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Turkey

EU must hold Turkish president accountable for press violations

- News from around the world -

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As arrests of journalists and media closure continue, the European and the International Federation of Journalists (EFJ/IFJ) call on the European Union to take additional steps to hold Turkish president Erdogan accountable for press freedom breaches.

Since the coup aimed at toppling President Erdogan failed on 16 July, the EFJ and IFJ have been alerting on the number of arrests of journalists and media closure for being allegedly associated with the pro-Gülen movement accused of being behind the failed coup.

The situation came to a point where local media's fear to be arrested is leading to an increasing muzzlement of the press, thus infringing fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression and the public's right to know.

According to EFJ/IFJ latest information:

On 27 July, arrest warrants were issued against 47 former staff of the Zaman newspaper, an official said. Zaman daily columnist, Şahin Alpay, has been detained after police raided his house in the early morning hours. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, who used to work for Zaman and Today's Zaman and currently reporting for IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, was taken by police from her home. Columnist Nuriye Akman (former Zaman Daily), former Zaman writers Ali Bulaç and Mümtazer Türköne are also in custody.

On 27 July, the IFJ and EFJ listed 28 journalists detained, namely Yakup Sa?lam, Şbrahim Balta, Seyit K?I?ç (former TRT reporter), Bayram Kaya, Cihan Acar, Nazi? I?cak, Han?m Bü?ra Erdal, Bülent Mumay (Birgün daily), Zeynel Abidin Bulut (Pro-Kurdish daily Azadiya Welat), Zehra Dogan (JINHA), Sahin Alpay (former Zaman), Nuriye Akman (former Zaman), Lale Sariibrahimoglu (former Zaman), Ali Bulaç, Mümtazer Türköne, Zafer Ã-zsoy, Ahmet Metin Sekizkarde? (Cihan Medya Deputy Chair), Cuma Kaya, Murat Avc?o?lu, Osman Nuri Arslan, Şeref Y?lmaz (Irmak TV), Hüseyin Turan, Faruk Akkan (editor-in-chief Cihan), Bünyamin Köseli (Aksiyon weekly), Abdullah K?I?ç (Meydan), Hüseyin Ayd?n (Cihan News Agency), Cuma Ulus, Mustafa Erkan Acar (Cihan News Agency).

According to Bianet, Dicle News Agency (D?HA) and Ã-zgür Gündem websites were also blocked on 27 July by the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (T?B) due to "administrative injunction". Such a blocking is not the first of its kind since DiHA has been blocked 43 time this year and Ã-zgür Gündem twice. Last week, 20 independent online news portals, including Haberdar, Meydan and Medyascope, had already been shutdown following a decision of the T?B.

On 27 July in the evening the Turkish government issued a new decree ordering the closure of 131 media organisations. According to the decree published in the official gazette, three news agencies, 16 television channels, 23 radio stations, 45 daily newspapers, 15 magazines and 29 publishing houses have been ordered to shut down. Media shut down include new agency Cihan Haber Aöans?, Bugün tv, Can Erzincan tv, Kanaltürk, Samanyolu tv, Bugün, Taraf, newspapers Zaman and Today's Zaman, newspaper Yar?na Bak?? magazines S?z?nt?, Aksiyon, Nokta.

EFJ president Mogens Blicher Bjerregard and EFJ general secretary Ricardo Gutiérrez called on the European Union and the Council of Europe to act. "We can't remain silent while journalists are being arrested by dozens right here in front of us. President Juncker and High Representative Mogherini must do everything in their power to end this worrying situation," said Mogens Blicher Bjerregard.

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IFJ president Philippe Leruth said: “ The European union must take a stand and hold President Erdogan accountable for breaching Human rights convention and muzzling the press. Global journalists are highly concerned by the escalation of attacks against the press in a country that calls itself a democracy. This situation must end immediately.”

The federations reported all these cases to the Council of Europe Platform for the promotion of journalism and the protection of journalists.

Take action

By sending a letter to the Turkish ambassador in your country and/or your national government (sample letter below)

– By signing and sharing the Amnesty International petition [“Rights hard-won cannot be taken away”](#) , calling on President Erdogan to uphold human rights in Turkey (the petition mentions the unlawful censorship of media but also workers’ rights to challenge their suspensions or dismissals)

– By sending a contribution to the IFJ Safety Fund in order to support individual requests from Turkey (Bank account BE64 2100 7857 0052; Swift Code GEBABEBB; communication “Solidarity Turkey”)

Many thanks!

Ricardo Gutiérrez

General Secretary / Secrétaire général
European Federation of Journalists / Fédération européenne des journalistes

SAMPLE LETTER TO AMBASSADORS

H.E . Xxxxxx Xxxxxxxx (NAME OF THE AMBASSADOR)

Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey

The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey

Local address – Street – City – Postal code - Country

Your Excellency

On behalf of (NAME OF YOUR UNION OR ASSOCIATION) and its (NUMBER OF MEMBERS) members, I am writing to express our deepest concerns at the unprecedented clampdown on media in Turkey and to urge your government to reverse the widespread attacks targeting journalists and media outlets in the country.

Through the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), we are reporting all these press freedom violations on the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalism.

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We believe that the state of emergency should not be used as an excuse for widespread purges in media and other sections of society. Censorship of media simply for criticising government policy is unlawful, even in a state of emergency.

We call on the Turkish authorities to respect international conventions protecting the human rights, the trade union rights and the freedom of expression.

We urge you to foster a culture where press freedom is fully respected.

(OPTIONAL :) (We would highly appreciate if you would accept a meeting with a delegation of our organization to discuss the issue.)

Yours sincerely,

(NAME OF THE PRESIDENT OR THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF YOUR ORGANISATION)

(SIGNATURE)