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## TO ALL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

### **Urgent Action Appeal - Türkiye: Stop the Repression of Education Unionists! Defend Democracy and Trade Union Rights!**

Dear Colleagues,

Education International (EI) calls on its member organisations worldwide to stand in solidarity with teachers and education union members in Türkiye amid the worsening repression of union leaders, educators, students, and citizens exercising their democratic rights. [EI issued a webitem](#) describing the situation and highlighting solidarity initiatives.

EI calls on all member organisations to address a protest letter (see [attached model letter](#)) to the Turkish authorities to condemn the politically motivated house arrest of Eğitim Sen's Executive Board members and urge the immediate lifting of restrictions on unions and the restoration of fundamental rights and the rule of law.

#### **Democracy under Attack**

On 19 March, massive protests broke out across Türkiye following the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the democratically elected Mayor of Istanbul and a key opposition leader. His detention is widely seen as a politically motivated move by autocratic President Erdoğan to eliminate a rival ahead of the 2028 presidential elections.

The protests, initiated by university students in Istanbul, quickly spread nationwide. As dissent grew, the government unleashed a wave of repression targeting not only demonstrators but also educators and trade unionists.

On 25 March, members of Eğitim Sen staged industrial action in solidarity with protesting students and in defence of university autonomy and academic freedom. In response, authorities placed the union's Executive Board under house arrest, where they remain to this day. Nearly 2,000 people including students, journalists, and lawyers have been detained.

This represents a severe escalation in the ongoing campaign to undermine unions, academic freedom, and democratic space in Türkiye.

#### **Trade Union and Gender Equality Rights Under Threat**

Eğitim Sen has long championed gender equality, public education, and trade union rights.

In retaliation, the government has:

- Cancelled the Eğitim Sen “Project for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Education”;
- Targeted teachers advocating gender equality and non-discrimination;
- Escalated investigations, detentions, and intimidation against union members;
- Undermined international labour standards ratified by Türkiye, including ILO Conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining.

### **A United International Response**

EI has already written to Turkish government authorities demanding:

- An immediate end to all forms of repression against Eğitim Sen;
- Unrestricted union activity, in line with Türkiye’s international obligations;
- Support for quality, inclusive, science-based public education;
- The dropping of all baseless charges against union leaders.

Eğitim Sen President Kemal Irmak joined EI’s European structure, ETUCE, from house arrest on 9 April, where he received messages of solidarity from education unionists across Europe and beyond.

### **Take Action Now:**

- **Sign and share** the petition: [LabourStart Petition for Democracy in Türkiye](#)
- **Send the attached letter** to Turkish government authorities.
- **Spread the word** within your union, and raise this issue with national and international bodies.

Thank you in anticipation for your support with Türkiye educators and Eğitim Sen leaders.

In solidarity,



David Edwards  
General Secretary

