

Michelle Carpentier

ICPA Head Office
132A Avenue Louise
Brussels, B-1050
Belgium

Friday, 11 November, 2022

Dear Madam,

Re: ICPA Correctional Excellence Award, Turkish Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses

We write to you regarding a prize you have recently awarded to the Turkish Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses ("Ceza ve Tevkifevleri Genel Müdürlüğü").

We understand that you have recently awarded a "Correctional Excellence Award" to the Turkish Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses which Enis Yavuz Yıldırım, the general director, flew to collect personally.

As an NGO who "actively promotes policies and standards for humane and effective correctional policies," you are better placed than anybody, save for the actual victims, to know about the gross human rights violations in Turkey to which international bodies have desperately been trying to attract attention.

Yet, as an NGO with an ECOSOC status, you have not seen anything wrong in commending the very system the Turkish government has been weaponising to crack down on dissent.

Amid reports by credible international human rights organisations that describe torture and ill-treatment of detainees as a common practice, Turkey has constantly been blocking the publishing of the country reports of Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

Only a few months ago the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT) found that "Torture and ill-treatment in the form of physical attacks, threats, beatings, naked searches and unannounced cell searches, violations of right to healthcare and treatment and arbitrary restrictions are rising."

Halime Gülsu was a teacher. The police arrested her for assisting members of the Gulen movement. She was only making and selling kibbeh to support the families of prisoners with no income. She had been suffering from a potentially life-threatening autoimmune disease. She wrote numerous letters to the prison administration pleading with them to get her condition treated. She was denied necessary medication and accused of lying about her condition. Her pleas fell on deaf ears. She consequently collapsed and fell into a coma. Instead of receiving proper treatment in a hospital, she was placed in an overcrowded ward. The prison administration "lost" her medical reports which resulted in her not being able to take her most crucial medication. Halime Gulsu passed away in prison shortly after in April 2018 less than 3 months after her arrest.

This is just one case among the countless tragedies that the Turkish prison system has been producing over the past few years. Many of these stories can easily be found in English-language news sources, credible NGO reports, and even in some United Nations documentation.

It was therefore and in effect quite cynical of you to commend the Turkish Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses with an excellence award in utter ignorance of the plight of thousands of Turkish prisoners.

You should have also been aware of how ACEP, the very project for which you commended the Turkish prisons authority, was being denied to political prisoners.

Finally, you presented the award to a man who was the head of the Turkish prison system also in 2016 and 2017 when ill-treatment of political prisoners was at its worst.

You owe those whose most fundamental human rights have been violated in Turkish prisons an apology.

Yours sincerely,

Coskun YORULMAZ

Legal Consultant