

9 July 2018

Turkey: Detained human rights defender Onur Hamzaoglu's first hearing on 19 July

Academic and human rights defender **Onur Hamzaoglu**'s first hearing will be held on 19 July 2018. He is accused of "terrorist propaganda" and "provoking the people to hatred and enmity" as a result of issuing a press release opposing Turkey's military operations in Afrin in Syria for its humanitarian consequences and demanding peace in the region. He was taken into custody on 9 February 2018 and arrested on 17 February after being questioned by the court.

[Onur Hamzaoglu](#) was a professor of public health in the Faculty of Medicine of Kocaeli University. He drew public attention following his research throughout the 2000s on the severe health and environmental implications of industrial pollution in Dilovasi, Kocaeli. He is a member of Academics for Peace and signed the 2016 peace petition "We will not be a party to this crime!". He was dismissed from his position in Kocaeli University on 1 September 2016 by an emergency decree. As a professor of public health, he taught the course "War and Health" for 30 years, in which he elaborated war as a human-made public health matter. He is an active member of the Turkish Medical Association, which advocates for health professionals' and patients' rights in Turkey. The Association also supports the full democratisation of Turkey.

On 9 February 2018, Onur Hamzaoglu and other representatives of various groups issuing the press release opposing Turkey's military operations in Afrin on 4 February were taken into custody. On 17 February, Onur Hamzaoglu was arrested at around 5 a.m. after being questioned by the court. Since that date, he has been held in Ankara Sincan F-Type Prison No. 2. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, since the launch of the military operations on 20 January 2018, Turkish authorities have taken 786 people into custody on accusations of "terrorist propaganda" for being part of protests and events or sharing social media posts opposing Turkish military intervention in Afrin.

On 5 April 2018, the Prosecutor's Office requested his release. Upon the refusal of this request by the judge, the Prosecutor's Office appealed the decision, but the judge reviewing the appeal also refused to release Onur Hamzaoglu. He is one of only two detained suspects, along with Fadime Celebi, in the case related to the press release dated 4 February 2018. The case will be heard by Ankara's 29th High Criminal Court, and the first hearing of the case will be held on 19 July 2018 at 10am, in the courtroom for 11th High Criminal Court in the Ankara Sihhiye Courthouse.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern regarding the ongoing detention of Onur Hamzaoglu.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Onur Hamzaoglu and drop all charges against him, as it is believed that he is being held solely as a result of demanding peace and exercising his fundamental rights to freedom of expression guaranteed under domestic and international law;
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.