Model letters

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Dear President,

I am writing to you about the case of the ‘Saturday Mothers’ whose peaceful protest has been banned since 25 August 2018 as they were to mark their 700th week of their longstanding weekly vigil.

As you know, having met a 12-strong delegation in 2011 while you were Prime Minister, Saturday Mothers have been seeking truth and justice for their loved ones who were disappeared during the 1980s and 1990s when hundreds of women and men including some children were detained by state authorities, never to be seen again. According to the Truth Justice Memory Center (Hafıza Merkezi), Turkey has been found guilty of human rights violations in 55 cases at the European Court of Human Rights, concerning 129 people who were disappeared. Of the domestic criminal complaints concerning 344 people, only two resulted in convictions.

The mothers and other relatives of the disappeared deserve to know the fate of their loved ones. The weekly vigils aim to reiterate their call for truth and to keep the issue on the agenda. The ongoing ban is preventing them from peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, guaranteed under both domestic and international human rights law.

Seven years ago, you promised that the government would start working on the cases of the disappeared, yet their relatives are still looking for answers. I call on you to make good on your promise, starting with lifting the ban on the ‘Saturday Mothers’ peaceful weekly vigils, and signing and ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Families of the victims of enforced disappearances suffer untold pain not knowing whether their loved ones are dead or alive. I am appealing to you to ensure that the ‘Saturday Mothers’ are not silenced, but instead their demands for truth, justice and non-repetition are answered.

Yours sincerely

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