

24.10.2016

To the attention of:

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Federica Mogherini

Dear Mrs Mogherini, Vice President / High Representative

Zehra Dogan, painter and a multiple-award-winning reporter for women's news agency JINHA is under pre-trial detention since 21 July. Her trial date is still unknown after 2 months of imprisonment.

Dogan's news and paintings are used as a "Evidence of membership to PKK" by the judiciary, which makes her case unique in the history of Turkey. She's the only painter in prison that accused of terrorism because of her paintings. Two of those "terrorism evidences" is also attached in the end of this document.

Dogan has followed the curfew in the border town Nusaybin for 5 months, making paintings and reports about the clashes between the Turkish army and the PKK. In a time where Turkish media rarely reported the news reports coming from the region, her paintings about the scenes in Nusaybin got widespread in social media.

"Like other journalists in the region, I narrowly escaped death in many situations. I was targeted by snipers in once, my home was shelled and raked by automatic weapons on the others. I received many threats and insults on the social media. And in the end I was arrested" says Zehra Dogan, in a letter she wrote from her prison to the European Parliament, "Apart from the arbitrary naked searches in the police office, I experienced verbal harassments and heavy insults by the police and special forces. I was asked these questions non-stop: Why are you practicing journalism? What is your purpose in painting? Are you getting orders from PKK?"

Dogan is held in an overcrowded prison. She was taken to a ward which hosted 30 people, more than its capacity. After 2 months, there are more than 45 people in Dogan's ward and the population is increasing every week. Because of the over crowdedness, the prisoners are forced to keep their doors and windows open in order to get oxygen, which makes the prison cold especially in the recent weeks where the temperatures begin to drop.

"I remembered the famous quote of Pablo Picasso when the police asked me if I made the painting that depicts the destroyed city center of Nusaybin: A Nazi-officer asked him if he had made the painting of Guernica and Picasso replied 'No, you did'. Even the Nazi regime didn't imprisoned Picasso, but Erdogan regime imprisoned me" told Zehra Dogan

to the European Parliament, "I tried to stop the guns that are pointing my people, with my painting brush and pen. As I'm regarded as a 'terrorist' by the regime, they must be regarding brushes and pens as weapons. It was the same President Erdogan who defined the book of Ahmet Sik as 'more dangerous than a bomb' during his speech in 2011 at Council of Europe while defending their imprisonment. I may be imprisoned now but don't forget that I still have my brush and my pen!"

Zehra Dogan has won many awards with her journalism in Turkey, including the prestigious Metin Goktepe Journalism Award. Her paintings are exhibited in Turkey and France, published in many other countries. She still continues to paint and write the stories of the women in prison.

Dogan is just one of the imprisoned journalists and artists. For example, Asli Erdogan, a novelist who won many prizes nationally and internationally is under pre-trial detention since late August. Her columns in the newspaper Ozgur Gundem are used as evidences for "PKK membership". Necmiye Alpay, a renowned linguist, is under pre-trial detention since late August. The 70 year old linguist is accused of being a PKK member because she's in the informal "Consultation Council" of Ozgur Gundem newspaper. Atilla Tas, a secular CHP politician and a columnist for Meydan newspaper, is under pre-trial detention since early September with the accusation of being a member of the Islamist Gulenist organization.

According to the Reporters without Borders, Turkey became the world leader in terms of imprisoned journalists by putting more than 120 behind bars.

The Erdogan regime is using the powers given by the state of emergency, declared after the failed coup attempt for increasing the pressure on the press and independent voices. Two months ago, right after the failed coup attempt 45 newspapers, 23 radio stations, 18 TV channels, 15 journals, 29 publishing houses and 3 agencies were closed by the state. In the beginning of October 12 TV channels and 11 radio stations which were mostly left wing, Kurdish or Alevi channels, were closed down by the state, leaving 3.000 media workers unemployed.

The regime is not only oppressing the media but also many other elements of the society. The heads of the local municipalities in the Kurdish region that were elected by the local elections are taken away from their positions by the government. Around 10.000 teachers that are members of the secular left wing Egitim Sen workers' union are laid off from their jobs. More than 3 thousand academics are laid off from their jobs at the universities, 234 of them were arrested and 8 of them are put in pre-trial detention.

As European Parliamentarians, we are condemning these act of oppression on all different parts of opposition. We are worried of the totalitarian tendency in which a man, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is trying to shape every aspect of the state and the society according to his political aims. We are in solidarity with the peoples of Turkey both against

the coup attempt and also against the dictate of the regime. We urge Turkey to immediately lift the state of emergency, stop the pressures on free press, release Zehra Dogan and all the imprisoned journalists, artists, politicians and civilians which didn't had any link to the coup attempt.

We call on you, Mrs Mogherini, to take positive action in favor of the above mentioned personalities, in your exchanges with the Turkish authorities.

Yours Sincerely,

