

Turkey | NGO Committee aids state seeking to silence NGOs

08.02.2017

The UN Committee on NGOs has recommended withdrawal of ECOSOC accreditation to three Turkish NGOs which were controversially deregistered in the country last year. In a [letter](#) to the UN Secretary General, Member States and the President of ECOSOC, a group of national, regional and international NGOs are urging ECOSOC to reject the Committee's recommendations, expressing deep concern for a lack of due process and insisting on the urgent need for reform.



In its current session, the ECOSOC NGO Committee – the body responsible for considering NGO applications for accreditation with the UN – has recommended the withdrawal of accreditation to three NGOs and the closure of a handful of new applications on the basis that these organisations were deregistered in Turkey last year during the state of emergency. In a [letter](#) to the new Secretary General and ECOSOC Member States, a group of human rights organisations, including ISHR, point out flaws in the practice of the Committee in these cases.

Firstly, that the Committee took into account the deregistration process nationally when registration at national level is not a requirement for NGO accreditation with ECOSOC. Beyond this, that the Committee on NGOs made recommendations based on a process of deregistration in Turkey that itself has been criticised as in violation of international human rights standards. Amnesty International, for example, has characterised the process of deregistration as 'disproportionate' and 'arbitrary'. Thirdly, that the Committee ignored its own procedures and did not inform the affected NGOs of its proposed decisions.

'This UN Committee has mimicked the lack of due process provided to these NGOs nationally,' said ISHR's Eleanor Openshaw. 'This is a shameful development, showing an UN Committee apparently willing to contribute to the crackdown against NGOs.'

The signatories to the joint NGO letter note that the UN Committee risks being instrumentalised by States seeking to commit reprisals against NGOs that call attention to their human rights records at the UN.

Whilst the UN should provide platforms for those seeking justice and accountability denied at national level, gaining access to the UN can be deeply problematic. The NGO Committee has been the subject of strong criticism by States, UN officials and NGOs for several years. 230 NGOs highlighted the need for urgent reform of the Committee, in a [letter sent to ECOSOC members last June](#).

'These latest recommendations by the Committee are a worrying development in an already alarming practice,' said Eleanor Openshaw. 'ECOSOC must reject the Committee's recommendations and take responsibility for the Committee's reform. This is now a question of the UN safeguarding its own integrity.'