

Friends in solidarity:

Friends of the search for Peace, Justice, and Democracy, I would like to share with you this account of the second hearing in my trial. Nearly four months after I was released from detention, it still feels strange to write to you from a cosy home instead of my prison cell. I thank you for your powerful support in this improvement. May it be the same for all those who have been unjustly deprived of their liberty.

The hearing before the second High Court at Balıkesir took place on Tuesday, November 19, in the early afternoon. It was short, about 20 minutes long. It started around 2:20PM and ended around 2:40. I was represented by my lawyers Meriç Eyüboğlu and İnan Yılmaz. Also in attendance was Baptiste Bonnet, appointed by University Lyon 1 as I enjoy functional protection as a university employee. During those 20 minutes, we learnt that the charge of membership in a terrorist organization had been reduced to the less severe count of propaganda for a terrorist organization.

I had prepared a one-page speech for the hearing, but when Mrs. Eyüboğlu was notified on her screen, right before the opening, of the Prosecutor's indictment, I decided not to read it. The hearing started with a brief summary of the indictment, consisting essentially in the reduction of charges, a summary so brief that my lawyer asked the prosecutor to read it out in full since otherwise her client might not understand what it meant. A more detailed summary was then read. It is based on the announcement, in Turkish, for the February 21, 2019, event organized by the association *Amitiés Kurdes Lyon-Rhône-Alpes*. According to the prosecutor, this text, which was prepared by a legally registered French association for a public panel discussion duly authorized by the Lyon Prefecture and taking place in the Villeurbanne City Hall, can be taken as evidence of propaganda for a terrorist organization.

I then spoke for a few minutes, my first words being : "I don't have a lot to say. The announcement you have just read was prepared by the organizing association. It is not fair that I should be the only accused. Moreover its substance, namely the period 2015-2016, has been documented and confirmed in the reports of many national and international human rights organizations. What you just read is not 'propaganda for a terrorist organization' but a series of real facts." I added a few comments on the refusal to return my passport, which prevents me from returning to my professional duties, and which has turned Turkey into a prison for me. I concluded by calling for my immediate acquittal.

Then my two lawyers spoke. Mrs. Eyüboğlu recalled that at the first hearing she had already discussed the point that the charge could by no means be "membership in a terrorist organization". She argued that the crime of "propaganda for a terrorist organization" has not been committed either. She evoked my trial before the Istanbul 29th High Criminal Court for having signed the Peace Petition, for which I was acquitted at the beginning of fall, and she added that last summer the Balıkesir court had asked to have the two cases joined. In her view, it would be unconstitutional to convict me for sharing on Facebook an announcement by an association containing criticism that is incomparably less harsh than that contained in the Peace Petition, whose contents the Constitutional Court had ruled to lie within the bounds of free speech. Both the poster I am accused of and the Petition for which I was recently acquitted concern human rights violations between July 2015 and January 2016 by Turkish forces in Kurdish cities in Turkey, on the pretext of a war against terror. She finished with a reminder that as long as I am not acquitted, I cannot return to work, and stated that she is sure that at the next hearing the Court will acquit me after having heard the defense

Mr. Yilmaz attacked the indictment from a different angle. He recalled a European convention ratified by Turkey and France, under which the parties have the duty to inform one another of terrorist activities on their own national territories. He then asked the Court whether it claimed that terrorist activities had taken place on the territory of a party to this Convention, and how such a conclusion had been reached—referring implicitly to the report written by the Turkish Consulate in Lyon, a letter which led directly to this legal procedure against me, and which I regard as espionage, a letter which the *Amitiés Kurdes Lyon-Rhône-Alpes* association has published and denounced on its Facebook page as of November 22. Mr. Yilmaz's next-to-last sentence speaks volumes: *"In this context, it is likely that your court will find itself obliged to inquire of the Foreign Office whether they investigated a legal meeting, and what facts this investigation produced."*

The hearing ended with the submission of appointment letters to the Court from various scientific societies and human rights organizations whose representatives were present as observers. At the same time, I had a curious exchange with the presiding judge. Perhaps feeling an obligation in view of my statement regarding the refusal to return my passport, the president asserted that as an administrative matter the decision was not under his jurisdiction. As this defense did not surprise me in the least, I replied that I knew this very well, but that I wanted this to be heard in the courtroom as well.

The next hearing will be on Friday, January 24, 2020. Until then and without a passport I will remain a hostage of the Turkish state, and cannot return to my position in Lyon.

Friends in solidarity! The Court is convinced that the initial charge, that of "membership in a terrorist organization" is untenable, but it has thought it sufficient to replace it by one less severe, one which is more defensible, as they see it. Its keenness to condemn me endures. In the face of this obstinacy, there is one effective remedy: your support. We shall be heard only if we remain mobilized for the two months until the next hearing. Your support and your mobilization will not only help Tuna Altinel be acquitted. More fundamentally, they will defend democratic values against an arrogance which knows neither boundaries nor limits in its struggle to maintain a shroud of deadly silence.

Together we shall prevail. Solidarity keeps us alive!