



**Middle  
East  
Studies  
Association**

of North America, Inc.

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November 21, 2011

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Başbakanlık  
06573 Ankara, Turkey  
Via facsimile +90 312 417 0476

Dear Prime Minister Erdoğan:

I write to you on behalf of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) of North America and its Committee on Academic Freedom in order to express our dismay and concern over the October 28<sup>th</sup> arrest of Professor Büşra Ersanlı, professor of Political Science and International Relations at Marmara University, who was later charged under the Anti-Terror Law on grounds that her membership in the BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi-Peace and Democracy Party) allegedly links her to the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan- Kurdistan Workers' Party).

MESA was founded in 1966 to promote scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has nearly 3000 members worldwide, including more than a hundred who are scholars, teachers or students at institutions of higher education in Canada. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

Professor Ersanlı is the author of over 50 scholarly works on Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Russian Federation, Eurasia, and Turkey. She is also a BDP member and was in the process of assisting the party in preparing draft proposals for the new civilian constitution. Professor Ersanlı was arrested only a day before she was to attend an academic conference at Bilgi University on "Controversial Issues in the History of the Turkish Republic." Her arrest not only is an infringement of her ability to exercise academic freedom in providing expert advice on constitutional reform; it also prevents her from participating in professional exchanges with other scholars.

Professor Ersanlı has not been accused of using violence, nor has she ever endorsed its use, either publically or in her scholarship. She appears to have been targeted for having exercised her right to freedom of expression and association, which is protected by Turkey's consent to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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Re: Professor Büşra Ersanlı

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We wrote to you in September about the case of Professor Beşikçi, whose right to academic freedom was similarly violated by your government. Government efforts to silence scholars who voice support for the rights of Kurdish citizens in Turkey send a chilling message to Turkey's scholarly community which, as you are aware, has rallied to Professor Ersanlı's defense. We are very concerned with what seems to be a clear and ongoing campaign to arrest those who seek a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish problem.

We respectfully ask you to intervene in Professor Ersanlı's case to see that she is released and that all charges are dropped. We also urge you to take note of mounting international condemnation of the erosion of democratic rights and freedoms in Turkey.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,



Suad Joseph

MESA President

Professor of Anthropology and Women and Gender Studies

University of California, Davis