

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 27 March 2012

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for your letter of 21 March related to the ongoing hunger strikes concerning the situation of Kurds in Turkey and the detention conditions of Abdullah Öcalan.

From the outset, I would like to assure you that I am aware of the content of the requests being made. This is a complex issue with very sensitive and far-reaching institutional and humanitarian implications. I have given them very careful consideration and finally concluded that I was not in position to engage in direct communication with the hunger-strikers, for two reasons.

Firstly, because I have an institutional responsibility to ensure the relevant Council of Europe bodies – and in particular the Committee for the Prevention of Torture – can continue to do their work in line with their mandate and without any undue interference or influence, from governments or anyone else. This is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of their work which has proven its value over and over again, including with regard to some of the issues raised in your letter.

The second reason is of a humanitarian nature. I am deeply concerned about the well-being of the women and men currently engaged in the hunger strikes and I very much hope that they will end their action as soon as possible. For the very same reason, I am also determined to avoid creating any precedents which could encourage other persons to engage in actions endangering their health and ultimately their lives.

I should like to use this opportunity to assure you that the Council of Europe will continue to use all its statutory prerogatives to defend and promote human rights and the rule of law in all its member States, including Turkey.

Yours sincerely,



Thorbjørn Jagland

To all signatories of the above-mentioned letter
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