

**President of the Turkish Republic
H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Presidential Palace
ANKARA
Turkey**

Brussels, March 18th 2016

PH-hb-114

Your Excellency,

Concerns arrests of lawyers

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ordre des barreaux francophones et germanophone de Belgique (AVOCATS.BE), which represents more than 7.500 Belgian lawyers. AVOCATS.BE is member of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (C.C.B.E.).

AVOCATS.BE places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. AVOCATS.BE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

AVOCATS.BE came to learn that, in the night of 15th to 16th March 2016, a wave of arrests had hit twenty people, including lawyers MM. Irfan Arasan, Ayşe Acinikli Hüseyin Bogatekin, Şefik Çelik, Adem Çalışçi, Ayşe Başar, Tamer Doğan, Ramazan Demir and Mustafa Ruzgar.

These lawyers are all members of the Association of Lawyers for Liberty (Ozgurlucku Hukukcular Dernegi - OHD). They were meant to ensure, as from today, the defense of 46 lawyers prosecuted for their involvement in the defense of the leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

Although the official reason for the questioning of our colleagues is not yet known, it seems clear that it is related to their quality of defenders and to the exercise of their profession.

In this context, AVOCATS.BE again wishes to draw to your attention the Principle of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (attached), in particular Principles 16, 17, 18 and 20 on Guarantees for the functioning of lawyers and Principle 23 on Freedom of expression and association.

a.

AVOCATS.BE

In view of the above, AVOCATS.BE respectfully requests the immediate stop of intimidation and prosecution against lawyers who are simply exercising their defense mission. Lawyers cannot be assimilated to their clients or the cause they defend.

AVOCATS.BE also asks you to take all necessary measures so that lawyers can keep on exercising their defence mission without fear of reprisal, hindrance, intimidation, or harassment.

Yours sincerely,

In the name of Patrick Henry
Président



Christine de Ville de Goyet
Chief administrative officer

Annex: 1