

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

TUR 010 / 1120 / OBS 135

Arbitrary detention /
Judicial harassment

Turkey

November 27, 2020

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and FIDH, has received new information and requests your intervention in the following situation in **Turkey**.

New information:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the arbitrary detention and judicial harassment against Dr. **Şeyhmus Gökalp**, a physician, member of the High Disciplinary Committee of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB)¹ and a volunteer of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT)².

According to the information received, early in the morning of November 20, 2020, Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalp was arrested by the Turkish police and taken into police custody, within the scope of an investigation conducted by the Prosecutor's Office in Diyarbakır.

On November 23, 2020 the Diyarbakır Second Criminal Court of Peace ordered the pre-trial detention of Dr. Gökalp in Diyarbakır prison. The justification of the Court's decision was the existence of a "strong suspicion of a crime", in connection with Dr. Gökalp's alleged provision of healthcare for members of a terrorist organization in a hospital during a period he did not work in those premises, as well as with his alleged participation in a meeting considered illegal by public authorities.

Nonetheless, no video footage or tape recording was presented by the Prosecutor to prove Dr. Gökalp's presence at the meeting concerned. As of issuing this Urgent Appeal, no further information was available as the investigation was kept confidential and a decision whether to press official charges or not will be made in the upcoming period.

The Observatory firmly condemns the arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of Dr. Gökalp and recalls that this is not the first time that TTB members and Dr. Gökalp are being targeted because of their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities³.

The Observatory urges the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalp, as well as to put an end to all forms of harassment, including at the judicial level, against him and all human rights defenders in Turkey.

¹ Established in 1953, the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) is a chamber of medical doctors in Turkey. The TTB aspires to defend the rights of doctors, represent the profession of medical doctors and protect the ethic codes, contribute to medical education, improve and sensitise about public health in Turkey. The TTB counts around 85.000 members which represents almost 60% of Turkey's doctors and it is affiliated to the World Medical Association.

² Established in 1990, the HRFT is a non governmental and non-profit organisation providing treatment and rehabilitation services for torture survivors and documenting human rights violations in Turkey.

³ See Observatory Urgent Appeal [TUR 001 / 0118 / OBS 014](#), published on January 31, 2018.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Turkey asking them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalg and of all human rights defenders in Turkey;
- ii. Immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalg and all other human rights defenders detained in Turkey, as their detention is arbitrary since it only seems to aim at punishing them for their human rights activities;
- iii. Put an end to all forms of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalg and all human rights defenders in Turkey, and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their activities without hindrance and fear of reprisals;
- iv. Refrain from the practice of abusing anti-terrorism legislation for silencing dissent and crackdown on human rights activities;
- v. Comply with all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular its Articles 1 and 12.2;
- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Turkey.

Addresses:

- President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Fax: +90 (312) 525 58 31. Email: contact@tccb.gov.tr
- Minister of Justice, Mr. Abdülhamit Gül. Email: info@adalet.gov.tr. Fax: +90 (0312) 419 33 70
- Minister of Interior, Mr. Süleyman Soylu. Email: diab@icisleri.gov.tr; sti@icisleri.gov.tr
- Ambassador Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Diplomatic Mission of Turkey to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. Fax: + 32 2 511 04 50. Email: info@turkdeleg.org; tr-delegation.eu@mfa.gov.tr
- Ambassador Mr. Sadık Arslan, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Email: turkey.unog@mfa.gov.tr

Please also write to the diplomatic missions or embassies of Turkey in your respective country.

Geneva-Paris, November 27, 2020

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and FIDH. The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. OMCT and FIDH are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org



The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

- Tel OMCT + 41 22 809 49 39
- Tel FIDH + 33 1 43 55 25 18

The logo for FIDH (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits humains) is shown in white lowercase letters on a dark purple rectangular background.

fidh

The logo for OMCT SOS-Torture Network features the acronym 'OMCT' in a large, bold, black font with a red diagonal slash through the 'O'. Below it, the words 'SOS-Torture Network' are written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

OMCT
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