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## **Turkey: Fourteen lawyers from People's Law Office arrested and charged**

On 20 September 2017, 14 lawyers were charged with “being members of a terrorist organisation” by the Istanbul Criminal Judgeship of Peace. They were detained and taken into police custody on 12 September 2017.

Didem Baydar, Şükriye Erden, Ayşegül Çağatay, Ebru Timtik, Aytaç Ünsal, Zehra Özdemir, Yağmur Ereren, Engin Gökoğlu, Süleyman Gökten, Aycan Çiçek, Naciye Demir, Behiç Aşçı, Barkın Timtik and Özgür Yılmaz are human rights defenders and lawyers belonging to the [People's Law Office](#) in Turkey. They are well known due to their work on high profile cases such as that of 15- year old Berkin Elvan, who died during the Gezi Park protests after being hit on the head by a tear-gas canister fired by a police officer, and Dilek Doğan, a young woman who was shot and killed by a police officer during an anti-terror raid on her house on 18 October 2015. They also represent Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça, two educators dismissed from their positions following the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The detention of the 14 human rights defenders from the People's Law Office occurred two days before the educators' trial was due to begin on 14 September 2017.

On 11-12 September 2017, around midnight, Turkish police raided the offices of People's Law Office in Istanbul and Ankara as well as the lawyers' houses. The 14 human rights defenders were detained following a warrant issued by the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office accusing them of “being members of a terrorist organisation”. On 20 September 2017, the human rights defenders were taken to the prosecutor's office in Istanbul courthouse where their testimonies were taken. Ahmet Mandacı and Ezgi Gökten were then released under judicial control as they had no formal ties to the People's Law Office, while all others were arrested. The lawyers are accused of having ties to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party (DHKP-C) which is recognised as a terrorist organisation in Turkey.

The HRDs were separated and sent to different prisons following their arrest. Behiç Aşçı and Aytaç Ünsal are detained in Burhaniye T Type Prison; Sükrüye Erden and Didem Ünsal are detained in Karabük T Type Prison; Naciye Demir, Barkın Timtik and Zehra Özdemir are held in Bolu T Type Prison; Yağmur Evin and Ebru Timtik are held in Balıkesir T Type Prison; Ayşegül Çağatay and Aycan Çiçek are in Düzce T Type Prison, Özgür Yılmaz is in Edirne T Type Prison, Süleyman Gökten is in Tekirdağ No. 1 Prison and Engin Gökoğlu is detained in Tekirdağ No.2 Prison.

Under the State of Emergency currently imposed in Turkey, over 140,000 civil servants have lost their jobs following governmental decrees. Many people including human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, academics and intellectuals have been detained and accused of ties with terrorist groups.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the charges against the 14 lawyers and human rights defenders affiliated with the People's Law Office, as it believes that they have been detained in relation to their peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of human rights in Turkey.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release the lawyers, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately drop all charges against the lawyers, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the lawyers;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Turkey are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.