

07 June 2019

Turkey: Nurcan Baysal taken into custody and released after giving statement

On the morning of 3 June 2019, following a police raid at her house, human rights defender **Nurcan Baysal** was taken into police custody in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır, on the grounds that there had been an arrest warrant issued against her in relation to the charge of "membership of an armed terrorist organisation". She was released later on the same day, after submitting a deposition before a judge.

[Nurcan Baysal](#) is a Kurdish human rights defender and journalist based in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır. In 2015 and 2016, she documented human rights violations committed in the context of the military operations conducted in the region. As a journalist, she writes about the Kurdish issue and topics related to development and poverty. She also co-founded several civil society organisations and has been involved in many civil society studies on forced migration, poverty, development and gender. In recent years, she has been involved in the establishment of a camp for Yazidi women fleeing the Islamic State. She is also the [Global Laureate](#) of the 2018 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.

On 3 June 2019 around 10 am, five heavily armed police officers in a riot control vehicle (TOMA) raided the house of Nurcan Baysal. The human rights defender was taken to the Diyarbakır Police Anti-Terror Branch on the grounds that there had been an arrest warrant issued against her in relation to the charge of "membership of an armed terrorist organisation". For several hours, the human rights defender was denied information on the reason for her detention.

Around 2 pm, Nurcan Baysal was brought before the Penal Judgeship on Duty to submit a deposition in relation to the charge of "membership of an armed terrorist organisation". The arrest warrant against her was lifted afterwards and she was released on the same day. After her release, the human rights defender stated that she had been asked questions about her attendance at a conference held by the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), as well as the activities of the Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (DİSA), which she currently does not have any official relationship with. The information in the investigation file had been obtained through wiretapping and email tracking between 2010 and 2012. Nurcan Baysal underlined the fact that she had never been a member of the DTK, and that she had only attended the conference because of its focus on development and poverty issues in rural Diyarbakır, her areas of interest. Additionally, she was questioned about the public activities undertaken by the DİSA, particularly those related to education in mother tongue and the system of local voluntary guards. She also added that she had not been an active member of the organisation for the last 4-5 years and that she had officially stepped out of DISA a year before.

When Nurcan Baysal asked why heavily armed police officers had raided her house in order to take her into custody, while she could have been sent a summons to provide her deposition at the police station, she was told that they had not been able to find her home address and thus had to issue an arrest warrant. However, previously, in January 2018, she had been arrested in the same house, in connection with her tweets calling for peace and condemning the Turkish government's military operation in Afrin.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern about the ongoing judicial harassment and intimidation of Nurcan Baysal, as it believes that the charges against her are solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders further condemns the unjustified police raid carried out in order to take the human rights defender into custody and obtain her deposition.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately close the investigation against Nurcan Baysal, as it is believed to be solely related to her peaceful and legitimate activities in defence of human rights.
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Turkey are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 12 (2): *"The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration"* and to Article 18 (2): *"Individuals, groups, and non-governmental organisations have an important role to play and a responsibility in safeguarding democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributing to the promotion and advancement of democratic societies, institutions and processes."*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director