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Turkey: Seven years on, still no justice for Ahmet Yıldız

Ahmet Yıldız was just 26 years old when he was shot dead on 15 July 2008, in what has been widely regarded by Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) rights activists as a gay “honour” killing. Seven years on, his killer or killers are still at large and the lack of progress in bringing about justice is viewed by LGBTI organizations in Turkey as an indictment of the lack of protection of LGBTI individuals and a symbol of impunity for homophobic violence.

Speaking to Amnesty International on the eve of the anniversary of Ahmet Yıldız’ murder, his partner Ibrahim Can said: ‘How can the Turkish state that boasts of its position as an important world power, a powerful state, be so incapable of apprehending Ahmet’s killers? Is the Turkish state so impotent, so incapable of bringing his killers to justice? This case highlights how victims of homophobia and homophobic violence are treated: as undeserving of justice and unequal in the front of the law.’

A catalogue of serious mistakes and negligence by the Turkish authorities include the failure to investigate threats Ahmet Yıldız had received from members of his family in the months leading up to his murder, despite these threats having been reported to the authorities. After Ahmet Yıldız’ murder it emerged that his complaint had not been investigated: instead the state prosecutor had transferred the complaint to another office on the grounds that it fell within the jurisdiction of the neighbouring Ümraniye district. In November 2007, the state prosecutor in Ümraniye ruled that there were no grounds for a criminal investigation of the complaint, on the basis that there was no evidence beyond ‘abstract allegations’. According to his partner, neither Ahmet nor the members of his family were interviewed regarding the complaint.

There has not been an investigation into the failure of the authorities to act on Ahmet Yıldız’ complaints since the murder. An arrest warrant was only issued in October 2008, three months after the killing, by which time the only named suspect in the case, Ahmet Yıldız’ father was believed to have left the country and could not be apprehended, and seven years on, still hasn’t been despite an Interpol red alert issued for him to be arrested. A prosecution was initiated in April 2009, naming Ahmet Yıldız’ father as sole suspect.

After 20 hearings in the case in six years, justice for Ahmet Yıldız is as remote as it has ever been. During the last three hearings, in November 2014, March and July 2015, the prosecution stated that they were in correspondence with law enforcement authorities to check addresses associated with Ahmet Yıldız’ father. The fact that seven years on, such basic steps are yet to be taken is an indictment of the lack of diligence and commitment of the authorities to bring about justice in this case.

Amnesty International launched a campaign for justice for Ahmet Yıldız in 2012, with activists from around the world calling for the Turkish authorities to ensure there are no further delays in the case, by

promptly and actively seeking implementation of the international arrest warrant through all available means in order for the trial to proceed.

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