

## **TURKEY: Monthly “301” Action – 19 December 2007**

*PEN members are asked to continue the monthly action taking place on or around 19<sup>th</sup> of each month in memory of the murdered Armenian-Turkish Editor, Hrant Dink, killed on that day in January 2007.*

**\*Total number of writers and journalists on trial under Article 301 – 20\***

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### **Progress Towards Human Rights in Turkey Remains Slow**

As 2007 draws to a close, almost a year after the outcry at the murder of Hrant Dink, Turkish human rights monitors are unhappy with the lack of progress in human rights reform. On 10 December 2007, International Human Rights Day, the Human Rights Association and Turkish Human Rights Foundation issued a joint statement in which they expressed disappointment at the continuing problems in Turkey. Their report refers to the systematic use of torture in detention centres, lapses in fair trial practices, restrictions on the use of Kurdish in some areas of civil society, and, most pertinent to PEN, the remaining abundance of laws that curtail freedom of expression.

- To see more go to *Bianet* report [Turkey's Human Rights Situation "Discouraging"](#)

Publisher Ragıp Zarakolu, himself on trial – see below - also records a depressing picture in a report he issued as Chair of the Freedom to Publish Committee of the Turkish Publisher's Association. He welcomes that there has been a drop in the numbers of titles banned compared with 2006, and publishers are no longer liable for books they publish, leading to cases being dismissed or acquittals. However responsibility has been transferred to translators and, where the authors lived abroad, the publisher then becomes liable. The report lists 43 trials against books and publishers in 2007.

### **Ragıp Zarakolu Trial Drags into 2008: Other 301 Trials continue**

On 5 December, Ragıp Zarakolu, who has been on trial for over two years under Article 301 for publishing the book *The Truth Will Set Us Free* heard that the hearings will continue into 2008. At this latest hearing, the author, George Jerjian, who lives in the UK, wrote an open letter to the court in which he stressed that he “grew up in a family which was protected by a Turk, and it was thus unthinkable for our family to have any bad intentions or thoughts towards Turks.” He called for Zarakolu's acquittal, saying “I am asking you how Zarakolu can insult the memory of a brave leader like Atatürk, who himself accepted that what happened to the Armenians was a crime?” The next hearing against Zarakolu will be on 31 January 2008.

In another case, that of **Irfan Ucar** and **Umur Hozatli**, journalist and editor respectively for *Ülkede Özgür Gündem*, the trial is set to linger at least another five months. Ucar is accused under Article 301 for an article that criticised another trial under the same legislation, this time against publisher Fatih Tas who himself was tried for publishing a book about a journalist, Nazim Babaoglu, who disappeared in 1994. Hozatli is accused for an article on a bombing in the south eastern city of Diyarbakir in 2006 that killed a number of children. Ucar told the free media monitor, *Bianet*, “*Even if we are not convicted, we experience stress all the time.*”

### **Memorials Planned to Mark the Anniversary of the Death of Hrant Dink**

Memorial events commemorating Hrant Dink are being planned by Turkish human rights groups and other NGOs, alongside Dink's family and his newspaper *Agos* to take place in Istanbul on and around 19 January, the first anniversary of his murder. International PEN and Turkish PEN plan to be present at these memorials. Meanwhile, Rakel Dink has been travelling the world to receive awards on her husband's behalf, most recently, on 10 December, the International Press Institute's nomination of Dink as its 52<sup>nd</sup> World Press Hero in recognition of his "significant contribution to freedom of expression and press freedom of Turkey."

- *For more information the memorials, please contact [sara.whyatt@internationalpen.org.uk](mailto:sara.whyatt@internationalpen.org.uk)*
- *Also visit the Agos website [www.agos.tr](http://www.agos.tr)*

## **ACTION**

**PEN centres are asked to continue to protest the trial against Ragip Zarakolu and to call for the abolition of Article 301.**