



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, a non- governmental organization on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Türkiye: Repression Intensifies Against Journalists, Press and Media Organisations**

As the 2023 elections approach in Türkiye, the governmental coalition composed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) reinforces the crackdown on dissent, especially Kurdish people; while the popular reactions against the government are rising as a consequence of the economic, social and political crisis in the country.

The Turkish government used the attempted coup in July 2016 to suspend democratic norms and the enjoyment of universal human rights in order to build an autocratic political system, intensifying its unlawful attempts to shut down and seize democratic-legal institutions, arrests and even kidnapping of journalists, thus preventing dissenters from organising and creating an atmosphere of fear and dysfunction through anti-democratic and repressive methods.

Since the 1980s, the Turkish state has not refrained from using all kinds of methods to silence and disorganise dissent in all sectors of society, notably by torturing and imprisoning dissenters to death. In the 1990s it took the form of disappearances through unsolved murders, and in the period of AKP-MHP rule, it took the form of condemning people for trumped up crimes or false confessions extracted under threat or torture. Since the 1990s, Türkiye has justified its repressive practices with the fight against terrorism.

In his report to the 35th session of the Human Rights Council in 2018 (A/HRC/35/22/Add.3), Mr. David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, presented a comprehensive report on freedom of opinion in Türkiye. He emphasized that under the AKP-MHP government "Turkey has fallen behind the 1982 constitution with its practices". Mr. Kaye stressed that "at least 177 media outlets have been shut down, 231 journalists have been detained, more than 150 journalists have been arrested, and Turkey has used a 'vague' anti-terrorism law, the full extent of which is unclear, as a pretext to prosecute journalists, artists, writers, academics, press organizations." Mr. Kaye said that there were serious doubts about a fair trial because of interference in the judiciary.

Kaye said that journalists and intellectuals who wanted to show solidarity with the Özgür Gündem newspaper's employees against the pressures they faced due to their editorial line were arrested and put on trial. Kaye noted that the crackdown on Kurdish media has reached very serious dimensions, noting that Kurdish-language television stations have been shut down and media outlets close to the Alevi faith have been shut down and censored.

Under the AKP rule, operations against Kurdish journalists began in 2009. During the AKP period, arrests have reached a level exceeding that of the military coup of 12 September 1980. While a total of 24 journalists were arrested in 1980, 105 Kurdish journalists and 35 distributors have been arrested and imprisoned in 2012. Writers, lecturers, publishers and journalists have been subjected to investigations because of expressing their opinions. Journalists and press workers have been imprisoned under the anti-terrorism law and the Turkish penal code. According to recent researches, 70% of journalists in Türkiye are anti-government and are involved in reporting on rights violations against the Kurdish people. Reporting on a press statement, a published interview or on human rights violations committed by security forces are used as evidence of participation in "terrorist organisation" activities. Almost all cases involve the expression of opposition opinions, possession of newspapers and magazines, computer records, wiretaps and "secret witness statements".

### **CRIMES ATTRIBUTED TO SOME JOURNALISTS ARRESTED AND PROSECUTED DURING THE AKP ERA**

Kenan KIRKAYA Dicle News Agency (DİHA) Ankara Representative states that he is accused of "making propaganda with the aims and objectives of the organization in all of his news reports" and describes the charges against him in the indictment as follows: criticizing "especially the Turkish government, the prime minister, the judicial system and the law enforcement forces"; using "expressions and discourses bordering on insult"; trying to

"thereby create public opinion that the state is committing violence and oppression against the Kurdish people"... Kırkaya says that he was alleged to have carried out so-called journalism in minefields, which have nothing to do with journalistic activities and constitute a terrorist offense, and that the prosecutor told him, "Your news are more dangerous than the bullets fired by terrorists".

Abdurrahman GOK, a journalist who took photographs when Kemal Kurkut, a civilian and defenseless university student, was killed by a police bullet during a police check on his way to a Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir in 2017. The Diyarbakir High Penal Court charged Abdurrahman Gok with making propaganda when publishing and reporting on the Kurkut killing and sentenced him to 1 year and 8 months in prison, while the police officers who killed Kemal Kurkut were acquitted.

On 11 September 2020, two villagers, Osman Şiban and Servet Turgut, were detained by soldiers and taken to a helicopter. During the flight, they were thrown out of the helicopter by the soldiers. Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and Deva party MPs submitted parliamentary questions for an investigation. Journalists Adnan Bilen, Cemil Ugur, Sehriban Abi and Nazan Sala were arrested for reporting about the throwing of the two sheep men from the helicopter by the soldiers and the parliamentary questions.

## **REPRESSION AGAINST THE KURDISH PRESS**

In the first semester of 2002, 76 journalists were arrested, while 156 were on trial, 16 have been sentenced, 35 journalists were in detention, 27 were under investigation, 49 were subject to mistreatment, 25 were raided at their home and 35 were prevented from following specific cases. In the same period of time, 4 ban decrees were issued against broadcasting outlets.

On 7 June 2022, an operation was carried out against Kurdish media institutions, 20 journalists were detained without charges and 16 journalists were released after 8 days of detention. Dicle Firat Journalists Association made a statement reminding that an operation was carried out against the free press in Diyarbakır on the 30th anniversary of the murder of Hafız Akdemir, who was murdered by the state-backed Hezbollah in Sur district of Diyarbakır in June 1992. All digital materials were confiscated during raids on JİNNEWS' office and Pia, Pel and Ari Production Companies. The police blockaded Ari and Pia Production Companies on 8 June and prevented access to these institutions by claiming that 'the search is ongoing', even though there was no legal basis to act. This new crackdown on the Kurdish media illustrates the repressive policy of the Turkish government against freedom of expression and freedom of the press

The 16 journalists arrested are. Remziye Temel (Production company representative), Serdar Altun Presenter (Dicle Firat Co-President of Journalists Association), Omer Celik (Presenter and editor of Mesopotomia Agency), Ramazan Geciken (cameraman and journalist for Pel and Ari production company), Suat Doguhan (Company official and cameraman), Mazlum Dogan Guler (cameraman), Lezgin Akdeniz (cameraman), Nese Toprak (presenter), Elif Ungur (presenter), Mehmet Sahin (presenter), Mehmet Ali Ertas (Xwebun newspaper editorial director), Safiye Alagas (Jinnews Director, Aziz Oruc (Mezopotomya agency editor), Zeynel Abidin Bulut (editor of Xwebun newspaper), Ibrahim Koyuncu (cameraman), Abdurrahman Oncu (cameraman).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples urges the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on torture, each one in the framework of their respective mandates, to pay special attention to the treatment of Kurdish journalists in Türkiye.