Cyprus Newspapers Receive Threats, Cyber Attacks

The Turkish language newspapers Özgür Gazete and Gazedda Kıbrıs in Cyprus have suffered cyber attacks and their editors have been threatened following their reporting on a local businessman’s alleged links to drug trafficking.

Pınar Barut, the editor-in-chief of Özgür Gazete, and Nuri Sılay, an editor of Gazedda Kıbrıs, told IPI that they received threats and phone calls demanding the removal of articles that commented allegations by the exiled Turkish mafia boss Sedat Peker. According to these allegations, the Turkish-Cypriot businessman Halil Falyalı, who reportedly owns hotels, casinos and media outlets in Cyprus, was involved in drug trafficking along with Turkish officials. Some of the calls and requests came from Falyalı himself.

Several allegations regarding Turkish-Cypriot political leaders and officials have been raised by Peker as part of a series of videos published in recent weeks.

On 27 May, Barut, who is also the host of Özgür Gazete’s daily broadcast on Facebook, said in the morning news show that access to Özgür Gazete’s website had been blocked due to a cyber-attack and that she had received threats against her and her family. Barut said she had asked local authorities for protection but had not received a positive answer. Sılay told IPI he considered the calls and requests from Falyalı as acts of intimidation aimed at stopping reports on the issue. Sılay said that Falyalı threatened him with filing lawsuits for compensation, and the
cyber-attacks on Gazetda Kıbrıs news site followed later. The site was flooded with millions of requests that caused it to crash.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **IPI Statement:** "Northern Cyprus newspapers targeted after reporting on drug trafficking allegations"

### STATE REPLIES

- **02 Aug 2021 | NEW** Reply of the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus
  - Letter from the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the Council of Europe