Turkey: New Wave of Arbitrary Detentions — Lawyers Once Again Under Attack

Urgent international call for the immediate release of lawyers and ÇHD-members Atty. ***Ezgi Önalan****, Atty.* ***Yunus Emre Işık****,* ***Boran Işıldak****,* ***Burhan Can****,* ***Halil Arbağ*** *and Atty.* ***Özge Usanmaz*** *— as well as Atty.* ***Doğa İncesu****, Atty.* ***Semra Demir*** *and Atty.* ***Kürşat Bafra****.*

7 July 2026

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our grave concern regarding the latest detentions in Turkey targeting lawyers, among others. We demand the immediate release of those detained and an end to arbitrary police custody.

On Sunday, 5 July 2026 further large-scale, coordinated police operations were carried out across İstanbul, Eskişehir, Antalya and İzmir. Journalists, students, academics and, once more, lawyers have been taken into custody. Among those currently detained are our colleagues of the Progressive Lawyers Association (Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği, ÇHD) :

- Atty. **Ezgi Önalan**, Chair of the İstanbul Branch of ÇHD, whose door was forced open by police during her arrest;
- Atty. **Yunus Emre Işık**, member of ÇHD;
- **Boran Işıldak** and **Burhan Can**, members of the ÇHD İstanbul Branch Student, Intern and Worker Lawyer Commission;
- **Halil Arbağ**, member of the ÇHD İzmir Branch Student Commission.

Once again, the circumstances surrounding the detention of our colleagues raise concerns about violations of due process and the right to a fair defense: As in previous cases, the authorities imposed a confidentiality order (secrecy decision) on the investigation file, along with a 24-hour restriction on access to counsel. These restrictions prevent the detainees and their defense teams from accessing the specific accusations and alleged evidence against them during the critical initial phase of custody. Arbitrary and recurring measures such as these severely undermine the fundamental right to a fair trial and directly interfere with the right to defense.

These latest targeted detentions form part of a wave of arbitrary detentions carried out across Turkey in the days immediately preceding the 36th NATO Summit, to be held in Ankara on 7–8 July 2026. We note that simultaneous pre-dawn raids in Ankara and İstanbul placed three of our ÇHD-colleagues into police detention on 23 June 2026 — Atty. **Doğa İncesu**, Atty. **Semra Demir** and Atty. **Kürşat Bafra**. Furthermore, on 1 July 2026, Atty. **Veysi Çetin**, Secretary of the İzmir Branch of ÇHD, was arrested. While he was released after four days, Doğa İncesu, Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra remain detained on remand to this day.

Additionally, on 5 July 2026, ten lawyers, who had attended the protests against the NATO summit, were taken into custody in Ankara. The following day, ÇHD-member Atty. **Özge Usanmaz** was arrested in Ankara. She had traveled from İstanbul to Ankara to visit some of her clients, who had been previously detained on 4 July 2026.

We therefore urgently call upon the relevant authorities to:

- Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Ezgi Önalan, Yunus Emre Işık, Boran Işıldak, Burhan Can, Halil Arbağ, Özge Usanmaz, Doğa İncesu, Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra, and all other individuals arbitrarily detained in connection with these recent operations;
- Guarantee full and unimpeded access to independently retained legal counsel of the detainees' own choosing at every stage of the proceedings;

- Lift any confidentiality orders imposed on the relevant investigation files, and ensure full access for defense teams to case materials and evidence;
- End the ongoing criminalization of the legal profession, and the systematic use of disproportionate force.

We further call on the international community to:

- Raise these concerns with the Turkish government through all available bilateral and multilateral channels, as well as publicly, and urge Turkey to end the use of the criminal justice system as a preemptive tool to silence civil society, the legal profession, and public discourse ahead of the 36th NATO Summit and beyond.

We stand in unwavering solidarity with our colleagues in Turkey, and will continue to monitor these developments closely.

Signatories:

Asociación Americana de Juristas

Associação Portuguesa de Juristas Democratas

Avocats Européens Démocrates
European Democratic Lawyers (AED-EDL)

Bologna Bar Association

Brescia Bar Association

Centro di ricerca ed elaborazione per la democrazia (CRED)

Defense Commission of the Barcelona Bar Association

Défense Sans Frontière – Avocats Solidaires (DSFAS)

Democratic Lawyers Switzerland

European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)

Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer

GeBehatokia – Bask Country

German Bar Association (DAV)

German Federal Bar (BRAK)

Grenoble Bar Association

Human Rights Legal Project

Indian Association of Lawyers

Institut des Droits de l'Homme du Barreau de MONTPELLIER (IDH)

International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)

International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)

International Association of Russian Advocates

International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)

Lawyers for the Rule of Law

Legal Centre Lesvos

National Lawyers Guild, International

National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL)

New York City Bar Association

Republican Lawyers' Association (RAV)

Torino (Turin) Bar Association

Union of Peoples Lawyers in Mindanao