Your Honor,

The first step in ensuring a fair trial is making sure that the defendant has a clear idea of the accusations leveled against him.

In spite of reading the indictment, I have failed to comprehend the allegations against me.

If there is anybody in this courtroom today who knows what I stand accused of, and what reason this accusation is based on, I kindly ask that they also share this information with me.

Your Honor,

I doubt there’s anybody in this room who clearly knows what my alleged crimes are.

Certainly, it is not without reason why this allegation and the grounds on which it was founded have been left so ambiguous.

The indictment doesn’t openly state the main grounds for the accusation. More correctly, it can’t openly state the main grounds for the accusation, because a legal or a logical reason on which the indictment can be based on doesn’t exist.

Hence the equivocation in the segments about the grounds for the accusation.

Your Honor,

The indictment seeks my punishment for the crimes of acquiring secret documents that belong to the state; disclosing their content and finally destroying these documents.

This much, I understand.

But I couldn’t make out which documents are being made mention of in the indictment.

At the Taraf Newspaper, we published documents concerning a coup plot titled “Balyoz” (Sledgehammer).

The materials we published were excepts from a plan, which a group of military commanders prepared and discussed, in apparent defiance of clear orders from the Chief of Staff to refrain from discussing any such military scenario in a military seminar in the First Army.

If you acknowledge the authenticity of the documents we’ve published, and further claim that the content of these documents amount to a “state secret,” you do also acknowledge the authenticity of a coup plot.

Your Honor,

Plans that were devised to overthrow the constitutional order cannot possibly be “state secrets.”

Plotting to overthrow the government is a crime and bringing such a crime to light is a duty for journalists, as this is directly in benefit of the public.

If you bring us here today for having published those documents, this means that you acknowledge the authenticity of the coup plot, which means you should drop this case immediately and start trying those who have devised that plot.

Are you accusing us of “revealing state secrets” because we published the Balyoz Coup Plan?

What is the certain and clear answer to that question?

Your Honor,

If you answer, “publishing the truth about a coup plot is certainly not a crime and the real crime is in planning the coup,” then you must be trying us for something else.

And that is that?

In the same seminar where the Balyoz Plot was discussed, a second war scenario was also taken up.

In that scenario called the Egemen (Soveriegn) Plan, military measures to be taken against Greece were decided.

Are you accusing us of having acquired and publicly disclosed these plans collectively titled the Egemen Plan?

If this is indeed so, this case should be dropped this very session.

Because we haven’t seen, published or destroyed those plans.

This I say, based on hard evidence.

If you look at the archived issues of Taraf, you will see that those documents were never published.

Additionally, the Interior Ministry and the Constitutional Court have officially announced that those documents were at no time published by the Taraf Newspaper?

Are you going to try us for “disclosing state secrets” over documents that we have neither seen nor published?

Can this be possible according to law or logic?

Your Honor,

Please explain the reason we are on trial today, to us and everyone else who’s interested in this trial.

When you express the reason for our trial clearly, you will also see that such a court case cannot be.

I ask of your panel of judges to drop this case which is completely devoid of any legal or logical basis and set things straight early on, instead of dragging it on in a cloud of haze for no real reason.

AHMET ALTAN

2 September 2016