



THE OBSERVATORY
for the Protection of
Human Rights Defenders

STATEMENT - THE OBSERVATORY

Turkey: Six Human Rights Association (İHD) members to stand trial on 29 September and 2 October after months in pre-trial detention

Mert Ahmet Aldemir, Zehra Camcı, Hale Nur Çetin, Emirhan Gedik, Tuğba Kahraman and Şevin Özden were among the 16 İHD members detained on 23 June 2026 ahead of the Ankara NATO Summit. They are due to stand trial on charges of “membership in an armed illegal organisation”. The undersigned organisations participating in the [SOS-Defenders](#) project – including the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership between the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) – express their solidarity with the Human Rights Association (İHD) and its members, and urge the Turkish authorities to release them immediately and to put an end to all forms of criminalisation against human rights defenders.

Geneva-Paris, 28 September 2026.

On 23 June 2026, at least 225 people were detained in house raids as part of a large-scale operation launched by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office ahead of the NATO Summit scheduled to take place on 7 and 8 July 2026. The arrests took place the day after the Ankara Governorate announced a 13-day province-wide ban on all public assemblies (from 28 June until 10 July 2026) on purported grounds of national security to ensure the smooth running of the NATO Summit. At least 178 people, including human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers, were remanded in custody on charges of “membership in an armed illegal organisation”, while 34 were placed under house arrest. As part of the operation, 16 İHD members were detained. Two were released immediately, while 14 were remanded in custody on 25 and 26 June 2026 within the scope of two separate investigations.

Eight of the 14 were subsequently released. The remaining six – **Mert Ahmet Aldemir, Zehra Camcı, Hale Nur Çetin, Emirhan Gedik, Tuğba Kahraman and Şevin Özden** – remained in detention and were committed for trial.

In seeking the continued detention of the six human rights defenders, the prosecution relied not on any concrete act or evidence, but rather on speculative assertions that they “could carry out terrorist acts with the intention of having the Republic of Türkiye associated with terrorism.” The indictments likewise fail to present any concrete evidence demonstrating that the detained İHD members committed or encouraged any act of violence, or that they acted within the hierarchical structure of an illegal organisation. Instead, their participation in peaceful assemblies and demonstrations, their public activities, and their human rights advocacy work have been presented as evidence supporting the charges against them.

Tuğba Kahraman, Hale Nur Çetin, Mert Ahmet Aldemir and Şevin Özden are due to appear before the Ankara 4th High Criminal Court for the first time on 29 September 2026. Emirhan Gedik and Zehra

Camcı are due to appear before the Ankara 2nd High Criminal Court for their first hearings on 2 October 2026.

The Observatory and the signatory organisations [recall](#) that the detention of the İHD members occurs within a broader context of shrinking civic space and the criminalisation of legitimate human rights work in Turkey. These investigations and prosecutions therefore have serious implications not only for the six human rights defenders who have been deprived of their liberty, but also for the future of human rights advocacy in Turkey.

The Observatory and the signatory organisations underline that Turkey is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is therefore bound to guarantee the right to liberty and security of the person and the prohibition of arbitrary arrest or detention (Article 9), as well as the rights to freedom of expression (Article 19), freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 21) and freedom of association (Article 22). Turkey has also ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, notably Articles 5, 10 and 11, which protect the same rights and freedoms and under which the European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly found Turkey in [violation](#) of its obligations in cases involving the prosecution and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors on terrorism-related charges. The detention of the six human rights defenders solely on the basis of their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities is in breach of these obligations and runs counter to the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which affirms the right of everyone, individually and in association with others, to promote and protect human rights.

The Observatory and the signatory organisations urge the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the six İHD members who remain in arbitrary detention and to put an end to all forms of criminalisation of human rights defenders' activities.

The Observatory and the signatory organisations further call on the Turkish authorities to guarantee that human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists can carry out their legitimate work throughout Turkey without fear of judicial harassment, reprisals or intimidation.

Signatories

1. Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization (ADDO)
2. Asociación Memoria y Justicia por Nicaragua (AMJ)
3. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
4. CIVICUS
5. Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN)
6. Comité Cerezo México
7. Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
8. Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center (EHRDC)
9. Fundación Cristosal
10. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
11. Human Rights Association (İHD)

12. Human Rights Center "Viasna"
13. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
14. Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms (IARF)
15. Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH)
16. Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC)
17. The Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA)
18. The Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU)
19. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders