

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 416 (2017)¹ Fact-finding mission on the situation of local elected representatives in Turkey

1. At the meeting of 8 February 2016, the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe asked its co-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 south-east Turkey, in the light of Turkey's commitments under the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122).

2. The Congress is aware of the threats that Turkey is facing, including an increase in terrorist attacks, the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, several million refugees within its territory 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 with which to combat these threats.

4. It believes, however, that the large-scale detention and arrest of local elected representatives and the extensive resort to lengthy remand detentions, 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 shelters 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 Commissioner for Human Rights, in the framework of his visits to Turkey, pays particular attention to the situation of elected mayors, notably in south-east Turkey, including that of those former mayors who are now in prison;

c. suggests that the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) prepare an opinion on the constitutionality of the measures in Emergency Decree No. 674 concerning 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 placement in 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), rapporteurs: Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), and Leendert VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC).