

PRESS RELEASE

CCBE Human Rights Award 2013 goes to the President and Council of the Istanbul Bar Association 29/11/2013

The Plenary Session of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) granted today the Human Rights Award 2013 to Mr. Ümit Kocasakal, President of the Istanbul Bar Association, and the Members of the Bar Council of the Istanbul Bar Association in recognition of their outstanding commitment, perseverance and courage in support of human rights in Turkey.

The Istanbul Bar Association has continuously supported its members against attacks from the Turkish authorities towards the legal profession and its independence.

The President and Members of the Bar Council of the Istanbul Bar Association have faced harassment both from the political power and the judiciary as a direct result of their support of defence lawyers in the controversial Sledgehammer conspiracy trial (Balyoz Harekâtı). The Bar formally requested the competent court to conduct this trial according to law and fair trial principles, after defence lawyers reported harassment, seizures, illegal surveillance and multiple breaches of the rights of the defence.

For addressing these matters with the court orally and in writing, the President and Members of the Bar Council have been charged with "*attempts to influence the court*" and now face prison terms of 3 months to 6 years. The case will be heard in January 2014, in the presence of observers from the CCBE and other organisations from around the world.

An informal English translation of Mr Kocasakal's acceptance speech is available [here](#).

The CCBE represents the bars and law societies of 32 member countries and 11 further associate and observer countries, and through them over one million European lawyers.

Every year since 2007, the CCBE has granted the Human Rights Award to a lawyer or lawyers' organisation that has brought honour to the legal profession by upholding the highest values of professional and personal conduct in the field of human rights. More information about past

recipients and criteria for the award is available [here](#).

Note to editors:

Text of recipient's acceptance speech: http://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/NTC_document/EN_CCBESpeech_text1_1385462960.pdf

Background and biographical information: http://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/NTC_document/EN_Press_packagepdf1_1385462862.pdf

More information on the CCBE Human Rights Award, criteria for eligibility and past recipients: <http://www.ccbe.eu/index.php?id=271&L=0>

For further information, please contact Hugo ROEBROECK, Director External Liaison
Tel: +32.(0)2.234.65.10
Fax: +32.(0)2.234.65.11
E-mail: roebroeck@ccbe.eu

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