

Paris, 7th February 2021

**Turkey: President Erdoğan's personal attack on Ayşe Buğra,
Professor at Istanbul's Boğaziçi University**

Ayşe Buğra, professor emeritus at Boğaziçi University and founder member of the European Network for the Study of Political Society (REASOPO), has just been attacked, personally, by the President of the Turkish Republic; this is tantamount to a threat.

On Friday 5th February 2021—at the moment a court confirmed her husband Osman Kavala's detention, postponed his trial until May on yet another new charge, contrary to the law—Recep Tayyip Erdoğan launched his attack on Ayşe as he left his Friday prayers. He poured scorn on her as “the wife of someone known as Osman Kavala, Soros's agent in Turkey” and accused her of being among the “instigators” of the student demonstrations protesting against the appointment of an unqualified official, allied to government, as Chancellor of Boğaziçi University.

Ayşe Buğra is a distinguished and renowned scholar. A political economist, she has spent her whole career at the celebrated Boğaziçi University, especially at its Atatürk Institute of Modern Turkish History, where she founded the Social Policy Forum. She is well known as a major student of Karl Polanyi's work. She has translated him into Turkish and, in her many books and articles, her fresh interpretations have shown his continuing relevance today. She has played a major role in making Polanyi's work more widely known, and enlarged our understanding of his methods and principal ideas.

In addition, Ayşe Buğra has both reminded economists of the need to use the insights of social science and pressed social scientists to make use of the methods and theoretical logics employed by economists. She is interested in the history of economic and political thought; in the political and economic directions taken by states; in the significance of social values, conventions, and understandings; and in the political conditions of power relations. In particular, Ayşe Buğra has developed ways to analyse the dynamics of social policy. She emphasizes the subtle, ambiguous dimension of variables too often introduced in a global and unidirectional way, such as religion, social class, women, and marginalised groups. She tackles head-on the political dimension of economies, explaining not only how wealth and income are assessed and redistributed, but also knowledge and skills, with questions about inequality and injustice—all with a keenly critical mind emptied of personal prejudice.

Well known for the quality and originality of her work, Ayşe Buğra has published in important American and European scholarly journals and has been a visiting professor or research fellow in the United States (Harvard, New York University) and in Europe (The European University Institute at Florence, London School of Economics, Berlin's Wissenschaftskolleg, Vienna University, SciencesPo, EHESS, and CNRS-Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales at Paris). Besides REASOPO she sits on a number of research councils, especially until recently the council of the French Institute of Advanced Study. But what best characterises her international presence is her openness and generosity. She has always aimed to help younger colleagues with her knowledge and connections, including in the academic world, seen in her devotion to the work of her University and her Social Policy Forum. The award of the Celso Furtado prize by the World Academy of Science in 2015 honoured her work and her service to the academic world.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's charges against Ayşe Buğra are despicable, grotesque, worthless and pointless. They show, yet again, his misuse of the law and systematic denial of academic freedoms. The European Network for the Study of Political Society (REASOPO) requests all European governments and university authorities to formally protest against these baseless charges against a professor who is admired and respected around the world.