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Turkey: Verdict expected on human rights defender Fatin Kanat's case

On 8 December 2022 at 14:15, the fourth hearing of the case against human rights defender **Fatin Kanat** will take place at the 25th Heavy Penal Court in Ankara, Turkey, where a verdict is expected to be given. The human rights defender was arrested at his home on 27 November 2019 for attending a press gathering in 2016 and subsequently was charged with terrorist propaganda for attending several press gatherings.

[Fatin Kanat](#) is a human right defender who has been actively working for advocating the rights of others since 1990s. He is the co-chair of the Ankara branch of Human Rights Association. Fatin Kanat is also a documentary film maker and is co-founder of a cinema association called *Sinetopya*. Additionally, he is one of the organisers of the annual International Labour Film Festival.

On 8 December 2022, Fatin Kanat will appear before the 25th Heavy Penal Court in Ankara for the fourth time, where he is charged with terrorist propaganda for attending several press statements and gatherings held in public between 2016 and 2019.

During the third hearing on 19 October 2022, the public prosecutor submitted his opinion and requested that Fatin Kanat be found guilty and sentenced for terrorist propaganda. The prosecutor argued that the press gatherings which Fatin Kanat participated were organised under the instruction of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the outlawed Kurdish armed group.

The indictment listed eleven press statements in which the human rights defender attended as evidence. Nine of these were gatherings organised in 2019 and called for the release of heavily sick prisoners who are unfit to stay in prison. Another vigil from 2018 was a gathering in front of Human Rights Association demanding justice for the killing of 34 civilians by Turkish fighter jets in 2011. It also included a gathering in 2016, where protestors demanded that the clashes between PKK and the security forces end, and to open a human corridor to bring the civilians, and the sick and wounded out of the area.

In the early hours of 27 November 2019, Fatin Kanat was arrested at his home during a raid operation, where another 10 individuals' homes were raided and they were arrested. This was reportedly linked with the press gathering in 2016. Two days later, on 29 November 2019, they were released. The court accepted the indictment dated the 7 January 2022, and the human rights defender appeared before the Ankara 25th Heavy Penal Court on 19 April 2022 for his first hearing.

Front Line Defenders believes that Fatin Kanat is being prosecuted solely for his peaceful human rights work and must be acquitted without further delay. As the co-chair of the Ankara branch of Human Rights Association, it is his duty to promote and advocate for the rights of people whose rights are violated or ignored. Front Line Defenders is deeply worried about the Turkish government's persistent use of anti-terror laws to intimidate and silence human rights defenders and any critical voice with baseless accusations. Being a party to the Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the government has a duty to uphold and protect the freedom of expression and assembly of all. Furthermore, as an endorser of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the government should ensure a safe and enabling environment for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Front Line Defenders urges the Turkish authorities to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Fatin Kanat as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his/her legitimate and peaceful work in 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.