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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, a non- governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Turkey: opposition and civil society under severe repression

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Turkish authorities have arrested thousands of security forces and civil servant personnel, as well as journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders.

Many of them received heavy sentences from different tribunals. Hundreds sought refuge abroad.

Opposition parties and civil society organisations became to be targeted and strictly monitored by the Turkish intelligence.

“NEW TURKEY”

The so-called new policy of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is defined by intimidation of the democratic opposition, prosecution of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and destruction of any remnants of civil society.

Following the HDP's decision to participate in the 7 June 2015 elections as a political party, its partisans were subjected to systematic and continuing oppression, including a series of bomb attacks. A bouquet of flowers that included explosives and a parcel bomb destroyed the HDP regional headquarters in Mersin and Adana. On the eve of the elections, a twin bomb blast in the HDP's Diyarbakir rally killed three people and left more than two hundred people wounded.

Despite these bloody attacks and widespread election fraud, the HDP surpassed the 10 percent threshold with 13.2 percent of the votes cast, securing 80 seats in the Turkish National Assembly. HDP was undertaking a key role in working towards peace by supporting the ongoing peace talks between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its leader Abdullah Öcalan (who has been incarcerated on the prison island of Imrali since 1999) and the Turkish government.

However, on 1 November 2015, president Erdogan declared a snap election to re-claim the AKP majority and form a single party government.

The peace talks, which had lasted for three years, collapsed. In the predominantly Kurdish towns of Cizre, Sur, and Nusaybin, round the clock curfews were imposed that were followed by harsh military interventions. These caused the deaths of thousands and the displacement of half a million people. Whole sections of these cities were destroyed, and crimes against humanity, including extrajudicial killings of civilians, were carried out by Turkish soldiers and by Islamist mercenaries under Turkish government oversight. HDP party offices and headquarters across the country were stormed and burnt down by mobs.

In the Suruç bombings (8 September 2015) the party lost 33 young people from one of their component organisations, the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF), in a suicide attack committed by an ISIS militant in this predominantly Kurdish town in Turkey. In Ankara, (10 October 2015) 103 HDP sympathisers were killed in two suicide bomb attacks by ISIS militants at an HDP peace rally.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's strategy consists in obstructing HDP by all means, including by assigning unelected government-appointed trustees of the presidential Justice and Development Party (AKP) in place of elected representatives, and by show trials based on unfounded and insubstantial indictments. Immunity from prosecution was lifted from eleven HDP deputies during the 2015-2018 period and the current electoral terms.

HDP former deputies Nazmi Gür, Ayla Akat Ata, Ayhan Bilgen (suspended mayor of Kars), Beyza Üstün, and Emine Ayna were arrested in 2020 on charges based on parliamentary activities they engaged in before the 2015 elections. As of May 2021, 14 HDP deputies are under arrest.

Compiled lists show that over 10,000 HDP members have been under arrest since 2015. Some thousands of HDP members have been released after being behind bars - sometimes for years

- but there are still more than 4,000 HDP members, including MPs and co-mayors, in prison. There are also thousands of HDP members living abroad, including MPs and former co-mayors who had to escape from politically-motivated arrest warrants issued by the judiciary.

Following the local elections held on 31 March 2019, Turkish authorities arbitrarily replaced the elected representatives in 49 out of the 65 municipalities won by the HDP with government-appointed trustees. These municipalities included three metropolitan areas, five provinces and 33 districts. 37 municipal co-chairs, including 19 women, were imprisoned. As of March 2021, 15 Co-Mayors, including Diyarbakır Metropolitan Co-Mayor Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı, Co-Mayor of Kars Ayhan Bilgen and seven women, remain in detention. A further six Co-Mayors are under house arrest.

The indictment filed on 17 March 2021 by the Prosecutor General's Office at the Constitutional Court seeking the dissolution of the HDP and the political ban on more than 687 HDP members is also being used as the basis for closing down the HDP completely.

Although the Constitutional Court found the indictment 'duly incomplete and wrong' because the prosecutor's allegations regarding the closure of the HDP were found to be insubstantial, the closure of the HDP is still at stake since the rule of law has been manipulated in order to incarcerate HDP members.

'KOBANE CASE'

In October 2014, the HDP called on people to support legitimate popular protests for Kobane against the ISIS attack on the city and the ongoing support for ISIS being shown by the Turkish authorities. For years, the HDP has been calling for a parliamentary inquiry to shed light on what led to the violence, but Turkish authorities have always rejected the proposal.

The Turkish Attorney General has started 'Kobane Case' and ordered the detention of 108 individuals, among them leading representatives of the HDP. There is an ongoing manhunt for 75 people. With this show trial, Turkish authorities want to portray known politicians as criminals in order for social support to the HDP to be broken. The 3,530-page indictment contains evidence that has nothing to do with the truth. If things go according to President Erdogan's wishes, Selahattin Demirtas should spend up to 15,000 years in prison, which is the request of the Office of the Attorney General.

Kobane case is still going on in the Turkish tribunals.

RECOMANDATIONS

MRAP calls upon the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, each one in the framework of his/her mandate, to pay particular attention to the cases raised in the present statement and to request a visit to the country.