



Mr Abdullah Gül
President of the Turkish Republic
Ankara
Turkey

E-mail: cumhurbaskanligi@tccb.gov.tr

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Contact Name: Jan Willem Goudriaan - Tel: +32(0)2 250 10 80

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Dear Mr President,

I write on behalf of the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions (EPSU), the European trade union federation representing 8 million women and men working in the public services in all European countries and including in Turkey.

On 1st May 2009, Turkish trade unions, represented through their federations, DISK, KESK and TÜRK-İŞ, intend to organise peaceful marches to Taksim Square in Istanbul. May Day rallies in Taksim Square hold a particular significance for the Turkish labour movement. On May Day 1977, thirty-seven workers lost their lives in Taksim Square when gun fire was opened on the 500,000 people who were exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and peaceful protest. No one has been brought to justice for those killings.

Since 1977 all attempts by Turkish trade unions to assemble in Taksim Square and commemorate the deaths of their 37 comrades have been thwarted by the authorities, often through the use of brute force and violence.

We join the international community, including members of the European Parliament, human rights groups and the global trade union federation PSI, in condemning the excessive use of force by the police to prevent protesters from exercising their legitimate rights. Last year police used tear gas, water cannons and batons to disperse crowds marching towards Taksim Square and several demonstrators were injured. Even patients in a nearby hospital suffered the effects of the tear gas used.

EPSU urges your government to make sure that arrangements are in place at an early stage, which will enable peaceful demonstrations to take place this year on 1st May in Taksim Square, respecting the rights to freedom of association, freedom of assembly and peaceful protest. The freedom to demonstrate freely and peacefully on 1 May is another test if Turkey is ready to join the European Union.

Yours faithfully,

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel
General Secretary

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Cc: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
E-mail: receptayyip.erdogan@basbakankik.gov.tr