

STATEMENT FOR THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC

The right to defend our rights is a fundamental right. We demand the release of rights defenders and revocation of the investigations and cases filed against them !

24 October 2017

As we explained in detail in the file notes¹ announced to the public on 11 July, 14 August and 8 September 2017, a training workshop was organised in Büyükdada (Prinkipo), İstanbul on 2-7 July 2017 on the basis of the decision and information of the civil society organisations under the Human Rights Joint Platform. On the fourth day (5 July 2017) the workshop had been raided by the police upon the instructions issued by the Office of Adalar (Prince Islands) Chief Public Prosecutor, and 10 rights defenders were detained. 8 of the rights defenders were detained and 2 were released on judicial control. About three months later on 4 October 2016, an indictment was issued by the Office of İstanbul Public Prosecutor involving charges of membership to illegal organisation and aiding illegal organisations. This indictment was admitted on 16 October 2017 by the Heavy Penal Court no 35 of İstanbul and 25 October 2017 was set as the date for the first hearing. The indictment prepared by the prosecutor's office also included among the list of suspects Amnesty International's President of Board for Turkey Branch Attorney Taner Kılıç who was detained on June 6, 2017 and is still in remand.

The indictment that has been prepared lacks a legal basis.

The training on coping with trauma and digital security has nothing confidential, has been organised in an open and transparent manner and basically aims to enhance the information and wellbeing of rights defenders. It is about a normal issue organised everywhere in the world, yet the lawsuit aims to forcibly criminalise the training meeting as well as its participants.

The rights defenders against whom a lawsuit has been initiated are managers and members of rights organizations recognized in Turkey and in the world. We do not accept the branding of such persons as members and supporters of outlawed armed organizations. We believe that such allegations lack any credibility. The lives of rights defenders and the works and actions they have carried out up until now prove the absurdity of such accusations.

We would like to stress it one more time:

We are entitled to defend our rights as a fundamental right. It is a duty of the governments to facilitate the work of the rights organizations and defenders. In the framework of the norms and standards protected under international and regional human rights conventions and documents, which Turkey is a party of and she has transposed pursuant to constitutional article 90, is also under liability to protect human rights defenders.

Accusing, detaining and arresting people just because we are standing up for our rights constitute a human rights breach. Therefore we demand the human rights defenders be released and the relevant investigations and law suits be cancelled.

The hearing will be held on Wednesday, 25 October 2017 at 10:00 at İstanbul Çağlayan Court House's 14th Assize Court.

Kindly submitted to the attention of the public.

***Equal Rights Monitoring Association, Rights Initiative, Human Right Association, Human Rights Agenda,
Women's Coalition, Human Rights foundation of Turkey, Amnesty International Tukey, Citizens Assembly***

¹ Bkz. www.ihop.org.tr (<http://www.ihop.org.tr/2017/07/11/gozaltindaki-insan-haklari-savunuculari-ve-katildiklari-faaliyete-dair-bilgi-notu/>
<http://www.ihop.org.tr/2017/08/14/insan-haklari-savunucularina-yonelik-keyfi-tutuklamaya-son-verin/>
<http://www.ihop.org.tr/2017/10/16/tutuklu-insan-haklari-savunuculari/>)