

## TO ANKARA 32ND HIGH CRIMINAL COURT

**File no:** 2018/361

**Subject:** My testimony concerning charges in the indictment.

I fully agree with the text presented by my colleague Raşit Tükel. But I have some points to add from my window.

The 16th of 17 Sustainable Development Goals declared by the UN as “Goals to Change the World” is about peace. Of these goals to be attained by 2030, the one related to peace is further consolidated in the UN document “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict” which states that “the independence of national speakers and/or local civil society organizations waging efforts to prevent war is of critical importance.”<sup>1</sup> In this context, the position of our organization, Turkish Medical Association against all armed conflicts in the world and its independent expression of opinion from the window health and human rights is a universally recognized attitude expressly supported by the United Nations that Turkey is a member of.

In resolutions of the UN General Assembly meetings, it is stressed that the role of women is critical in preventing armed conflicts and violence and that peace processes that exclude women cannot be sustained. I present mentioned UN sources and resolutions for your information as annexed to my petition. There is one point that I want to stress specifically: In his report to the UN Security Council in 2017, the UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** called on the UN and all Member States to support women’s involvement at all stages of efforts geared to preventing wars and armed conflicts.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary-General stressed in the same report that worldwide at least 65.5 million people, many of women and children, were forced to migrate as a result of violence and armed conflict as of the end of 2016. This is a striking fact since gender-based violence that preys on women and girls in particular is on the rise alarmingly. It is such that gender-based violence does not stop even after the settlement of conflict until peace is fully established and women and girls continue to bear the burden of harm. As we witnessed sadly in the recent Syrian crisis, women carry along their war trauma while moving to other countries and many are doomed to live with physical or psychological remnants of violence in years to come. I must say right at this point that first as a woman and then a physician working for migrant health, there can be nothing more natural than standing against all armed conflicts mainly for the well-being of women and children.

I want to say a few things about that part of the indictment with charges against me personally. It is unfortunate that my social media sharing and position was unfairly distorted by searching my accounts by using some key words. As I stated expressly and in detail in my testimony to the prosecutor, I have been strongly against a terrorist organization in particular. Though I have never been close to any such organization in my whole life that organization which I particularly denounce is the ISIL. It is the organization that brought immense pains and suffering to Syria and Iraq. Its crimes against humanity include mass raping of women and girls; chaining and selling them in markets like animals; killing women doctors for curing male children; and having its share in flight of about 4 million Syrians to

Turkey. What is strange is that my comments on this organization are broken apart from its context and presented as defending another terrorist organization. It is the barbarism of the ISIL burning our four soldiers alive; shedding blood in our provinces like Diyarbakır, Ankara, İstanbul and Urfa; and organizing bloody assaults targeting civilians and daily life not only in our region but in various European Countries and the US as well. It is true that I felt myself on the side of Turkmen, Ezidi, Kurdish, Arabic, Assyrian, Christian, Sunni and Shia peoples and women in particular in **self-defence** against the ISIL when their barbarism made a peak in 2014. It is for this reason that Nadia Murad, an Ezidi woman who are both the victim of and militant in struggle against ISIL barbarism was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for her “decisive contributions in combating violence against women” thus crowning women’s firm stance against this barbarism with universal conscience. I must state openly that my position is no different than that of UN goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad who was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2018.

Neither in 2014 nor earlier or later have I ever sympathized with any terror organization. Contrary to groundless arguments included in this indictment it is a fact that I have always stood against terror and terror organizations. In this context, I absolutely refuse any charge that I have tried to legitimize the acts of terror organizations.

Lastly, both as a woman and physician my sincere wish is that all wars, armed conflicts and violence in our region and throughout the world come to an end at least for the well-being of women and children. I repeat my strong rejection of charges against my organization and myself and ask for our acquittal.

With my best regards.

Dr. Hande Arpat

1. Pathways for Peace Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict // UN
2. Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security // S/2017/861\*; General Assembly Security Council