



THE POLISH BAR COUNCIL

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Akin Gürlek

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Ankara

Türkiye

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Subject: Call for the immediate release of Lawyers Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra and Doğa İncesu

Dear Minister,

Addressing you Mr Minister with due respect, and at the same time with concern for the independence of European lawyers we are writing to this letter on behalf of The Polish Bar Council and whole community of Polish Advocates. We already know, that our European Colleagues from different organisations have done it as well.

Please find our position from slightly different angle. As Poland has faced number of difficult experiences within area of lawyers' independence for decades of war times, nazi and soviet regimes, we are placing much greater efforts on respect for human rights, lawyers independence and the rule of law- so bearing the above in mind, as well as our close mutual relationships with our both nations (see – our President Mr Karol Nawrocki's recent visit in Turkey) we would like to express our concerns regarding three lawyers from the Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD). Lawyer Doğa İncesu, a member of the ÇHD Istanbul Branch, along with lawyers Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra, members of the ÇHD Ankara Branch, were taken from their homes and detained. We have strong grounds to believe that these actions might have been linked to the lawful exercise of their professional duties as lawyers.

We wish to express our deep concern over the simultaneous pre-dawn police raids conducted in Ankara and Istanbul on the morning of June 23, 2026, which resulted in numerous individuals being taken into police custody, including the three above mentioned lawyers.

Although we know how difficult times we all live, and how many challenges all governments have to govern societies and watch the law, as lawyers, we would like to wish to condemn this disproportionate and punitive use of police powers. The lawyers- Demir, Bafra, and İncesu are legal professionals who frequently attend police stations and courthouses as part of their daily professional activities. Instead of issuing a summons for them to appear at the prosecutor's office, in accordance with Art. 145 of the Turkish Code of Criminal Procedure, the authorities carried out pre-dawn home raids and placed them in police custody, where they can be held for up to four days. We see no need for such drastic measures.

The circumstances surrounding their custody raise significant concerns regarding adherence to due process and the right to a defense. A confidentiality order (secrecy decision) was immediately imposed on the investigation file, blocking access by the defense team to the accusations and evidence. Furthermore, a 24-hour restriction on communication with legal counsel has been implemented, preventing the lawyers in custody from meeting with their representatives and leaving them completely isolated during the initial stages of their custody. We are at the position, that this combination of arbitrary police custody and severe painful restrictions constitutes a direct and deliberate attack on the right to defense.

These arrests seem to align with a recent and broader pattern of police crackdowns targeting civil society actors and human rights defenders. Consequently, we are deeply concerned that these actions may not be rooted in legitimate judicial inquiries, but rather serve to suppress democratic space and intimidate legal professionals ahead of this international event.

It seems evident that the legitimate professional activities and human rights advocacy of our Turkish colleagues, as active members of ÇHD, are once again being unjustly criminalized in an attempt to intimidate legal professionals and suppress democratic space ahead of this international event.

Therefore, in accordance with international standards such as the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, while governments must ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference we wish to appeal the proper authorities in Turkey for:

1. Immediate and unconditional releasing of the lawyers:

- (i) Semra Demir,
- (ii) Kürşat Bafra,
- (iii) Doğa İncesu

from police custody.

2. Lifting the arbitrary confidentiality orders and the 24-hour lawyer-access restrictions immediately, ensuring the lawyers would have full access to their legal defense teams and the case files

3. Ceasing the criminalization of the legal profession and guaranteeing that all lawyers in Turkey are able to carry out their professional duties without fear of reprisals, undue restrictions, or judicial harassment.
4. Ensuring that the rights of persons deprived of their liberty are respected at all times and that the fundamental right to a fair trial are upheld.

None of the European lawyers should suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards, and ethics. That's what we all fight for years and are determined to continue this struggle.

Just to point out – all those principles are included in the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer prepared by CCBE and signed by 34 states, which underscore the independence of lawyers and their freedom from intimidation, interference, or improper sanctions. Thus, the placement of the lawyers in the police custody, isolation, nor restriction of defense rights of our colleagues brings concerns regarding their right to a fair trial and other fundamental human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We believe you would wish to share our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Przemysław Rosati



President of The Polish Bar Council

Bartosz Grohman



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Head of The Polish Delegation to
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