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## Case Information: Halil Kemal Gürüz



<b>NAME:</b>	GÜRÜZ, Halil Kemal
<b>DATE OF BIRTH:</b>	May 19, 1947
<b>PROFESSION:</b>	Chemical engineer
<b>DATE OF ARREST:</b>	June 25, 2012
<b>STATUS:</b>	Detained
<b>CASE TYPE:</b>	Active, Private

## Summary and Current Status

Kemal Gürüz is a Turkish chemical engineer, education administrator, retired professor, and former university rector who has held leadership roles in national higher education organizations in Turkey. In late June 2012, while traveling outside of Turkey, Professor Gürüz was informed that the police wanted to interrogate him. He returned to Turkey immediately and, on June 25, appeared at the Ankara Courthouse, where he testified for three hours. According to the Turkish pro-government newspaper, *Today's Zaman*, the court ruled in favor of Professor Gürüz's arrest and ordered him to be remanded to jail for his alleged role in the 1997 unarmed toppling of Turkey's first Islamic-led government. He is being held in Sincan prison in Ankara and is permitted weekly family visits during which they must speak by phone, looking across a glass screen. He reportedly will be permitted one "open" visit per month. We have been told that Professor Gürüz reportedly is distraught and has not been eating. His prison address is:

Professor Kemal Gürüz  
Ankara 1 No'lu F Tipi Yuksek Guvenlikli Ceza Infaz Kurumu Yenikent  
Sincan Ankara, TURKEY

This is not the first time that Professor Gürüz has been interrogated. On January 7, 2009, 15 policemen came to his apartment in Ankara, searched it for five hours, and confiscated the hard drive of his computer, his cell phone, a camera, documents, tapes and CDs. Professor Gürüz was then flown to Istanbul where he was taken to the organized crimes division of Istanbul Police

Academies in the Network support and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assist unjustly incarcerated nonviolent professional colleagues, address grave science-related human rights issues, and advocate for member institutions whose independence is threatened.  
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Headquarters and interrogated for four days. The interrogation lasted 11 hours, and was conducted in the presence of his lawyer. Professor Gürüz was released on January 11, 2009, pending trial. He was charged with “forming and leading an alleged illegal armed terrorist organization [known as Ergenekon] and obtaining secret documents related to state security” and was subsequently brought to trial. That trial is ongoing.

## Background

Kemal Gürüz is a retired professor of chemical engineering at Middle East Technical University. Previously, he was president for eight years of Turkey’s Council of Higher Education (YÖK), a national board of governors for all institutions of higher education, and the Turkish Scientific and Technical Research Council (TÜBİTAK). Other positions Professor Gürüz has held include that of rector of Karadeniz Technical University in Trabzon from 1985 to 1990 and fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and the State University of New York from 2004 to 2005. He has also published a number of books and articles about higher education governance, including the recent article, “Turkey: Obstacles to and examples of curriculum reform,” published in *Confronting challenges to the liberal arts curriculum: Perspectives of developing and transitional countries* in 2012.

The Turkish government’s “Ergenekon” investigation began in June 2007 when 27 hand grenades and explosives were discovered in the Istanbul home of a retired noncommissioned Turkish military officer. According to Human Rights Watch, “The investigation that followed uncovered evidence pointing to a much larger conspiracy, including evidence of plans to assassinate the prime minister, the former chief of staff, several members of Parliament from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party, the writer Orhan Pamuk, and others.” Ergenekon—which, in a legend about the genesis of the Turkish people, refers to the Turks’ mythical homeland—is the name given to an alleged illegal ultranationalist group consisting of former military and police officers, politicians, journalists, and some intellectuals.

Over the past four years several hundred people have been detained in connection with the “Ergenekon” investigation. Of this group, approximately 194 individuals have been charged and brought to trial. The first group of defendants—consisting of 86 people, primarily senior military officers, alleged members of organized crime, leading figures from the media, and some civil society activists—were brought to trial on October 20, 2008. Their trial is ongoing. A second group of 56 people was indicted in March 2009, and a third group of 52—which includes Professor Gürüz, as well as a number of other academics whose cases have been undertaken by the CHR—was indicted in August 2009.

The second Ergenekon trial, in which Professor Gürüz and 51 others are co-defendants, began on September 7, 2009. It was anticipated that it would continue for an extended period because the Istanbul 13th High Court merged two indictments—the one that included Professor Gürüz and the “second group” of 56 defendants arrested earlier. The trial then proceeded with a total of 108 co-defendants. Of this group, 55 co-defendants were released on bail pending the outcome of the trial. Since then another large-scale trial and 16 smaller groups were each separately brought to trial in connection with the Ergenekon case. In early 2012 all 19 Ergenekon-related cases were merged in a new trial with a total of 256 suspects. To the best of our knowledge no credible evidence has been presented to support the serious charges brought against Professor Gürüz. To date, none of the defendants has been convicted, although legal proceedings began more than three years ago.

Given that a significant number of those arrested in 2009, such as Professor Gürüz, are intellectuals who support a secularist civil society and had been outspoken in opposing attempts by Turkey’s current government to desecularize the country’s universities, there is significant concern that the Ergenekon case has become politically tainted by targeting for arrest an increasing number of critics and opponents of the ruling Islamist party’s policies.

Professor Gürüz’s most recent arrest, on June 25, 2012, is not connected to Ergenekon, but rather to the current government’s investigation of the downfall of the 1997 government (referred to as the “post-modern coup” or “unarmed coup”) began in April 2012, when police raided the homes of 29 individuals accused by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of “attempting to overthrow the government” and arrested them. Two others similarly accused were not arrested at the time because they were abroad. This is the latest crackdown by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s government against current and retired members of the Turkish Armed Forces and others alleged to have been involved in past coups. (Some 300 current and former members of the military and others, including

a number of academics, have been on trial for several years for alleged involvement in planning coups. The trials are known as “Ergenekon” and “Sledgehammer.”) This latest crackdown against individuals alleged to have been involved in the “post-modern coup” began a week after the two surviving members of the 1980 military junta were brought to trial for their alleged roles in the September 1980 military coup. (Turkey has had four coups since 1960. Two were armed, in 1960 and 1980, and two others, in 1971 and 1997, were unarmed.)

The background to these latest arrests reportedly is as follows. During a nine-hour meeting on February 28, 1997, the military-dominated National Security Council (MGK) reportedly pressured then-Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to implement 18 measures aimed at curbing certain practices allowed by the Islamist government that the Council perceived as a growing threat against secularism in the country. Subsequently, additional pressure, using the media and other avenues, reportedly was intensified against Erbakan’s government. In June 1997, when a senior MP left the government’s party, then-Prime Minister Erbakan lost, by one, a Parliamentary confidence vote and resigned. He had served only one year as head of the government.

Speaking on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “post-modern coup,” current Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was quoted in the Turkish newspaper, *Hurriyet*, as saying that the organizers and supporters of the “February 28 Process” would never be forgiven “even if 1,000 years went by”. He reportedly also recently supported a controversial education reform bill on the grounds that it would remove the last traces of the “February 28 Process,” including the law that mandated a compulsory eight-year primary education for all Turkish citizens.