

TURKISH WRITER NEVIN BERKTAŞ BACK IN PRISON

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[Nevin Berktaş](#), the Turkish writer who has spent 21 years of her life in Turkish prisons, was arrested in early November 2010 and is currently imprisoned in Istanbul Bakirkoy Prison. She is serving a 10-month sentence for offences related to views expressed in a book she published in 2000, *Inancin Sinandigi Zor Mekanlar: Hucreler* (Difficult Places that Challenge the Faith: Prison Cells). The book describes the experience of resistance in the prison where she was incarcerated during the military coup in 1980. Berktaş was convicted and sentenced under Article 7 of the Anti-Terror Law (propaganda for an illegal organization). Her lawyer has demonstrated that, due to an administrative error in calculating a sentence for other convictions, Berktaş has already spent almost 6 years too many in prison. Her lawyer has asked for the 10 month prison sentence to be annulled. The request was recently dismissed by the court.

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Recently, Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair of Writers in Prison Committee, addressed a letter to the Minister of Justice in Ankara protesting the treatment of Nevin Berktaş. The letter is included below. If you would like to send similar letters of protest to the Turkish authorities or to the Turkish ambassador in your own country, please feel free to use this letter as a model.

Mr Sadullah Ergin
Minister of Justice
06669 Kizilay
Ankara
Turkey

Dear Mr Ergin,

I write as Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN, the world association of writers founded in 1921 to promote literature, and which today has 145 Centres in 104 countries across the globe. We do this through the promotion of literature, international campaigning on issues such as translation and freedom of expression and improving access to literature at international, regional and national levels.

With urgency, I wish to draw your attention to the case of the writer Nevin Berktaş, who was arrested

on 2 November 2010 and is currently, and unjustly, imprisoned in Istanbul Bakirkoy Prison. She is serving a 10-month sentence for offences related to views expressed in her book, *Inancin Sinandigi Zor Mekanlar: Hucreler*.

The book was published in 2000, while the writer was in prison, and, as we understand it, Berktaş faced four separate trials as a result. Three of her trials resulted in cash fines or acquittals, but one, where she was tried for 'aiding and abetting a terrorist organization,' resulted in a guilty verdict and a four-year prison sentence. Following a change in the law, Berktaş' lawyer requested a retrial of the case, after which the prison sentence was changed to a suspended sentence.

Berktaş was released in 2007, after serving thirteen years in prison. Previously, between 1983 and 1991, she had served another prison sentence of eight years. After her release, her lawyer was able to demonstrate that, due to an administrative error, Berktaş had served 5 years and 7 months longer in prison than she should have done.

After Berktaş' release in 2007, the *Inancin Sinandigi Zor Mekanlar: Hucreler* case was re-tried once again and she was convicted and sentenced to ten months in prison under Article 7 of the Anti-Terror Law (propaganda for an illegal organization). As we understand it, her lawyer applied to the Prosecutor's Office to have this sentence annulled because of the almost 6 extra years Berktaş had already spent in prison.

According to information we have received, the Prosecutor's Office was in the process of reviewing this application – and had not completed the process - when an arrest warrant was issued for the writer and she was detained.

Nevin Berktaş is fifty-two years old, and, having spent twenty-one years in prison, she is in bad health. She has already spent more time in prison than her sentences required, and her imprisonment is punishment for views expressed in her book.

Given that Turkey is committed as a signatory to both Article 19 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights – both of which guarantee the right to freedom of expression – I urge you, as a matter of urgency, to consider the case of Nevin Berktaş, and to release her from prison.

Yours sincerely,

Marian Botsford Fraser

Chair, Writers in Prison Committee

[Petition Blog](#)

