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*Le Président*  
The President

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**President of the Republic of  
Turkey  
Dr. Abdullah Gül  
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genel Sekreterliği  
06689 Çankaya, Ankara**

Brussels, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013

**RE: Concerns over the arrest of more than 50 lawyers supporting the Taksim Gezi protest**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further twelve European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its deepest concerns over the arrest of dozens of lawyers, taken in custody by the police while peacefully protesting in Istanbul's Çağlayan Courthouse.

The CCBE has been informed that on 11 June more than 50 lawyers met in the Çağlayan Courthouse to express their support in favour of the Taksim Gezi protest and to oppose the violent repression exhibited by Turkish authorities against the protesters. The lawyers were initially held at the Courthouse and then taken to Vatan police station. Many of the lawyers were reportedly beaten or otherwise ill-treated during the police intervention.

All lawyers were released shortly after their arrest, which followed the strong support expressed by 100 lawyers who gathered outside the police station demanding that their colleagues be released. However, the legal basis for their arrest remains unclear and the use of force by the police seems absolutely unjustified.

The CCBE is alarmed by these arrests that show a repressive environment for lawyers, who are the persons obliged to uphold the Rule of Law.

In this context the CCBE would draw to your Excellency's attention Article 23 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local,*

*national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE urges your Excellency to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that lawyers are free to exercise their freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression and that the rule of law is in any case respected by Turkish authorities and law enforcement agencies. The CCBE also implores you to take all the necessary measures to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the abovementioned facts in order to prosecute and sanction any offender.

Yours sincerely,



EVANGELOS TSOUROULIS  
CCBE President