

## APPEAL

Subject: Quick decisions and the implementation of existing judgments of the ECHR on applications by the citizens of the Republic of Turkey

Dear Sir or Madam,

As we have learned from the press, there were 47 states ahead of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 59,800 court cases have been pending.

After Russia with 15,050 cases, Turkey is in second place with 9,250 cases.

The court deals with 25.2 percent with Russia and 15.5 percent with Turkey.

In 2019, 884 judgments were pronounced, 113 of them against Turkey. In 97 percent of the cases Turkey violated at least one article of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In front of the ECHR, Turkey has received the most judgments of freedom of expression violations. Of 68 judgments the court handed down in 2019 for violating freedom of expression, Turkey accounted for 35.

This information makes it clear that the plaintiffs from Turkey often about people who have not committed a crime but have exercised their democratic rights.

No democracy can exist in the long run if it there is a lack of people who exercise their freedom of expression.

Many cases are about Turkish media professionals doing their work. Also the representatives of the Kurdish ethnic group, peaceful in the print and digital media as well as elsewhere, are affected in the discussions about the recognition of national, cultural, linguistic and religious rights of their ethnic group like other communities such as the Assyrian / Aramaic, Armenian, Christian, Alevi and Yezidi ethnic groups. The judiciary regularly classifies this engagement as "terrorist propaganda" and brings those people in front of the court. These people must have the right to move freely and, without fear, express opinions about the government policies in Turkey.

It is well known that freedom of the press and freedom of expression continue to be massively suppressed in Turkey. Up to 170 journalists and other media professionals are currently in the country's prisons. In connection with the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, which, according to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "a gift from God" ractically all media, critical of the government, were banned in the two months thereafter.

For the most part, they were known as part of the Movement around the preacher Fethullah Gulen, who lives in exile in the United States. Leftist and Kurdish media were also banned. Overall, the ban affected 179 media organs (53 newspapers, 34 TV channels, 37 radio stations, 20 magazines, 6 news agencies and 29 publishers). 620 journalists were withdrawn from accreditation, some passports are declared invalid. The assets of the media organs

were seized by the state. Four years after the coup attempt, the detainees are still not released.

On the otherside, pressure on democratically elected mayors in the east of the country, which is mostly populated by Kurds, increased significantly. The Turkish authorities deposed eight mayors of the pro-Kurdish opposition party HDP, districts in the southeastern provinces of Batman, Diyarbakir, Bitlis, Siirt and Igdir, at the end of March on charges of terrorism. The police carried out raid to the district offices and arrested several HDP politicians.

Turkish President Erdogan is using the corona pandemic to crackdown on opposition activists both inside and outside the prison.

In this context, we recall the fate of Kurdish journalist Nedim Türfen, who has been detained in Van for three years. To date, he has not even received his indictment.

The way the Turkish judiciary deals with journalist and writer Ahmet Altan is not better. He is 70 years old and was sentenced to life imprisonment on February 16, 2018. He is detained since July 2016.

It is very dangerous, especially in times of the corona pandemic. The cells are overcrowded, absence of hygiene and adequate medical care is the case. The rule of law in Turkey cannot be talked about. The pressure to journalists increased after the December 2013 corruption scandal. Courts and prosecutors were brought on the line by Ruler Erdoğan.

Numerous critical journalists and other people in Turkey have no chance of a fair trial and have therefore lodged a complaint to the ECHR.

It is more important for the tribunal to deal with the cases of the journalists as soon as possible. However, we have to state that those affected are waiting for a decision by the ECHR for years without any result.

So is the head of the Samanyolu broadcaster, Hidayet Karaca, since December 19th, 2014 in prison. On 7th May 2015 he submitted an application to the European Court of Human Rights, requête no 25285/15. Since then, the journalist has been waiting for an answer from your court.

Meanwhile, the situation for Karaca is getting worse. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for various terrorist offenses. Today he is sitting in a cell in the Istanbul Silivri prison and suffering from various diseases. Recently it was known that over 80 inmates in the prison were infected with the dangerous corona virus. At least one of the inmates died from it.

The case shows that criticsers in Turkey have no chance of a fair trial. Critical journalists are also attacked regularly by their counterparts, close to the government. They are accused as being close to the Gülen movement or the Kurdish PKK. Since the attempted coup on July 15, 2016, the Gülen movement has also been classified by the Turkish government as a terrorist organization. We are watching that the critical media-people are regularly declared as targets by the Turkish government and the related media, supported by government.

So that you too can get a clearer picture of the situation in Turkey, we have our Memorandum "Turkey - guarantee freedom of the press and freedom of expression!", the irregularities on the subject clearly listed in the country. Political prisoners in Turkey increasingly get into the risk of becoming infected with Covid-19. We therefore ask the ECHR to decide about the cases of journalists like Hidayet Karaca or Hanım Büşra Erdal, who is worked for the Daily newspaper "Zaman", as well as other people from Turkey, as quickly as possible. Please also clarify why about the cases mentioned here and other cases has not been decided even after years.

We also appeal to the ECHR to use all existing mechanisms for Turkish government, that is a member of the Council of Europe, to accept judgments of the ECHR unconditionally and to implement these immediately.

It is a scandal that the Turkish government is overruled over the decision to release the former HDP chairman Selahattin Demirtaş. Also the Turkish civil rights activist and cultural patron Osman Kavala remains in prison despite requests from the ECHR.

Best regards,

Ulrich Delius, Direktor der Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (GfbV)

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-To all members of the EU Parliament