

LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR PREVENTION OF TORTURE

From Human Rights Organisations in Turkey

25 March 2019

It was stated by lawyers of Abdullah Öcalan who has been held at the High Security F Type Prison in İmralı that he has been neither allowed to contact his lawyers for a long time, nor demands of his family members to visit are met. Ms Leyla Güven, Hakkari Deputy of the People's Democratic Party, initiated an indefinite and with no alternate hunger strike to protest this situation on 8 November 2018 when she was detained at Diyarbakır E Type Prison. Although she was released from prison 25 January 2019, she still sustains her act of hunger strike. In addition to Leyla Güven, 313 prisoners held in different prisons of Turkey also initiated hunger strikes to support hunger strike act of Ms Güven as well as to protest the isolation on contacting to outside world applied in İmralı Prison. By 1 March 2019, more than 1000 inmates participated in the hunger strike act.

In due course, none of the communications and attempts made to the Ministry of Justice and the Parliament have given any result. We are deeply concerned about the possible outcomes led by hunger strikes initiated at prisons to protest isolation conditions at İmralı Prison. Our concerns were increased with the suicides committed by four prisoners since 17 March 2019 to protest the isolation.

The report of the CPT prepared following the visit on 28-29 April 2016 to İmralı Prison was opened to public on 28 March 2018 upon the permission provided by the Government of Turkey. One of the issues raised in this report was related to the restrictions imposed on all prisoners held at İmralı Prison concerning their contact with the outside world as indicated in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the report.

According to the "United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners" (known as Nelson Mandela Rules) updated in December 2015, States have the duty to ensure the exercise of rights by prisoners notwithstanding of their identity and the nature of their imprisonment. The right to contact with lawyers and family members is among these rights (Rule 58 to 63).

As human rights organisations in Turkey, we ask the Committee to act immediately in accordance with its mandate, to protect the lives of people in prisons through ending the hunger strikes and to lift the restrictions applied to prisoners at İmralı which leads to isolation.

Association for Monitoring Equal Rights, Rights Initiative Association, Human Rights Association, Human Rights Agenda Association, Citizenship Association