

## Press Release

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### Freedom for Osman Kavala Freedom for political prisoners in Turkey

In light of the shocking verdicts against Osman Kavala and other defendants in the Gezi trial in Istanbul, the Akademie der Künste is again appealing to the German government to advocate for the release of the prisoners and to speak out against human rights violations in Turkey.

On Monday, 25 April 2022, Osman Kavala, founder and director of the Istanbul cultural foundation Anadolu Kültür, was sentenced to aggravated life in prison for “attempting to overthrow the government”. Seven other defendants were each sentenced to 18 years in prison: political scientist Hakan Altınay, human rights lawyer Can Atalay, education activist Yiğit Ali Ekmekçi, urban planner Tayfun Kahraman, journalist Çiğdem Mater, filmmaker Mine Özerden and architect Mücella Yapıcı.

Osman Kavala has already been imprisoned for the last four and a half years in the high-security prison wing in **Silivri**, despite the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) having already ordered his release in December 2019. The infringement proceedings launched by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe against Turkey for non-execution of the judgement have been ongoing since 2021 but have yet to make an impression on the rulers in Ankara.

The Akademie der Künste, **KulturForum TürkeiDeutschland**, **Amnesty International**, the **Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels** (German Publishers and Booksellers Association), the **Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (dju) in ver.di** (Union of German Journalists), the **PEN Centre Germany**, the **Deutscher Journalisten-Verband DJV** (German Federation of Journalists) and **Reporters Without Borders** have, over the last four and a half years, jointly appealed repeatedly to the **German government** to campaign for President **Erdogan** to release **Osman Kavala** and **all political prisoners** in Turkey.

Monday’s verdict against Osman Kavala and his seven co-defendants are an example of the arbitrariness with which the **AKP government** and the justice system in Turkey take action against uncomfortable voices in civil society. This is how millions of Turkish citizens who took part in the Gezi protests in summer 2013 are discredited and their legitimate freedom of expression is criminalised. **Osman Kavala** has dedicated his life to promoting the civil society and culture of Turkey. Over the last 30 years, he has supported numerous independent human rights organisations and co-founded a series of civil society organisations and publishing houses.

We again call on the Turkish government to release Osman Kavala!

Jeanine Meerapfel, President of the Akademie der Künste.

#### Press and Public Relations

Pariser Platz 4  
10117 Berlin  
T +49 (0)30 200 57–15 14  
F +49 (0)30 200 57–15 08  
presse@adk.de  
www.adk.de