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Ref: JWG/cb

Brussels, 26 February 2013

Dear Minister,

EPSU, the European Federation of Public Services Unions, has been informed by our colleagues that a further 151 trade union representatives and trade union members have been arrested on 19 February 2013 in Turkey. These arrests were apparently made in relation to the investigation into the suicide bomb attack on the US embassy in Ankara on 1 February 2013.

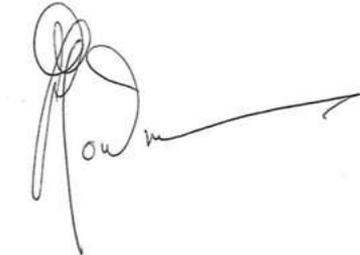
Most of the arrested persons are members of KESK, the Confederation of Public Employees, and its affiliated unions. These arrests follow the detention of 15 female trade unionists on 15 February and over 67 of our colleagues on 25 June 2012. Many of them are still in jail without facing clear charges and without proper trial. The European Commission, European governments, international human right organisations and others have expressed their deep concern about the situation. Some of our colleagues have now been in jail since June without having seen a judge. This clearly is not acceptable.

We urge you to stop the harassment of trade unionists and to promptly release those detained in prison if there is no concrete and substantial evidence that they have participated in unlawful acts and committed offense. Merely speaking one's mind, arguing a case, advocating the positions of the trade union and participating in union work is not a basis for arrests and detention. You and your colleagues are well aware of the international obligations Turkey has entered into at the ILO and the UN to defend trade union rights and freedom of speech (part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognized in international human rights law (International covenant on Civil and Political Rights.) Turkey is also a member of the Council of Europe and has signed and ratified the European Social Charter in 2004 and 2007 respectively.

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Minister, we look forward to hear from you on this important matter. We urge your government to take an immediate action to stop the harassment of trade unions and to release our colleagues from jail without delay.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a long horizontal stroke that ends in a small arrowhead pointing to the right.

Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU Deputy General Secretary

EPSU members in Turkey : www.epsu.org/r/93

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions, representing 8 million workers organized in over 275 trade unions in all European countries. EPSU works with PSI, Public Services international, the Global Federation and is recognized as its regional organisation. EPSU is a member of ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation.