

Quick Response Desk
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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Date: 26 June 2020

FOR THE ATTENTION OF:

- **Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders**
- **Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences**
- **Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Expression**
- **Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association**
- **Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism**
- **Working Group on Arbitrary Detention**

Dear Sir/ Madam,

URGENT ACTION: The unlawful and arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of women human rights defenders, including members from the Rosa Kadın Derneği (Rosa Women's Association, RWA), Free Women's Movement (TJA) and Kurdish politicians in Turkey.

1. We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the unlawful and arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of women's human rights defenders Adalet Kaya, Narin Gezgör, Fatma Gültekin, Gülcihan Şimşek, Özlem Gündüz, Remziye Sızıcı, Sevim Coşkun and politicians Mehmet Ali Altinkaynak, Mehmet Arslan, Celal Yoldaş and Veysi Kuzubla, whose arrest was made in connection to an investigation against the RWA. The detention

of these human rights defenders is the latest of a series of actions taken by the Turkish State to unlawfully restrict the freedom of expression of human rights defenders, including women's rights groups, within Turkey.

Background

2. On 15 July 2016, a faction of Turkey's armed forces staged a violent coup attempt, which resulted in the deaths of over 200 and injuries to over 2,000 people¹. Following the attempted coup, the Government of Turkey (Government) declared a three-month state of emergency to commence on 21 July 2016. The state of emergency was later extended seven times (by three month increments each time) and eventually ended on 19 July 2018². The state of emergency exacerbated the 'purge' of state organs and civil society. Human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and NGO members who had sought to expose rights violations have been persecuted and often arbitrarily detained and imprisoned³. The common thread is, under the guise of national security arguments, the suppression and criminalization of all expression or association of those who are perceived to *potentially* express, inspire or support criticism of state action or expose state wrongdoing.
3. Under the state of emergency, the Government introduced amendments to the Municipalities Law, which granted the power to replace locally elected Kurdish mayors with Government-appointed trustees, known as the *kayyum*⁴. Following the March 2019 local elections, 45 mayors of a total of 65 municipalities won by the People's Democratic Party (HDP), a Kurdish-rooted opposition party, were dismissed and replaced with trustees. The broad provisions of the Anti-Terror Law and the Penal Code has enabled arbitrary abuse and overly broad interpretations by State security and Prosecutors to implicate the enjoyment of the right of freedom of expression of dissenting society in Turkey⁵.
4. Women's rights groups are amongst the hundreds of NGOs that have been required to close by Government decree since the 2016 coup attempt. In particular, Kurdish-led

¹ Amnesty International, *No End in Sight, Purged Public Sector Workers Denied a Future in Turkey*, 2017, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/6272/2017/en/>>

² On 9 August 2018, the lifting of the state of emergency and end of the derogation period was notified by the Turkish Government to the Secretary General of the UN, <<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2018/CN.378.2018-Eng.pdf>>

³ Amnesty International, *Turkey: NGOs unite to defend civil society from destruction*, 27 February 2019, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/turkey-ngos-unite-to-defend-civil-society-fromdestruction>>

⁴ European Commission, *Turkey 2019 Report* <<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf>>.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Submission by Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists and the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project*, 2 June 2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/02/submission-human-rights-watch-international-commission-jurists-and-turkey-human#_ftn15>.

women's groups in the South Eastern Kurdish region have been subject to harassment by State authorities and female consultancy centres have been closed down by trustees in former-HDP municipalities.⁶ This can be seen as part of an increasing and systematic erosion of women's rights in Turkey at the national level. According to a 2019 EU report, gender-based violence contributed to the deaths of 440 women in 2018.⁷ However, there is little political commitment to gender-based violence and the State-authorized closures of women's organisations have left many women without access to support, all constituting a violation of Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), both of which are international agreements that Turkey is a State Party to.

5. Women's rights defenders exercising their right to freedom of assembly during peaceful protests organised have frequently been met with police use of force. On 25 November 2019, police used tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse a women's march held to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was claimed to be a "proportionate intervention" by the Police Directorate.⁸ Throughout December 2019, multiple demonstrations have led to the arbitrary detention of women's rights defenders on various charges. On 8 March 2020, thousands of women took part in a march for International Women's Day in Turkey, including women's rights organisations protesting against femicide in Turkey, the disappearance of student Gülistan Doku⁹ and a draft bill that could grant amnesty for perpetrators of sexual abuse¹⁰. As well as the use of force against peaceful protestors, women's rights defenders have faced other forms of harassment, such as the closure of the Antakya Purple Solidarity Women's Association's premises, which was sealed without notice for allegedly "organising training without permission."¹¹ Female journalists have also been arrested, including Melike Aydın from *Jinnews*.
6. This harassment and arbitrary detention of women's rights defenders takes place against a background of repressive measures against civil society, as well as a deteriorating rule of law. The independence and impartiality of the judiciary has been substantially

⁶ World Organisation Against Torture, *Turkey: Women's Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs*, 20 December 2019 <<https://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/turkey/2019/12/d25650/>>.

⁷ European Commission, *Turkey Report 2019*, May 2019. <<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf>>.

⁸ World Organisation Against Torture, *Turkey: Women's Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs*, 20 December 2019 <<https://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/turkey/2019/12/d25650/>>.

⁹ The disappearance was treated as a suicide without any police investigation.

¹⁰ Saeed Abdul Razzak, *Bill granting amnesty to rapists sparks outrage in Turkey*, 26 March 2020. <<https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2200756/bill-granting-amnesty-rapists-sparks-outrage-turkey>>.

¹¹ World Organisation Against Torture, *Turkey: Women's Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs*, 20 December 2019 <<https://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/turkey/2019/12/d25650/>>.

undermined by legislative and constitutional amendments (both pre-coup and post-coup) which have increased executive influence over the judiciary. The judiciary now lacks the capacity to ensure a robust system of justice and uphold the rule of law, especially with reference to remedies for human rights violations by state actors flowing from the state of emergency measures¹²

Case Study

7. The RWA is a women's rights group in Diyarbakir, advocating against gender-based violence. It was established following the Government-decreed closure of all women's organisations in Diyarbakir and is currently the only women's organisation involved in support work and active struggle against violence perpetrated against women in the region¹³. The RWA and the TJA, another women's rights group in the region, are both unofficially linked to the HDP. In the early hours of 22 May 2020, the homes of at least 19 people were raided by special operation forces as part of an ongoing investigation conducted by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office against the RWA and HDP.
8. Amongst those detained were twelve women's rights defenders from the RWA and TJA: RWA President Adalet Kaya; founding members Ayla Akat Ata and Narin Gezgör; association executive Fatma Gültekin; Gülcihan Şimşek; Zelal Bilgin; Özlem Gündüz; Remziye Sızıcı; Gönül Aslan; Sevim Coşkun; Nevriye Çur; and Nazile Tursun. Also detained was member of the Diyarbakir Peace Mothers' Assembly¹⁴ Rebia Kiran. Six male politicians were also detained, Kasım Kaya, Veysi Kuzu, Hüseyin Harman, Celal Yoldaş, Mehmet Arslan and Mehmet Ali Altinkaynak.
9. In addition, police also raided the office of the RWA in the Kayapinar district of Diyarbakir, confiscating organisational documents, mobile phones, tablets, video-tapes and hard disks.¹⁵ A 24-hour confidentiality clause was placed on the case-file by authorities, meaning the reasons for detention and potential charges were initially unknown¹⁶.
10. The women's rights defenders and male politicians were detained on suspicion of 'membership to a terrorist organisation' under 220/7 of the Penal Code. The six men were

¹² See. International Commission of Jurists, Turkey: the Judicial System in Peril : A briefing paper, <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Turkey-Judiciary-in-Peril-Publications-Reports-FactFindings-Mission-Reports-2016-ENG.pdf>; Council of Europe Group of State Against Corruption (GRECO), Fourth Evaluation Round Turkey: Corruption Prevention In Respect of Members of Parliament, Judges and Prosecutors, 15 March 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-evaluation-round-corruption-prevention-in-respect-of-membersof/1680792de8>;

¹³ Zehra Doğan, *TJA and Rosa Women's Association's Activists Arrested*, 23 May 2020. <<http://www.kedistan.net/2020/05/23/tja-rosa-women-activists-arrested/>>.

¹⁴ A group of Kurdish mothers who have lost children to the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, calling for peace.

¹⁵ Aziz Aslan, *Turkey: Opposition DBP members remanded in terror probe*, 24 May 2020. <<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-opposition-dbp-members-remanded-in-terror-probe/1852243>>

¹⁶ Steve Sweeney, *Women's Organisations Criminalised in Turkey after scores of arrests*, 25 May 2020. <<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/w/womens-organsations-crminilaised-turkey-after-scores-arrests>>.

accused of being ‘secret members’ of the RWA, with the exception of Mr. Veysi Kuzu¹⁷. These arrests were made on the basis of an alleged secret witness statement that linked the women’s rights defenders and politicians to a terrorist organisation¹⁸.

11. Following interrogation at the Anti-Terror Branch, Nevriye Çur, Ayla Akat Ata, Zelal Bilgin, Nazire Tursun and Hüseyin Herman were released on judicial control. The remaining fifteen were requested to be detained by the Prosecutor and referred to the Diyarbakır 1st Peace Judgeship. The judge placed 68-year old activist Rebia Kıran under house arrest¹⁹ and ordered pre-trial detention of RWS President Adalet Kaya and members Narin Gezgör, Fatma Gültekin, Gülcihan Şimşek, Özlem Gündüz, Remziye Sızıcı, Gönül Aslan and Sevim Coşkun, and politicians Mehmet Ali Altınkaynak, Mehmet Arslan, Celal Yoldaş and Veysi Kuzu. The eight women’s rights defenders were sent to Diyarbakır D Type Closed Prison on the grounds of participation in the 8 March protest, protesting against the appointment of trustees in HDP municipalities, statements made to the press, support of hunger strike action and protesting against the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan (imprisoned leader of PKK).²⁰ Gönül Aslan was later released on appeal with her 3 year old son on 9 June 2020.
12. According to a TJA statement, lawyers present during the interrogation informed them of the questions asked by the Prosecutor, including: *Why did you organize the March 8th rally? What was your aim?; Why did you make statements to the press about the replacement of mayors by government appointed trustees? What was your aim?; Why did you support the activities by Peace Mothers pressing the State to accept the humanitarian demands of the hunger strikers?; What is the relationship between TJA and the Rosa Women’s Association? Why are they supporting one another?*²¹ The human rights’ defenders were also questioned about the TJA’s motto “*co-chair system is our purple line*” and the “*Where is Gülistan*” protests.²² Such questions clearly show that the arrest and detention of the women’s rights defenders was an attempt to suppress the exercise of their right to peaceful assembly and expression.

¹⁷ FIDH, Turkey: *Arbitrary Detention of WHRDs and Judicial Harassment of Rosa Women’s Association*, 27 May 2020. <<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/turkey-arbitrary-detention-and-judicial-harassment-of-rosa-women-s>>.

¹⁸ Evrensel, *Arrested on charges of ‘informal member’ of Rosa Women’s Association*, 27 May 2020. <<https://www.evrensel.net/haber/405749/rosa-kadin-derneginin-gayri-resmi-uyesi-iddiasıyla-tutuklandilar>>.

¹⁹ FIDH, Turkey: *Arbitrary Detention of WHRDs and Judicial Harassment of Rosa Women’s Association*, 27 May 2020.

²⁰ Bianet, *12 people arrested in Diyarbakır*, 25 May 2020. <<http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/224746-12-people-arrested-in-diyarbakir>>

²¹ Zehra Doğan, *TJA and Rosa Women’s Association’s Activists Arrested*, 23 May 2020. <<http://www.kedistan.net/2020/05/23/tja-rosa-women-activists-arrested/>>.

²² Ibid.

13. The detainees were also interrogated about statements they had made during telephone conversations taped by the authorities, such as comments expressing dissenting opinions on war. The TJA stated that this reflects the “state mindset which would have people prohibited even from expressing privately that they are against war.”²³ It was emphasised by RWA Board Member Gözde Engin in a press conference that all the actions and activities listed as evidence of alleged offences, such as participation in the 8 March protests, were carried out with the permission of the governorship.²⁴
14. It was declared that the use of slogans “*Jin jiyān azadī*”, “*Don’t interfere with our free will, No to isolation*”, “*Where is Gülistan Doku*”, “*Women want peace*” and “*Co-chair system is our purple line*” are illegal and incriminating.²⁵ The slogan “*Femicides are political*” was also said to be incriminating.
15. It is clear that protected forms of the freedom of expression and assembly under international law have been used as a basis for the investigations carried out against these women’s rights defenders. This can be seen as part of a wave of repression and harassment against women activists and women institutions, as well as human rights defenders more generally. The use of the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in favour of women’s rights should not be treated as criminal evidence.

Turkey’s Obligation to Protect Women’s Rights Defenders

Domestic Law:

16. The fundamental rights and freedoms of every individual are guaranteed under domestic law in the Turkish Constitution of 1983 (the Constitution). Article 26 guarantees the right to freedom of expression, which states that “everyone has the right to express and disseminate his or her thoughts and opinions [...] without interference by official authorities.”²⁶ The right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed under Article 34 of the Constitution, which states that everyone has the right to organise assemblies and demonstrations without using arms and without obtaining permission. The right to personal liberty and security is guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution.
17. Under Article 10, these fundamental rights are recognised equally for everyone before the law. In 2004, the Article was amended to include an explicit provision for gender,

²³ Zehra Doğan, *TJA and Rosa Women’s Association’s Activists Arrested*, 23 May 2020.

<<http://www.kedistan.net/2020/05/23/tja-rosa-women-activists-arrested/>>.

²⁴ ANF News, *Rosa Women’s Association members hold a press conference*, 1 June 2020.

<<https://anfenglishmobile.com/women/rosa-women-s-association-members-hold-press-conference-44189>>.

²⁵ Emily Apple, *One of the most progressive women’s movements in the world is being repressed by a NATO state*, 24 May 2020. <<https://www.thecanary.co/feature/2020/05/24/one-of-the-most-progressive-womens-movements-in-the-world-is-being-repressed-by-a-nato-state/>>.

²⁶ “*Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*”, 1982, available at: <https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf>.

stating that “men and women have equal rights. The State shall have the obligation to ensure that this equality exists in practise²⁷.” Under Article 90 of the Constitution, where there is a conflict between national law and international treaty law concerning the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, the provisions of the international agreements shall prevail.

International Law:

- 18.** Under international law, among others, the fundamental rights and freedoms are enshrined under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), both of which Turkey has ratified. Under the ECHR, everyone has the right to the freedom of expression, the right to freedom of assembly and the right to liberty and security²⁸. Article 14 prohibits any discrimination in the enjoyment of these fundamental rights and freedoms made on the basis of gender.
- 19.** In recognising the existence of discrimination against women in the enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, CEDAW operates both as a bill of rights for women and as an agenda to end discrimination against women.²⁹ As a State Party to CEDAW, Turkey has an obligation under Article 3 to take measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Turkey is also a State Party to the the Istanbul Convention, which constitutes the most far-reaching international treaty in tackling violence against women.³⁰ Under Article 4, the Istanbul Convention prohibits discrimination against women in the enjoyment of their fundamental rights and requires States to take necessary measures to promote and protect the rights of women to live free from violence in both the public and private sphere. In particular, Article 9 of the Convention requires Parties to recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental organisations and civil society active in combating violence against women and to establish effective co-operation with these organisations.
- 20.** Moreover, as a party to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (the Declaration), Turkey has a general duty to take all necessary measures to ensure protection against violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of a human rights defender’s legitimate exercise of their right to

²⁷ “Constitution of the Republic of Turkey”, 1982, available at: https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf.

²⁸ “Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, 1950, available at: https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.

²⁹ Preamble, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, December 1979, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>.

³⁰ “Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence,” 2011, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>.

protect and promote their own, or another's, human rights.³¹ The Declaration similarly protects the fundamental freedoms of human rights defenders, such as the right to association and the right to freely disseminate views and information on human rights.³² Thus, it necessarily includes the State's obligation to refrain from undue interference with human rights defenders' rights.³³

21. The Declaration places additional positive obligations on States to create an enabling environment for human rights defenders, such as the promotion of education on human rights.³⁴ On a similar note, the Council of Europe noted that States should "create an environment conducive to the work of human rights defenders, enabling individuals, groups and associations to freely carry out activities, on a legal basis, consistent with international standards, to promote and strive for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms without any undue restrictions."³⁵
22. Finally, Article 12 of the Declaration protects human rights defenders from arbitrary detention, prosecution and judicial harassment in the exercise of their fundamental freedoms.³⁶ This is also reflected in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which emphasises the obligations of States to refrain from acts that violate the fundamental freedoms of human rights defenders as a result of their human rights work.³⁷ The European Court of Human Rights (the ECtHR) has consistently found that human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable to arbitrary use of criminal law and, therefore, any measure to restrict the fundamental freedoms of human rights defenders must be made with "enhanced scrutiny".³⁸ The Court has indicated several factors that may indicate a misuse of State power against human rights defenders, such as an arrest forming part of a larger campaign to crack down on non-governmental organisations.³⁹

³¹ Article 12, A/RES/53/144, 8 March 1999, available at: <<https://undocs.org/A/RES/53/144>>.

³² Article 5; Article 6, the Declaration.

³³ Written comments in the case of *Taner Kılıç v. Turkey* (Application No. 208/18), August 2019, available at: <<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8bbe8c89c172835f9455fe/t/5d5a7b5ffbeeb000019c7c09/1566210920345/16082019+Kilic+v+Turkey.pdf>>.

³⁴ Article 15, the Declaration.

³⁵ UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, *Practical Recommendations for the Creation and Maintenance of a Safe and Enabling Environment for Civil Society based on Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/32/20, 2016, para 4.

³⁶ Article 9, the Declaration.

³⁷ OSCE, *Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders*, 2014.

<<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/1/119633.pdf>>.

³⁸ ECtHR, *Osman Kavala v. Turkey*, App. no. 28749/18, 10 Dec. 2019, para. 231; *Alajos Kiss v. Hungary*, App. no. 38832/06, 20 May 2010, para. 42.

³⁹ ECtHR, *Rasul Jafarov v Azerbaijan*, App. No. 69981/14, 17 Mar. 2016, para 159.

Application of the Law:

- 23.** The arrest and detention of these women’s rights defenders is a clear violation of Turkey’s obligations under both domestic and international law, constituting a gross interference with the fundamental rights and freedoms of expression, assembly and liberty and security. It is a clear and discriminatory attack on women’s rights defenders for their activities in promoting and protecting women’s rights and the prevention of violence against women and comes as part of a wider trend that has consistently targeted women’s rights activists and women’s rights defenders in Turkey as a mean of pursuing a political agenda by the state authorities.
- 24.** In addition, Turkey is violating its positive obligations under CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention to encourage the promotion and protection of women’s fundamental rights. While Article 9 of the Istanbul Convention requires Turkey to support the work of non-governmental organisations working to combat violence against women, the Group of Experts (GREVIO) established under the Convention have continued to express their alarm over the increasingly restrictive conditions experienced by civil society organisations, in particular independent women’s organisations, under what has been termed by those working on the ground and by international institutions as a “shrinking space for human rights organisations.”⁴⁰ Overall, Turkey’s implementation of the Istanbul Convention has been considered to be very poor.⁴¹
- 25.** The arrest and detention of these women’s rights defenders is also a violation of Turkey’s obligations under international law to protect human rights defenders more generally. The judiciary continues to use the broad provisions of anti-terrorism laws for the ulterior purpose of silencing dissenting opinion, perceiving legitimate criticism as a threat to the integrity of the state and preventing individuals from their right to uphold and promote their rights under international law.
- 26.** Human rights defenders, and particularly women’s rights defenders, play a vital role in democratic society, as recognised by the OSCE.⁴² The ECtHR has similarly emphasised their importance as a “public watchdog”.⁴³ However, the arrest and pre-trial detention of these women’s rights defenders has the effect of silencing and discouraging those undertaking work to protect women’s rights, including crucial advocacy against gender-based violence in Turkey. As stated by Dunja Mijatović, the Council of Europe

⁴⁰ GREVIO, *Baseline Evaluation Report on Turkey*, October 2018. <<https://rm.coe.int/eng-grevio-report-turquie/16808e5283>>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² OSCE, *Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders*, 2014. <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/1/119633.pdf>>.

⁴³ ECtHR, *Sdružení Jihočeské Matky v. Czech Republic*, App. No. 19101/03, 10 July 2006.

Commissioner for Human Rights, the proceedings taken against human rights defenders subjects all of Turkish society to a “profound chilling effect”.⁴⁴

ACTIONS REQUIRED

- 27.** We request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to facilitate the immediate release of Adalet Kaya, Narin Gezgör, Fatma Gültekin, Gülcihan Şimşek, Özlem Gündüz, Remziye Sızıcı, Sevim Coşkun, as well as the four politicians, Mehmet Ali Altınkaynak, Mehmet Arslan, Celal Yoldaş and Veysi Kuzubla, arrested in connection with the investigation to end their arbitrary and unlawful imprisonment and pre-trial detention.
- 28.** We further request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to stop all forms of harassment, including the judicial harassment, against these individuals as well as against other women’s human rights defenders, and allow the enjoyment of their right of freedom of expression and association within civil society in the advocacy of women’s rights without fear of intimidation or improper interference.
- 29.** We request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to take the necessary actions to ensure the return of the possessions taken from those arrested and records seized from the office of the RWA in the Kayapınar district of Diyarbakir.
- 30.** We further request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to make its anti-terrorism legislation compliant with international human rights standards and to stop prosecuting the expression of critical opinions and right to assembly.
- 31.** We request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to fully implement its obligations in the promotion and protection of women’s rights and the prevention of violence against women under the Istanbul Convention and the CEDAW.
- 32.** We also request the Special Rapporteurs urge the Turkish Government to respect and fully implement all other international and European instruments ratified and supported by Turkey, including the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- 33.** Finally, we request the Special Rapporteurs to intervene in these grave matters and raise all of these issues, as a matter of priority, with the Turkish Government and to communicate the concerns outlined in relation to the violation of the right to freedom of expression, assembly and the right to liberty.

⁴⁴ Commission for Human Rights, *Turkey needs to put an end to arbitrariness in the judiciary and to protect human rights defenders*, 8 July 2019. <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/turkey-needs-to-put-an-end-to-arbitrariness-in-the-judiciary-and-to-protect-human-rights-defenders>>.

34. We would be grateful if you would kindly notify us of what action you are minded to take on this matter and to inform us, in due course, of any response received from the Turkish State. We would also be grateful if you are able to acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Ayşe Bingöl Demir, Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project

(and on behalf of the following NGOs endorsing the letter)

Rosa Kadın Derneği

London Legal Group

Research Institute on Turkey

Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği

Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı

Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi

Eşit Haklar İçin İzleme Derneği

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Yurttaşlık Derneği

Özgürlük İçin Hukukçular Derneği

Civil Rights Defenders

Sivil Alan Araştırmaları Derneği

Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı

Yaşam Bellek Özgürlük Derneği

İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi

İnsan Hakları Gündemi Derneği