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Turkey: HRK President criticises trials of academics

In an open letter to the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul, HRK President Professor Dr Horst Hippler has expressed strong criticism of the prosecution of a large group of Turkish academics, whose trials are scheduled to begin this week.

In his letter, Hippler calls for the principles of the rule of law to be observed, and points to the fundamental importance of academic freedom and free speech. "Universities are places where free speech prevails," the HRK President said. "The current wave of prosecutions against the signatories to the petition entitled 'We will not be a party to this crime!' is in contravention of any understanding of fundamental democratic principles. The ongoing repression of members of universities in Turkey constitutes a denial of academic freedom."

Relationships between universities in Turkey and Germany are traditionally particularly close. The HRK President has previously spoken out repeatedly on the threat to academic freedom in Turkey, expressing his solidarity with university members who have been subjected to state repression. [\[Link\]](#)

The trials beginning in Turkey over the coming days target the signatories to the petition "We will not be a party to this crime". In the appeal published in January 2016, academics demanded an end to military intervention in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, and called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The international network *Scholars at Risk* is currently appealing to universities to send letters of support to the Turkish government. [\[Link\]](#)