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To the media

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Press Release 03

Doğan Akhanlı is still under arrest without legal justification

On 31 August 2010, the Turkish judiciary rejected, rapidly, not to say precipitately, Doğan Akhanlı's lawyers' third appeal for his release from custody. The 9th Chamber of the Istanbul criminal court took less than a day to deliver its decision - the appeal had been handed in the morning of the same day. It was based on three arguments:

1. The first ex-witness for the prosecution has provided the court with a written retraction of his 1992 statement, which he made under torture. (The relevant document may be found at www.das-kulturforum.de; see 'Juristischer Hintergrund', then 'Zeugenaussage Hamsa Kopal'.)
2. The second 1992 ex-witness for the prosecution has likewise provided the court with a written retraction, and further explained that, in 1992, not a single photograph of Doğan Akhanlı was submitted to him for identification. When he was shown photographs on 13 August 2010, he did not recognize Akhanlı as a possible perpetrator of the crime. (This statement may also be found at the aforementioned web address: see 'Zeugenaussage Mustafa Tutum'.)
3. Twenty-one years after the fact, the Turkish investigating authorities have finally seen fit to take fingerprints from two bags left behind by the perpetrators of the October 1989 armed robbery. None of Akhanlı's fingerprints were found on the bags (see document 'Identifizierungsprotokoll'.)

These facts carried no weight with the court, which justifies Akhanlı's continuing incarceration on the sole grounds that he has been accused of a grave crime. Who has accused him, on what evidence – the court remains silent on these matters. (The exact wording of its rejection of the appeal may also be found at the aforementioned web address).

This is an outrageous, scandalous procedure that makes a mockery of any notion of law.

By now, at the latest, it is time to confront the German government - specifically, the German Foreign Ministry - with the question as to whether it intends to continue to allow a German citizen to be harassed and humiliated in this fashion and to be held in prison with no justification for purely political reasons.

The time has come to protest the Turkish government's actions as sharply as possible.

We call on human rights organizations and associations, as well as individuals, to continue to lodge protests against Akhanli's arbitrary imprisonment with the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, and the Turkish General Consulate in Cologne.

For background information and addresses, please visit: www.das-kulturforum.de

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.

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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>

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