

URGENT ACTION

TURKISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION LEADERS DETAINED
On 30 January police detained 11 members of the Turkish Medical Association's Central Council as part of a criminal investigation launched following the association's statement calling for an end to Turkey's military operation in Afrin, northern Syria. They must be released immediately and unconditionally.

In the morning of 30 January, police raided the head office of the **Turkish Medical Association (TTB)** and the homes of the association's chair **Raşit Tükel** and 10 doctors who are members of its Central Council in Ankara, the capital, and seven other provinces. The police detained them as part of an investigation for 'making propaganda for a terrorist organization' and 'inciting the public to hatred or hostility'. The investigation began following a criminal complaint by the Ministry of Interior and government spokespeople condemning the TTB for their statement on 24 January, entitled 'war is a public health issue'.

According to the TTB's lawyer who spoke to Amnesty International, the prosecutor in charge of the investigation is expected to bring members of the Central Council detained outside the city to Ankara for questioning. The association's lawyers are lodging an appeal against the decision to detain the doctors.

Following its statement regarding the military operation in Afrin, northern Syria, the TTB received many threats by phone, email and on social media. On 26 January, the association made a formal request for protection from the Ankara governorship. As of 30 January, the requested protection had not been granted.

The TTB's statement calling for an end to Turkey's military operation is protected under the right to freedom of expression and that its members must not be prosecuted for having exercised this right, enshrined in international human rights law and in the Turkish Constitution.

Please write immediately in Turkish, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Raşit Tükel and 10 members of the Central Council of the Turkish Medical Association;
- Urging the Minister of Interior and the Governor of Ankara to provide immediate protection for TTB's members and offices, as requested by the organization;
- Calling on the Minister of Interior to ensure that a prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigation is carried out into the threats of violence received by the TTB.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MARCH 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice

Mr Abdulhamit Gül
 Kızılay Mahallesi, Milli Müdafı Cd.,
 06420 Çankaya/Ankara, Turkey
 Fax: 90 (0312) 419 33 70
 Email: info@adalet.gov.tr
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ankara Governor

Mr Ercan Topaca
 Hacı Bayram Mahallesi,
 Armutlu Sokak,
 Valilik Binası, Ulus, Altındağ,
 Ankara,
 Fax: +90 312 306 6670
 Email: <http://www.ankara.gov.tr/ankara-valisine-mesaj> [online message form]

Minister of Interior

Mr. Süleyman Soylu
 İçişleri Bakanlığı
 Bakanlıklar
 Ankara, Turkey
 Fax: +90 312 418 1795
Salutation: Dear Minister

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.

This is the first update of UA 16/18. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/7796/2018/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 24 January, the TTB issued a statement calling for an end to the Turkish armed forces' military operation in Afrin, northern Syria. The ongoing military offensive began on 20 January and is directed at the Kurdish Autonomous Administration's military wing, the YPG (the People's Protection Units) in Afrin, northern Syria. Turkish government cites YPG's links to the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), with which it has fought for decades within Turkey.

The Central Council is the executive committee of the organization, made up of the chair and representatives from provincial medical associations.

The right to freedom of expression is protected under Article 19 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to both of which Turkey is a party, and Article 26 of the Turkish Constitution.

Name Raşit Tükel (m), Sezai Berber (m), Sinan Adıyaman (m), Selma Güngör (f), Şeyhmus Gökalp (m), Hande Arpat (m), Ayfer Horasan (f), Taner Gören (m), Funda Obuz (f), Yaşar Ulutaş (m), Nazım Yılmaz (m).

Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 16/18 Index: EUR 44/7814/2018 Issue Date: 30 January 2018