



ISTANBUL CULTURAL CENTER GA SUBMISSION FOR THE UN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

The Istanbul Center, a unit of Istanbul Cultural Center GA, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-governmental and non-partisan organization established originally by Turkish-Americans in 2002 to promote a better understanding and closer relations between individuals and communities in Atlanta and the Southeastern United States.

The mission of Istanbul Cultural Center is to;

- Proactively contribute to solving educational, cultural, environmental, social and humanitarian issues
- Contribute to world peace by showcasing the Turkish experience of the "Art of Living Together" via respect, acceptance, dialogue, love, richness of faith and culture over centuries of time
- Become the premiere representative organization of the Turkish culture by disseminating knowledge of the language, history, culture, education and social life of Turkiye in the Southeastern United States
- Create opportunities for dialogue between communities and individuals to build bridges between cultures
- Provide assistance to Turkish people in order to integrate into the local society

TURKEY: VIOLATIONS OF RIGHT TO TRAVEL

Turkish Justice Minister on January 18, 2019 declared that more than 500, 000 people have been investigated and arrested on terror and coup linked charges. Turkey deliberately violates the domestic legislation and the international agreements. Specifically, the freedom to travel has been protected by many international documents including Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD),

Article 10 of the Convention on Rights of Child, Article 8 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 4th Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). 3. Article 23 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey provides that; “Everyone has the right to freedom of residence and travel...Freedom of travel may be restricted by law for the purpose of investigation and prosecution of an offense, and prevention of offenses. A citizen’s freedom to leave the country may be restricted only by the decision of a judge based on a criminal investigation or prosecution. Citizens shall not be deported, or deprived of their right of entry into the homeland.”

F.C, an asylum seeker in Alpharetta, GA, had to flee Turkey in April, 2017 by not the proper ways but through Aegean Sea because of the travel ban issued by the Turkish government on his passport. According to our interview with him, F.C. was taken into custody because of an alleged link to the Gulen movement and after released he went to Greece by passing through Aegean Sea and a few days later he arrived in USA in April, 2017. However, his wife A.C could not leave the country since she was being arbitrarily investigated by means of a denouncement of an acquaintance with the accusation of an alleged link to the Gulen Movement. She has been denied twice to grant with a passport by the government authorities and is still in Turkey along with her two children, at the age of 9 and 13. Because of being denied the right to travel and leave the country of residence, members of C. family have not been able to unite for more than 2 years. ¹

Another case related to the violation of right to travel took place in Istanbul. A.S.K, the son of a prominent attorney, was arrested during a police raid which was conducted to arrest his father on July 25, 2016. When the police could not find M.K, the father, they took A.S.K into jail. He was imprisoned for 42 days and released as a result of long and determined efforts of his attorney. A.S.K’s only guilt was to be the son of an allegedly accused person who was in USA at that time. After released, the passport of A.S.K was confiscated and he has not been able to unite with his family in USA for 3 years. No indictment has been presented yet and his case has not been closed either. ²

DUTY OF STATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

¹ Identity and case details can be provided by our organization upon request by United Nations officials.

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Turkey routinely targets human rights and liberties, defenders and suppresses dissent. Individuals specifically the ones allegedly linked to the Hizmet Movement or having Kurdish, Armenian, Alawi ethnicity suffer disproportionate multi-faceted discrimination, in particular as regards to equal access to political participation, health, education, employment, justice and other basic universal rights because of current practice as well as the laws enacted. The freedom to travel refers to free movement of individuals who are citizens or foreigners. The freedom to travel consists of three components:

- a. Individuals enjoy freedom of movement in their own countries
- b. Individuals can leave the country including their own (i.e. going abroad)
- c. Individuals can return to their own countries

The government of Turkey effective immediately must abide by its international human rights obligations and ensure that its citizens and foreigners residing in the country enjoy their right to leave.

Additionally, Istanbul Cultural Center GA urges the international community to effectively take action to end the intense violations of human rights in Turkey and in particular to take steps to counteract the Turkish government's lawless acts which contradict right to travel and leave the country. In this regard, international community should directly address, as a matter of utmost priority and importance, the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey, including in relation to the right to leave and arbitrary deprivation of nationality of Turkish citizens, through all relevant and appropriate United Nations, Council of Europe and other mechanisms, as well as through bilateral diplomatic engagement.