



Brussels, 29 January 2016

Dear First Vice-President Timmermans, High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini,

On 27 January, renowned Turkish journalists Can Dündar and Erdem Gül have been informed that they both faced one aggravated life sentence, one ordinary life sentence and 30 years in jail on charges of revealing state secrets. These claims are based on an article Dündar published in Cumhuriyet newspaper, a major Turkish newspaper of which Gül was the Ankara bureau chief. The article claims to show proof that a consignment of weapons from the Turkish government seized at the border in January 2014 was bound for Islamist rebels in Syria. Similar penalties are usually reserved for cases involving violent crimes. As such they have a chilling effect on press freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey.

The indictment prepared by Istanbul Deputy Chief Public Prosecutor İrfan Fidan accuses Dündar and Gül of "gathering secret state documents for the purposes of political and military espionage," "attempting to topple the government of the Republic of Turkey or attempting to stop either partially or totally the government from fulfilling its duties" and "deliberate support for a terrorist organization without being a member." The two men are accused of being "accomplices" of a so-called Gülenist Terror Organization/Parallel State Structure (FETÖ/PDY). According to the indictment, the purpose of the report published in Cumhuriyet was "to create the perception in Turkey and in the world that Turkey was helping terrorist organizations to associate the government with terrorism."

Both the charges and the proposed sentences have serious implications for Turkey's already poor press freedom record. I urge you to urgently call for the release of both men, who have already spent 65 days in pre-trial detention. In your intensified contacts with the authorities in Turkey, in the context of the so-called deal on migration, there must be room for other urgent matters, including the freedom of expression, particularly for Can Dündar and Erdem Gül.

Sincerely,

Marietje Schaaake (ALDE)

Martina Anderson (GUE)

Petras Auštrevičius (ALDE)

Beatriz Becerra (ALDE)

Brando Benifei (S&D)

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE)

Michal Boni (EPP)

Lynn Boylan (GUE)

Matt Carthy (GUE)

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (EPP)

Mark Demesmaeker (ECR)

Gérard Deprez (ALDE)

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)

Ismail Ertug (S&D)

José Inácio Faria (ALDE)

Eugen Freund (S&D)

Ana Gomes (S&D)

Takis Hadjigeorgiou (GUE)

Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE)

Eva Kaili (S&D)

Tunne Kelam (EPP)

Ska Keller (GREENS/EFA)

Dietmar Köster (S&D)

Stelios Kouloglou (GUE)

Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D)

Barbara Lochbihler (GREENS/EFA)

Ulrike Lunacek (GREENS/EFA)

Andrejs Mamikins (S&D)

Stefano Maullu (EPP)

Costas Mavrides (S&D)

Matthijs van Miltenburg (ALDE)

Péter Niedermüller (S&D)

Demetris Papadakis (S&D)

Georgi Pirinski (S&D)

Julia Reda (GREENS/EFA)

Michel Reimon (GREENS/EFA)

Liadh ní Riada (GUE)

Frédérique Ries (ALDE)

Robert Rochefort (ALDE)

Judith Sargentini (GREENS/EFA)

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Alyn Smith (GREENS/EFA)

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Renate Sommer (EPP)

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