



PRESS RELEASE

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**Turkey –Amsterdam, 22 November 2016**

## Lawyers for Lawyers and Fair Trial Watch monitor hearings in two trials in Turkey

### **Trial against 12 lawyers**

On Tuesday 22 November 2016, the criminal trial of 12 lawyers, almost all of whom are members of the OHD, the Association of Lawyers for Liberty, continued. All these lawyers are accused of involvement in terrorist activities.

Two of the lawyers on trial are Ayşe Acinikli and Ramazan Demir. Ramazan Demir previously defended both journalists and lawyers who are being prosecuted by the Turkish government in mass terrorism trials. He also represented the Dutch journalist Frederike Geerdink. Ramazan Demir and Ayşe Acinikli were held in pre-trial detention from 6 April until 7 September 2016.

During their interrogation, the lawyers were questioned about their previous activities, such as the complaints they had filed with the European Court of Human Rights about violations of human rights by the Turkish army during the siege of towns in Eastern Turkey. These towns were predominantly inhabited by Kurds. They also had to answer questions about visits they had made to clients held in detention and interviews they had given to (Western) media.

Lawyers from **Lawyers for Lawyers** (L4L) and Fair Trial Watch, accompanied by the President of the Amsterdam Bar Association, Pieter van Regteren Altena, attended the trial in Istanbul. Furthermore there were international monitors from France and Italy present.

The accused lawyers and their defense emphasized that the position of lawyers in Turkey is more difficult than ever. Last week, three organizations representing lawyers, the OHD, CHD and MHD (together with hundreds of other civilian organizations) were temporarily banned. On 22 November, the ban was made permanent. The accused lawyers and their defense are unable to conduct a proper defense in this atmosphere of repression.

One of the defense lawyers said: "We are in one of the darkest periods of repression: the banning of organizations, the arrests of lawyers, the silencing of the media."

The case has been postponed until April 20, 2017.

### **The KCK-case against 46 lawyers**

On 14 November 2016, monitors from **L4L**, Fair Trial Watch and the Dutch Bar Associations again attended a hearing in the KCK case – the case against 46 lawyers who are accused of being involved in terrorism. The trial started in November 2011. Some of the suspects in the case had been held in pre-trial detention almost 2.5 years.

During the hearing on 14 November, the trial was handled by three new judges and a new prosecutor. The defense argued that both the Prosecutor and the President of the Court who

handled the case originally were Gülen supporters, and suggested that they might have fabricated evidence against the suspects. Furthermore, the defense stated that there are connected files, which should be added to the case file, and that the present case file is a mess. They asked the new Prosecutor to re-evaluate the case and the evidence, and requested a postponement of the hearing in order to investigate these issues. After the Prosecutor accepted this request – which was the first time in this case that such a request was accepted -, the hearing was postponed until 9 March 2017.

### **Recent arrests of lawyers**

There are more lawyers who have been arrested. On Monday 21 November 2016, four lawyers were arrested in Mardin (Southeast Turkey): Ziya Bagi, Seher Acar, Mahmut Bingol and Feyzi Adsız. They are all members of the Mesopotamic Lawyers Association, and were engaged in documenting human rights violations in the area where fighting was taking place in the conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK. At the beginning of November, three lawyers (and seven journalists) from the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet were arrested in Istanbul: Kemal Gungor, Bülent Utku and Akin Atalay. They are still being held in pre-trial detention.

On 14 November 2016, Levent Pişkin was arrested. He is HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş' lawyer, an LGBTI activist and a member of the OHD. He was arrested shortly after he visited Demirtaş, who was arrested at the beginning of November, in prison. Together with the Law Society of England and Wales, **L4L** called for his release. On 16 November 2016, Pişkin was provisionally released. The (only) question posed to him during his detention was why he wanted to talk to Demirtaş.

### **Deep concerns**

**L4L** is deeply concerned about developments in Turkey and will continue to follow these closely, by, among other things, continuing to monitor hearings in cases involving lawyers. **L4L** will also continue to urge the Turkish government to respect lawyers and their role in the rule of law, in line with the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

### **Note to the editor, not for publication:**

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**Fair Trial Watch** is an independent and non-political Dutch Foundation that promotes a fair trial for everybody and anybody around the world.

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