

ARBITRARY DENIAL OF PAROLE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS: JOINT UN COMMUNICATION ON THE DETENTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SELÇUK KOZAĞAÇLI

On 2 February 2026, five human rights and legal organisations – the Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project (TLSP), the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH), the International Bar Association’s Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the Law Society of England and Wales, and Lawyers for Lawyers – submitted a joint communication to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (“the Working Group”) concerning the ongoing arbitrary detention of prominent human rights lawyer Selçuk Kozağaçlı.*

Background

Selçuk Kozağaçlı was convicted for ‘membership of a terrorist organisation’ – a charge based entirely on his professional work as a human rights lawyer. He became eligible for conditional release on 11 February 2025 and was briefly released on 16 April 2025, only to be re-arrested the next day after judicial authorities revoked his release.

Mr Kozağaçlı remains in prison despite the fact that there is no legitimate basis for his continued detention. He has been repeatedly denied conditional release. His case is not an isolated one – it reflects a broader pattern in Türkiye where political prisoners are systemically denied parole, adding yet another layer of rights violations to already politically motivated detentions, prosecutions, convictions and sentencing.

Why This Detention is Arbitrary

Our communication sets out that Mr Kozağaçlı’s continued detention amounts to arbitrary detention on multiple grounds falling under Category I, II, III and V arbitrary detention as defined by the Working Group:

- * No legal basis: His detention rests on overly broad and vague Turkish legislation on parole, applied arbitrarily by prison and judicial authorities.
- * Punishment for exercising his rights: His parole was revoked because of his participation

in hunger strikes protesting prison conditions and fair trial violations – acts of free expression and peaceful assembly.

* Denial of due process: His rights to liberty and security, a fair trial and an effective remedy have all been violated (Category III violation).

* Part of a decade-long pattern of harassment: Mr Kozağaçlı and his colleagues have faced sustained persecution for their work defending human rights as lawyers.

What We are Asking

We are calling on the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to urgently confirm that Mr Kozağaçlı's continued detention violates international law and to recommend his immediate release, along with just compensation for his arbitrary detention and a full investigation into his case.

Beyond these individual remedies, we urge the Working Group to call on Türkiye to fundamentally reform its conditional release framework. Eligibility and "good conduct" criteria must be clear, objective, foreseeable, and applied consistently, not wielded as tools to keep political detainees behind bars. The use of vague "remorse" requirements, opaque scoring mechanisms, or minor disciplinary infractions to block release must end. Decisions on conditional release must be made by independent bodies and subject to meaningful judicial review.

** Our communication remains pending before the Working Group.*

Signatories:

***Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project
(TLSP)***

***European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and
World Human Rights (ELDH)***

***International Bar Association's Human Rights
Institute (IBAHRI)***

The Law Society of England and Wales

Lawyers for Lawyers