

**HAND IN HAND FOR  
FREEDOM!**

**INTERNATIONAL  
SOLIDARITY WITH  
EGİTİM SEN AND KESK**



**EĞİTİM SEN**



## HAND IN HAND FOR FREEDOM!

### INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WITH EGITIM SEN AND KESK



Today approximately 10.000 people; students, journalists, lawyers, trade unionists and academics... who dare to oppose the existing government's policies are in prisons in Turkey. Currently 65 friends who are members of KESK (Confederation of Public Workers Trade Unions) affiliate trade unions are detained in prisons. 28 of them are members of Egitim

Sen (Education and Science Workers Union) and most of them are executive board members of the trade unions and trade unions' branches. Their activities related to trade union work were somehow accepted as activities connected to terrorism by the courts and they were arrested as a result of a totalitarian approach by no means compatible with justice and human



rights. Even only in last year, KESK faced 3 comprehensive police operation. With the last operation of June 25th, Egitim Sen Executive Board member and Gender Secretary Sakine Esen Yilmaz, General Secretary and ETUCE Committee member Mehmet Bozgeyik were arrested too.

### KESK and Egitim Sen: Why Are They Targeted?

KESK has defended labor rights against neo-liberal attacks, peace against war policies and brotherhood of the Turkey's peoples since its establishment. Accordingly, it has always been

the target of the powers which are anti-democratic and anti-labor. During ten-year Justice and Development Party (AKP) government period, neo-liberal attacks have destroyed the public services in Turkey. Additionally, during that period, no peaceful and democratic solution to resolve the Kurdish question has been proposed. Policies of violence have been sustained in new forms, via new tools. KESK, as the confederation of all laborers from all ethnic identities of Turkey who are in a collective struggle against neo-liberal and pro-violence policies, became the target of this intimidation. Particularly during last three years, the methods of intimidation against labor movement have changed in form. Judicial processes and police operations have been the main tools of repressions and intimidations.

### Unfair Court cases, Unlawful Trials



Detainees filling the prisons, as a last resort, went on a hunger strike on September 12th (the anniversary of 12 September 1980 military coup) demanding the government to take steps about the democratic solution of the Kurdish question and some basic human rights like right of advocacy (legal defense) in mother tongue and the right of children to be educated in mother tongue. During this period, the prime ministers' and the government's approach, threatening and insulting the strikers was a matter of concern and it caused many people to join the strikes as a reaction to this deadlock. A group of KESK detainees including Eğitim Sen Gender Secretary Sakine Esen Yılmaz and some branch executives had been on hunger strike until November 18th, when all the strikers decided to end the strike.

In Turkey, there are hundreds of trade union members, released pending trial but being tried with similar reasons

and thousands who have been struggling administrative proceedings, investigations and exiles from their workplace. Similar arrests and detentions have become widespread in spite of the obvious cooperation and solidarity with Eğitim Sen and KESK. Some ongoing cases well-known by the international public are as follows:

- KESK and KESK affiliated trade unions' 35 leaders and members, including the present of KESK, Lami Özgen, former Women's Secretaries of KESK and Eğitim Sen, were detained on 28 May 2009. While 9 of them were released by the court pending a trial, 22 were sent to prison. In this case known as "İzmir Trial" all our 22 friends, who had been detained for six months, were released on 21 November 2009 in the first hearing. On 28 November 2011, verdict was issued by the court. 25 people including KESK president, KESK's former Women's Secretary and both former and present Women's Secretaries of Eğitim Sen were sentenced to imprisonment of six years and three months each. An appeal was filed against the verdict and the Supreme Court has not made a final decision about this appeal yet.
- İsmet Aslan, who has worked as an expert for 6 years in the Confederation's Office was detained on 13 January 2012, after his house was raided. He was arrested and sent to Sincan Prison on 16 January 2012. Although more than 10 months have passed since he was arrested, official indictment has not been prepared yet. He has been kept in prison without considering the health problem he suffers.
- 15 women leaders and members of KESK-affiliated trade unions including Canan Çalağan, KESK's Women's Secretary, were taken into police custody as a result of the police operation on 13 February 2012. On 16 February 2012, 9 women were sent to prison. First hearing of the trial was held on 4 October 2012, about 8 months after the arrests. 6 woman trade unionists including the Women's Secretary of KESK were released pending trial. Next hearing will be held on 13 December 2012. We hope the remaining 3 will be released on 13th.
- On 25 June 2012, 50 KESK leaders and members including Lami Özgen, the President of KESK were detained as a result of a police operation. 28 trade unionists including the president of the Tarım Orkam Sen (Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Stockbreeding Labor Public Workers' Trade Union), General Secretaries of Eğitim Sen

(Trade Union of Education and Science Workers) and Tüm Bel Sen (All Municipal and Local Administration Workers' Trade Union), and Women's Secretary of Eğitim Sen were arrested. Although 28 unionists have been in prison since June, the indictment has not been prepared yet and the date of the first hearing of the trial is not still clear.

- Although above mentioned cases are the ones well-known by the international labor movement, there are other members of KESK who are in prisons all around Turkey. For example, the presidents of Mardin and Tunceli Branches of Eğitim Sen have been in prison since October 2011. Former executive board member of Eğitim Sen Kars Branch has been in prison since March 2010 and the president of Eğitim Sen Şırnak Branch has been in prison since September 2011.

In many cases mentioned above, accusations leveled against unionists are about their attendance in legal and lawful union activities, meetings and demonstrations. Our members' phone calls and e-mail accounts are monitored in order to create an element of crime. Our members' houses are raided early in the morning and even some books found in their house during police raids can be considered as elements of the alleged crimes. Within the scope of these operations, the headquarters' and branch offices of the trade unions are raided and union's documents and records were seized by the police. During the interrogations, the defendants were asked about the reasons for their taking part in the meetings organized by trade unions. They are asked if they participated in the usual activities of the unions (such as, strikes and International Women's Day activities) acting accordingly to the orders taken from some "terror centers". While the main reasons for filing these suits are completely irrational, keeping the defendants arrested during the trial process clearly betrays a specific intention. Apparently the aim of such cases is to intimidate and to repress the opposing trade unions and their members, thereby inactivate these unions.

Today 28 members of Eğitim Sen are in prisons because of these cases. The indictments of our members who have been arrested since the operation in June, still haven't been prepared. Eğitim Sen's executive board members Sakine Esen Yilmaz and Mehmet Bozgeyik have been in prison since June without having information about what they're exactly charged with. The trial must start immediately and this human right abuse must be ended!

## International Solidarity with Eđitim Sen and KESK Detainees



In last one year, ITUC, ETUC, EI, ETUCE , many international labor organizations and Eđitim Sen's comrades from all around the world have sent numerous messages of condemnation and warning to the government and authorities in Turkey. International solidarity had an important affect on the ongoing trials. For the October 4th hearing of the 9 detained women of KESK, a strong delegation was in Ankara as observers and 6 of the 9 women were released pending trial in this hearing. We hope in the next hearing of December 13th, the remaining 3, amongst which there's an Eđitim Sen member will be released and all the women tried for this unjust case will be acquitted.

### What Can You Do?

- Follow the developments and campaigns and publicize it among your members.
- Give place in your magazine, website etc.
- Inform the national media in your country.
- Inform the Turkish representations in your country, your country's representation in Turkey and EU representations by requesting appointments and writing them letters.
- Attend the hearings in Turkey and help us to make the international solidarity more visible.
- Organize solidarity visits to the colleagues in prisons.

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