



Human Rights Leaders Urge Turkish Government to Drop Charges against Transgender Activists

Harassment of Transgender Individuals Must End

For Immediate Release

(New York, Nov 2, 2011) - In a joint letter [\[hyperlink\]](#) sent to the Turkish Ministry of Justice today, seven human rights organizations called for an end to the continuous harassment of transgender individuals and human rights defenders and expressed alarm at the conviction and potential imprisonment of leaders from the organization Pembe Hayat.

On October 26, 2011, Ankara's 15th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced three transgender human rights defenders, Naz Gdmen , Buse Kılıçkaya , and Selay Tunç, to jail terms ranging from five to eighteen months. They were convicted of offenses such as "resisting the police" and "insulting the police." While the jail sentences for Ms. Tunc and Ms. Gdmen were suspended, the court's ruling in the case of Ms. Kılıçkaya is to be enforced if it is upheld by the Court of Appeals.

The court's ruling was based on charges for events that took place on June 19, 2010. That day, the police pulled over the three human rights defenders while they drove through the Seyranbaglari Mah neighborhood in Ankara and subsequently arrested them. According to the groups, the arrests were arbitrary and part of a pattern of systematic harassment of transgender individuals, particularly those defending their human rights.

The letter to the Justice Minister was signed by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), COC Netherlands, Global Action for Trans* Equality, the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), Transgender Europe (TGEU), ARC International, and STP 2012, International Stop Trans Pathologization Campaign.

Ms. Kılıçkaya and Ms. Tunç are co-founders and current board members of Pembe Hayat, and Ms. Gdmen is an active member. Pembe Hayat (Pink Life Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transsexual Solidarity Association) is an Ankara-based organization that works to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia.

In their letter, the human rights organizations requested that Turkish authorities drop all charges against Ms. Gdmen, Ms. Kılıçkaya, and Ms. Tunç and investigate the discriminatory treatment of transgender individuals by the police and courts. The groups also requested the Turkish government provide sensitivity training for law enforcement officers and court officials in order to prevent future cases of transphobia and homophobia.

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