



STATEMENT

For immediate release - 19 January 2007

Turkey: Killing of Turkish-Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink

ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, is deeply shocked and saddened by the murder of Hrant Dink. A Turkish journalist of Armenian descent, Mr Dink was the editor of the bilingual Armenian –Turkish weekly *Agos* and one of the most insightful commentators on Armenian – Turkish relations and the life of Armenian community in Turkey. Mr Dink was also one of the most outspoken critics of the Turkish actions between 1915 and 1923, when hundreds of thousands of members of Turkey's Armenian minority were killed or driven out of the country. Increasingly, these events are being referred to as the Armenian genocide by a range of international and State actors.

Mr Dink had received several previous threats for his public statements and his writing on this topic and was regarded as a 'traitor' by extreme nationalist groups within Turkey.

"Today is a sad day for human rights and freedom of expression in Turkey and elsewhere in the world. ARTICLE 19 is profoundly shocked by the silencing of such a critical voice for Turkey's political and cultural life. The Turkish authorities must do everything in their power to investigate and prosecute those responsible at all levels," said Dr. Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19's Executive Director.

Dr Callamard added: "The Turkish authorities must also take a very hard look at their own role: their failure to repeal Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, the continuing use of this and other provisions to prosecute writers, journalists and others that dare speak out on taboo topics, and the authorities' public criticism of these voices: all of these contribute to creating an environment that legitimises attacks on freedom of expression, including attacks of a most violent and deadly nature."

The events of 1915-1923 remain one of the most forbidden topics in Turkey and a number of journalists, academics and writers have been put on trial under Article 301 of the Penal Code, which prohibits "insulting the Turkish identity". In October 2005 Mr. Dink was convicted under this provision and received a six-month suspended sentence.

ARTICLE 19 calls upon the Turkish authorities to:

- Take all measures necessary to investigate the murder of Mr Dink and prosecute those responsible for it;

- Take all measures necessary to protect members of its population against acts of violence, threats, intimidation, perpetrated by non-state actors: provision of an environment where free and open discussion over difficult issues is possible is a positive obligation of the State.

- Repeal Article 301 of the Turkish penal code, along with all other provisions that can be used to illegitimately suppress the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

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ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.

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