



Press release
Paris, September 16

CRNI and Cartooning For Peace are relieved, gratified and overjoyed to hear that Musa Kart has been released from prison after a Supreme Court decision overturned his criminal conviction for “support of a terrorist organisation without being a member”. The process of his acquittal is not yet fully complete — the original criminal court must formally quash their verdict — but in effect his innocence has been restored in the eyes of the law.

Musa Kart, along with multiple colleagues from the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper was [arrested in 2016](#), part of the widespread and severe crack-down on media freedom that occurred in Turkey in the aftermath of that summer’s failed coup. He was detained for nine months pre-trial, wholly illegally, and was finally able to hear the charges against him in court in the summer of 2017.

His spirited, humorous [opening statement](#) was one of the most eloquent accounts of cartooning’s power and importance ever composed. Despite having escaped the wrath of President Erdoğan in two prior trials he was ultimately convicted. The most ludicrous detail of the prosecution depended not upon the content of his cartoons but his [choice of travel agent](#).

After every avenue of appeal was exhausted Musa Kart and five former staff from *Cumhuriyet* surrendered to custody voluntarily in April this year. He should never have spent a single day in prison but we are pleased he has been spared the majority of his official custodial sentence. In total he has endured almost three years of unimaginable duress.

“It is difficult to live in countries that have lost their sense of humor but it’s even harder to live in countries where everything is satirical. Unfortunately we are passing through a period in which everything is like a bad joke. It can be demonstrated in our case file. In modern lawful states people are first tried and then penalized. For us, it was the exact opposite. Only after detention for nine months in Silivri [prison] were we able to appear before a judge. So we were sentenced in advance. We have not abandoned our demand for proper application of law. We insist on this. After almost fourteen months in prison we’re free now, but we have gathered many stories of unjust treatment and victimisation. We left behind people urgently awaiting justice. Everyone knows that journalists have been thrown into prison to create a climate of fear. We want it to be shown now that this is not the right way. Let it be known and seen that prisons neither wipe away our smile nor weaken our stand.”

— Musa Kart

“CRNI first acknowledged Musa Kart’s bravery in 2005, when then Prime Minister Erdoğan took umbrage at his depiction in Musa’s cartoons. It was the beginning of a vendetta, ultimately given full license by the circumstances of the coup attempt and the extra powers afforded to the presidency in recent years. We’re delighted that the Supreme Court has seen through the pathetic prosecution that sought to portray Musa as a danger to Turkey. Nothing could be further from the truth.” — Terry Anderson

Both organisations also welcome the wider repercussions of this decision. Surely all state prosecutions of media workers and rights defenders in Turkey, which number in their hundreds, are now open to question. For too long the country has held the dubious honorific of [World’s Biggest Jailer of Journalists](#). Every effort must now be made to secure the freedom of those still imprisoned or awaiting trial.



Press release
Paris, September 16

We endorse the findings of the substantial IPI-led international press-freedom mission to Turkey this week; [the crisis is far from over](#). In particular we are concerned about [Erol Önderoğlu](#) and his co-defendants, needlessly dragged back to court after their acquittal on charges pertaining to the incitement of terrorism and criminality.