

## **Solidarity with arrested journalists in Turkey**

### **Call for their immediate release**

Freedom of expression is under constant and increasing attack in Turkey. Academics, journalists and writers who criticise the government are at risk of criminal investigation, prosecution, intimidation, harassment and censorship. This strategy, combined with the recent arrest of 21 journalists in Diyarbakir, sends a clear and disturbing message and has serious consequences for press freedom. The scale of the arrests and the repression of the media by the Turkish government is described by many international institutions and organisations as that of "a country that is a prison for journalists".

On Wednesday 8 June 2022, the police raided the homes of many journalists in Diyarbakır in the morning. During the raids, Serdar Altan, co-chair of Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG), Safiye Alagaş, director of JINNEWS, Gülşen Koçuk, editor-in-chief of JINNEWS, Aziz Oruç, editor-in-chief of Mesopotamia Agency (MA), editor-in-chief of the Xwebûn newspaper Mehmet Ali Ertaş, and journalists Ömer Çelik Suat Doğuhan, Ramazan Geciken, Esmer Tunç, Neşe Toprak, Zeynel Abidin Bulut, Mazlum Doğan Güler, Mehmet Şahin, Elif Üngür, İbrahim Koyuncu, Remziye Temel, Mehmet Yalçın, Abdurrahman Öncü, Feynaz Koçuk, Lezgin Akdeniz, and Kadir Bayram were arrested.

Six of these journalists' offices have been searched and their technical equipment has been confiscated. As an order of confidentiality has been imposed on the case, it is not known what the journalists were accused of until now.

In an environment where fundamental rights and freedoms are violated, the government and its partners continue to target journalists, to pave the way for physical attacks and to reward those who attack journalists with impunity. Keeping journalists in prison on arbitrary charges and for long periods of time continues to be an insult to democracy.

Turkey remains an extremely repressive country for the press. Turkish authorities and courts equate critical journalism with criminal terrorist activity. This situation has also been widely criticised by international organisations including the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU, RSF and Amnesty International.<sup>1</sup> Turkey ranks 149<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index<sup>2</sup> and currently 60 journalists are in prison in Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the government is trying to create a new legal tool for pressure on the media and for censorship. The new draft law on "disinformation and false information" provides for a prison sentence of up to three years for "anyone who intends to endanger the country's security or public order". Such a bill, which leaves the definition of "disinformation" and "intention" so vague, exposes journalists and millions of internet users in Turkey to the risk of criminal prosecution for sharing information that the government does not approve. The bill can become another tool to harass journalists and opposition groups and generalize self-censorship.

In this context, we, the undersigned, demand the end of the persecution of journalists in Turkey, the immediate release of journalists currently detained, the repeal of the country's

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<sup>1</sup> Venice Commission of the European Council : [https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2017\)007-f](https://venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2017)007-f) , United Nations : <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/turkiye> (Consulté le 09.06.2022)

<sup>2</sup> Reporters without borders : <https://rsf.org/fr/pays/turquie> (Cons. 09.06.2022)

<sup>3</sup> DFG's report : <https://diclefiratgazeteciler.org>, and the reports and press releases by IPI : <https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media> (Cons. 09.06.2022)

anti-terrorism legislation, the establishment of effective safeguards for freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary, the end of the systematic violation of democratic norms and the establishment of press freedom and the rule of law. We call on Turkey to act in accordance with the international conventions it has signed.

**Solidarity with the arrested journalists!**

To sign this call, please contact the following address:

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(Profession / Organization, Name, Country)

or fill out the form: <https://form.jotform.com/221605337173047>

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