



GROUP OF THE UNIFIED EUROPEAN LEFT (UEL)
PARLEMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Strasbourg, 07 December 2017

Dear Colleague,

Today, Selahattin Demirtaş, co-chairman of the HDP from Turkey and a member of the Turkish parliament, is appearing in court for the first time after being kept in a Turkish prison during a year. However, he does not appear there in person. The Turkish authorities even don't allow him to attend his own trial; he can only offer a defense against a stream of accusations towards him through a video online connection. His right to a fair trial, which should be guaranteed to him on the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been ratified by Turkey, is also violated in this way, just as his detention in prison is contrary to the rights of a Member of Parliament, whose party represents more than 10% of the population of Turkey.

I think we should protest against the way in which the Turkish authorities deal with the elected representatives in their country. Aside from Selahattin Demirtaş, HDP co-chairperson Figen Yüksekdağ has been locked up in prison for a year, together with even more HDP members of Parliament and HDP members.

The coup d'état attempt in 2016 was resolutely condemned by Selahattin Demirtaş and his HDP, as an attack on democracy in Turkey. Nonetheless, his party, the third party in the parliament of Turkey representing millions of residents of the country, is one of the main victims of the 'terrorist hunt' that President Erdogan has instigated since then.

President Erdogan openly calls his political opponent Demirtaş "a terrorist," without there being any single court ruling that would support such a claim. It is clear that it is a political process against Selahattin Demirtaş.

I think that all of us, no matter how different our political views sometimes are, must stand in favor of elected representatives in all Member States of the Council of Europe. With our core values: human rights, the rule of law and democracy, it is by no means appropriate to confine elected representatives to prison and thus make their representative role impossible.

May I therefore urge you to call on the Turkish authorities to show respect for the rights which Turkey has guaranteed to all its citizens by signing the ECHR, and to release immediately Selahattin Demirtaş, Figen Yüksekdağ and all other members of the HDP who have been detained and to at least allow them to prepare themselves **in freedom** for their defense against the charges filed against them?

Sincerely,
Tiny Kox

President Unified European Left Group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe