

32nd SESSION

Fact-finding mission on the situation of local elected representatives in Turkey

Resolution 416 (2017)¹

1. At the meeting of 8 February 2016, the Congress Bureau asked its rapporteurs on Turkey to conduct a fact-finding mission to investigate the detention and removal from office of an increasing number of elected mayors and municipal councillors in Southeast Turkey, in the light of Turkey's commitments under the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

2. The Congress is aware of the threats that Turkey is facing, including an increase in terror attacks, the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, several million refugees within its borders and war on its borders. It categorically condemns all forms of terrorism and violent extremism. Nobody can deny that Turkey needs to take adequate and proportionate measures to protect itself and its institutions.

3. The Congress has set the fight against violent extremism as a priority activity and is convinced that local authorities have a unique and key role to play in this respect and that the healthy functioning of local democracy is an essential tool for facing these threats.

4. It believes, however, that the detentions and arrests of local elected representatives and the extensive resort to lengthy remand detention, within the framework of the fight against terrorism, are counter-productive and are weakening the capacity of Turkey to deal with the terrorist threats that it is facing.

5. The Congress is concerned that the replacement of elected mayors by "mayors appointed by the central authorities" is being accompanied by a reduction in local public services, and in particular the closure of women's refuges and other services for women, children and families at risk.

6. The Congress therefore,

a. reaffirms its commitment to working with the Turkish authorities to strengthen local democracy and to combat all forms of terrorism and violent extremism;

b. proposes that the Human Rights Commissioner, in the framework of his visits to Turkey, pays particular attention to the situation of elected mayors, notably in Southeast Turkey, including those former mayors who are now in prison;

c. suggests that the Venice Commission prepare an opinion on the constitutionality of the measures in Decree Law No. 674 which concern the exercise of local democracy in Turkey;

d. calls on the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) to pay particular attention to reports of closures of women's shelters by "mayors appointed by the central authorities";

e. asks the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) to examine reports of inhumane treatment of detained local elected representatives in Turkey, notably their solitary confinement and systematic transfer to prisons far from their homes;

f. agrees to put the review of the situation of Nurhayat Altun, member of the Turkish delegation of the Congress, on the agenda of its Bureau meetings until the end of legal proceedings.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 March 2017, 2nd sitting (see document [CG32\(2017\)13](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE) and Leendert VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC)