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ETUC Press release

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## **ETUC condemns persecution of trade union and civil society activists in Turkey**

### **502 in court over two-year old demonstration against educational reforms**

14/01/2014

***The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) strongly condemns the continued harassment of trade unionists and other civil society activists in Turkey following the hearings of over 500 activists who took part in a demonstration over educational reforms in March 2012.***

A total of 502 people, mainly trade unionists, were called to trial in Ankara yesterday (13 January) for taking part two years ago in a demonstration against Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's educational reform.

The first hearing of the case against 502 people, including the President of the **Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions (KESK)** and other KESK members, was held in Ankara amid great expectation. The defendants, which numbered some of the highest number ever tried, had been brutally arrested by the police during the rally in which they demonstrated their democratic opposition to a new educational system they considered dogmatic and segregationist.

An international delegation of trade unionists, including the ETUC and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), attended the trial to support those indicted, and to show their opposition to the Turkish government in its campaign to hinder the trade union movement.

The ETUC insists on the release without charges of the accused. But above all, ETUC calls the Turkish government to stop trade union and human rights violations in the country.

The ETUC reminds the Turkish government that Turkey is a candidate country on the road to EU membership, and that the limitation of the rights of freedom of expression, meeting, organisation of workers and collective bargaining are practices contrary to many articles and principles of the Treaty on European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Convention on Human Rights, and International Labour Organisation conventions.

*The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations. The ETUC is also on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).*

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