



4.11.13

TURKEY | CSW Calls on Turkish Government to Protect Malatya Lawyer

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling the Turkish government to offer protection to Mr. Erdal Dogan, a human rights defender who has received death threats as a result of his work as legal counsel for the victims in the trial concerning the killing of three Christians on April 18, 2007 in Malatya, South Eastern Turkey.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) Freedom of Belief Initiative wrote an open letter calling on the Turkish authorities “to take all necessary measures to provide protection and ensure the safety of Mr. Dogan” after one of the defendants in the trial, Varol Bulent Aral, threatened him during a hearing on March 8, 2013.

On April 18, 2007, Turkish citizens Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel and Tillman Geske, a German citizen, were tortured and killed at the offices of Zirve Publishing House, a Christian publishing house in Malatya, by five young Muslims.

The trial of the five alleged murderers began on Nov. 22, 2007 at the Third Criminal Court in Malatya. The trial has been prolonged due to the prosecutors’ desire to prove the killings were part a high-level clandestine scheme to undermine the government through acts of terror. In September 2012, and just two days before the next phase of the trial, two judges and two prosecutors were removed by the Turkish Justice Ministry, leaving just one judge familiar with the case.

In the NHC’s open letter, Mr. Dogan is quoted as saying, “This is not the first threat I have received as a result of this case. But this one is significantly different from the other ones and seemed to be an imminent danger.”

The letter continues, “The Zirve/Malatya case points to the same circles of people that [were] behind the murder of Hrant Dink, the Turkish Armenian editor killed on Jan. 19, 2007. In the indictment, both cases are seen as actions of the same criminal network. This network may see

Mr. Dogan, representing the victims in the Zirve/Malatya case, as a driving force in exposing people involved in the network. Both in the court room and in public, Mr. Dogan has made requests for intelligence services to provide all information they have about the network.”

CSW’s Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, “We call on the Turkish government to take the threats against Mr. Dogan’s life seriously and offer him protection. As we approach the anniversary of their deaths, we remember the lives of Necati, Ugur and Tilman, and offer up prayers once more for their families and friends. We welcome the prosecutors’ determination to uncover all the aspects of this case. It is vital that all who were involved in these murders, at any level, are brought to justice.”