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Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU  
Avenue de Cortenbergh 107  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

Brussels, 1 March 2019

Dear Heads of State and Government,

We are writing to you in response to the news that a Turkish criminal court has aggravated life sentences for 16 civil society leaders, including Osman Kavala. They are accused of organising and financing the 2013 protests that began in Gezi Park, and charges against them include “attempting to overthrow the government or partially or wholly prevent its functions.” This is a cynical move to rewrite Turkey’s recent history by reinventing the Gezi protests as an externally funded coup attempt.

It is the latest example of the harsh crackdown by the government of Turkey, and the case against Osman Kavala, a highly respected civil rights leader, and the 15 others risks further decimating Turkey’s independent civil society. Osman Kavala, who has been in pre-trial detention for almost 16 months, dedicates his life to promoting peace and understanding in Turkey and beyond. He sought to bridge divides between people from different regions in Turkey, as well as bridging divides between Turkey and the EU.

We welcome the statement by the EEAS spokesperson of February 21st in response to the indictments and we expect you to raise your voices as well. Furthermore, we urge you to engage your Turkish counterparts, to address this case, as well as the systematic human rights violations in Turkey at the highest level.

Sincerely,

Kati Piri (EP Turkey rapporteur, S&D, Netherlands)  
Marietje Schaake (ALDE, Netherlands)  
Renate Sommer (EPP, Germany)  
Bodil Valero (Greens/EFA, Sweden)  
Takis Hadjigeorgiou (GUE/NGL, Cyprus)