

IPA & PEN International Condemn Conviction of N. Mehmet Güler to 1 year and 3 months in prison

Istanbul, 10 June - For immediate release

On trial in Turkey since May 2009, publisher Ragip Zarakolu (Belge) and writer N. Mehmet Güler today were facing a prison sentence of more than seven years for respectively publishing and writing the novel *More Difficult Decisions than Death*. While Zarakolu was acquitted, Güler was convicted to a prison sentence of 1 year and 3 months. Both Zarakolu and Güler were accused under article 7/2 of the Anti Terror Law of "spreading propaganda" for the banned Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Another book by N. Mehmet Güler's "KCK File / Global State and Kurds without □State", also published by Belge, is now also accused of "spreading propaganda". Aimed at scholars, academics and journalists, only 1000 copies of the book were published. The book was banned immediately after its release, just like the novel *More Difficult Decisions than Death*. N. Mehmet Güler will appeal the sentence. IPA and PEN International call for his acquittal in appeal.

Bjorn Smith-Simonsen, Chair of IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee declares: "Through convicting N. Mehmet Güler to a prison sentence of 15 months, Turkey is in breach of its international obligations under Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, a block Turkey is aspiring to join. International PEN calls for writer Güler to be acquitted in appeal".

Eugene Schoulgin, International Secretary of PEN International adds: "In November 2009, the Prosecutor did not want to proceed with the case. In March 2010, a new Prosecutor reversed that decision and decided to go ahead. It is not only Turkish legislation, which needs reform. Practice also needs change and stability. Additionally, it is not only the big names attracting media attention like Elif Shafak or Orhan Pamuk, which need acquittal. The lesser known names need acquittal too in those freedom of expression trials. Pen International therefore joins IPA in calling for the acquittal of N. Mehmet Güler in appeal".

Notes for Editors:

To stop the flow of freedom of expression and freedom to publish trials in Turkey, Turkish legislation □(Articles 125, 216, 301 [...] TPC, Law 5816, etc.) and practice should be amended to meet international standards, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as Turkey was recently reminded of by its peers when it came under review during the 8th Session of the Universal Periodical Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council on 10 May 2010 in Geneva. To see the joint submission on Turkey to the UPR working Group of IPA, International PEN and Index on Censorship,

please go to:
http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/MembersOnly/FTPC/UPR/turkey%20upr%20_3_.pdf

More about IPA:

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is an international industry federation representing all aspects of book and journal publishing. Established in 1896, IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness for publishing as a force for economic, cultural and political development. Around the world IPA actively fights against censorship and promotes copyright, literacy and freedom to publish. IPA is an industry association with a human rights mandate.

More about PEN International:

Originally founded in 1921 to promote literature, today PEN International has 145 Centres in 104 countries across the globe. It recognises that literature is essential to understanding and engaging with other worlds; if you can't hear the voice of another culture how can you understand it? PEN's primary goal is to engage with, and empower, societies and communities across cultures and languages, through reading and writing. WE believe that writers can play a crucial role in changing and developing civil society. We do this through the promotion of literature, international campaigning on issues such as translation and freedom of expression and improving access to literature at international, regional and national levels. PEN's membership is open to all published writers who subscribe to the PEN Charter regardless of nationality, language, race, colour or religion. International PEN is a non-political organisation and has special consultative status at UNESCO and the United Nations.

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