

URGENT ACTION

FREE IMPRISONED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

Prominent human rights defender Nimet Tanrıkulu has been in held in pre-trial detention in Ankara's Sincan women's prison since 29 November 2024, accused of "membership to a terrorist organization". The first hearing in the prosecution will take place on 4 March at the Istanbul Heavy Penal Court no. 24. Amnesty International examined the indictment and believes that the accusations levelled against Nimet Tanrıkulu are baseless, and that she should be released immediately pending her trial.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr Akın Gürlek
Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor
Çağlayan Meydanı
Şişli Merkez Mah.
Abide-i Hürriyet Cad. No: 223
Şişli/İstanbul, Türkiye
Email: istanbulcbs@adalet.gov.tr

Dear Chief Public Prosecutor Akın Gürlek,

I write to express my deep concern at the ongoing detention of the prominent human rights defender **Nimet Tanrıkulu** who has been held at Sincan women's prison in Ankara since 29 November 2024. In December 2024, she was indicted for "membership of a terrorist organization" by a court in Ankara, which also ruled that it had no jurisdiction and transferred the prosecution file to Istanbul, the province of her residence and where she was detained. The first hearing in the prosecution will take place on 4 March at the Istanbul Heavy Penal Court no. 24.

Amnesty International examined the questions Nimet Tanrıkulu was asked during interrogation and allegations in the indictment, namely her historic travel, participation in civil society events relating to Kurdish human rights issues during the 2013/14 peace process, mobile phone signals from same base station as other individuals and witness statements. None of the accusations levelled against Nimet Tanrıkulu could be considered on their own as constituting material links with an armed group.

The speed with which an indictment has been drawn up is welcome, however, Amnesty International believes that the accusations in the indictment appear to be a series of inferences and vague allegations rather than rely on material evidence that demonstrate that she is guilty of having committed an internationally recognizable offence. This fits into a pattern documented by the organization of how baseless anti-terrorism charges have been used to target and silence peaceful, legitimate dissent in Türkiye.

I therefore call on you to request that Nimet Tanrıkulu is released from pre-trial detention pending her prosecution.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nimet Tanrıkulu is a prominent human rights defender and founding member of Human Rights Association who has been active in Türkiye's human rights community for several decades including campaigning with Saturday Mothers/People, the group of relatives of victims of enforced disappearances and their supporters for truth, justice and accountability.

On 26 November 2024, police raided Nimet Tanrıkulu's home in early hours and detained her in the context of an ongoing criminal investigation which is subject to a secrecy order. On the same day, she was transferred to Ankara by officers from the Ankara Security Directorate's anti-terrorism branch. 12 others, including politicians, trade unionists and others were also detained in the context of the same investigation. On 30 November 2024, Nimet Tanrıkulu and eight others were remanded in pre-trial detention under Article 314/2 of the Turkish Penal Code for 'membership of a terrorist organization' by the Ankara Criminal Judgeship of Peace No. 4. The remaining four were released, with judicial controls including reporting to a police station and foreign travel ban.

On 12 December 2024, an Ankara prosecutor submitted an indictment asking that Tanrıkulu is prosecuted for "membership of a terrorist organization", based on vague inferences rather than solid evidence, namely her historic travel, participation in civil society events relating to Kurdish human rights issues during the 2013/14 peace process, mobile phone signals from same base station as other individuals and witness statements. An Ankara court accepted the indictment but simultaneously ruled that it had no jurisdiction, due to Nimet Tanrıkulu's place of residence and location of her detention being Istanbul. On 3 January, the prosecution file was sent to Istanbul and accepted by the Istanbul Heavy Penal Court No. 24. Nimet Tanrıkulu remained in Ankara's Sincan women's prison.

States are duty bound to protect human rights defenders in the course of their work to prevent human rights violations, report them when they occur, and to provide an enabling environment for their work as defenders. Authorities must ensure criminal investigations, detentions and prosecutions are not misused to target human rights defenders as such proceedings are unjust for the individuals and may create a chilling effect on all those who speak out about possible human rights abuses. States' duty to protect and promote human rights includes the creation of this enabling environment for human rights defenders as outlined in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

In the past, Amnesty International has [documented](#) how anti-terrorism laws and trumped-up coup related charges have been used to target and silence peaceful, legitimate dissent in Türkiye. Prominent journalists, academics, human rights defenders and other civil society actors were subjected to arbitrary detention, prosecutions and, if found guilty in unfair trials, face long sentences.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Turkish, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 19 March 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Nimet Tanrıkulu (she/her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/8855/2024/en/>