



30 April 2018

Subject: Call for Election Observation Missions to Turkey

To Whom It May Concern:

The presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey will be held on 24 June 2018 under state of emergency rule and an extreme climate of fear. President Erdoğan and his ultranationalist allies (Nationalist Movement Party – MHP) have decided to have the elections fifteen months earlier than the normal electoral schedule (November 2019) amidst aggravating political instability and economic problems. The outcome of presidential elections will not simply determine who will rule the country for five years but may irreversibly destroy its democratic life and political future.

Over the last couple of years, particularly after the abortive coup in July 2016, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been annihilating the already weak democratic institutions in the country towards establishing an extremely authoritarian rule. There is now no separation of powers and an independent judiciary in Turkey. President Erdoğan has also managed to secure almost complete control over the media. In addition, the AKP-MHP coalition has recently passed a bill and amended the electoral law so as to legalize various irregularities and fraud in the elections (please see Appendix for details).

President Erdoğan has been using the abortive coup as a pretext and opportunity to suppress all sectors of the society who are critical of his policies in the lead up to presidential elections. Members of parliament, elected Kurdish mayors, academics, students, journalists, NGO and trade union representatives, and many others have been arrested. This ongoing crackdown has particularly targeted the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and its main constituent Democratic Regions Party (DBP), whose thousands of administrators and members have been jailed in the last two years.

Despite these dire circumstances, about half of the people of Turkey did dare to stand against president Erdoğan and said “No” in the referendum on 16 April 2017. Erdoğan won in the referendum with a small margin, and yet that “success” was thanks to blatant violations of the electoral law, extreme pressures on the opposition, and widespread irregularities and fraud, which were also documented by election observation missions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). With the recent amendments in the electoral law, the AKP has legalized its disputed practices in the referendum, such as counting votes in unsealed envelopes as valid. Nobody is expecting to have fair and free elections under emergency rule.

Hence, many political commentators argue that the AKP-MHP coalition will win in the elections thanks to Erdoğan's unlawful use of public resources for electoral purposes, monopoly over the media, and the use of emergency rule powers to further the crackdown on

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the opposition. The playing field for the elections is extremely uneven, especially in the Kurdish provinces, and the opposition needs to also defeat the referee in order to win. Obviously president Erdoğan and his allies have many advantages, but their success is not a done deal. Defeating Erdoğan and his allies may be very difficult, but not impossible. There is fear and repression in Turkey, but there is also hope and struggle for a democratic future.

We hereby invite all international institutions and individual persons who are concerned about Turkey's democratic future to observe presidential and parliamentary elections on the ground, with a particular focus on Kurdish provinces. Although president Erdoğan has long closed his ears to the repeated calls from the international community for the lifting of emergency rule and setting up of the conditions for fair and free elections, the presence of international and foreign observers may still have an impact and help to somewhat level the extremely uneven playing field for the elections between the AKP-MHP coalition and the diverse political opposition.

May you have questions or need further assistance, please contact HDP's Foreign Affairs Department at international@hdp.org.tr or +90 505 0071981 (Mr. Evren Çevik) / +90 535 6495919 (Ms. Berivan Alataş).

Peace and solidarity,

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