

The Committee calls for safeguarding local democracy in Turkey



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The UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights calls for supporting the Mayor of Diyarbakir, Gultan Kisanak, the Co-Mayor, Ferat Anli, and the city's detained public agents, and calls for respecting local democracy in Turkey

Gultan Kisanak, the Mayor of Diyarbakir (Turkey), and the Co-Mayor, Firat Anli, were arrested last October 25th and were taken into custody, accused of supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is considered a terrorist organization. Around 15

municipal public workers have also been arrested and charged on the same basis. Access to municipal facilities was blacked for two days and so were internet communications in the whole city, from 25 to 27 November.

Ms. Gultan Kisanak is the first female Mayor of Diyarbakir metropolitan city, which has 1.8 million inhabitants and is considered a cultural capital in South-eastern Turkey. She is a member of the UCLG World Council and the Executive Bureau, and the city has been involved in the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights since its creation in 2005.

In the UCLG World Congress in Bogota (last October 12-15), the Mayor contributed to the promotion of the draft declaration to support the peace process in Colombia, which she considers "a model". The UCLG World Council unanimously adopted the Declaration. Few days later, in the framework of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Urban Development, "Habitat III", in Quito, Ms. Kisanak took part, along with the Committee, in the launch of a global campaign for the right to housing set up by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing.

The detention of Gultan Kisanak and Firat Anli happened in a context of State of Emergency in Turkey, following the failed coup of July 2016. Indeed, 27 Kurdish elected representatives are currently under detention on the basis of similar charges, and 43 Mayors and co-mayors have been suspended and replaced by national non-elected officials appointed by the government in Ankara.

Although the recurrent inspections conducted by the Turkish Ministry of Interior in the Diyarbakir metropolitan city's offices, national authorities haven't been able to get any evidence proving the charges of supporting the PKK organization.

The UN High Commissioner of Human Rights conveyed his concern regarding Gultan Kisanak and Firat Anli's arrest, as well as other Turkish mayors' detention and suspension from office, through a statement released on October 29th. He recalled the Turkish government that, even in the event of State of Emergency, the government must respect the principle of presumption of innocence and right to a fair trial. He also invited the Turkish government to respect human rights and to be transparent in the administration of justice. For their part, UCLG members released a statement on October 30th expressing their concern and recalling the need for safeguarding local democracy and to protect local elected representatives vested with a democratic mandate.

The UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights joins these concerns and expresses its solidarity with the detained mayors, co-mayors and public servants.

We also support the call released by our member city of Diyarbakir, and we invite our members and partners to contact Turkish Consulates and Embassies in their territories and to call upon the Turkish government (disiliskiler@tbb.gov.tr, contact@tccb.gov.tr and cumhurbaskanligi@tccb.gov.tr) asking for the release of Gultan Kisanak, Firat Anli and all other arrested public servants of the city of Diyarbakir, and for the respect of local democracy in Turkey.

We also invite our members to support and spread this call through their territories and to contact international and regional institutions for human rights protection.

For further information, you can access online the report of the city of Diyarbakir on this issue.

Arrestation des co-maires de la ville de Diyarbakir
Communiqué de Nathalie Appéré, maire de Rennes

J'ai appris avec une très grande inquiétude l'interpellation et le placement en garde à vue de Gültan Kışanak et Fırat Anlı, co-maires de la ville de Diyarbakir. Ces arrestations font suite à la destitution, en septembre dernier, de vingt-quatre maires kurdes, remplacés par des administrateurs proches du parti au pouvoir.

Je suis, avec la plus grande attention, les conditions de détention et les procédures judiciaires qui concernent aujourd'hui mes homologues. Dans ce cadre, j'ai officiellement fait part de ma vive préoccupation à Jean-Marc Ayrault, ministre des Affaires Étrangères.

Rennes et Diyarbakir entretiennent des liens d'amitié depuis 30 ans. Au nom de ce partenariat, je veux réaffirmer l'attachement inlassable de notre ville à une résolution pacifique du conflit, dans le cadre d'un dialogue politique ouvert, seul moyen de parvenir à une solution durable de la question kurde. Alors que des nouvelles de heurts entre policiers et manifestants, nous parviennent de Diyarbakir, je réitère également notre attachement profond au respect de l'état de droit et des principes démocratiques, qui protègent, en particulier, les représentants élus des pouvoirs locaux. Nous condamnons avec la plus grande force l'usage de toute violence, d'où qu'elle vienne.

En décembre dernier, j'avais rencontré mon homologue Gültan Kışanak, qui avait tenu à se rendre à Rennes, malgré les vives tensions qui menaçaient déjà sa ville. Cette rencontre nous avait permis d'envisager de nouveaux projets de coopération et d'engager une aide supplémentaire de Rennes pour permettre l'accueil des nombreux réfugiés qui affluent à Diyarbakir.

Nathalie Appéré
Maire de Rennes

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