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Türkiye: Human rights defender Enes Hocaogulları arrested for a speech he made at a Council of Europe meeting

On 5 August 2025, human rights defender **Enes Hocaogulları** was detained at the Ankara Esenboğa Airport, on his return to Türkiye due to an arrest warrant issued by an Istanbul court, in connection with ongoing investigations into a speech he made at the 48th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on 27 March 2025.

[Enes Hocaogulları](#) is a youth and LGBTI+ rights defender based in Ankara, Türkiye. Since 2022, he works as the International Advocacy and Fundraising Coordinator at [Ünikür Association](#), a LGBTI+ rights organisation in Türkiye. His focus is on diplomatic engagement, monitoring youth rights, reporting and advocacy. His climate activism during his high school years eventually evolved into a fight for human rights and democracy. In February 2025, he was selected as the youth delegate from Türkiye for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

On 5 August 2025, Enes Hocaogulları was detained while going through passport control at the Ankara Esenboğa Airport based on an arrest warrant issued by an Istanbul court. He was transferred to the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office for his statement to be taken. After taking Enes Hocaogulları's statement, the prosecutor referred the human rights defender to the Ankara 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace with a request for pre-trial detention under article 217/A¹ of the Turkish Penal Code, which is also known as the Disinformation Law.

The judgeship ruled for the pre-trial detention of Enes Hocaogulları, justifying the decision by stating that there is strong suspicion that the human rights defender might flee. This is despite the fact that he returned to Türkiye aware of the risk of arrest upon arrival. Following the pre-trial arrest decision, he was transferred to Sincan Prison in Ankara.

In February 2025, Enes Hocaogulları was selected as the youth delegate of Türkiye for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. On 24-27 March 2025, the human rights defender attended the 48th session of the Congress, where he delivered several speeches, including on 27 March 2025, when he gave a [speech](#) detailing police violence imposed on protesters in Türkiye, including attacks with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons, and

1 Overtly Disseminating False Information to Mislead the Public

ARTICLE 217/A: (1) Any person who overtly disseminates false information contrary to the facts about the internal and external security, public order, and public health, with the motive exclusively to create distress, fear, and panic among public and in a manner conducive to disturb public peace, shall be sentenced to imprisonment from one to three years.

the strip search of detained students. He called on the international community to act against the human rights violations in Türkiye.

The speech, which was recorded and posted online, went viral on social media. This led to a smear and hate campaign against the youth and LGBTI+ rights defender, accusing him of being a traitor, foreign agent and a queer who wants to “spread LGBTI+ ideology”. Additionally, investigations were initiated by Ankara and Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutors’ Office under articles 216 (inciting public to hatred and hostility) and 217/A (defamation law) of the Turkish Penal Code respectively, which were later consolidated under Ankara prosecutor’s office. An additional investigation was initiated by the Kırşehir Prosecutor’s Office under article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code (insulting the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey, or the institutions and organs of the state).

Front Line Defenders believes that the human rights defender was solely arrested for his peaceful human rights work and for exercising his right to free expression to explain the human rights violations that he has personally witnessed. It is particularly worrying that he was targeted for a speech that he made at the Council of Europe, which Türkiye is a member of.

Front Line Defenders calls on the Turkish authorities to

1. Release human rights defender Enes Hocaogulları immediately and unconditionally;
2. Ensure that his mental and physical health are guaranteed while he is deprived of his liberty;
3. Stop using and repeal article 217/a, also known as the defamation law, to silence journalists, human rights defenders and opposition members who denounce human rights violations in a peaceful manner;
4. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Türkiye are able to conduct their peaceful and legitimate activities without undue restrictions, fear of harassment, threats or retaliation, including judicial harassment and arbitrary arrest against them.