

Urgent International Joint Call for the Immediate Release of Lawyers Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra and Doğa İncesu

We, the undersigned organizations, express our deep concern over the simultaneous pre-dawn police raids conducted in Ankara and Istanbul on the morning of June 23, 2026, which resulted in numerous individuals being taken into police custody, including three lawyers from the Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD). Lawyer Doğa İncesu, a member of the ÇHD Istanbul Branch, along with lawyers Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra, members of the ÇHD Ankara Branch, were taken from their homes and detained. We have strong grounds to believe that these actions are linked to the lawful exercise of their professional duties as lawyers.

We strongly condemn this disproportionate and punitive use of police powers. Lawyers Demir, Bafra, and İncesu are legal professionals who frequently attend police stations and courthouses as part of their daily professional activities. Instead of issuing a summons for them to appear at the prosecutor's office, in line with the Turkish Code of Criminal Procedure (CMK) Art.145, the authorities carried out pre-dawn home raids and placed them in police custody, where they can be held for up to four days.

The circumstances surrounding their custody raise significant concerns regarding adherence to due process and the right to a defense. A confidentiality order (secrecy decision) was immediately imposed on the investigation file, blocking access by the defense team to the accusations and evidence. Furthermore, a 24-hour restriction on communication with legal counsel has been implemented, preventing the lawyers in custody from meeting with their representatives and leaving them completely isolated during the initial stages of their custody. This combination of arbitrary police custody and severe restrictions constitutes a direct and deliberate attack on the right to defense.

Given the timing and scale of these simultaneous operations, we are highly concerned that holding our colleagues in police custody is a preemptive measure linked to the upcoming 36th NATO Summit, scheduled to be held in Ankara on July 7-8, 2026. These arrests align with a recent and broader pattern of police crackdowns targeting civil society actors and human rights defenders. Consequently, we are deeply concerned that these actions are not rooted in legitimate judicial inquiries, but rather serve to suppress democratic space and intimidate legal professionals ahead of this international event.

It is evident that the legitimate professional activities and human rights advocacy of our colleagues, as active members of ÇHD, are once again being unjustly criminalized in an attempt to intimidate legal professionals and suppress democratic space ahead of this international event.

In accordance with international standards such as the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, governments must ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference. Furthermore, lawyers shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution for any action taken in

accordance with recognized professional duties, standards, and ethics. These guarantees are also reflected in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer and the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (2000)21, which underscore the independence of lawyers and their freedom from intimidation, interference, or improper sanctions. The placement in police custody, isolation, and restriction of defense rights of our colleagues also raise significant concerns regarding the right to a fair trial and other fundamental human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations urgently call on the authorities in Turkey to:

- 1. Immediately and unconditionally release lawyers Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra, and Doğa İncesu from police custody.**
- 2. Lift the arbitrary confidentiality orders and the 24-hour lawyer-access restrictions immediately, ensuring the lawyers have full access to their legal defense teams and the case files**
- 3. Cease the criminalization of the legal profession and guarantee that all lawyers in Turkey are able to carry out their professional duties without fear of reprisals, undue restrictions, or judicial harassment.**
- 4. Ensure that the rights of persons deprived of their liberty are respected at all times and that the fundamental right to a fair trial is strictly upheld.**

We will continue to monitor this situation closely and stand in strong solidarity with our colleagues in Turkey who tirelessly defend human rights and the rule of law.

Signatories:

Bologna Bar Association (Italy)
Brescia Bar Association (Italy)
Center for Research and Elaboration for Democracy.(CRED), Italy
Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (Conseil des Barreaux Européens, CCBE)
Defense Commission - Barcelona Bar Association
Défense Sans Frontière – Avocats Solidaires (DSF-AS)
Deutscher Anwaltverein (German Bar Association)
European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)
European Democratic Lawyers (AED)
Fermo Bar Association (Italy)
Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer
German Federal Bar (BRAK)
International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
International Association of Russian Advocates
International Observatory of Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
Padova Bar Association (Italy)
Patti Bar Association (Italy)
Socialist Lawyers Association of Ireland
Swiss Democratic Lawyers

Turin Bar Association (Italy)
Union of Italian Criminal Chambers (UCPI)
Verona Bar Association (Italy)