



PRESS RELEASE

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Lawyers for Lawyers and Fair Trial Watch are monitoring trial against lawyers in Turkey

On Wednesday, 22 June the criminal trial of lawyers Ramazan Demir and Ayşe Acinikli will begin in Istanbul. They have already spent two months in detention on suspicion of terrorist activities. Demir previously defended both journalists and lawyers who were prosecuted by the Turkish government in mass terrorist trials. Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L) and Fair Trial Watch (FTW) will monitor the trial in Istanbul.

Ramazan Demir and Ayşe Acinikli are on trial with Irfan Arason, Huseyin Bogatekin, Sefik Celik, Adem Calisci, Tamer Dogan, Mustafa Ruzgar, Ayşe Gosterislioglu, Sinan Zincir and Raziye Oztuk, who are all members of the Libertarian Lawyers Association (Ozgurlukcu Hukukcular Dernegi – OHD). They are accused of being members of a terrorist organization and propagandizing for it.

Arrest of 11 lawyers in March 2016

The lawyers were arrested on 16 March 2016 with a great show of force where their homes and offices were searched. They were released some days after their arrest, but Ramazan Demir and Ayşe Acinikli were rearrested and since then have been held in pre-trial detention.

Human rights advocacy activities in the international arena

During the hearings the lawyers were questioned about their previous activities, such as the complaints they had filed to the European Court of Human Rights about violations of human rights by the Turkish army during the siege of towns in Eastern Turkey which were predominantly inhabited by Kurds. They also had to answer questions about visits they had made to clients held in detention, interviews they had given to (Western) media, their activities for the TUAD (an association for relatives of prisoners (of conscience)), Twitter messages about cases before the European Court, their defense of Gezi activists, and contact with international colleagues and civil organizations.

This trial fits in a pattern of terrorist trials that the Turkish government is bringing against its citizens- journalists, trade union members, human rights activists, members of parliament, academics and students who are committed to a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question and to freedom of speech.

Lawyers prosecuted because of their work

The fact that lawyers (and public prosecutors and judges) have for years also been subject to persecution has often been ignored. Lawyers are persecuted for their professional activities: they are identified with their clients or their clients' cases. Lawyers should be able to exercise their profession freely and independently, which is essential to uphold the rule of law. **L4L** and FTW call on the Turkish authorities to ensure the independence and safety of lawyers in their professional and personal capacities in compliance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

Note to the editor, not for publication:

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Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L) is an independent and non-political Dutch foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession. L4L has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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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