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United States Mission to the OSCE

Media Freedom Concerns in Turkey

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires a.i. Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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We are troubled by the Turkish government’s use of appointed trustees to shut down or interfere with the editorial operations of media outlets critical of the government. Court-ordered supervision of a media company’s finances and operations should not prompt changes to the newsroom or editorial policy. The practice of filing charges against journalists for “insulting” senior officials is also cause for concern due to its chilling effect on legitimate political discourse.

The latest worrying developments in a series of government actions to silence independent media include: the February 29 move by government appointed trustees to shutter media outlets owned by the Koza Ipek Holding Company; the March 4 Istanbul court ruling to place under trusteeship Feza Media Group, including Zaman newspaper and Cihan News Agency; and the subsequent police raids on both Zaman and Cihan to enforce the court’s ruling. We call on the Turkish government to ensure full respect for due process and equal treatment under law.

In a democratic society, critical opinions should be encouraged, not silenced. We urge Turkish authorities to ensure their actions uphold the universal democratic values enshrined in Turkey’s constitution, including freedom of speech, assembly, and the press.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.