

28 March 2019**HRK President appalled at repression of Turkish researchers****Strong protest against imminent imprisonment of Professor Dr Füsün Üstel**

Around three years after the petition "We Will Not Be a Party to this Crime!" was published, the repression of researchers by the Turkish authorities has taken on a new dimension.

The President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), Professor Dr Peter-André Alt, stated his views on this today in Berlin:

"I am alarmed, or rather appalled, at the events at Turkish universities since the petition "We Will Not Be a Party to this Crime!" was published. The Turkish State is systematically and with great force cracking down on researchers who have exercised their right to free speech as citizens. In doing so, it is also undermining academic freedom. Freedom of expression is not just one of the basic principles of democratic societies, it is also a cornerstone of the university as an institution. German universities unequivocally condemn the state repression of members of universities in Turkey. We stand in solidarity with Professor Üstel."

The emeritus professor of political sciences at the Galatasaray University in Istanbul is one of more than 1,100 researchers who signed the petition in which academics called for an end to the military intervention in the Kurdish regions of Turkey in January 2016. After an Istanbul court rejected the appeal contesting her sentence in February, Prof Dr Füsün Üstel is now facing a fifteen-month prison sentence.

Other researchers are facing the same fate. Since the petition, more than 500 researchers have lost their positions at Turkish universities and there has been a large number of trials and convictions.

International partners of the HRK, such as the French Rectors' Conference (CPU) and the European University Association (EUA), have also criticised the repression of Turkish researchers, and of Professor Dr Üstel in particular, in recent statements.

The HRK has strongly condemned the state repression of Turkish researchers over the last three years in a series of statements and open letters.

Traditionally, academic relations with Turkey are very strong; the HRK currently has 1,471 collaborative ventures between German and Turkish universities on record.