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Turkey has as much a history of severe human rights violations as a tradition of combatting violations. We are the civil society organisations, professional organisations and initiatives that play a role in the history of combatting violations, carrying out rights-based activities in several fields, including the violation of the right to life, enforced disappearances, forced migration, collective memory based on conflicts and social trauma as well as discrimination.

We highlight the urgency of confronting the past and ensuring accountability to meet the demands of the truth and justice of those subject to violations and to eliminate the social and economic injustice increasingly on the rise in Turkey. We want to remind of effective practices for confronting the past, such as punishing perpetrators of severe human rights violations in addition to removing them from public service; establishing independent truth and investigation committees to disclose the facts; developing compensation and reparation policies for victims and survivors; ensuring that the state assumes responsibility by way of issuing an official apology; reforming state institutions that have turned a blind eye to violations to avoid any future violations as well as scaling up human rights education.

We consider the call to “make amends” by the leader of the main opposition party in this context and find it noteworthy in this regard. Although we remain wary of the expression of “making amends”, we are aware of the importance to keep the field of debate active, which would pave the path to social reconciliation.

This debate field sparked by the call to “make amends” can evolve into a specific model for confronting the past in Turkey. On the other hand, due to the state’s systematic neglect of human rights obligations for decades, it is usual to harbour doubt about such calls to confrontation. The first step to establishing a consistent political will to have the state assume responsibility is to develop a participatory process. A transparent process embracing civil society and various segments of society, including first and foremost the victims of violations, is essential for any call to confrontation to gain trust and succeed.

To eradicate social polarization and guarantee democracy, we need to bear in mind that the past should be seen through the lens of the principles that keep us together, such as truth, justice and peace. Indeed, confronting the past gives a promise for the future: The promise

that violations will “never occur” again. The experience and knowledge of civil society fighting for equality and freedom will play a key role in bringing about the transformation needed to keep this promise.

No matter what we call this effort, be it “making amends” or confronting the past, we expect the steps in this direction to serve a lasting peace. To achieve this, it is vital to establish a link between the root of existing problems and the said mechanisms, including those that provide reparations or reveal the truth. Consequently, this process also means confronting the story of the founding of the Republic based on pure Turkishness, racism, class dominion, religious and sectarian discrimination, sexism and cis-heterosexism. There are many areas that need to be confronted. Rather than prioritising these areas, it is necessary to proceed by addressing them separately and taking heed of their specific challenges. That is why we remind that victims and civil society should be at the centre of the effort of making amends.

We call on everyone determined to confront the past: We, civil society organisations, professional organisations and initiatives, aspire to work together and promote any process based on truth, justice and equality.

Amed KESK Women’s (Confederation of Public Employees’ Unions) Assembly

Mothers of Peace

Association of Cultural Research for Peace (bakad)

Association for Investigation of the Truth in Press and Law

The Women State of Solidarity Association (DAKAHDER)

DEMOS Research Association

Diyarbakır Bar Association

Diyarbakır Association for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets (DKVD)

Ecology Association

The Federation of Associations for Barrier-Free Living

Young LGBTI+ Association

Migration and Humanitarian Aid Foundation

Truth Justice Memory Center

Halklar Arası Dayanışma Köprüsü Derneği /Association for Bridge of Solidarity Among the Peoples

Hêvî LGBTI+ Association

Însiyatîfa Derûnnasên Mezopotamyayê/ (Der-Mez) Mesopotamian Psychologists Initiative

Human Rights Association (IHD)

Human Rights Association Amed Branch

Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch

Association of Human Rights School (IHO)

Kadın Zamanı Derneği Time for Women Association

Kaos GL Association

Lotus Youth Space Association

Medeniyetler Beşiğinde Yakınlarını Kaybeden Ailelerle Yardımlaşma Dayanışma Birlik ve Kültür Derneği (MEBYA-DER) Association of Aid, Solidarity, Unity and Culture for Families That

Lost Their Relatives in the Cradle of Civilizations (MEBYA-DER)

Association of Lawyers for Freedom (OHD)

Rengarenk Umutlar Derneği Association of Multicolour Hopes

Research Institute on Turkey

Rosa Women's Association

Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation Studies Association (SPoD)

Sahmaran Women's Platform

Free Women's Movement (TJA)

TMMOB-Turkish Union of the Chambers of Engineers & Architects, Amed Provincial Coordination Board

Foundation for Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV)

Tutuklu Hükümlü Aileleri Hukuk Dayanışma Dernekleri Federasyonu (TUHAD-FED) Federation of Associations for Legal Support and Solidarity for Families of Prisoners and Convicts

ÜniKuir

Life-Memory-Freedom Association

New Life Association