

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead expressing concern for the state of freedom of expression in Turkey.

30 March 2007

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Office of the Prime Minister
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Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to express its concern for on-going threats to freedom of expression in your country.

At the time of his murder on 19 January this year, **Hrant Dink**, editor of the Turkish-Armenian magazine *Agos*, was on trial in two cases: one, on charges of "insult to Turkishness" for an article quoting from an interview he gave to Reuters in mid-2006, the other for "interference in the judiciary" for a piece published in September 2005 criticising a court decision. On 22 March, a court in Istanbul overseeing the first trial hearing - under Article 301 of the Penal Code - against him since his death, dropped the charges. However, the trial against his son, **Arat Dink**, and two co-defendants working for *Agos*, **Serkis Seropyan** and **Aydin Engin**, continues. The next hearing will be held on 14 June. They are all accused for the publication in *Agos* in July 2006 of a piece entitled 'I vote against 301, which included a quote from an interview Dink had given to the Reuters news agency in which he stated that he had no doubt that an Armenian genocide had taken place and that he would not remain silent on this issue.

The second trial relates to another article, published in October 2005, which is being tried under Article 288 of the Penal Code - interfering with the judiciary. The piece questioned a court's decision to sentence Dink to a six-month suspended sentence, again under Article 301, for an article on Armenia. This case is currently before the European Court on Human Rights. Again, Arat Dink and Seropyan are co-defendants. The next trial hearing, the first relating to this case since Dink's murder, is to be held on 18 April.

A Turkish NGO, the Freedom of Expression Initiative, reports that there are around twenty cases under Article 301 currently under way, with a further ten under appeal. Of these, 15 relate to writers, journalists and publishers. On 15 March, another of what has been series of court hearings over the past two years against publisher and PEN Canada Honorary Member **Ragip Zarakolu** relating to two separate books was held, resulting in yet another postponement, this time to 3 May. Residing in the USA at the time, Zarakolu decided not to attend that hearing in light of Dink's murder. He expects to be present at the next. Meanwhile, several writers, journalists and academics are living under police protection for fear that they too may be targeted by extremists.

PEN Canada is concerned that there are currently around 15 trials underway against writers, journalists and publishers accused under Article 301 continue, notably those against Arat Dink, Serkis Seropyan and Aydin Engin of *Agos* magazine; and publisher Ragip Zarakolu. These trials are in contravention of international standards protecting the right to freedom of expression as enshrined under Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the European Covenant on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a signatory of both. PEN Canada supports calls for the repeal of Article 301 in recognition of the fact that it has been used to bring numerous people to the courts solely for having legitimately expressed

their opinions. The murder of Hrant Dink is an example of the danger the law brings to individuals accused under it by becoming targets of extremists.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

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Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

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