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Public Statement in Support of Persecuted Psychologists in Turkey

We write on behalf of the European Community Psychology Association (ECPA) to express our concern about the prosecution of scholars who signed the declaration “***We will not be a party to this crime***”—commonly referred to as the “***Academics for Peace Petition***.”

Since the *Academics for Peace Petition* was published in January 2016, 610 academics have been required to appear in court on various charges associated with being signatories of the petition. Of this group, a large number have been given suspended sentences for a duration of less than two years, most have been sentenced to 15 months in prison. The remainder who have been sentenced have received prison terms of longer than two years. Sentences exceeding 24 months may not be suspended so this latter category face the real possibility of imprisonment.

Among those academics being tried in court is **Dr. Serdar M. Değirmencioğlu**, with the charge of “propagandizing for a terrorist organization.” Dr. Değirmencioğlu has been in exile since July 2016 and his trial is continuing in his absence at the 30th Heavy Penal Court in Istanbul.

Dr. Değirmencioğlu was a professor of psychology in Istanbul when he was fired in April 2016 for having signed the **Academics for Peace Petition**. In February 2017, he was banned from public service for life. His passport was revoked in December 2017.

Dr. Değirmencioğlu is a well-known community psychologist and a founding member of ECPA. He has served as president of our organization and is currently president of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict & Violence (Peace Psychology).

On September 11, the fourth hearing in Dr. Değirmencioğlu’s trial will be held. In a recent decision, the Constitutional Court of Turkey has ruled that the “***Academics for Peace Petition***” should be considered under freedom of expression. It has, therefore, become clear that the charges against him are baseless and should be dropped immediately.

We urge the authorities to drop the charges against Dr. Değirmencioğlu and all other psychologists on trial with similar charges immediately.

We urge the government of Turkey to desist from repressing academic freedom and freedom of expression for scholars, researchers, and both undergraduate and graduate students in Turkey.

In particular, we call on the government of Turkey to desist from the prosecution of petition signatories and abandon the expansive interpretation of anti-terrorism provisions—extending to many forms of peaceful advocacy—that stifles critical inquiry, scholarly research and political dissent in Turkey.