



**1 October 2020**

**Adding insult to injury: Co-mayor of the city of Kars Ms Şevin Alaca, members of the city and municipal council and other locals are detained, too.**

We have already informed the international community about the utterly unlawful detention of co-mayor of Kars Mr Ayhan Bilgen, several former HDP parliamentarians -- Sirri Sureyya Onder, Ayla Akat Ata, Nazmi Gur, Altan Tan, Beyza Ustun and Emine Ayna, former members of its executive board, and other politicians and activists on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We woke up to new detentions in the early morning of October 1st. This time Turkish police raided Kars municipality, the HDP office in the city, and several houses and detained HDP's co-mayor Sevin Alaca, Co-chair of HDP's Kars office Cengiz Anlı, deputy mayor Muazzez Cagriekinci, Fahrettin Kaya, Kaya Naki, Suat Bayhan, Hamit Taşdelen, Reis Baykız, Zorba Başkurtlu, Bülent Ağbaba, Şengül Erkmén, and journalist Sevda Manduz. The charges raised against them are both typical and totally unfounded: financing terrorism, making terror propaganda through media outlets, hiring family members of PKK militants, and the like.

This last police operation in Kars came right after the statement of Kars Co-Mayor Ayhan Bilgen on September 30. Bilgen announced through his attorneys that, if no trustee were already appointed until the end of his detention period, he would still resign from office as the mayor of Kars. Such resignation could have prevented the appointment of a trustee by the Ministry of Interior and given an opportunity to the municipal council to elect a member of the council as the new mayor. The Ministry is clearly trying to undermine this opportunity by detaining both the unofficial co-mayor and all HDP municipal council members. It is a case of utter shamelessness and we really do not have any other words to describe the situation.

Our co-mayors and municipalities have been under constant attacks of the AKP-MHP coalition government since the failed coup attempt in July 2016. Hundreds of HDP-run municipalities have been seized; their elected co-mayors dismissed and arrested as a part of a total crackdown on the Kurds and their struggle for recognition in Turkey. As of today, the government has appointed 47 trustees to replace our elected mayors. 6 mayors who had won the elections in March 2019 were denied their election certificates with the excuse that had previously been dismissed from their jobs by emergency rule decrees. 35 HDP co-mayors elected in 2019 have been jailed. Of them, fifteen are still behind bars. The cases of those released are pending. Based on our previous experiences and the current state of Turkish judiciary, we expect that almost all of these mayors will receive prison sentences.

These attacks will surely not save the rule of President Erdoğan and his racist allies. We promise!

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