

17 January 2018

Turkey: Ongoing detention of Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and initiation of repatriation process for her husband Doctor Sekouba Conde

On 16 January 2018, a lawyer confirmed the ongoing detention of **Dr. Sekouba Conde** in Harmandalı Repatriation Centre in İzmir. The defender had been uncontactable for over a month.

On 11 October 2017, human rights defender [Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde](#) was put in pre-trial detention and charged with “membership of an armed terrorist organisation.” A repatriation process was also initiated against her husband, human rights defender [Dr. Sekouba Conde](#), who is originally from Guinea and a legal resident in Turkey. He has been granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and possesses a two year residency and work permit issued by Turkish authorities and valid until 2019.

Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and Dr. Sekouba Conde are the founders of the [Association of Solidarity and Mutual Assistance to Migrants](#) (ASEM), an organisation which focuses on the right to health of African migrants and refugees and in particular, helps migrants and refugees who cannot access medical treatment because of constraints in Turkish health policies for migrants and refugees.

On 4 October 2017, the human rights defenders’ home was raided by police in connection with a case against a number of people accused of “membership of a terrorist organisation”, namely the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party (DHKP-C), recognised as a terrorist organisation in Turkey. A witness in this case testified against Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde, claiming that during a symposium, she worked as an interpreter on behalf of the DHKP-C.

When police attempted to forcefully take Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde into custody, her husband intervened and stated his intention to file a complaint against the responsible police officers. Dr. Sekouba Conde was threatened that he would be sent to a repatriation centre and taken into custody for “resisting a police officer.” The defenders were brought to İstanbul Security Directorate’s Anti-Terror Branch. Although the lawyers were informed that Dr. Sekouba Conde would be released, a repatriation process was initiated by the Directorate General of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior under Article 54 (1) of the law “On Foreigners and International Protection”: “a removal decision shall be issued in respect of those foreigners who/whose (d): pose a public order, public security or public health threat.” Dr. Sekouba Conde’s lawyer appealed the initiation of a repatriation process but the appeal has not yet been heard.

On 11 October 2017, Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde was charged with “membership of an armed terrorist organisation” by the Istanbul Vacation Criminal Judgeship of Peace and placed in pre-trial detention in Balıkesir T Type Prison. The case is confidential and the authorities have failed to provide any information regarding the investigation to the lawyers. Her husband Dr. Sekouba Conde was initially sent to Istanbul Kumkapı Repatriation Centre, Kırıkkale before being sent to İzmir Harmandalı Repatriation Centre. For approximately one month after he was sent to İzmir Harmandalı Repatriation Centre, Dr. Sekouba Conde was uncontactable, leading his colleagues to presume that he had already been repatriated.

On 16 January 2018, a lawyer from İzmir Bar Association reported that Dr. Sekouba Conde is still

detained in Harmandalı Repatriation Centre in İzmir and visited him. The lawyer reported that Dr. Sekouba Conde was deprived of his right to make a phone call and could not inform anybody about his situation.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the detention of Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and the possible repatriation of Dr. Sekouba Conde as it is believed that they have been targeted solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and unconditionally release Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and Doctor Sekouba Conde;
2. Ensure respect for the rights of Ayşe Lerzan Caner Conde and Dr. Sekouba Conde while in detention, including unfettered access to family and a lawyer;
3. End up the repatriation process, considering that Dr. Sekouba Conde has been granted refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and could be at risk if sent back to his country of origin;
4. 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.