

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
President of the Republic of Turkey  
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi  
06560 Beştepe, Ankara  
Turkey

25 January 2019

Dear President Erdogan,

I am writing to express the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims' (IRCT) serious concern with the sentencing of Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı to two years and six months imprisonment by the Istanbul 37th Heavy Penal Court on 19 December 2018. Prof. Dr. Fincancı was convicted for signing a peace declaration entitled "We will not be a party to this crime." The Declaration calls on the Government of Turkey to end violence and reach a peaceful solution in Southeast Turkey.

Prof. Dr. Fincancı is the Chair of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (a member centre of the IRCT), a member of the Independent Forensic Expert Group, and has previously been Member of IRCT's Council. She has also been Head of the Forensic Medicine Department at İstanbul University for over two decades. In recognition of her medical and human rights work, Prof. Dr. Fincancı was awarded the *Hessian Peace Prize* in 2018, the *Physicians for Human Rights Award* in 2017, and the *Hrant Dink Prize* in 2014.

As a medical professional, Prof. Dr. Fincancı has a duty to preserve the health of all individuals and to save lives. The bombardment and use of heavy weaponry in Southeast Turkey, as well as the enforcement of curfews, however, has led to the devastation and deaths of the civilian population. It also has violated Turkey's obligations to protect human rights under its own national and international laws. Prof. Dr. Fincancı's actions, including her participation in the peace declaration, arises from her professional obligations and are a legitimate exercise of her freedom of speech as a health professional, academic, and human rights defender.

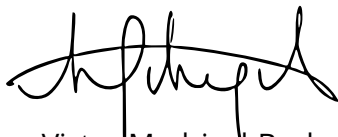
Such actions can and should not be criminalised and the IRCT therefore respectfully urges the Turkish government to:

1. Immediately withdraw all charges against Prof. Dr. Fincancı based on her participation in the peace declaration;
2. Until all charges are dropped, ensure that all proceedings against Prof. Dr. Fincancı are carried out in compliance with her right to a fair trial, as protected under Turkish national and international laws;
3. Cease all acts of harassment, including on the judicial level, against Prof. Dr. Fincancı and all health professionals, academics, and human rights defenders in Turkey due to their legitimate work to defend human rights;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances the freedom of speech of Prof. Dr. Fincancı and all health professionals, academics, and human rights defenders in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, and international human rights instruments ratified by Turkey.

We respectfully remind you of the valuable role that health professionals, academics, and human rights defenders play in building strong democracies that guarantee the rule of law and justice for its citizens. The IRCT stands together in

solidarity with them in urging the Turkish government to quickly resolve Prof. Dr. Fincancı's case in a manner consistent with your national and international human rights obligations.

Yours Sincerely,



Victor Madrigal-Borloz  
Secretary General, IRCT

cc:

Mr. Binali Yıldırım, President of Grand National Assembly of Turkey;

Mr. Abdülhamit Gül, Minister of Justice;

Mr. Fahrettin Koca, Minister of Health

Mr İsmail Rüştü CİRİT, First President of the Court of Cassation;

Ambassador İzzet Selim Yenel, Mission of Turkey to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium;

Ambassador Mr. Ali Naci Korum, Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland