



Turkish Freedom to Publish Hero Jailed: IPA Demands Immediate Release of Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu

Geneva, 1 November 2011 - For Immediate Release

Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu, recipient of the 2008 IPA Freedom to Publish Prize, was arrested on Friday, 28 October 2011 in Istanbul. The 14th High Criminal Court in Beşiktaş, Istanbul decided earlier today, following a 28-hour long hearing, to incarcerate the man whom many view as Turkey's most prominent freedom of expression and minority rights activist. In particular, he is being accused of being a member of an illegal organisation under the anti-terror legislation. IPA considers his imprisonment to be in violation of Turkey's international treaty obligations. IPA therefore demands that he be released immediately until the trial begins.

Ragıp Zarakolu is widely considered as a freedom to publish hero. One of Ragıp Zarakolu's son, Deniz Zarakolu, was also arrested on 2 October 2011 after having lectured on political philosophy at the (legal) pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy (BDP) party political science academy, and has been detained since at the Edirne F-type (high security) prison. The charges against Ragıp Zarakolu are reportedly also related to a speech he made at an event organised by the BDP party, and articles published in the newspaper *Öğür Gündem* (Free Agenda). These arrests are part of a larger crackdown initiated in 2009 and still on-going against Kurdish political parties. IPA is concerned that Ragıp and Deniz Zarakolu's imprisonment, alongside several other writers and intellectuals like Professor Büşra Ersanlı, is in violation of Turkey's obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Says Bjørn Smith-Simonsen, Chair of IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee (FTPC): "October is an extremely sad month for freedom to publish in Turkey and worldwide. Ragıp Zarakolu is the pride of publishing. He is the limelight of freedom to publish in Turkey. He is a tireless human and minority rights activist. Up to now, his quest for truth, reconciliation and justice has been unstoppable. **This man does not belong to prison, he deserves a Nobel Prize.** We demand that Ragıp Zarakolu, the recipient of IPA's Freedom to Publish Prize be released immediately. The trial is likely to begin in a year's time only. Ragıp Zarakolu's health is not good. We fear that he will not stand his detention conditions in the terrible F-type (high security) prisons. This is an additional reason for the Turkish authorities to show compassion and release him immediately".

Jens Bammel, IPA's Secretary General, adds: "As the EU Commission's 2011 Turkey Progress report stresses, legal amendments to the Turkish anti-terror legislation are very much needed to comply with various rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. We

too have witnessed in the last two years an increasing use of the anti-terror legislation to stifle freedom to publish in Turkey. On behalf of the International Publishing community, I will seek to meet as soon as possible the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations Office in Geneva¹ to raise our serious concerns with the Turkish authorities, urging his government to release publisher Zarakolu immediately. Already in March the authorities had condemned Zarakolu for spreading propaganda under the anti-terror legislation. Now they go one step further in accusing him of being a member of an illegal organisation. The rule of law and the principles of freedom of expression must prevail”.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

More about Ragıp Zarakolu:

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 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 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, among others, a founding member of the Turkish Human Rights Association.

Throughout his publishing career Ragıp Zarakolu has been singled out by the conservative elements of the judiciary 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.

Throughout his life, Ragıp Zarakolu has been subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings for shedding light on controversial issues. A publisher in the courts is a publisher who spends time and money away from his work. Like a terrible disease, such procedures can drain time and energy. The court case in itself becomes the punishment for the publisher.

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. IPA had condemned their convictions and called for their acquittal when appeal time would come.

¹ Mr Mustafa Oğuz Demiralp

More about Freedom to Publish in Turkey:

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 supports its Turkish member's request that Article 301 be repealed. Following the recent explosion of obscenity cases under Article 226 TPC², IPA also supports its Turkish member's 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 further notes 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 Daşdoğan, to a 9-month prison sentence in absentia for printing a book that included interviews of Abdullah Öcalan. Sadik Daşdoğan was convicted of "spreading propaganda for an illegal organisation". The publishers had already opposed such a move in the early 1980s. If the printers were held responsible for the books they print, the consequences on freedom of expression 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:

http://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 is an industry association with a human rights mandate. IPA currently has 65 member associations in 53 countries.

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² Sel publishing- Irfan Sancı – and Ayrıntı Publishing are among the recent targets for publishing respectively *The Soft Machine* by William S. Burroughs and *Snuff* by Chuck Palahniuk. Irfan Sancı in particular is being harassed by the courts for doing his publisher's job.