

October 7, 2020

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, PC, MP
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Via email



Dear Minister:

On behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and its more than 390,000 members across the country, I am writing to you to express my concern with the arbitrary detention of Cihan Erdal in Turkey and demand his release.

Cihan Erdal is a Canadian permanent resident, an activist, and a PhD candidate at Carleton University. He was detained in Istanbul, Turkey, on September 25, while there conducting his doctoral fieldwork on youth-led social movements.

He was detained along with 81 others, including activists, politicians, and academics. The arbitrary arrests appear to have targeted individuals currently or formerly involved with the opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Erdal was previously a member of the HDP when he lived in Turkey, but is no longer involved. Furthermore, the most recent information shows that the subject of the charges is HDP social media posts from 2014, which Erdal played no part in, according to his statement.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Turkish government is using the arrests to restrict the right to political association and to crack down on an opposition political party, signaling the erosion of democratic rights. On this we must not stay silent. Furthermore, there are concerns that Erdal could be targeted for prolonged detention due to his sexual orientation.

Carleton University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, where Erdal is a student, has condemned the detention and called for his release. A number of [academic associations and labour unions](#), including the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), of which Erdal is a member, have spoken out and called for his release.



On behalf of NUPGE members across the country, I add my voice to those condemning the arbitrary detention of Cihan Erdal and demanding his immediate release. I implore you to take urgent action to secure Erdal's immediate release and safe return to Canada.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your response on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LB', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Larry Brown
President

cc: Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer
National Executive Board