

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST ON HUNGER STRIKE

Since June 2021, Ecevit Piroğlu, a political activist from Türkiye, has been held unlawfully and arbitrarily in an immigration detention centre in Serbia potentially facing deportation to Türkiye, despite a Serbian court ruling that he could not be extradited. On 12 February, he began a hunger strike in protest of his continued detention at the Padinska Skela detention centre, and stated his intention to continue until he is released. Since then, his health has deteriorated significantly in the absence of adequate medical care. He remains at risk of unlawful return to Türkiye, where he faces a real risk of serious human rights violations. Ecevit Piroğlu must be released immediately.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL USING THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of the Government of Republic of Serbia

Mr Miloš Vučević

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Dear Prime Minister,

*I am writing to express my deep concern over the ongoing unlawful and arbitrary detention in Serbia of prominent political activist from Türkiye, **Ecevit Piroğlu**. I am particularly concerned that he has not been receiving adequate medical care since he started a hunger strike on 12 February and that his condition has been severely deteriorating.*

Ecevit Piroğlu was first detained in June 2021 under an extradition request from Turkish authorities. The extradition proceedings were eventually halted in May 2023 when the Appellate Court in Belgrade ruled that he may not be returned to Türkiye. Despite the rejection of Türkiye's extradition request, Ecevit Piroğlu has been kept in an immigration detention centre in Padinska Skela based on a decision from the Ministry of Interior. There are well-founded fears that he is still at risk of deportation to Türkiye or that his detention could continue indefinitely.

I call on Serbia's government to ensure the immediate release of Ecevit Piroğlu from the immigration detention centre as his detention is unlawful and arbitrary and to refrain from any attempt to deport him to Türkiye or a third country which could return him to Türkiye where he faces a real risk of serious human rights abuses. In the meantime, I urge the authorities to grant him access to adequate healthcare at a facility of his family's choice, where he can receive treatment from qualified medical professionals in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ecevit Piroğlu is a Turkish national and a member of the Kurdish ethnic minority. He is a political activist and one of the founders of the Socialist Democratic Party.

Ecevit Piroğlu was arrested at the Belgrade International Airport by the Serbian authorities in June 2021 based on an Interpol arrest warrant issued by the Turkish authorities on the grounds of criminal proceedings initiated against him in Türkiye for allegedly belonging to a "terrorist organization". During the extradition proceedings, Ecevit Piroğlu was detained in the Country Prison in Belgrade for one year, until June 2022. Subsequently, Ecevit Piroğlu was transferred to the immigration detention centre for foreigners, designed for irregular migrants, where he remains until today.

Additionally, Ecevit Piroğlu's request for asylum in Serbia was rejected in August 2022 without any significant deliberation, including after his appeal to the Asylum Commission. Instead of allowing Ecevit Piroğlu to leave Serbia following this rejection, as he wanted to do, the Ministry of Interior ordered his rearrest in January 2024 and placed him again in immigration detention, this time arguing that Ecevit Piroğlu was in Serbia illegally, a claim that his lawyers are challenging.

Faced with the prospect of indefinite detention in Serbia, Ecevit Piroğlu started a hunger strike on 12 February in protest of his continued detention. As of 9 May, he only weighs 50 kg, his health is rapidly deteriorating, and he is feeling increasingly weaker. Ecevit Piroğlu's family were recently able to visit him in the detention centre and expressed extreme concerns about his health.

There are well-founded concerns that Ecevit Piroğlu could continue to be held in immigration detention indefinitely and without access to an effective remedy. His appeals against the detention have not been addressed by the authorities, and his detention order has already been extended once. The maximum period Ecevit Piroğlu could legally be held in immigration detention is until 9 July 2024, but Serbian authorities have failed to comply with such legal restrictions in the past.

Even though Türkiye's extradition order was rejected by a Serbian court, there is still a risk that Ecevit Piroğlu could be deported to Türkiye or a third country (which could then send him to Türkiye) through an immigration procedure, in violation of the Serbia's obligations under international law not to return an individual to a country where they may be at risk of serious human rights violations. There have been dangerous precedents of Serbia extraditing foreign nationals in the context of bilateral cooperation agreements and in violation of interim measures issued by UN Committee against Torture. Given the prevailing circumstances in Türkiye and the particular risk for members of Kurdish minority and political activists, Ecevit Piroğlu would be at a real risk of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, unfair trial and torture and other ill-treatment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Serbian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 8 July 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ecevit Piroğlu (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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