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PRESS RELEASE ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2019

It is acknowledged in UNHCR's Global Trends 2018 Report that the number of forcibly displaced people increased by 2.3 million people in 2018. By the end of the year, almost 70.8 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations.¹ Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, states:

“What we are seeing in these figures is further confirmation of a longer-term rising trend in the number of people needing safety from war, conflict and persecution.”

Since the coup attempt on July 15 2016, the Turkish government has targeted individuals and groups opposing the government. Through a mass witch-hunt hundreds of thousands of people have been faced with arrest, imprisonment, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, denial of fair treatment, labeling, confiscation, and passport seizure. Turkish 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, mistreatment, 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. Consequently thousands of people were forced to leave the country for freedom and to live in humane conditions.

Migration is not easy for those who migrate as well as those countries who receive them. The activist poet Warshan Shire's words about forced displacement summarize the refugee issue very concisely: “No one puts their children in a boat unless the boat is safer than the land.”

We, as AST (Advocates of Silenced Turkey), are dedicated to support refugees as well as to defend their rights and be a voice for them.

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¹The United Nations Refugee Agency. (2019). *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2018*. Geneva, Switzerland: <https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf>