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## Turkey: Hanifi Barış charged with insulting the Turkish President

On 2 June 2019, human rights lawyer **Hanifi Barış** was notified that a new case had been opened against him on 31 May 2019, related to the charge of “insulting the Turkish President” through his social media posts. The first hearing is due to be held on 8 October 2019 at the Bakırköy 22. Criminal Court of First Instance.

**Hanifi Barış** is a lawyer and academic who has defended the right of his clients to represent themselves in the Kurdish language. He is a member of Academics for Peace, a group which has condemned state violence in southeastern Turkey and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict by signing the petition “We will not be a party to this crime!” in 2016.

On 6 November 2018, Hanifi Barış was notified by the Prosecutor’s Office in Bakırköy that an investigation had been opened on whether he had insulted the Turkish president through his social media posts. He was summoned to the Prosecutor’s Office to give his statement between 26-28 November 2018. On 31 May 2019, the human rights defender was informed that a case had been opened against him, related to the charge of “insulting the Turkish President” through his social media posts. Since the human rights defender has not received the indictment yet, it remains unclear which of his social media posts form the basis of the case. The first hearing is due to be held on 8 October 2019 at the Bakırköy 22. Criminal Court of First Instance.

On 4 July 2018, Hanifi Barış was [arrested](#) as part of a separate case related to his social media posts. He was accused of “propagandising for a terrorist organisation” in connection with news articles and commentaries from international and local media sources that he had shared on social media. He was released on 18 September 2018 pending trial and sentenced on 12 February 2019 to 1 year and 8 months. The pronouncement of his sentence was deferred meaning that he was not given a criminal record provided that he would not be convicted of another crime within the next five years. This means that if he is convicted in the case opened against him on 31 May 2019, his earlier sentence will come into effect as well.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern about the ongoing judicial harassment against Hanifi Barış, as it is believed to be solely motivated by his exercise of the right to freedom of expression and his peaceful activities in defence of human rights.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Hanifi Barış, as they are believed to be solely motivated by his exercise of the right to freedom of expression as well as his peaceful human rights activities;
2. 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.