



Call for immediate release of ÇHD-lawyers Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra and Doğa İncesu and an end to attacks on the legal profession in Türkiye

25 June 2026

Lawyers for Lawyers and the Law Society of England and Wales are alarmed by the arrest and detention of lawyers and members of the Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD) Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra and Doğa İncesu, on 23 June 2026 in Istanbul and Ankara. Based on information received, we have reasons to believe that these actions are linked to their legitimate professional activities and form part of a concerning wider crackdown on civil society and human rights work in Türkiye ahead of the upcoming 36th NATO summit. We call on the authorities in Türkiye to immediately and unconditionally release the three lawyers and guarantee the right of all those detained to prompt access to legal counsel.

All three lawyers are members of the Progressive Lawyers' Association (Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği, ÇHD) — Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra of its Ankara Branch, Doğa İncesu of its Istanbul Branch — an association whose members regularly represent political opponents, trade unionists and human rights defenders. ÇHD has long been subject to judicial harassment, and its lawyers have repeatedly faced criminal prosecution and lengthy imprisonment in connection with their professional activities.¹

In the early hours of 23 June 2026, the authorities [carried out](#) simultaneous police raids in Ankara and Istanbul, reportedly taking over 200 individuals into custody. According to ÇHD, police arrest lawyers Demir and Bafra at their homes in Ankara and lawyer İncesu at his home in Istanbul. The authorities imposed a confidentiality order on the investigation file and a 24-hour restriction on access to a lawyer, leaving the detained lawyers unable to meet their representatives during the initial stage of their custody in violation of international fair trial standards.

On the same day, ÇHD [reported](#) that at approximately 08:50 at the Counter-Terrorism Branch of the Ankara Police Department, a member-lawyer was assaulted by police officers after objecting to the mistreatment of their client, one of those detained during the large-scale pre-dawn raids. A complaint filed against the officers concerned resulted in no action, and a subsequent attempt by an Ankara Bar Association official to take a report was refused entry.

While the authorities have described the raids as part of a counter-terrorism security operation, local civil society organisations have [condemned](#) the detentions as an attempt to silence critical voices ahead of the 36th NATO summit in Ankara scheduled for 7–8 July 2026. In the days before the operation, the Ankara Governor's Office reportedly [announced](#) a ban on demonstrations in the capital to run from 28 June until the end of the summit.

We recall Türkiye's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), notably the right to liberty and security and the prohibition of arbitrary detention, the right to a fair trial, and the prohibition of ill-treatment, which Türkiye is further bound to prevent and investigate as a party to the Convention against Torture (CAT).

Furthermore, the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers prescribe that governments must ensure lawyers are able to perform their professional functions without intimidation, harassment or improper interference, and shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution for acts carried out

¹ See, for instance: [Joint Submission to the Committee Against Torture on Türkiye](#) (10 June 2024) pp. 12-14; [Joint Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Türkiye](#) (11 October 2024) paras 30-33; ["Delegation of 60+ International observers condemns court Judgment in prosecution of 21 Lawyers from ÇHD and HHB"](#) (11 November 2022, Lawyers for Lawyers).



in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards, and ethics. These standards are reflected in the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2000)21 on the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer.

In light of the above, we urge the relevant authorities in Türkiye to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release lawyers Semra Demir, Kürşat Bafra and Doğa İncesu;
2. Lift the confidentiality order and the restriction on access to legal counsel, and ensure that all detainees, including lawyers, have full and prompt access to legal counsel of their choosing;
3. Carry out a prompt, independent and effective investigation into the reported assault on a lawyer and a detainee at the Counter-Terrorism Branch of the Ankara Police Department, and into the refusal of access to the Ankara Bar Association, and hold those responsible to account;
4. End the criminalisation of the legal profession and guarantee that all lawyers in Türkiye can carry out their professional duties without fear of reprisal, undue restriction or harassment;
5. Promptly sign, ratify, and subsequently implement the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer.

The above-mentioned organisations will continue to monitor this situation and call on the authorities of the Republic of Türkiye to ensure that all lawyers and human rights defenders in the country can perform their professional duties without fear of reprisals, harassment or undue interference, in accordance with international standards.