



International
Publishers
Association



For the Sake of Freedom of Expression in Turkey, IPA and PEN International Demand Immediate Release of Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu

Geneva/London, 15 November 2011

Turkey's leading freedom of expression advocate, publisher Ragıp Zarakolu, has been on pre-trial detention for two weeks under terrorism charges. On 4 November, he was moved to a high security "F-Type" prison in the city of İzmit, 80 km east of Istanbul. IPA and PEN International are seriously concerned about the effect that the harsh detention conditions could have on his health. IPA and PEN International are also seriously concerned that his pre-trial detention – likely to last a year - is in violation of Turkey's international treaty obligations, in particular Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and therefore demand that he, his son Deniz, and Professor and writer Büşra Ersanlı, and all other writers and journalists held solely for their writings and other legitimate activities, be released immediately.

Ragıp Zarakolu is widely considered an iconic defender of the freedom to publish and the freedom to write. One of his sons, Deniz, a scholar and publisher, has also been detained since early October at the Edirne F-Type prison, 215 km west of Istanbul. Arrested at the same time as Ragıp Zarakolu, Professor and writer Büşra Ersanlı, is also on pre-trial detention. She is detained in Istanbul and is the victim of a slander campaign in some media circles. All three are held under the anti-terror law and were arrested as part of a larger crackdown initiated in 2009 and still on-going against Kurdish political parties. The Anti-Terror Law (ATL) has long been criticised as being too vague in its definition of terrorism and terrorist organisations, and there are concerns that numerous writers and journalists are held and on trial in violation of their right to peaceful freedom of expression and association. This coupled with the lengthy trial processes, sometimes years long, makes the application of the ATL particularly problematic.

Says Bjørn Smith-Simonsen, Chair of IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee (FTPC): **"Today it is not only the survival of Ragıp Zarakolu's publishing House Belge which is at stake. As Chair of the Freedom to Publish Committee of the Turkish Publishers Association (TPA/TYB), Ragıp Zarakolu has been documenting the numerous freedom to publish violations in Turkey and has been at the forefront to defend the other publishers' freedom to publish, including those small Kurdish**

publishers few people have shown interest in. This work has required amazing courage and strength. By putting this man behind bars, the authorities clearly want Ragıp Zarakolu's important work – documenting ALL freedom to publish violations in Turkey and making them public – to stop. This is unacceptable. The recipient of IPA's 2008 Freedom to Publish Prize should be released immediately. As I said two weeks ago, when the Istanbul 14th High Criminal court decided to incarcerate Ragıp Zarakolu, this man does not belong in prison, he deserves a Nobel Prize. In addition, we regret that our request to meet the Turkish Ambassador to the UN in Geneva remains unanswered and still hope that he will meet with us soon".

Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee of PEN International, adds: **"Ragıp Zarakolu is an internationally recognised defender of the right to write and publish freely. It is essential not to confuse the efforts of those who, like Ragıp Zarakolu, have worked to bring down barriers of censorship in Turkey with those who press political agendas through violence. PEN International emphatically protests his arrest and calls for his immediate release".**

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

More about Ragıp Zarakolu and Belge Publishing:

Ragıp Zarakolu is a Turkish publisher born in 1948. Since starting his publishing house Belge with his wife Ayşe Nur in 1977, he has been subjected to harassment from the Turkish authorities. Ragıp Zarakolu was jailed on various occasions. Yet he has consistently refused to abandon his campaign for freedom of thought, striving "for an attitude of respect for different thoughts and cultures to become widespread in Turkey".

Over the years, the charges brought by the Turkish authorities against Ragıp Zarakolu and his wife resulted in attacks, imprisonment, confiscation and destruction of books, and the imposition of heavy fines, endangering the survival of the Belge publishing house. Ragıp Zarakolu is the chairperson of the Freedom to Publish Committee of the Turkish Publishers Association (TPA/TYB). He is also a founding member of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD).

Throughout his publishing career, Ragıp Zarakolu has been subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings for shedding light on controversial issues. He has been singled out by the authorities because of his decades of struggle for freedom of expression, and particularly his promotion of minority rights and his quest for truth and justice. Ragıp Zarakolu's work as a publisher and his wholehearted support of freedom to publish have often brought him into conflict with the authorities and endangered his personal safety. His publishing house Belge was fire bombed in the mid-1990s. Despite the string of attacks, he has persistently continued to tackle contentious issues, thus encouraging healthy debate and democratization in Turkey.

Ragıp Zarakolu, as recently as March 2011, was condemned by an Istanbul court to paying a TL 16,660 (€ 8,330) fine for publishing N. Mehmet Güler's *KCK File / Global State and Kurds without State*. N. Mehmet Güler was also condemned to a suspended 15-month prison sentence. Both Zarakolu and Güler were accused under article 7/2 of the Anti-Terror Law of "spreading propaganda" for an illegal organization, the banned Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). The book, which was banned immediately after its release at the Diyarbakir Book Fair in May 2010, remains banned.

Today, the very survival of the Belge publishing house is really at risk, Ragıp and his son Deniz being in prison.

More about Freedom to Publish in Turkey:

The EU Commission's 2011 Turkey Progress report stressed that legal amendments to the Turkish anti-terror legislation are needed to comply with various rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. IPA and PEN International have also witnessed an increasing use of the anti-terror legislation to stifle freedom to publish in Turkey in the last couple of years.

Following the 25 October 2011 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in *Altuğ Taner Akçam v. Turkey* concluding that Article 301 TPC as amended in 2008 still violates Article 10 of the ECHR, IPA and PEN International support their Turkish members' request that Article 301 be repealed. Following the recent explosion of obscenity cases under Article 226 TPC¹, IPA and PEN International also support their Turkish members' request that the Prime Ministerial Board for the Protection of Children from Harmful Publications be disbanded as it insists on banning literature for adults, which the European Court of Human Rights has described as "belonging to the European literary heritage".

IPA and PEN International further note with concern the ruling made by Istanbul's 14th High Criminal Court in August 2011 that the printer of a book be considered "like its author", condemning the owner of Berdan Printing House, Sadik Daşdöğen, to a 9-month prison sentence in absentia for printing a book that included interviews of Abdullah Öcalan. Sadik Daşdöğen was convicted of "spreading propaganda for an illegal organisation". If the printers were held responsible for the books they print, the consequences on freedom of expression, freedom to write, and freedom to publish in Turkey could be severe.

To curb the flow of freedom of expression and freedom to publish trials in Turkey, Turkish legislation (Articles 125, 216, 301 [...] TPC, Law 5816, Anti-terror legislation, etc.) and practice should be amended to meet international standards, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as Turkey was 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 in May 2010 in Geneva. To see the joint submission on Turkey to the UPR Working Group of IPA, PEN International and Index on Censorship, please go to:

www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/MembersOnly/FTPC/UPR/turkey%20upr%20_3_.pdf

More about IPA:

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is the global non-governmental organisation representing all aspects of book and journal publishing worldwide. Established in 1896, IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness for publishing as a force for cultural and political advancement worldwide. IPA currently has 65 member associations in 53 countries. IPA is an industry association with a human rights mandate.

More about PEN International:

¹ Sel publishing- İrfan Sancı – and Ayrıntı Publishing are among the recent targets for publishing respectively *The Soft Machine* by William S. Burroughs and *Shuff* by Chuck Palahniuk. İrfan Sancı in particular is being harassed by the courts for doing his publisher's job.

Originally founded in 1921 to promote literature, today International PEN 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? Our 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. Our membership is open to all qualified 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.

For further information, please contact:

Alexis Krikorian
Director, FTP
International Publishers Association
3, avenue de Miremont
1206 Genève
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 704 1820
krikorian@internationalpublishers.org
www.internationalpublishers.org

Sara Whyatt
Programme Director
Writers in Prison Committee
PEN International
Brownlow House, 50 - 51 High Holborn
London WC1V 6ER
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 20 74 05 0338
Sara.Whyatt@pen-international.org
www.internationalpen.org.uk/