The Commission finds the verdict sentencing Mr Osman Kavala to aggravated life imprisonment without parole, and seven other defendants\(^1\) to 18 years in prison regrettable.

As underlined in the statement by the High Representative/Vice President\(^2\), it deepens concerns over the Turkish judiciary’s adherence to international and European standards. As a member of the Council of Europe, Turkey is bound to implement the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), while Turkey’s status as a candidate country confers upon it an obligation to uphold the Copenhagen criteria. The EU has repeatedly pointed out that Turkey urgently needs to reverse the negative trend of the last years and make concrete progress in the respect of fundamental rights, a cornerstone of the EU-Turkey relations. The 2021 Commission Report on Turkey\(^3\) referred to a number of ongoing prominent court cases against activists and human rights defenders, and included detailed reference to the case of Mr Kavala. Work on the 2022 report on Turkey has already started and issues such as democracy, fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary, including the Kavala’s case, will be thoroughly addressed in this year’s report as well.

The EU will continue calling for Mr Kavala’s release and following closely the infringement proceedings launched by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe against Turkey, for failing to implement the 2019 ECHR ruling on Mr Kavala.

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