

TURKEY: THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL COMMUNITY CONDEMNS THE DETENTION OF FOUR ÇHD LAWYERS AND THE RAID ON THEIR OFFICE

8 February 2024

The OIAD¹, together with the undersigned organisations, condemns the detention of lawyers Didem Baydar Ünsal, Berrak Çağlar, Seda Şaraldı and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı, members of the Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD), following a raid on their office in Istanbul on February 6, 2024.

On February 6, 2024, following an armed attack on the largest court building (Çağlayan Courthouse) in Istanbul, two assailants were shot dead by the police. According to police sources, the attackers were members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C).

Following this attack, several offices of various organisations were raided and ransacked by police forces in Istanbul. Among them is the **People's Law Office**, where **four lawyers, members of ÇHD, were detained. Didem Baydar Ünsal, Berrak Çağlar, Seda Şaraldı and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı** have since remained in custody in Vatan Police Headquarters awaiting to be transferred to the courthouse.

The detained lawyers have been **denied access to their lawyers** for 24 hours following their detention. Due to the confidentiality order on the case file, **colleagues acting as defence counsel are also unable to access the content of the file**. Such restrictions to the defence rights rule out the possibility of knowing the ongoing accusations against these lawyers and the reasons behind the raid of their office.

The People's Law Office also includes lawyers Selçuk Kozağaçlı, Barkın Timtik, Aytaç Ünsal and Oya Aslan, who have been imprisoned for years, as well as 18 other accused lawyers. Given that the office has often defended alleged members and supporters of the DHKP-C in criminal proceedings, these fellow lawyers have already been accused of being members or supporters of the DHKP-C themselves. This unacceptable identification of the lawyers with their clients also seems to be the reason for February 6 attack on the People's Law Office.

For the above reasons, the undersigned organisations urge the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release lawyers **Didem Baydar Ünsal, Berrak Çağlar, Seda Şaraldı and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı**.
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the rights to due process, legal defence and access to justice in the case of **Didem Baydar Ünsal, Berrak Çağlar, Seda Şaraldı and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı**.
3. Guarantee, in all circumstances, that **all lawyers in Turkey are able to carry out their legitimate professional activities without fear of reprisals**, and free of all undue restrictions, including judicial harassment, arbitrary arrest, deprivation of liberty or other arbitrary sanctions, in compliance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, adopted in Havana in 1990.

The listed organisations remind the Court and the Turkish authorities that the world is watching.

¹ The International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD) is an initiative founded by the French National Bar Council (France), the Paris Bar (France), the Spanish National Bar Council (Spain) and the Italian National Bar Council (Italy) and it represents 49 bar association that support the project. This Observatory was created with the aim of coordinating its work with other entities, networks and mechanisms that operate in the field of protection for lawyers in general and human rights lawyers in particular.

The following organisations sign this statement:



UIA Institute for the Rule of Law



The Law Society of England and Wales



International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD)



BARREAU
DE
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ORDRE
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Barreau de Bruxelles



Institut des droits de l'Homme du Barreau de BRUXELLES



Institut des
Droits de l'Homme
Barreau de Montpellier

Institut des droits de l'Homme du Barreau de MONTPELLIER



European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & Human Rights



Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer



Syndicat des Avocats pour la Démocratie



Giuristi Democratici



New York City Bar Association



Ordre des Barreaux Francophones et Germanophones de Belgique



FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders



World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders



AED - European Democratic Lawyers



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di Bologna



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