

CEMR statement on the increased pressure against democratically elected mayors in Türkiye

Brussels, 9 July 2025

We are issuing this statement just a few hours after the condemnation of Zeydan Karalar, Deputy-President of our member organisation, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT), to express our growing alarm and deep concern about the actions taken against local leaders in Türkiye.

As European local and regional leaders, we feel compelled to voice our profound disquiet regarding the recent developments, which directly target our peers as democratically elected representatives.

In recent months, it has become increasingly evident that mayors affiliated with opposition parties are being subjected to suspensions and legal measures that obstruct them from fulfilling their democratic mandates. Today, we are particularly alarmed by the detention of Mayor Zeydan Karalar, Deputy President of UMT. This is even more concerning given that he assumed this role following the earlier arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, former President of the Union.

Such actions risk undermining the principles of local democracy and have potentially far-reaching consequences for stability, democratic resilience, and social cohesion across our continent. The legitimacy of democratic governance relies on strong, autonomous local governments, and respect for political pluralism.

Consequently, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment to supporting and standing in solidarity with local governments in Türkiye and throughout Europe.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) calls upon the European and international communities to keep the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and local self-government firmly at the forefront of their engagement with Türkiye. We respectfully urge the prompt release of all detained Mayors and officials and the full restoration of their rights to perform their democratic functions without fear or interference.

Democracy and local self-government cannot and will not be compromised. CEMR extends its full support to all local elected representatives in Türkiye who continue to serve their communities with courage, integrity, and dedication.

Vince Maple

Councillor of Medway
Chair of CEMR Financial
Management Committee

Philippe Laurent

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CEMR Co-President

Christoph Schnaudigel

President of the County
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Jan van Zanen

Mayor of The Hague
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Anders Knappe

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