
STATEMENT

Paris, November 25, 2024

TRIAL MONITORING IN ISTANBUL

UIA-IROL looks back on its recent mission to follow the hearings of Seda Şaraldı and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı, two Turkish lawyers prosecuted for being assimilated to their clients.

As part of its monitoring of the situation of lawyers in Türkiye ¹, UIA-IROL decided to follow the trial of these two lawyers in order to observe the conformity of the legal proceedings underway with international fair trial standards, and to assess respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights.

The monitored hearings are part of a larger sequence of events following an armed attack outside the Istanbul Courthouse on February 6, 2024. This attack, attributed to suspected members of the DHKP-C, a group designated as a terrorist organization by both the Turkish government and international bodies, resulted in the tragic deaths of a police officer and a civilian. In the aftermath, security forces launched extensive operations targeting lawyers affiliated with the ÇHD, suspecting them of involvement with the group. Among those arrested were Seda Şaraldı, of the Istanbul Bar, and Betül Vangölü Kozağaçlı, of the Ankara Bar, both of whom have denied any involvement with the DHKP-C. The charges against these lawyers have escalated over time, with accusations based on anonymous testimonies collected months after the incident. This case is emblematic of a broader trend in Türkiye, where lawyers defending individuals charged with terrorism are themselves subject to persecution, fostering an environment of intimidation.

The mission took place from October 1 to 3 and began with a series of meetings between representatives of UIA-IROL, other international delegations and members of the Turkish Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD). These exchanges enabled the delegations to gain a better understanding of the wider context surrounding the trials.

The following day, observers attended the two hearings of Seda, whose hearing was subsequently postponed to December 11, 2024, and that of Betül, postponed to December 6, 2024.

UIA-IROL's approach during the mission was strictly observational, ensuring non-interference in judicial proceedings while maintaining a visible presence to signify support for the legal community and adherence to judicial transparency. Trial observation aimed to document compliance with international fair trial standards, identify potential violations of fundamental rights and support advocacy for a strong and effective rule of law.

¹ [See UIA-IROL actions in Türkiye](#)

UIA-IROL reaffirms that trial monitoring is an essential mechanism for promoting transparency and the publicity of judicial processes. This tool not only facilitates the assessment of compliance with international human rights standards but also enables the identification of strengths and weaknesses within the judicial system. The analysis extended to observing the conditions of trial proceedings, the conduct of justice officials, and the overall accessibility and organization of the court infrastructure.

The mission's findings will contribute to a comprehensive public report aimed at supporting judicial reforms and promoting awareness and engagement from civil society.

UIA-IROL's presence in Istanbul is a testament to the unwavering support of the international community for the protection of human rights and the legal profession in Türkiye. By observing these trials, UIA-IROL emphasizes the importance of judicial transparency, the upholding of defence rights, and adherence to the principles of the rule of law.

UIA-IROL warmly thanks the *UIA Endowment Fund for the Rule of Law* for supporting this mission.

More about the UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

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