



**Women Human Rights Defenders
International Coalition**
Defending Women Defending Rights

Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC) is in solidarity with resilient women in Turkey

We, the undersigned organisations, recognise that the Turkish government has the right and responsibility to investigate the violent events of the July 2016 coup attempt and to bring all those responsible to justice. We also recognise that the immediate aftermath of the attempted coup is the type of exceptional circumstance in which a government could legitimately invoke a state of emergency but still has to comply with their human rights obligations.

We are however increasingly concerned that the far-reaching, almost unlimited discretionary powers exercised by the Turkish authorities during the first three months of the state of emergency – extended for a further three months on 19 October - endanger the general principles of rule of law and human rights safeguards.

[Ayla Akat](#) a leading woman human rights defender and Kurdish political activist in Turkey, who also served as an elected Member of Parliament between 2007 and 2015, was taken into custody on 26 October in Diyarbakir/Amed. Partners in Diyarbakir informed the WHRDIC that during her arrest, Ayla was dragged across the floor, physically abused and harassed. The police also raided her house and office and confiscated all equipment pertaining to her human rights work, including laptops. Ayla has been moved to Kandira Prison, an F-type (high security) prison over a thousand kilometers from her home. Akat was charged with “being a member of a terrorist organization” on 31 October 2016.

Since the breakdown of the ceasefire between the Turkish State and the PKK, those speaking out on abuses in the SouthEast of the country have faced threats, intimidation, persecution and sometimes imprisonment. Kurdish women human rights defenders are amongst those bearing the brunt of the State crackdown.

On 15-16 July 2016, a faction of the military in Turkey attempted a coup d'état. At least 260 citizens and security personnel were killed during a night of violence in the

clashes. The government of Turkey declared a state of emergency following the attempted coup, which is now being used as an excuse to curb civic freedoms, target human rights defenders and suppress dissent.

Ayla's detention follows a wave of arrests targeting Kurdish activists in Turkey. Co-mayors of Diyarbakır, Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, were also imprisoned on terrorism charges on 30 October, having been taken into custody on 25 October. [Gültan Kışanak](#) is a symbolic figure of the Kurdish women's movement and after the last military coup in September 1980 experienced the most brutal forms of threats, restrictions and violence, including torture and sexual assault in prison. Other arrests include that of renowned novelist, columnist and human rights activist [Aslı Erdoğan](#) and writer and linguist [Necmiye Alpay](#).

On 3 November 2014, twelve deputies from the Democracy Party (HDP) including party's co chair and WHRD Figen Yüksekdağ were detained and accused of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization", a provision routinely used to suppress independent voices in Turkey. Additionally, on 11 November 2015, the Ministry of Interior announced it suspended activities of 370 associations, 9 of which are grassroots women's rights organizations including Adıyaman Women Life Association, Anka Women Research Association, Bursa Panayır Women Solidarity Association, Ceren Women Association, Gökkuşluğu Women Association, Kongreya Jinen Azad (Free Women Congress), Muş Women Association, Selis Women Association and Van Women Association. All associations are a vital part of the gender struggle in Turkey.

A Kurdish woman, who prefers to remain anonymous, said "It must be emphasized that the pioneering role that women play in this process has been perceived as a threat by the patriarchal state." There is no doubt, Ayla, Gültan, Figen and other Kurdish women human rights defenders are vital members of a global community who work peacefully and committedly for rights, justice and equality.

The Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRDIC), express our solidarity with the Kurdish women human rights defenders and their allies in their efforts to ensure gender and the full enjoyment of human rights in the country. The WHRDIC calls for the: release of Ayla Akat as well as, Gültan Kışanak, Aslı Erdoğan, Figen Yüksekdağ and other imprisoned human rights defenders. We further demand that the Turkish authorities lift all restrictions targeting women human rights defenders and their organizations in Turkey.

WHRDIC is a global network which provides solidarity and support to women human rights defenders worldwide.