

International Peace Bureau

Disarmament for Development

IPB Statement on the Detention and Deportation of Executive Director Sean Conner and other Activists in Istanbul on 3 July 2026

Monday, 6 July 2026

The International Peace Bureau (IPB) unequivocally condemns the detention and deportation of its Executive Director, Sean Conner, alongside other activists from Germany, Finland, and Italy. Upon arrival to Istanbul's Sabiha Gökçen International Airport at 17:27 local time on Friday, 3 July, Sean had his passport and cell phone confiscated and was submitted to two hours of interrogation, including scans of his fingerprints and mugshot photographs. Turkish authorities repeatedly lied about the reasons for the interrogation and claimed that the reason for the check was a flagging by the German authorities, who denied any involvement.

Sean then had all his belongings searched, including the confiscated phone, was coerced into signing paperwork for his own deportation – without context or explanation to what he was signing – and forced into a detention room, at which point he was told he would be deported on a flight the following day. The same treatment was given to four activists from Linksjugend (Left Youth of Germany), one activist from Työväen antimilitaristit (Labor antimilitarists of Finland), as well as one from Fronte Popolare of Italy. Other activists faced interrogation but were ultimately allowed to enter.

Those detained were subject to psychological punishment and illegal practices, including an unsanitary environment and bright lights that prevented sleep, an inability to communicate with anyone outside the facility or to be aware of the time due to confiscation of all technology, and no explanation for the reason of detention or deportation. Passports were only returned to activists after landing in their country of departure, accompanied by threats of police escort upon return.

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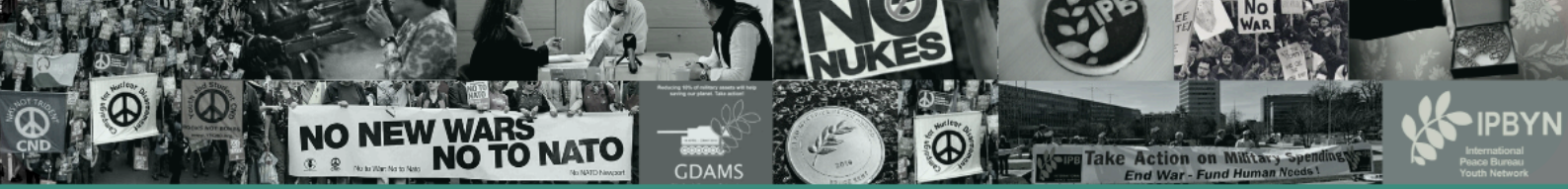
Officially –according to paperwork provided to detainees after their deportation – these activists received an “Entry Ban” for being a “Potentially Disruptive Passenger” due to public security Law No. 6458 Article 15-1c, which states: “(a) Visa shall be refused for those foreigners who are considered undesirable for reasons of public order or public security”.

Sean and the other detainees had travelled to Istanbul to attend the Istanbul Anti-Imperialist Peace Summit on Saturday, 4 July alongside Turkish and other international activists – a completely legal and peaceful conference which sought to bring forward perspectives for a more peaceful and just world before the opening of the 36th NATO Summit in Ankara on 7-8 July. Leading up to the summit, Ankara placed blanket protest bans in several provinces, denial of accreditation to journalists, and the detention of over 200 lawyers, academics, civil society representatives, and students, including international activists.

These undemocratic acts are blatant violations of both Türkiye’s own democracy and international law. Yet unfortunately such actions are increasingly common not only in Türkiye but throughout its NATO allies who have increasingly cracked down on nonviolent peace activists and international solidarity groups, from Germany and the UK to the USA.

NATO repeatedly brands itself as a defender of global democracy based in common values like freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. Yet the actions of Türkiye and other NATO members demonstrate exactly the opposite – the alliance consistently fails to respect international law and the rights to assembly and free speech; insofar as the alliance does have any shared values, they are based in repression of any dissenting viewpoint, militarization, and their own national interests.

The International Peace Bureau (IPB) is a Nobel Peace Laureate organization with more than 130 years of respected history as a global voice for peace; we do not represent a threat of any sort to public security in Türkiye. It is clear that their attempt to block Sean’s entry was not about public security as they claimed, but an attempt to silence the voice of the international peace movement.



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IPB therefore demands an immediate explanation from the Turkish and German authorities as to the cause of the detention and the malpractice of Turkish authorities in denying the detained activists basic rights. We call on all other NATO members to immediately and unequivocally denounce the actions of the Turkish authorities and their treatment of peaceful and democratic activists both Turkish and international.

These developments only serve to further the need for criticism and opposition to NATO and its undemocratic, militarist and imperialist practices. If the alliance is willing to look away from the mistreatment of its own citizens, including the violation of their human rights, we must imagine what it is willing to do to people in countries deemed to be its 'adversaries'.

Today, as always, we say no to the undemocratic and rights-violating NATO, and yes to global peace and justice.

