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Petition

Stand up against repression in Turkey

- News from around the world -

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Eleven Research Assistants who work in the Faculty of Communication at Marmara University in Turkey – and who are also members of Egitim-Sen (Education and Science Workers' Union) – participated in a KESK (Confederation of Public Workers' Unions) strike action held on June 4 and 5, 2013. As a result of this participation, disciplinary proceedings by the Rector of Marmara University against these assistants were initiated. In addition to these proceedings, the number of proceedings on 15 different Research Assistants reached at 25 for 2 years since Prof. Dr. Yusuf Devran had taken up the position as the Dean of Faculty of Communication.

The right to participate in collective action as decided by the unions of which public workers are members is recognized in the Convention on Human Rights, the Constitution as well as administrative judicial decisions taken by European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Thus, the strike action held by Egitim-Sen, of which all 11 Research Assistants are members, was not a criminal act, but, rather, it was an action guaranteed by both union and democratic rights.

In response to the press statement issued by Istanbul University Branch of Egitim-Sen, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Devran declared the strike action held by KESK to be unlawful, and stated that the 11 Marmara Research Assistants should be punished because they attended a legal strike action. Thus, Prof. Dr. Yusuf Devran's statement was in direct contradiction to the Convention on Human Rights, the Constitution and the administrative judicial decisions reached by the European Court of Human Rights.

According to the statement issued by Prof. Dr. Yusuf Devran, the strike action was not about personal responsibility, nor individual rights and freedoms. The action was held simply in order to protest nation-wide police violence committed during Gezi Park demonstrations, in addition to KESK's call for "Living in Dignity, Guaranteed Jobs and the Future". These 11 Research Assistants were made scapegoats in an academic witch-hunt (linked to the Gezi Park demonstrations) taking place throughout Turkey. Other instances include disciplinary proceedings against 4 scholars at Tunceli University for having taken part in the strike action, and another disciplinary proceeding against Asst. Prof. Dr. Timuçin Köprülü, who criticized police violence in a speech given at the Uludağ University graduation ceremony.

We, the undersigned citizens, due to our academic, professional and humanitarian responsibilities, call upon the Marmara University Rectorship to withdraw these unlawful proceedings which have the hallmarks of an attack upon freedom of speech and assembly; to call upon Prof. Dr. Yusuf Devran, the Dean of Faculty of Communication, to cease preventing academic staff from exercising their constitutional, democratic and union rights; and, finally, to end the use of abusive investigations as a tool for intimidating Research Assistants (and other staff).

Because academic freedom means our freedom!

To sign the petition please send an e-mail to freeacademy@yandex.com with your name, surname, profession and organization. **Deadline is 11th September 2013.**