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To the media

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Press Release 04

Charges against Doğan Akhanlı confirmed. Trial date not yet set.

The Istanbul judiciary's efforts to keep writer and human rights activist Doğan Akhanlı behind bars are taking on Kafkaesque¹ dimensions. It is now clear that he will indeed be put on trial. On 6 September, the 11th Chamber of the Istanbul Criminal Court approved Akhanlı's indictment and confirmed its intention to carry on with judicial proceedings. A date for the trial has not yet been set.

With the nonchalance that is his hallmark, state prosecutor Hüseyin Ayar has stated his case in a scant three pages. They show that he is still intent on pinning the blame for the October 1989 hold-up of a currency exchange stand on Doğan Akhanlı, while also portraying him as the ringleader of a criminal gang and nothing less than the mastermind behind a conspiracy to overthrow Turkey's constitutional order. Ayar has brushed aside exonerating statements made in August 2010 by the only two state's witnesses, arguing that their incriminating statements of 1992 are more reliable because they were made closer to the time the crime was committed.

Ayar has simply ignored the declaration of the first witness to the effect that his 1992 statement was obtained under torture and that of the second to the effect that his statement was falsely attributed to him. The prosecutor is manifestly also uninterested in the fact that the Turkish Supreme Court concluded as early as 1994 that there were no grounds for pursuing the organisation in which Akhanlı was active in the 1980s, or that members of this organization were cleared of charges of plotting to overthrow the government.

We hope that the curtain will go up on the absurd spectacle concocted by the Turkish authorities as soon as possible and that the prosecutor's little play will flop on opening day, when the two witnesses are examined before the bar. In any case, the court may rest assured that international observers will be present at the trial.

Further information and useful addresses may be found at: www.das-kulturforum.de

¹ "My guiding principle is this: Guilt is never to be doubted" (Franz Kafka: In the Penal Colony)