

## Pen statement on the 11th hearing of the case against Önderoğlu, Fincancı and Nesin



*From left: Hege Newth, Ingeborg Senneset, Baturay Göksular, Marianne Østergaard, Anders Heger, Erol Önderoğlu, Elisabeth Löfgren, Natalie Arien, Berna Akkızal Özfilizler and Froukje Santing*

«This trial is about criminalizing and silencing journalism. There is no proof against me»

In a small court room in Istanbul, Erol Önderoğlu stood his ground against the charges made against him.

Today was the 11th hearing. On trial are Reporters Without Borders representative and IPI member Erol Önderoğlu, Turkey's Human Rights Foundation Chair, Şebnem Korur Fincancı, and journalist Ahmet Nesin. The latter two could not make their statements in today's hearing.

The three defendants are charged with «engaging in propaganda for a terrorist organisation», «incitement to commit a crime» and «praising criminal activities and those engaged in them». For what? A solidarity act – acting as guest editors in the «Editors-in-Chief on Watch» solidarity campaign for the shuttered pro-Kurdish daily Özgür Gündem.

One single day as a guest editor have cost several journalists and editors days, months and years of uncertainty, waiting for the court to decide their fates. Freedom is on trial.

The judges were all young and seemed inexperienced. This is a common and very serious problem in Turkey, hence thousands of judges and other academics are dismissed, put on trial or have fled the country.

«I doubt you are very well informed in human rights,» Önderoğlu told the judges.

Approximately 75 journalists, freedom of speech activists, international and national observers attended the hearing. Not all could fit in the few seats reserved for observers, and some waited in the hallway as Önderoğlu finally got to deliver his defence speech.

The hearing was over in under an hour. Afterwards PEN centres met with Erol Önderoğlu, who was tired, but determined.

«Many of my colleagues have spent months and months in prison. At least I`m outside. But I am not free. After waiting more than two and a half years, it was a relief for me to express myself to the court. It`s very important to me that the court actually take my message into consideration, even if any independent practice in the terms of judiciary is highly unlikely.»

The case is now postponed to 17 July. Postponements are also a way of tiring out both defendants and the public.

Read more and updated news about the case on [Bianet](#).

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