

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Turkey: Human rights defender and conscientious objector Halil Savda acquitted of ‘alienating the public from military service’

The prosecution against the www.savaskarsitlari.org website registered in the name of Halil Savda concluded at the end of November with his acquittal on the charge of ‘alienating the public from military service’ under Article 318 of the Turkish penal code.

The court concluded that ‘even though a prosecution had been started for ‘alienating the public from military service, the defendant is acquitted because the elements of the crime were not present’. At the time of writing, the prosecutor was still considering whether to appeal the acquittal.

In court, Halil Savda said: ‘The existence of an offence of ‘alienating the public from military service is contrary to Turkey’s constitution and international conventions it’s a party to. It is not a crime to alienate people from being a doctor, an imam or a journalist. There cannot be a crime called ‘alienating the public from military service. I don’t accept such a crime. The current monstrous Article 318 in the Turkish penal code must cease to exist.’

Amnesty International has been campaigning for years for the abolition of Article 318 which it views as being in a direct breach of the right to freedom of expression guaranteed in international human rights law. AI welcomes the decision of the court and renews its call for the immediate abolition of the article.

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