

Tutsakların Sesi Platformu

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Prisoners Voice Platform

Prisoners Voice

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Prisoners Voice Platform (*Tutsakların Sesi Platformu -TSP*)



Prisoners Voice Platform (TSP) is working to support political prisoners held in the prisons of the Turkish state, to bring their struggle and voices to the democratic European public, and to build international solidarity with prisoners. Whilst the main

focus of our work is on political prisoners in the prisons of the fascist Turkish state, we also value and show solidarity with prisoners in different countries around the world.

With these aims in mind, TSP regularly publishes a Turkish language magazine called Free Thought Post (Özgür Düş Postası). Within the magazine are included letters, poems, stories, caricatures, pictures and other works produced by prisoners, as well as exposes of the state's attacks on prisoners.

TSP is working to make prisoners' voices heard through announcements, notices, press conferences, panels, stands, art exhibitions, protests, meetings and other such means.

TSP in particular aims to support political prisoners both materially and spiritually, and to provide contact, coordination and solidarity between the families of prisoners.

With this newly produced English language edition of ours, we intend to regularly inform the European public about the rights violations in the prisons of the Turkish state and the resistance of political prisoners. In addition, information regarding political prisoners in various countries will be included.

Our work as TSP can be followed from our website accessed here www.prisonersvoice.org and we can be contacted via our email address info@prisonersvoice.org.

**Information
regarding the
prisons of the
Turkish state**

Every year, the Turkish state allocates a significant budget for the penal system.

According to an announcement by a spokesperson for the general directorate of prisons and detention houses under the Turkish ministry of justice, since 2016 until the present day 394 prisons have been closed and, in the same period, 285 new prisons have been opened, of which 16 were opened in 2023 alone.

Instead of the previously existing smaller prisons in which prisoners stayed in a communal ward system, since the early 2000's the Turkish

state has been constructing campus-type prisons, where many prisons are built in the same location together and have a focus on keeping the thousands of prisoners held in such prisons in solitary.

Prisons constructed since 2016 tend to be of this new solitary confinement type. Of these prisons which many

**“314,375 prisoners
are being held in
prisons across
Turkey and
Kurdistan.”**

political prisoners are now being transferred to, S-type, Y-type and high security prisons are entirely solitary confinement prisons and political prisoners held in these prisons are faced with

severely oppressive measures and routine rights violations.

According to an announcement by the ministry of justice on 01/02/2024:

- There are a total of 403 prisons in Turkey with a capacity of 495,702. Within these prisons are held 13,094 female prisoners and 298,399 male prisoners for a total of 314,375 prisoners. This data shows the current number of people incarcerated to exceed the prisons' total capacity by 18,693.
- Of the total prisoners held, 4,397 men and 161 women for a total of 4, 558 people are over the age of 65. 2, 882 are children below the age of 18.
- At the end of 2023, there were 552 mothers with children between the ages of 0-6 being held in prisons.

- As of the 1st September 2023, there were 11, 245 foreign prisoners.

According to an announcement by the Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CİSST), there are 269 prisoners with disabilities and 1,453 serving aggravated life sentences.

There are no official statistics regarding the number of LGBTQ+ prisoners being held. However, in a briefing on 14th November 2018, it was suggested that around 200 LGBTQ+ prisoners are being held.

The Turkish state does not make announcements regarding the number of political prisoners being held, though human rights organisations estimate the number to be in the tens of thousands.

Rights violations in the prisons of the Turkish state

Erdogan's fascist dictatorship's attacks directed against socialist and revolutionary organisations, the Kurdish people and other anti-fascist forces with the aim of silencing his political opposition are continually increasing. As the attacks increase, so too do the numbers of political prisoners.

The Turkish state, which has no regard for universal human rights, international conventions, decrees from the ECHR or even its own laws, conducts frequent rights violations against prisoners which are reported on and brought to light by the Human Rights Association (İnsan

Hakları Dernekleri - İHD) and other legal and democratic organisations.

İHD Istanbul Branch Prison Commission in its Marmara Region 2023 Rights Violations Report published on 12/03/2024, detailed that in the year 2023 there were 268 appeals to the İHD Istanbul Branch from 51 prisons in which they determined a total of 6,411 rights violations had occurred. The İHD also made it known that they identified a further 1,061 violations by means of press surveys bringing the total for 2023 to 7,472. In other regions of Turkey and Kurdistan, the İHD continues to collate on and publish rights violations in similar reports. Below are a few examples of the rights violations currently being

experienced by prisoners held in Turkish prisons:

The most infamous example of the practice of isolation and solitary confinement is that of the Leader of the Kurdish people Abdullah Öcalan, who has been held since 1999 in İmralı F-type prison and from whom no communication has been heard for the past three years. To demand that the solitary confinement being imposed upon Öcalan be lifted and for an end to rights violations in prisons, PKK and PAJK prisoners have been on a continuous hunger strike since 27th November 2023. In many prisons, hunger striking prisoners are subject to additional punishments.

By their treatments and early releases being denied, sick prisoners are being condemned to death. Every year dozens of sick prisoners



die either in prison or outside, released when they are on the verge of death. The latest examples of this are:

İsmet Çardak, released on the 28th February from Elâzığ R-type closed prison, died on the 14th March. Çardak, who had recently received treatment for muscle atrophy, left prison in a wheelchair.

Mutlak Tozun, who was seriously ill and had been held for 30 years in Manisa

Akhisar T-type prison, after fainting in her ward on the 18th of August was taken to hospital and diagnosed with late-stage stomach cancer. On the 30th March, Tozun passed away in hospital.

According to data from the İHD, there are 1,517 sick prisoners held in prisons in the Turkish state and since 1st January 2022, 94 sick prisoners have passed away. Prisoners taken to hospital are often subjected to strip searches and mouth searches. Those prisoners who refuse are denied treatment. Strip searches as a method of torture have become increasingly widespread. Prisoners taken to the hospital are forced to be examined in handcuffs and this situation has turned into a torture process for sick prisoners.

When prisoners are due to be released, many are arbitrarily kept in prison far beyond their original sentences. For example, prisoners who have been held for 30 years are expected to display repentance, those political prisoners who refuse are held indefinitely.

Frequent raids are carried out on prisoner's cells in which their possessions are destroyed and the hygiene products they have purchased from the commissary are seized.

Prisoners are under 24 hour surveillance as a form of psychological torture, social activities are banned, prisoners are deprived of fresh air and sunlight and are kept isolated.

Cases of torture and verbal abuse and sexual violence

against women and LGBTQ+ prisoners are increasing.

In order to further isolate prisoners, communication between prisoners inside is heavily restricted and those outside prison who visit prisoners, send them money, or attempt to correspond with them are arrested. In the past few weeks, tens of revolutionaries, socialists and family members of prisoners have been arrested for having sent money to or visited a prisoner. For example, 75-year-old Hatice Yıldız was sentenced to four years and two months in prison for sending her daughter and her cellmate money and on the 22nd March was taken from her house on a stretch and placed into a single-person cell. Hatice Yıldız's lawyer Xebat Demircan, who recently visited her in prison, stated

that she was unable to walk by herself, was brought to the meeting by prison guards and fainted during the visit.

Prisoners are resisting fiercely against all of these attacks. For example, MLKP (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party) remand prisoners Fethiye Ok and Seda Baykan began a five-day hunger strike on the 25th March 2024 in protest against the rights violations they had been subjected to. It is a political as well as a humanitarian duty to stand in international solidarity with political prisoners who resist fascist oppression and attacks without compromising their revolutionary identity and honour.

Freedom for political prisoners!

Release sick prisoners immediately!