

theodor heuss foundation

for the promotion of political education and culture
in Germany and Europe

A Theodor Heuss Medal for 2017 is awarded to author,
physicist and human rights campaigner

Aslı Erdoğan

in recognition of her exemplary commitment as a citizen
for many years towards democracy, human rights and
freedom of speech and her important contribution to an
open, democratic culture of debate in Europe. As an
author, Aslı Erdoğan spoke up for women, Kurds, Alevists,
Armenians, prisoners and refugees and denounced all
infringements of human rights. “Please do not forget
me. And my books. They are my children,” wrote Aslı
Erdoğan from prison. She is not currently able to write,
she does not have the strength, she is too shaken.

Aslı Erdoğan does not belong to any Kurdish party.
Despite this, she was arrested in Istanbul on 16 August
2016 and charged in accordance with Article 302 of the
Turkish Criminal Code (destruction of the unity and inte-
grity of the state). The charges were brought not because
of her texts and books or any propaganda or offence to
the state government, but because she was a member of
the consultative committee for the pro-Kurdish news-
paper “Özgür Gündem”. The charge is not reasonable
from a legal perspective, however the criminal offence
carries a potential life sentence.

The fate of Aslı Erdoğan demonstrates that it is time for
the civil society to practise solidarity with authors, scien-
tists, journalists and artists who are hampered in their
work by authoritarian and undemocratic structures. “In
prison, I have learned that solidarity is not just a word.
My faith in humanity was shaken, but now I believe again.
The voices from outside are important as they allow you
to cling on to life,” explains Erdoğan. This proves how
existential the idea of a democratic public is.

Stuttgart, 1 April 2017

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