



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
de los Derechos Humanos

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

Press release

Turkey

Hrant Dink case : harassment against Agos continues

Paris, 12 October 2007 - The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) strongly deplores the continued harassment faced by journalists debating the question of the killings of hundreds of thousands by the Ottoman Army in 1915-1917 of Armenians in Turkey. Yesterday, Hrant Dink's son and one of his colleague from the newspaper Agos were sentenced to a suspended prison sentence for « insulting the Turkish identity », pursuant to Article 301 of the penal code.

FIDH recalls that one year ago Hrant Dink, a Turkish journalist of Armenian origin, former leader of the movement for democratic reforms in Turkey, who personified dialogue between Turks and Armenians, was charged with making « disparaging comments about Turkish identity » after he called the 1915-1917 killings a genocide. On 19 January 2007, Hrant Dink was assassinated on a public street in front of his office in Istanbul by a teenager close to ultra nationalist movements.

Hrant Dink and Sarkis Seropyan, respectively editor in chief and director of Agos - a bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper – were sentenced on the ground that Agos published in their columns an interview of Reuters in which Hrant Dink called the 1915-1917 killings a genocide. Hrant Dink had been prosecuted several times and sentenced to six-month of prison on the basis of Article 301.

FIDH is deeply worried about this continued pattern of infringement to freedom of expression and opinion which constitutes a flagrant violation of international standards and, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was ratified by Turkey in September 2003. We are very concerned about the frequent use of Article 301 on the denigration of «Turkishness », the Republic, and the foundation and institutions of the State, to prosecute non-violent critical opinions. The majority of cases recently brought against journalists, publishers and writers are based on Art. 301.

Despite the assassination of Hrant Dink, the Turkish authorities continue to consider that discussing the nature of the 1915-1917 killings is an insult to Turkish identity, and thus expose the lives of those opening the debate.

FIDH requests the Turkish authorities to:

- take the necessary measures to ensure the respect of freedom of expression and opinion and, in particular, amend domestic legislation in order to comply with its international and regional obligations;
- put an end to prosecutions brought against individuals under Article 301 of the penal code; and abrogate this article;
- ensure that the trial of perpetrators and masterminds in the assassination of Hrant Dink is

conducted in a fair and transparent manner and examine thoroughly the responsibility of the Government and authorities which failed to protect a citizen who lived under a threat that was known to all.

Press contact : Karine Appy/Gaël Grilhot : + 33 1 43 55 25 18