



Health workers face imprisonment after helping dying civilians during Turkish army curfew in Cizre (EMBARGOED UNTIL 28.08.18) Mardin, Turkey/Geneva, Switzerland

Fourteen public service workers, who brought healthcare to the community during a curfew by Turkish armed forces of the Kurdish-majority city of Cizre, could face years in prison in a court case beginning Friday.

The workers, who are members of the PSI-affiliated *Trade Union of Employees in Public Health and Social Services (SES)*, were part of a volunteer ambulance service, tending to people in their basements during a 79-day army curfew, from December 2015 - March 2016.

The blanket curfew, which restricted all movement across the city, was among the longest in modern times and was part of a wider Turkish Government action against PKK linked fighters in the region. More than 355,000 were displaced within towns or to other nearby towns and villages and at least 338 civilians were killed.

Despite informing relevant authorities of their health mission during the curfew, the workers were detained by the Turkish Armed forces, restricted from providing care and now face imprisonment under anti-terrorist laws, accused of distributing propaganda and membership of an illegal organisation.

Among those who died during the siege were dozens of children. Many other civilians died as a result of the complete lack of medical services. Human Rights Organisations have [documented](#) widespread abuses including suspected extrajudicial killings and targeting of civilians.

Public Services International, the Global Union Federation for Public Service Workers, will attend the court case as an international solidarity observer and to call on the government to end the persecution and mass dismissals of workers.

Previously the Turkish government has failed to respond to requests by the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights for an external investigation into the army operation in the region. The first hearing of the case begins at 09.00am on 28 September 2018, before the 3rd Assize Court in Mardin, a South-Eastern city.

Speaking ahead of the hearing, PSI's Health Officer, Baba Aye, said:
"The labour movement across the world stands with these courageous workers who face imprisonment for doing their job; helping people in need."

Jan Willem-Goudriaan, General Secretary of the European Public Services Union said
"The Turkish authorities should stop prosecuting trade unionists and volunteers that seek to help workers and people in cities affected by violence and in which public services have been destroyed. We stand with our members for solidarity and peace, we want them to be acquitted from this unjust trial."

For journalists interested in conducting interviews with the workers facing trial, contact:
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