



Statement of the Journalists and Writers Foundation:

Silencing Journalists: The Habitus of Turkey

OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting:

THE ROLE OF THE FREE MEDIA IN THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY

2-3 November 2017 Hofburg - Vienna / Austria

SESSION I: FREE MEDIA AS A BASIS FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY

The Journalists and Writers Foundation¹

- **reminds** that freedom of expression and freedom of the media strengthen the resilience of society to cope with challenges of security
- **reminds** that Turkey is the biggest jailer of journalists in the world. 255 journalists and media workers are now in jail.
- **urges** Turkey to release all journalists and media workers, who have unduly been detained for carrying out their professional activities as covering the corruption scandal and the post-coup crackdown in Turkey.
- **demands** Turkey to lift the state of emergency and immediately honor its commitment to international standards of due process and judicial independence
- **underlines** that terrorism charges under the state of emergency in Turkey are being manipulated to suppress freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and fundamental human rights.
- **calls** the relevant bodies of OSCE, especially the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to take action and raise awareness on the current situation of journalists and journalism in Turkey.
- **underlines that Journalism is not a crime.**

¹ The Journalists and Writers Foundation, based in New York, is an international Civil Society Organization, which is dedicated to the culture of peace, human rights and sustainable development. The JWF promotes diversity and inclusion by creating forums for intellectual and social engagement; generates and shares knowledge with stakeholders; builds partnerships worldwide and develops policy recommendations for positive social change



President Erdogan and the Turkish government are abusing the coup attempt, which he called “a blessing from the God” on the night of the coup attempt, to drift further away from European democratic standards.

Being a journalist and not in line with President Erdogan and the Turkish government harbours the high risk to end up in prison- The habitus of silencing journalists through the abuse of the criminal justice system and expanding the scope of the definition of terrorism to use it against defendants are among the human rights violations frequently cited in human rights reports as well as in documents from the European Union, the United Nations, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As it is underlined in the recently submitted report by Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), “certain criminal provisions on the security of the state and terrorism are prone to arbitrary application due to their vague formulation and the overly broad interpretation of the concepts of terrorist propaganda and support for a terrorist organization, including to statements and persons that clearly do not incite violence“.

All of the journalists under arrest were charged with “membership in a terrorist organization,” “spreading terrorist propaganda,” “attempting to overthrow the current government” or “espionage.”

The case of journalists for whom detention warrants were issued or who were forced to live in exile constitutes another problem in terms of media freedom: They are facing serious financial hardship, pressure on their family members and relatives in Turkey as well as revocation of their press credentials, cancellation of passports and denial of consular services at Turkish embassies. The stigmatization by Turkish pro-government media outlets is another major concern.

Journalists working in the few remaining independent and critical media organizations have to face death threats, violence, hate speech, discrimination, profiling, and censorship. The number of media organizations seized and shut down by the government has reached 189.



This is not only a clear indicator of the enormous blow to the functioning of media scrutiny on behalf of the public, but also for the widespread unemployment across the media landscape: In the ongoing state of emergency, more than 30 percent of journalists have lost their jobs. Furthermore, many of them are not able to find jobs even in non-media-sectors, because they have been blacklisted by the government.

Only few can find a job where they cannot use their education and professional achievements and are unable to draw their potential.

On the other hand, courts pass seizure orders on the assets of journalists in prison or in exile, further victimizing journalists and their families. The habitus of silencing Journalists in Turkey does not have any limits.

As a member of the Council of Europe and participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Turkey officially recognizes the rule of law as a cornerstone of democratic governance. The 15-month-old state of emergency is a clear violation of Turkey's commitments to comprehensive security, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Being aware that freedom of expression and freedom of the media strengthen the resilience of society to cope with challenges of security, the JWF calls on the government of Turkey to release all journalists- Journalism is not a crime.