

28 August 2020

## Update: Turkey – Human rights lawyer Ebru Timtik dies on hunger strike

On 27 August 2020, human rights lawyer Ebru Timtik died on the 238<sup>th</sup> day of a hunger strike to protest the irregularities in her trial and express serious concerns about judicial independence. The woman human rights defender had been [sentenced](#) to 13 years and six months after being convicted of membership of a terrorist organisation. Her health deteriorated rapidly in recent days and last night she passed away in the secured prison ward of Bakırköy Dr. Sadi Konuk Hospital. She and fellow lawyer Aytaç Ünsal were transferred to hospital from Silivri Prison on 30 July following a court order which ruled against their release on health grounds. This was despite a report from the Forensic Medicine Institution which concluded that the health of the two lawyers was not good enough to be kept in prison. Both lawyers worked with [People's Law Office](#), staff of which have been subjected to continued judicial harassment over the past number of years. Aytaç Ünsal, who remains on hunger strike, is serving a 10 year and six month sentence, also on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation.

On 11 August 2020, the Constitutional Court of Turkey rejected the request for the release of Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal, stating that their lives would not be at risk solely due to their continued captivity, that they had been hospitalized and had access to medical care. However, both lawyers declared that they did not want any forced medical intervention and therefore were not receiving any medical treatment.

Front Line Defenders is deeply saddened by the news of Ebru Timtik's death and holds the Turkish authorities responsible for her death. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern for the critical health of Aytaç Ünsal, who is still being held in Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Hospital in Istanbul. The hospital is being used to treat Covid cases, increasing the health risks of the already vulnerable human rights lawyer. The organisation repeats its call on the authorities to respect the fair trial demands of the imprisoned lawyers and in the interim, Front Line Defenders calls on the Turkish authorities to release Aytaç Ünsal on health grounds, in line with the Forensic Medicine Institute's recommendations. The appeal of all 17 lawyers from the People's Law Office must be urgently reviewed by the Supreme Court and their right to fair trial be respected, according to the international fair trial standards.