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## Turkey: Eren Keskin sentenced to 7.5 years in prison

On 30 March 2018, Istanbul's 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced human rights defender **Eren Keskin** to 7.5 years in jail for having published articles deemed to have "degraded" the Turkish nation and "insulted" the Turkish president. The articles had been published in the daily newspaper *Özgür Gündem* ("Free Agenda"), of which she was co-editor-in-chief at the time. *Özgür Gündem* was closed on 16 August 2016 as a result of a statutory decree issued under the State of Emergency.

[Eren Keskin](#) is a human rights defender, lawyer and the vice-president of the **Turkish Human Rights Association**. She is also the founder of **Gözaltında Cinsel Taciz ve Tecavüze Karşı Hukuki Yardım Bürosu** (Legal Aid Bureau against Sexual Harassment and Rape in Custody) in Turkey. She has been arrested, imprisoned and the object of numerous lawsuits for her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights. In 2004, she received the prestigious Aachen Peace Award "for her courageous efforts and activities for human rights", in 2005, she was awarded the Theodor Haecker Prize for Civic Courage and Political Integrity, and in 2018, she became a laureate of the Helsinki Civil Society Award.

Eren Keskin was charged with "degrading the Turkish nation, the Republic, institutions and organs of the state" under Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, and with "insulting the President of the Republic of Turkey" under Article 299 of the Turkish Criminal Code. She received a prison sentence of 7.5 years, which her lawyer has applied to appeal.

This is not the first time that Eren Keskin has faced accusations for her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights. By now, 143 lawsuits have been filed against the human rights defender. She has consequently been ordered to pay a cumulative amount of 355.000 Turkish Liras (approximately 72,000 Euro). The Court of Cassation is in the process of deciding whether she will need to pay an additional 105.920 Turkish Liras (approximately 22,000 Euro).

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern with the sentencing of Eren Keskin, which it believes is solely a consequence of her peaceful and legitimate work as a human rights defender.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey:

1. Immediately and unconditionally quash Eren Keskin's sentence, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being held solely as a result of her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Turkey are able to carry out their

legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.