

URGENT ACTION

FEAR FOR HUNGER STRIKERS' WELLBEING

Academic Nuriye Gülmen and primary school teacher Semih Özakça, were remanded in Sincan prison, in Ankara, on 23 May. They are continuing a prolonged hunger strike to protest against the dismissal from their jobs. There are fears for their wellbeing including that they may be forced to end their hunger strike against their will.

In the early hours of 22 May, academic **Nuriye Gülmen** and primary school teacher **Semih Özakça** announced on social media that they were being detained from their homes before being taken into police custody. On 23 May, a court in Ankara ruled that they be remanded in Sincan prison, also in Ankara.

Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça have been protesting at the human rights monument in central Ankara since November 2016 against the dismissal from their jobs by executive decree. During the first few months of their sit-down protest, they were detained by police on numerous occasions. On 9 March, Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça began their ongoing hunger strike while in police custody. They were released on 14 March but they continued their hunger strike in public at the human rights monument in Ankara.

An indictment accusing them of "membership of a terrorist organization" and "propaganda for a terrorist organization" was accepted by a court in Ankara on 2 May. On 23 May, the court ruled to remand them in prison on grounds that "despite their prosecution, they insisted on continuing their action on behalf of the terrorist group DHKP-C" (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, a proscribed leftist armed group) and that "if they were not remanded, they would damage the course of justice". They deny any involvement with DHKP-C.

Amnesty International is concerned that Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça may be force fed. Article 82 of the law on the execution of judgments No. 5275 allows for prison authorities to feed inmates on hunger strike without their consent, on the decision of the prison doctor. Such measures may also amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Urging the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça as they appear to be detained solely in connection to their peaceful protest;
- Calling on them to ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that they have access to independent medical professionals to provide health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Reminding them that they are engaging in a peaceful form of protest and the Turkish authorities have an obligation to respect their right to freedom of expression, including their right to protest;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 JULY 2017 TO:

Minister of Justice

Mr Bekir Bozdağ
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanlığı
06659 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 (0)312 419 33 70
Email: ozelkalem@adalet.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights
Mustafa Yeneroğlu
Commission Chairperson
TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu
Bakanlıklar, 06543 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 (0)312 420 24 92
Email: insanhaklarikom@tbmm.gov.tr

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDURRAHMAN BİLGİÇ, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square SW1X 8PA, 020 7393 0202, embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Like over 100,000 other public sector workers, Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça were dismissed by executive decree without any individualised justification or evidence for their dismissal being provided. Amnesty International detailed the arbitrary nature of these dismissals and lack of effective appeal mechanism in the report *No End In Sight: Purged Public Sector Workers Denied A Future In Turkey* (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/6272/2017/en/>). The authorities have justified these dismissals on the vague and generalized grounds stated in the executive decrees; that dismissed individuals were “members of, connected to, or in communication with a terrorist organization”. Like Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça, dismissed public sector workers have not been given reasons for their dismissal nor do they have an effective means to challenge the decisions. Not just summarily dismissed from their jobs, they have also been expelled from all forms of public service, meaning that many cannot continue their careers or maintain a livelihood without support from friends and relatives. With their passports cancelled by the authorities, they cannot seek work abroad either. Amnesty International calls for an end to arbitrary dismissals and a prompt and effective appeal mechanism for those already dismissed.

Amnesty International does not support hunger strikes, nor does it try to persuade hunger strikers to end such a protest. The organization opposes any punishment of hunger strikers for refusing food and attempts to coerce them to end their hunger strike. Such measures violate their right to freedom of expression, and may also amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The authorities have an obligation to ensure prisoners' right to life and health and must ensure that hunger strikers, like other prisoners, have adequate access to qualified health professionals and any medical assessment, advice and any treatment that they will accept voluntarily based on this assessment.

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