

Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)				
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2011		68	Turkey	<i>Büşra Ersanlı</i>

Announcement

PEN International reports today that on 28 October 2011 Büşra Ersanlı and others were arrested in Turkey. Büşra Ersanlı is a highly respected professor of political science and a constitutional law expert at Marmara University in Istanbul. She also wrote extensively on the history of Turkish historical writing since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. She was to attend a conference on “Controversial Issues in the History of the Turkish Republic” at Istanbul Bilgi University on 29 October 2011, but she was taken under custody within the framework of the so-called “KCK operation.” Please see below for case details and context. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeal immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.



PEN INTERNATIONAL (RAPID ACTION NETWORK)

31 October 2011

RAN 56/11

TURKEY: WRITER AND ACADEMIC RAGIP ZARAKOLU ARRESTED ALONGSIDE PROFESSOR BÜŞRA ERSANLI

The arrest this weekend of publisher Ragip Zarakolu, one of Turkey’s most prominent freedom of expression and minority rights activists and a leading member of PEN Turkey is greeted with alarm and concern by PEN International. Arrested at the same time was Professor Büşra Ersanlı, of the faculty of Political Science at Marmara University. The arrests are part of a larger crackdown initiated in 2009 and still ongoing against Kurdish political parties. PEN is concerned that Zarakolu and Ersanlı, alongside several other writers and journalists also detained under this crackdown, are held in denial of their rights to peaceful freedom of expression and association. Ragip Zarakolu and Professor Büşra Ersanlı were arrested on 28 October 2011. Forty one people had also been arrested around the same time under what is known as the *Democratic Society Congress (Koma Civaken Kurdistan; KCK) operation* that has

been under way since 2009 leading to several hundred, some say over 1,000, arrests and trials. The KCK is seen as its civil/political wing front for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and thus also illegal.

Human rights groups monitoring the *operation* have reported concerns over a number of areas including lengthy pre-trial detention without bail (some have been held pending trial since the start of the operation in April 2009), that the charges may be politically motivated, and that fair trial standards are being ignored. Trade union and human rights activists, mayors and local politicians are among those arrested.

Among the organizations being linked to the KCK is the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi; BDP). Thirty BDP representatives took their seats in the Turkish parliament on 1 October. The BDP was created after the Democratic Society Party (DTP) was forcibly closed down in 2009 on accusation of affiliation to the PKK. The BDP has made it clear that is not affiliated to the PKK and that it does not influence its political policy. Despite this, BDP and former DTP members have been arrested and harassed. Some activists claim that over 1,000 have been arrested on charges ranging from speaking Kurdish, making statements critical of the government, as well as having links to the KCK.

BACKGROUND

Professor Büşra Ersanli is an academic based at Istanbul's Marmara university's Faculty of Political Science and International Relations. She is an expert on constitutional law and at the time of her arrest was working with the BDP's Constitutional Commission.

Ragip Zarakolu is a well known political activist who has been fighting for freedom of expression in Turkey for over 30 years, publishing books on issues such as minority and human rights. As one of the 50 writers chosen to represent the struggle for freedom of expression since 1960 for the Writers in Prison Committee's 50th Anniversary Campaign—Because Writers Speak Their Minds. In the days running up to his arrest, he had been campaigning for the release of his son, Deniz Zarakolu, who had been arrested three weeks earlier on 7 October, also under the *KCK operation*. Deniz is a PhD student of political thought and has translated academic works including Thomas Hobbes' *De Cive*.

Among the early *KCK operation* arrests was Muharrem Erbey, lawyer and writer, arrested in December 2009 who is still detained, and his trial is underway. Representatives from PEN Centres

have observed his trial. PEN is monitoring the cases of several other writers similarly arrested for links to Kurdish political parties.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS:

****Expressing alarm at the arrests of Ragip Zarakolu, Professor Büşra Ersanli and Deniz Zarakolu, as well as the continued detention of Muharrem Erbey, and other writers and journalists accused for their affiliation with Kurdish political parties.**

****Referring to concerns that the arrests flout international standards protecting the rights to freedom of expression and association as guaranteed by both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Convention on Human and Democratic Rights, to which Turkey is a signatory.**

****Raising concerns that the trial are politically biased and do not conform to fair trial standards, and seeking assurances that these concerns are addressed as a matter of urgency.**

SEND APPEALS TO:

****Mr Sadullah Ergin**

****Minister of Justice**

****06669 Kizilay**

****Ankara**

****Turkey**

****Fax: 00 90 312 419 3370**

Also to the Turkish ambassador in your country.

****Please contact NCH if sending appeals after 30 November 2011****