



TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS

EL/LR
Brussels, 1 April 2025

To Ms Kaja Kallas
High Representative for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy and Vice-President
of the European Commission

[letter sent by email]

ETUC letter following the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu

Dear High Representative Kallas,

We would like to express our deepest concern about the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu - along with approximately 106 other municipal officials, as well as more than 1.000 people protesting.

Putting Mayor İmamoğlu in jail when he was to be nominated by the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), Türkiye's main opposition party, to run against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the 2028 presidential election cannot be a coincidence.

The move came a few days after the decision of the Istanbul University to revoke the Mayor's 1994 diploma more than thirty years after it was granted, a diploma needed in order to be a presidential candidate.

In three separate elections, Ekrem İmamoğlu was chosen as Mayor by the citizens of Istanbul, a city of more than 16 million people. The Mayor's arbitrary detention undermines the integrity and fairness of electoral processes and amounts to another assault on democracy. As is the ban of gathering and demonstrations in the four days after, and the hundreds of arrests that followed.

The attacks on an opposition party leader follows the intimidations, attacks, arrests or even imprisonments of other politicians, journalists, NGO staff, and colleague unionists in the last six months (7 October 2024: İsmet Aslan, Kesk officer; 26 November 2024: Remzi Çalışkan, Vice President of DISK and President of Genel-iş Union...).

Dear High Representative,

As an EU candidate country and member of the Council of Europe, Türkiye committed itself to respect and uphold democratic values, the rule of law and human rights – including such essential rights as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly – and to accept the crucial role played by the opposition in a democratic society.



On behalf of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) - and its 45 million members, from 94 trade union organisations in 42 European countries - we urge the Commission to take action and call on the Turkish authorities to respect these commitments - the rights of elected officials, as well as the right of peaceful demonstration, need to be fully respected - and demand the Mayor's immediate release, as well as the release of all peaceful protesters that have been detained.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, which appears to read "Esther Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation