



The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), a non-governmental organization with consultative status to the Council on Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (ECOSOC), and the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH) are shocked and outraged by the brutal murder this morning of our colleague Tahir Elçi, president of the Diyarbakir Bar Association.

Tahir Elçi was killed this morning during a press briefing in the Sur district of Amed (Diyarbakir).

According to initial reports Elçi was shot in the head with a single bullet. Four other lawyers and journalists are said to have been wounded in the attack as police began firing on people attending the press briefing in the Sur district, which was recently under siege by Turkish state forces.

During his entire career Tahir Elçi was a fierce fighter for people's rights and human rights. In particular, he defended as a lawyer the rights of Turkish and Kurdish progressive activists and organisations, the fundamental rights of Kurdish people who suffer oppression in Turkey.

Precisely because of his stand for the oppressed he was targeted by the Turkish state since decades. In November 1993 Elçi and 15 of his colleagues were arrested on false accusations of membership of a terrorist organisation, but in reality because they had represented clients before the State Security Court and been involved in human rights work. All of them were tortured. The European Court of Human Rights convicted the Turkish State on 13 November 2003 for torturing Tahir Elçi and his colleagues, a violation of art. 3 of the European Human Rights Convention, as well as for illegally detaining Elçi and his colleagues, a violation of art. 5 of the European Human Rights Convention.

More recently on 19 October 2015 Elçi was arrested again. He was prosecuted for expressing the opinion that the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) should not be considered as a terrorist organisation.

Between 1993 and 2015 Elçi has been working courageously to defend fundamental rights under constant pressure of the Turkish State.

The brutal assassination of Elçi reminds us of the state terror that was organised in the 1990's by the Turkish State and its death squads against Kurdish and Turkish progressive activists. Lawyers, doctors and writers have been assassinated in similar circumstances as Elçi today. Turkish and Kurdish democratic forces pointed at the responsibility of the Turkish State which denied any form of implication in these crimes. However a investigating committee of the Turkish National Assembly discovered later evidence that the perpetrators of these crimes -operating under the cover of a fanatic religious organisation- had been acting with the consent and under the control of the anti-terrorist security forces.

Today Turkish and Kurdish progressive forces point rightly at the responsibility of the Turkish state in the new wave of terror that sweeps through the country. Brutal military attacks on the population of entire cities, such as Cizre, Tahir Elçi's home town, the bomb attacks in Diyarbakir and later in Ankara against progressive mass gatherings, hysterical propaganda against the Kurdish people and

organisations and now the réapparition of targeted killings seem to be all part of an all-out war waged by the Turkish authorities against the Kurdish people and its representatives. Denials of the Turkish State about its involvement in any of these brutal acts can therefore not be taken seriously.

IADL and ELDH call for an independent international investigation into the murder of Tahir Elçi and will cooperate with its Kurdish and Turkish colleagues to bring justice for all victims of Turkish state terror.

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