

## EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



**Acting Managing Director**

EURCA Europe and Central Asia

Brussels, 15 May 2020  
A(2020)1890274 - 2541238

The IAJ General Secretariat  
International Association of Judges  
Palazzo di Giustizia  
Piazza Cavour  
00193 Rome

Dear Mr. Igreja Matos,

Thank you for your email dated 24 March 2020 on behalf of the International Association of Judges addressed to the President of the European Council, regarding Turkish actions in light of the Covid-19 pandemic against overcrowded prisons.

It is clear that governments should make use of all available alternatives to detention whenever possible and without discrimination, while ensuring that the human rights of detainees are upheld in particular of the most vulnerable detainees.

The EU welcomes all efforts aimed at reducing the currently very high prison population in Turkey yet we regret that the Turkish authorities excluded the early release of inmates held in pre-trial detention or convicted for non-violent offences, including lawyers, journalists, politicians, human rights defenders, and those who are at particular risk in prison from a rapidly spreading disease in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

The European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. These are crucial values for a tolerant, inclusive and pluralist society. As a candidate country and a member of the Council of Europe, Turkey is to respect these values and principles. These are central to our work on EU Turkey relations.

Yours sincerely,

Angelina Eichhorst  
(*e-signed*)