



The Law Society of
Upper Canada

Barreau
du Haut-Canada

January 23, 2017

H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Turkey
T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genel Sekreterliği
06100 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 468 5026
Email: cumhurbaskanligi@tccb.gov.tr

Office of the Treasurer

Osgoode Hall
130 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N6

Tel 416-947-3415
Fax 416-947-7609

Your Excellency:

Re: Arrest of Lawyer Levent Piskin

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Upper Canada* to voice our grave concern over the arrest of lawyer Levent Piskin. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

Levent Piskin is a human rights lawyer who was arrested by the Turkish police on November 14, 2016. He is alleged to have conveyed messages from his client, Selahattin Demirtas, to the German publication *Der Spiegel*.

Although reports indicate that Levent Piskin was, on November 16, 2016, provisionally released pending the end of the investigation, we are concerned that the basis for his arrest remains unclear as no formal charges have been brought against him.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges Your Excellency to comply with Turkey's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 1 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

All persons are entitled to call upon the assistance of a lawyer of their choice to protect and establish their rights and to defend them in all stages of criminal proceedings.

Article 16 states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 18 states:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

The Law Society urges the government of Turkey to:

- a. ensure that Levent Piskin is able to perform his professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference;
- b. put an end to all acts of harassment against Levent Piskin;
- c. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Levent Piskin; and
- d. ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours truly,

Paul B. Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

Copies:

Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu
Foreign Minister of Turkey
Basbakanlik,
06573 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 417 0476
Email: receptayyip.Erdoğan@basbakanlik.gov.tr

H.E. Mr. Selcuk Unal
197 Wurtemberg Street
Ottawa, ON
Canada K1N 8L9
Fax: +1 (613) 789-3442
Email: embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2
chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

Alex Neve, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

Mary Lawlor, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders

Emma Achili, Head of European Union Office, Front Line Defenders

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Ümit Kocasakal, Istanbul Bar Association

Adrie van de Streek, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers

David F. Sutherland, Chair, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Yves Berthelot, President, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gabriela Knaul, Special Rapporteur of the Human Council on the independence of judges and lawyers, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Marina Brilman, International Human Rights Adviser, The Law Society of England and Wales