

STATEMENT

Paris, May 5, 2023

**Turkey: Abusive Mass Detentions against Lawyers Must Cease**

In the morning of Tuesday April 25, 2023, more than 120 people were detained across 21 provinces in Turkey as part of an investigation conducted by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. Twenty-two lawyers, all members of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (Özgürlük için Hukukçular Derneği), were among the detainees, along with journalists, artists and human rights defenders.

The UIA-IROL is much concerned that the offices and residences of the detained lawyers were searched without the presence of a representative of the bar association, as is required, and that some case files were also illegally seized. The ÖHD headquarters in Diyarbakir were also subjected to a search.

A confidentiality order was imposed on the case, and the detainees were prevented from meeting with their lawyers for 24 hours. According to the information received, at least three of the lawyers were formally arrested and transferred to prison facilities, on April 27, 2023. On that same day and the following day, 15 other lawyers were released with judicial control measures in the form of an international travel ban and requirement to report to the nearest police station. The processes against the other detained lawyers are reportedly still pending.

It is our understanding that the lawyers were charged with “membership of a terrorist organization”. However, it appears that these charges are directly related to their exercise of the legal profession.

This new wave of mass arrests took place in a tense electoral context ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey.

The UIA-IROL condemns these detentions and arrests, **which appear to be arbitrary and in disregard of the very fundamental principles of the legal profession and due process guarantees**, as enshrined in all international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Turkey.

Moreover, the UIA-IROL deplors that, once again, lawyers in Turkey seem to be targeted by the misapplication of counter-terrorism legislation, and continue to be systematically aligned with their clients and/or their clients’ interests or causes, which is flagrantly inconsistent with the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers ( Principle 18).

**The UIA-IROL urges Turkish authorities to immediately release all lawyers who have been unduly arrested for carrying out their professional activities.**

**The UIA-IROL further calls upon the Turkish authorities to put an end to all forms of harassment of lawyers in Turkey, and ensure that, in all circumstances, such lawyers are able to carry out their professional activities and duties without fear of intimidation, retaliation and improper interference, as provided by the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Principle 16).**

The UIA-IROL will continue to closely monitor the situation. It takes this opportunity to express its unconditional support to and solidarity with all individual lawyers and bar associations in Turkey who continue to courageously and fully assume their core role in the defense of human rights and the Rule of Law, despite challenging circumstances.

### **More about UIA-IROL**

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*The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.*

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For more information go to: [www.uianet.org](http://www.uianet.org) - [uiacentre@uianet.org](mailto:uiacentre@uianet.org)  
**Contact:** Julie ROSA, Communication & Digital Strategy Manager, [jrosa@uianet.org](mailto:jrosa@uianet.org)