

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Incorporated by the Congress 1889

February 4, 2016

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı
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Your Excellency:

The American Historical Association expresses alarm and deep concern regarding reports of punitive measures and criminal investigations taken against Turkish academics who recently signed a petition addressing Turkish government policies in southeastern Turkey.

The AHA is a scholarly association that represents approximately 14,000 US and internationally based professors, secondary teachers, advanced students, and public historians, who conduct professional historical activities for all fields of the past and all periods. Our membership includes historians within Turkey and scholars of Turkish and Ottoman history. In concert with many other scholarly societies, we are committed to the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression for scholars wherever their research and teaching take them. We thus strongly support the right of historians in Turkey to explore the past and teach about it freely. We fear that the current campaign against signers of a petition will undermine the ability of historians to fulfill their mission.

We are aware of widespread reports that university employees in the field of history face investigations under article 301 of the Penal Code. We hope this is not the case. Dismissals, detentions, and criminal investigations that constitute retaliation against scholars for nonviolent exercise of academic freedom and free expression would violate international standards including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, both of which Turkey has ratified, similarly require the government to uphold citizens' freedom of expression, as does Turkey's own constitution. When respect for such international protocols is not observed, historians and other scholars are unable to conduct their work.

We respectfully urge the Government of Turkey to take all steps to fulfill its duties to protect free expression and academic freedom, and to abandon any disciplinary investigations of those who signed the recent petition. By doing so, the government will ensure that historians can freely engage in the important work we do to preserve and illuminate the past.

Sincerely,



Patrick Manning
AHA President, 2016