



# **JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS FOUNDATION**

Towards Universal Peace

**Journalists and Writers Foundation:**

## **The Grave and Intentional Violations of the Rights of the Child in Turkey**

### **Statement**

**ODIHR Human Dimension Seminar on Rights of the Child:**

**Children in Situations of Risk**

**11-12 October 2017**

Recalling the principles of protection and respect for human rights as reflected in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption,

Reminding the 1990 Conference on the Human Dimension in Copenhagen, which declared that: “The participating States decide to accord particular attention to the recognition of the rights of the child, his civil rights and his individual freedoms, his economic, social and cultural rights, and his right to special protection against all forms of violence and exploitation”,

Recognizing the vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated children,

Being mindful that participating States are committed to protect children from all forms of violence, and stressing the importance of respecting their special needs for protection and assistance, and the opportunity for the child to be heard,

**the Journalists and Writers Foundation wants to shed light on the grave and intentional violations of the rights of the child in Turkey:**



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As we look at Turkey and the Turkish communities around the world today, we're confronted with an uncomfortable but undeniable truth: Thousands of children's lives are currently shattered for no other reason than the family or the circumstances into which they were born.

By the end of August 2017, six hundred sixty-eight (668) children under the age of six are in jails across Turkey with their mothers, detained or arrested as part of the government crackdown on the Gulen inspired Hizmet Movement. One hundred forty-nine (149) of these children are infants under a year old.

The unlawful constraints confronting these children are neither technical nor a matter of resources. They are a matter of political commitment, and the Turkey's government cracked on dissent. It is imperative to join forces and make it a priority to end discrimination and ensure that hundreds of thousands of children are not left behind.

Turkish children, both in Turkey and abroad are in so many ways victims of the "witch hunt," the massive purge and suppression of the Gulen inspired Hizmet Movement and its alleged members.

As their parents are dismissed from their jobs and professions, detained or arrested, children face serious problems, which significantly affect their physiological, psychological, and cognitive development. Many of them are in prisons with their mothers in precarious conditions where they are routinely denied the right to education and access to healthcare. The detention and arrest of their parents and their alienation as a result of the resulting labeling frequently causes psychological disorders in children.



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Among the key determinants of children's health, nutrition and development are the realization of the mother's right to health<sup>1</sup> and the role of parents and other caregivers. The state party, as all other parties, must reduce child mortality. Unfortunately, a significant number of infant deaths have occurred in the aftermath of the attempted coup due to the harsh conditions imposed on the mothers before and during the pregnancy and in the immediate postpartum period. In addition, the imprisonment of parents with dependent children has negative consequences for the child's development, severely impacting his/her human right to flourish.

As the Journalists and Writers Foundation underlined in its recent published policy recommendation paper "**The State Of Turkey's Children: Victims Of Unlawfulness**"<sup>2</sup>, the Turkish government should, as a matter of urgency:

- have the best interest of the child always a primary consideration, in particular those dependent children in places of deprivation of liberty.
- take all necessary measures to reverse all legal, administrative and practical measures, with a view of ensuring non-discrimination of children whose parents have been dismissed or imprisoned because of alleged links to the Gulen inspired Hizmet Movement.
- be strictly guided, in the treatment of all children, by the relevant principles mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant international instruments.

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<sup>1</sup> See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/54/38/Rev.1)*, chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>2</sup> Journalists and Writers Foundation: "The State of Turkey's Children: Victims of Unlawfulness", October 2017 <https://i2.wp.com/jwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/children.png>



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- ensure that no child, regardless of who his/her parents are, is deprived of his or her right of access to health care services. Health and other services for children of individuals dismissed or deprived of their liberty in the aftermath of the attempted coup should be available and accessible on an equal basis, in accordance with the relevant principles of international human rights law.
- provide healthcare coverage and ensure social and healthcare benefits, entitlements and protection for all children whose preventive health care is otherwise jeopardized, regardless of the political beliefs of their parents or whether they have been victims of the post-coup purges.
- provide access to preventive and remedial health services for all children and women with dependent children in places of deprivation of liberty, including care for cancer and disabilities.
- provide citizenship to all babies born to Turkish citizens, who have not been registered and thus denied the right to the nationality.
- allow non-custodial sentences for pregnant women and women with dependent children based on the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules)

JWF calls on local and international media to continue raising awareness on the State of Turkey's Children who have become the victims of an arbitrary witch-hunt. We finally call on civil society organizations and all relevant stakeholders to address the human rights violations against children and mothers in Turkey.