

Family, Friends and Colleagues demand freedom for Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner

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The families, friends and colleagues of the Swedish IT consultant Ali Gharavi and German Trainer, Coach and Photographer Peter Steudtner today condemned the charges brought against them for aiding an armed terrorist organisation and demanded their immediate and unconditional release. Mr. Gharavi and Mr. Steudtner were arrested along with eight renowned Turkish human rights defenders, including the Director of Amnesty Turkey Idil Eser, on 5 July 2017 during a workshop in Istanbul. While four of the 10 human rights defenders were released on bail, the Turkish authorities ordered pre-trial detention for Mr. Gharavi and Mr. Steudtner along with four Turkish human rights defenders.

Before their arrest Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner had been leading a workshop, planned for five days, on information management and stress and trauma, with support of the international development organisation Hivos. The workshop ended abruptly on the fourth day with the arrest of all those present during a police raid. After two weeks of detention without charges, Gharavi and Steudtner will now be transferred to pre-trial custody. The oppression of civic social engagement by the Turkish regime has thereby reached a new level.

"We are shocked that Ali and Peter's support for peaceful human rights defenders has led to their imprisonment. The accusations of aiding an armed terrorist organisation against them are groundless. Workshops of this kind are common, essential education for human rights organisations, so that they can protect sensitive information, such as testimonies from witnesses of human rights violations or personal information of victims. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner as well as their four colleagues", said Daniel Ó Cluanaigh, Berlin-based human rights consultant and colleague of Mr. Gharavi and Mr. Steudtner.

Ali Gharavi lives between Kalmar, Sweden and Berlin, Germany with his partner, Laressa Dickey. "Today's decision by the Turkish authorities to charge Ali, Peter, and their colleagues – who have decades of service in internationally recognized human rights organizations – is an insult to their work, their communities, and the people they serve. They've devoted their lives and careers to the core principles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Hundreds of colleagues from around the world have attested to their integrity and call for their immediate release. We demand the dismissal of the charges against all ten," said Ms. Dickey in Sweden today.

Peter Steudtner lives with his Partner and two children in Berlin. His Partner, Magdalena Freudenschuss, said "Not knowing when Peter and Ali will be released scares us and makes us angry. We miss them from our everyday lives, as do many others who know them and their work for a fairer, more peaceful world".

Several human rights organisations have condemned the arrests, including Amnesty International, Avaaz, Front Line Defenders, Hivos, Human Rights Watch, the International Trade Union Confederation and Transparency International. // ENDS

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