

Dear guests, and the true friends of democratic Türkiye

1. I am delighted to have this opportunity to address the distinguished participants today and shed light on the violations and injustices occurring in Türkiye.
2. However, I must admit that I approach this with great sadness. As a citizen, it deeply saddens me to witness the state of my country, which played a crucial role in the establishment of the Council of Europe 74 years ago, and was once considered a democratic model for Middle Eastern countries!
3. Regrettably, my beloved country is currently the only member state of the Council of Europe facing an infringement procedure is going on due to the government's unacceptable refusal to abide by the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.
4. "European Union Progress Reports" about Türkiye can no longer be written because there is backsliding in every field, and unfortunately, the rule of law is at the frontline. The divergence from modern law leads to numerous human rights abuses.
5. Before delving into the details of these abuses, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my colleagues who have supported the victims of injustice. Their heartfelt letters and messages, which reinforced our commitment to civic values and provided strength and courage to me, my colleagues, and our families, particularly during my imprisonment, have deepened my understanding of the importance of international cooperation and collegiality. I extend my sincere greetings to the entire delegation of the International Association of Judges, Magistrats européens pour la démocratie et les libertés, the European Association of Judges, the Association of European Administrative Judges, and Judges for Judges as well as all of the European institutions, and thousands of judges and public prosecutors from over 90 countries for their continuous support over the past years, enabling us to survive and continue the struggle.
6. Actually, I would like to mention the names of all my colleagues who have supported me and all Turkish colleagues in similar situations, but this is not possible for two reasons. The first of these is the shortage of my time. And, I think all of you can easily guess the second reason.
7. In 2016, while serving as a Judge, I was dismissed from my profession through a decision of 61 pages that violated Turkish Constitution and basic procedural rules. The only relation between this decision and me was solely the inclusion of my name in an attached list of judges and prosecutors. With a single decision, 4500 judges and prosecutors were dismissed. Individualization is ensured by writing "Ayrı ayrı olmak üzere = that can be translated as 'separately', 'one by one' or 'individually'" on the last page of the decision.
8. Similarly, my freedom was taken away through a similar template decision without any evidence. Actually, the judge arrested me by writing, "According to a possible intelligence report that has not submitted to the file yet!" in his reasoned judgment.

There was nothing about me in this decision. As journalist Deniz Yücel from Die Welt stated about himself, "I don't know why they arrested me and then set me free."

9. In Türkiye, many judges, prosecutors, journalists, authors, human rights defenders, academics, and various other professionals, people from various ethnic, social, and religious groups have faced similar violations.
10. Murat Arslan, who was awarded the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2017 for advocating for the independence and impartiality of the Turkish judiciary, is still being punished and held in jail. Lawyers; late Ebru Timtik, Can Atalay and Selçuk Kozağaçlı have been penalized for their involvement in the struggle for justice. Osman Kavala and Selahattin Demirtaş are still being held in prison despite the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.
11. The grave human rights violations in Türkiye not only affect our colleagues who have been dismissed but also harm all of society by exerting pressure on judges who are still in service, making it impossible for them to make fearless decisions based on their conscious.
12. In today's Türkiye, freedom of the press and expression is being restricted, human rights violations are increasing every passing day, and the justice system has completely lost its credibility. To illustrate, in the indexes for the rule of and democracy, Türkiye finds its place at the bottom of the lists. With such a judiciary under the full control of the executive, Türkiye has been demoted to the Gray List of the FATF(The Financial Action Task Force). Not last but the least, it is so saddening to see my country's withdrawal from the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention to fight violence against women.
13. Dear guests, I once again seek your support to ensure the independence of the Judiciary and to put an end human rights violations in Türkiye. The Turkish people want to hold their belief in democratic values and the rule of law. More than 60% of the population still supports European values, and this percentage is 66 among women and youth. It suggests Türkiye is indeed a part of Europe, and in the process of democratization of Türkiye, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and other international institutions should play a leading role. I also would like to emphasize that historically and politically, the borders of Europe start from the east of Türkiye, not the west of Türkiye.
14. In conclusion, today, I call upon all those promoting democracy and human rights, to prevent the grave injustices in Türkiye which is setting a precedent for other countries like Poland and Hungary, and to extinguish the fire before it spreads elsewhere.

Thank you all for listening carefully.