

Urgent call

11 protestors arrested and kept in custody for 12 hours during a peaceful demonstration in northern part of Cyprus, 4 of whom are New Cyprus Party (YKP) members!

Yesterday, on Wednesday, 18 May 2011, the former Cyprus Turkish Airlines (KTHY) employees and a group of supporters from various trade unions and political parties have organised a demonstration to demand the social rights of former KTHY employees. As is known, KTHY was the sole airline company of the Turkish Cypriot Community with a capacity of around 400 employees and went bankrupt and was closed down by the Turkish Cypriot administration back in November 2010.

Since then, the former employees have been claiming their rights by setting up a tent next to the premises of the Airlines in order to ask for their various social rights and they have been waiting to be paid their salaries for over the last seven months.

On 11 May 2011, the employees have carried out a protest in front of the "Ministry of Transport" and demanded that the authorities give them a final clarification concerning their situation. The administration's answer was that this would be decided at next week's meeting. Today, the employees gathered peacefully in front of the 'Prime Ministry' starting at 10:00am. The police have taken extraordinary precautions as a method of psychological threat.

The employees were not given any clarifications as they were promised. On top of this, "Prime Minister" Kucuk described the protestors as terrorists which has, in turn, raised the tension.

Following the statement, the protestors went on and blocked the main road in a sit down protest. Around 8:00 pm, eleven people were arrested without being given any previous warning, during this **passive peaceful demonstration** four of whom were New Cyprus Party members: **Nevzat Hami** New Cyprus Party's (YKP) Member of the Executive Board and General Secretary of YKP Youth, **Mehmet Karadag** YKP's Nicosia District Secretary and Party Council Member, **Oncel Polili** YKP's Nicosia District member and lawyer of the Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation and **Salih Batak** Yenicag Newspaper's Coordinator which belongs to YKP.

The eleven protestors were dragged to the police van during which they have suffered minor injuries. For 12 hours they were being kept in Nicosia Police Headquarters in a room of 2m X 4m dimensions. During these hours their basic needs such as water and toilet use were refused at times. The request of YKP's Nicosia District Secretary and Party Council Member Mehmet Karadag to seek medical help, through his lawyer, was declined. The protestors were released around 8:00 am with criminal charges of 'participating in an unlawful assembly and 'obstructing police officials to conduct their duty'.

We strongly condemn the non-proportionate force used during arrest as well as ill-treatment of the detainees by the police authorities that are under the control of the Turkish military forces of the occupation regime in the northern part of Cyprus. As it is known, the northern part of Cyprus, which is defined as the subordinate local administration of Turkey. The police receive orders from the Chief Commander of the Turkish Cypriot army who is appointed directly by Ankara.

Turkey is directly responsible for this action. We demand immediate withdrawal of all charges against all of the eleven protestors and we thus call upon all political groups and organisations of Europe to react and show their reaction directly to Ankara, to the President of Turkey, the Prime Minister of Turkey and the Chief Commander of the Turkish Army and show international solidarity to the Turkish Cypriots activists who were arrested.

Nicosia, 18 May 2011