

## **Culture Action Europe calls on Turkish government to fully respect the right to freedom of expression and to immediately cease the use of excessive police force towards civilians**

*Statement 20 June 2013*

Culture Action Europe\* expresses its extreme concern for the situation unfolding in Turkey.

Democracy is not just an exercise in the right to vote. It also implies that debates can be generated inside societies without the State responding with violence that triggers a negative spiral of public anger. The use of disproportionate violence by the police violates the right to demonstrate peacefully and a **threat to the freedom of expression in Turkey**.

Gezi park symbolizes the vital importance of public spaces in a democracy, not just in Turkey, but throughout Europe. Turkish youth, intellectuals, NGO's and artistic communities have coalesced in defense of a shared public space and of the freedom to access it, and this represents a vital asset for the future of Turkish democracy.

Culture Action Europe calls on the Turkish government to listen to the demands of the citizens, especially when they claim respect for their individual and collective freedoms, and in particular their right to speak and express themselves freely and to promote shared public spaces for social life.

We ask that all peaceful demonstrators are released and demand that the Turkish government avoids any unnecessary and unilateral use of force. We also demand that the Turkish government guarantees to fully respect all international conventions protecting freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, which Turkey has ratified.

Culture Action Europe calls on the European Union and its Member States to use all available diplomatic means to persuade the Turkish government to enter into a constructive dialogue with the demonstrators, respecting freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the terms of the international conventions that it has ratified.

*\* [Culture Action Europe \(CAE\)](#) was established in 1992 and is today the leading European advocacy network in the field of culture. CAE currently associates 110 organisations from all across Europe giving voice to more than 80,000 organisations active in all cultural and artistic domains: from orchestras to writers associations, from research institutions to cultural contact points, from national theatres to international cultural networks, from museums to opera houses, from conservatoires to visual artists.*

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