



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1193
Vienna, 19 July, 2018**

EU statement on the sentencing of six Turkish journalists

The EU would like to express its concern over the recent heavy sentences against six journalists of the now-closed Zaman newspaper in Turkey. The prison sentences ranging from 8 years and 9 months to 10 years and 6 months for charges of membership of a terrorist organization raise questions about the rule of law and add further to the EU's serious concerns about media freedom in the country.

We recall the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that the pre-trial detention of one of the defendants, Şahin Alpay, was a violation of his right to freedom of expression. Further, the Court underlined that the existence of a public emergency must not serve as a pretext for limiting freedom of political debate and that criticism of governments should not attract criminal charges for serious offences such as belonging to or assisting a terrorist organization. Mr Alpay received a sentence of 8 years and 9 months in prison.

The EU reiterates its call on Turkey to abide by its OSCE commitments in the field of freedom of expression and media freedom. The standards of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights must be respected. We share the view of the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media that the sentences against the Zaman journalists confirm the critical state of press freedom in Turkey. We reiterate our call on Turkey to respect the freedom of the media, and create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for journalists to perform their work independently, without undue interference and without fear of reprisals.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ARMENIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.