



STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

20 June, 2013

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey
Ankara
Turkey

Dear Mr Prime Minister,

I am writing to you as General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We are an affiliate of the International Trade Union Confederation representing over 175 million workers worldwide in 156 countries, including Turkey, to express serious concerns over the repression of peaceful and legitimate protests.

More than 10 million civilians have been participating in peaceful protests in all parts of the country for the past 20 days and have expressed legitimate demands, in particular regarding Gezi Park. Unfortunately, you have preferred to use brutal and excessive violence against protesters instead of engaging in a constructive dialogue.

The disproportionate and excessive use of tear-gas canisters by police has led to the deaths of four people (Mehmet Ayvalıtaş, Abdullah Cömert, Ethem Sarısülük and Mustafa Sarı) and the injury of 1 500 people in Istanbul and 700 in Ankara. The Turkish Medical Association has reported that only 5 per cent of the injured were admitted to hospital. In fact, the Ministry of Health opened an investigation against the Istanbul Chamber of Medicine which had organised volunteers to treat injured protestors. One physician and a medical student have been detained.

On 16 June 2013 alone 441 people were detained according to the Istanbul Bar Association, including journalists. National TV stations such as Ulusal Kanal, Halk TV, Cem TV, and EM TV which have covered the protests extensively were fined for "inciting violence." Turkey is the country with the largest number of journalists imprisoned ahead of Iran and China.

The Minister of Interior, Muammer Güler, has announced the government's intention to continue to take measures against social media. Furthermore, the Mayor of Ankara threatened civil servants who stated that they want to participate in the protests with dismissal. More than 800,000 trade unionists protested on 17 June 2013.

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These actions severely violate fundamental rights, including the rights to freedom of association, assembly, expression and information. Civic participation in decision making is an integral component of democracy. The continued repression of legitimate and peaceful protests constitutes a serious threat to democratisation and social cohesion.

We therefore urge you to honour your commitments to democracy and human rights and to:

- End violence and repression against peaceful protests and to address the demands made by the protestors;
- Hold those responsible for the thousands of injured people and the deaths of Mehmet Ayvalıtaş, Abdullah Cömert, Ethem Sarısülük and Mustafa Sarı accountable, to dismiss them from their posts and to prosecute them before the law
- Guarantee the right to freedom of assembly in all public areas, including Taksim square;
- Ensure that trade unionists who exercise their right to freedom of assembly are not dismissed;
- Immediately release citizens who have participated in the protests peacefully and to drop all charges against them;
- Immediately release KESK trade unionists, detained journalists and all others unjustly held for legitimate acts of protests and opposition;
- Remove all the legal and practical barriers against the exercise of trade union rights and the right to strike;
- Ensure that injured protestors have access to adequate health care; and
- Stop prohibitive measures against the use of social media.

Turkey and its people deserve much better. They deserve democracy and the protection of all their human rights, including trade union rights. We encourage your Government to move in that direction in the crucial days and weeks ahead.

Yours sincerely,



David Begg
General Secretary