

Your Excellency Mr. Yılmaz TUNÇ,
Minister of Justice,
Adalet Bakanlığı 06659 KIZILAY / ANKARA-TÜRKIYE

Reykjavik June 6th 2024

Honorable Minister Tunç

With utmost respect, I write on behalf of the Icelandic Judges Association concerning a matter of grave concern regarding Mr. Murat Arslan, the esteemed president of the Turkish Association of Judges and Prosecutors (YARSAV). Our association is deeply committed to safeguarding democracy, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring the independence of the judiciary, principles that we hold dear and that form the bedrock of a just and fair society.

Mr. Arslan, a distinguished recipient of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize in 2017, has been subjected to an unjust 10-year prison sentence due to his unwavering dedication to an independent judiciary and human rights. For nearly eight years, he has endured incarceration, and it is with a heavy heart that we bring to your attention the recent developments regarding his conditional release.

Despite meeting all legal prerequisites for conditional release, Mr. Arslan's right to a conditional release has been denied by the Committee. Mr. Arslan's next interview is scheduled for next July, further prolonging this unjust situation.

On April 26th 2024 at a conference of the European Association of Judges in Warsaw we were informed that some prison committees were wielding their discretionary powers arbitrarily, rejecting applications for conditional release without valid justification. These decisions, based on vague and unsubstantiated grounds, are not only unjust but also discriminatory in nature. This selective and arbitrary practice runs counter to the principles of impartiality and equality before the law, fundamental values that we hold in high regard in our quest for a just and fair society. Every individual's request for conditional release should be subject to fair, transparent, and impartial evaluation, in accordance with established legal criteria and human rights principles.

We respectfully urge Your Excellency to intervene promptly in this matter and ensure that Mr. Arslan is afforded a fair interview and well-founded decision regarding his conditional release. It is imperative that these decisions are taken in accordance with the rule of law and respect for human rights, without bias or discrimination.

Your attention and swift action on this issue are greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted for your attention and consideration,



Kristbjörg Stephensen,
Chairman of the Icelandic Judges Association