

**PEN
NORWAY**

**PEN Norway's hearing report
in the case of Pinar Selek**

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The sixth trial of the case known as “the Spice Bazaar explosion” against Pınar Selek, a feminist, anti-militarist, peace activist, sociologist, researcher and a writer, has begun in İstanbul, Turkey.

A number of observers, politicians, journalists and lawyers attended the hearing held today at the 15th High Criminal Court of İstanbul. Lawyers from the Bar Associations of Paris and Marseille were present together with over 40 lawyers who were in the courtroom to defend Selek.

Also present at the courthouse were nearly 80 observers representing various municipalities, bar associations, social sciences and research centres, human rights organisations, women’s organisations, the French Communist Party and various solidarity committees from France, where Selek has been conducting her research.

Upholding that Selek should be extradited to Turkey for her testimony, the Court adjourned the next hearing to 29 September.

After 25 years of various trials and four acquittals, Selek is now charged with “attempting to separate a part of the territory under the sovereignty of the state from the state administration”, “unauthorised possession or transfer of dangerous substances”, and “membership of an illegal armed organisation”.

Statements by the lawyers of the Bar Associations of İstanbul and Paris

At the beginning of the hearing, the judge explained that the Court had applied to France to get Selek’s defence. The judge also stated that lawyers from the French bar associations would be allowed to make their statements through an interpreter.

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At the beginning of his remarks, Lawyer Akin Atalay stated that “Following the latest decision of the General Board of Criminal Department of the Supreme Court, it seems that the courts are now obliged to follow whatever the highest authority in the judiciary says. We, however, have a different opinion.” He pointed out that Selek’s acquittal is not only justified based on principles of justice and fairness but also on legal grounds.

He highlighted that the arrest warrant against Selek should be lifted and reminded that Selek was not a “fugitive” but an academic residing abroad. Atalay stated that she could submit her testimony from abroad and the trial could continue.

Following the statements by Lawyers Martin Pradel and Françoise Cotta of the Bar Association of Paris, the presiding judge said: “We welcome them as guests because although they have no official legal capacity here, as foreign partners they have an advisory role in international law.”

Court awaits Selek’s extradition

Following the statements by the lawyers, the prosecutor presented his final opinion. He requested that the court comply with the appeal court’s decision, that the request for Selek’s testimony to be taken where she currently resided be rejected and that the Court should wait until the arrest warrant is executed.

The court rejected the request for Selek’s testimony to be taken in France and decided to wait until the arrest warrant was executed.

The next hearing will be held on January 29, 2023.



■ Chronology of events

In July 1998, an explosion took place in the Spice Bazaar, one of the oldest covered bazaars in Istanbul. Eight people were killed in the explosion. Two days after the incident, sociologist Pinar Selek was detained and was asked the names of the people she had interviewed for her sociological research on the Kurdish issue. She was severely tortured in detention. A week later she was arrested on charges of “membership of an illegal organisation”.

One and a half months after the explosion, Selek found out that she was associated with the Spice Bazaar explosion as she was watching the TV in prison.

Notwithstanding the incident report by the police bomb experts and the Criminal Laboratory that stated that there was no evidence of a bomb in the explosion, in November 1998 Selek was indicted for the Spice Bazaar explosion anyway.

Along with Selek, another defendant in the case was Abdülmecit Öztürk, who -in his testimony taken under severe torture, stated that he had “carried out the act together with Selek”.

Four acquittals, one aggravated life sentence

Selek was repeatedly put on trial. Released from prison in 2000, Selek was acquitted in trials in the years 2006, 2008 and 2011 respectively. Each time, the Court of Cassation overturned the court’s judgement. Meanwhile, Öztürk’s acquittal was finalised.

Click here for detailed information on the chronology of the case: [English - Turkish](#)

In 2013, despite the dissenting opinion of the presiding judge, the 12th High Criminal Court of Istanbul, by a majority vote, sentenced Selek to aggravated life imprisonment and issued a warrant for her arrest. However, this prison sentence was overturned by the Court of Cassation as well.

The case was reopened in 2014 and Pinar Selek was acquitted for the fourth time.

In 2022, once again the General Board of Criminal Department of the Supreme Court overturned this decision and ruled that Selek should be sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment. The case was reopened in 2023, exactly 25 years after the explosion.