

President

The Minister of Justice
of the Republic of Turkey
Mr. Sadullah Ergin
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16 September 2010
mb/kg

Dear Minister,

The German Education Union (GEW) represents the interests of 260.000 members in schools, universities, day-care centers for children and socio-educational institutions in Germany. We are committed to "Education for All" and the implementation of human rights all over the world.

On 10 August the author Doğan Akhanlı, who has been a German citizen since 2001, was arrested at the airport in Istanbul. He is being kept in the prison of Tekirdağ since 20 August 2010. The Turkish public prosecution accuses Akhanlı of having been involved in an armed robbery of an exchange office in Istanbul in October 1989, where one person got killed. Akhanlı decidedly rejected this accusation and any connection to the robbery. His lawyers, Haydar Erol (Istanbul) and Ilias Uyar (Cologne) consider the evidence presented by the public prosecution to be utterly weak.

From 1985 through 1987 Doğan Akhanlı was a prisoner of conscience in the Istanbul military prison where he was also tortured. In 1991 he fled to Germany, was acknowledged a political refugee and later expatriated by Turkey. Since the middle of the Nineties he has been living in Cologne as an author. In novels, essays, interviews and projects in Germany he repeatedly spoke up for an open approach to historical violence and the indivisibility of human rights. In 2009 he received the Hürriyet Literary Award. For the first time since his escape in 1991 he travelled to Turkey in order to visit his father, who is seriously ill.

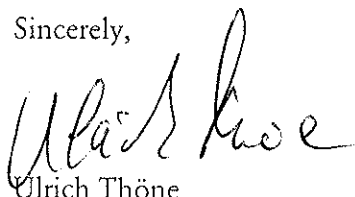
Surely it is not only the right, but also the obligation of the Turkish judiciary to investigate the above mentioned robbery. Also we have no intention of interfering with legal proceedings.

The accusation and detention of potential suspects, however, require a sufficiently founded suspicion and have to follow the rule of law. In case of Doğan Akhanlı we have serious doubts about this. According to information we received, incriminating testimonies were extorted under torture and have meanwhile been withdrawn. This raises the suspicion that the accusation of Doğan Akhanlı has a political motivation and was only brought up in order to punish a former citizen of the country for his unpopular political commitment.

The majority of the Turkish population voted for a new constitution, which is supposed to end the legacy of the military coup in 1980 and to guarantee more democracy and rights in the future. Politically motivated lawsuits against human rights activists, trade unionists, intellectuals and dissidents should have an end in Turkey.

We ask you to see to it that justice be brought to Doğan Akhanlı, that the warrant against him be cancelled and that he be allowed to leave prison.

Sincerely,



Ulrich Thöne

President of GEW

Board Member of Education International