

## Joint Press Release

### New blow to Rule of Law in Turkey: more than 50 Turkish lawyers arrested for denouncing the repression of protesters

Paris-Geneva, June 12, 2013. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA – International Association of Lawyers), and the Conférence internationale des Barreaux (CIB – International Bar associations Conference) express their deepest concern following the arrest of more than 50 lawyers who were demonstrating inside a courthouse in Istanbul to denounce the repression of the “Occupy Gezi” protesters and call upon the authorities to guarantee the free exercise of the right to freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression.

During the afternoon of June 11, 2013, more than 50 lawyers, who were protesting at Çağlayan Justice Palace (the main justice court in Istanbul) to denounce the repression of the “Occupy Gezi” protestors, were arrested by members of Turkey’s special forces.

According to some reports, Vice Chief Public Prosecutor Zekeriya Oz ordered their arrest. All those arrested were taken to a hospital before being transferred to the Anti-Terror Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters. Around 100 lawyers gathered outside the police station demanding that their colleagues be released.

Reportedly, many of the lawyers were beaten and kicked on the ground by the police and their clothes were torn. To date, the legal basis for their arrest remains unclear. All lawyers were released shortly after their arrest.

As a similar peaceful protest should take place today at noon before the Çağlayan Justice Palace, our organisations proclaim that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national [...] level[s]”<sup>1</sup> and that for that purpose the “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone [...] against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights [...]”<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, “lawyers, like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights (...)”<sup>3</sup>.

Recalling the role of lawyers as agents in the administration of justice, our organisations call upon the Turkish authorities to:

- guarantee the free exercise of the right to freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression of lawyers;
- carry out a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into the above mentioned use of

<sup>1</sup> Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly.

<sup>2</sup> Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly.

<sup>3</sup> Article 24 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted on December 18, 1990 by the United Nations General Assembly

- force, bring any offender before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the sanctions provided by the law;
- guarantee their safety and integrity in all circumstances; and
  - respect the rule of law.

Finally, we remind that 36 lawyer remain in detention today for the legitimate exercise of their profession and call on the Turkish authorities to put an end to all kinds of harassment against lawyers involved in the defence of human rights.

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