

Speaking Notes of the Secretary General to the 1256th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

(11 May 2016)

Excerpts

Turkey

Turning to developments in Turkey. You may know that last Friday Can Dündar, the Cumhuriyet editor-in-chief, and Erdem Gül, its Ankara bureau chief, were sentenced to prison sentences of five years and five years and ten months respectively for revealing state secrets.

The two now have the option of appealing to the Court of cassation. In the meantime they have not been detained. If the Court of cassation confirms the sentence, they can submit an application to the Constitutional Court. Ultimately, they can bring an application to the Strasbourg Court.

According to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, in a democratic society, the notion of state secret should not be interpreted in such a way as to avoid scrutiny by the press and public opinion. In addition, such heavy sanctions on journalists can have a chilling effect on the press.

I strongly hope that the Turkish high courts will recognise this principle should the case come to them, in order to end the ordeal of these two men and their families and colleagues, and to send a positive signal about the future of freedom of expression in Turkey.