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Turkey: Nurcan Baysal's house violently raided

On 19 October 2019, around thirty masked and heavily armed police officers raided journalist and human rights defender **Nurcan Baysal's** apartment in the south-eastern province of Diyarbakır at 5am. Seven days since the raid, the human rights defender still has not been informed whether a criminal investigation case has been opened against her, and on which grounds her home was raided.

[Nurcan Baysal](#) is a Kurdish human rights defender and journalist based in the south-eastern province of Diyarbakır. In 2015 and 2016, she documented human rights violations committed during the frequent military operations carried out in the region. As a journalist, she covers Kurdish issues and topics related to development and poverty. She has co-founded several civil society organisations and has been contributed to many studies on forced migration, poverty, development and gender. In recent years, she has been involved in the establishment of a refuge for Yazidi women fleeing the Islamic State. She is also the [Global Laureate](#) of the 2018 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.

On 19 October 2019, police raided Nurcan Baysal's apartment in the south-eastern province of Diyarbakır. Around thirty masked and heavily armed police officers raided her house around 5am. They kicked in the door of her apartment, and ransacked the house. Nurcan Baysal was not at the house since she is currently in London for a residency with English PEN, an organisation promoting the right to freedom of expression. However, two of her children were at home during the raid, and according to Nurcan are traumatised as a result of the violent break in.

According to an inquiry carried out by Nurcan Baysal's lawyer, on 18 October 2019 late at night, the director of chief of the Diyarbakır Security Directorate called the prosecutor on duty by phone and asked for permission to carry out a raid immediately on her home. The prosecutor on duty gave permission on the phone. Seven days since the raid, the human rights defender still has not been informed whether a criminal investigation case has been opened against her. As the relevant documents have not been sent to the Office of the Prosecutor by the Diyarbakır Security Directorate, she is unaware which of her social media posts are under scrutiny, and on what accusations. Nurcan Baysal is planning to file a complaint against the security officers and the prosecutor on duty, not only because they carried out the home raid with such violence and without any evidence, but also because they did so with full knowledge that her children were at home and she was not.

This is not the first time that Nurcan Baysal's house has been raided. Raids have begun to be frequently used as a tool of intimidation against the human rights defender. On the morning of 3 June 2019, following a police raid on her house, she was [taken into custody](#) after a warrant was issued for her arrest for supposed "membership of an armed terrorist organisation". That same day, she submitted a deposition to the judge, she was released, and the investigation was closed. Previously, on 22 January 2018, Nurcan Baysal was [taken into custody](#) after another police raid.

She was held in the Anti-Terror Branch in Diyarbakır for three days and released after being questioned by the Prosecutor's Office for her anti-war tweets during Turkey's military offensive in Afrin, Syria. She was later acquitted of her charges.

Front Line Defenders expresses serious concern about the ongoing judicial harassment and intimidation of Nurcan Baysal, as it believes that the accusations against her are solely motivated by her peaceful and legitimate activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders further condemns the unjustified and intimidating house raids, which were carried out without concrete evidence, in the early morning, by a large number of heavily armed security officers, with no regard for the children in the home.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Turkey to:

1. Immediately close the investigation into Nurcan Baysal;
2. Stop the ongoing judicial harassment and the use of "home raids" as a tool of intimidation against Nurcan Baysal;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the violence employed by police during the house raid, as well as the issuing of a search warrant without evidence, with a view to bringing the responsible officers to justice in accordance with international standards;
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.