



Photo Source: Teller Report

STATEMENT ON THE TRIALWATCH FAIRNESS REPORT ON THE TRIAL OF AHMET TUNA ALTINEL IN TURKEY

Trial Grade: C

CHARGE

Propaganda for a Terrorist Organization

OUTCOME

Acquitted

TRIALWATCH MONITOR

Clooney Foundation for Justice

FAIRNESS REPORT

René Provost Ad.E., Professor of Law, McGill University

August 17, 2020

The Clooney Foundation for Justice’s TrialWatch initiative monitored the trial in Turkey of Ahmet Tuna Altinel on charges of ‘propaganda for a terrorist organization.’ The Turkish authorities prosecuted Mr. Altinel, a Professor of mathematics at the University of Lyon-1, for social media posts inviting attendance at an event in France to discuss the Turkish military’s attack on the town of Cizre. While his acquittal is welcome, the Fairness Report released today finds that “the Turkish authorities violated Mr. Altinel’s right to liberty” by detaining him for 80 days without a lawful basis and that “the proceedings amounted to an abuse of the legal process,” as Mr. Altinel was “punished for disseminating information that he genuinely and reasonably believed to be true” and the proceedings “fit into a pattern of abusing the criminal process.”

This trial took place against the backdrop of Turkey’s continued use of [vague and overbroad criminal provisions](#)—including Article 7 of the Anti-Terror Law, at issue in this case—to prosecute speech and lawful association. Mr. Altinel was also [among the ‘Academics for Peace’](#) who had previously been prosecuted, although ultimately acquitted, for signing a petition calling for peace and condemning Turkish government actions. The Report concludes that “the facts that were invoked as justification for Mr. Altinel’s arrest and detention consisted of lawful activities that corresponded to the exercise of human rights protected under [human rights law].”

While the Bursa Regional Court of Appeal has affirmed Mr. Altinel’s acquittal, the authorities have not yet returned his passport, which was confiscated when he entered the country in April 2019. **CFJ calls on Turkey to ensure that any future prosecutions for ‘terrorist propaganda’ are consistent with the right to freedom of expression and to decline to pursue any further appeals of Mr. Altinel’s acquittal.**

BACKGROUND

The Fairness Report, which was authored by Professor René Provost of McGill University, was based on TrialWatch's monitoring of the three hearings in this case and review of the case documents. In addition to the violations described above, it also found that a public statement by the Governor of the province of Balıkesir, which stated that "it was determined that an academic named Ahmet T. A. organized an event for the PKK/KCK armed terrorist organization," violated Mr. Altinel's right to be presumed innocent.

As the Report concludes, "[i]t is especially concerning that, in a number of respects, Mr. Altinel's trial corresponded to other cases in which the European Court of Human Rights had already found Turkey's actions to constitute violations of the Convention."

For a full legal analysis of the trial and explanation of the grade that has been provided, please see the [Fairness Report](#).

ABOUT THE CLOONEY FOUNDATION FOR JUSTICE'S TRIALWATCH INITIATIVE



**CLOONEY
FOUNDATION
FOR JUSTICE**

The Clooney Foundation for Justice's [TrialWatch](#) initiative monitors and grades the fairness of trials of vulnerable people around the world, including journalists, women and girls, religious minorities, LGBTQ persons and human rights defenders. Using this data, TrialWatch advocates for victims and is developing a Global Justice Ranking measuring national courts' compliance with international human rights standards.