

AAUP

American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

January 30, 2008

Mr. Mehmet Ali Şahin
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Adalet, Bakanligi
06659 Ankara
Turkey

Your Excellency:

I am writing to express the deep concern of the American Association of University Professors with the decision of a Turkish court to sentence Professor Atilla Yayla, a member of the Gazi University faculty, to a fifteen-month suspended jail sentence for suggesting in a panel discussion in November 2006 that the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, was not as progressive as official portrayals indicate. We understand that as a result of the court's sentence, Professor Yayla is subject to supervision by the local police.

This Association, the paramount professional organization of teachers and scholars at institutions of higher learning in the United States, cannot but view the reported decision of the court as inimical to internationally accepted principles of free expression. The arrest and sentencing of Professor Yayla violates both his individual rights and his rights as a member of the academic community. We urge that the court's decision be vacated so that Professor Yayla can freely pursue his academic work.

Sincerely,



Cary Nelson
President

cc: Ambassador Nabi Şensoy, Embassy of Turkey
Mr. Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs,
Department of State
Professor Atilla Yayla

