

URGENT ACTION

TURKEY SUSPENDS ACTIVITIES OF HUNDREDS OF NGOS

The Ministry of Interior announced on 11 November the blanket and arbitrary suspension of the activities of 370 NGOs for three months. NGOs working on children's rights, women's rights, poverty, and lawyers associations have been among those targeted. These arbitrary suspensions violate the rights to freedom of expression and association, and cannot be justified, even under the state of emergency.

On 11 November, the Ministry of Interior announced the suspension of activities of **370 NGOs** in 39 provinces under Article 11 of the State of Emergency Law, citing "general security and public order". Since the announcement, dozens of NGOs' offices were sealed by provincial governorships without prior notice.

These suspensions, imposed initially for three months, were announced without individualized reasoning and there is no possibility of appeal or judicial remedy against them. The decision of the Ministry of Interior takes place in the context of a massive crackdown on all forms of dissent, including wholesale closures of media, and imprisonment of journalists, members of the opposition, human rights defenders and activists, in the aftermath of the 15 July coup attempt and the declaration of the state of emergency on 21 July.

Among the NGOs whose activities have been suspended are Progressive Lawyers' Association (ÇHD) and Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), whose members have represented victims of torture and other ill-treatment, and Van Women's Association (VAKAD), which provides services to women fleeing domestic violence. The decision also affects Agenda: Child Association (Gündem Çocuk), which contributed to a comprehensive report in March on the impact on the population of curfews imposed in the context of clashes between the army and the Revolutionary Patriotic Youth Movement in the town of Cizre, in southeast Turkey. Another organisation targeted by this suspension is Sarmaşık Association, which provides food aid and education services to 32,000 people in Diyarbakır, in southeast Turkey, including people forcibly displaced by the state. Reports indicate that activities of over 70 NGOs have been suspended so far. A full list of the 370 NGOs has not been made available.

These sweeping measures preventing NGOs from carrying out their work are disproportionate and cannot be justified even under the state of emergency, and are in violation of the rights to freedom of expression and association, guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Turkey is a party.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately lift the arbitrary suspensions imposed on the activities of the NGOs affected by the decision of the Ministry of Interior;
- Urging them to halt any further suspension or closure of associations and NGOs, and ensure effective remedies are provided to challenge the legality of derogating measures under the state of emergency;
- Calling on them to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and association, and end the crackdown on dissent under the guise of the state of emergency.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 DECEMBER 2016 TO:

Minister of Interior
Mr Süleyman Soylu
İçişleri Bakanlığı
Bakanlıklar
Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 418 17 95
Fax: +90 312 425 85 09
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prime Minister
Mr Binali Yıldırım
Vekaletler Caddesi
Başbakanlık Merkez Bina
P.K. 06573
Kızılay / Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 403 62 82
Email: ozelkalem@basbakanlik.gov.tr
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

And copies to:
Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights
Mr Mustafa Yeneroğlu
Commission Chairperson
TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu
Bakanlıklar, 06543 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 420 24 92
Email: insanhaklarikom@tbmm.gov.tr

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDURRAHMAN BİLGİÇ, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square SW1X 8PA, 020 7393 0202, embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ministry of Interior announcement on 11 November states that, of the 370 NGOs, 153 have alleged links to 'Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization' (FETO), 190 to the banned Kurdish Workers Party/Kurdish Communities Union (PKK/KCK), 19 to the armed leftist group Revolutionary Peoples' Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) and eight to the armed group that calls itself the Islamic State. The authorities have not provided individualized justifications for the blanket decision. There is no legal remedy to the suspensions.

Speaking to Amnesty International, a representative of Sarmaşık Association in Diyarbakır said: "Our association provides food to 32,000 people every month. These families are so destitute that they may not get through the night let alone miss out on our services for the next three months. We told the authorities about the risks to our supplies in our warehouse and how vulnerable the people we help day in day out are, they still went ahead and sealed our offices. We will explore every legal avenue open to us to challenge this cruel decision."

A representative of Gündem Çocuk, a children's rights association said: "On 11 November, the Ankara governorship suspended our activities for three months under Article 11 of the State of Emergency Law. The situation we find ourselves in is deeply troubling for those who dream of a society based on human rights. We are confident all of our work is about creating a better world for children. We will take all legal steps over the next week and use all our rights to challenge this decision. We call on national and international solidarity in order to shine a light on how this decision is impacting on the very people we exist to support."

Turkey is obliged under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds; and to uphold the right to freedom of association under Article 22 of the ICCPR and Article 11 of the ECHR. The only permissible restrictions they may impose on the exercise of these rights are those which are demonstrably necessary for the protection of national security and public order and public health or morals and the protection of the rights of others and are proportionate to the stated purpose; they must also prohibit propaganda for war and advocacy of hatred constituting incitement against people.

While the rights to freedom of expression and association might be derogated in exceptional and temporary circumstances, the Human Rights Committee has stated that all derogation measures under a state of emergency must be limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation. The obligation under international law to limit any derogations to those strictly required by the exigencies of the situation reflects the principle of proportionality, which is common to derogation and limitation powers. Specific measures taken pursuant to the derogation must also be shown to be required by the exigencies of the situation.

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