



Mr Jürgen Stock
Secretary General
ICPO-INTERPOL
200 quai Charles de Gaulle
Lyon 69006
France

25 August 2017

Dear Secretary General,

Fair Trials and PEN International write in relation to the recent arrests of writers of Turkish origin, which are reported to have taken place on the basis of INTERPOL alerts issued by Turkey. We are deeply concerned that Turkey is misusing Red Notices and Diffusions systemically, and in violation of INTERPOL's rules, to seek the arrest and extradition of writers living in exile that are critical of its government. We urge INTERPOL to carry out urgent reviews of Turkish Red Notices and Diffusions.

In August 2017, Hamza Yalçın and Doğan Akhanli, both writers renowned for their criticism of the Turkish government, were arrested in Spain, reportedly on the basis of an INTERPOL Red Notice. Yalçın and Akhanli have been living in exile in Sweden and Germany respectively, having fled Turkey many years ago on account of persecution for their political views and their writings. The arrests have attracted significant international criticism, including in Akhanli's case from German Chancellor Merkel, who expressed concern over the misuse of INTERPOL. We have concerns that Yalçın and Akhanli's recent arrests are part of a worrying trend of the use of INTERPOL alerts by Turkey against writers and journalists living in exile. Last year Maxime Azadi, another journalist of Turkish origin living in exile, was arrested in Belgium because of a Red Notice.

You are no doubt aware that there have been previous cases in which Turkey has misused INTERPOL Red Notices in violation of INTERPOL's obligation to remain politically neutral, and to respect international human rights standards. An example of this was illustrated in the case Bahar Kimyongür.

We have serious concerns that INTERPOL alerts issued for the arrest and extradition of the aforementioned journalists are highly likely to be incompatible with INTERPOL's rules, in particular Articles 2 and 3 of its Constitution. We believe that there is a very real risk that individuals who are arrested and extradited to Turkey on account of their journalistic activities would be exposed to violations of their human rights.

In July 2016, Fair Trials wrote to INTERPOL to alert you to the surge in arrest warrants issued against Turkish journalists in the aftermath of the attempted coup d'état. We asked INTERPOL to exercise particular caution to prevent Red Notices from being misused against journalists from Turkey. The crackdown against journalists and writers appears to have continued. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression voiced concerns about the deterioration of media freedom in Turkey following his visit to Turkey in November last year,¹ and civil society organisations have highlighted that the situation of journalists has continued to worsen.²

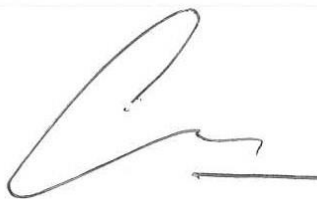
We appreciate INTERPOL's continuing efforts to ensure that its Red Notice system is not undermined by attempts by countries to misuse it for the purpose of politically motivated persecution. While we understand the challenges in reviewing and identifying more than 10,000 Red Notices each year, we are concerned that INTERPOL's review procedures have not been able to prevent the dissemination of abusive Red Notices against Turkish writers.

We strongly urge INTERPOL to conduct a thorough review of Red Notices and Diffusions issued by Turkey as a matter of urgency, in order to detect and remove those that were disseminated in violation of its Constitution.

Yours sincerely,



Jago Russell,
Chief Executive, Fair Trials



Carles Torner
Executive Director, PEN International

¹ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, 'Preliminary conclusions and observations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression to his visit to Turkey, 14-18 November 2016' (18 November 2016)

² Human Rights Watch, 'Turkey: UN Human Rights Council should address Continuous Deterioration of Freedom of Expression and other Human Rights' (17 May 2017)