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Turkey

Alert created on: 25 May 2016

Criminal Investigation Opened Against Journalists for Solidarity Campaign

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Detention and imprisonment of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: EFJ/IFJ, Article 19, AEJ, CPJ, Index, IPI, RSF

On 18 May 2016 Turkish judicial authorities opened a criminal investigation against six journalists and trade unionists for participating in a solidarity campaign with the Kurdish daily newspaper Özgür Gündem. The journalists include Ertugrul Mavioglu, Faruk Eren, Ayse Düzkan, Mustafa Sönmez, Melda Onur and Erol Önderoglu.

The Co-Editorship-in-Chief campaign was launched by Özgür Gündem daily on 3 May 2016 for World Press Freedom Day (#WPF) where up to 16 journalists participated. Requests have been filed for the journalists and trade unionists to testify for articles that are being considered "terrorist propaganda" and an "incitement to crime" which were published whilst they participated in the solidarity campaign.

UPDATES

19 Jan 2018: On 16 January 2018 the 13th High Criminal Court in İstanbul convicted Ragıp Duran, Mehmet Ali Çelebi, Ayşe Düzkan and Hüseyin Bektaş to 18 months in prison for spreading "propaganda for a terrorist organization". The Court convicted Hüseyin Aykol to three years and nine months.

 **Article published by RSF: "Two Turkish journalists get jail terms for solidarity campaign role"**

09 Jun 2017: The fourth hearing in the trial took place at the Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court on 8 June 2017. Önderoğlu and Fincancı were in attendance, while Ahmet Nesin, who is abroad, was not present in the courtroom. The court adjourned the session until 26 December 2017 to wait for the implementation of the arrest order for Nesin and to obtain his defense statement.

01 Jul 2016: On 1 July 2016, Ahmet Nesin was freed. His release is also conditional.

Charges against him are still outstanding.

30 Jun 2016: Turkey Human Rights Foundation (TİHV) Chair Şebnem Korur Fincancı, and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Turkey Representative Erol Önderoğlu, who were arrested on charge of "terrorist propaganda" for participating in Özgür Gündem daily's Editor-in-Chief solidarity campaign were released conditionally on 30 June 2016. Charges are still outstanding and indictments (propagandizing for a [terrorist] organization and praising a crime and criminals) have been accepted by Istanbul 13th Heavy Penal Court. The first hearing is to be held on 11 November 2016.

29 Jun 2016: On 26 June 2016, journalists Nadire Mater, Yıldırım Türker, Tuğrul Eryılmaz and Faruk Balkçı were the next four editors of Özgür Gündem to be questioned on "terrorist propaganda" charges for participating in the solidarity campaign with the newspaper.

20 Jun 2016: On 20 June 2016, a prosecutor issued a warrant for the pre-trial arrest of Şebnem Korur Fincancı, Erol Önderoğlu and Ahmet Nesin. Following a court decision, all three journalists were arrested.

- ➔ Article published on Bianet: "Özgür Gündem's Editors in Chief on Watch; Önderoğlu, Nesin, Korur Fincancı Arrested"
- ➔ Statement from EFJ: "Arrest of 3 editor-in-chief in Turkey is unacceptable ! "
- ➔ Statement from the AEJ: "AEJ joins Turkish journalists' united protest against arrests over 'Editors on duty' campaign of solidarity"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ➔ UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urges "quick release" of RSF's Turkey representative
- ➔ Article on the EFJ website on "Turkey must stop feeding its environment of fear for journalists and trade unionists"
- ➔ Report published on the Mapping Media Freedom Platform: "Turkey: Investigation opened against journalists for solidarity campaign"

FOLLOW-UPS

OSCE 20 Apr 2018 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative declared that interim decision to prolonge trial of Kurdish newspaper Özgür Gündem editors, including Erol Önderoğlu, Ahmet Nesin and Sebnem Korur Fincancı means chilling effect these trials impose on journalists will continue in Turkey and urged for acquittal so they can continue their work freely.

 **Tweet by Harlem Désir**



20 Jun 2016 | CoE Commissioner for Human Rights appalled by detention of human rights defenders in Turkey will take this up with the authorities.

 **Tweet by Nils Muiznieks**



20 Jun 2016 | OSCE Representative appalled by imprisonment of two journalists and a human rights activist in Turkey, urges their release

 **Statement from the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**