



June 20, 2019

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi, 06560 Beştepe
Ankara TURKEY
Via email: contact@tccb.gov.tr

Dear President Erdoğan:

I write to you on behalf of the American Sociological Association (ASA), a professional society representing more than 12,000 sociologists around the world to express our deep and continued concern regarding the treatment of scholars who were signatories to the 2016 Academics for Peace petition, which called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict with the Kurds in south-east Turkey. The petition was initially signed by 1,128 scholars from 89 Turkish universities. Following the petition's publication, state and higher education authorities in Turkey began launching criminal and administrative investigations against the signatories.

Sabancı University Professor Ayşe Gül Altınay was one of those signatories and on May 21, 2019 she was sentenced to two years and one month in prison by the Istanbul 25th Heavy Penal Court for "knowingly and willingly aiding a terrorist organization as a non-member." According to Amnesty International and Scholars at Risk, this sentence appears to be an act of retaliation for the non-violent exercise of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association represented in Professor Altınay's choice to sign the petition. It also appears to be part of a larger campaign of intimidation designed to silence scholars and prevent expressions of dissent. Professor Altınay is an internationally recognized anthropologist. Other signatories to the petition are sociologists and other social scientists, as well as academics in the physical sciences and the arts and humanities. As a scholarly society, the American Sociological Association is outraged at this wholesale attack on academics and the freedom to think, question, and share ideas.

We call upon the Turkish courts to reverse Dr. Altınay's conviction and to cease the persecution of all signatories to the Academics for Peace petition. We urge you use the power of your office to rectify a situation that has become a stain on the reputation of Turkey and a threat to the production of knowledge and the advancement of science.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Mary Romero'.

Mary Romero
President, American Sociological Association