

5.12.2016

Chers amis, collègues,

Cette lettre est écrite depuis la prison pour femmes de Bakırköy, quelque part entre un asile de fous et une vieille léproserie. En ce moment, un nombre de “journalistes”, estimé entre 150 et 200, a été emprisonné en Turquie, et je suis l’un d’entre eux.

Je suis une écrivaine, seulement une écrivaine, auteure de huit livres traduits dans de nombreuses langues, incluant le français. Depuis 1998, je travaille comme chroniqueuse en essayant de combiner littérature et journalisme dans mes chroniques. Les derniers Prix Nobel sont un signe que les “limites rigides” de la littérature sont remises en question avec justesse.

J’ai été arrêtée pour la raison, ou plutôt le prétexte, que je suis un des “conseillers” de Özgür Gündem, le soit-disant “journal kurde”. Même si les lois régissant le journalisme ne donnent aucune responsabilité aux conseillers d’un journal, et qu’aucun parmi les centaines de procès intentés aux journaux n’ait inclus ces symboliques “conseillers”, six de ces conseillers ont été accusés de “terrorisme” : Necmiye Alpay, linguiste et activiste pour la paix, Bilge Cantepe, fondateur du Parti Vert, Ragıp Zarakolu, éditeur et candidat pour un Prix Nobel de la Paix, Ayhan Bilgen, parlementaire, Filiz Koçali, journaliste féministe.

En fait, parmi ces 150 “journalistes”, il y a plusieurs écrivains, des académiciens, des critiques littéraires, mais ils sont tous en prison pour leur travail journalistique.

La situation de la presse est alarmante. Environ 200 journaux, agences de presse, radios et chaînes de télévision ont été fermées sur ordre du gouvernement en à peine 4 mois. Une “punition collective” a aussi été administrée au journal Cumhuriyet, le plus vieux journal de Turquie, bastion de la social démocratie. Comme pour Özgür Gündem, tous les noms listés comme conseillers et éditeurs ont été arrêtés pour avoir approché des organisations terroristes, y compris l’éditorialiste culturel et un caricaturiste !

Le journal Cumhuriyet a il y a peu courageusement publié des rapports sur les relations entre la Turquie et ISIS (Daesh) et a fermement protesté contre les attaques d’enragés contre Charlie Hebdo. De nombreux journalistes, y compris

moi, ont été poursuivis pour leur solidarité avec Charlie Hebdo, certains ayant même été condamnés à des peines de prison.

Nous avons besoin de votre soutien, de votre sensibilité et de votre solidarité. PEN, qui est à la base une organisation pour la défense des écrivains, se bat activement pour la liberté des journalistes. Quand la liberté de pensée et d'expression est en danger, il n'y a plus de discrimination.

“Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” : ce sont des concepts que nous devons à la Révolution française ! Plus de deux siècles ont passé qui ont donné du sens, et une réalité, à ces concepts, façonnés par des siècles de raisonnement, de pensées et de développement littéraire, découlant de siècles de labeur, de combats, de guerre et de sang... Ces concepts se doivent d'être universels, aussi bien en théorie qu'en pratique, pour tous, sans exception.

Mon sentiment est que la crise récente en Europe, déclenchée par les réfugiés et les attaques terroristes, n'est pas seulement politique et économique. C'est une crise existentielle que l'Europe ne pourra résoudre qu'en ressaisissant les nations qui la composent.

De nombreux signes indiquent que les démocraties libérales européennes ne peuvent plus se sentir en sécurité alors que l'incendie se propage en sa proximité. La “crise démocratique” turque, qui a été pendant longtemps sous-estimée ou ignorée, pour des raisons pragmatiques, ce risque grandissant de dictature islamiste et militaire, aura de sérieuses conséquences. Personne ne peut se donner le luxe d'ignorer la situation, et surtout pas nous, journalistes, écrivains, académiciens, nous qui devons notre existence même à la liberté de pensée et d'expression.

*Merci beaucoup.
Sincères salutations*

Ash Erdoğan
Prison de Bakırköy C-9

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5.12.2016

Dear friends, colleagues
This letter is written in Bakirly Womens Prison, situated in between a lunatic asylum and old leprosy hospital. Currently, an estimated number of 150 to 200 journalists - a world record - are in prison in Turkey and I am one of these.

I am a writer, only a writer, author of eight books translated to many languages including French (published by Actes Sud). I have been working as a columnist since 1998 and in my column have tried to combine literature and journalism. Last two Nobel Prizes signal that rigid borders of literature are justifiably questioned.

I have been arrested for the reason, or on the pretext that I am one of the "advisors" to "Egër Gündem" the so-called "Kurdish newspaper". Although the Press Law clearly states that advisors have no legal responsibility over a newspaper, and none of the hundreds of cases opened against the paper has included the ~~ad~~ symbolic advisors, first time in 20 years, six advisors have been charged with terrorism: Neziha Akyaz, linguist and peace activist, Bilge Cantekin, founder of Green Party, Ragıp Zarakolu, publisher and a candidate for Nobel Peace Prize, Ayhan Bilgen, parliamentar, Fikri Kaya, a feminist journalist. In fact, among these 150 "journalists", there are several writers, academicians, book critics, but they are all in jail for their journalistic work.

The situation with press is alarming. Around 200 newspapers, press agencies, radio and TV channels have been shut down with the order of the government in nearly four months. "Collective punishment" was applied also to Cumhuriyet, the oldest paper in Turkey, a critic of social democracy. Like "Egër Gündem",

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all names listed as advisors and editors, have been attacked for assisting two different terrorist organizations, including the culture editor and a caricaturist! Cumhuriyet has recently published conspicuous reports on Turkish-ISIS relations and strongly protested the violent attack on Charlie Hebdo. Many journalists, including myself, have been prosecuted for our solidarity with Charlie Hebdo, some have received prison sentences.

We need your support, sympathy and solidarity. PEN, originally an organization for writers, ^{has} been actively fighting for the freedom of persecuted journalists when freedom of thought and expression is underpinned, there can be no discrimination.

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity": Concepts we owe to French Revolution! More than two centuries have passed to give a meaning and reality to these concepts, formed by centuries of reasoning and thought and without development, formed by centuries of toil, struggle, sweat and blood. Concepts that need to be universal, in theory and in reality, for everyone, without exceptions.

I feel that the current crisis of Europe, triggered by refugees and terrorist attacks, is not only a political or economical one. It is an existential crisis that Europe can solve only by holding onto its own values. There has been too many signals that indicate European liberal democracies can no longer feel secure when the fire around is expanding. The "democracy crisis" in Turkey, for so long underestimated or ignored for pragmatic reasons, namely the growing risk of an Islamic-based, militaristic dictatorship, will have serious outcomes. Europe has to have to have a bird's eye to the situation, especially us, journalists, writers, academics as we owe our existence to freedom of thought and expression. MANY THANKS.

Best regards,
ASLI ERDOGAN
BAKIRKÖY CEZAYİ C 9

5.12.2016

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I have been arrested for the reason, or on the pretext, that I am one of the “advisors” to Özgür Gündem, the so-called “Kurdish newspaper”. Although the press law clearly states that advisors have no legal responsibility over a newspaper, and none of the hundreds of cases opened against the paper has included the symbolic advisors, first time in 20 years, six advisors have been charged with “terrorism” : Necmiye Alpay, linguist and peace activist, Bilge Cantepe, founder of Green Party, Ragıp Zarakolu, publisher and candidate for Nobel Peace Prize, Ayhan Bilgen, parliamentarian, Filiz Koçali a feminist journalist. In fact, among these 150 “journalists”, there are several writers, academicians, book critics, but they are all in jail for their journalistic work.

The situation with press is alarming. Around 200 newspapers, press agencies, radio and TV channels have been shut down with the order of the government in merely four months. “Collective punishment” was applied also to Cumhuriyet, the oldest paper in Turkey, a castle of social democracy. Like Özgür Gündem, all names listed as advisors and editors have been arrested for accusing two different terrorist organisations, including the culture editor and a caricaturist ! Cumhuriyet has recently published courageous reports on Turkish-Isis relations and strongly protested the rabid attack on Charlie Hebdo. Many journalists including my self have been prosecuted for our solidarity with Charlie Hebdo, some have received prison sentences.

We need your support, sensibility and solidarity. PEN, originally an organisation for writers, has been actively fighting for the freedom of prosecuted journalists. When freedom of thought and expression is under peril there can be no discrimination.

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serious outcomes. No one has the luxury to turn a blind eye to the situation, especially us, journalists, writers, academicians, as we owe our existence to freedom of thought and expression.

Many thanks.

Best regards.

Aslı Erdoğan

Prison de Bakırköy C-9