended to send a message that dissent will not be tolerated. But the courage of İdil Eser and her colleagues and the support they have garnered

around the world has sent a brighter message: that critical voices cannot be silenced,” said John Dalhuisen.

“The Turkish authorities must immediately and unconditionally release the imprisoned defenders and end the brutal post-coup crackdown that is ravaging the country.”

For more information or to arrange an interview contact Alison Abrahams on alison.abrahams@amnesty.org +32 2 548 27 73 or +32 483 680 812 or in case of absence, +32 (0)2 502 1499

Or Stefan Simanowitz on press@amnesty.org or stefan.simanowitz@amnesty.org or 0044 (0) 20 7413 5566

To find out more about the activities happening around the world search the hashtag #PartyWithIdil

Background

The Istanbul 10 were attending a workshop on wellbeing and digital security on 5 July when police raided the building and detained them all. They were held in Istanbul’s police headquarters until 18 July when they appeared before a judge following the prosecutor’s request that they be sent to prison pending their trial. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/09/who-are-the-istanbul-ten-and-why-have-they-been-imprisoned-in-turkey/>

The eight jailed human rights defenders are İdil Eser (Amnesty International), Günel Kurşun (Human Rights Agenda Association), Özlem Dalkıran (Citizens’ Assembly), Veli Acu (Human Rights Agenda Association), Ali Gharavi (IT strategy consultant), Peter Steudtner (non-violence and wellbeing trainer) and İlknur Üstün (Women’s Coalition) and Nalan Erkem,(Citizens’ Assembly). Two other human rights defenders arrested at the same time were released on bail. They are Şeyhmus Özbekli (Rights Initiative) and Nejat Taştan (Association for Monitoring Equal Rights).

Taner Kılıç, the Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, was detained on 6 June and accused of membership of the “Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization” on the basis of the unfounded allegation that he downloaded the ByLock secure messaging application. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/chair-of-amnesty-international-turkey-swept-up-in-post-coup-purge/>

In their own words:

“I am ready to pay the price for my choice to work on human rights and I am not scared. My time in jail has made me even more committed to standing up for my values. I will not compromise them.”
İdil Eser (8/19/17)

“We want women to be lifted from poverty and deprivation. We want them to have access to education and not to be subjected to abuse or rape. If that is a crime, then we are guilty, but it is a crime we will continue to commit.” **İlknur Üstün** (August 2017).

“I value the morale that the domestic and international campaign is generating for us in detention and for human rights defenders out there. I have never felt part of a family as much as I feel right now. So happy that you exist, that we all exist.” **Özlem Dalkıran** (October, 2017)

“It’s important to me that the political and legal responsibility for our situation isn’t placed on Turkey as a country or its people...Let us walk the non-violent path of human rights together!”
Peter Steudtner (September 2017)