

CCBE statement¹ in support of the Istanbul Bar Association

16 May 2025

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the Bars and Law Societies of 46 countries, and through them more than 1 million European lawyers.

On 16 May 2025, on the occasion of its Plenary Session in Bordeaux, and in view of the forthcoming criminal hearing scheduled for 28 and 29 May 2025 at the Marmara prison (formerly Silivri prison), the CCBE strongly condemns the dismissal of the President of the Istanbul Bar, İbrahim Kaboğlu, and of the members of its Council following the hearing held on 21 March, which was held without respecting the essential guarantees of a fair trial.

This procedure was initiated in response to their legitimate call for an effective and impartial investigation into the circumstances of the death of two journalists and for respect for international humanitarian law, actions which are fully in line with their role in defending the rule of law and human rights.

The CCBE is deeply concerned that ten members of the Istanbul Bar Council and its President are facing criminal charges for ‘terrorist propaganda’ and ‘public dissemination of misleading information’.

In addition, lawyer Fırat Epözdemir, who was arrested on 23 January 2025 at Istanbul airport, has been held in pre-trial detention ever since.

On 8 April 2025, following three months of detention, the prosecutor filed an indictment against Fırat Epözdemir on charges of “membership of an organisation” and “terrorist propaganda”. Fırat Epözdemir, who served as the President of the Lawyers for Freedom Association (Özgürlük için Hukukçular Derneği – ÖHD), faces up to 15 years in prison for his public statements and declarations, including remarks made during an observatory

¹ This statement follows several letters and statements of support from the CCBE to the Istanbul Bar: [Investigation Against the Istanbul Bar Association](#) (13/01/2025)

[Joint Statement by the International Legal and Human Rights Community on the Actions Against the Istanbul Bar Association](#) (28/01/2025)

[Dismissal of the President and leadership of the Istanbul Bar Association](#) (24/03/2025)

[CCBE statement in support of the Istanbul Bar Association](#) (27/02/2025)

mission concerning the curfew imposed in 2015 in Şırnak, during which 288 people reportedly lost their lives.

The CCBE is also particularly concerned by the seizure of lawyer Fırat Epözdemir's office computers and hardware.

These actions constitute an extremely serious attack on the independence of the legal profession and the institutions that represent it.

The CCBE recalls that the principle of independence of lawyers and their representative bodies is an essential guarantee of the rule of law.

The CCBE recalls that all lawyers must be able to exercise their professional functions without fear of reprisal, interference, intimidation or harassment in order to preserve the integrity of the legal profession, the administration of justice and the rule of law.

In view of the above, the CCBE:

- Strongly condemns the dismissal of the President of the Istanbul Bar, İbrahim Kaboğlu, and of the ten members of its Bar Council;
- Expresses its unwavering solidarity with the President of the Istanbul Bar, İbrahim Kaboğlu, the ten members of his Bar Council and all Turkish lawyers threatened in the exercise of their functions;
- Calls for the immediate withdrawal of all legal proceedings against the Istanbul Bar Association and its representatives;
- Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the lawyer Fırat Epözdemir;
- Urges the Turkish authorities to respect their international obligations concerning the independence of the legal profession and to sign and ratify the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer;
- Expresses its full support for the Istanbul Bar Association in its defence of the rule of law and human rights;
- Encourages the international community and the European institutions to take concrete measures to protect the independence of lawyers in Turkey;
- Will follow the criminal hearing scheduled for 28 and 29 May 2025 at the Marmara (Silivri) prison on charges of 'terrorist propaganda' and 'public dissemination of misleading information'.