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IPA Demands Freedom for Nobel Peace Prize Nominee Ragıp Zarakolu

Geneva, 14 March 2012 - **For Immediate Release**

2012 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee publisher Ragıp Zarakolu has been held on pre-trial detention for 135 days in a high-security prison, being accused of membership of an illegal organisation under Turkish anti-terror legislation. His detention and that of many others symbolize the current fall of Turkey in international freedom of expression rankings. The International Publishers Association (IPA) continues to be seriously concerned that his imprisonment, alongside several other writers and intellectuals, is in glaring violation of Turkey's international human rights obligations. IPA therefore continues to seek his immediate release. This will be the core of the message to be delivered by William Nygaard, the Norwegian publisher of *The Satanic Verses* who was shot at for that reason in the 1990s, on behalf of IPA, at an important domestic and inclusive freedom of expression rally co-organised by IPA's Turkish member, the Turkish Publishers Association (TYB), at the Turkish Journalists Association. William Nygaard will take that opportunity to announce the official launch of the <http://freedomforragip.wordpress.com> blog.

Ragıp Zarakolu's lawyers have been denied access to the investigation file and the related documents. His arrest and pre-trial detention solely rest, so it seems, on his attendance of two public meetings of a legal organisation, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which were open to the public and the media. This is unacceptable and seriously questions the rule of law in Turkey. Ragıp Zarakolu's lawyers have therefore filed an application to the European Court of Human Rights, accusing Turkey of violating articles 3, 5 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, T. Jagland, recently declared that 1,000 of the pending cases before the European Court of Human Rights concern freedom of expression in Turkey. Turkey is actually, year after year, the country which gets the highest number of convictions by the European Court on Human Rights, ahead of Russia. All this is incompatible with the values of a free and democratic society.

Says Bjørn Smith-Simonsen, Chair of IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee (FTPC): "On the BBC's Hard Talk program, Turkish EU Minister Bağış recently declared that no intellectual or journalist was behind bars in Turkey for being a journalist or an intellectual. He added that only rapists, killers and bank robbers were in prison. In that somewhat highly irrational context, we welcome the recent release of journalists Şık and Şener (although pending trial and after 375 days in prison), and urge the Turkish authorities to show consistency by also releasing 2012 Nobel Peace Prize Nominee publisher Ragıp Zarakolu".

International Publishers Association

William Nygaard, representing IPA at the Istanbul 15 March freedom of expression rally adds: “The detentions of publisher Zarakolu, academic Ersanlı and many others symbolize Turkey’s fall in all international freedom of expression rankings. The situation is extremely serious. IPA is therefore very concerned and keeps urging the Turkish authorities to release Ragıp Zarakolu, his son Deniz, Büşra Ersanlı, and all the others who are in prison solely for having exercised their right to non-violent freedom of expression immediately. IPA also calls on the Turkish authorities in particular to amend the anti-terror legislation and to abolish Article 301”.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1. William Nygaard’s speech is available at:
www.internationalpublishers.org/images/stories/FtP/blog/speech_final.pdf
2. The blog for the liberation of Ragıp Zarakolu is available at:
<http://freedomforragip.wordpress.com>
3. More about the 15 March Freedom of Expression Rally in Istanbul:

“In order to protest the growing oppression in our country, PEN Turkey, the Turkish Publishers Association, the Writers' Syndicate of Turkey and the Association of Literary Translators are organizing a meeting on Freedom of Expression in Turkey at the Journalists' Association of Turkey on 15 March 2012 (Conference Hall in Cağaloğlu, Istanbul)”.

10.00 - Opening - Speeches by IPA and PEN International representatives, and messages from abroad. For IPA: William Nygaard (Norwegian publisher of *The Satanic Verses*). For PEN International: Eugene Schougin, Vice-President of PEN International.

Messages from writers and journalists in prison.

10.30 - Panel 1: Freedom of Thought and Expression in terms of Law.

12.00 - Panel 2: Freedom of Thought and Expression from the viewpoints of writers.

13.30 - Preparation of the statement (by representatives of PEN Turkey, the Turkish Publishers Association, the Writers' Syndicate of Turkey and the Association of Literary Translators).

More about IPA:

The International Publishers Association (IPA) is the global non-governmental organisation representing all aspects of book and journal publishing worldwide. Established in 1896, IPA's mission is to promote and protect publishing and to raise awareness for publishing as a force for cultural and political advancement worldwide. IPA is an industry association with a human rights mandate. IPA currently has 65 member associations in 53 countries.

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