

Dear Madam Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,

The International Association of Human Rights in Geneva (IAHRAG), along with the Open Dialogue Foundation hereby asks you, within the frame of your mandate and position, to call on the government of Turkey to release all political prisoners in an emergency bid to stop the spread of the COVID-19.

As stated by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet on 25<sup>th</sup> and 30th March, 2020, **all governments shall take urgent measures to protect the health and safety of people in detention and closed facilities**, as part of overall efforts to contain the **COVID-19 pandemic**. UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies and UN Special Procedures experts echoed her call by urging States to include all people in COVID-19 strategies, even those deprived of liberty, as the only way to combat the pandemic. Several States have already succeeded to implement these measures. Conversely, Turkey has nowadays more than **300,000 inmates and detainees deprived of their liberty**, among which, there are **2.500 children** and **750 babies** staying with their mothers in prison.

Based on the information provided by the Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, currently there are 368 penitentiary institutions prisons, with a total capacity of 235,431 individuals. Therefore, people have been staying in prisons exceeding their normal capacity and lacking required medical personnel and equipment. According to the Human Rights Association of Turkey (IHD), there are **1,333 sick prisoners in Turkey's prisons, among them 457 seriously ill**, meaning that they are at greater risk of death, including from **COVID-19**.

The [United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#) enshrines in its rule 24 that **all prisoners are entitled to enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community. Their safety and security must be ensured at all times** (rule 1).

As you are well aware, it is undeniable that we need to act with solidarity and cooperation regarding this situation that affects us all. Therefore, on behalf of IAHRAG and the Open Dialogue Foundation, I kindly ask you to call on the government of Turkey to release all political prisoners in order to guarantee the well-being of all people without discrimination and decrease the spread of the COVID-19.

Respectfully yours,

Ali Furat, President

IAHRA in Geneva

CC:

H.E. Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşođlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey

Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Turkey

Mr. Feridun Sinirliođlu, Ambassador, Permanent Representative  
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Turkey to the UN, New York

S.E. M. Sadık ARSLAN, Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire  
Représentant permanent auprès de l'Organisation des Nations Unies à  
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Presidency of European Union Affairs, Republic of Turkey