



Oslo, Istanbul, 11 April 2013

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee: Freedom of Belief Initiative is concerned about the death threat against Mr. Erdal Doğan, who is a legal counsel for the victims in the Zirve/Malatya trial concerning the killing of three Christians on 18 April 2007 in Malatya, South Eastern Turkey. A defendant, Varol Bülent Aral, in the trial threatened Erdal Doğan during the hearing on 8 March 2013.

- **By this letter, we call on Turkish authorities to take all necessary measures to provide protection and ensure the safety of Mr. Doğan.**

According to a statement by Mr. Doğan of March 10, “This is not the first threat I have received as a result of this case. But this one is significantly different from the other ones and seemed to be an imminent danger. The suspect who gave the threat and message to the outside world, [is] Varol Bülent Aral, ...”

A reason to take the threat serious is that the the Zirve/Malatya case points to the same circles of people that was behind the murder of Hrant Dink, the Turkish Armenian editor killed on 19 January 2007. In the indictment, both cases are seen as actions of the same criminal network. This network may see Mr Doğan, representing the victims in the Zirve/Malatya case, as a driving force in exposing people involved in the network. Both in the court room and in public Mr Doğan has made requests for intelligence services to provide all information they have about the network.

The Zirve/Malatya trial concerns murder of three missionaries, German citizen Tillman Geske and Turkish citizens Necati Aydın and Uğur Yüksel. They were tied up and tortured before their throats were slit at the Zirve Publishing House on April 18, 2007.

Five young men confessed to the murder and were arrested for the crime. However, authorities have continued to investigate the case, which is believed by many to be an act of the “deep state,” rather than a group of independent fanatics.

Erdal Doğan is a human rights defender who has worked as a lawyer in, among others, the Zirve/Malatya case, and numerous cases of Hrant Dink and editors of Agos newspaper. He also submitted a file entitled “37-38 Dersim” to the International Criminal Court. He regularly teaches at the Istanbul Bar on the rights of the accused and criminal litigation.



NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE
DEN NORSKE HELSINGFORSKOMITE



İnanç Özgürlüğü Girişimi Türkiye'de herkes için düşünce, vicdan, din veya inanç özgürlüğünün korunmasının iyileştirilmesi amacıyla kurulmuş bir insan hakları projesidir. / Freedom of Belief Initiative is a human rights project founded to improve the protection of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The website of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee: www.nhc.no

The website of the Freedom of Belief Initiative project: www.inancozgurlugugirisimi.com