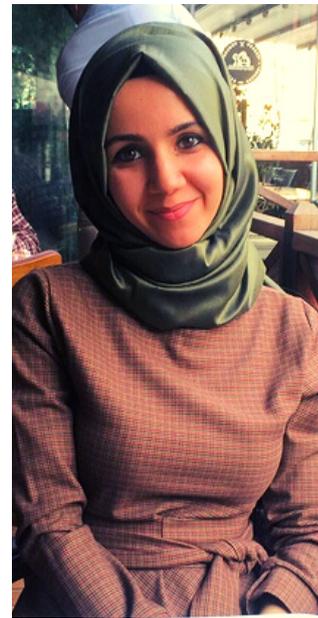


Turkey's "anti-state" women journalists.

The country uses legality to censor journalists.



The
Coalition
For
Women In
Journalism



TURKEY'S "ANTI-STATE" WOMEN JOURNALISTS.

This report was developed with the support of Craig Newmark Philanthropies.

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ABOUT US

The Coalition For Women In Journalism is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered mentorship for mid-career women journalists across several countries around the world, and is the first organization to focus on the status of free press for women journalists. Our system of individuals and organizations brings together the experience and mentorship necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong mechanism where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

THE REPORT

Turkey has developed a pattern of attacking journalists with legal consequences when they report on facts that are deemed critical. This report takes a look at some of the cases we have been documenting since last year.

If you would like to request more insight into our findings, or would like to suggest an addition to our work reach out to us at data@womeninjournalism.org. For media inquiries reach out to us at press@womeninjournalism.org.



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN TURKEY?

Turkey has been under immense criticism for placing the most number of female journalists behind bars. In particular, investigative and critical reporters, Kurdish journalists are targeted by the government. Dozens of women journalists are imprisoned on terrorism or other anti-state charges.

The Gezi Park protests marked a turning point for the media's relationship with the government in 2013. Many journalists working for mainstream media outlets lost their jobs, following their criticism of the Turkish administration. Apart from the Gezi Park protests, the failed coup attempt and the state of emergency in 2016 is also to be examined crucially. When The Turkish government imposed an emergency, 179 media organisations, including newspapers (53), television channels (34), radio channels (37), magazines (20), news agencies (6) and printing houses (29) were shut down across the country.

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Since the failed coup attempt, most journalists who were arrested have been accused of terror-related crimes, as the government declared Fethullah Gülen's opaque movement a terrorist organization. Therefore, anyone accused of any type of link to the group or the coup attempt will face terror charges. Most journalists work in a repressive environment and try to change this environment within the bounds of possibility.

We have observed that as of September 2019, at least 11 women journalists are currently jailed in Turkey on various charges by the state.



IMPRISONED FOR TERRORISM

Majority of the number of arrests and detentions of journalists observed in Turkey are connected to operations against terrorist organizations in the country. Journalists, particularly pro-Kurdish ones, who have covered, reported and followed the issue, have been incarcerated by the state.

Many editors and reporters of Jinnews, a pro-Kurdish media outlet, were arrested and detained recently. Several journalists linked to Jinnews are accused of being members of a terror group, and creating terrorist propaganda.

After the failed coup attempt, a more controlled environment was created for journalists. The many political restrictions have instilled a sense of fear in journalists, who want to avoid detention. Approximately 189 journalists passed through police custody last year. The number is still on the rise day by day.

This report will look at the 11 women journalists, who were detained without charge or for offences classified as “anti-state”. They are still behind bars because of their reports, articles and even social media posts.

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After the local elections on March 31, a series of sweeping operations took place in various parts of Turkey after the appointment of trustees to the Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin. The appointments took place after the mayors of these cities were dismissed by the Interior Ministry, following which protests erupted in the cities. During the protests, many journalists covering these events were taken into custody because of their press activities. A total of 418 individuals were detained as a result of these operations.

THE CASES

AYŞE NAZLI ILICAK

Well-known columnist, TV host and former parliamentarian, was arrested on 26 July 2016 as part of an operation targeting journalists who allegedly had links with the Gülen movement, which the government accuses of maintaining a terrorist network (FETO/PDY) and staging the 15 July, 2016 coup attempt.

On 5 July 2019, the 16th Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Appeals overturned the verdict rendered by the trial court that sentenced Nazlı Ilıcak, Ahmet Altan, Mehmet Altan and three of their co-defendants to aggravated life imprisonment on the charge of "attempting to overthrow the constitutional order."

The 26th High Criminal Court of Istanbul, issuing its decision for retrial on 18 July 2019, said it would take up the case on 8 October, 2019.

The court will abide by the Court of Cassation ruling to overturn the life sentences. Nazlı Ilıcak and other detained defendants' detention will continue.

The next hearing will be held on November 4.

BURÇİN DOKGÖZ

She was a reporter covering crime for now shuttered Zaman. She is accused of being a mouthpiece for a terrorist organization and the parallel state structure led by exiled preacher Fethullah Gülen. The judgement process is still continuing since failed coup attempt in 2016.

HANIM BÜŞRA ERDAL

Hanım Büşra Erdal was arrested on July 26 from her family's home. She was a reporter and columnist for the now closed Zaman and Yeni Hayat dailies. She was taken into custody under a crackdown targeting journalists who were suspected of being connected to a banned movement by Fethullah Gülen.

Erdal was handed down a sentence for "terrorist group membership". The evidence against her had been taken from her columns and her Twitter posts. The case against her and 28 others was dubbed "Media arm of FETÖ." On March 8, 2018, the court convicted 25 journalists under terrorism-related charges. The journalist was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months, along with 10 others because of their supposed "membership in an armed terrorist organization." Erdal is currently jailed at İstanbul's Bakırköy Women's Prison.

AYŞENUR PARILDAK

Ayşenur Parıldak was arrested and sentenced on the same charges as Hanım Büşra Erdal. She was a former court reporter for Zaman and was taken into custody on August 3, 2016, while she was at her university campus.

She was put into a prison before her trial began on August 11, and was also charged with "being a member of FETÖ terrorist organization." The court gave her nine years in prison when she was sentenced, however, this was brought down to seven years and six months for good behavior. She is currently serving her sentence at the Ankara Women's Prison.

THE CASES

HATİCE DUMAN

She used to work as an editor and publisher for Atılım newspaper. Of Turkey's 68 imprisoned journalists, Duman — who is serving a life sentence — has been detained the longest. Officials accused her of being a member of the banned Marxist Leninist Communist Party, producing propaganda, and "attempting to change the constitutional order by force."

KİBRIYE EVREN

She used to work as a reporter for Jinnews. She was detained and arrested together with 142 other people including journalists and politicians on October 9, 2018 as part of an investigation launched by Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

She was charged with "membership of a terrorist organization" and "propagandizing for a terrorist organization".

MELTEM OKTAY

She worked as a reporter and photographer covering human rights, politics, and war for Dicle News Agency. The journalist has been sentenced to four years on charges of creating propaganda for the outlawed Kurdish group PKK in connection with material published on social media. She were detained on anti-state charges based on her journalism and social media posts for four months in 2016.

GURBET ÇAKAR

Gurbet Çakar, the director of the Kurdish-Turkish Rengê Hevîya Jinê women's magazine, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for allegedly making propaganda for the PKK and committing a crime on behalf of the organization in October, 2010.

PINAR GAYIP & SEMİHA ŞAHİN

Journalists from Etkin News Agency (ETHA) Pinar Gayip and Semiha Şahin were first detained on April 13, 2018, and then arrested by the Prosecutor's Office on April 13, 2018. While Şahin was charged with "being a member of an illegal organization and propagandizing for it", Gayip was charged with "being a member of an illegal organization". They had their fifth hearing at the İstanbul 23rd Heavy Penal Court on June 13. The court placed the two journalists under house arrest and released them from prison in June this year.

RELEASED JOURNALISTS

Between February and August 2019, several journalists who had been in prison on similar charges were released. This includes, Zehra Doğan (sentences for terrorist propaganda), İsmnaz Temel (sentenced for membership of a terror group), Seda Taşkın (charged with helping a terror outfit and disseminating terrorist propaganda), and others. The Coalition finds these cases worrying, and is alarmed by the obvious trend of labeling journalists terrorists or linking them to terrorism, in a bid to silence them.



The Coalition For Women In Journalism is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered mentorship for mid-career women journalists across several countries around the world, and is the first organization to focus on the status of free press for women journalists. We thoroughly document cases of any form of abuse against women in any part of the globe. Our system of individuals and organizations brings together the experience and mentorship necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong mechanism where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

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