

press statement in support of Turkish Academicians and the freedom of academic expression.

25 February 2016

The Council and the Trustees of the Academia Europaea [The Academy of Europe], strongly support the recent declaration [January 19, 2016] of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies[[see this link](#)]; the expression of support recently published [[link](#)] by ALLEA (All European Academies)dated February 1, 2016 and the statement published by the Science Academy of Turkey [of 15 January, 2016]with regard to the authoritarian actions taken against a large number of academic scholars and teachers who collectively and individually made public their concerns about possible restrictions to freedom of observation and expression.

The Academia Europaea, is of the view that there is a fundamental principle upon which all European scholarly dialogue and academic enquiry, interpretation and learning have been based: that is, the principle that encompasses freedom of thought, expression and comment. Further, we see educated criticism as the accepted tool of the freedoms that are essential for the continuation of both civilised education and for societal development.

Within the European family of academic traditions, we can see that these tenets are fundamental. It is our position, that it is an absolute obligation of sovereign European governments of any political colour, to hold these principle freedoms in the highest regard and to safeguard them and facilitate them within their boundaries. Published ideas and criticisms of themselves do not pose threats; openness does not pose a danger. On the contrary, it is the cutting off of these actions and freedoms and the repression of the individuals who offer such observations that provide the stimuli for future threats and danger.

Therefore, the Academia Europaea wishes clearly to be fully associated with the expressions of concern that have already been published internationally. We further state here, that we fully support the right of academic freedom of expression and the right to express the objective criticism that has been demonstrated by our fellow scholars in Turkey.

On behalf of the 3,500 individually elected scholars of this Academy, who are drawn from all countries of the European continent and more widely, we ask the President and the Government of the Republic of Turkey to pause and reflect on the potential damage that their excessive actions will have on the international reputation of Turkey as a major regional centre of tolerance and of learning and on the lasting damage that will be done to the young students and future educators, who see their teachers and mentors subject to these disproportionate actions.

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Background

The Academia Europaea was founded in 1988. It is an Academy made up of eminent individual scholars from all disciplines, currently comprising some 3,500 peer elected members who are drawn from all countries of the European continent and from other parts of the world. The AE supports and promotes research and scholarly excellence and interdisciplinary dialogue amongst researchers and educators. See www.ae-info.org

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