



May 29, 2019

H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Turkey
T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genel Sekreterliği
06689 Çankaya, Ankara
receptayyip.erdogan@basbakanlik.gov.tr

Dear President Erdoğan:

The Human Rights Task Force of the Association for Middle East Women's Studies (AMEWS), an affiliate of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), writes in solidarity with our Turkish colleagues who signed the Academics for Peace statement, "We Will Not Be a Party to this Crime." The treatment the Academics for Peace has been subjected to in Turkey is simply unmatched in the democratic world of the twenty-first century.

We highlight here the sentence of two years and one-month imprisonment that our colleague Prof. Dr. Ayşe Gül Altınay received on May 21, 2019. Dr. Altınay is one of the most accomplished anthropologists of Turkey. She is globally known as a scholar of women and gender studies and is an editorial board member of the European Journal of Women's Studies. In terms of her productivity and scholarly impact, Dr. Altınay is in a league with the most distinguished scholars of her field worldwide. She is the kind of scholar that Turkey should be proud of. Sentencing her for "knowingly and willingly aiding a terrorist organization as a non-member" makes the Turkish justice system lose all of its remaining credibility.

We find it incredible that a petition that calls for peace and was signed by more than 2,200 academics is deemed to be terrorist propaganda. Even more incredible is the way in which the signatories have been treated. As of May 28, 2019, 726 signatories have been put on trial. 192 sentences have been handed down. Of these, 153 were suspended and 4 were deferred. The remaining 35 included convictions that ranged from 15 to 36 months. This kind of discrepancy in sentencing for the same alleged crime is unheard of in the annals of legal history.

Contrary to the accusations of being "producers of terrorist propaganda," the signatories of the Peace Petition have been themselves terrorized for exercising their academic freedom in petitioning their government and producing knowledge that is critical of state policies directed toward the inhabitants of the Kurdish majority provinces of Turkey.

The Association for Middle East Women's Studies Human Rights Task Force stands in solidarity with our persecuted colleagues and demands the immediate dismissal of all their cases. Such state supported violations of academic freedom and basic human rights will negatively impact



international collaboration with Turkish universities. It is in Turkey's interest to correct the injustice done to the Academics for Peace by dismissing all charges.

Sincerely,

AMEWS Human Rights Task Force

Nancy Gallagher, Chair, University of California, Santa Barbara

Sondra Hale, University of California, Los Angeles

Nadje al-Ali, Brown University

Anita Fabos, IDCE Clark University

Hind Ahmed Zaki, Harvard University

Angie Abdelmonem, Arizona State University

cc: Professor Dr. Yusuf Leblecici, President, Sabanci University; rektor@sabanciuniv.edu