

16 March 2017

Turkey - Arrest of human rights defender Raci Bilici

On 15 March 2017, human rights defender **Raci Bilici** was arrested and is currently held in detention in the Anti-Terror Branch of the Diyarbakır Provincial Directorate of Security.

[Raci Bilici](#) is the Chairperson of the **Diyarbakır Branch of Human Rights Association (IHD)** and national Vice-Chairperson of İHD. The association was founded in 1986 with the aim to promote human rights and democracy in Turkey. It conducts research and educational events in the area of human rights, monitors and documents violations of human rights, and combats all forms of discrimination.

On 15 March 2017, Raci Bilici was arrested after the Public Prosecution Office in Diyarbakır searched his house as part of an investigation into the work of the Turkish Kurdistan movement. The prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for 16 people suspected of being PKK/KCK members. Raci Bilici was taken to the Anti-Terror Branch of the Diyarbakır Provincial Directorate of Security where he remains in custody. The homes of 15 other representatives of different non-governmental organisations and political parties in Diyarbakır have also been searched and 10 people were detained, while 5 more people remain under investigation. According to the information provided by Raci Bilici's lawyers, the ongoing investigation is covered by a confidentiality order, therefore it is not yet clear what charges have been alleged against the human rights defender.

Following the July 2016 coup attempt, the Turkish authorities declared a state of emergency, which was further extended in January 2017. The Turkish authorities have abused emergency provisions to stifle dissent and detained scores of individuals including human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and civil and political activists who were accused of being linked to coup attempt.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest and detention of Raci Bilici, as it believes they are motivated by his peaceful and legitimate defence of human rights in Turkey.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Raci Bilici and drop all charges against him;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Raci Bilici, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Turkey are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.