

Minister of Justice
Abdulhamit Gul
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanligi
06659 Ankara
Turkey

Dear Minister;

I am writing to express my grave concern on four students from the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) in Turkey have been detained over a banner containing caricatures of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The students could face up to four years in prison for 'insulting the president'. As the Turkish courts ruled in 2006 and the European Convention of Human Rights stipulates, however, the image was protected by the right to freedom of expression and the right to engage in criticism of politicians.

I respectfully call on the authorities to release the four students immediately and unconditionally and to drop all charges against them.

I strongly call on the authorities to repeal Articles 299('insulting the president') and 125('criminal defamation') of the Turkish Penal Code.

I lastly call on the authorities to ensure full respect and protection of the right to freedom of expression in Turkey.

Sincerely yours,