



PRESS RELEASE

June 26th, 2019

Re: Urge **Turkish Authorities to stop torture and bring perpetrators to justice** on "INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE" JUNE 26th

Gokhan Acikkollu, 42-year-old history teacher with diabetes, was dismissed from his job, subsequently detained and tortured for 13 days under police custody in Turkey. He ultimately died from a heart attack. Two years later after his death, authorities found him not guilty and reinstated him to his teaching post, however no real justice has been given.

Since the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016 democratic and fundamental human rights have been suspended in Turkey. The Turkish government has disregarded basic human rights, equality and respect for human dignity. It has completely broken its ties with the western world, the European Union in particular. It is stated in Human Rights Watch October 2017 report that **people accused of terrorism or of being linked to the July 2016 attempted coup are at risk of torture in police custody. There has been a spate of reported cases of men being abducted, some of whom were held in secret detention places, with evidence pointing to the involvement of state authorities.**¹

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for UN Human Rights, declared that during the state of emergency period about 160,000 people were detained in Turkey; 152,000 state officials, including teachers, judges and lawyers were arbitrarily expelled or investigated; over 200 journalists were arrested, 201 media outlets and hundreds of websites were shut down. **There were many cases of torture, rape and kidnapping, which were only partially reflected in the reports.**

According to a report released by the United States Department of State on human rights practices in Turkey in 2018 between July 2016 and July 2018, Turkish Ministry of Justice reported that "investigations" were opened into 612,347 persons, the majority of whom were affiliated with the Gulen movement. Authorities prosecuted 1,519 lawyers and dismissed 7,257 academics and more than 4,000 judges and prosecutors. After the coup, the government operated prisons became filled with people who were detained and awaiting trial, and began to operate over capacity. 28 individuals disappeared, some kidnapped in broad daylight in front of their families. Reports of torture, mistreat-

¹ Human Rights Watch. (2017). *In Custody Police Torture and Abductions in Turkey*. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/turkey1017_web_0.pdf

ment, and abuse skyrocketed from tens in 2017 to more than 2,500 in 2018. 51 people lost their lives under suspicious circumstances in official custody.²

The most recent torture incidents took place at Police Headquarters in Ankara against detained six ex-diplomats of Turkish Foreign Ministry on May 26th which were documented by the Ankara Bar Association. HDP MP Omer F. Gergerlioglu; Erinc Sagkan, President of Ankara Bar Association, and CHP MP Sezgin Tanrikulu spoke out about the allegations immediately.

We urge all the international bodies and human rights organizations along with Turkish judiciary to take all necessary steps to STOP TORTURE in TURKEY and bring all the perpetrators to justice.

Advocates of Silenced Turkey

help@silencedturkey.org

www.silencedturkey.org

Twitter: @silencedturkey

Facebook: @silencedturkey

² United States Department of State (2018). *Turkey 2018 Human Rights Report*. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/289435.pdf>