INTERNATIONAL JOINT STATEMENT:

Turkey: Stop the Attacks on Lawyers and Release Those Detained in the İzmir Operations

18 November 2026

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly condemn the detention of lawyers during coordinated police operations carried out across several provinces of Turkey on the morning of 17 November 2026.

The dawn raids, centred in İzmir, resulted in the detention of Veysi Çetin, Secretary of the İzmir Branch of the Progressive Lawyers Association (Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği – ÇHD); ÇHD members Yemen Cankan, Emrah Kanbay, Göksel Akbaba and Erdoğan Akdoğdu; and lawyer Bahattin Özdemir, alongside other individuals.

During searches of these lawyers' homes, work-related digital materials were reportedly seized. A confidentiality order and restrictions on access to the investigation file had been imposed, as a result, no official information regarding the substance of the charges had yet been made available. Furthermore, those currently detained have reportedly been denied access to their lawyers for over 24 hours. These measures raise grave concerns regarding the right to defence, the confidentiality of lawyer–client communications and the protection of lawyers against arbitrary interference with their professional activities.

These detentions cannot be viewed in isolation. Turkey has been one of the most high-risk countries in the world for lawyers. Lawyers in Turkey, particularly those representing individuals subjected to government prosecution and political persecution, have faced repeated criminal investigations, prosecutions and detention in connection with their professional activities and their involvement in independent lawyers' organisations. Turkish authorities' continued targeting of members of ÇHD forms part of this broader pattern of pressure on the legal profession.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (Havana Principles, 1990) require states to ensure that lawyers can perform their professional functions without intimidation, harassment or improper interference (Principle 16), and that they are not identified with their clients or their clients'

causes (Principle 18). The principles also guarantee the confidentiality of lawyer–client communications (Principle 22) and protect lawyers' freedom of expression and association (Principles 23–24).

These safeguards are further reflected in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer (Luxembourg Convention, 2025), which establishes specific standards concerning the independence of lawyers, their protection against interference, access to legal assistance following deprivation of liberty, and safeguards during searches and seizures involving professional materials. The Convention represents an important commitment at the European level to protecting lawyers against the growing threats to their independence and professional activities.

The reported measures also raise serious concerns under Turkey's binding obligations pursuant to the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly Articles 5, 6, 8 and 11.

The arrest or detention of lawyers in circumstances suggesting that their professional work or association with organisations defending fundamental rights may have been targeted has consequences extending far beyond the individuals concerned. An attack on the independence of lawyers undermines the right to a fair trial, access to justice and the protection of fundamental rights throughout society.

We therefore call upon the Turkish authorities to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release the detained lawyers and all others held without lawful and substantiated grounds and dismiss any pending charges;**
- Guarantee the detained lawyers immediate and confidential access to legal counsel and full respect for procedural safeguards;
- Protect the confidentiality of professional communications and materials, including digital data seized during the operations;
- End the harassment, intimidation and criminalisation of lawyers and their professional associations for carrying out legitimate professional and human rights activities.

We further call upon the United Nations, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, the Council of Europe, European institutions, bar associations and human rights organisations around the globe to closely monitor these developments and take urgent action within their respective mandates.

The independence of lawyers is indispensable to the rule of law. Defending lawyers against intimidation and arbitrary detention is a responsibility shared by the international legal community.

We stand in solidarity with our detained colleagues and with all lawyers in Turkey who continue to defend fundamental rights and freedoms despite mounting pressure.

Signatory organisations:

1. American Association of Jurists (AAJ)
2. Association of Democratic Lawyers (VDJ), Germany
3. Basque Observatory of Human Rights (GEBehatokia)
4. Bologna Bar Association, Italy
5. Brescia Bar Association, Italy
6. Center for Research and Elaboration on Democracy (CRED), Italy
7. Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders in Western Sahara (CODESA)
8. Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
9. Defence Commission of the Barcelona Bar Association, Spain
10. Defence Without Borders – Lawyers in Solidarity (DSF-AS), France
11. European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)
12. European Democratic Lawyers (AED)
13. Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer (DEL), The Netherlands
14. German Bar Association (DAV), Germany
15. German Federal Bar (BRAK), Germany
16. Human Rights Committee of the Punjab Bar Council, Pakistan
17. Human Rights Institute of the Montpellier Bar, France
18. Indian Association of Lawyers
19. Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL)
20. International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
21. International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)
22. International Association of Russian Advocates
23. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
24. International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
25. Law Society of England and Wales
26. Lawyers for Lawyers
27. Lawyers for the Rule of Law, USA
28. Legal Centre Lesvos, Greece
29. Legal Team Italia
30. National Association of Democratic Jurists (GD), Italy
31. National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL), South Africa
32. National Lawyers Guild, (NLG), USA
33. New York City Bar Association
34. Republican Lawyers Association (RAV), Germany
35. Swiss Democratic Lawyers (DJS), Switzerland
36. Trade Union of Lawyers for Democracy (SAD), Belgium
37. Turkey Litigation Support Project (TLSP)
38. Union of Italian Criminal Chambers (UCPI), Italy