

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3048/05
by Emma Bonino (ALDE)
to the Council

Subject: Arrest of the Turkish scholar Yektan Turkyilmaz in Armenia

Yektan Turkyilmaz, aged 33, is studying for a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University, North Carolina. Mr Turkyilmaz is an expert in Turkish history, in particular the late period of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, he was given permission to have access, as the first Turkish scholar, to the Armenian National Archives.

On 17 June, as Mr. Turkyilmaz was about to fly out of Yerevan, he was forcibly removed from the aircraft and detained. When boarding his flight, he was carrying with him his research material and the books that he had bought in second-hand bookstores and the open-air market in Yerevan.

Mr Turkyilmaz has been charged with smuggling under the Article 215, paragraph 2 of the Armenian Criminal Code, and he faces a jail sentence of between 4-8 years. Since 17 June, Mr Turkyilmaz has been held in the National Security Service headquarters in Yerevan under high security conditions.

Mr Turkyilmaz bought the books legally from second-hand bookstores (as the testimonies of the booksellers' confirm) and did not imagine that he would need permission to take these books out of Armenia. He is being treated in the same category as a nuclear weapons smuggler.

Is the Council aware of the case of Mr Turkyilmaz? Has the EU representative in Yerevan sought permission to visit Mr Turkyilmaz in prison?

Has the Council formally requested clarification of this matter from the Armenian Ambassador? If not, why not? If so, what replies have been received?

What representations will the Council make to the Armenian Government so as to ensure that the right to a fair trial is respected by the Armenian authorities in this case?