



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 5, 2020

Contact: Prof. Dr. Johan Vande Lanotte

Phone: +32 475 734933

Email: info@turkeytribunal.com

Launch of Turkey Tribunal, its website and social media handles

BRUSSELS – In recent years, human rights violations have increasingly been reported in Turkey. Various international bodies and courts have confirmed this, sometimes even in very sharp terms. That is why we have taken the initiative to set up a “Turkey Tribunal.” The tribunal is not a legally binding body. But the ruling of the tribunal will have high moral authority.

All documents, the testimonials and the verdict of the judges will be published in full transparency through modern digital means of communication. In this way we want to inform and raise awareness towards the issue among the international community. Because silence is the greatest enemy of fundamental human rights.

The Organization, registered as a not-for profit organization in Brussels, Belgium, consists of the initiative takers, steering committee, the tribunal, executive staff, and reporters.

The Initiative-Takers

- The **Van Steenbrugge Advocaten (VSA)** law firm is a Belgium-based firm that has handled various cases for Turkish citizens. For example, VSA lawyers defended Ismet Özçelik and Turgay Karaman before the UN Human Rights Committee, inter alia on the grounds of kidnapping and unlawful deprivation of liberty (CCPR/C/125/D/2980/2017, March 2019).
- The initiative is coordinated by **Prof. Dr. Johan Vande Lanotte**, professor at the University of Ghent, who at the end of the 1980s was one of the first in Flanders region in Belgium to give a fully-fledged Human Rights course.

The Judges

- **Prof. Em. Dr. Françoise Barones Tulkens** (Belgium)
Professor Emeritus at the «Université de Louvain La Neuve», was Judge and Vice president of the European Court of Human Rights.
- **Justice Johann van der Westhuizen** (South Africa)
Former Professor Emeritus at the University of Pretoria, was Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa.
- **Adj. Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Abi – Mershed** (USA)

Deputy Professor at the Washington College of Law, was Deputy Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

- **Prof. Em. Dr. Giorgio Malinverni** (Switzerland)
Professor Emeritus at the University of Geneva, was member of the Venice Commission and was judge at the European Court of Human Rights
- **Prof. Ledi Bianku** (Albania)
Associate Professor at the University of Strasbourg,, was a member of the Venice commission and was judge at the European Court of Human Rights
- **Dr. John Pace** (Australia)
Chief of the Human Rights Office of the Un Assistance Mission to Iraq and Secretary to the Commission on Human Rights from 1978 till 1994.

The Reporters

- **Eric Sottas** (Switzerland) : report on torture (in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Johan Vande Lanotte) – Eric Sottas was Secretary General of the World Organization against Torture
 - Question 1: Can we see a pattern in the facts underlying the (torture) testimonies? What groups are targeted and why? What is the motivation, and what is the highest level of state involvement?
 - Question 2: Do the testimonies about torture allow us to conclude that there is a systematic and organized use of torture in Turkey ?
- **Prof. Dr. Yves Haeck** (Belgium) and **Drs. Emre Turkut** (Turkey) : report on impunity – Yves Haeck is professor at the University of Ghent; Emre Turkut is finalizing his Phd with the post-coup decisions as subject.
 - Question 3: Is there an internal system of preventing and monitoring torture or mistreatment, and if yes, how does it function in reality?
 - Question 4: Is there an efficient system of sanctioning possible mistreatment or torture? Or can we speak of an organized impunity towards mistreatment and torture against people hold in detention?
- **Lawyers Collective** (Turkey): report on legal aid¹
 - Question 5: Can we evaluate the situation of lawyers in Turkey and their relationship with their clients and the way they can organize the defense as guaranteeing the principle of a fair trial in accordance with the international standards?
- **Prof. Dr. Sebnem Korur Fincanci** (Turkey) : report about medical assistance for people whose in prison or in custody – Sebnem Fincanci was head of the Istanbul Forensic Medicine Department and is President of the Human Rights Foundation.
 - Question 6: Is the level of medical care, the medical staffing, the procedures to assure a timely reaction and the possibilities to rely on specialized services if needed, in the Turkish prisons and other places where people are kept in custody, in accordance with what is needed to preserve their right to health in conformity with the internationally recognized standards ?

¹ The legal aid report will be made by a group of lawyers who want to keep their anonymity for security reasons. The organizing committee will ask a reputable and independent person to function as auditor and visit these lawyers and discuss in depth with them. Then, if all the conditions are fulfilled, this person will certify the report.

- Question 7: What are the guarantees (de jure and de facto) that the medical staff will be able to examine and independently report any mistreatment and/or torture on persons hold in prison or in any other form of custody?
- **Ankara Bar Association** (Turkey) and **Johan Heymans**, (Belgium - Van Steenbrugge Advocaten) report on forced disappearances – The Ankara Bar association has a Human Rights Branch, Johan Heymans is a human rights Lawyer with international experience.
 - Question 8: Can we, taken in account the reports and the testimonies produced before the tribunal, conclude that abductions again are a part of the action of the state towards opposing persons and that no serious inquiry is organized about these facts?
- **Philippe Leruth** (Belgium) : report on freedom of expression and freedom of the press – Philippe Leruth was president of the international Federation of Journalists.
 - Question 9: Can Turkey at this stage be considered as a country within which a sufficient degree of freedom of the press and freedom of expression is guaranteed, so it can be in compliance with the standards of a good functioning democracy?
 - Question 10: Can the decisions taken by the Turkish government (still) be considered as a reaction linked to the “ coup d’etat” or need they to be evaluated as a way to “destroy” the voices and/or organizations critical towards the government in Turkey.

The Steering Committee

- The President: Em. Prof. Dr. Marc baron Bossuyt
Professor Emeritus at the University of Antwerp and was President of the constitutional Court of Belgium and president of the UN Commission on Human Rights
- Jan De Bock
Jan De Bock was head of the Belgian Diplomacy, was Belgian ambassador at the United Nations and the European Union.
- Mr. Christine Mussche
Christine Mussche is attorney at Law in criminal cases and more specifically in cases of sexual assault
- Prof. Dr. Rik Van de Walle
Rector of the University of Ghent
- Prof. Dr. Caroline Pauwels
Rector of the University of Brussels

Turkey Tribunal is a not-for-profit organization (vzw) registered in Belgium. The financing of the Turkey Tribunal is managed through crowdfunding on various platforms including our own website. From each person or company or institution that wants to contribute, a maximum contribution of 5000 Euro is applicable. The finances will be managed by the steering committee.

Donations can be made via IBAN:

Turkey Tribunal NPA IBAN: BE70 3632 0131 2325 BIC: BBRU BE BB Bank: ING Belgium

Or via online system on the website: <https://turkeytribunal.com/how-is-the-turkey-tribunal-financed/>

Additional Information

- The Turkey Tribunal will be held in Geneva between September 21 and 25, 2020.
- During the first four days, a report will be presented to the tribunal. The judges will ask questions to the rapporteurs. Witnesses will also be heard. The Turkish government will be given the opportunity to answer for itself.
- The reports will be published on the website a few weeks before the tribunal starts. A short video will summarise the reports and be placed on the website.
- The hearings of the tribunal will be streamed live, afterwards short videos will be made to summarize the hearings. These videos will be placed on the website.
- On the last day of the tribunal, the tribunal will announce its verdict. This will also be published on the website.
- There will be two side events: One during the tribunal days on the prosecution of elected politicians in the zone of the Council of Europe, including Turkey and Spain, and the other in March on the impartiality of judiciary.

Website(s):

EN | www.turkeytribunal.com NL | www.turkijetribunaal.com TR | www.turkiyetribunali.com

Social Media:



[@turkey_tribunal](https://twitter.com/turkey_tribunal)



[@TurkeyTribunal](https://www.facebook.com/TurkeyTribunal)



[Turkey Tribunal](https://www.youtube.com/TurkeyTribunal)