

Fevzi Yazıcı was granted
“SND Award of Excellence”
with the artwork he made
in his cell 14



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MOGENS BLICHER BJERREGÅRD
EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS



TURKEY IS BIGGER
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MUSTAFA KULELİ SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
JOURNALISTS' UNION OF TURKEY

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JOURNALIST POST



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The Press Is Not Free

As the access to information is a human right and a fundamental means of keeping the authorities in check, freedom of press is a vital component of democratic regimes.

The oppressive regimes, on the other hand, control the overall access to information by imprisoning dissident voices, shutting down media outlets, and filling the venues of social media with troll armies.

In its recent descent to authoritarianism, Turkey has become an inferno for the journalists who are outside the enormous propaganda machinery of the AKP government.

As the dissident voices are silenced in a systematic manner, the country has turned into a massive prison for the journalists.

The following is a quick account of press freedom in Turkey:

■ While more than 2000 journalists have been prosecuted for their political stance, 135 of them are currently in jail, making Turkey a leading jailer of journalists. To make the matters worse, long detention periods without a court trail has been made into a deliberate norm for the dissidence and specifically for the journalists.

■ Over 85% of the existing media outlets are functioning under strict

government control. The remaining 15% is functioning with the shutdown risk on a daily basis.

■ While about 500 journalists left the country out of political pressure and prosecutions, more than 7000 other media workers lost their jobs as a result of systemic media takeover of the AKP government in recent years and tens of them are physically attack by the hooligans of the government who enjoy impunity for their acts.

■ In the evaluations of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Turkey ranked 154th out of 180 countries in 2020.

This outlook- needless to say- is a result of the authoritarian drift of the Erdogan government that subverted the separations of power and undermined the stipulations of the Constitution regarding the freedom of speech and access to information.

Therefore, we celebrate the journalists who keep doing their jobs under the contemporary codes of media ethics despite all the pressure and express solidarity with those who lost their jobs and freedoms doing their jobs.

We call the AKP Regime to release the journalists who have been imprisoned by politically charged prosecutions and end the overall oppression on media.

Peaceful
Actions
Platform

PEACEFUL
ACTIONS PLATFORM

No one is free, when others are oppressed

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PHOTOGRAPH: ABDURRAHMAN GÖK

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ABDURRAHMAN GÖK: “I WISH I'D NEVER TAKE THIS PHOTOGRAPH”

Journalist Abdurrahman Gök, who prevented a big lie and manipulation by taking a photograph of the moment when 22-year-old Kemal Kurkut was shot, says that he could not sleep at night he took the photo and could not get rid of the effect of the incident for a long time. Saying “I wish this had never happened” Gök is being judged with the question “Why did you take those pictures”. 8



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PHOTOGRAPH: YUNUS ERDOĞDU

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from editor

We didn't know

We are excited to publish the new issue of Journalist Post on May 3rd “World Press Freedom Day”. The first issue was published on November 2, 2020 on “International Day to end Impunity for Crimes against Journalists”. Along with this excitement, we also see how great and valuable the responsibility we take on our shoulders with the Journalist Post, as we see the violence, threats and torture that journalists are subjected to almost all over the world, especially in Turkey.

May 3 is celebrated worldwide as “World Press Freedom Day” by a resolution adopted by the United Nations in 1993. The main purpose is to emphasize the role of the press in protecting democracy. Thinking that this decision taken in 1993 was a late one, when we witness that writers and intellectuals who express their opinions within the scope of the freedom of expression of journalists were imprisoned, killed and tortured in many countries, especially in Turkey, it is a legitimate question to say what has changed since Magna Carta, which was signed in 1215.

In the Magna Carta, where the foundations of law were laid, it was written that “Justice cannot be sold, delayed, no citizen can be deprived of it” Nevertheless, in 21st century, 3 women journalists were killed in the middle of the street in Afghanistan. According to Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2021 Report, Turkey ranks 146 out of 195 countries. Long storry short, Turkey is in the category of “not free countries”.

According to the report, 63 countries are ‘partly free’, while 49 countries are ‘not free.’ The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) announced that 65 journalists worldwide were killed while doing their jobs in 2020, and Turkey ranks first with the number of journalists in prison, followed by China, Egypt, Eritrea and Saudi Arabia.

Journalists are deprived of justice and imprisoned by authoritarian regimes simply because they do their job, want to find the truth, write and help enlighten the people. They spend their years in prisons, being beaten or killed in the middle of the streets simply because they work as journalists without any criminal evidence.

In his article, written for Journalist Post, titled “What was the truth?” Journalist Fred Kwint, uses the following wonderful phrase in his article: “Many soldiers captured after the Second World War said: “Wir haben es nicht gewusst”, we didn't know. “As journalists, it is our sacred duty to make sure no one ever says that again. It's our job to make sure they know.”

We are aware of the responsibility we have for the peace and well being of societies and nations. We are aware that democracy and freedom of the press will not be gained in Turkey or in any other country without a price. Any support you give to the IJA and the Journalist Post will be a roadblock that will prevent someone from saying, “We didn't know.”

To the genuine World Press Freedom Days, where the press and journalists will be free around the world... ■



BY MOGENS BLICHER BJERREGÅRD PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS



MUSTAFA KULELİ SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE JOURNALISTS' UNION OF TURKEY

Free journalists!

More than 75 journalists are behind bars in Europe, and more journalists are under detention, and some are waiting for court cases. This situation is not only appalling, for the journalists sentenced to jail just for doing their job, it is also deeply problematic and deteriorating for press freedom as all sort of violation on journalists has a chilling effect on their journalism. Last but not least, it is undermining our democracies and creating a big risk for the future of Europe in peace.

Through many years now, Turkey has been considered as the biggest jail for journalists which unfortunately is still the case with 50 journalists and media workers in jail according to the last update from the European Federation of Journalists. Upon that we should add a number of bloggers, writers and human rights defenders. For years, we have all been active on this case, and how it is time to step up developing new initiatives and mechanisms to change the situation in Turkey.

Today Belarus is challenging the Turkey on this deplorable development. With random arbitrary charges, the Belarusian dictatorship sentence their journalists to jail. 10 have got verdicts, and many more are awaiting their trial or simply next steps to happen. Like we, in Turkey, have seen journalists being arrested, charged and jailed for tweets or fabricated accusations, journalists in Belarus risk being prisoned for telling the truth, as happened for a young female journalists informing the public that a killed citizen was not affected by alcohol as accused for. Her "crime" was to reveal personal information.

Russia and Azerbaijan are two other countries with jailed journalists in Europe. However other countries are using other tools to silence journalists. The so-called SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) keep hundreds of journalists busy dealing with their own cases stealing their time to do serious journalism.

A third and dangerous method to silence journalists and free media is the word, namely when in particular presidents and prime ministers verbally attack journalists. We have seen that in several Central Eastern European countries. Such words matter because political leaders by their rhetoric de facto legalize hatred on journalists which always is the first wave before



physical attacks and in worse case killings.

During all our history authoritarian regimes have suppressed free media, being in control of the word that always has been the first victim in any conflict or war. On the other hand,

free and independent journalism is a prerequisite for thriving democracies, and therefore we from the European Federation of Journalists highly welcome the EU Democracy Action Plan addressing the violation of free media.

Thus, we in Europe on the World Press Freedom Day 3rd May should follow-up on the action plan encouraging our governments to step up guaranteeing journalists their freedom; providing national action plans for the safety of journalists by including all stakeholders that should be part of the solution; supporting the EU in an anti-SLAPP directive; ensuring self-regulatory mechanisms in all European countries; introducing arms' lengths principles asking both politicians and oligarchs to stay away from the newsroom.

However, we must go high. As journalists we have always stayed on our values not being mixed up with politics but remaining as the extremely important watchdog in any society. Without compromising our role, we for the future must be more aware of the developing of our democracies. We are already taking part in the so-called Media Literacy, and now with our role in mind, we should go high and play our role, be responsible in what we could and should call Democracy Literacy. ■

Turkey is bigger than Erdogan

Journalism can only fulfill its public duty where democracy exists. Therefore, we must also fight for Democracy for free media. Because Turkey does not fit into the dictatorship shirt on which it is wanted to be worn. Turkey is bigger than Erdogan.

There is a cruel despot and he forcibly silences those who think differently." Someone who looks at our country from the outside will probably think so; Yes, Erdogan has all the power in Turkey. But somehow this one man is constantly complaining about something and is not responsible for any negativity(!). According to him, there is a constant problem of survival in the country and we are surrounded by enemies. That's why his supporters should be on constant alert. Anyone who opens their mouth should be silenced on the grounds that they pose a threat to the security of the country. Oh, right, crack voices can't be allowed in the event of such mobilization...

In Turkey, anyone who does not swear allegiance to Erdogan is demonized by absurd accusations and heavy hate speech. A clique focused solely on maintaining its power is becoming aggressive as the social support behind it wanes.

Even a single message that you retweet on social networks can lead to "counterterrorism" then police can be raiding your house in the morning and detaining you. Journalists who disturb the power are physically attacked, intimidated by cases, or imprisoned. The slightest social objection is immediately suppressed by violence. Lives are being blacked out for" making terrorist propaganda despite not being a member of a terrorist organization."

This situation leads to automatic control of journalists and journalist organizations that are in favor of democracy, as well as all critical actors. An entire opposition, at least half the country, is acting within the boundaries drawn by Erdogan to protect itself from this oppression and violence. Because the courts are



not independent, and the police force of the state have become the police force of the Erdogan regime. The Constitution, laws, decisions of the Constitutional Court, even decisions of the European Court of Human Rights are suspended.

So, how do we get out of here?

Hate produces hate. If Erdogan is fed by tension, polarization and conflict, we must insist on negotiations and reconciliation. Instead of imposing our preferences on each other, we must create a new social consensus. In order to spread the culture of democracy, we must patiently raise fundamental rights and freedoms.

Journalism can only fulfill its public duty where democracy exists. Therefore, we must also fight for Democracy for free media. Because Turkey does not fit into the dictatorship shirt on which it is wanted to be worn. Turkey is bigger than Erdogan. The people of Turkey will eventually defeat tyranny and despotism. ■

BEING A KURDISH JOURNALIST IN TURKEY

Each of us should pattern after from the Resistance of Kurdish press workers, who continue to be the voice along with the shortcomings of those who suffer ethnicity, faith, sect, gender, genre, class discrimination, and everyone should see solidarity as a historical task.

AZAD KESKİN *

The resistance of the Kurdish press workers, who continue to be the voice of those who suffer ethnicity, religion, sects, gender, racial identity and class discrimination should be inspired by the resistance and everyone should see solidarity as a historical duty.

Osman Şiba and Servet Turgut, who were detained on September 11, 2020 by soldiers in the Yogurtlu village of Ciglica in Van, were not heard from for two days, according to information given by relatives to local and national media, including The Mesopotamia news agency (MA). Due to Turkey's political climate, human rights violations, torture, ill-treatment, and heavy pressure on freedom of expression, there were no journalists or media outlets interested except The Mesopotamia news agency. This occurred because it was known to everyone that the slightest news about this issue would have severe consequences.

MA reporters, who followed the story with great care, soon received information that Şiba and Turgut were in the intensive care unit of a private hospital. The Doctors' report stated that the villagers, who had been severely tortured, were then thrown from military helicopters. The torture of Şiba and Turgut was later proved by photographs, and Turgut subsequently died on September 30th at the hospital where he was being treated. Şiba's memory loss due to the torture still continues, and MA reporters, eyewitnesses, villagers, relatives and hospital staff have provided uncensored details about what occurred. As this information unfolded, alarm bells began to ring for the journalists who broke the story.

POLICE TARGET JOURNALISTS

Police officers from the Van Provincial Police made a public statement targeting the MA cameramen and reporters; and following this, ministers and politicians belonging to the Justice and Development Party (AKP) made statements targeting MA and its reporters, who brought the news to the public agenda. The business was now politicised and statements were made with instructions to the "judiciary". As a result, on the morning of October 6, 2020, the houses of MA Van Bureau Chief Adnan Bilen, reporter Cemil Uğur, Jinnnews reporter Şehriban Abiv and former

MA employee Nazan Sala, along with the agency's office, were raided by Special Action Police, and all news material was seized. On October 9th, four journalists were arrested.

THE ACCUSATION IS "MAKING NEWS"

The Van Public Prosecutor included MA correspondent Zeynep Durgut in his investigation of "membership in an armed terrorist organization", accusing journalists of "reporting against the state, weakening the state's fight against terrorism and reporting on social events". The prosecutor who made this charge was also the prosecutor charged with investigating the torture and allegations of Şiba and Turgut.

"WHY DON'T YOU DO THE TABLOID NEWS?"

The prosecutor said the indictment was a "very good case" for the U.S tape recordings, physical surveillance, searched and confiscated items, open source research, digital media review, law enforcement, and population and criminal records based on "what they obtained."

In the 14-page indictment, "provocative publications against the state, (...) it was determined that news was made against the state and its institutions, that it was not normally reported in accordance with the perspective of the press committee such as sports, tabloid or natural events, etc."

JOURNALISTS WERE DETAINED FOR 6 MONTHS

In the indictment, among the confiscated material, journalists reported the situation of a disabled detainee, who participated in a live television broadcast for International Women's Day, on 8 March. She was interviewed by news sources and friends, and the presence of a notebook was among the confiscated material.

Further "proof" of the prosecutor was that the journalists did not have press cards that had been issued by the Presidential Communication Center. Unfortunately, the data pertaining to all these accusations and police reports were taken seriously by the 5th High Criminal Court of Van and made the subject of the case. The four journalists, who were detained for 6 months,



PHOTOGRAPH: PIXABAY.COM

were released on April 2nd for the first time to be tried without charge by a court.

80 KURDISH JOURNALISTS KILLED IN THE 90'S

This example of mass trial, outlined above, is considered to be a case of oppression, violence, tragedy and resistance faced by the Kurdish press and its employees over the years.

However, entering the historical course of the Kurdish press exceeds the scope of this article because there are hundreds and thousands of such examples.

During the 90s, 80 employees were killed by a single bullet in the neck and hundreds of employees were tried and imprisoned, while many other hundreds became refugees and received incalculable fines.

"THIS FIRE BURNS YOU TOO"

Repression, marginalisation, disregard and exclusion did not come only from the state apparatus that holds power, but came also from non-state formations, the political structure, civil society, labor and professional organisations who were discriminated against in retaliation. When the Free Country was bombed in 1994, almost all the press, including the state agency AA, took a narrow and indirect opposition. However, in the "KCK Press" operation carried out by this government in 2011, the media organisation focussed around the government itself or formed partnerships with them (it is necessary to emphasise that all these organisations are Islamist and rise on victimization). Unfortunately, some of those who made their headlines are still in search of justice today. Those who ruled against us based on the allegations of a prosecutor overnight did not give us a single say.

It is a tragic reality that the statist Turkish-Islamist media and its employees need the emphasis on justice in the headline

"This fire burns you too" the day after the bombing of the Free Country.

There is currently no self-criticism for this injustice, unlawfulness, and support.

By 2016, the Kurdish press had experienced a great amount of pressure due to the failed military attempt, which remains unclear. Dozens of newspapers and magazines, radio stations, TV channels, news agencies and publishing houses were locked and their properties confiscated. Dozens of our friends have become refugees.

SOLIDARITY IS A HISTORICAL TASK

Again, we have seen very limited support from journalistic labor and professional organisations, or we have been subjected to evaluations from the point of view of the state.

For example, freedom of the press and expression, along with imprisoned journalists and anti-censorship attitudes, can't go beyond seeing the Kurdish press from the sidelines, from the coast. They even told international media outlets that we are not journalists.

Today, in this story we are telling, we cannot imprison Kurdish media workers, many of whom are under arrest, and with cases and fines against them. Undoubtedly, an enormous tradition of resistance has been created in the face of these disproportionate attacks. Despite everything, it is meaningful and valuable that this tradition continues its existence from its own roots.

The resistance of the Kurdish press workers, who continue to be the voice of those who suffer ethnicity, religion, sects, gender, racial identity and class discrimination should be inspired by the resistance and everyone should see solidarity as a historical duty.

NOTE: The journalist has used a pseudonym because he lives in Turkey and continues his profession. ■



ABDURRAHMAN GÖK:

“I WISH I’D NEVER TAKE THIS PHOTOGRAPH”

Journalist Abdurrahman Gök, who prevented a big lie and manipulation by taking a photograph of the moment when 22-year-old Kemal Kurkut was shot, says that he could not sleep at night he took the photo and could not get rid of the effect of the incident for a long time.

Saying “I wish this had never happened” Gök is being judged with the question “Why did you take those pictures?”.



ŞEMSİ AÇIKGÖZ

Kemal Kurkut is a young man who was killed when he was only 22 years old. Kemal lost his dad at the age of 5. Her mother cleaned 13 barns at different times and built a home (!) for herself and her four children. Despite growing up in such an environment, Kemal studied at the Fine Arts Faculty of the İnönü University, with the direction of his gentle and aesthetic character. Maybe his dream was to become a musician like Ahmet Kaya, whom he loved so much.

"He wasn't an aggressive boy," his aunt says. She hesitates for a moment. "But," she says, "On Newroz day when the police wanted him to remove his clothes, he might have gotten angry. Even if I asked for water forty times, he wouldn't complain and bring it. When his mood was bad, he wanted to be alone, and never talked to anyone. He was a very beloved child because he did not hurt anyone." (İrfan Aktan, Newspaper Duvar)

This young man, in the prime of his life, was shot and killed in front of everybody by the police in Diyarbakır, where he came from Malatya to attend the Newroz celebration on March 21, 2017.

Immediately after Kurkut was killed, the Diyarbakır Governorate made a statement in a hurry to hide something that a suicide bomber was killed. When the mainstream media published the description of the Governor's Office without question, the whole of Turkey believed that Kemal was a suicide bomber. Of course, it was until the journalist Abdurrahman Gök published the photographs of the moment of the murder. These historical photographs, which changed the course of the case, also have caused Gök's house to be raided by the police and the ongoing lawsuits to be opened.

The trial of journalist Abdurrahman Gök, editor of the Mesopotamia Agency, regarding those photographs he took, continues and his second hearing will be held next month. We talked with journalist Gök about the murder of Kemal Kurkut, his photographs, and what happened afterwards.

It was the morning of a Newroz day in Diyarbakır and you were waiting for the program in the square where the celebration would take place. Suddenly you were startled by the sound of guns and everything was getting mixed up. What exactly happened there?

Kemal Kurkut was murdered by a police bullet at the age of 22. Abdurrahman Gök, the journalist who took these photos, is on trial due to those photos.



I was assigned to follow the Diyarbakır newroz by Di-haber (the news agency closed by the Decree-Law) where I worked as an editor. At around 07.00 in the morning, I came to the entrance point on Evrim Alataş Street, which was called the protocol entrance. A large number of armored police vehicles, police officers from each unit, journalists, members of the Newroz Organization Committee were waiting here. We were waiting for the searches to end to enter the area of newroz. When I turned around with the sound of a gun at 08.04 a.m., I saw a young man with a knife pointed to his chest, half-naked, among several policemen.

Did he point the knife we saw in his hand at himself?

Yes, that's right. I guess as a reaction to the taking off his clothes.

Then?

There was such a view in front of me; dozens of policemen waiting in a position to open fire with their weapons pointed at him and a young man among them. I immediately started taking pictures. After taking the first photograph, Kemal got out hands of the police and started running. Just at this time, gunfire came over and over again. At those moments, I was running towards Kemal involuntarily and pressing the shutter button repeatedly.

I took 28 photographs with the shock of the incident until Kemal collapsed and the policemen waiting by him checked his pulse. I was awake when a policeman with a long-barreled gun blocked and pushed me. When I turned on my camera to check what I was taking, I saw the last photo of Kemal, covered in blood, eyes open, and holding his wound. Thinking that the police might confiscate the photographs, I removed the memory card from its slot, and the police surrounded me at that moment.

They wanted to confiscate my camera, but I did not allow them. They demanded the photographs I took. I said that the incident had occurred before I inserted the card into the

machine and that I pressed the empty shutter reflexively. Expert police officers from the photo-film team searched my bag, formatted all the memory cards they found, and gave my cards and bag to me after making sure that all existing photos were erased. However, they could not find the memory card containing Kemal Kurkut's photographs. And obviously, they served the "suicide bombing" statement to the public, with the convenience of making sure that no pictures were taken.

How could they not find that memory card? Where did you hide it?

First, I hastily put it in the back pocket of my trousers. Then I hid it in my socks. I didn't take it out until I went to the office. I uploaded the photos to the computer in the office. I sat down at the computer to write the story of the governor's office, my observations, and the photographs I took. I had to watch Kemal's last 50 seconds, which fit into 28 frames, over and over again. I carefully watched every detail reflected in the photograph, and we published the eight photos we selected with the title "Here is the moment when the young person was shot in Diyarbakır!"

What effect did it have when you published the news?

When the photos were published in Dihaber, which was not closed by a decree at that time, there was a serious reaction against the governorship's "suicide bomber" statement. And four days later, two policemen were investigated. The governor did not state that he was "misled" with an official statement, but at a ceremony, when asked by a journalist, he was contented with stating that "the information given to him and the photographs did not match and therefore he was sorry".

Y.Ş., working in the Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime Branch and O.M., temporarily working at the TEM Branch while he was working in the Riot Force Directorate, were taken into custody on March 25, 2017. The prosecutor's

statement of detention was followed by the “suspension from office” decision of the Diyarbakır Governorship.

I think the police are asked to be banned from the profession first, but then ...

Yes, it was like that at first. After the photographs were published, the Ministry of Interior inspectors came to Diyarbakır. Inspectors made investigations and applied for five police officers’ statements, including Y.Ş. and O.M. in Diyarbakır.

In the reports kept by the inspectors, there is the conviction that these police officers should be banned from the profession for disobedience to the order. Also, according to the report of the Diyarbakır Provincial Police Disciplinary Board, one of the two bullets that hit Kemal Kurkut was the bullet that ruptured the vein. The other is the bullet that tears between the index finger and middle finger. According to ballistic inspection, this second bullet came from police officer O.M.’s gun. In the investigation, “it was decided not to prosecute” this police officer, and O.M. never been tried.

Has the other police been dismissed from the profession?

No, on the contrary. Despite the “dismissal from profession” opinion of the inspectors and Diyarbakır Police Provincial Disciplinary Board, Y.Ş. was returned to his post three months later before the indictment was submitted to the court. He was tried as a police officer on duty. In another scandal, again according to the inspector’s reports, all the police at the scene, including the defendant cops, washed their hands even though they knew that Swap traces would be taken. (Swap analysis: Blood and gunpowder analysis report spilled on hands after firearms use)

How did you get involved?

About ten days after the incident, the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor made a call for me through the Kurkut family’s lawyer to attend court as a witness and hand over the photographs I took to them. I met with the Attorney General, told him about my testimony, and handed over the photos I took to him. Later, the investigation opened against the two police officers was followed by the indictment prepared for “murder with possible intent” and was accepted on October 2, 2017. But, it was decided that there was no need to prosecute police officer O.M.

The trial against Y.Ş. began on 14 December 2017 in Diyarbakır 7th High Criminal Court.

As far as I know, two institutions prepared reports at this stage, but these reports contradict each other.

Exactly. Two institutions prepared reports. At the hearing on December 20, 2018, the report of the Forensic Medicine Institute(FMI) stating that “Kemal Kurkut’s death was not possible due to the bullet bouncing from the ground” was added to the file. When Kurkut’s lawyers objected to this report and demanded another report from independent institutions, the court requested a report from the National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB). Based on the photos I took and the images attached to the cameras of the police vehicles

and armored vehicles, which were later in the file, the NCRB prepared a report examining the posture of the police.

In this report, which was added to the case file at the hearing on February 28, 2019, unlike the FMI’s report, there was information that Kurkut was shot directly by the defendant police, without any doubt. The court requested a second report from the NCRB. The NCRB denied its previous report, claiming that Kemal Kurkut died due to a bullet bouncing off the ground, in its new report at the hearing on May 30, 2019. However, it did not change the information that the police concerned was again Y.Ş. As a result, despite the photographs and the NCRB’s first report, the defendant was declared innocent and acquitted by court decision.

This is the technical and bureaucratic side of the event. What I am curious about is what you experienced emotionally during and after taking the photographs? Can you share your feelings?

The effect of those photographs on me has not diminished in course of time. The moment of murder rushed into my memory on that day, the night of that day, the next day, and every time I passed the place where Kemal was shot, every time I saw his name, every time his photograph appeared.

For example, I could not sleep on the night of newroz. I thought of that young boy whose name I don’t even know in my bed until the morning. It was as if he was looking at me, he seemed to have noticed that I was taking a photograph... Until the morning I thought about his gaze, the expression on his face, his gripping and control of his wound, fading of his color, falling to the ground, his water bottle in his hand that he did not leave until he fell weak.

But you left a very important photograph in history...

Yes, maybe it did, but I don’t even remember how many times I said to myself “I wish I wasn’t there, I wish I hadn’t witnessed the murder of this boy.” Because it affected me so much. However, I found solace in the words of Kemal Kurkut’s family. It turns out that the fake news was about to convince even his family that Kemal could be a suicide bomber. Even his closest neighbors were afraid to share the family’s pain and offer their condolence. But when those photos were published, the family was delighted at least because Kemal was not a suicide bomber! So the neighbors went to express their condolences ashamedly.

The most important reason why I say I wish I hadn’t taken this photograph is the wish that this incident never happened and Kemal was still alive.

How was Kemal’s mother? I guess it is the greatest pain a mother experiences.

Kemal’s mother Sican’s pain is the same today as the first day. She still laments. The acquittal of the accused police officer in the case deepened her pain. When we first met with the mother, Sican said “the last eyes that saw Kemal’s eyes” and kissed my eyes over and over again. There can’t be a heavy feeling as a mother’s gratitude to a journalist who photographed the last moments of her murdered son.

You have also been sued and you are still on trial. Did you guess what would happen to you before publishing the photographs?

Some said, “Don’t publish the photographs, you get into trouble.” Because the country I live in is a country where there are a lot of journalists shot in the back of their backs for writing the truth. I thought about what could happen to me. I thought about even being arrested or killed like that young boy. But not publishing the photographs would have been part of the killing. It would betray the universal principles of journalism, the conscience, and the truth.

I’m sure the police are following you closely!

Unfortunately, they are. 28 days after I took 28 photographs of the moment of Kemal’s murder, the first investigation was initiated against me. Upon the investigation initiated by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office because it was a denunciation, an instruction was sent to the Diyarbakır Police Department to take my statement and my house was raided. A broken cell phone and some of my books were confiscated during the search. I gave my statement and it was decided not to prosecute. I still have no information about the content of this denunciation.

Another investigation was opened a few months later. I shared a report published by the United Nations about the basements in Cizre on Twitter. Upon a comment made to this post, an investigation was launched against me instead of the person who commented. It’s unbelievable, but it’s true. In this investigation, it was decided that there was no need for a prosecution.

After a while, I was called for another investigation. My phones had been tapped between 2012-2014, and it was said that an investigation was initiated upon this. Questions were asked about my news sharing with the journalists, telephone conversations, and the news I made. This investigation also resulted in non-prosecution.

On October 9, 2018, my house was raided again and as a result of a new investigation, I was told that there was a detention order against me. After being detained for three days, my statement was taken on the order of the prosecutor and I was released. The investigation was turned into an indictment on the days when police Y.Ş, who was tried for killing Kemal Kurkut, was acquitted and this indictment was accepted by the Diyarbakır 5th High Criminal Court. I have been asked to be sentenced to 7 to 20 years in prison. After my first hearing was held, the case was postponed to 3 June 2021.

I have fulfilled the requirements of journalism. These photographs prevented the perpetrators from writing the story the way they wanted. The stories of many people who were killed before were written by the perpetrators because such photos were not available. The photographs prevented it in the Kemal Kurkut trial, but as a result of the policy of impunity, the whole world witnessed the acquittal of this execution documented with photographs. ■



WHO IS ABDURRAHMAN GÖK?

Abdurrahman Gök, born in Batman in 1980, went to high school in Batman. Following 5 years of Arabic language education, He then studied journalism at Ege University, Faculty of Communication. From 2004, he followed the marches from Mount Fermani and Mount Shengal to Rojava, where the militants faced slaughter during the ISIS attack on Shengal while he was working at Dicle News Agency. He followed up the war there in September 2014 when ISIS attacked Kobanê.

He was the editor-in-chief of Jiyan TV, Turkey’s first channel broadcasting in Kirmancki-Zaza languages. After the shut-down of dozens of television, agencies, newspapers, radio and broadcasting organizations by Decree Law (KHK), he worked as an editor at the newly established Dihaber Agency. After Dihaber’s shut-down with KHK, he worked as a news director for about a year and a half at the Mezopotamya Agency and still continues his journalistic activities as an editor at the Mezopotamya Agency.

Owing to his documentary, news and photographs; he has been granted awards in different periods by Yılmaz Güney Culture and Art Festival, Musa Anter and Free Press Martyrs Journalism Awards, Metin Göktepe Journalism Awards, Association of Turkish Southeastern Journalists.



Fevzi Yazıcı brought hundreds of world-famous designers, illustrators, photographers and journalists together with the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Communication at the +IT Design Days, which he organized with his friends in the Art Department of Zaman newspaper for 10 years.

Yazıcı was granted “SND Award of Excellence” with the drawings he did in his cell

Highly placed in newspaper design and held in Silivri prison for 5 years, journalist Fevzi Yazıcı won a double Design Award in a competition organized by the Society for News Design. Yazıcı was honoured with an Excellence Award in the ‘Best Printed News Design’ Competition.

JOURNALIST POST

Tmprisoned journalist Fevzi Yazıcı won a double Excellence Award in a competition organized by the Society for News Design (SND), which is considered the ‘Oscar of the design world’. At the 42th of “Best Printed News Design” competition this year, Yazıcı’s drawing made in his cell in Silivri Prison were awarded. The Yazıcı’s drawings were featured in a three-page broadsheet titled “Art of Darkness” published in the Washington Post in May 2020.

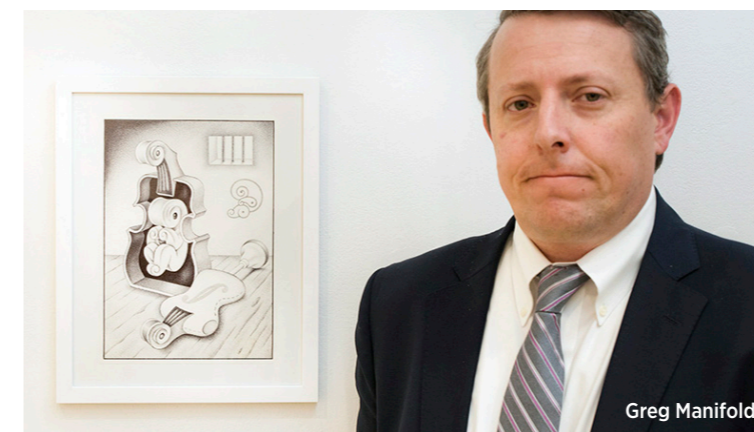
Fevzi Yazıcı, who was the design director of Zaman newspaper, was jailed in 2016 as part of a crackdown on freedom of expression in Turkey. He was on the SND’s jury of the world’s designs in 2015 and is one of hundreds of journalists detained around the world.

Fevzi Yazıcı, who was nominated for an award by Greg Manifold, the design director of the Washington Post, and was awarded by a jury, says that thoughts cannot be thrown into jail in his drawing, which he calls “Arrest Socrates.” The theme of the visual can be summarized as “if you try to trap thoughts, the ideas turn from light to a prisma and start to shine.”

Exhibition of drawings made in prison by Fevzi Yazıcı, St. Louis, New York was made in at the Yeh Art Gallery, John’s University, in January 2020.

The exhibition, titled “Dark White”, featured nearly 40 drawings made by Yazıcı, who has been held behind bars since July 27, 2016, in his cell. ■

The Yazıcı’s artwork were featured in a three-page broadsheet titled “Art of Darkness” published in the Washington Post in May 2020.



The Washington Post Visual Director Greg Manifold:

An artist who cannot participate in his own exhibition!

The Washington Post visual director Greg Manifold shared his feelings for the award, which was given to Fevzi Yazıcı via social media. In his article “The Art of Darkness”, Manifold described how the Yazıcı’s imprisonment affected his art. Stating that the Yazıcı was unable to attend the opening ceremony of his own exhibition, Manifold wrote that he had taken pictures of other artists in front of his works, while he was in a prison cell in Turkey, 8,000 kilometers away.

He continued: “It is very sad that the Yazıcı was honoured by his work while he was in prison. Yazıcı has been in solitary confinement for 1230 days. (as of May 1, 2021). Those who do not know about this unjust imprisonment should read his story.”

Manifold also stated that he shared this happy news with Fevzi Yazıcı’s wife, saying: “his wife hopes to share this good news with Fevzi during their visit to prison. Today I think of his family, including his two boys...” he wrote.



Society for News Design

Society for News Design (SND) is an international organization formed by professionals working in the media, especially in the field of art and design.

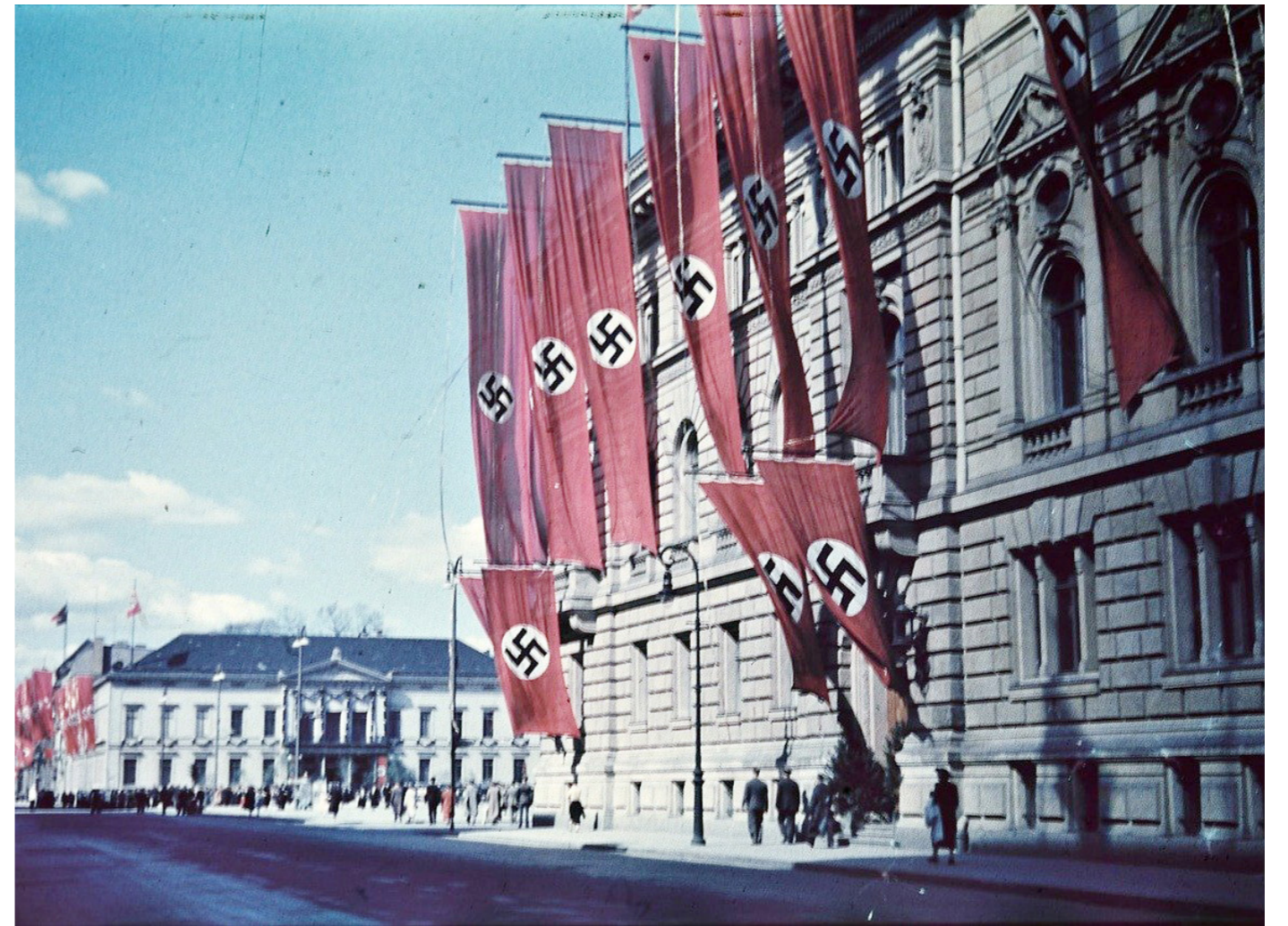
Founded in the United States in 1979, the non-profit association has about 2,600 members from 50 countries. Every year, Syracuse University (New York) “Best Newspaper Design” contest organizer SND is presenting the ranking art to the art-lovers in the book titled “The Best of Newspaper Design” which is published every year.

+IT Design Days organized by Fevzi Yazıcı, former visual director of Zaman newspaper, a member of SND, with his team in the art department of the newspaper attracted attention of communication teachers and students in Turkey. During the last 10 years before the government shut down the Zaman newspaper, thousands of students attended +IT Design Days, and the SND Association supported it as a partner. Every year, world-famous artists, illustrators, photographers and journalists from SND members participated in the +IT event.

In addition, Zaman newspaper was awarded every year in the “SND Best Newspaper Design” competition in the years which it participated and was awarded more than 100 “Excellent Newspaper” awards in total.



FRED KWINT *



What is truth?

After the Second World War many captured soldiers used the phrase: “Wir haben es nicht gewusst”, we didn’t know. As journalists it is our sacred duty to make sure no one can ever say that again.

T have been working for television for 35 years. For a public broadcaster in the Netherlands. A safe haven for free press. Attacking a journalist was considered attacking the freedom we have had as a nation for hundreds of years. Except maybe in the dark days of the Second World War. But more and more we see a free press under siege. Also here, where right-wing nationalists start to rouse suspicion against the free press that they like to call MSM, the main stream media.

And that rings an alarm. Because dictators have always started targeting the free press. They don’t want questions, they want obedience. They don’t like questions, they like quotes!

And for those who keep their eyes open, this phenomenon can be seen everywhere. In Turkey, where journalists are being accused of Gülenism or terrorism when they ask too many questions. Or in Trump’s America, where they were

ridiculed and accused falsely of having a hidden agenda. We see it in Poland and Hungary and most recently in Myanmar.

And the pattern didn’t change much since Hitler took power. Find a common enemy, be it the Jews, the Rohingya, the Kurds, the Western World, the LGBT-community. Name any minority and they can be used for this goal. Focus the hate of the people in one direction. Away from the leader and his abuse of power in the direction of a minority. Any minority...

They are after us, so let’s get them first. Don’t think for yourself, let the leader do the thinking, you just follow as sheep... And put in the poisonous potion of nationalism. We see it here with fascist parties glorifying our colonial past and our so called Golden Age. And we see that in every nation. Nationalism and a common enemy.

And this is where an obedient press is needed. This is where it gets crucial to have a press that applauds the leader. People need to believe in the things they are told, not

question them. This is why they limit internet access or buy media outlets like tv stations and newspapers and arrest those who do not want to cooperate. They are the enemies of the people...

But are they? Why is a free press so damaging for (wannabe) dictators? Because usually they want a people that follows them without questioning. They want to control how people think. Journalists are an important shackle in the chain of rule. They can be the conscience of a nation. What would have happened if people would have known the truth about the concentration camps in Nazi-Germany? If they would hear the truth about the camps in China where the Uyghurs are being re-educated or should I say eradicated? What would have happened if the people of Myanmar knew about the atrocities the military committed towards the Rohingya minority? Or the political arrests made in Turkey after the attempted coup? A free press would have changed the course of history in all those countries mentioned before. People would have seen the truth and would have responded accordingly.

For this reason journalists around the world risk their lives and often lose it. We all remember Mr. Khashoggi, but the list is almost endless. The number of journalists that were murdered in the line of duty has doubled in 2020. But we carry on with our work. All over the world, from Brazil to Russia because we are dedicated to one thing: the truth. And our audience deserves to know. After the Second World War

many captured soldiers used the phrase: “Wir haben es nicht gewusst”, we didn’t know. As journalists it is our sacred duty to make sure no one can ever say that again. It is our duty to make sure they could have known. And I am well aware of the fact that journalists are human too, they can be influenced, driven by wrong motives like greed or fame, but in general journalists are dedicated to the truth and deserve our full support. So the people can see the consequences of what the leadership decides, so the people can see the brutality used against unarmed civilians, so the leaders can be held accountable by being questioned, over and over again. And so that politicians will be confronted with their actions.

Truth is a word often abused. But I am convinced in my heart that only truth can bring freedom. Oppression of truth is leading to dictatorship. ■

Who is Fred Kwint?

* “Fred Kwint. 62 yo. works for Dutch national tv as a researcher. Made programs on problems in developing countries, streetgangs, etc. Values human rights and freedom of press. Twitter: @FredKwint”

BEING A PRESS FREEDOM ACTIVIST IN MANDELA COUNTRY

Beginning from following world leaders presenting in war zones and documenting hundreds of international organizations Yet, one morning that you woke up as a journalist, being declared as a terrorist in your miles-away country.



TÜRKMEN TERZİ

T, Turkmen Terzi, am a self-exiled journalist and media freedom activist now living in the land most well-known for freedom fighter and President Nelson Mandela- South Africa

My journey as a journalist began in 'Incredible India' where I covered stories for Turkey's Private Cihan News Agency, there I saw and covered stories related to everything from exotic foods to exotic animals. I then relocated to Sri Lanka's capital Colombo where I covered the deadly Tamil War. Cihan News' subscribers included among many others, subscribers such as the Turkish Official Broadcaster TRT and other major national TV stations and newspapers, these widely covered my stories from India as well as the live war coverage from the beautiful Serendib Island. I had the opportunity to travel with the Sri Lankan army to the North-Eastern part of the Island where the Tamil majority lives. I will never forget the day which began with early morning trip to the Sri Lankan Air Force headquarters in Colombo. We travelled among a group of journalists via military aircraft, military helicopters, and a military tank until we reached Puthukkudiyiruppu, a small town located in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. During our brief time

in this town, we witnessed the ongoing heavy bombing of LTTE fighters as well as many rescued Tamil civilians who were being taken to the army's camp. On this journey, we saw desolate houses, land, and villages abandoned as a result of the LTTE fighters forcing entire Tamil populations to relocate with them towards the Northern region of the Island, which was a stronghold for the LTTE.

As a war correspondent, I did not experience the conflict situation in Northern part of the Island but instead faced the daily risk of bombings in the capital city of Colombo for a few years.

I was present in Sri Lanka on that memorable day which signalled the official end of a 26 year-long civil war following a victory by the Sri Lankan government. Soon after attending the official ceremony celebrating the Sri Lankan government's victory on 16 May 2009, I left the Island as the major media network no longer had any interest in the small Island. My editor informed me that South Africa would be a fertile location for our Cihan News Agency as the 2010 World Cup was about to be held in South Africa. The Turkish public were confident that the Turkish National Team would qualify to participate in the World Cup. Be-

Türkmen Terzi conducted interviews with many world leaders. PHOTO: TÜRKMEN TERZİ ARCHIVE



sides, the world's Icon, Nelson Mandela was alive and large numbers of top International Media networks were present in Johannesburg to cover the last days of Mandela's life as he was over 90 years old and was very ill.

I flew from Sri Lanka to South Africa via a direct flight, without visiting Turkey. It was as if I slept in Sri Lanka and woke up immediately to begin my journey in Nelson Mandela's South Africa. My life in South Africa began in the vibrant city of Pretoria, which is one of South Africa's capitals as well as the administrative capital of South Africa and the city known to be host to one of the highest number of embassies in the world including North Korean. Turkey's South Africa embassy is also present in this capital, perhaps most famous for an abundance of gorgeous purpled hued Jacaranda trees.

It was not long before I had met Turkey's Ambassador Kaan Esener, who is now one of the top diplomats currently serving as a Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe. Ambassador Esener previously served as the Head of the Department of Human Rights in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, and Deputy Undersecretary of Turkish Foreign Affairs. The same top diplomat Esener visited the Hizmet Movement's Turkish Schools set up in Johannesburg, and Cape Town even attending the opening ceremony of the Turkish School in Pretoria. He had on several occasions visited the Nizamiya Mosque Complex in Johannesburg, which was built by Turkish philanthropist Ali Katircioglu who is now the target of Turkish state for services rendered to the Gulen Movement. Of course, as the Cihan News Agency South Africa Bureau Chief, I always covered Esener's visits to Hizmet affiliated Schools and the complex. I was always invited by Kaan Esener to the Turkish embassy functions and covered these on special days

such as Turkish Republican Day, Religious days and special programs for business people and cultural festivals. At the time, The Azerbaijani Embassy was also active in South Africa and promoting Azeri culture and business. I also covered their functions for Azerbaijan's Ictimai TV. At one point, the Ambassador called me one afternoon requesting that I interview Botswana's senior officer from the Trade Ministry as the Ambassador had a meeting with him to improve Turkey and Botswana trade and business relations. I drove from my Johannesburg office to Oliver Tambo International Airport where I caught up with the officer from Botswana who was staying over at the Oliver Tambo Airport hotel and was about to fly back home that evening. I will not forget that my drive to the airport took almost two hours during peak traffic hours. I completed the interview and published the story and the ambassador thanked me. My media related communication and cordial relationship with the Turkish ambassador lasted from his arrival to South Africa in 2012 until 15 July 2016, the day following the unfortunate 15 July coup attempt in Turkey.

I vividly remember that Friday, as I relaxed in my modest rented home in Johannesburg's Midrand suburb browsing the internet amid my young daughter's games? to play, when I suddenly saw a tweet stating that a group of soldiers blocked the Bosphorus Bridge, which links the European and Asian sides of Istanbul. I immediately messaged my friends in Istanbul, and received information of a coup attempt underway. I did not sleep the entire night diligently following developments. I got a call from South Africa's 24 hours Independent news channel ENCA for an interview on the 15 July Coup attempt. I explained to the ENCA news anchor at 10 minutes noon time live interview on 16 July 2016 that this coup attempt seems unusual as the Turkish army is



known to have organized many coups in modern Turkish history however all these successful coups occurred during the early parts of the morning but never on a Friday afternoon during peak traffic hours. I explained that the coup attempt looks like a false flag operation which gave Erdogan the ammunition he needed to increase his grip on power and silence all of his opponents. I also mention that it is mysterious that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has flown to Istanbul Ataturk Airport while rebel pilots of two F-16 fighter jets had civilian planes in sight. Erdogan made accusations against the Gulen Movement while the coup attempt was still underway. Besides ENCA, I talked to several Radio Stations including POWER FM and wrote an Op-ed piece on the coup attempt, which was published by South Africa's Independent Group's newspapers.

On July 20, I received another call from South Africa's Public Broadcasting SABC for a live radio discussion on the coup attempt. The SABC's SAfm Radio Producer requested that I bring South African based intercultural-interfaith dialogue foundation Turquoise Harmony Institution's director to the SABC station the next day. I was informed that the other panelist of the show would be Turkish Ambassador of Pretoria Kaan Esener as well as one of South Africa's political analysts. The Director of the Hizmet Movement affiliated Turquoise agreed and we were ready at the studio to join SAfm's flagship show AMLive which airs between 6 am to and 9 am every weekday. The Producer then informed me that the South African Political Analyst couldn't make the program and that I should join the show instead of him. She also mentioned that Turkish Ambassador Esener will join the show from Ankara over the phone. Hence, the Turquoise

Director and I were the guest of South Africa's award-winning radio presenter Sakina Kamwendo.

Since arriving in South Africa in 2009, I had been listening to Kamwendo's radio news show during my morning drive to the work. I was nervous at the beginning as the coup attempt was still so fresh in my mind and the post-coup purges were at its peak but Sakina Kamwendo's reassuring smile and calm demeanour immediately relaxed me. I was surprised by Kamwendo's insight on the "fake coup" attempt as she challenged the Ambassador with questions such as: "Is there a purge going on in Turkey following the last week's failed coup?"

Following last week's failed military coup in Turkey, the country has seen more than 50 thousand people either detained, dismissed or suspended from their jobs, many generals and admirals have been arrested, further damaging the reputation of the Turkish Military and also the civil service, reportedly reeling from thousands of detentions, suspensions of judges, teachers, police, intelligence officers... schools have been closed, the media also has not been spared, at least 24 radio stations, and television channels accused of having links to US Based cleric Fethullah Gulen, I have also come under fire, Turkish government has blame Gulen supporters for organizing the attempted coup last week" Kamwendo highlighted the level of ongoing post-coup purges before Esener's talk. The Turkish Ambassador informed listeners that he was on leave in Ankara while he found himself in the midst of the coup attempt. Despite only few days having passed since the coup attempt and no coup trials having taken place yet, Esener accused a faction of the Turkish army which was alleged to

have gotten orders from US resident Fethullah Gulen, of having carried out the coup. By referring to the Turquoise Director and I, Esener stated during a live show that we are coup plotters with blood on our hands who will be apprehended by the Turkish government the moment we enter Turkey. The Turkish Ambassador then went on to inform Kamwendo that he refuses to share a platform with the criminals and pulled out of the show. Following Esener's departure from the radio show, many South African media colleagues phoned in to the live show attesting to that "Their friend Turkmen Terzi is not a terrorist but a journalist". A senior Editor who told the listener that "Turkmen can only kill people with his jokes but not with guns."

Kaan Esener was eventually assigned to the head of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and another senior Turkish Diplomat Elif Ulgen Camoglu who served in NATO, UN and EU was appointed to South Africa. Ulgen also closely followed my news coverages in South Africa and several times issued "Letters to the Editor" in Independent Group's the Star, Pretoria News, Cape Times, and Mercury Newspaper following my op ed pieces. She has also several times accused me of being a terrorist in her "letter to the editor" and opinion pieces to these newspapers.

I have lodged complaints with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) against Esener and Comoglu for their accusations. Years later I saw a Tweet of Turkey's senior journalist and Tv Personality Can Dundar about Esener. He was also accused of being a terrorist by Esener in Europe. "With support from @RSF_inter, Turkish journalist Can Dundar filed a defamation suit in Strasbourg today against Turkey's permanent representative to the @coe Kaan Esener, who called him a "criminal & a fugitive" last November at the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy" Can Dundar (@candundaradasi) tweeted.

It has been 11 years since I first came to Nelson Mandela's free and democratic country. I have been fortunate enough to cover the 2010 World Cup, the BRICS Summit which hosted leaders from China, India, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa, the 2013 Africa Cup of Nations, Nelson Mandela's last years, as well as African Union Summits in this beautiful country. I was awarded by my media group for my coverage on the Tamil War and my stories were selected among the top 3 stories of 2009. Following the coup attempt, I become an accidental media freedom activist with my speeches in South Africa's main programs on media freedom and national and international editors' events in the country and in the journalists' protests for free media. South Africa's online news portal Daily Maverick published my story with the title, "A Turkmen in SA: Heartbreak of a foreign journalist in exile" while several other media houses have interviewed me since having lost my job and becoming a self-exiled journalist.

Despite allegations against me by the Turkish Ambassadors, I am grateful to say that I am free to conduct my work as a journalist in a free and democratic South Africa where not a single journalist has been jailed in decades. As a board member of the South African Foreign Correspondent Association, I am committed to serve high quality journalism and defend free media. ■



WHO IS TÜRKMEN TERZİ?

Turkmen Terzi was the representative of Cihan News Agency in India, Sri Lanka and South Africa between 2003 and 2016. Terzi, who lives in Johannesburg, continues to commentate in South Africa's local newspapers as a freelance journalist after the shut-down of Cihan and writes The African Agenda for European-based online Turkish news portals.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR UKRAINIAN JOURNALISTS

Similar to any country whose democracy is unsettled, Ukraine, as well, is a highly compelling country for journalists. Even though the political polarization, COVID-19 pandemic and the fight against manipulation makes the media more fragile. For real journalism to win, we must be together.



SERGIY TOMILENKO *

From the last year Ukrainian journalists and media, as well as our colleagues in other countries, are concerned, first of all, about the threats which the coronavirus epidemic has brought to our work. But Ukrainian journalists had reason to worry about protecting their rights, freedom of expression and independence even before the pandemic began.

The profession of journalists in Ukraine is dangerous for health and life. This can be confirmed by dozens and hundreds of my colleagues beaten due to the performance of professional duties. And it is not about special circumstances or global unexpected events, such as mass beatings during covering the protest on the Euromaidan in Kyiv in 2013-2014 or the injuring and capture of journalists in the Donbass. Journalists are beaten every month in a peaceful Ukraine. Last year, we recorded 77 cases of physical aggression against media workers in the framework "The Index of Physical Safety of Journalists in Ukraine" which conducted by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine together with partner NGOs. In 2019, there were 75, in 2018, - 86. Not threats or harassment on social media, namely physical attacks. Investigative journalist Vadym Komarov was killed in the Ukrainian city Cherkasy a year ago! During the epidemic, we record attacks by citizens on journalists who simply do their jobs by reporting compliance with or noncompliance with quarantine regulations.

An unacceptable high level of physical aggression in Ukraine is possible due to the lack of precedents for severe punishment for crimes against journalists. Cases do not go to court or drag on for years, or criminals do not receive significant penalties. After all, fines of several euros or guilty pleas with simultaneous exemption from punishment for expiry of the statute of limitations cannot be called a serious punishment. In November 2019, for the first time in 10 years, special parliamentary hearings on the physical safety of journalists were held. In fact, it was a forum of

injured journalists. And holding such hearings that the previous Parliament refused to hold for years is the real merit of the new Ukrainian Parliament. (However, it is still the only one merit of Parliament for supporting journalists and media) Similarly, since the hearings, the leaderships of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the National Police of Ukraine have significantly changed their approach to responding to reports of obstruction of journalism. And now the recording of proceedings under the "journalistic" articles of the Criminal Code is taking place quickly.

Disinformation, manipulation or superficial and unprofessional journalism is another enemy of the press. Disinformation undermines the credibility of the media and journalists and harms public life. But the fight against fakes that governments have to wage in authoritarian countries or immature democracies such as Ukraine is used by officials to fight inconvenient journalists.

The media environment in Ukraine today is polarized in political terms. Recently, my Union and some media have been attacked by some media NGOs. We do not divide journalists according to their views and we protect everyone, we call for solidarity. This is in line with European practice. Instead, some media NGOs, which receive western grants, seek to divide the newsrooms into "patriotic" and "non-patriotic" which are labeled as "pro-Russian". Among them is the Ukrainian NGO "Media Detector". Despite the implementation of many necessary and important information projects, their editorial office has recently begun to actively implement the policy of dividing Ukrainian journalists into "correct" ("good") and "incorrect" ("bad"), justifying the harassment of Ukrainian media, which the government (or politicians or some experts) call "pro-Russian." Also, Detector.media publishes non-objective materials about the activities of the NUJU, which encourages attacks on our organization, as not enough patriotic.

This is how we face the phenomenon. Instead of uniting and



fighting together for their rights, the journalistic community incites hostility. In such conditions, it is very difficult to talk about solidarity.

The economic crisis caused by COVID-19 dealt a powerful blow to the Ukrainian media. This is confirmed by the results of a recent survey among print media editors conducted by our Union. 192 journalists and editors from 24 regions of Ukraine and Kyiv took part in this survey, conducted from March 1 to 25. Format - Google-forms, which included several groups of questions. In 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NUJU, with the support of the International Federation of Journalists, conducted a similar survey. The new survey allows us to evaluate the current situation and is the next step towards protecting the labor rights of Ukrainian journalists.

Respondents answered questions about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activities of their print media and editorial teams. The respondents also expressed their position on the draft law "On the media", which strengthens state regulation of the media, and to the problems with the postal delivery of print media in Ukraine. According to this survey among print media editors: 86% of publishers lost advertisers, 50% reduced salaries, 40% reduced staff, 28% stopped cooperation with freelancers, 5% switched from paper to online, 5% completely stopped their activity. In addition to COVID, a great challenge for the Ukrainian print industry is the reform of the national postal operator, which has reduced the number of local post offices and postmen.

The National Union of Journalists of Ukraine is actively working to solve these problems. We hold large meetings, trainings, communicate with the Government, Officials and MPs. Now we wrote a special resolution, which contains 14 demands to the Government and Parliament. These requirements include the creation of a Media Support Fund such as in European countries, a "tax holiday" for the media until the end of the quarantine, unimpeded access to journalists to all government activities during

the pandemic, soft loans for media development, and saving jobs and other. It was also determined that 2 working groups will be set up in the Parliament to develop proposals for the implementation of a complex anti-crisis program and create tax stimulus for the Ukrainian media. We agreed with the management of the national postal operator "Ukrposhta" that their company will not increase the tariff for subscription and delivery of newspapers in the second half of 2021. This is a great help for regional print media.

I hope that this year will be the best for the whole journalistic community. Only together will we win and will make the profession of a journalist safer. ■

Head of Information Society Department CoE

Patrick Penninckx

THE PREREQUISITE FOR DEMOCRACY IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

"I recall our many opportunities to meet, both in the context of the activities organised by my Department in Kyiv, as well as international events, namely those organised in cooperation with the European Federation of Journalists. I have witnessed your strong commitment to the defense of media freedom and the protection of journalists and I appreciate the efforts you undertook to bring journalists from different perspectives together, also in cooperation with the then OSCE Representative of the Freedom of Media, Dunja Mijatovic.

The protection of journalists and quality and pluralistic journalism is indeed crucial for freedom of expression and an important precondition for democracy. It is also an important/high priority for the Council of Europe, including in our related work in Ukraine".

NO, IT WAS NOT THE MILKMAN

According to the renowned stipulation of Winston Churchill, "Democracy means that when there's a knock in the door at 3 am, it's probably the milkman."



NUR EREN KILIÇ

When I came across with the knock on the door, I was a 25 years old journalist and the year was 2017. On that day I had left my work by the end of my shift and I was having a sweet walk on the streets dreaming about my wedding which was two months away. I came home around 7 pm and started working on my story that covers July 15 Coup Theatre, penned and directed by the homegrown dictator Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. I was tired but I had to keep working because the messages that were flooding my mailbox were blowing my mind. I was losing my sleep. The families of 18 year-old military students who were put in prison with the accusation that they were the ones behind the coup attempt and the next-of-kins of the teachers and doctors who were declared traitors overnight were sending hundreds of e-mails to journalists like me. I was working through these e-mails and getting the necessary court documents to prepare a book on them. I had two options: I would either ignore the messages and avoid political reporting or would I write the truth whatever cost follows through. The latter was needed from me as a human and then a journalist.

THE FIRST TARGET OF THE POLICE WAS MY BOOKS

A report I put together under the title of "The oppression of State of Emergency Surpassed that of February 28" was published in the subheading of the daily that I worked back in the time. Erdoğan's trolls on social media started throwing in lots of threats after this publication. There were a lot of threat messages in my mailbox but my heart was still going to the innocent people who were dehumanized and imprisoned through baseless accusations.

I had fallen asleep with such thoughts on my mind that I was startled with the noise that someone was hammering my door. They were yelling as they hammered my wooden door. No, it could

not be the milkman. As I opened the door, 8 male police officers flooded into my house which was not more than 40 square meters. As they did not even allow me to put something on, they raided into my books. It was outrageous and scary. They were going through my about 400 books and handwritten mails. No, they were battering them to carve out anything to support that I was a terrorist. The scenery reminded me a saying by Alberto Manguel, "from among all the things that were invented by humans, the books are the biggest enemies of dictators".

A FORM OF TORTURE: STRIPSEARCH

I threw in one last glance at my home and my preparations for my wedding both were looted when I was being dragged out among 8 male police officers. The violence that manifested through the behaviour of the police was a small reflection of dictator's wrath. At that moment I came to realize that I was not even going to be able to say goodbye to my azaleas and my flower-hearted mom who was waiting for my return.

My journey that started that night continued with my detention in the police station and I was finally put in Istanbul Bakırköy prison. I did not know what was going to happen after I got registered in. In a small room, I was stripsearched by some women guards who were gossiping and laughing non-stop. When I was located in my ward I came to realize that it was not just me who has gone through this torture of stripsearch. The prisoner next ward, Ö.N., who was a dismissed judge and with whom I spoke yelling through the windows would tell me that she has gone through it multiple times.

After my days in that cell were over, I was taken to a ward for 30 people. The things that heard in that ward were shocking, or rather jaw-dropping. My mind still goes to that judge, Ö.N.



NUR EREN KILIÇ

Nur Eren Kiliç, a graduate of Atatürk University, Faculty of Communication, was the political news editor of Yeni Asya newspaper. She was arrested on March 1, 2017 as a journalist with a yellow press card in Turkey. She was released on 21 February 2018 after given a sentence of 7 years and 6 months in prison and house arrest. While in prison, her book "Three Branch of Daisies", consisting of letters from people in prison, was published by the Yeni Asya Press. She appeared in court again on charges that the book was a 'propaganda of the terrorist organization.' The journalist was forced to flee to Germany due to unending pressures.

WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM THOSE BABIES?

Being a political prisoner was the thoughtest residence in the jail. At the beginning of the shift that started with the first daylight, the criminal offenders would go out to sports hall, library or painting courses. Their laughers would echo in the corridors of the prison. For political prisoners, like myself, such activities were prohibited. Unfortunately, the babies were subject to such limitations as well. No, you did not misread it. While the babies of criminal offenders had the right to attend to the kindergarten, the babies of our ward were prohibited from going out. While the voices of the children who go to kindergarden enlightened the prison, I was busy running from the questions of my five-year-old best friend, S., who was asking why she was not allowed to go to kindergarden. "Who are those children? Why can't I play with them? Being exposed to those questions was more difficult to stand than all the tortures and rights violations.

A "CRIMINAL" WHO CANNOT EVEN GO TO BATHROOM ON HER OWN

Another issue that has given me tough time was the sick and elderly inmates in my ward. I will never forget the silent sobbings of F., who was an Alzheimer's patient and used to ask for her grandchildren. After some years, her voice is still in my ears and the nightmare that I still have. Due to the diseases and deficiencies that she had at her hands, belly and heart, she was having hard time going to bathroom on her own. At times, she would fall in the bathroom and the other inmates would help her out. What did Erdoğan want from that woman who could not go to bathroom, write her own defence? What was the role of this woman in Erdoğan's coup theatre? The only crime that she committed was working at a quran course on a voluntary basis and cooking for the poor children.

MY SPRING IN A PARSLEY, MY PATIENCE

I was trying to create petite beauties to open space and breathe better for my self and the other inmates. The days were heavy for

all of us. I used to order parsley from the prison store, put in in vase that I cut out of a plastic bottle and watch those small gren leaves. With those gren leaves, I was in love. Looking at the parsley would give me a lot of joy in this rather soilless, colorless and torturous place as if I was looking at azaleas and violets, that is untill a guard noticed my parsley. The guard would crush my plastic bottle-made-into-vase in her dirty hands would tell me, "parsley is sold for eating purposes, you can't keep it here" with her dirty heart. These people could not stand the hope that reflected through the green of the parsley and this is why whatever they represented was doomed to lose.

ERDOĞAN'S POISON: HIS MEDIA ARMY

After an imprisonment of 357 days, I had served my time for 7 years and 6 months that I was sentenced to. I was released with all the traces of torture on my mind and heart. Upon my first step out, I had cried; "I am outside that door now but there are babies and elderly women in those wards. I will be happy once they are all released." Leaving those babies and elderly women to the mercy of the guards who cannot stand the green of the parsley was a saddening feeling.

When it is about Turkey, rights violations and Erdoğan the dictator, I have a lot to say and write. It has been 5 years after the July 15 coup theater staged by Erdoğan and my ensuing imprisonment. What happened then, in this 5 years? According to the rankings and evaluations of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Turkey has become the largest prison for journalists in which Erdoğan established his army of media and retained his determination with the power that he derived from the people that he poisoned. At this point, let's remember what Ray Bradbury said in his Fahrenheit 451: "You can stop the books and shut them down for a while. But once the television sowed a seed in the room that it is, has there been anyone that freed herself from its claws?"

I end my words with my wishes of freedom to those babies, sick and elderly inmates who are trying to survive in Erdoğan's Turkey. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: PIXABAY.COM



JOURNALISM IS A DEADLY PROFESSION IN AFGHANISTAN



EHSANULLAH ZIYAYI *

It is by nature that every profession has its own difficulties. The health professionals, for example, have a lot of difficulties in their fight against the global pandemic. Being a journalist in Afghanistan, however, has permanent difficulties. Each passing day, it is becoming ever more fatal.

Afghanistan is a country where the wars have not ended for good and the fear roams around in the streets. On the other hand it has boundless beauties and cultural riches. The media members, who would help spread these beauties around the world are being targeted. According to the statistics of Afghanistan Journalists Center, there is a significant increase in the cases of “threat, intimidation, violence and insult” that the journalists face in the conduct of their profession.

Taliban targets journalists with the pretext that they support “Western values”. However, until today, no murder of journalists has officially been linked to Taliban nor have the perpetrators been brought to justice. After Taliban declared that the journalists support the Western values, 294 attacks on journalists claimed the

lives of 10 journalists between 2014 and 2016. With such a discourse Taliban unintentionally discloses that it is afraid of journalists as much as it fears the bombs. In a broader perspective, the journalists who cover the issues pertaining to corruption, land extortion, violence against women and human rights violations are being targeted by all the existing powerhouses. Outside big cities like Kabul, they are being targeted in an easier fashion as they are deprived of the security measures that are provided for them in Kabul. One last example of that has been the killing of 7 women journalists in Jalalabad.

NO ONE IS ABLE TO DO ANYTHING

“Press freedom” is built on fragile grounds in Afghanistan. Press members have been victim to the long lasting civil war in the country. Bismillah Aimaq, Rahmatullah Nekzad, the chairman of Ghazni Journalists’ Union, Malala Maiwand, reporter for Enikass TV, Yama Siawash, a news presenter and Aliyas Dayee, a reporter for Radio Liberty are just a few to mention here from



Without doubt, one of the countries where journalism profession is the hardest to maintain is Afghanistan. As government is not the only power to resist. Taliban, corrupt administrators, landlords and ISIS are against journalists and women journalists are especially targeted.

among the fallen victims. Institutions like Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) cannot do much other than condemning these attacks and disclosing the fact that Afghanistan is one of the deadliest countries for journalists in the world. This bitter truth brings self-censorship and decreases the interest in the profession. Especially women journalists drop out of profession due to the threats that they receive. In the World Press Freedom Index of RSF, Afghanistan ranks 122th out of 180 countries.

IN ONE YEAR, 50 JOURNALISTS WERE MURDERED

According to a 2013 resolution of the United Nations, “the rights of the journalists in the war zones must be defended”. Afghanistan qualifies as the number one country in this framing, because there is a high density of foreign journalists in Afghanistan due to the foreign military presence. While the aforementioned UN resolution is regarded as an effective measure to support press freedom and decrease violence against journalists in Afghanistan,

the reality speaks otherwise. While Mexico stays on top of the Deadliest Countries list, Iraq, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan follow it. RSF declared that bitter fact that 50 journalists and media professionals were murdered in the year 2020. The numbers are very high despite the fact that the field work has significantly decreased because of Covid-19 pandemic. It is argued that in 2020, 11 murder, 20 injury, 10 kidnapping and more than 30 beating cases were reported.

JOURNALISTS ARE VICTIMS TO BOTH SIDES

As it cannot protect its own people, the Afghan government has not taken necessary steps to protect the journalists in the country. Due to various pressures and economic difficulties in the country, more than 10 radio stations shut themselves down. There are ongoing wars around the world. A high number of journalists are falling victims to these wars despite the fact that they are not parties to them. It is recorded that many journalists leave their profession because of the attacks that they sustained. While most of them move to more secure regions of the country and deal with other businesses, about 300 of them left the country.

As Taliban and the Afghan government are negotiating around a table the attacks on journalists are moving on in a relentless manner. With the murder of 7 women journalists at the beginning of March, the atmosphere of fear is going on within the Afghan media. While the attacks on journalists are continuing across the country, we are in anticipation of what the peace negotiations will bear. We will see it together with the rest of the world. ■

WHO IS EHSANULLAH ZIYAYI?

Born in Sheberghan province of Afghanistan, Ehsanullah Ziyayi worked as a reporter for Cihan News Agency until it is closed. Currently, he is working as a teacher in Kabul while he maintains as a freelance journalist.

MEDIA IN THE FEAR TRIANGLE



MONIR AHMADI *

The phenomenal growth of the media and freedom of expression has been one of the most significant achievements of the post-Taliban era for the people of Afghanistan.

In this article there will be a variety of topics which will be discussed. Firstly, I would like to highlight the historical perspective on the media and a brief overview of the legal framework for freedom of expression. Then I will move on to the triangle of fear, violence, self-censorship and pressure against journalists and media in Afghanistan.

During the black Taliban regime between 1996 and 2001 in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious minorities including women did not have a voice at all. In fact, there was no media operation, freedom to speak or write. The only media at the time was the Taliban radio known as Radio Voice of Shariat. The only trusted news sources in that time was the BBC Persian radio where contents were produced in Pakistan and London.

Looking at back in history of media in 1873 in Afghanistan was the year the first print media called Shamsunahar

was published in Kabul. After which the second periodical publication called Seraj-ul-Akhbar was printed in 1906. Seraj-ul-Akhbar, as an oppositional publication, was critical of the friendship between Afghanistan and the UK was against the idea of colonialism. The first radio channel started operation in 1920 while the first TV broadcasted in 1978. Some believed that the operation of independent media outlets dated back to the late 1940s.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Freedom of expression, information and press are guaranteed under article 34 of constitution and in article 4 of the mass media law of Afghanistan. While article 50 protects access to information. The legal framework governing freedom of expression, information and media includes the Constitution of Afghanistan, Mass Media Law, Freedom of Information Law, Regulation on Establishment and Activity of Private Mass Media as well as Penal Code.

Article 34 firmly guarantees both freedoms of expression and the press. It strongly prohibits censorship in any



form. This article also considers a historical development in freedom of expression in Afghanistan as decades ago, constitutionally, the government had the right to observe and control the content of publications prior to publish and specific government bodies were missioned to revising content of the press.

In addition to protecting freedom of opinion, freedom to publish/print, the word “inviolable” (translation of Mas’oon in Persian) protects the right holders from any physical and psychological attacks and prevents anyone, including government, from any interferences to citizens’ right to free speech.

In the context of mass media law, free speech is protected similarly to the wording in article 19 of ICCPR but not absolute. Both positive and negative aspects of free speech is protected under this law.

After decades of conflict in Afghanistan, when the new constitution was ratified in 2003, Article 34 enshrined freedom of expression as a pillar of democracy and a vehicle for enlightening public opinion. It brought hope to citizens where if the freedom tree grew under the constitution, it would establish an awakening society and pave the ground for growth and prosperity of the country. Historically, since the new constitution was enacted after decades of conflict and civil war, all attention was focused on stability, security and peacebuilding; therefore, Article 59 mainly focuses on restrictions in the context of independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and national unity.

The language of this article is vague, broad and misleading; considering the long history of suppressive regimes in Afghanistan, and it is fairly difficult for the traditional soci-

ety to have a 180-degree U-turn and accept the democratic definition of freedom against secrecy. Therefore, it is hard to define the distinction between freedom and security or national unity in practice. Without a doubt, other terms such as “national unity” and “sovereignty” used in this article are also extremely vague and interpretable. It results in suppressing free speech in practice.

For instance, in 2010, government banned journalists from covering the suicide attack scenes on the grounds of damaging psychological security prescribed in media law. This ban was denounced by the journalists’ community and was considered an unlawful restriction, which contradicts article 4 of the same law. As a result, the journalists’ community prevailed this decision of the government.

Not only courts but also prosecuting and security authorities unlawfully attack journalists. Among others, An unpublished article costs Zaman Ahmadi 20 years in jail.

The start of the interim government (2001) was a historical moment for free speech and media. For the first time, citizens, non-government bodies, businesses and political parties obtained the right to establish independent media such as private televisions, radios and newspapers. With a population of around 38 million, Afghanistan is now home of over 90 local and national television channels, 175 radio stations, around 1000 print media and several news agencies. During this challenging 20-year free speech journey, dozens of media outlets established and collapsed.

Today, radio is the primary source of news and information for citizens in Afghanistan, particularly in rural areas. Providing news, information and entertainment content in

Farsi, Pashto and Uzbeki, some international radio channels such as BBC, VOA, Radio Free Europe are also operating. The leading national radio and television channels are of Moby Group including Arman radio, Tolo TV and TOLONews, the Killid Group, 1TV, Ariana TV, Ariana Radio, etc. Television remains in second place in terms of viewership while print media readership is lower. Hasht-eSubh (8AM) is the leading newspaper, followed by Etilaatroz, Arman Mili, etc.

Unfortunately, due to poor governance and lack of the rule of law, Taliban and Insurgent groups also got the chance to occasionally publish extremist contents through FM radio channels in some parts of the country which later on it was destroyed by the government.

THE TRIANGLE OF FEAR: VIOLENCE, PRESSURE AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

Challenges against media/journalists can be better explained in the form of triangle of fear. On the top right corner sets political pressure and censorship. On the top left corner sets self-censorship and cultural barriers and the bottom corner is violence and security threats.

To be a journalist in Afghanistan it is not only dangerous but also one the most challenging occupations. Violence against journalists in Afghanistan is a severe human rights violation that hasn't been reflected very much on the international level. Journalists/media workers routinely face physical violence, threat, intimidation during their work. Attacks on journalists and media by government or warlords, or the Taliban insurgents often go unpunished. Who can punish the Taliban, though? Civil society organizations such as Afghanistan's Journalists Safety Committee, Nai - Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan, Afghanistan's National Journalists Union put efforts to advocate for safety and security of journalists, fighting against violence and influence policies to safeguard freedom of media. They also regularly record violence cases against journalists, but still, many violence incidents remain unreported/unregistered. The nature of these violent incidents includes physical attacks, target killing, kidnapping, beating, injury, arrest, intimidation and insult, misbehavior and wrongful termination.

The causes and perpetrators of violence against journalists and media workers are not only government or the Taliban. According to data from 2013 to 2020, in terms of quantity from most to least, 8 categories of perpetrators/causes have been involved as following: Government (320 cases), Taliban(152 cases), unknown gunmen/groups(92 cases), ISIS(82 cases), local warlords(53 cases), media officials/owners(18 cases), protesters(13 cases) and natural disaster(4 cases).

Afghanistan has been one of the deadliest countries for journalists. Since 2001, over 130 journalists and media workers have been killed. Over 1550 violence cases (mostly unsolved) against media, media workers and journalists have been recorded, and since 2020, assassination cases are on the rise.

The top right corner of the fear triangle is political pressures and content censorship. In order to censor media and silence journalists, pressure has been not only imposed by the president's office in various forms, but also by other corrupt officials, local warlords, commanders, security forces and in-

surgent groups. Among others, female journalists have been violently targeted amid a wave of killings that is spreading fear among journalists and media workers by the Taliban.

Since 2001, security and political pressure have been two major concerns for media/journalists. President Karzai's administration (2001-2014) has been less suppressive and authoritarian towards media and journalists. Although he didn't approve the freedom of information act during his office in 2014. His term is known as the decade of freedom of expression and media. Experts believe that despite government failure in succeeding to institutionalize good governance in the country, it did, however, advance and maintain freedom for the media.

Ghani's administration (2014-present), though, has been considered the worst for journalists and freedom of media. According to reports, the situation of media and free speech has been worsened under Ghani's administration. Meaning, journalists and media experienced the worst security and censorship challenges ever.

President Ghani increasingly attempts to censor media in various ways including but not limited to individual attacks on media and journalists during his speeches, arresting critical journalists through National Security Council, imposing tax on print media against the law, organizing monthly meetings with editors and media directors on issues of national security and national interest concerns, controlling media with state-funded ads, closed-door meetings with media outlets, and assigning journalists/media editors in key government positions.

The newest censorship measures taken by the government include threatening media outlets via social media users. Print media owners have been threatened through social media by government-assigned individuals. Victims believe such social media users are financed and technologically backed by the government.

Finally, the top left corner of the triangle is self-censorship and cultural barriers. In simple words, journalists self-censor to survive. According to a report, the Taliban warned a reporter that his house would be attacked if he continued quoting the election commission. In other instances, government officials had forced journalists to apologise for stories critical of government officials.

Investigative reporters and editors find themselves in a self-censoring state, while reporting on sensitive issues such as corruption, land grabbing, violence against women and drugs, as a mechanism to their safety and preventing post-publication incidents. While article 4 of media law clearly prohibits censorship in any form: "Government shall support, strengthen, and guarantee the freedom of mass media. No real or legal person including government and government offices may ban, prohibit, censor or limit the free operation of informational and news media or otherwise interfere in their affairs."

Although self-censorship, violence and pressure against journalists/media are interrelated to each other, according to real life cases often one of them has been the real cause of violence. ■

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Letter of solidarity to detained journalists from PEN Romania

The Romanian branch of the International Writers' Union showed its solidarity with detained journalists in Turkey by sending letters. "What I experienced during the communist period remains soft compared to the nightmare that you have experienced," Liviu Antonesei, one of Romania's highly placed journalists, wrote in a letter to Ahmet Altan.



NECDET ÇELİK SERBEST GAZETECİ

Romanian members of the PEN International organized a letter campaign to raise awareness of imprisoned journalists in Turkey. PEN member 11 writers and poets, took 11 detained journalists from the list on jailed-journos.com and wrote letters to each of them. Each day, in alphabetical order, a letter was posted on the association's official page and facebook account.

ONE LETTER, ONE HOPE

Letters were translated into Turkish and sent to prisons where detained journalists are staying. Assessing the campaign in a broadcast on State Radio Radioa Romania Cultural, PEN Romania President Radu Vancu said Romanian intellectuals who have had similar experiences have launched the initiative to empathise with their Turkish counterparts and give them hope.

Emphasizing that the central organization PEN International constantly keeps the situation of imprisoned journalists in Turkey on the agenda, Vancu said that they acted quickly as a Romanian branch in the newly launched "Action for Turkey" campaign.

WHAT'S IN THE LETTERS?

Liviu Antonesei, one of the veteran journalists of Romania, who wrote a letter to Ahmet Altan, who was released from Silivri Prison under the pressure of the European Court of Human Rights, mentioned his own past by saying "It never occurred to me that for a journalist, the crime of participation in the coup could be scripted," said he. At the end of his letter, 68-year-old Antonesei asked for the release of journalists and writers unjustly imprisoned on behalf of all intellectuals in Romania.

"Not only were you censored, but they tried to gag you so that you wouldn't say anything" Investigative journalist Sabina Fati wrote in a letter to Hidayet Karaca. "But I know that you are resisting with all of your strength for the free days ahead, when you can speak to the microphone again," expressed she.

Romanian intellectuals ended their lines with wishes to drink Turkish coffee by sitting freely, face to face with their Turkish colleagues.

According to the data from the platform of solidarity with imprisoned journalists Jailedjournos.com, there are currently 178 journalists and media workers in Turkish prisons. ■



THEMBISA FAKUDA

Are politicians journalist's friends?

"Never allow discussions on quality of journalism to be led by politicians, it is not their realm. Politicians will never be friends nor admirers of constructive journalism". - Anonymous

Lindsay Dentlinger is an ENCA controversial South African journalist who was accused of racism after insisting on only black guests on her news interviews to wear masks. The incidents happened after the budget speech by the Finance Minister of South Africa, Tito Mboweni in parliament on 24 February. ENCA is a South African independent 24-hour news channel based in Johannesburg. Following the incident and public outcry, the channel issued a media statement, which for all intents and purposes was meant to apologise and put the entire saga to rest. However the statement has further angered most in South Africa. The channel stands accused of trying to defend Dentlinger and of being out of touch with sociopolitical reality especially on matters pertain to racial sensitivities in the country. Dentlinger certainly erred in her coverage; in a racially charged country like South Africa where incidences of racism are commonplace she should have known better. Moreover, what is more disappointing

is the manner in which ENCA handled the situation; it was an absolute failure on the side of its management and communication apparatus. Like most big institutions, ENCA underestimated the power and influence of social media in shaping the public opinion. Having said that, the Dentlinger saga has also presented an opportunity to discuss important matters in the field of news coverage in South Africa and the trappings of "Woke and Cancel cultures" in general. First, traditionally in South Africa after every budget speech, journalists line the steps of parliament to obtain reactions of the speech from opposition politicians. The process is often clumsy and poorly produced at least for television. Journalists often run up and down soliciting politicians for reactions in front of live cameras. Ordinarily, anchors and correspondents in such setups rely heavily on producers to prepare interviews. Behind the scene preparations are responsibilities of technical team, consisting of camerapersons, soundpersons, producers etc. Coordina-



tion between the studio, field anchors and correspondents is also the responsibility of technical teams. Whilst it is important to chastise Dentlinger for her actions, South African media should introspect the quality of their journalist in general and training of their journalists, worse could have happened give the current state of preparedness and professionalism. Whatever the truth behind Dentlinger's actions, preparedness of technical her technical team could have easily prevented such an occurrence.

South Africa continues to battle racism in all spheres of the society; journalists are amongst those accused of racism. This has given rise to heightened vigilance of all forms of bigotry on social media. Since the emergence of the #MeToo and #Black Lives Matter movements in the United States (US), there has been a rise of "Cancel culture" and proliferation of "Woke culture" across the globe including South Africa. Cancel culture, also referred to, as the call-out culture is "a modern form of ostracism in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circles – whether it be online, on social media, or in person". Woke culture on the other hand is a term "that originated in the US, referring to a perceived awareness of issues that concern social justice and racial justice. It derives from the African-American Vernacular English expression stay woke, whose grammatical aspect refers to a continuing awareness of these issues. Cancel culture has consequently led to the destruction of a number of people's careers often without recourse. Some those called out on social media are later discovered that they are actually innocent of accusation laid upon them. In October 2017, Mike Tunison was added in

the Sh-tty Media Men List a Google Doc that collected allegations of misconduct from anonymous, unvetted sources. Tunison was accused by someone (he didn't know) of stalking, harassment, and physical intimidation, and asserted they had filed a complaint with human resources at the Washington Post. According to Tunison, no such claim existed. "I ended up checking with HR and they were like 'we have nothing on file.' The only thing in my file that they mentioned was that I was forced to resign from the Post because I was writing for this crass sports blog Kissing Suzy Kolber, which is probably what most people know me from". What is important to note in the case of Tunison is the weaponisation of the social media to peddle untruths and destroy careers. The lack of due process, lack of evidence and subsequent ostracization of those accused is of great concern. In the case of Dentlinger what was concerning is how a less than a minute long video clip circulated widely in the social media by a politician managed not only to create a debate but somehow managed to dent her career. In order to judge people's bona fides; honesty of their past actions and indeed their journalism it must surely take more than a video clip.

Furthermore, journalists and media fraternity in general must be careful that social media activism in the form of Woke culture does not morph into a tool used by politicians to settle scores and pushback on journalism. Journalists must close ranks, self correct when necessary, criticize and sanction each other in order limit the role of external actors particularly politicians in their affairs. Racism accusations made against Dentlinger in South Africa were first raised by one of the leading South African politicians, Floyd Shivambu. Most journalists failed to identify the intent of Shivambu, which was clearly meant to smear Dentlinger and bring doubt to her journalism and the organization she represented. Shivambu is accused of assaulting a Netwerk24, a leading South African media institution, journalist at the Parliamentary Precinct in 2018. There is a danger in such an atmosphere like South Africa, where journalists are divided along racial lines; and competition to scoop each other out of stories outweighs solidarity; journalists end up siding with destructive forces. Cancel and Woke cultures are certainly growing practices and still lack thorough understanding in South Africa. Indeed, there have been positive outcomes on social media as a result of both Woke and Cancel cultures. However, they have become weapons for those seeking to settle scores. ■



PHOTOGRAPH: PIXABAY.COM



PROF. DR. VEDAT DEMİR

The Ottoman perception of modernization as just led the way only to innovations in the military field and strengthening the army sheds a light on understanding the imprisonment and exile of journalists, writers and intellectuals in today's Turkey.

CENSORSHIP HISTORY OF TURKEY

Abstract Freedom of expression is an essential human right that forms the basis of an open government and a well-informed society through public debate as well as free and independent media. Therefore, ensuring freedom of expression and having free, independent, and diverse media are vital elements for any healthy and strong democracy. This chapter analyses the history of the press and media freedom in Turkey by focusing on the last two decades under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP). The chapter closely examines the tools and methods the Erdoğan government used to take the media under control and establish an authoritarian one-man regime in Turkey.

Turkey is one of the salient examples of the countries that have experienced democratic backsliding in the last decade. The deterioration in media freedom in Turkey played a key role in its transformation from being an exemplar democracy in the MENA region to an oppressive one-man rule. In order to understand this transformation, this chapter analyzes the history of media and media freedom in Turkey by focusing on the last two decades under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) as well as the tools and methods they used to take the media under their control and establish an authoritarian regime.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TURKISH PRESS

The fundamental goal of the Turkish modernization and westernization reforms was saving the state rather than creating a modern society. In one of his articles published in 1872, Namık Kemal, a distinguished Turkish intellectual, points out

this reality and discusses the intentions of the “Tanzimat” a series of reform movements that started the period of westernization and modernization in the Ottoman Empire.

The military defeats and territory losses stimulated the Ottomans to look for the factors underlying the Western military superiority which was the main problem of the Ottoman modernization process (Mardin 2000, 134–35). Initially, the Ottoman Sultans attempted to address the growing Western challenge by reforming the military and assembling a modern army. By the nineteenth century, however, the Ottoman elites came to the realization that military reforms would not be enough and a modern political, social and economic structure was necessary to keep up with the Western world (Ahmad 1993, 3). A developed press that could inform the public was a fundamental part of this modern structure.

EMERGENCE OF THE TURKISH PRESS

Other than the ones in the military field, the most important technical innovation adopted from the West was printing. In 1727, an Imperial decree was issued, giving permission for the establishment of a Turkish press and the printing of Turkish books in Istanbul. During the time between the appearance of the first book in 1729 and the closing of the printing house in 1742, seventeen books had been printed. The development of printing in Turkey proceeded rapidly after the printing house was reopened in 1784.

FIRST SHUT DOWN OF A PAPER

Ceride-i Havadis and Tercüman-i Ahval suddenly found themselves competing against each other. Ceride-i Havadis

started to put out a supplementary daily news bulletin to address this challenge. Tercüman-ı Ahval, on the other hand, boasted of its independence stating that its competitors were owned by the imperial government and an Englishman while it represented the “people of Islam.” A further argument on questions of education between the two newspapers resulted with the first official suspension of a Turkish journal when Tercüman-ı Ahval was shut down for 2 weeks.

In 1862 a new paper called Tasvir-i Efkâr (Illustration of Opinion) started to be published. Tasvir-i Efkâr had a slightly more advanced approach and its radicalism was more cultural than political. It attracted some attention to political issues in the Ottoman Empire and called for financial and legal reforms. In March 1863, it was followed by a newspaper called Mir’at (Mirror) which had only three issues published.

REGULATIONS ON THE PRESS

In 1865, for the first time, the Ottoman government felt the need to put some kind of restraint upon the press to keep it under control. The Press Law of January 1865 was declared, and a press bureau was established to watch over the execution of these set of laws (Yalman 1914, 36). According to the new law, every paper and editor needed to obtain an official permit, and they were required to deliver a signed copy of each issue to the government for review and were responsible for penalties as a result of a violation of regulations.

A more radical newspaper called Muhbir (Informer) was established and started to be published on January 1, 1867. The vigorous and sensational articles appeared on Muhbir angered the Ottoman administration in a short span of time. The editors of Muhbir were exiled to Anatolia and the newspaper stopped being published on March 8, 1867. In the meantime, several other newspapers had started to be published in Istanbul. The rapid increase in the number of newspapers caused concern within the Ottoman administration which made the government more and more autocratic especially after the accession of the new sultan, Abdülaziz, in 1861.

The Ottoman administration realized in a short span of time that the press laws failed in checking the revolutionary publications and the personal attacks against those in power. The next step taken by the government characterized a defining feature of the Turkish system of government that has been in effect since then. The government decided that “on account of considerations of public order, to act, as often as the interests of the country required, through administrative channels, and independently of the existing press law, against newspapers which should disregard the principles, the observation of which is the essential condition of a national press” (Yalman 1914, 36). The authoritarian measures taken by the government started an era of severe pressure on the press, suppressing more and more newspapers, and causing the press departure for Europe of their more prominent contributors. As a result of the oppressive policies, the most significant Turkish newspapers had to be published in exile in London, Paris, and Geneva in the following years.

Despite the government and oppression, the Turkish press continued to grow and develop, both in number and in quality. In 1860, there was only one official and one semi-official newspaper established and run through the government support. In 1872, there were three dailies, two papers published three times

a week, a satirical weekly, a semi-weekly, a weekly police gazette, a military weekly, and a commercial weekly.

In the following years, the press proved to be a tool giving a voice to the opponents of the Ottoman administration while the numbers of papers were increasing remarkably. There was no considerable Turkish middle class to play the role taken by the bourgeois in Western countries, and most of the Turkish intellectuals were attached to the administration through official posts. They, however, could oppose and criticize the administration and the newly developed Turkish press gave them an opportunity to raise their voices.

THE PRESS UNDER CONTROL OF THE STATE AND CENSORSHIP

After his accession to the throne in 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid used all of his power to oppress the opposing voices in the society and control the press. As a result of his policies, the free intellectual life of Turkey transferred itself to France, Egypt and other places together with the press activity in Turkey.

Censorship was already well established in the time of Sultan Abdülaziz, and it became more widespread and extended from newspapers to any kind of printed matter under the rule of Abdülhamid (Lewis 1968, 187). During this time, a censorship department in the Ministry of Education was established to enforce the press and publication laws and criticism against the government was strictly forbidden. The writings of some Turkish authors were banned as well as the writings of some European authors such as Racine, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hugo, and Zola.

The government censorship prohibited any political discussions, especially ones related to liberalism, nationalism and constitutionalism. The newspapers were also restrained from discussing current affairs in any meaningful ways, and therefore the press published papers filled with encyclopedic articles rather than news. They attempted to inform the Ottoman reading public, which was still only a fraction of the population, about the outside world this way (Zürcher 2017, 74). The press in Istanbul avoided any serious political comment or the reporting of news, but they unobtrusively continued to instill European social ideas and attitudes in their readers and keep them connected to the modern world of which Turkey was now a part.

CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD

After the 1876 Constitution was put into action again with the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the press started to enjoy a status incomparably better than the previous oppressive period (Yalman 1914, 16). Censorship was lifted and newspapers and magazines filled with diverse opinions started to be published to satisfy the long-lasting need of the public (Ahmad 1993, 31). The government oppression on the press returned again after 1909. However, even the increasing bullying of the administration and the conditions of war were not able to prevent the flow of progressive thoughts and arguments within the empire (Lewis 1968, 230–31). The Second Turkish Constitutional Regime was declared in 1908. Although it lasted longer than the first attempt, it also failed. The Constitution, however, remained in force and elections were still held while the regime turned into a military oligarchy of the Young Turk leaders. The regime eventually ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 as a result of the First World War. ■

Press Card Out, Terrorist Label In

The AKP government is criticized mostly for press freedom and the fact that hundreds of journalists are in prison. But each time, the government claims that jailed “journalists” do not have press cards, so there are no journalists in prisons. Is it the card practicing the journalism?



İSMAİL SAĞIROĞLU JAILED JURNOS

Cemil Uğur, a Mezopotamya Agency reporter who spent 175 days in prison in Turkey, appealed to the Constitutional Court, the highest court for an appeal against the illegal treatment he faced. The Constitutional Court asked the Ministry of Justice for an opinion on the application. The ministry argued that Uğur was not the holder of a “press card” issued by the Presidential Communications Directorate, and also there was a connection to “terrorism” regarding his case. Journalist Cemil Uğur was released by the court pending a trial after his first court appearance 6 months later. His case is still ongoing. But Uğur is not the first journalist treated as a “terrorist” due to the fact that he has no press card valid in Turkey! Hundreds of journalists in Turkey have had their press cards cancelled. President Recep Erdoğan, in his speeches, often claims that journalists in prison are not actually journalists. “These people are not journalists.” “These are terrorists” is one of the arguments he uses the most. He uses “There are no detained journalists in Turkey, no journalist holding a press card has been arrested.” as a defense. The equation is simple, if you don’t have a government-issued press card, you’re not a journalist!

WHAT IS THIS CARD FOR?

The card doesn’t practice journalism; it can’t come up with news or record moments. No such “license” is needed. In the Constitution, it is not necessary to carry a press card to be considered as a journalist. But why is the card necessary, what are the advantages? What does it mean for a journalist in Turkey to have a yellow press card?

ADVANTAGES

If you have a card, you can easily follow the meetings held in parliament, the statements made by government agencies, ministers and MPs. It’s an advantage to have a card when you follow marches, rallies, social events. Because the police can demand to see the card. In the same way, especially in the East and southeast of Turkey, the card is asked at the entry and exit points to cities.

The biggest advantage is 5 years early retirement. According to the law, journalism is considered to have a “depreciation” effect, so journalists with a card can retire after 20 years of work, not 25 years.

If you are a foreign journalist, you can get a residence



permit with your card.

There are also bonuses that some municipalities provide, such as free parking, bus and subway use.

HOW TO GET A PRESS CARD IN TURKEY?

According to Turkish law, Press employees can apply to the relevant state organization to receive a card after 1 year if their insurance premiums are paid and they make an employment contract in accordance with the "Press Labor Law No. 212". The assembled commission conducts a review. The applicant is eligible to receive a card if he/she has the necessary requirements. The journalist has the right to carry this card as long as he or she actively works. He/She must return the card 6 months after leaving work. A journalist who has worked in this way for 20 years is eligible to be "retired" and is the owner of a press card that he/she can constantly carry.

BREAKING POINT

Issuing the press card by the state has always been a topic of discussion in Turkey. However, the system continued for many years without a hitch, as the card-issuing commission also had representatives of professional organizations. The breaking point occurred in 2014. 94 journalists who were eligible for permanent press cards were not given their cards without any justification. Appeals were inconclusive. The government, with the courage it took from here, began to set tougher rules. The Turkish Journalists Union and the Turkish Journalists Association were removed from the press card commission due to the changes made to the press card regulation. The card-issuing commission reformed by associations close to the government.

LAWS CHANGED

In 2018, the "Presidential Communications Directorate" was established for press and media affairs after the transition to the presidential system. The authority to issue press cards has given to this institution. The Presiden-

tial Communications Directorate received broad authority over press cards. The laws were changed again, new rules were introduced. "Not convicted of terrorist crimes and crimes committed with the purpose of terrorism under the Anti-Terrorism Law "and" not convicted of crimes against public peace" terms were added to the list of "Conditions for persons to grant press card".

In addition to the regulated qualities sought for journalism, "engaging in or habituating conduct contrary to national security or public order" was also considered a justification for the cancellation of the press card.

In 2019, the Communications Directorate cancelled the cards of all journalists, including foreigners, on the grounds that the card color would be changed to turquoise and its size would change. It was requested all journalists to apply "from scratch." After the new applications, opposition journalists were not granted their press cards. Hundreds of "objectionable" journalists, including journalists who were eligible to carry a permanent press card, were left without a card. Journalists whose cards have been taken away now have to work in more difficult conditions to produce news. They will not be able to retire early because their "depreciation" rights have also been taken away.

LEGAL BATTLE CONTINUES, BUT...

In order to change these laws, which is a crusher to journalism and press freedom, The Progressive Journalists Association (PJA) filed a lawsuit in the Council of State on February 14, 2019, demanding the cancellation of the new press card regulation. The Council of state confirmed that the laws adopted by its decision on April 1, 2021, are not lawful. The ruling said the press card regulation put journalists under pressure, which is not acceptable. The court ruled that press cards cannot be canceled on vague and arbitrary grounds, such as "violation of national security or public order or habituating them"; doing work that would damage the honor of the journalistic profession". "The press card is not only a professional card, but also a card

that provides convenience for the person who owns the card to access news, information, events, and is a tool for accurate information of the community in this direction," was stressed.

REPLY WAS THERE RIGHT AWAY...

However, after the decision of the State Council, the head of communication Fahrettin Altun said on his twitter account: "some terms of our Press Card Directorate have been canceled by the State Council. We immediately started working to do better. As long as we are in office, we will fight those who make "propaganda of terrorism" under the roof of "journalism". "Terror admirers rejoice in vain!" said he.

Professional press organizations state that the decision must be implemented. They demand that press cards to be issued by professional organizations, not by the state. "Not issuing a press card is preventing the freedom of the press and the work of the journalist" Can Gülerüzlü, the chairman of the PJA, said in a statement. It is not legal to cancel the press card without a commission decision. You can't arbitrarily cancel a journalist's card, you can't say, 'he/she can't apply for it for life.' Freedom of the press and expression is indispensable," he said, calling on professional organizations to fight together.

How will this fight end, will journalists be able to get rid of being labelled as "terrorists" and regain their lost cards?... The answers to all these questions will become clearer after the legal struggle. Until then, journalists in Turkey will continue to work on thorns. ■

SITUATION IN TURKEY

Having a press card in Turkey is important for you to prove your work. This has become a tradition in the country, and if you do not have a card, you are not considered a "real" journalist. Because of this, institutions such as DISK Press Business Union, Turkish Journalists' Union, Turkish Journalists' Society began to cooperate with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and began to issue an international press card (IPC). The card does not have much validity in Turkey, but those whose cards are canceled by the state or those who are not granted for cards can apply and receive it if they meet the necessary conditions.



Jailed JJ Jornos

Jailed Jornos is a platform for journalists in prison in Turkey to hear their voices and tell their stories. Our aim is to help arrested journalists and their families in Turkey and to work for the promotion of freedom of press and expression. Accordingly, the platform follows press cases and prepares reports on journalists in prison. We record the list of journalists in prison. By creating posters, articles and special videos, events are constantly organized to explain that journalists in prison are innocent. Jailed Jornos is a non-profit organization and works on a voluntary basis. <https://jailedjornos.com> twitter: @jailedjornos

JOURNALISM IN CHINA'S OPEN-AIR PRISON

In the East Turkestan, which has been turned into an open-air prison neither people out of it nor the insiders hear from each other. Not a single connection exists and communication is impossible. The Chinese government commits crimes such as arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial executions or massacres in East Turkestan and hides these crimes from the public as a state secret.



DOÇ. DR. ERKİN EMET ANKARA UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF LANGAUGE, HISTORY, AND GEOGRAPHY

The 'question' of Eastern Turkestan has been received as a threat since the early eighteenth century when its name was changed into Xinjiang but, especially after its occupation by the Manchu rule in 1884.

The government in China has been approaching Eastern Turkestan as a strategic tool, primarily due to the events culminating in the economic rise of China. The Communist regime of China occupied Eastern Turkistan in 1949. In the following decades, the Cold War ended, and the Central Asian Republics declared independence. New economic alliances in the region necessitated reframing the domestic and foreign policies. The fall of the Soviets, ethnic conflict in the Balkans, changing international relations after 9/11 escalated tension and served to legitimise increasing aggressive measures imposed by the Chinese government.

In the region, any ethnic, cultural, political request or appeal for human rights created tension and became a threat to the ruling power. The policy of 'strike hard' defined "three evil forces", which are 'separatism, terrorism, fundamentalism,' legitimised state violence that waged war against voices from various thoughts, identities, and religious faith. The aggressive measures in the region generated a recession in the human rights of ethnic or religious minorities. In 2008, the government in Beijing, claiming the security reasons for the Olympics, prohibited 'twenty-three types of religious activities,' including religious marriage, funeral processions, pilgrimage to the sacred sites, and praying in public spaces in Eastern Turkestan.

Civil servants working in the police forces, schools, labour-intensive works, and other public posts were fined, sentenced to imprisonment, or lose their jobs if they partic-



ipate in any religious activity. From then on, the pilgrimage to Mecca, headscarf and beard for Uyghur women and men were banned. By March 2004, Uyghur Turkish as a language of instruction in primary, secondary, and high schools were banned. This was an unprecedented ban and resulted in compulsory early retirement for the teachers who did not speak Chinese. Moreover, the retirement salaries for these teachers were paid only for two years.

By 2010, the transition to Chinese as the only language of instruction was completed in all education institutes from primary school to university in Eastern Turkestan. The assimilation policies that targeted Eastern Turkestan raised public upheavals. However, they ended in bloodshed, as in the Ghulja Genocide on February 5, 1997, and Urumchi Genocide on July 5, 2009. For many Uyghur Turks, claiming access to fundamental human rights resulted in imprisonment and execution.

In Eastern Turkestan, freedom of thought and speech is curtailed, silencing academics, writers, researchers, teachers, educators, intellectuals, politicians, and journalists. After the July 5 massacres, Uyghur journalists who reported the violence and injustice committed by the Chinese government were detained and imprisoned. Some were sentenced to ten years, others to life long imprisonment.

Journalists in Eastern Turkestan are still under state surveillance. No media coverage can be printed without the official approval of the Chinese communist regime. The journalists are not allowed to criticise the government or

the Community party. The news that includes any criticism has been heavily censored, and the reporters are being imprisoned.

None of the media in China is independent. Establishing independent press, newspapers, TV channels are banned. From prominent institutes to individual reporters, everyone is subject to constant scrutiny. No report can be printed without official approval. Moreover, the international community are not given access, banned from entering Eastern Turkestan, writing about Uyghurs or the region.

The Chinese government is intimidated by any probability that its crimes against humanity in Eastern Turkestan will be exposed worldwide, and Eastern Turkestan will attract global attention. Thus, the news of the international press is heavily censored within the country, and opening new businesses in media, such as radio, TV, newspapers, journals, or internet news portals, are not allowed in the region.

As the international press is not given access to the region, the news on Eastern Turkestan or Uyghur Turks heavily relies on Xinhua, one of the mouthpiece papers of the Chinese government. Thus, the international news reflects a one-sided and censored state perspective. As a result of all, Eastern Turkestan became an open-air prison where the people inside has no connection with the outside world and vice versa.

The state crimes in the region, however, is beyond creating an open space prison. The government continues

whimsical imprisoning, sentencing, hanging people without due process or legal reason. The journalists who report on state violence in Eastern Turkestan are either detained or imprisoned. The crimes are facilitated by censorship and secrecy, and the secrecy is maintained by extreme and violent measures to ensure self-censoring and, if not, silencing defenders of human rights by any means. One can say that the state crimes in China present cases of textbook examples for genocide in international law and social science literatures.

Hundreds of local and international reporters and journalists who wrote and spoke about the July 5, 2009, Urumqi massacres have been imprisoned in Chinese prisons. Their names are not known and kept as a state secret. The international media and human rights organisations could reach only twenty-two names and their documents. One of them, Mehmed Abdullah, was the editor of the news service on Uyghurs at public radio in Beijing. Abdullah's crime was broadcasting about 2009 Urumqi massacres, and giving interviews to the international press. He was immediately detained and in 2010 was sentenced to life long imprisonment. The other names obtained by Amnesty International are as follows:

Abdulgani Mehmetemin – nine years, Dilşat Perhat – five years, Gayret Niyaz – fifteen years, Gülmire Emin ve Memet Abdullah – life long imprisonment, Mehbube Ablesh – three years, Nicat Azat ten years, Nureli Ubul – three years, Nurmuhammad Yasin – ten years, Tursuncan Hezim – seven years. (1)

Beyond all these atrocities, however, the most urgent issue that affects thousands of lives is that two million Uyghur Turks are held captive in internment or political inculcation camps. China opened “reeducation centres” in 2017. After a few initial titles, these camps were officially named Profession Education Schools in early 2017. (2) The internment camps will have multi-generational effects on Uyghur Turks.

Chinese government showed how it shifted from discourses requesting respect for the rights of the ethnic minorities to assimilation politics involving detention in internment camps, criminalising the ethnic and religious identities. Some researchers and observers even compared these practices with Soviet Gulags. (3) For instance, an article in the Washington Post wrote, “The ones who believe in “never again” philosophy after the Nazi camps and Stalin's gulags, has to raise their voice against brainwashing, imprisonment, and torture in China.” (4)

Another critical analysis was provided by the researcher Rian Thum who prepared a report about China and its Congress and Administrative bodies. In his report dated July 2, 2018, Thum warned that if legal preventive measures and due processes not imposed in the camps, ‘We cannot prevent a potential massacre.’ (5) The politics of Uyghur youth and the educational system have been central in Chinese politics of ethnic cleansing. Initially, speaking in Uyghur Turkish was banned in schools and universities. Uyghur students at the age of secondary school were dispatched to the majority Chinese speaking schools. Hiring Uyghur nationals were restricted. Entries to the mosques

were recorded and for the Uyghurs banned Security search for Uyghur majority areas and around mosques were increased, and many people disappeared during these searches. At the top of these, the International Uyghur students were asked to return, and upon their return, they were detained and taken into the incarceration camps without any due process or warning.

One of the latest strategies of ethnic cleansing was opening new orphanages for the children whose parents were detained in the incarceration camps. The Uyghur children have no freedom to have a future under state surveillance and state violence where ethnic profiling, bullying, inculcated censorship, and violence is endemic. New tactics of oppression are invented every day. A different report by Radio Free Asia highlighted inhumane and unsanitary conditions of the incarceration camps as the number of people is above the capacity of the camps. Despite this fact, more and more people are being imprisoned every day and adding up to the population density in the camps. (Shohret Hoshur, 1, 2018). (6) We can expect the worse to come with layers of more aggressive policies. It can be deduced that human rights violations will increase and escalate, creating much harsher conditions.

The ethnic cleansing is not inclusive of only Uyghur Turks. Unfortunately, other ethnic minorities in Eastern Turkestan also suffer from violation of fundamental human rights. Alongside the Uyghurs, Kazak, Uzbek, and Tatar Turks are detained in the incarceration camps, or so-called “Educational Centres.” Some were exiled into prisons in the inner land of China and had been suffering from a myriad of losses in health, economic, and social aspects. Some lost their lives in the camps, some disappeared, and nothing heard about thousands.

Conclusion: Many intellectuals, students, academics, and writers have been detained, imprisoned, and tortured in the camps and prisons in China. These include the leading linguists, folklorists, poets, artists, and public intellectuals from different minorities, from Uyghurs to Kazak Turks. Ethnic cleansing might have begun with leaders of ethnic minorities as poets and linguists; however, it spread and turned the region into an open-air prison.

The leaders are the light to enlighten their people, the bridges connecting them to their past and future. The intellectuals are the backbone, the soul, the spirit of a society. Targeting the freedom of speech and thought is the most considerable violence a community can face. Silencing the people of Eastern Turkestan means erasing their legacy, their past and future. Despite all the suppression, the international media has been reporting state violence in China. ■

1) Abdülehed ER, Doğu Türkistan'da Gazeteci Olmak, <https://akademiye.org/tr/?p=1723>, 29 Ağustos 2018.

2) Uygur İnsan Hakları Projesi Raporu 2017.

3) Nordlinger, J. (2018). China's Uyghur Oppression: A New Gulag. [online] National Review.

4) Washington Post (2018). China's repugnant campaign to destroy a minority people.

5) Congressional-Executive Commission on China (2018). Hearing on Surveillance, Suppression, and Mass Detention: Xinjiang's Human Rights Crisis. [online] CECC.

6) www.rfa.org/uyghur



Media freedom was discussed at the Turkey Tribunal

The third episode of the webinar series organized by the International Observatory of Human Rights was realized. The report prepared in the program, which discussed restrictions on media freedom and freedom of thought in Turkey, drew attention. Following statements were stressed in the report:

‘Freedom of the press is the cornerstone of democracy and the fundamental indicator of the health of a functioning democracy. No democracy can live without the balances that secure a free press. Freedom of the press in Turkey is under great pressure. Many journalists have already been sentenced to long-term penalties due to the content of their critical articles.’



Körber Foundation Exile Media Forum was Held

We were a guest of the webinar series organized by Körber Stiftung (Körber Foundation), one of the leading foundations in Germany. In the program, which took place on January 14, 2021 and lasted more than one hour, our association was first introduced and its activities were mentioned. The programme also discussed the problems of refugee journalists and, in this context, the problems faced by Bold media based on the attempt to close them by the Erdogan regime and how to cooperate against them.

Gesellschaft Für Menschenrechte Turkey Special Symposium

International Journalists, founded by exiled journalists in 2017, was invited to the seminar on 18 February 2021 by the International Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte (IGFM), Germany's leading human rights association. The international human rights association, based in Germany, operates in many countries with more than 50 years of experience. Ilias Uyar, Kamal Sido, Simon Jacob and our member journalist Erkan Pehlivan attended the seminar on February 18. Pehlivan de-

scribed the restrictions imposed on freedom of opinion in Turkey in recent years and the grievances caused by pressure on the media. Expressing the victimization of media pressures, arrest of many journalists and journalist's unemployment due to governments shutting down newspapers, Pehlivan said that different professional media organizations didn't show the necessary attention to the issue as well, and imprisoned journalists were not sufficiently kept on the agenda.



Turkey is the country where the most journalists are in prison

The International Federation of Journalists announced that in 2020, 65 journalists around the world were killed while doing their professions, 229 journalists are in prison.

The International Federation of journalists (IFJ) reported that in 2020, 65 journalists worldwide were killed while performing their profession. Presenting its annual report to the public, the IFJ noted that the number of journalists killed last year increased additional 17

people compared to 2019, noting that in 2020, journalist murders occurred in 16 different countries. According to the IFJ report, at least 229 journalists are in prison worldwide as of March 2021. According to the report, Turkey is “the country that jailed the most journalists in the world”. According to the IFJ report, at least 67 media employees are in prison in Turkey, but according to our Jailed Journos and association data, this number is 160.

European Union Parliamentarian: “The situation in Turkey is alarming”

European Union parliamentarian Maria Arena spoke to the Peace and Justice Association. Addressing many issues, from the downfall of Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu’s deputy to Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, Arena said that the press is of great importance both in Turkey and around the world. Speaking to peace and Justice’s YouTube channel, the European Union Parliament pointed out that journalists have been arrested in countries outside Europe. Pointing out that the media is a force that informs people, Arena said the situation in Turkey is alarming. “Some media agencies in Turkey are closing because they cannot enjoy freedom of expression,” Arena expressed, noting that many journalists from Turkey are now living in exile.

Stating that journalism is a profession and professional people are needed, Arena said: “We need to protect journalism and do what needs to be done to inform people, but that doesn’t mean you can do or say whatever you want. We need to have professionals in journalism.”



Turkey is still not ‘free’!

Freedom House, a non-governmental organization that conducts research on democracy, freedom and human rights issues, released its 2020 report. In the report, Turkey was included in the category of “not free countries” this year. Turkey, which received 32 points out of 100 points, was ranked 146th in the “freedom” ranking, among 195 countries. As last year, Turkey took part in the “not free countries” category this year. Among the 49 countries, the 10 worst-case countries were Tajikistan, Libya, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ecuadorian Guinea, North Korea, Turkmenistan, South Sudan, Eritrea and, finally, Syria.

In the last 10 years, Turkey has become the second country in the world where freedoms have declined the most. Ahead of Turkey,

which has fallen 31 points in 10 years, was the Central African country of Burundi with a loss of 32 points. The report on Turkey in the section “opposition politicians, members of civil society groups, independent journalists and critics of Ankara’s foreign policy that continues through 2020 and prosecution for harassment campaigns,” he emphasized. In addition, the report cited terrorism charges, torture and humiliating treatment targeting Kurdish opponents, supporters of the Gulen movement and leftists.

General Freedom Scores

General Score of Turkey: 32 (0 lowest 100 highest)

Political Rights: 16 / 40

Civil Rights: 16/60

Journalist execution

In the middle of the street in Afghanistan, three female journalists working for a local media organization in the city of Nangarhar, close to the border with Pakistan, were killed in an armed attack. ISIS-Khorasan, which describes itself as the Afghanistan branch of ISIS, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Afghan government, however, blamed the Taliban organization for the attack. Taliban spokesman Zebihullah Mujahid denied the charges against the organization. Police Chief Cumagul Himmet said the attacker carried out the murder with a pistol wearing a silencer. ISIS said they are targeting female journalists because they work in a “government-backed media organization.” More than 200 unsolved murders have been committed in Afghanistan in the past six months, and several journalists and activists have been killed by gunfire.

We have provided AFP subscriptions to our Partner channels

A cooperation between International Journalist Association and Agence France-Presse (AFP) took place. Thus, our association provided written, photo and video news subscriptions for broadcast media and journalists who continue their free journalism activities with limited opportunities from abroad. 15 publications that are currently partners with our association will be able to benefit from the subscription.

Ahmet Şık and Taş’s journalistic activities were prosecuted

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) handled the conviction and trial files of journalist Ahmet Şık and columnist Atilla Taş accused in Turkey. Ahmet Şık was imprisoned for 13 months and 7 days, while Atilla Taş was imprisoned for 16 months.

Courts in Turkey have charged both men with terrorist propaganda. Both journalists referred the trial to the ECHR. After 4 years of trial, the ECtHR ruled that Ahmet Şık was tried for his journalistic activities and arrested without

reasonable doubt in his imprisonment for this claim. Court also decided to Şık to be paid 16 thousand euros in compensation. Another case in which the ECHR stated that journalism was prosecuted was the Atilla Taş Case. The court declared that Taş, who was an author in the Daily Meydan, which was closed with the KHK, and was imprisoned for his writings, had violated his right to freedom and security and freedom of expression, and that the claims of terrorism were not proven by the court.



Commission of Investigation request from Tanrıkulu for attacks on journalists

CHP Istanbul Deputy Sezgin Tanrıkulu, stating that journalism in Turkey has become a ‘dangerous profession,’ gave a motion to the Turkish Grand National Assembly to establish a commission of investigation in the Parliament. Recalling the attacks on journalists, Tanrıkulu stated that the public has the right to know who car-

ried out these attacks. “The impunity policy raises allegations that it was carried out in the form of threat to intimidate those considered dissidents during the period of AKP governments and the Presidential government system,” Tanrıkulu said, noting that the perpetrators of attacks on journalists were left unknown or released.

Journalists beaten in the middle of the street

Violence against media workers continues in Turkey, pressure on free and opposition media is becoming more widespread every day. Moreover, the extent of these pressures has gone from abuse of the law to the use of violence. What these attacks had in common was criticism of the policies of the MHP, a supporter of regime practices and a junior partner of the government. It is understood that these attacks on journalists, who have come from the same party in the past, are now criticizing their cooperation with the government, took place in a systematic way. One of the developments that supports this understanding is that all attackers are captured, but released without any punishment. We hope that this attitude of the regime does not encourage the realization of other attacks and larger events. Ankara Representative Orhan Uğuroğlu, Sabahattin Önkibar, Yavuz Selim Demirağ, Murat İde and Ahmet Takan were attacked and the Journalist Levent Gültekin was beaten in the middle of the street. Gültekin was attacked by a group as he walked to the Halk TV, where he was making a program. Gültekin's fingers are broken.

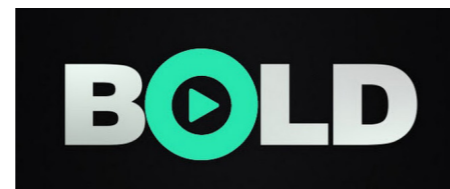
Journalism In Exile

Between 10-19 November, we organized webinars on 'journalism in exile' with the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF). Journalists from countries such as Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan participated in the trainings given by Freelance German Journalist Erkan Pehlivan.



Towards the end of the month of censorship of Bold Media

TRT, the state channel in Turkey, caused the closure of Bold media with the right to Content ID, which it has on the grounds that its content in Bold media violates the copyright. While TRT's copyrights were not annexed, YouTube used the Content ID privilege granted to certain institutions to silence Bold media. With the close up of the channel, our association officials contacted YouTube officials to remedial action to this injustice. Later, the struggle was continued through professional organizations, rights struggle associations, politicians and publishing organizations and freelance journalists. The technical reports prepared and the claims and justifications of TRT were answered one by one and revealed that they were unfounded. Through initiatives supported by the Digital Freedom Association and its lawyers, the right to YouTube SMS (content ID) was proven to be abused by TRT, and 43 videos that were removed were re-uploaded to the channel. During its closure, the broadcast team, which continued the struggle by creating a channel called Bold Plus, soon exceeded



50 thousand followers. Along with Bold Media, which began broadcasting again on January 25, broadcasts are still continuing on two channels. Bold Media technical team, during the time they remained closed, they experienced a subscriber loss of about 7 thousand, but they made up for it again in a short time, reaching 252 thousand subscribers. Despite the current ban on access from Turkey, the channel's access to these viewing figures has an impact on the censorship attempt, and similar censorship attempts may be in question for both its own channels and other free and opposition broadcasters. As an association, we will continue the struggle for rights in the international arena, as we also assume that the struggle is not yet over and will not end anytime soon.



Who Are We?

We are journalists who have been forced to go abroad and most of whom become refugees due to increased pressure on the media in Turkey, especially after 2014.

International Journalists Association e.V. is a professional organization founded by journalists, mostly refugees, who were forced to flee abroad especially after 2014 due to the lack of freedom of thought and increase pressure on the media.

It is a non-profit organization owned by journalists who have worked in different broadcasting organizations in the past and now come together in solidarity with the goal of free publishing and acting for the common good,

Our association, headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany, has 165 members who are trying to continue their profession in more than 30 countries. Although it was founded by people of Turkish origin, it has already started to globalize with the participation of its colleagues of different nationalities, as it aims.

Our association continues its work modestly with independent publishing revenues and donations made for this purpose on the basis of 'freedom of media and freedom of ideas', which is the purpose of the organization.

Some of our recent activities are listed for you below;

- Up-to-date recording and monitoring of information about media employees detained and held in prisons in Turkey
- Documentation of shutdown media institutions via reports, transfer of their information to international courts
- Monitoring, reporting and publishing restrictions on media freedom and freedom of thought
- Cooperation with international professional organizations for information purposes on issues that our organization monitors and reports, as well as continuing its claim for rights
- Production of promotional videos, articles, news and various media materials for imprisoned journalists, their announcement to the world through social media campaigns
- Transport of letters to the ECHR, written personally by journalists who have been subjected to torture
- At certain intervals, actualization the 'exiled journalists' congress Creating a common struggle ground and awareness of solidarity
- Preparation of special reports to international institutions such as the UN, EU and ECHR.

- Conducting outdoor activism practices in organizations attended by large audiences, such as the Frankfurt Book Fair
- Camfest (Germany Media Gathering) participation
- Bringing the Tenkil Museum project, consisting of memories of those who experienced victimization in Turkey, to life
- Providing equipment support to refugee journalists. Supporting our colleagues who are trying to publish with their individual efforts
- Providing specialist training for refugee journalists Ensuring that a single person can publish all the stages of the news without help through these trainings.
- Providing international news agency subscription for broadcasters
- Organizing a joint conference with the ECPMF (European Centre for Press and Media Freedom)
- Presentation at IGMF (International Human Rights Association) conference
- Organizing a private 'Exile Media Forum' with the Körber Foundation
- Preparation of a special report to the UN, EU and German parliament together with the GfbV (Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker)
- Producing videos for partner associations such as the UN, EU and ECHR. Ensuring that the field work that takes place in the press and broadcasting organizations
- Creation of a production and PR agency called FORA with the synergy of media employees
- Organizing social media campaigns in support of victims, various community groups and professional organizations
- Being among the founders of the Peaceful Actions Platform, where associations that come together to fight for rights work throughout Europe
- Educating future journalists and providing educational support to young people and amateur workers who carry out media activities, especially through social media. Establishment of Media Academy for this purpose
- Publication of the international periodical magazine, JournalistPOST available in English, German and Turkish languages. ■

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