

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

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Chair: Richard J. Harvey (richard.harvey@tooks.co.uk)
President: Michael Mansfield QC

Open letter to Tony Blair MP Prime Minister and President of the European Union

Re: Attack on fundamental liberties of lawyers in Turkey

We are deeply concerned to learn that, immediately after the European Court of Human Rights ruling in *Ocalan v. Turkey* on 12 May 2005, the Turkish government moved to prohibit Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan's 12 lawyers from representing him in preparation for his retrial. We call on you to urge Turkey's Interior Minister to apply to the Turkish courts to rescind this ban.

The European Court held that Ocalan did not receive a fair trial in Turkey in 1999, due to denials of unrestricted access to his lawyers and of adequate time and facilities to prepare his case. Yet, within weeks of the Court's ruling, based merely on vaguely worded allegations, his lawyers were prohibited from continuing to represent him. Under a law passed on 1st June 2005, no lawyer is allowed contact with Mr. Ocalan unless there is a government representative present and tape recording everything that is said. This appears to be a direct slap in the Court's face.

No complaint had been made of the lawyers' conduct prior to the European Court judgment and it seems clear that this law is aimed at further depriving Mr. Ocalan of contact with his lawyers and hence impairing his ability to defend himself. Not surprisingly, Mr. Ocalan refuses to have any further meetings with his remaining lawyers in conditions which violate his Convention rights.

Such an attack on the independence of lawyers, even in the present climate of concern, would not be tolerated in any EU member state. We therefore urge you to take every opportunity available to you during your presidency of the EU to impress upon Turkey's representatives that there can be no prospect of EU membership so long as such threats to fundamental liberties persist.

Signed by

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