



January 29, 2016

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu
Office of the Prime Minister
Başbakanlık
06573 Ankara, Turkey
Via Email: cumhurbaskanligi@tccb.gov.tr

We write on behalf of more than 12,000 members of the American Sociological Association to express our grave concern about the actions that the Turkish government has taken against signatories to the Academics for Peace statement.

The American Sociological Association has a long-standing position of supporting the free exchange of ideas across national, state, cultural, and social borders that is consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “[e]veryone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression [including the right] to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.”

The Academics for Peace statement, which calls for a halt to military action in the southeastern region of Turkey, a lifting of curfews in some Kurdish-majority cities, and the development of a roadmap to lasting peace, has been falsely depicted as supporting terrorism. The supporters were derided as traitors. We understand the Turkish government has arrested some of the scholars who signed the statement (charging them with treason) and filed a lawsuit against all those who signed, and that the Higher Education Council (YÖK) in Turkey has launched investigations into scholars who signed the statement with the stated purpose of removing those people from their university positions. This overall atmosphere of intimidation has culminated in a public campaign involving violent threats against the signatories.

These actions are a violation of Turkey’s responsibility to protect freedom of thought, expression, and assembly as a member state of the Council of Europe, and as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights as well as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

President Erdoğan’s criticism of the signatories as “so-called” intellectuals and “traitors” – simply for disagreeing with government action – conflicts with the basic principles of free expression, which are necessary for the maintenance of a vibrant democracy.

Moreover, the chilling effect that the government’s actions will likely have on intellectual thought will degrade the quality of scholarly ideas coming from the many Turkish universities in

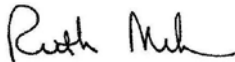
which your government has invested. Turkish universities produce world-class scholarship and intellectuals who have international influence, but that production of innovative thought can only continue when ideas can be exchanged and debated free from government repression. As sociologists, we urge you to consider how government action intended to stifle unpopular ideas only serves to create a climate of fear that will, in the long term, weaken Turkish society and Turkey's standing in the global scholarly community.

For these reasons, we urge you to drop all legal action against signatories to the Academics for Peace statement, to ensure that YÖK end all investigations into signatories, and to encourage universities to support a climate of free expression on their campuses by ceasing any pending investigations of their faculty who have supported the Academics for Peace statement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula England". The script is cursive and fluid.

Paula England
Professor of Sociology
New York University
Past President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Milkman". The script is cursive and fluid.

Ruth Milkman
Distinguished Professor of Sociology
CUNY Graduate Center
President

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Michele Lamont". The script is cursive and fluid.

Michele Lamont
Professor of Sociology
Harvard University
President Elect

Bcc:

- Hon. John Kerry
- Hon. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
- Hon. Ismail Kahraman
- Hon. Bekir Bozdağ
- Dr. Yekta Saraç
- Dr. İhsan Sabuncuoğlu
- Dr. Hüseyin Akan
- Dr. Ramazan Kaplan
- Dr. Mustafa Inal
- Dr. Hayri Coşkun
- Dr. Faruk Kocacık
- Dr. Murat Tuncer
- Dr. Nigar Demircan Çakar
- Dr. Ebubekir Ceylin
- Hon. Barbara Lochbihler
- Hon. Monika Kacinskiene
- Hon. Johannes Hahn
- Hon. Nils Muižnieks