

SCHOLARS AT RISK

NETWORK  EUROPE

Scholars at Risk Europe Suggestions on European Parliament Resolution: *Human rights situation in Turkey, notably the case of Selahattin Demirtas and other prisoners.*

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Parliament recommendation of 29 November 2018 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on **Defence of academic freedom in the EU's external action** (2018/2117(IND))
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including Article 13 thereof,
- Whereas 6,081 academics, including 406 signatories of the Peace Petition, were dismissed since January 2016 through emergency decrees based on arbitrary accusations of “affiliations with a terrorist organisation”, which were not substantiated before a court of law.ⁱ
- Whereas thousands of dismissed academics in Turkey still await justice, facing lengthy delays in appealing their dismissals and unable to work in academia;
- Whereas the appeals by Academics for Peace are among the cases “not yet concluded” by the State of Emergency Appeals Commission, despite the Constitutional Court’s ruling in July 2019 that endorsement of the Peace Petition was strictly under the protection of freedom of speech;
- Whereas scholars, students, and other individuals expressing dissent have—over the past five years—been arrested, detained, and imprisoned, including Peace Petition signatories such as political scientist Zübeyde Füsun Üstel, and most recently Boğaziçi University students;
- Strongly condemns the recent police-sanctioned violence and arrests in response to student protests at the Boğaziçi University over the appointment of a new rector; and considers that this attack is illustrative of Turkey’s intolerance for dissent.
- Urges the EU and its Member States to call on Turkey to publicly affirm its commitment to academic freedom and related human rights by restoring all scholars, students, and higher education personnel who were the subjects of Turkey’s emergency decrees to their former university positions and to respect their right to freedom of movement.
- Calls on the EU and its Member States to protect academic freedom, wherever possible, by extending protections to at-risk and refugee scholars from Turkey who are within their borders, and allocating available resources to ensure that scholars from Turkey are able to continue their academic pursuits while in exile.
- Calls on Turkey’s State of Emergency Appeals Commission to swiftly process the appeals of higher education personnel dismissed by decree who remain in limbo, unable to reclaim their careers and travel outside the country, and ensure that the July 2019 Constitutional Court ruling is fully considered in their review of applications.

- Calls on the Higher Education Council, the Inter-University Board, and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey to press the State of Emergency Appeals Commission to swiftly process such appeals and ensure consideration of the July 2019 Constitutional Court ruling.

Background: See ‘The University under Siege: Turkey’s Academic Community in Paralysis’, Contributed by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, pages 69-75 in [Free to Think 2020](#), Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project.

About SAR Europe: [Scholars at Risk Europe](#) is the European office of the global Scholars at Risk network. [Scholars at Risk](#) an international network of higher education institutions and individuals working to protect threatened scholars and to promote academic freedom.

Launched at an event at the European Parliament in November 2018, the establishment of SAR Europe represents the culmination of two decades of partnership between European higher education institutions and the global Scholars at Risk Network. The European office, hosted by Maynooth University, Ireland supports and coordinates the activities of Scholars at Risk national sections and partner networks across Europe to strengthen our collective voice at the European level and contribute to informed policymaking for the greater protection of scholars and increased respect for academic freedom worldwide.

SAR Europe coordinates [Inspireurope](#), an EU-funded, 10-partner initiative to support researchers at risk. SAR Europe also works to expand, coordinate and support advocacy in Europe to promote academic freedom, including convening the [European Coordinating Committee for Academic Freedom Advocacy](#).

15 January 2021

ⁱ ‘The University under Siege: Turkey’s Academic Community in Paralysis’, contributed by Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, in 2020 Free to Think, Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, p. 69.