

recherche internationale e.V.

Merowingerstraße 5-7

D-50677 Köln

Tel. *49 - (0)221 - 31 70 91

Fax *49 - (0)221 - 331 87 52

Albrecht.Kieser@rjb-koeln.de

[recherche internationale e.V.](#)

[Merowingerstr. 5-7, D-50677 Köln](#)

To the media

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Press release 01

Author and Human Rights Activist Doğan Akhanlı Wrongly Imprisoned

On 10 August, 2010, the writer Dogan Akhanli, well-known in Turkey and a German citizen since 2001, was arrested at the airport in Istanbul and brought to Metris prison. He has been held in prison in Tekirdağ since 20 August. Akhanli had come to Turkey for the first time since fleeing the country in 1991. He wanted to visit his ill father.

The Turkish public prosecutor's office accuses Akhanli of participating in an armed robbery of an exchange office in Istanbul that led to the death of one person. Akhanli has emphatically rejected the accusation as well as any connection with the attack. His lawyers, Haydar Erol (Istanbul) and Ilias Uyar (Cologne) consider the evidence to be presented by the prosecutor's office as completely unfounded.

The first witness to incriminate Akhanli in 1992 did so **under severe torture** (a medical report is available). His statement, which is, moreover, contradictory, is not usable following legal criteria. In addition, a few days ago and in front of Akhanli's lawyers, **he withdrew his former allegations**. Following the accusations extorted under torture in 1992, the police had presented photos that exclusively showed Akhanli to the eyewitness, the son of the victim, and had gotten the latter through suggestive ways (?) to state that the man on the photo might have been one of the three suspects. In accordance with the rule of law, this statement should also not suffice to justify the imprisonment of Dogan Akhanli; the witness should have, also under Turkish law, been presented with photos showing different people in order to enable him to have a choice in the first place. The police made up for this on 13 August 2010. On that day at the police station the witness had it recorded, together with his brother, that he **could not identify Mr. Akhanli as a suspect**.

Over the course of one week the responsible prosecutor Hüseyin Ayar neither added these exculpatory witness statements to the main file nor did he pass them onto the custodial judge. Whether misplaced or embezzled: the custodial

judge who had to decide over an appeal for release on 20 August 2010, passed his judgment unaware of the updated witness statements and rejected the appeal.

Akhanli knew about vague accusations against him by the Turkish authorities. That is why he had, by way of precaution before his departure, asked lawyers and friends to support him in case of arrest. As friends, colleagues and dedicated citizens, we recognize the right of the Turkish judiciary to investigate the robbery in question.

But we don't accept the arbitrary imprisonment on the basis of questionable investigations by the prosecutor. Such a procedure does not befit a democratic Turkey. We expect that those responsible for the Turkish judiciary guarantee the compliance on the part of its employees to the rule of law and prevent potential political revanchism against a disliked former citizen of their country.

We demand the immediate release of Dogan Akhanli.

Doğan Akhanlı – Short Biography

Doğan Akhanlı was born in Şavşat, in the northeastern part of Turkey, in 1957. He moved to Istanbul at the age of twelve. He went underground in the wake of the 1980 military coup d'état. A political prisoner from 1985 to 1987, Akhanlı was tortured in an Istanbul military prison. In 1991, he fled to Germany, where he was **granted political refugee status**. In 1998, Turkey stripped him of his Turkish citizenship. He became a German citizen in 2001. Since the mid-1990s, he has been living in Cologne, where he works as a writer.

In novels, essays, and interviews, and also in the context of various projects in Germany, Akhanlı has consistently displayed an honest approach to historical violence, while defending the inalienability of human rights. Akhanlı initiated the Raphael Lemkin Library in Cologne. He is committed to memorialising **the genocides** of the twentieth century, including the Armenian genocide, and to promoting cross-cultural dialogue with a view to reconciliation.

Among other institutions, the German Federal Republic's 'Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future' Foundation has sponsored Akhanlı's projects. Some of his projects were distinguished with awards from the Federal 'Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance'.

His novel *Madonna'nin Son Hayali* was singled out as one of the most important works of fiction published in Turkey in 2005. In 2009, the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* awarded him its Literary Prize.

Akhanlı has committed himself to exposing the truth about the murder of Hrant Dink and to perpetuating the memory of this Armenian journalist and publisher, who was dedicated to bringing about reconciliation between Armenians and Turks.

Akhanlı is a staff member of the nonprofit organization 'Research International', which is principally concerned with developing educational curricula on genocidal violence. In addition Akhanlı is involved in a dialogue project on German, Kurdish and Turkish history and mutual understanding since 2010.

For further inquiries please contact:

Albrecht Kieser (Albrecht.Kieser@rijb-koeln.de) Cell: 0178.903 99 98.

Further contacts:

Lawyer Ilias Uyar in Cologne, Cell: 0177.8440.745

Lawyer Haydar Erol in Istanbul, Cell: 0090.532.263.7735

Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, Press: 030.5000.2056

Consulate General in Cologne, Phone: 02233.78 091.97 41 80; Fax: 02233.75 572; Email: turk.genkon.koeln@t-online.de

Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Justice in Ankara, Phone: 0090.312.218.78 01; Fax: 0090.312.219.45 23; Email: uhdigm@adalet.gov.tr

Further information on Doğan Akhanlı's work (German):

Kanat Kitap; Akhanlı's Turkish publisher: <http://www.kanatkitap.com/index.php>.

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C4%9Fan_Akhanl%C4%B1

<http://kulturserver.de/-/kulturschaffende/detail/14518>

<http://www.buehnederkulturen.de/pages/de/inszenierungen/487.htm>

Bank details: Account No. 23 812 043 - Stadtparkasse Köln - BLZ 370 501 98