

Current situation in Turkey

In total, approximately 4,000 judges and prosecutors have been dismissed. About 500 of them are still in prison. More than 600 judges and prosecutors including some main representatives of YARSAV like Murat Arslan, have been sentenced between 6-12 years imprisonment. There are also many ongoing lawsuits against the others. Eventually, the number of former judges / prosecutors sentenced will be more than 1,000. Because in 2017, more than 2,300 judges / prosecutors were in prison (pre-trial detention). The courts are likely to impose on them a prison sentence of at least a few years to avoid paying compensation for unjustifiable detention.

In general, these judges and prosecutors are appealing against the verdicts and some of them were released from detention while the appeal is pending. This means that they are waiting for the decision of the last instance.

However, being released does not make life easier. There is always a difficult struggle to bargain a job. According to Turkish law, those persons cannot return to their former work, cannot become lawyers, cannot become civil servants or whatever.

In addition, private sector employers do not want to offer them a job because of their social security record containing information about their dismissal or judicial problems.

Considering the total number of cases (there are also thousands of persons in the same situation: former professors, lawyers, officials, businessmen), one can assume that it will take at least 2 or 3 years until definitive decisions are rendered. After the last instance will have approved the verdicts of the first instance, these persons must return to prison to serve their sentence.

Apart from this, some former judges / prosecutors have been acquitted of the allegations contained in their criminal trials although there were only a few cases.

Nevertheless no one can return to work either. Each of those persons faces the same almost insurmountable problem: to find a job.

The importance of the Fund

Several reasons show the importance of the fund. The first – and most important – is related with our Turkish Colleagues and their expectations. It is very clear that the mere existence of a Fund managed by an international association of judges is a permanent symbol – perhaps the

more concrete and effective one – of European solidarity towards the present torment of our Turkish Colleagues.

In the same context, the psychological part of the support (showing the victims that there are still “good people” around the world who can understand and care about them) plays an important role. This assessment is confirmed by the many reactions that always declare how grateful our Turkish Colleagues are for our efforts.

In addition to this, there are still many colleagues asking for help, not only for an initial donation, but also for a consecutive one.

The functioning of the Fund

We divide into two categories the people we decide to help. For the first group, the criteria are very concrete; if the couple has children and they do not have a job, we send them 900 euros.

The second group consist of other people who don't meet the criteria of the first group, although they also need urgent support. For people in this category, the Fund Committee could decide to send 500 or 900 euros depending on the urgency of the needs. Different types of applications may fall into this category:

- Unemployed couples who don't have children
- Unemployed singles who must support their families
- People in need of support for medical treatment (for example, cancer treatment)

- In principle, our support is only for once. However, in very exceptional situations, we decided to send a second support to families who need additional support.

On the other hand, we don't send support to families who have a regular income (rent or when one of the couples works).

To date, we have received 505 requests, of which 170 have been accepted and 130,000 euros sent in total. In addition, we have sent help to more than 25 families in the last two months. This shows that we are still receiving applications and that people still need help.

Letter of thanks

Finally, here are the same messages we received that demonstrate the importance of this fund to them.

“... So far we've spent our savings. We had to sell our car. We are seriously struggling to cover our costs. We have never received any help. We had to make this application because we had to....”

“... I appreciate your organization's sensitivity in protecting European values and taking the people who are in need of assistance like me by hand. In an environment in which even my own relatives do not help me, your organization's assistance always reminds me the importance of the modern world and democratic values, as well as the hope in terms of the future. I am telling and going to tell my children about your assistance and help during these difficult days ...”

“... Thank you for your consideration and kind support. We, I and my wife, as a former judge and prosecutor who have to live in a place where the human rights are at stake, very glad to hear from you. Both during the detention and after the release from prison, we have received tons of moral support from you. This is in itself very precious for us...”

“...I am really thankful, want to thank you and your donors very very much. Nowadays are absolutely different than past. My husband was a judge, i was an engineer but everything has changed. Your support helped and helps me to adjust these days, thank you for your kind interest and support...”

“Dear European Colleagues,

These are difficult times for Turkish Judiciary. Unfortunately fighting the injustice takes a long time. Nothing lasts forever. All that remains our friends' helping hand. Thank you for sharing your Turkish colleagues' pain. We will see better days. I am sure that Turkish judges will never forget European friends' support...”