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Urgent Call: Worsening Situation in Turkish Prisons

Recently there have been several news and claims in the Turkish and international media that uprisings might be provoked in the prisons of Turkey to provide the government the excuse and opportunity to execute planned massacres against prisoners. We know that the government has replaced many prison guards with special security forces and also transferred heavy weapons to some prisons – weapons that have not been used in the prisons so far. Such new measures and preparations in prisons are raising questions and concerns.

Due to increasing tension in prisons across the country, both the prisoners and their families are scared and alarmed. The information we have been receiving from the lawyers and families of prisoners also points to a grave situation in the prisons, giving credibility to the claims that the government may be planning to execute some repressive, even fatal policies in prisons.

Most recently, on 23 November, 58 political prisoners accused of being members of or supporting the PKK were suddenly exiled from Edirne F-Type High Security Prison to other prisons without any prior notice or explanation. Our co-chair Mr Selahattin Demirtaş and deputy Mr Abdullah Zeydanoglu have been kept in this prison under conditions of solitary confinement.

We call upon all relevant international bodies and institutions, first and foremost the Committee on the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, as well as the relevant authorities of the European Union and European Parliament, to observe, meticulously research, and act upon the grave situation in Turkish prisons. We urge them to immediately communicate with the Turkish government and make sure that the lives and personal safety of prisoners are not in jeopardy.

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