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Situation of Abducted Soldiers and Police Officers

With the reemerging armed conflicts in Turkey as of 24 July 2015, the civilian servants and officials abducted by the PKK/HPG became a current issue of public opinion once again. **In the past period, all of those abducted were returned unharmed to their families as a result of the efforts by human rights organisations.** 20 customs officials who were abducted by the PKK/HPG in the KRG region in the period of July – August 2015 were returned on 8 September 2016 to their families in Turkey by the efforts of IHD.

The soldiers and police officers who were abducted when PKK/HPG militants blocked the road and perform road checks have yet to be released. In accordance with the applications made to our Association by the families, the abducted persons are as follows:

- **Police Officer Vedat Kaya**, abducted in Diyarbakır – Bingol Highway on 24 July 2015
- **Police Officer Sedat Yabalak**, abducted in Diyarbakır – Bingol Highway on 28 July 2015
- **Specialist Sergeant Huseyin Sarı, Private Sedat Sorgun and Private Süleyman Sungur**, abducted in Diyarbakır – Lice highway on 13 August 2015
- **Sergeant Semih Özbey**, abducted in Tunceli – Erzincan Highway on 18 September 2015
- **Private Müslüm Altuntaş and Private Adil Kavaklı**, abducted in Tunceli – Pülümür Highway on 2 October 2015
- **Specialist Sergeants Sedat Vardar and Ferdi Polat**, abducted in Şırnak city center on 12 December 2015
- **Specialist Sergeants Ümit Gıcır and Mevlüt Kahveci**, abducted in Hakkari city center on 21 September 2016

Human Rights Association (IHD) is a non-governmental, independent and voluntary organisation. Established by 98 human rights defenders in 1986, the Association has 31 branches, 5 representation offices and 8108 members. Being the oldest and largest human rights organisation in Turkey, IHD's "sole and specific aim" is to conduct activities on human rights and freedoms.

Families and relatives of those abducted made their applications to IHD and Mazlumder branches. Our headquarters and branches (IHD, TIHV_HRFT and Mazlumder) made many statements in the last 2 years in order for these persons to be released and returned.

Other than press conferences delivered together with the families, meetings with group deputy chairmen of political parties and various government officials were carried out in the presence of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Additionally, the families expressed the solution to the problem by having interviews with Ministers, the Prime Minister and President of the Republic.

For years, we have been dealing with the situation of those abducted. **This is the first time we are acting with the sensitiveness of this much family.** The families stated in the meetings that the government must perform what is needed in order for their children to be released.

Voice and video messages belonging to the abducted soldiers and police officers including Vedat Kaya, Sedat Yabalak, Hüseyin Sarı, Semih Özbay, Müslüm Altuntaş and Adil Kavaklı were first published on 4 January 2016. The second message was published on 8 July 2016; however, this time only the messages belonging to Süleyman Sungur, Müslim Altuntaş and Adil Kavaklı were published.

On 23 December 2016 we had meetings with the political parties having groups in the GNAT. In these meetings, we indicated that we can take initiative and return these persons to their families. Amongst the meetings, only the one with HDP was performed before the media. Finally, IHD Diyarbakır Branch together with the families held a press conference a few months ago.

We asked for an appointment with the Minister of Interior for 2 times, Prime Minister for 3 times and President of the Republic for 1 time; however, we have yet to meet. **The President of the Republic, Prime Minister and other ministers contact with the families but they avoid contact before the media.**

On 27 September 2017 we held a meeting with the Mr. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of main opposition party CHP, and demand for his support. **Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu acted in sensitiveness and stated that he will handle the issue, discuss with the Government and stand by the families.**

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