

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Turkey: Halil Savda must be allowed to exercise his right to freedom of expression

Amnesty International called on the Turkish authorities to ensure that Halil Savda and his five friends are able to exercise their right to freedom of expression and assembly during their 'peace walk' and expressed concern at their detention in Adana province on the 28th day of the walk.

Halil Savda and five other persons accompanying him in his 'peace walk' that he began on 1 September in Uludere/Roboski in the province of Hakkari, were stopped on 28 September at around noon by the police in the Bahçe district of Osmaniye province in southern Turkey.

Police officers allegedly stated that the reason for stopping the marchers was 'sensitivities in the region', that the march 'was provocative', initially claiming that the Governor of Osmaniye had ordered the marchers to be stopped and prevented to carry on their march to Ankara. However later, the police officers allegedly told Halil Savda that it was the chief of police of Osmaniye who had ordered the stopping of the march.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, Halil Savda and his friends were subsequently fined under the Misdemeanour Law. The support vehicle accompanying them was also fined for driving too slowly. On 28 September, at around 3.30pm, they were allegedly forcibly taken by the police officers into police cars. Their phones were confiscated. There are also unconfirmed allegations of ill-treatment and that they were handcuffed. According to their lawyer, they were released in the Ceyhan district of Adana at around 5.30pm.

Before their phones were confiscated, Halil Savda told Amnesty International that they were determined to continue the march on foot, having already marched for 700km.

Amnesty International believes that Halil Savda's and his friends' right to freedom of expression and assembly have been unfairly limited, without justification and evidence that their protest represents a threat to public order. Amnesty International calls on the authorities to ensure that Halil Savda and his friends are allowed to continue their peaceful protest, without unjustified interference from the authorities and ensure that any restrictions placed on the marchers is proportionate, justifiable and exercised without recourse to use of force. The reasons of their irregular detention and the confiscation of their phones are unknown.

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