

Statement against the ongoing persecution of academics in Turkey

For three years now, academics and PhD students in Turkey are being criminalized, dismissed from their positions, put on trial, sentenced and incarcerated for signing the a peace-petition “We will not be a party to this crime” (1128 first-signatories, later-on over 2000). The petition denounced the use of heavy weapons against the civilians in the Kurdish towns, criticized the imposition of month-long curfews which violated the basic rights to life liberty and security of the civilian population during the military operations that started in August 2015, and called for an immediate return to peace-talks.

The ensuing harassment of academics reached a new dimension very recently. Depending upon the daily mood of the judges, as it seems, the signatories are sentenced to varying periods of imprisonment.

Political Scientist Prof. Füsün Üstel (retired) from Galatasaray University has been sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment and put behind bars since May 8th. Mathematics professor Tuna Altinel, a lecturer at Lyon University, was arrested, after inquiring why a travel restriction was imposed upon his passport. Altinel is held in prison since May 10th without any legal sentence against him, while his having attended a conference in France is being used as a pretext by the authorities.

Right now, more than 30 academics (their numbers are increasing daily) are under the imminent threat of imprisonment, and are waiting for the final decision from the court of appeal. One among them, Prof. Ayşe Gül Altınay from Sabancı University was already sentenced to 25 months in prison for signing the peace-petition. Prof. Altınay is a cultural anthropologist, Director of the Gender and Women’s Studies Centre and the editorial board member of the European Journal of Women Studies.

Information on the latest developments of the trial can be found here:

<https://www.barisicinakademisyenler.net/English> .

We strongly condemn the restrictions to academic freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey, as in other authoritarian regimes. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues, Academics for Peace, who are persecuted for criticizing the violation of most basic human rights and we demand an immediate stop to their criminalization.

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