

28 September 2017

Turkey/Syria : Syrian human rights defenders Orouba Barakat and daughter, Halla Bakarar, murdered in Turkey

On 21 September 2017, Syrian human rights defender **Orouba Barakat** and her daughter, journalist and human rights defender **Halla Barakat**, were found stabbed in their apartment in Istanbul, Turkey.

[Orouba Barakat](#) was a prominent Syrian human rights defender and producer of numerous documentaries detailing torture by authorities and prison massacres committed by the Assad regime. Her daughter [Halla Barakat](#) worked as a human rights defender and editor for the pro-opposition website Orient News which has issued reports on secret detention centres in Syria. After leaving Syria at the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, they traveled to Britain and the United Arab Emirates before settling in Istanbul, Turkey.

On the night of 21 September 2017, the bodies of Orouba Barakat and Halla Barakat were found by police in their apartment in Uskudar neighborhood, Istanbul. Police had been alerted by family friends who had found themselves unable to contact the pair. Post-mortem examinations on the bodies indicated that they had died three days prior to discovery. Reports from family members and friends indicate that their murders were politically motivated due to their peaceful and legitimate work in human rights.

This is not the first time human rights defenders have been killed in Turkey in recent years. Since the beginning of the civil war, Turkey has become a home for approximately 3 million refugees including Syrian human rights defenders. In 2015, Syrian journalist, film maker and human rights defender **Naji Jerf** was killed in Turkey's border city of Gaziantep and in 2016, journalist and human rights defender **Zahir El Sherquat** was killed there also.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killings of Orouba Barakat and Halla Barakat as it believes that their murders were politically motivated and due solely to their peaceful and legitimate work in human rights. Front Line Defenders also regrets that their murders are part of a larger pattern of targeting of Syrian human rights defenders in Turkey.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Strongly and immediately condemn the killing of Orouba Barakat and Halla Barakat;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Orouba Barakat and Halla Barakat, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Turkey are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities free of all restrictions and without fear of reprisals.