

## CCBE statement<sup>1</sup> in support of the Istanbul Bar Association

27/02/2025

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The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the Bars and Law Societies of 46 countries and, through them, more than 1 million European lawyers.

On 27 February 2025, on the occasion of its Standing Committee in Vienna, the CCBE strongly condemns the judicial proceedings and investigation targeting the Istanbul Bar Association, its President, İbrahim Kaboğlu, and the members of its Council. These proceedings were initiated in response to their legitimate calls for an effective and impartial investigation into the deaths of two journalists and for the respect of international humanitarian law — actions that fall squarely within their role in defending the rule of law and human rights.

The CCBE is deeply concerned that ten members of the Council of the Istanbul Bar and its President face criminal charges of "terrorist propaganda" and "public dissemination of misleading information", as well as civil proceedings seeking their removal from office. Furthermore, the CCBE denounces the arbitrary arrest and pre-trial detention of lawyer Fırat Epözdemir on 25 January 2025 at Istanbul Airport upon his return from a Council of Europe meeting.

These actions represent a severe attack on the independence of the legal profession and the institutions that represent it. The CCBE recalls that lawyers and their representative bodies have the right to participate in public discussions on the law, the administration of justice, and the protection of human rights. The independence of Bar associations is essential to the independence of the legal profession itself.

In this context, more than sixty Bar presidents representing Turkish Bars from Edirne to Ankara, the president and leaders of the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, thousands of lawyers from the Istanbul Bar, representatives of Bars from numerous European countries, including the CCBE, representatives of trade unions, professional organisations, and associations advocating for the defence of lawyers, as well as journalists and parliamentarians, gathered on 23 February 2025 at the Haliç Congress Centre in Istanbul to support the Istanbul Bar Association.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement follows the previous CCBE letter in support of the Istanbul Bar Association, sent on 13 January 2025, which condemned the investigation against the Bar (available here: [https://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/speciality\\_distribution/public/documents/HUMAN\\_RIGHTS\\_LETTERS/Turkey\\_-\\_Turquie/2025/EN\\_HRL\\_20250113\\_Turkey\\_Investigation-Against-the-Istanbul-Bar-Association.pdf](https://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/speciality_distribution/public/documents/HUMAN_RIGHTS_LETTERS/Turkey_-_Turquie/2025/EN_HRL_20250113_Turkey_Investigation-Against-the-Istanbul-Bar-Association.pdf)), and the joint statement issued on 28 January 2025, which reaffirmed the CCBE's commitment to defending the independence of lawyers and the rule of law in Turkey (available here: [https://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/speciality\\_distribution/public/documents/HUMAN\\_RIGHTS/HR\\_Statements/EN\\_20250128\\_Joint-Statement\\_Istanbul-Bar-Association.pdf](https://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/speciality_distribution/public/documents/HUMAN_RIGHTS/HR_Statements/EN_20250128_Joint-Statement_Istanbul-Bar-Association.pdf)).

In view of the above, the CCBE:

- Recalls that the freedom of expression inherent to the independence of the legal profession is a fundamental principle recognised by international law, in particular Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Principle 23 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.
- Firmly condemns the arbitrary judicial proceedings and investigation against the Istanbul Bar Association, its President, and its Council members;
- Calls for the immediate withdrawal of all judicial proceedings against the Istanbul Bar and its representatives;
- Demands the immediate and unconditional release of lawyer Firat Epözdemir;
- Urges the Turkish authorities to comply with their international obligations regarding the independence of the legal profession;
- Expresses its full support for the Istanbul Bar Association in its defence of the rule of law and human rights;
- Encourages the international community and European institutions to take concrete measures to safeguard the independence of lawyers in Turkey;
- Will closely monitor the hearing scheduled for 4 March 2025 at the Istanbul Courthouse concerning the removal of the President and Council members.

The CCBE reiterates that all lawyers must be able to carry out their professional duties without fear of reprisal, interference, intimidation, or harassment to uphold the integrity of the legal profession and the administration of justice and the rule of law.