



Amnesty International

Group 524
JUNE 2023



June In-Person Meeting

Turkish Human Rights Defenders Acquitted!

Break The Cycle Of Violence Act

Welcome

I hope everyone is well and enjoying the start of summer! We are planning to meet in person this month! We have good news to share and this month's action is focused on gun violence.

Good News: Four Turkish Human Rights Defenders Acquitted!

Convictions of four human rights defenders, including Taner Kılıç, Amnesty Türkiye's Honorary Chair, and Idil Eser, Amnesty Türkiye's ex-director, have been overturned. Details on pages 2 and 3.

Break The Cycle Of Violence Act

Reducing gun violence requires investments in our communities that can happen with much needed funding provided by this Act. Details are on page 4 and a sample letter to our Senators is on page 5.

Afghanistan: Taliban's Treatment of Women and Girls

Amnesty issued a report concerning the Taliban's human rights violations against women and girls and is summarized on page 6.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).

We have written in support of Taner Kilic and Idil Eser since their arrest and were featured in the 2017 Write For Rights action.

GOOD NEWS Four Human Rights Defenders Acquitted in Türkiye

Convictions of four human rights defenders, including Taner Kılıç, Amnesty Türkiye’s Honorary Chair, and Idil Eser, Amnesty Türkiye’s ex-director, quashed



The decision by a Turkish court to overturn baseless convictions of Amnesty International Türkiye’s Honorary Chair and three other human rights defenders is a huge relief, yet also highlights the politically motivated nature of the prosecutions, Amnesty International said today.

The ruling on the convictions of Taner Kılıç, İdil Eser, Özlem Dalkıran and Günal Kurşun — four of 11 human rights defenders in the Büyükada case, who were convicted in July 2020 — comes exactly six years after Taner’s initial arrest which was followed the by the arrests of the others just weeks later.

“Today’s ruling brings to an end a travesty of justice of spectacular proportions. While we are hugely relieved that the convictions have finally been quashed, the fact that they were brought in the first place remains unconscionable,” said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“For six years, we have watched the wheels of injustice grind as the baseless claims leveled against these four brave human rights defenders have been accepted as fact by successive courts. Today’s ruling revealed the true purpose of such politically motivated prosecutions: using the courts as a weapon to silence critical voices.”



Taner Kılıç, a refugee rights lawyer and Honorary Chair of Amnesty’s Türkiye section, was arrested in June 2017 and detained in prison for more than 14 months. Despite a complete lack of evidence, in July 2020, he was convicted of “membership of a terrorist organization” and sentenced to six years and three months in prison. İdil, Özlem and Günel were all sentenced to 25 months for “assisting a terrorist organization” and spent more than three months in behind bars in 2017.

Over the course of 12 court hearings, every allegation leveled against the four human rights activists was repeatedly and comprehensively proven baseless, including in the state’s own police report.

Today’s ruling follows the 2022 decision by the European Court of Human Rights’ to reject Türkiye’s referral for review by the Court’s Grand Chamber of their decision that Taner Kılıç’s detention in 2017-18 violated his human rights.

In May 2022, the European Court reaffirmed that the authorities in Türkiye did not have “any reasonable suspicion that Taner Kılıç had committed an offense”. It also found that his incarceration on the second set of terrorism-related charges was “directly linked to his activity as a human rights defender”.

“For Taner, İdil, Özlem and Günel, their ordeal may be over, but across Türkiye many human rights defenders are languishing in jail, living in fear of arrest or facing similar unfounded prosecutions,” said Agnes Callamard.

“We will take strength from today’s victory. We will also continue to fight against the relentless curtailing of human rights in Türkiye, and on behalf of those who refuse to be silenced by the government’s threats.”

Background

Taner Kılıç and Özlem Dalkıran are both founding members of Amnesty International Türkiye. Over the last 20 years, they have played a crucial role in defending human rights as part of the organization and the wider human rights community in Türkiye.

At the time of her arrest in July 2017, İdil Eser was the Director of Amnesty International Türkiye. Günel Kurşun, a lawyer, international criminal law expert and long-standing member of Amnesty International Türkiye, is a prominent human rights defender in the country.

The acquittal of these four human rights defenders remains subject to an appeal by the prosecutor.



HELP END GUN VIOLENCE



We all have the right to be safe from gun violence. Our Senate has the opportunity to protect communities across the country –**last year was one of the deadliest gun violence years in the U.S. in decades.**

Too many kids and teens are losing their lives, and communities of color are disproportionately affected. This year is on track to be worse... unless we change the way we fight gun violence.

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed the *Break the Cycle of Violence Act* (H.R. 4118), now we need the U.S. Senate to join their colleagues and pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act, S. 2275. This legislation will provide **\$5 billion in funding** for community violence prevention and intervention programs across the country. In city after city, these programs save lives and lower the number of gun homicides by nearly 50%.

These programs work because they are often staffed by community leaders who provide survivors and families with counseling, connections to critical services, conflict avoidance tactics, mediation and more. But with the pandemic and budget shortfalls, too many of them are losing funds.

Take Action: Urge your Senators to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act. It's time to give community heroes the tools they need to help us all live free from gun violence!

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Dear Senator,

As your constituent, I'm asking you to commit at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention by passing the Break the Cycle of Violence Act.

Community-level firearm violence in the USA disproportionately impacts communities of color. Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2018, and it was the third leading cause of death for Latino men and boys in the same age range. The flood of gun sales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to make the pandemic of gun violence even worse.

Research indicates that long-term, adequately funded, evidence-based projects tailored towards specific social, economic and cultural contexts, and working in partnership with the affected communities, can achieve sustained reductions in firearm violence. Congress must support and prioritize programs working to address this urgent human rights and public health crisis.

These programs save lives and make our communities safer and stronger. That is why I support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act as an important step toward addressing this urgent public health and human rights crisis. The Break the Cycle of Violence Act would fund these critical, evidence-driven programs led by community members that are proven to be effective at preventing gun violence.

Persistent gun violence in the United States is denying people their civil and political rights including their right to live, the right to security of person, and the right to be free from discrimination. Gun violence also undermines the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to health and the right to education.

In addition to the unimaginable human toll of gun violence across the country, the economic cost is stunning. Estimates place the annual cost of gun violence at hundreds of billions of dollars every year, including medical and criminal justice expenses. Accordingly, it is not only in the interest of our fundamental human rights, but also your constituents as taxpayers, to robustly fund these programs.

You can make a difference on the crisis of gun violence. As your constituent, I am asking for you to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act and support allocating at least \$5 billion over the next 8 years to community gun violence prevention and intervention programs.

Sincerely,



AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN'S TREATMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED AS THE CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY OF GENDER PERSECUTION – NEW REPORT

The Taliban's severe restrictions and unlawful crackdown on women and girls' rights should be investigated as possible crimes under international law, including the crime against humanity of gender persecution, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists said today in a new report.

The report, '[The Taliban's war on women: The crime against humanity of gender persecution in Afghanistan](#)', presents a detailed legal analysis of how the Taliban's draconian restrictions on the rights of Afghanistan's women and girls, together with the use of imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, could amount to the crime against humanity of gender persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists consider that the prosecutors of the International Criminal Court should include the crime against humanity of gender persecution in their ongoing investigation into the situation in Afghanistan. The organizations are also calling on other states to exercise universal jurisdiction or other lawful means to bring to justice Taliban members suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law.

"The Taliban's campaign of gender persecution is of such magnitude, gravity and systematic nature, that cumulatively the acts and policies form a system of repression which aims to subjugate and marginalize women and girls across the country. Our report indicates that this meets all the five criteria to qualify as a crime against humanity of gender persecution," said Santiago A. Canton, Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists.

"Since their take over, the Taliban has imposed draconian restrictions on the rights of Afghanistan's women and girls. Let there be no doubt: this is a war against women – banned from public life; prevented from accessing education; prohibited from working; barred from moving freely; imprisoned, disappeared and tortured including for speaking against these policies and resisting the repression. These are international crimes. They are organized, widespread, systematic," said Agnès Callamard, Secretary General at Amnesty International.

The report covers the period from August 2021 to January 2023 and bases its analysis on a growing body of evidence collected by credible sources, including Amnesty International's 2022 report *Death in Slow Motion*, civil society organizations and UN authorities. It also provides a legal assessment of why women and girls fleeing persecution in Afghanistan should be presumptively considered refugees in need of international protection. It complements the work of UN experts and women's rights groups to lay the foundation for the robust response needed to ensure justice, accountability and reparation for the crimes against humanity of gender persecution.

An online petition action is available at <https://act.amnestyusa.org/>