

Brussels, 7 October 2026

## **CEMR statement on the arrest of Vahap Seçer, President of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye and CEMR Vice-President**

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is deeply concerned by the arrest of Vahap Seçer, Mayor of Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, President of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT), and CEMR Vice-President, on 6 October 2026.

Mayor Seçer is the third President of UMT, CEMR's member association in Türkiye, to be deprived of his liberty since the 2024 Turkish local elections. His arrest follows those of Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, on 19 March 2025, and Zeydan Karalar, Mayor of Adana Metropolitan Municipality, on 8 July 2025.

These developments are part of a broader and deeply concerning trend. Since the 2024 Turkish local elections, more than 80 municipalities have had their mayors replaced, while over 30 mayors have been arrested. Among them is Sinem Dedetaş, Mayor of Üsküdar and a member of the CEMR Policy Committee, who was arrested in July 2026. Taken together, these events point to a continued erosion of local democracy in Türkiye, a trend that CEMR has repeatedly raised concerns about.

CEMR reiterates that local elected representatives must be able to carry out their duties freely and without undue interference. We therefore call on the Turkish authorities to:

- Respect the democratic mandates entrusted to local elected representatives by citizens and uphold the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
- Release arrested elected representatives and allow them to resume their mandates;
- Ensure that UMT can operate freely and continue to be led by the representatives chosen by its members.

CEMR also calls on European institutions and the wider international community to stand in solidarity with democratically elected local representatives in Türkiye and to raise these cases in their dialogue with the Turkish authorities.

At a time when democracy is facing increasing pressure across Europe, protecting local self-government is more important than ever. CEMR will continue to follow developments closely and stands firmly alongside UMT and its members and partners in Türkiye.



Christoph Schnaudigel  
President of the County of Karlsruhe