



Education International
Internationale de l'Education
Internacional de la Educaci3n
Bildungsinternationale



ETUCE – European Trade Union Committee for Education
Education International - European Region

ETUCE-CSEE

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Brussels, 9 April 2025

Ref.: JE/tb/10417

TO: : Mr Burak Maviş, Secretary-General
[Turkish Cypriot Teachers' Union]

Cc: Ms Selma Eylem, Mr Tahir G3kçebel

Solidarity with Turkish Cypriot teachers' unions in defence of democratic, secular, and inclusive education

Dear Mr Maviş,

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), representing 123 education trade unions and more than 11 million teachers and education personnel across Europe, expresses its full and unwavering solidarity with Turkish Cypriot teachers' unions and democratic forces currently defending the principles of secular, inclusive, and rights-based public education.

We are deeply alarmed by the government-backed regulation aiming to impose the wearing of the Islamic headscarf on young girls from secondary school age—without due public consultation, and in disregard of students' autonomy and well-being. Framed as an issue of individual freedom, this measure is, in fact, part of a broader ideological effort to reshape the education system and undermine democratic norms.

We commend the determined and peaceful mobilisation led by your unions over the past weeks, including the 21-day protest action and the joint memorandum supported by more than 50 civil society organisations. Such unity is a powerful expression of democratic resistance and professional integrity.

ETUCE strongly is gravely concerned by the reports of political pressure, direct interference from the Turkish Embassy, and utterly condemns the intimidation, hate speech, and threats—including gender-based violence—faced by union leaders such as Selma Eylem, Tahir G3kçebel, and yourself. These acts are a blatant violation of



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fundamental rights, and they attempt to suppress freedom of association and trade union action, as guaranteed under ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We call upon the authorities to immediately cease all intimidation and to ensure that teachers and their representatives can pursue their profession and exercise their rights without fear or interference.

ETUCE remains deeply concerned by the broader trend of political intimidation, pressure on teachers and trade unionists, and the erosion of democratic and secular principles in education observed in various parts of the region. We are attentive to developments and will continue to highlight such concerns in our advocacy, underlining the shared values of democratic participation, gender equality, and freedom of association that unite our member organisations.

In these critical times, we stand side by side with you in defending the values of democracy, gender equality, and secular education.

In solidarity,



John MacGabhann
ETUCE President



Jelmer Evers
ETUCE European Director