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For immediate release

TURKEY CONTINUES TO ATTACK LEGALLY ELECTED POLITICIANS

The past few days in Turkey have been marked by a wave of arrests of politicians from Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), including the Co-Mayors of Kars, numerous former MPs, and members of the party council. Proceedings to lift immunity are to be initiated against seven MPs. A trustee appointed by the Interior Ministry immediately replaced the arrested Co-Mayors of Kars. Trustees now govern 59 of the 65 municipalities that HDP had won in the 2019 local elections. Most of the deposed co-mayors are currently in jail. In the previous term, co-mayors were deposed in 96 of the 102 municipalities led by the HDP.

Any protest against the oppression of voters' will is responded by the state with violence. Particularly in areas mainly inhabited by Kurds, repression, military presence and fraud dominate the elections, although not only since Erdogan and the AKP came to power. The re-run of the Istanbul municipal elections last year is part of "stealing elections" and electoral fraud that has been visible to the West.

The latest warrants of arrests included 82 current and former HDP officials. The arrests were prompted by protests in solidarity with Kobane, the city that became internationally known for its resistance against ISIS. At the time when this happened, there were hundreds of arrests and convictions. Ayhan Bilgen, the Co-Mayor of Kars, had lodged a constitutional complaint and even received compensation.

In this context, it is certainly worth mentioning that the chief public prosecutor of Ankara who ordered the arrests married a week earlier. Witnesses to the marriage were, among others, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of General Staff. Following the ceremony, the couple visited the President in his palace to receive his gift. This shows the close relationship that exists between Erdogan and the chief prosecutor, which can be dated back to the time when Erdogan was imprisoned in Istanbul.

It is not acceptable for a country to attack lawfully elected politicians, steal elections and violate human rights on a daily basis. The EUTCC urges the European Commission and the Council of Europe to take concrete measures against Turkey immediately.

On behalf of the EUTCC board

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EU Turkey Civic Commission

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