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Keith Whitmore: "The detention of local elected representatives in Turkey remains a cause of grave concern"

"The continued detention of dozens of local elected representatives in Turkey, including Mrs Leyla Güven, a Congress member, remains a cause of grave concern for the Congress," stated Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in the framework of the Congress Monitoring Committee in Izmir, Turkey, on 4 July 2011.

The ongoing detention of 1,500 politicians in South-East Anatolia, including Congress member Leyla Güven and many other local elected representatives, has been repeatedly discussed by the Congress, most recently at its Statutory Forum on 17 June 2011. After visiting Mrs Güven in Diyarbakir prison in May 2010, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg also expressed his worry at the arrest of a number of notably Kurdish mayors, who were in detention without any indictment.

"While it is not our intention to interfere with Turkish judicial procedures, the Congress insists that it is not in the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which Turkey has ratified, that the seats of local elected representatives remain vacant for such long periods of time. It is indeed alarming and debilitating for the democratic process when such a significant number of elected representatives are prevented from exercising their mandates and fulfilling their duties to the citizens who elected them," underlined Keith Whitmore.

The Congress President called on the Turkish authorities to grant the repeated request of the Congress to meet Mrs Güven. "The Congress, as a political representative body of local and regional authorities, has the right to visit its members anywhere, including in places of detention", he concluded.

[Full text of the declaration](#)

Contact on the spot:

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Paul Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).