



# CLAMPDOWN ON FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN TURKEY

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## *About Stockholm Center for Freedom*

*Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) is an advocacy organization that promotes the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms with a special focus on Turkey, a nation of 80 million that is facing significant backsliding in its parliamentary democracy under its autocratic leaders.*

*SCF, a non-profit organization, was set up by a group of journalists who have been forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey.*

*SCF is committed to serving as a reference source by providing a broader picture of rights violations in Turkey, monitoring daily developments on fact-based investigative journalism and documenting individual cases of the infringement of fundamental rights. The founders of SCF are top-notch journalists who had managed national dailies in Turkey and worked for leading media outlets before they were forced to leave. They have the expertise, human resources and network on the ground to track events in Turkey despite serious challenges.*

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....PAGE 6

1) Demonizing the foreign media.....PAGE 10

2) Rights violations to which foreign  
media members are subjected.....PAGE 17

2.1. Jailing and detention media  
members are subjected.....PAGE 17

2.2. Accreditation and self-censorship PAGE 23

3) Sources fear to speak.....PAGE 24

3.1. Denying journalists entry into Turkey....PAGE 24

3.2. Finger-pointing and discrediting.....PAGE 27

3.3. Suspicious deaths.....PAGE 29

4) Why is Erdoğan targeting the foreign media?...PAGE 32

CONCLUSION.....PAGE 36

ANNEX.....PAGE 38

# Clampdown on foreign journalists in Turkey

## INTRODUCTION

Turkey is one of the most notorious countries in the world when it comes to cracking down on the right to freedom of the press and free expression. The jailing of journalists and media workers in large numbers and blocking thousands of websites for expressing criticism have been the hallmark of the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This terrible track record of the Turkish government has been well documented by respected press freedom advocacy groups.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Turkey was ranked 157<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index, falling two spots in the standings from 2017.<sup>1</sup> In Freedom of the Press 2017 by Freedom House, Turkey was described as “not free.”<sup>2</sup> Turkey’s freedom status was downgraded from “partly free” to “not free” in Freedom in the World 2018 by the same watchdog organization. Turkey tops the list of countries with the most dramatic declines in freedom in the last decade.<sup>3</sup>

A report titled “Turkey: Silencing the Media” by Human Rights Watch states that the Turkish government has all but silenced independent media in an effort to prevent scrutiny or criticism of its ruthless crackdown on perceived enemies.<sup>4</sup>

After a controversial coup attempt on July 25, 2016,<sup>5</sup> the Turkish government imprisoned journalists in large numbers, harassed them through unlawful court cases and shut down most of the opposition media.<sup>6</sup>

There are at least **237** journalists and media workers in Turkish prisons.<sup>7</sup> Turkey is the num-

1] 2018 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders, 25 April 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/turkey>

2] Freedom of the Press 2017, Freedom House, 28 April 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/turkey>

3] Freedom in the World 2018/Democracy in Crisis, Freedom House, 16 January 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>

4] “Turkey: Silencing the Media,” Human Rights Watch, 15 December 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/15/turkey-silencing-media>

5] “July 15: Erdoğan’s Coup,” Stockholm Center for Freedom, 5 July 2017, [https://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/15\\_July\\_Erdogans\\_Coup\\_13.07.2017.pdf](https://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/15_July_Erdogans_Coup_13.07.2017.pdf)

6] “Freedom of the Press in Turkey: Far Worse than You Think,” Stockholm Center for Freedom, 28 January 2017, pg.3-6. [http://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Freedom\\_of\\_press\\_in\\_Turkey\\_26.01.2017.pdf](http://stockholmcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Freedom_of_press_in_Turkey_26.01.2017.pdf)

7] “List of Jailed Journalists in Turkey,” Stockholm Center for Freedom, as of August 15, 2018, <http://stockholmcf.org/updated-list/>

There are at least 237 journalists and media workers in Turkish prisons as of August 15, 2018.



ber one country in the world, by a long shot, in terms of jailed journalists, according to all journalism or human rights organizations although they might use different research methodologies.<sup>8-9</sup> The Erdoğan government imprisons more journalists than the rest of the world combined.<sup>10</sup>

As part of a state of emergency (OHAL) declared on July 20, 2016, 178 media outlets<sup>11</sup> were shut down by the government without any court decision thanks to decree-laws, which were not subject to parliamentary approval. The exact numbers cannot be compiled or confirmed, but it has been estimated that more than 10,000 journalists and media workers are currently unemployed.<sup>12</sup>

Turkish journalists are not the only victims of recent pressure and intimidation in Turkey. Foreign correspondents and Turkish journalists who work for international media outlets are also being increasingly targeted by the Turkish government.<sup>13</sup>

8] "Turkey 'world's biggest prison' for journalists," Politico, 13 December 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-worlds-biggest-prison-for-journalists-report/>

9] "Turkey remains world's worst jailer of journalists," Deutsche Welle, 13 December 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/press-freedom-index-turkey-remains-worlds-worst-jailer-of-journalists/a-41769715>

10] "İFJ: Dünya genelinde hapisteki gazetecilerin üçte ikisi Türkiye'de," Euronews, 31 December 2017, <http://tr.euronews.com/2017/12/31/ijf-dunya-genelinde-hapisteki-gazetecilerin-ucte-ikisi-turkiye-de>

11] "CHP'den OHAL Bilançosu: '12 Eylül'ü Gölgede Bırakıyor (Facts and figures of OHAL by the CHP: Worse than the September 12 coup)," Voice of America, December 11, 2017, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/chepden-ohal-bilancosu-12-eylulu-golgede-birakiyor/4159018.html>

12] "Çalışmayan Gazeteciler Günü" toplantısı ("Unemployed Journalists Day" gathering, Çağdaş Gazeteciler Derneği (Progressive Journalists Association), January 10, 2017, <http://www.cgd.org.tr/index.php?Did=727>

13] "Mahir Zeynalov, Is Turkey safe for foreign journalists?" The Globe Post, <http://www.theglobepost.com/2017/02/27/is-turkey-safe-for-foreign-journalists/>

*Turkish government seized and shut down at least 178 opposition media outlets since 2016. Turkey's best selling daily, Zaman, was brutally taken over by the government on March 4, 2016 (right)*



Among the most common rights violations experienced by foreign journalists are detention and jailing, denial of residence permit extensions, cancelation of accreditation, deportation, prohibition to enter Turkey, discrediting and finger pointing. Although convictions are rare, there are a few examples that are enough to send a chilling message. Around half a dozen foreign journalists have also died under suspicious circumstances in the last five years.

Due to increased obstacles to freedom of expression, a climate of fear and xenophobic attitudes, foreign journalists are having a difficult time doing their jobs. They are hard-pressed to communicate with news sources, with experts, academics and other sources avoiding talking to foreign journalists for fear of being labeled as traitors or collaborators. The same concern is felt by many in the government as well, depriving foreign journalists of the ability to collect and verify data and get a government perspective. Street interviews have become more difficult because interviewees hesitate to talk when they learn these journalists are foreign.

Some foreign journalists admit they sometimes don't file reports under their byline and refrain from criticizing Erdoğan and his government on highly sensitive topics, speaking only anonymously about the troubles they encounter, and practice self-censorship on social media.

Foreign journalists tend to leave Turkey early or are recalled by their outlets due to security concerns. Some Turkish journalists working for foreign media outlets go abroad to protect themselves from jail and other risks.

On some occasions, police search the contents of electronic devices such as cell phones, computers and cameras belonging to foreign journalists without their consent, often forcing them to reveal their passwords.

In this report, we will examine the problems foreign journalists have been encountering especially since the Gezi Park protests of 2013.<sup>14</sup> We will also analyze the primary motives and ultimate goals of the Erdoğan government in pressuring foreign journalists.

**Gezi Park  
protests  
of 2013 in  
Istanbul's  
Taksim  
Square.**



14] 'Gezi Park protests: A wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in Turkey took place in the summer of 2013 initially to contest an urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park. The protests were sparked by outrage at the violent eviction of a sit-in at the park protesting the plan. Demonstrations and strikes in support took place across Turkey, protesting a wide range of concerns at the core of which were issues of freedom of the press, of expression and of assembly, and the government's encroachment on Turkey's secularism. Eight civilians and two police officers died during the protests. The police were criticized for the use of disproportionate force, which had been ordered by Erdoğan. On June 15, 2013, the protesters were ousted from the park.

## 1. Demonizing the foreign media

The number of foreign journalists in Turkey has increased significantly, especially in the last decade. In the early 1990s, there were only 75 foreign correspondents residing in Turkey.<sup>15</sup>

This number went up to 265 in 2008.<sup>16</sup> As of early 2017, there were 380 foreign journalists in Turkey hailing from 44 countries and 189 media outlets.<sup>17</sup>

Working as a journalist in Turkey for a long time, Andrew Finkel notes that foreign journalists used to follow Turkey-related news from Athens or Rome before Turkey became a popular place to work and report from.<sup>18</sup>



***Andrew Finkel***



***Aliza Marcus***

Mentioning how Turkey made things easier for foreign journalists, especially in customs and immigration matters, in order to attract more journalists to the country, Finkel recalls that Turkish authorities encouraged reporting on the stories of refugees who arrived in Turkey's southeastern region during and after the First Gulf War (1990-91). Finkel also adds that the authorities did not necessarily like the news when it included criticism of the government.<sup>19</sup>

The first ordeal of these “new foreign journalists” with the Turkish state took place when they reported the violent events in eastern and southeastern Turkey in the 1990s. The trial of Reuters correspondent Aliza Marcus at the State Security Court in 1995 due to a news report about torched Kurdish villages was one of the most sensational events of that period.<sup>20</sup> Working as a journalist in the region in those days, Amberin Zaman says the pressure under state of emergency conditions used to come from the military and that journalists were targeted through manipulation of the government by the military. Compared with the current situation, Zaman explains that the difference now is that the pressure comes from the government

15] “Yabancı Gazeteci Turizmi (Tourism for Foreign Journalists),” *Milliyet*, February 4, 1991, <http://gazetearsivi.milliyet.com.tr/Arsiv/1991/02/04>

16] “Türkiye’de yabancı gazeteci sayısı tavan yaptı (The number of foreign journalists in Turkey hits record high),” *Hürriyet*, May, 25, 2008, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/turkiyede-yabanci-gazeteci-sayisi-tavan-yapti-9018189>

17] “Türkiye: Yabancı gazetecilerin zor sınavı (Turkey: the ordeal of foreign journalists),” *Journo*, February 7, 2017, <https://journos.com.tr/turkiye-yabanci-gazetecilerin-zor-sinavi>

18] *ibid.*

19] *ibid.*

20] “Turkish court drops charges against reporter amid outcry,” *The Jewish News of Northern California*, 17 November 1995, <https://www.jweekly.com/1995/11/17/turkish-court-drops-charges-against-reporter-amid-outcry/>

itself and some media outlets acting as mouthpieces for the government. She also adds that the finger pointing comes from the president himself as head of the government.<sup>21</sup>

The Gezi Park protests marked the beginning of the targeting foreign journalists as government policy after a long hiatus starting in the 1990s. The Gezi Park protests, which began in May 2013, attracted much attention from the foreign media. The protests were likened to the Arab Spring, which started in the last days of 2010 and resulted in the overthrow of some long-standing leaders.<sup>22</sup>

After then-Prime Minister Erdoğan called the protesters “looters,” the protests grew even bigger.<sup>23</sup> Ruling AKP officials often asserted that international forces were behind the Gezi Park protests, while pro-government newspapers claimed that foreign spies had played an active role in the protests.<sup>24</sup> Foreign media outlets that reported on the protests were suddenly targeted by such news, which fueled xenophobia.

During a press conference held just before a North Africa visit, Erdoğan argued with Reuters’ Turkish reporter Birsen Altaylı and scolded her for misinforming. Erdoğan uttered his much-debated and notorious sentence, “Right now, we have at least 50 percent of this country’s population who we can barely keep [from coming out for counter protests],” hinting that he could unleash his supporters, who accounted for 50 percent of the vote in the 2011 elections.<sup>25</sup>

During the protests, leading foreign media outlets that often reported live from Istanbul received the harshest reaction from the government, so much so that the following statement was included in an indictment: “International media outlets such as CNN, BBC, The Economist, Al Jazeera and Reuters exaggerated and distorted the protests, partially and mistakenly reported that a civilian rebellion was taking place in Turkey, thus causing disinformation among the public.”<sup>26</sup>

Then-Prime Minister Erdoğan, at a press conference after his meeting with a delegation from

21] “How foreign journalists become ‘spies’ in Turkey,” Al Monitor, 12 January 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/originals/2015/01/turkey-press-freedom-foreign-journalists-spies.html>

22] “From Taksim to Tahrir: A Turkish ‘Arab Spring’?,” Al Jazeera, 18 June 2013, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/06/2013618111850423294.html>

23] “Erdoğan onbinleri ‘birkaç çapulcu’ ilan etti, ‘diktatörlük kanımda yok’ dedi (Erdoğan called thousands ‘a couple of looters’ and said ‘dictatorship not in my blood’),” Sol, June 2, 2013, <http://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/erdogan-onbinleri-birkac-capulcu-ilan-etti-diktatorluk-kanimda-yok-dedi-haberi-739>

24] “‘Kökü Dışarıda’nın Yeni Versiyonu ‘Yabancı Parmağı’ (The ‘foreign hand’ has become the new version of ‘traced to abroad’),” Bianet, June 14, 2013, <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/147556-koku-disarida-nin-yeni-versiyonu-yabanci-parmagi>

25] “Başbakan Erdoğan Basın Toplantısında Gazeteci Birsen Altaylı ile Tartıştı (Prime Minister Erdoğan argues with reporter Birsen Altaylı during press conference),” YouTube, June 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgQt7AGzGg>

26] “BBC, CNN, Reuters Gezi iddianamesinde (BBC, CNN included in Gezi indictment),” CNN Türk, December 23,

**During a press conference before a North Africa visit on June 03, 2013, then prime minister Erdoğan argued with Reuters' Turkish reporter Birsen Altaylı and scolded foreign media for misinforming on Gezi Park protests.**



the Turkish Tradesmen's and Artisans' Confederation on June 12, 2013, said: "Interest rate lobbies and international media outlets are part of these events [Gezi Park protests]. We have evidence that they supported the protests."<sup>27</sup> During the same press conference he also added that Israel was happy about those protests.<sup>28</sup>

On June 16, 2013 Erdoğan held a public rally with his supporters in Istanbul's Kazlıçeşme Square in response to the Gezi Park protests and openly targeted foreign media outlets by name: "If you would like to see a photograph of Turkey, despite the foreign media, this [picture of the rally] is the photograph you might want to see. Hey, foreign media, hide this photo as well, will you? BBC! CNN! Reuters! Hide this photo [of the rally]. You have been fabricating fake news for days. You presented Turkey to the world in a different light." Upon hearing this, Erdoğan supporters booed the foreign media outlets.<sup>29</sup> The Turkey representative of a foreign media outlet told the Stockholm Center for Freedom on condition of anonymity that when he went to this demonstration, he removed a windbreaker from his microphone that showed his media affiliation for fear of possible adverse reactions.

During the Gezi Park protests security forces denied foreign journalists possessing only foreign press cards entry to Taksim Square. It was announced that only those with yellow press cards issued by the Turkish authorities would be granted access to the area, thus preventing the foreign press from reporting from the scene. Ceylan Yeğinsu of The New York Times and Ceren Kumova of Agence France-Presse tweeted that they could not go beyond the police line.<sup>30</sup>

Andrew Finkel noted that foreign journalists had a privileged status in Turkey in the 1990s. He also added that while his Turkish colleagues used to frequently appear in court, foreign

27] "Başbakan Erdoğan: Olayların istihbaratını 3 ay önce aldık (Prime Minister Erdoğan: We received intelligence on the protests 3 months in advance)," Akşam, June 12, 2013, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/siyaset/basbakan-erdogan-olaylarin-istihbaratini-3-ay-once-aldik/haber-215118>

28] Ibid.

29] "Başbakan: 'Ey CNN, Reuters, BBC bunu da gizle!'" (Prime minister: 'Hey, CNN, Reuters, BBC... Hide this, too!'), İzlesene, June 16, 2013, <https://www.izlesene.com/video/basbakan-ey-cnn-reuters-bbc-bunu-da-gizle/6978152>

30] "Erdoğan'dan gözdağı, polisten kitlesel gözaltı (Intimidation by Erdoğan, mass arrests by the police)," BBC, June 17, 2013, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/130616\\_pazar\\_eylemler.shtml](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/130616_pazar_eylemler.shtml)



**Ceylan Yeğinsu of The New York Times was prevented from reporting in İstanbul's Taksim Square during Gezi Park protests in 2013**

journalists were not affected by the situation, so much so that when he himself once appeared in court, it was a big deal.<sup>31</sup> It can be argued that the Gezi Park protests marked the end of the privileged status foreign journalists operating in Turkey had enjoyed since the 1990s and the onset of systematic obstruction and harassment by the government.

Working as a correspondent in Turkey for The Times between 2010 and 2016, Alexander Christie-Miller in an interview after the Gezi Park protests said he felt less secure due to the Turkish government's blame game holding foreign journalists responsible for the protests.<sup>32</sup>

Working in Turkey since 2007, Dutch journalist Jessica Maas stated that some people suspected that she, like many other foreign journalists, was a spy or a missionary. Initially taken as a joke, such suspicions became dangerous after the protests. Maas was also concerned about a possible witch hunt because the suspicion was coming from the Turkish government.<sup>33</sup>

Xenophobia was pushed by the pro-government media after the Gezi Park protests, and propaganda that the ruling AKP would be overthrown by a conspiracy of a “mastermind” and its spies became the official party ideology. For example, on June 21, 2013, Nurettin Canikli, the AKP's parliamentary group deputy chairman, said: “Foreign powers keep saying that the country will be calmed down if the prime minister goes down. The Germans strongly oppose the third airport [in Istanbul]. We know the British are disturbed by the Canal Istanbul project. Here is what is going to happen: BBC will broadcast live for hours about Turkey and will say the Turkish Spring is under way, that Tayyip Erdoğan is going down and that he has no public support. This is a serious setup.”<sup>34</sup> Assistant Professor Murat Özbank, the author of “The Gezi Spirit and Political Theory,” argued that Erdoğan, through the discourse of “for-

31] “Türkiye: Yabancı gazetecilerin zor sınavı (Turkey: the ordeal of foreign journalists in Turkey),” *Journo*, February 7, 2017, <https://journo.com.tr/turkiye-yabanci-gazetecilerin-zor-sinavi>

32] “Yabancı gazetecilerin hayatı Gezi sonrası zorlaştı (The life of foreign journalists got harder after Gezi),” *Agos*, 19 June 2013, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/5304/yabanci-gazetecilerin-hayati-gezi-sonrasi-zorlasti>

33] *Ibid.*

34] “Canikli: ‘Tek Hedef Başbakan Erdoğan (Canikli: Erdoğan is the sole target),” *Kerasus Haber*, June 21, 2013, [http://www.kerasushaber.net/haber/siyaset\\_1/canikli:-tek-hedef-basbakan-erdogan/4227.html](http://www.kerasushaber.net/haber/siyaset_1/canikli:-tek-hedef-basbakan-erdogan/4227.html)

eign powers,” was turning Turkey into a totalitarian country.<sup>35</sup>

Not only public opposition but also disasters are described as foreign conspiracies by pro-government media outlets and journalists. For example, a coal mining disaster that claimed 301

lives in Soma, a town in western Turkey, in May 2014 was presented as sabotage carried out by the same international powers on the anniversary of the Gezi Park protests to cause further provocation and chaos.<sup>36</sup> More conspiracy theories arose after a terrorist attack on December 10, 2016 in Beşiktaş, Istanbul, due to the proximity of the BBC office to the scene of the incident and the fact that it broadcast live. Pro-government media outlets and the social media speculated that BBC might have had prior knowledge of the attack. Then Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek, with more than 4 million followers on Twitter, tweeted that BBC rented a building that had a good view of the site and went live only three minutes after the attack. Although this information turned out to be false, the damage had already

**Right after a bloody terror bombing near Istanbul's Vodafone Park Stadium on December 10, 2016 then Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek tweeted that BBC rented a building that had a good view of the explosion hinting that BBC had prior knowledge of it.**



been done on social media.<sup>37</sup>

It would be hard to explain the increased pressure on the foreign media without taking into account the “foreign powers” rhetoric disseminated in propaganda campaigns. In fact, phrases like “spies” or “foreign powers” were even more widely used by pro-government news outlets in the aftermath of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt.

A workshop titled “Iran and Its Neighbors” held on the Istanbul island of Büyükada on July 15, 2016 was presented as a CIA coup meeting by the pro-government media. On November 11, 2017, an arrest warrant was issued for American scholar Henri Barkey, who participated in the workshop as a foreign policy expert.<sup>38</sup> Scott Peterson, a Christian Science Monitor correspon-

35] “Murat Özbek: Erdoğan toplumu kıskırtmak istiyor (Murat Özbek: Erdoğan is trying to provoke the public),” Evrensel, June 20, 2016, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/283014/murat-ozbank-erdogan-toplumu-kiskirtmak-istiyor>

36] “Dilipak’tan Soma için provokasyon uyarısı (Dilipak warns of provocation in Soma disaster),” İhlas News Agency, May 16, 2014, <http://www.ihya.com.tr/haber-dilipaktan-soma-icin-provokasyon-uyarisi-356159/>

37] “BBC’nin Beşiktaş patlamasından 3 dakika sonra yayın yaptığı iddiası gerçek değil (The claim that BBC started broadcasting only 3 minutes after the explosion is false),” Teyit.org, December 14, 2016, <https://teyit.org/bbcnin-besiktas-patlamasindan-3-dakika-sonra-yayin-yaptigi-iddiasi-gercek-degil/>

38] “Darbeci CIA ajanı Henri Barkey’e yakalama kararı (Arrest warrant for coup-plotter CIA agent Henri Barkey),” Sabah, November 11, 2017, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/11/11/darbeci-cia-ajani-henri-barkeye-yakalama-karari>

dent, was targeted due to the similarity of his name to that of a prisoner sentenced to death on murder charges in the United States. It was claimed that the murderer was secretly brought to Turkey to assassinate Erdoğan and was still at large in the country.<sup>39</sup> Although the similarity in names was cleared up the same day, the fake news continued to spread the next day, and it was claimed that the so-called murderer had fled to Greece.<sup>40</sup>

Another incident that took place, on July 5, 2017, on Büyükada was the detention of 10 representatives of various human rights organizations who attended a meeting on the protection of human rights advocates.<sup>41</sup> Two foreign activists, one Swedish and the other German, were detained for 13 days before they were brought to the court for an arraignment hearing. “They came together for a meeting that functioned as a continuation of July 15 [coup attempt]. They have been detained due to a piece of intelligence we received,” Erdoğan said at the time of the detention.<sup>42</sup> Pro-government media outlets reported that the activists convened for a coup meeting under the control of the CIA and MI6.<sup>43</sup> A court on July 18, 2017 ordered the arrest of six people including the Swedish and German nationals. After spending 113 days in jail, the activists were released pending trial by the court on October 25, 2017.<sup>44</sup>



**On July 5, 2017, representatives of various human rights organizations who attended a meeting on the protection of human rights advocates were detained in Büyükada island of İstanbul. Pro-government media outlets reported that the activists convened for a coup meeting under the control of the CIA and MI6.**

39] “15 Temmuz gecesinin 10 karanlık yabancıları (10 shady foreigners from the night of July 15),” Akşam, August 5, 2016, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/15-temmuz-gecesinin-c210-karanlik-yabancisi-c2/haber-538961>

40] “Büyükkada’dan darbe yayını yapacaklardı (They were going to broadcast a coup from Büyükada),” Akşam, August 6, 2016, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/buyukadadan-darbe-c2yayini-yapacaklardi-c2/haber-539232>

41] “İnsan haklarına’ otelde gözaltı... Nerede tutuldukları hâlâ bilinmiyor (‘Human rights’ detained at the hotel... No information on their whereabouts),” Cumhuriyet, June 5, 2017, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/774983/insan\\_haklarina\\_\\_otelde\\_gozalti...Nerede\\_tutulduklari\\_h\\_l\\_\\_bilinmiyor.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/774983/insan_haklarina__otelde_gozalti...Nerede_tutulduklari_h_l__bilinmiyor.html)

42] “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Büyükkada’daki otelde neden toplandılar? (President Erdoğan: Why did they meet at the hotel in Büyükada?),” NTV, June 8, 2017, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/cumhurbaskani-erdoganbuyukadadaki-otelde-neden-toplandilar,A1GUNmJn8km-v9NzM8sNVfQ>

43] “Büyükkada’da 2. darbe toplantısı (Second coup meeting in Büyükada),” YouTube, June 11, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYM-hgM1tuI0>

44] “Büyükkada Davası: Tüm tutuklu sanıklar için tahliye kararı (Büyükkada case: All suspects released),” BBC, October 25, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-41751318>

It should be noted that news reported by a pro-government media outlet is usually quoted by all pro-government newspapers, magazines and TV and radio stations; thus, the possible influence of such news is not limited to the audience of a particular outlet. Since there are hardly any independent newspapers or TV stations in Turkey, such propagandist news that lacks verification spreads like a virus among large segments of society. Only 17 percent of Turkey's entire newspaper circulation between May 8-June 3, 2018 comprised opposition newspapers (Cumhuriyet, Sözcü, Evrensel, BirGün, AMK, Korkusuz, Yeni Asya, Yeniçağ, Milli Gazete).<sup>45</sup> As for television, out of 10 stations with the highest ratings, nine (ATV, TRT, TV 8, Kanal D, Show TV, A Haber, Star TV, CNN Türk, NTV) are pro-government stations.<sup>46</sup>

During the campaign for an April 16, 2017 referendum to decide whether the position of prime minister would be abolished and the existing parliamentary system of governance would be replaced by a presidential system, President Erdoğan frequently used the “foreign powers” argument. For example, in a speech on April 2, 2017 he emphasized that the referendum would be a response to the European Union, a Crusader Alliance as he called it.<sup>47</sup> In his victory speech, the day after the “Yes” votes backed by Erdoğan prevailed under the cloud of election fraud suspicions, Erdoğan said: “We struggled against the powerful nations. The Crusaders in the West and their puppets in Turkey both attacked us. But we never gave up.”<sup>48</sup> Erdoğan's visit to the Vatican, the first by a Turkish president in 59 years, along with his family and a large delegation,<sup>49</sup> and his cordial poses with Pope Francis reinforced the criticism that Erdoğan uses xenophobia and anti-Crusader sentiments to fuel religious and patriotic feelings among the masses, win elections and consolidate his power while also trying to do business as usual with the West.<sup>50</sup>

45] “28 Mayıs-03 Haziran 2018 tiraj tablosu (Newspaper circulation between May 28-June 3, 2018),” Medyatava, <http://www.medyatava.com/tiraj>

46] “2018 Haziran ayı kanal bazında televizyon reytingleri (TV ratings as of June 2018),” <https://www.canlitv.com/rating/?tur=tv& tarih=2018-06>

47] “Erdoğan'dan Avrupa'ya: Haçlı ittifakı (Erdoğan to Europe: [You are a] Crusader Alliance),” Deutsche Welle, April 2, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/erdogandan-avrupaya-haclli-ittifaki/a-38256911>

48] “Erdoğan, Ankara'da: Batı'da Haçlı zihniyeti bize saldırdı (Erdoğan speaks in Ankara: Crusader mentality in the West attacked us),” Sputnik, April 17, 2017, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201704171028110833-erdogan-ankarada-batida-haclli-zihniyeti-bize-saldiridi/>

49] “59 yıl sonra bir ilk! Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Papa ile görüştü (First in 59 years! President Erdoğan has personal audience with the pope),” Hürriyet, February 5, 2018, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-papa-franciscusla-gorusuyor-40731783>

50] “Haçlı İttifakının sonu (The end of the Crusader Alliance),” Yıldırım Oğur, Karar, February 7, 2018, <http://www.karar.com/yazarlar/yildirayogur/hacli-ittifakinin-sonu-6152#>

## 2. Rights violations to which foreign media members are subjected

### 2.1. Jailing and Detention



**Dutch journalist  
Frederike Geerdink.**

Jailing and detention are the main forms of rights violations experienced by foreign media members working in Turkey. Some foreign journalists were not allowed to enter Turkey and have been briefly detained in immigration. A significant number of international journalists have been detained by the police during their stint in Turkey. Some of them have been imprisoned after a long period in police custody. One of the main reasons for these detentions and incarcerations is the Turkish government's frequent accusation of disseminating terrorist propaganda.

Having lived in Turkey since 2007, Dutch journalist Frederike Geerdink was detained on January 6, 2015 at her home in Diyarbakır. Her house was searched for eight hours on accusations of distributing propaganda supportive of the PKK, a militant Kurdish group designated as a terrorist organization by the Turkish government, the EU and the US. Detained for four hours, Geerdink was asked about her social media accounts and the interview she conducted with Cemil Bayık, a prominent figure in the PKK.<sup>51</sup>

Three months later Geerdink was acquitted by the court of charges of distributing PKK propaganda.<sup>52</sup> Ramazan Faruk Güzel, the judge who ruled for the acquittal, was fired by the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK). Güzel said he was threatened by a judge who had close ties to the Erdoğan family and that he and his family had to flee Turkey. A case was opened against him regarding the July 15, 2016 coup attempt although he was not in Turkey at the time of the coup.<sup>53</sup>

Geerdink was detained again on September 6, 2015 while working on a news assignment in

51] "Frederike Geerdink konuştu (Frederike Geerdink speaks)," Sözcü, January 7, 2015, <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/frederike-geerdink-konustu-702675/>

52] "Gazeteci Frederike Geerdink'e Beraat (Journalist Frederike Geerdink acquitted)," Bianet, April 13, 2015, <http://bianet.org/bianet/if-ade-ozgurlugu/163771-gazeteci-frederike-geerdink-e-beraat>

53] "Mesleğinden atılan hâkim Ramazan Faruk Güzel: yurtdışındayken darbeyle suçlandım! (Dismissed judge Ramazan Faruk Güzel: I was accused of being a coup-plotter while I was abroad)," TR724, November 9, 2017, <http://www.tr724.com/mesleginden-atilan-hakim-ramazan-faruk-guzel-tr724e-konustu-yurtdisindayken-darbeyle-suclandim/>



**Judge Ramazan Faruk Güzel who ruled for the acquittal of Dutch journalist Geerdink was fired by the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors.**

Hakkari. She was accused of spying by the pro-government media.<sup>54</sup> A court ruled for her deportation, and she left Turkey on September 9, 2015.<sup>55</sup>

On August 27, 2015, Jake Hanrahan, the British correspondent of Vice News, Philip Pandlebury, the British cameraman, and Muhammed Ismail Resul, their Iraqi interpreter, were detained in Diyarbakır, where they went to cover a news story. Appearing in court on August 31, 2015, the journalists were arrested on charges of “assisting a terrorist organization knowingly and willfully despite not being part of the hierarchical structure of the organization.” The terrorist organization they were accused of assisting turned out to be ISIL.<sup>56</sup> Held for seven days in Adana’s Kürkcüler Prison, the journalists were released pending trial on September 7 and were deported the same day.<sup>57</sup> Resul, an M.A. student, however, had to spend four more months in the same prison. He was finally released on January 5, 2016 on condition of an international travel ban and judicial supervision.<sup>58</sup>



**American journalist Lindsey Snell**

American journalist Lindsey Snell was taken into custody on August 7, 2016 in Hatay for allegedly trespassing in a military zone after she entered Turkey through the Syrian border. She was later arrested and put in jail for illegal entry into Turkey. Her house in Istanbul was raided by the police on August 22, 2016, and her computer and camera were seized. Snell was released on October 13, 2016 and said on social media that the police damaged her Mac computer and that the hard drive they returned did not belong to her.<sup>59</sup>

French journalist Olivier Bertrand, who came to Gaziantep on November 12, 2016 for a news story about the Gülen movement, was detained on charges of disseminating terrorist organization propaganda. Since the Turkish government has designated the civic Gülen movement as terrorists, any work delving into the movement’s persecution can be treated as terrorist propaganda. Bertrand was released by the court and deported on November 14, 2016.<sup>60</sup>

54] “Ajan gazeteci Geerdink ‘canlı kalkan’ oldu (Spy journalist Geerdink became a ‘human shield’),” Sabah, September 7, 2015, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2015/09/07/ajan-gazeteci-geerdink-canli-kalkan-oldu>

55] “Geerdink sınır dışı ediliyor (Geerdink is being deported),” Sabah, September 9, 2015, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2015/09/09/geerdink-sinir-disi-ediliyor>

56] “Vice News ekibi tutuklandı (Vice News crew arrested),” Al Jazeera Turk, August 31, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/vice-news-ekibi-tutuklandi>

57] “Vice News muhabirleri sınır dışı edildi (Vice News reporters deported),” T24, September 7, 2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/vice-news-muhabirleri-sinir-disi-edildi,308881>

58] “Vice News Tercümanı 4 Ay Sonra Serbest (Vice News interpreter released after 4 months in detention),” Voice of America, January 5, 2016, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/vice-news-tercumani-4-ay-sonra-serbest/3132125.html>

59] <https://twitter.com/LindseySnell/status/966026481909542912>

60] “Gözüaltına alınan gazeteci Bertrand sınır dışı edildi (Detained journalist Bertrand deported),” Agos, November 14, 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/17006/gozaltina-alinan-gazeteci-bertrand-sinir-disi-edildi>

Dion Nissenbaum, a Wall Street Journal reporter, was detained on December 26, 2016 for three days for writing a news story about a video ISIL released. He said he was kept in solitary confinement and was asked to sign a Turkish document. When he asked for the English translation of the document, they backed down. Nissenbaum said he along with his family left Turkey after his release. He added that he was not allowed to speak to his lawyer or family during his detention.<sup>61</sup>



**French journalist**  
**Olivier Bertrand**

Spanish journalist Beatriz Yubero was taken into custody on August 6, 2016 and then deported while participating in a Ph.D. program at Ankara University.<sup>62</sup> Yubero was asked questions about whether she knew anyone from the Gülen movement during her interrogation by the police. She believes some of her neighbors with whom she did not have a good relationship might have filed a false tip.



**Spanish journalist**  
**Beatriz Yubero**

In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, upon frequent calls by the government, many Turkish citizens contributed to the crackdown on the Gülen movement by falsely denouncing their neighbors, colleagues and family members as terrorists. Speaking to El Pais about her experience,

Yubero said she was first kept in a gym with dozens of coup suspects after she was detained. Then she was taken to the foreigners section of the police department and then back to the gym, and finally to the counterterrorism unit of the Turkish police. The police told Yubero they believed she was innocent but that she would be deported anyway due to their orders.<sup>63</sup>



**Wall Street Journal**  
**reporter Dion**  
**Nissenbaum**

On April 9, 2017, Italian journalist and documentarian Gabriele Del Grande was detained in Hatay, close to the Syrian border. A decision was made to have him deported. The deportation was expected to be carried out in two days;<sup>64</sup> however, he remained in custody until April 24, 2017, when he was sent to Italy via Izmir.<sup>65</sup> To protest the

61] "ABD'li muhabire tek kişilik hücrede gözaltı (American reporter detained in a solitary confinement)," Hürriyet, January 1, 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/abdli-muhabire-tek-kisilik-hucrede-gozalti-40323907>

62] "FETÖ sorgusu'yla sınır dışı edilen İspanyol öğrenci: Hayatımı geri istiyorum (Spanish student who got deported after FETÖ investigation: I want my life back)," Diken, August 10, 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/feto-sorgusuyla-sinirdisi-edilen-ispanyol-ogrenci-hayatimi-geri-istiyorum/>

63] "İspanyol gazeteci sınır dışı edildi (Spanish journalist deported)," Deutsche Welle, August 9, 2016, <http://www.dw.com/tr/ispanyol-gazeteci-s%C4%B1n%C4%B1r-d%C4%B1n%C5%9F%C4%B1-edildi/a-19461306>

64] "Hatay'da gözaltına alınan İtalyan gazeteci Gabriele Del Grande sınır dışı edilecek (Gabriele Del Grande, the Italian journalist detained in Hatay, to be deported)," Cumhuriyet, April 11, 2017, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/718121/Hatay\\_da\\_gozaltina\\_alinan\\_italyan\\_gazeteci\\_Gabriele\\_Del\\_Grande\\_sinir\\_disi\\_edilecek.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/718121/Hatay_da_gozaltina_alinan_italyan_gazeteci_Gabriele_Del_Grande_sinir_disi_edilecek.html)

65] "Türkiye'de gözaltındaki Gabriele Del Grande sınır dışı edildi (Gabriele Del Grande, detained in Turkey, deported)," TRT, April 24, 2017, <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/turkiyede-gozaltindaki-gabriele-del-grande-sinir-disi-edildi-310959.html>



**Italian**  
**journalist and**  
**documentarian**  
**Gabriele Del**  
**Grande**

treatment he received, he briefly went on a hunger strike.<sup>66</sup> The announcement that Del Grande would be released was made by Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Angelino Alfano, who stated that his Turkish counterpart, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, gave him the good news.<sup>67</sup>

On May 8, 2017 French journalist Mathias Depardon was detained while taking photographs in the town of Hasankeyf in Batman province, for National Geographic. He was accused of disseminating terrorist propaganda. The judge released him but ordered his deportation. On May 11, 2017 he was sent to the Immigration Authority Deportation Center in Oğuzeli, Gaziantep province. On May 20, 2017 he went on a hunger strike to protest his treatment.<sup>68</sup> He ended his hunger strike after French consular officials were allowed to visit him.<sup>69</sup> A crisis between Turkey and France ensued that was resolved only after Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, asked President Erdoğan to let the journalist go home. On June 17, 2017 Depardon returned to France and was greeted by an advisor of Macron.<sup>70</sup>



**French journalist**  
**Mathias Depardon**

Loup Bureau, who entered Turkey from Erbil in northern Iraq on July 26, 2017, was arrested on August 2, 2017 on charges of spreading pro-People's Protection Units (YPG, recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey) propaganda and sent to Şırnak Prison. President Macron called Erdoğan twice, on August 15 and August 28, 2017, to ask for the release of his citizen.<sup>71</sup> Bureau was released during the first hearing of his trial, on September 15, 2017.<sup>72</sup>

One of the best-known cases of foreign journalist detentions involved Deniz Yücel, a Die Welt reporter with dual German-Turkish citizenship. After being detained for two weeks on charges of "disseminating terrorist propaganda and inciting hatred and hostility in the public," he was arrested on February 27, 2017. The PKK claimed to be the terrorist orga-

66] "Gözetimdeki İtalyan gazeteci açlık grevine başlıyor (Detained Italian journalist to go on hunger strike)," CNN Turk, April 19, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/turkiye/gozaltindaki-italyan-gazeteci-aclik-grevine-basliyor>

67] "Türkiye'de gözaltındaki Gabriele Del Grande sınır dışı edildi (Gabriele Del Grande, detained in Turkey, deported)," TRT, April 24, 2017, <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/turkiyede-gozaltindaki-gabriele-del-grande-sinir-disi-edildi-310959.html>

68] "Alıkonulan Fransız gazeteci Türkiye'de açlık grevinde (Detained French journalist on hunger strike in Turkey)," Deutsche Welle, May, 24 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/alikonulan-fransiz-gazeteci-turkiyede-aclik-grevinde/a-38966837>

69] "Türkiye gözaltındaki Fransız gazeteci Mathias Depardon'u sınır dışı ediyor (Turkey is deporting detained French journalist Depardon)," BBC, June 9, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-40219590>

70] "Serbest kalan Fransız gazeteci ülkesine döndü (Released French journalist returned to France)," Deutsche Welle, June 17, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/serbest-kalan-fransiz-gazeteci-ülkesine-döndü/a-40546806>

71] "Macron'dan Erdoğan'a tutuklu Fransız gazeteci için ikinci telefon (Macron's second phone call to Erdoğan for arrested French journalist)," Gazete Duvur, August 28, 2017, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/turkiye/2017/08/28/macron-dan-erdogana-tutuklu-fransiz-gazeteci-icin-ikinci-telefon/>

72] "Şırnak'ta tutuklu bulunan Fransız gazeteci Loup Bureau serbest bırakıldı (Loup Bureau, French journalist arrested in Şırnak, released)," BBC, September 15, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-41278215>



***France's President Macron frequently had to call Turkey's President Erdoğan to ask for the release of French journalists Depardon and Bureau.***

nization to which Yücel was connected.<sup>73</sup>

Yücel's arrest caused a diplomatic row between Turkey and Germany. In a statement after Yücel's arrest, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the decision was harsh and disproportional. She added that they would make every effort to set him free.<sup>74</sup>

President Erdoğan occasionally made remarks about Yücel's case justifying the arrest based on false information and conspiracy theories. In a speech on March 3, 2017 Erdoğan said: "Do you see [what] Germany [is doing]? This person hid in the German Consulate as a German spy and

PKK representative."<sup>75</sup> In another speech on April 14, 2017 he said: "We have videos and everything. He is a total spy, a terrorist." Erdoğan also said Yücel would not be allowed to return to Germany as long as he was president.<sup>76</sup>

In response to allegations that Germany engaged in negotiations with Turkey to ensure his freedom, Yücel made a statement from prison through his lawyer and said he did not want his freedom to be "stained with dirty negotiations of arms dealers or Rheinmetall's tank business." He also opposed being exchanged for members of the Gülen movement who had sought refuge in Germany.<sup>77</sup>

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, in an interview with ARD on February 14, 2018 prior to his meeting with Angela Merkel, said: "I am hoping he [Yücel] will be released soon. We might have an update soon."<sup>78</sup>

One day after Yıldırım's meeting with Merkel, Yücel was released, on February 16, 2018.

73] "Gazeteci Deniz Yücel tutuklandı (Journalist Deniz Yücel arrested)," Deutsche Welle, February 27, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/gazeteci-deniz-yücel-tutuklandı/a-37740232>

74] Ibid.

75] "Erdoğan: Deniz Yücel ajan (Erdoğan: Deniz Yücel is a spy)," Artı Gerçek, March 3, 2017, <https://www.artigercek.com/erdogan-deniz-yu-cel-ajan/>

76] "Erdoğan: Deniz Yücel iade edilmeyecek (Erdoğan: Deniz Yücel won't be returned)," Deutsche Welle, April 14, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/erdoğan-deniz-yücel-iade-edilmeyecek/a-38425494>

77] "Deniz Yücel: Kirli anlaşmayla tahliye istemiyorum (Deniz Yücel: I don't want to be released through dirty negotiations)," Deutsche Welle, January 17, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/tr/deniz-yücel-kirli-anlaşmayla-tahliye-istemiyorum/a-42174432>

78] "Yıldırım: Deniz Yücel'in kısa süre içinde serbest kalacağını umuyorum (Yıldırım: I am hoping Deniz Yücel will be released soon)," Sputnik, February 14, 2018, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201802141032245437-binali-yildirim-angela-merkel-deniz-yucel/>



**Deniz Yücel, the Die Welt's reporter in Turkey with dual German-Turkish citizenship.**

The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Yücel's release.<sup>79</sup> Yücel left Istanbul on a private plane chartered by the German Consulate General. It was leaked to the public that the plane was chartered two days prior to Yücel's release.<sup>80</sup>

In a short video message on social media, Yücel said that on the day of his release he was actually presented with an official document that confirmed the continuation of his detention but that he was released anyway. He also added that he had no idea why he was arrested in the first place or why he was released later on.<sup>81</sup> Yücel's case reaffirms politicization of the judicial system in Turkey and confirms that legal action taken against foreigners is tantamount to hostage taking.

On the day Yücel was released, an indictment against him was also accepted by a court in which the prosecutor sought an 18-year sentence on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda. His news reports about the Armenian genocide and the PKK were included in the indictment. The prosecutor also quoted the following statement made by

Yücel on July 18, 2016 as part of the terrorist propaganda he was accused of spreading: "The perpetrators of this coup attempt are still a mystery. There is no clear evidence that the supporters of Fethullah Gülen, Erdoğan's former ally who lives in the United States, are behind this coup attempt."<sup>82</sup> The Turkish government has held from the beginning that the Gülen movement was responsible for the coup and effectively obstructed independent fact finding investigations. Anyone who challenges the official narrative is often labeled a 'terrorist' or 'terrorist supporter'."



**Deniz Yücel was released one day after Turkey's then Prime Minister Yıldırım's meeting with Germany's chancellor Merkel on February 15, 2018**

79] "Son dakika haberi... Gazeteci Deniz Yücel serbest bırakıldı (Breaking News... Journalist Deniz Yücel released)," NTV, February 16, 2018, [https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/son-dakika-haberi-gazeteci-deniz-yucel-serbest-birakildi,GtheW\\_dEz0mrx9oF1t\\_ouQ](https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/son-dakika-haberi-gazeteci-deniz-yucel-serbest-birakildi,GtheW_dEz0mrx9oF1t_ouQ)

80] "Almanlar Deniz Yücel'in tahliyesinden iki gün önce özel uçak tutmuş (The Germans chartered a private plane two days prior to Deniz Yücel's release)," Cumhuriyet, February 21, 2018, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/dunya/930703/Almanlar\\_Deniz\\_Yucel\\_in\\_tahliyesinden\\_iki\\_gun\\_once\\_ozel\\_ucak\\_tutmus.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/dunya/930703/Almanlar_Deniz_Yucel_in_tahliyesinden_iki_gun_once_ozel_ucak_tutmus.html)

81] Ibid.

82] "Gazeteci Deniz Yücel Hakkındaki İddianame Kabul Edildi (Deniz Yücel indictment accepted)," Bianet, February 16, 2018, [http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/194402-gazeteci-deniz-yucel-hakkindaki-iddianame-kabul-edildi?bia\\_source=rss](http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/194402-gazeteci-deniz-yucel-hakkindaki-iddianame-kabul-edildi?bia_source=rss)

## 2.2. Accreditation and self-censorship



The accreditation of foreign journalists working in Turkey is handled by the Directorate General of Press and Information. Permanent press credentials are valid for one year, while temporary credentials expire in three months.<sup>83</sup> The obligation to renew their accreditation every year means repeatedly going through security background checks, which feels like an element of intimidation to the journalists. A journalist who wanted to remain anonymous stated that “the security of the country” comes first in the renewal of foreign journalist press credentials and that the Turkish intelligence agency (MIT) has the final say.<sup>84</sup>

On February 8, 2016 Silje Rønning Kampesæter, a Norwegian journalist, learned that her permanent accreditation had not been renewed. Kampesæter said no reason was given for the non-renewal, but she believed the real reason was the fact that her fiancé was Kurdish.<sup>85</sup>

Journalists who are unable to renew their press credentials must leave Turkey since they are no longer allowed to work. On March 17, 2016 Hasnain Kazim, the Istanbul reporter for Der Spiegel, was assigned to Vienna due to an inability to renew his accreditation.<sup>86</sup>

On April 27, 2017 Stern magazine announced that the press credential of Raphael Geiger, a Stern reporter, was not renewed for insulting President Erdoğan.<sup>87</sup>

83] “Daimi Basın Akreditasyonu (Permanent Accreditation),” BYEGM, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/turkce/basin-mensuplari/daimi-basin-akreditasyonu>

84] “Yabancı gazetecilerin zor sınavı (The ordeal of foreign journalists),” Journo, February 7, 2017, <https://journo.com.tr/turkiye-yabanci-gazetecilerin-zor-sinavi>

85] “Norveçli gazeteci ‘nişanlısı Kürt diye’ akreditasyon ve oturma izni alamadı (Norwegian journalist unable to obtain residence permit and permanent accreditation simply because her fiancé was Kurdish),” Diken, February 9, 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/turkiye-norvecli-gazeteciye-akreditasyon-ve-oturma-izni-vermemis/>

86] “Spiegel muhabirini Türkiye’den çekti (Der Spiegel recalls reporter from Turkey),” CNN Turk, March 17, 2016, <https://www.cnnturk.com/dunya/spiegel-muhabirini-turkiyeden-çekti>

87] “Die türkischen Kollegen, die es noch gibt, sind zu bewundern” (Turkish colleagues who still exist can be admired), Stern, April 27, 2017, <https://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/stern-reporter-raphael-geiger---die-tuerkischen-kollegen--die-es-noch-gibt--sind-zu-bewundern--7429200.html>

### 3. Sources fear to speak

It has become increasingly difficult for foreign journalists to find sources because people are worried about talking to them. Der Spiegel reporter Maximilian Popp notes that news sources are very careful when they speak to foreign journalists, or they don't speak to them at all. Another foreign journalist who spoke to Deutsche Welle but wanted to remain anonymous said Turkish citizens were cautious when talking politics with the foreign press and that they don't want to do it, especially in public. "We can have an interview in a café or in their office, but they don't want to do it on the street because they don't want to be seen at all responding to a reporter's questions," the journalist said.<sup>88</sup>



T.C. BAŞBAKANLIK  
BASIN YAYIN VE  
ENFORMASYON  
GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

Foreign media outlets have begun to take precautions in order to avoid going through the same troubles in the future. For example, as of January 3, 2017, The New York Times stopped naming its reporters in Turkey and used anonymous bylines for their articles.<sup>89</sup>

Some journalists, on the other hand, note that they can't tweet their own news stories, and they make sure not to use the "Erdoğan" hashtag.<sup>90</sup>

#### 3.1. Denying Journalists Entry into Turkey



The denial of entry into Turkey has been a growing problem for foreign journalists. Not only journalists who enter Turkey as their final destination, but also passengers who take extended layovers in Turkey en route to a final destination are not allowed to complete their travels.

According to Turkish law, journalists who travel to Turkey temporarily (up to three months without residency) are not required to have a visa annotated for the press.<sup>91</sup> All they need do is register with Directorate General of Press and Information (BYEGM) after they have entered the country. The fact that there is a "date of entry into

the country" section in the temporary accreditation form, which has been unchanged since

88] "Türkiye'deki yabancı basın endişeli (Foreign press in Turkey is concerned)," Deutsche Welle, February 28, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/türkiyedeki-yabancı-basin-endişeli/a-37742025>

89] "New York Times uses anonymous bylines in Turkey," Independent, January 3, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/new-york-times-anonymous-byline-turkey-news-reporters-journalists-protect-istanbul-attack-nightclub-a7506981.html>

90] "Türkiye'deki yabancı basın endişeli (Foreign press in Turkey is concerned)," Deutsche Welle, February 28, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/türkiyedeki-yabancı-basin-endişeli/a-37742025>

91] "Temporary Accreditation, Directorate General of Press and Information," BYEGM, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/english/foreign-press/temporary-accreditation>

2010, proves that this process can be completed after they enter Turkey.<sup>92</sup> In practice, the accreditation is often provided by the BYEGM after the journalist enters and files the necessary forms in Turkey.

An increase in the number of foreign journalists whose entry to Turkey is denied reinforces allegations that the government blacklists journalists based on critical stories produced about Turkey.<sup>93</sup>

Foreign journalists who are not allowed to enter Turkey are presented with a document citing Article 9 of Law No. 6458 on foreigners for justification. No further explanation is made. Article 9 bases the rejection on reasons such as public order, public security and public health.<sup>94</sup>

Claus Blok Thomsen, a Danish reporter working for Politiken, was arrested at Sabiha Gökçen Airport on his way to Kilis. Thomsen said he was asked to turn on his cell phone and laptop and that he had to give his passwords to foresecurity. Sent back to Copenhagen after one night of detention, Thomsen believes he was probably blacklisted due to his article suggesting that jihadists who want to join al-Qaeda travel to Syria via Turkey.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, Spanish journalist Natalia Sancha was detained at Sabiha Gökçen Airport on October 31, 2015<sup>96</sup> and later deported. A brief standoff with Turkish officials occurred when they demanded her cellphone and laptop passwords. She refused to reveal them unless an official from the Spanish Embassy were present. In her previous work Sancha mentioned claims that Turkish police collaborate with organized crime rings that smuggle Syrian refugees into Europe via Turkey.<sup>97</sup>

On April 19, 2016, Volker Schwenck, an ARD reporter, was not allowed to enter Turkey. He shared this message on Twitter: “Final stop Istanbul. Denied entry into Turkey. There is a

92] “Application Form For Temporary Accreditation, Directorate General of Press and Information,” November 2, 2010, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/docs/tempappform.doc>, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/english/foreign-press/temporary-accreditation>

93] “Türkiye’nin ‘yasaklı yabancı gazeteciler’ listesi mi var? (Is there a ‘banned foreign journalists’ list in Turkey?),” BBC, April 27, 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/04/160427\\_gazeteci\\_sinir\\_disi\\_liste](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/04/160427_gazeteci_sinir_disi_liste)

94] “Yabancılar Ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu (Law on Foreigners and International Protection),” Resmi Gazete (Official Gazette), April 13, 2013, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/04/20130411-2.htm>

95] “Türkiye Yabancı Gazetecileri de Taciz Ediyor (Turkey harasses foreign journalists as well),” Voice of America, March 31, 2016, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/turkiye-yabanci-gazetecileri-de-taciz-ediyor/3262514.html>

96] “Periodistas españoles en Turquía (Spanish journalists in Turkey),” Reporteros Sin Fronteras (RSF), October 17, 2016, <https://www.rsf-es.org/news/informe-periodistas-espanoles-en-turquia/>

97] “Türkiye Yabancı Gazetecileri de Taciz Ediyor (Turkey harasses foreign journalists as well),” Voice of America, March 31, 2016, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/turkiye-yabanci-gazetecileri-de-taciz-ediyor/3262514.html>

**On April 19, 2016, ARD’s reporter Volker Schwenck was not allowed to enter Turkey. “Final stop Istanbul. Denied entry into Turkey. There is a record to my name. I am a journalist. Is this a problem? wrote Scwenck on Twitter.**

record to my name. I am a journalist. Is this a problem?”<sup>98</sup> Flying from Cairo to Istanbul to report the story of Syrian refugees, Schwenck was held in custody for hours and then sent back to Cairo. Numan Kurtulmuş, the then-government spokesperson, stated that Schwenck had not been accredited and that the decision was taken for security purposes.<sup>99</sup> Talking to the German press, Schwenck said that he had valid accreditation, he was not asked any questions at the airport and he guessed that his name was on some sort of blacklist and thus he was taken into custody.<sup>100</sup>

On April 22, 2016, Greek photojournalist Giorgos Moutafis was sent back to Athens when the passport police told him he was on the list of banned people. “Until six months ago, I was able to come to Istanbul easily. I have no idea what happened in the meantime,” Moutafis told Bild.<sup>101</sup> Moutafis was originally planning to travel to Libya via İstanbul another day.<sup>102</sup>

David Lepasca, an American journalist who lives in Istanbul, was not allowed to re-enter Turkey on April 25, 2016. After having to wait for hours at the airport, Lepasca, whose columns and news stories appear in The New York Times, the Guardian, The Atlantic and Foreign Policy, decided to return to Chicago. While boarding a US-bound plane, he shared a picture on his Instagram account that read, “This is not the last I will see of you, Turkey.”

On January 17, 2017 The New York Times announced that senior correspondent Rod Nordland was forced to take a flight to London after he was taken into custody at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. The action against the correspondent who has reported from more than 150 countries appeared to be part of a broader government crackdown. There was no immediate explanation from Turkish officials. It was the first time a New York Times correspondent had been denied entry into Turkey. A lawyer said the airport police cited national security as a reason with no further details. Turkish officials earlier expressed their discontent over some articles by Nordland from November to December 2017, in particular a piece about the PKK.<sup>103</sup>

98] [https://twitter.com/VSchwenck/status/722281445386010624?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref\\_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dw.com%2Ftr%2Fard-muhabirinin-t%25C3%25BCrkiyeye-giri%25C5%259Fine-izin-verilmedi%2Fa-19198150](https://twitter.com/VSchwenck/status/722281445386010624?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dw.com%2Ftr%2Fard-muhabirinin-t%25C3%25BCrkiyeye-giri%25C5%259Fine-izin-verilmedi%2Fa-19198150)

99] “Türkiye’nin ‘yasaklı yabancı gazeteciler’ listesi mi var? (Is there a ‘banned foreign journalists’ list in Turkey?),” BBC, April 27, 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/04/160427\\_gazeteci\\_sinir\\_disi\\_liste](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/04/160427_gazeteci_sinir_disi_liste)

100] “Türkiye’ye girişine izin verilmeyen ARD muhabiri: Neden sınırışı edildiğimi bilmek istiyorum (Banned ARD reporter: I want to know why I was deported),” Sputnik, April 27, 2017, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/avrupa/201604271022419791-almanya-turkiye-gazeteci-volker-schwenck-sinirdisi/>

101] “Türkiye bir gazeteciyi daha geri çevirdi (Turkey denies yet another journalist),” Hürriyet, April 24, 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-bir-gazeteciyi-daha-geri-cevirdi-40093826>

102] “Türkei lässt BILD-Fotografen nicht einreisen!,” Bild, April 24, 2016, <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/tuerkei/tuerkei-verweigert-bild-fotograf-die-einreise-45511606.bild.html>

103] “Veteran Times Reporter Denied Entry to Turkey,” New York Times, 17 January 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/17/world/europe/rod-nordland-turkey.html>



**Sputnik Turkey  
Bureau Chief  
Tural Kerimov.**

The case of Sputnik Turkey Bureau Chief Tural Kerimov is a good example proving that denying entry into Turkey is largely based on political rather than valid legal reasons. Kerimov was deported and his press card and residence permit confiscated<sup>104</sup> after a Turkish Air Force F-16, by the order of then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu,<sup>105</sup> shot down a Russian fighter jet near the Syria–Turkey border on November 24, 2015 because of a border violation.<sup>106</sup> The incident caused a diplomatic row between Turkey and Russia that was escalated by harsh statements on both sides. Sputnik, which generally used to avoid criticizing Erdoğan before the crisis, changed its editorial policy, turning into an anti-Erdoğan news agency. On April 14, 2016, the Turkish government imposed a ban on [sputnik.com](http://sputnik.com), which broadcasts in 31 languages.<sup>107</sup> Six days after this ban, the Sputnik Turkey bureau chief was denied entry into Turkey. After the normalization of relations with Russia, the ban on Sputnik was lifted, on August 8, 2016.<sup>108</sup> Sputnik now avoids critical news stories that would annoy Erdoğan.

### 3.2. Finger-pointing and discrediting

One of the common accusations directed at foreign journalists in Turkey by Erdoğan, pro-government media outlets and social media accounts is spying. Erdoğan has publicly

accused foreign journalists and media outlets of being spies on many occasions. Turkish journalists working for foreign media outlets also often receive their share of insults as “traitors.”



**CNN correspondent Ivan Watson was accused of spying directly by Erdoğan and had to leave Turkey after living 12 years in Istanbul.**

CNN correspondent Ivan Watson, who became well known to the Turkish public during the Gezi Park protests in 2013, is one of the journalists Erdoğan personally accused of spying. Speaking to members of his AKP in parliament on the first anniversary of the Gezi events, Erdoğan said in reference to Watson: “CNN’s flunky was trying to do something over there. CNN International ran a nonstop, eight-hour broadcast to show my country in a different light. They have been caught red-handed again. They don’t care about press freedom or anything

104] “Sputnik Türkiye Genel Müdürü’nün Türkiye’ye girişine izin verilmedi (Sputnik Turkey bureau chief denied entry into Turkey),” Sputnik, April 20, 2016, <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201604201022255528-sputnik-turkiye-tural-kerimov-turkiye-giris/>

105] “Davutoğlu: Uçağın Vurulması Emrini Bizzat Ben Verdim (Davutoğlu: I personally ordered the downing of the jet),” haberler.com, November 25, 2015, <https://www.haberler.com/davutoglu-ucagin-vurulmasi-emrini-bizzat-ben-7908618-haber/>

106] “2015 Russian Sukhoi Su-24 shootdown,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015\\_Russian\\_Sukhoi\\_Su-24\\_shootdown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Russian_Sukhoi_Su-24_shootdown)

107] “Sputnik’e Türkiye’den erişim engeli (Turkey bans Sputnik),” Sputnik, April 14, 2016, [https://tr.sputniknews.com/trend/sputnik\\_turkiye\\_tib\\_erisim\\_engeli/](https://tr.sputniknews.com/trend/sputnik_turkiye_tib_erisim_engeli/)

108] “Rusya haber ajansı Sputnik’e erişim engeli kalktı (Ban on Russian news agency Sputnik lifted),” Anadolu Ajansı, August 8, 2016, <https://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/rusya-haber-ajansi-sputnike-erisim-engeli-kalkti/623588?amp=1>

like that. They are here to spy.”<sup>109</sup>

After these allegations, Watson, who had been living in Turkey for 12 years, had to leave the country. “Prime Minister Erdoğan called me an agent who was caught red-handed. This is a serious and dangerous accusation. I am accused of being an agent, but I have a yellow press card given by the Prime Minister’s Office. I have been working as a reporter in Turkey for 12 years, and both the prime minister and people around him know me very well. I have had face-to-face interviews with the prime minister. I have joined his foreign travel. I have been on his private jet. I also had interviews with the president and the minister of foreign affairs. If I am an agent, that means there is a serious security gap,” Watson said in response to Erdoğan’s unfounded accusations.<sup>110</sup>



The pro-Erdoğan media ran numerous negative and false pieces to discredit Watson, calling him “Ivan the Terrible.”<sup>111</sup>

Frederike Geerdink, the Dutch journalist who was deported from Turkey, was also labeled as a foreign agent.<sup>112</sup>

Turkish journalists working for foreign outlets are often targeted by the pro-government media and social media trolls. Among them are BBC correspondent Selin Girit, New York Times correspondent Ceylan Yeğinsu and France 24 correspondent Fatma Kızılboğa, who have frequently been accused of betraying their country by allegedly supporting the “perception operations” carried out against Turkey.<sup>113</sup> The journalists were referred to as “British Selin,” “American Ceylan” and “French Fatma.”<sup>114</sup>

On April 1, 2016 Erdoğan participated in a panel discussion hosted by the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. His bodyguards, who attacked several independent journalists, called Amberin Zaman, a correspondent for The Economist and a Taraf columnist, a “PKK-supporter bitch.”<sup>115</sup>

109] “Turkey’s Erdogan calls CNN reporter ‘agent’ for his coverage of protests,” Reuters, June 3, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-cnn/turkeys-erdogan-calls-cnn-reporter-agent-for-his-coverage-of-protests-idUSKBN0EE1J820140603>

110] “CNN muhabiri Ivan Watson Türkiye’yi terk etti (CNN correspondent Ivan Watson leaves Turkey),” Dipnot, June 9, 2014, <http://www.dipnot.tv/cnn-muhabiri-ivan-watson-turkiyeyi-terk-etti/70654/>

111] “Takvim bu kez CNN muhabirini bombaladı: Korkunc Ivan (Takvim bombards CNN correspondent: ‘Ivan the Terrible’),” Medya Tava, December 24, 2013, [http://www.medyatava.com/haber/takvim-bu-kez-cnn-muhabirini-bombaladi-korkunc-ivan\\_100699](http://www.medyatava.com/haber/takvim-bu-kez-cnn-muhabirini-bombaladi-korkunc-ivan_100699)

112] “Ajan gazeteci sınır dışı edildi (Journalist-agent has been deported),” Yeni Şafak, September 10, 2015, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/ajan-gazeteci-sinirdisi-edildi-2296471>

113] “Türk muhabirlerin Türkiye’yi karalama çalışmaları (Turkish correspondents’ smear campaigns against Turkey),” Ensonhaber, April 26, 2017, <http://www.ensonhaber.com/turk-muhabirlerin-turkiyeyi-karalama-calismalari-2017-04-26.html>

114] “O çirkin haberi ‘Amerikalı Ceylan’ yapmış (That ugly story came out of ‘American’ Ceylan),” Yeni Akit, September 17, 2014, <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/o-cirkin-haberi-amerikalı-ceylan-yapmis-29831.html>

115] “Amberin Zaman isyan etti: Bana PKK’lı kaltak dediler (Amberin Zaman: They called me ‘PKK-supporting bitch’),” Medya Radar, April 1,

**On April 1, 2016, Erdoğan’s bodyguards attacked several independent journalists in Washington D.C. and called American-Turkish journalist Amberin Zaman, a “PKK-supporter bitch.**



Wilco van Herpen, a cooking show producer from the Netherlands, was accused of developing an intelligence database by the Erdoğan's chief advisor, Yiğit Bulut

President Erdoğan frequently accused Deniz Yücel, whose detention caused tension between Turkey and Germany, of being an agent and a terrorist and claimed that the government had evidence to prove it.<sup>116</sup>

In a television program on A Haber, a station run by Erdoğan's family members, Erdoğan's chief consultant Yiğit Bulut claimed that foreign chiefs use their trips to the Turkish heartland as a cover for developing a database in intelligence operations. Wilco van Herpen, a cooking show producer from the Netherlands, was astonished to hear this accusation but at the same time sarcastically expressed pleasure that Bulut was watching his show.<sup>117</sup>

### 3.3. Suspicious deaths

Six foreign media members died in Turkey in the last five years: Press TV correspondent Serena Shim, TRT World correspondent Yasmine Ryan, Orient News correspondent Halla Barakat, Ayn-al Watan newspaper correspondents Ibrahim Abdulkadir and Firas Hammadi, and Entah magazine correspondent Naji El Jerf. There are still unanswered questions about their deaths.

On October 19, 2014 Serena Shim, an American correspondent of Lebanese descent for Iranian state-owned Press TV, came to Turkey to cover the civil war in Syria. On her way back to her hotel from Kobani, she had a traffic accident in Suruç, Şanlıurfa province. She was killed, while camera operator Judy Irish was injured. Turkish media reported that a cement truck coming from the opposite direction crashed into the journalists' car.<sup>118</sup> Two days prior to the accident, in a live broadcast on Press TV, the 29-year-old journalist said Turkish officials had accused her of being a spy but that she had done nothing other than journalism.<sup>119</sup>

~~Serena's family maintains that the accident was staged. Judy Poe, Serena's mother, believes her daughter was targeted because she filed reports that confirmed Turkey's support for ISIL. Serena's cousin, Judy Irish, who was driving the car (she was 16 at the time) challenged the media claim that the truck came from the opposite direction. Irish said she did not collide head-on with a cement truck, that instead a truck hit them from behind and ran them off the~~



Press TV reporter Serena Shim who was killed in a traffic accident in Suruç of Turkey on October 19, 2014 said Turkish officials had accused her of being a spy two days before the accident.

2016, <http://www.medyaradar.com/amberin-zaman-isyan-etti-bana-pkkli-kaltak-dediler-haberi-191645>

116] "Erdoğan'dan Deniz Yücel'e 'ajanlık' suçlaması (Erdoğan accuses Deniz Yücel of being an agent)," Deutsche Welle, March 3, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/erdoğandan-deniz-yücele-ajanlık-suçlaması/a-37806016>

117] "Başdanışman Bulut'un ajan imasına Hollandalı programcudan alaylı yanıt: Demek ki programımı izliyormuş (Sarcastic response from Dutch producer to chief advisor Bulut's spy accusation: It appears he watches my program)," Diken, December 8, 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/basdanisman-bulutun-ajan-imasina-hollandalı-programcudan-alaylı-yanıt-demek-ki-programımı-izliyormuş/>

118] "Serena Shim Suruç'ta öldü! (Serena Shim dies in Suruç)," Milliyet, October 19, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/serena-shim-suruc-ta-oldu--gundem-1957009/>

119] "Mystery of American journalist killed in car crash in Turkey," Daily Mail, October 20, 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2799924/mystery-american-journalist-killed-car-crash-turkey-just-days-claimed-intelligence-services-threatened-coverage-siege-kobane.html#v-3848613578001>

road. “I was driving on a three-lane, one-way highway in the fast lane,” she told Fox News. “I could see the semi-truck that was behind me in the middle lane. And he was going very quickly and he sped up in front of me and cut me off, making me crash into him.”<sup>120</sup>



**Orouba Barakat (right), a well-known Syrian opposition activist and her 22-year-old journalist daughter, Halla Barakat, a US citizen, were found dead in their Istanbul apartment on September 22, 2017.**

The Turkish government has made no official statement regarding Serena’s death. Serena’s mother said the Turkish government did not respond to their inquiries and that neither the US Embassy nor the State Department got involved with the incident despite the fact that her daughter was an American citizen.<sup>121</sup>

Orouba Barakat, a well-known Syrian opposition activist, and her 22-year-old journalist daughter, Halla Barakat, a US citizen, were found dead in their Istanbul apartment on September 22, 2017. They had been stabbed and their throats slashed. Their bodies were estimated to have been discovered two or three days after they were killed.<sup>122</sup> Having lived in the UK and United Arab Emirates before moving to Turkey, Orouba Barakat had been an opponent of

the Assad regime since the 1980s. She had been investigating reports of torture in prisons under the control of the Assad regime.<sup>123</sup>

Dubai-based, pro-Syrian opposition Orient News editor Halla Barakat had once worked for Turkish state channel TRT. She also free-lanced for American TV network ABC News. The FBI reportedly offered its assistance in the investigation into the Barakat murders, but Turkish officials declined.<sup>124</sup>

Turkish security officials detained and arrested Ahmet Barakat, Orouba’s cousin, who confessed that he had committed the murders for money.<sup>125</sup> Orouba’s relatives stated that the

120] “Two years after U.S.-born journalist dies in Turkey, a question lingers: How did it happen?,” Fox News, November 15, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/11/15/two-years-after-u-s-born-journalist-dies-in-turkey-question-lingers-how-did-it-happen.html>

121] “Serena Shim’e Türkiye’de ne oldu? (What happened to Serena Shim?)”, Birgün, November 25, 2015, <https://www.birgun.net/haber-de-tay/serena-shim-e-turkiye-de-ne-oldu-93425.html>

122] “Suriyeli aktivist ve 22 yaşındaki gazeteci kızı İstanbul’da öldürüldü (Syrian activist and her 22 year-old journalist daughter killed in Istanbul)”, Hürriyet, September 22, 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/suriyeli-aktivist-anne-ve-gazeteci-kizi-istanbulda-olduruldu-40586739>

123] “Suriyeli muhalif İstanbul’da öldürüldü (Syrian dissident killed in Istanbul)”, Deutsche Welle, September 22, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/tr/suriyeli-muhafif-istanbulda-olduruldü/a-40639071>

124] “FBI probes murder of Syrian-American journalist who sought to expose Assad regime abuses,” ABC News, November 28, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/fbi-probing-murder-syrian-american-journalist-mother-turkey/story?id=51436199>

125] Ana-kızı öldürdüğünü itiraf etti ve tutuklandı (Arrested after confessing the murder of mother and daughter), Milliyet, October 7, 2017, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ana-kizi-oldurdugunu-itiraf-etti-gundem-2532635/>

murder could not have been for money, noting that Ahmet Barakat was a pro-Assad agent in the Free Syrian Army and must have committed the murders at the order of the Syrian regime.<sup>126</sup> Ahmet Barakat was sentenced to life in prison on March 13, 2018<sup>127</sup>

Halla Barakat was not the only anti-Assad-regime journalist killed in Turkey. On October 30, 2015, Ibrahim Abdulkadir, the editor-in-chief of Ayn-al Watan (a newspaper in Arabic published in Şanlıurfa), and Firas Hammadi, a reporter for the same newspaper, were stabbed to death in their homes. The assumption is that the two journalists, claimed to have close ties to the Free Syrian Army, were killed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>128</sup> Releasing a video two days after the murder, ISIL claimed responsibility because “the two journalists were allied with the Crusaders.”<sup>129</sup>

Two months after the incident, on December 27, 2015, Najı El Jerf, a 37-year-old dissident Syrian journalist who published a magazine called Hentah, was shot in the head with a silencer when. It was claimed that El Jerf was working on a documentary about ISIL massacres and was therefore killed by ISIL.<sup>130</sup> El Jerf used to receive death threats and was getting ready to move with his family to France, where they had been granted asylum.<sup>131</sup>

On June 9, 2017, Yusuf Hamed Eshverihi, the prime suspect in El Jerf’s murder, was handed down two life sentences and five years, five months in prison by the Gaziantep 2<sup>nd</sup> High Criminal Court. Other suspects Faraq Al Hussin, Ali Cerkez, and Reyad Mata were acquitted due to a lack of evidence.<sup>132</sup>

On November 30, 2017, TRT World editor Yasmine Ryan, a New Zealand citizen, died after falling from the fifth floor of a building while staying at a friend’s apartment in Ortaköy, Beşiktaş. Ryan’s friend said she was awakened at around 2:30 a.m. by noises. When she entered Ryan’s room, the window was open and Ryan’s body was on the ground below. The police launched an investigation after it was recorded as a suspicious death.<sup>133</sup> The next day, a news story in Star, a pro-government newspaper, stated that the initial findings based on

126] FBI probes murder of Syrian-American journalist who sought to expose Assad regime abuses, ABC News, 28 November 2018, <http://abc-news.go.com/International/fbi-probing-murder-syrian-american-journalist-mother-turkey/story?id=51436199>

127] Suriyeli aktivist ve kızının öldürülmesi davasında karar (Verdict in murder of Syrian activist and daughter), CNN Turk, March 13, 2018, <https://www.cnntrk.com/turkiye/suriyeli-aktivist-ve-kizin-oldurulmesi-davasinda-karar>

128] Şanlıurfa’da iki Suriyeli gazeteci evlerinde öldürüldü (Two Syrian journalists murdered in their homes), BBC, October 30 2015, [http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151030\\_urfa\\_gazeteciler](http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/10/151030_urfa_gazeteciler)

129] Şanlıurfa’daki gazeteci cinayetlerini IŞİD üstlendi (ISIS claims responsibility for murder of journalists in Şanlıurfa), Cumhuriyet, November 2, 2015, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/402941/Sanlıurfa\\_daki\\_gazeteci\\_cinayetlerini\\_ISiD\\_ustlendi.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/402941/Sanlıurfa_daki_gazeteci_cinayetlerini_ISiD_ustlendi.html)

130] Suriyeli gazeteci Gaziantep’te öldürüldü (Syrian journalist killed in Gaziantep), Deutsche Welle, December 28, 2015, <http://www.dw.com/tr/suriyeli-gazeteci-gaziantep-te-öldürüldü/a-18944689>

131] The death of Najı Jerf and the battle facing Syria’s citizen journalists, BBC, January 13, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35295206>

132] Antep’te öldürülen Suriyeli gazeteci davasında karar (Verdict in case of journalist killed in Antep), Dihaber, June 9, 2017, <http://dihaber.net/GUNCEL/content/view/22412>

133] “TRT World editörünün sır ölümü! (Mysterious death of TRT World editor),” Hürriyet, November 30, 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/trt-world-editorunun-sir-olumu-40663801>



**Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.**

eyewitness accounts leaned toward the possibility of suicide. It was also stated that Ryan (34) had recently had family-related problems, causing her to become depressed and commit suicide.<sup>134</sup>

#### **4. Why is Erdoğan targeting the foreign media?**

There are a number of reasons why Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, president and ruling AKP leader, and his government have been engaged in a policy of systematic pressure and intimidation of the foreign media.

First of all, Erdoğan is a thin-skinned political leader with an authoritarian mindset who has generally been unable to handle criticism under freedom of expression without taking it personally or perceiving it as a threat. The number of defamation cases filed by previous presidents Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Abdullah Gül is 26 and 545, respectively, in their seven-year terms in office, whereas this number jumps to 3,658 in the first two years of Erdoğan's presidency. No current data has yet been released by the Ministry of Justice. The number of cases withdrawn by Erdoğan in a goodwill gesture in the aftermath of the July 15 coup attempt is thought to be about 4,000<sup>135</sup> according to Erdoğan's lawyers. But the ex-officio civil lawsuits launched by prosecutors against Erdoğan critics are ongoing.

134] "6. kattan düşen TRT WORLD editörünün intihar ettiği düşünülüyor (TRT WORLD editor who fell from 6th floor thought to have committed suicide)," Star, December 1, 2017, <http://www.star.com.tr/guncel/6-kattan-dusen-trtworld-editorunun-intihar-ettiği-dusunuluy-or-haber-1281294/>

135] "4 bin dava geri çekiliyor (4,000 cases are being withdrawn)," A Haber, August 1, 2016, <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/gundem/2016/08/01/4-bin-dava-geri-cekiliyor-1470031125>

It has become almost routine for Erdoğan to get into heated debates with foreign journalists at press conferences during the visits of foreign leaders to Turkey.

On October 14, 2015, during a press briefing with visiting President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, Finnish journalist Tom Kankkonen asked Erdoğan: “The public is afraid of you. Some call you a dictator. What do you say to this?” Before answering, Erdoğan asked the journalist which newspaper he worked for. Then he went on to say, “You probably can’t ask such a question in a country ruled by a dictator.”<sup>136</sup> The Finnish journalist later tweeted that he was attacked by pro-Erdoğan trolls on social media.<sup>137</sup> The Turkish government is widely believed to fund a troll army to intimidate critics.



On January 5, 2018, at a press conference during a visit by Erdoğan to French President Emmanuel Macron, French journalist Laurent Richard asked Erdoğan: “You sent weapons to Salafi groups in Syria. Do you regret that?” Erdoğan berated Richard, saying, “You are talking like someone from the FETÖ group.”<sup>138</sup> When the journalist clarified his question, adding that he meant the case when the Turkish intelligence agency (MIT) was caught sending weapons to Syria, Erdoğan responded that intelligence services have the authority to transport weapons by truck for this kind of operation. However, in 2014, according to Turkish law, Turkish intelligence did not have authority or duty to do that. MIT was allowed to transport such unregistered weapons after the law was changed in 2016.<sup>139</sup> “Today I just tried to ask questions Turkish journalists can no longer ask to Erdoğan,” Richard later tweeted.<sup>140</sup>

It is obvious that the detention and imprisonment of foreign journalists in Turkey in unprecedented numbers is part of the Erdoğan government’s “hostage-taking policy.” International relations experts and human rights observers confirm this systematic policy as well. Nate Schenkkan, project director of the Nations in Transit publication at Freedom House, notes in an article on March 2, 2018 that Turkey’s new foreign policy is hostage-taking and that this

136] “Erdoğan’dan ‘Diktatör müsünüz?’ diye soran Finli gazeteciye: Diktatörün olduğu bir ülkede böyle soru soramazsın, (Erdoğan responds to Finnish journalist who asked if he was dictator: You can’t ask such a question in a country ruled by a dictator),” Evrensel, October 14, 2015, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/262760/erdogandan-diktator-musunuz-diye-soran-finli-gazeteciye-diktatorun-oldugu-bir-ulkede-boyle-soru-soramazsin>

137] “Erdoğan’a ‘diktatör müsünüz?’ diye soran gazeteci ‘Ak-troller’in hedefinde (Journalist who asked Erdoğan ‘Are you a dictator?’ targeted by pro-government trolls),” Cumhuriyet, October 15, 2015, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/388515/Erdogan\\_a\\_\\_diktator\\_musunuz\\_\\_\\_diye\\_soran\\_gazeteci\\_\\_Ak-troller\\_in\\_hedefinde.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/388515/Erdogan_a__diktator_musunuz___diye_soran_gazeteci__Ak-troller_in_hedefinde.html)

138] FETÖ is an acronym for “Fethullahist Terror Organization,” which the AKP government coined when it launched a witch hunt against the Gülen movement.

139] “MIT’e ‘kayıtsız’ silah taşıma yetkisi (MIT authorized to carry ‘unregistered’ weapons),” Yeni Hayat, May 26, 2016, <https://arsiv.yenihayat-gazetesi.com/mite-kayitsiz-silah-tasima-yetkisi-15285>

140] <https://twitter.com/laurentrichard0/status/949331526206009344?lang=en>

has become one of the most pressing problems in relations between Ankara and its Western allies.<sup>141</sup>

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a think tank based in Washington, D.C., on May 31, 2018 published a report on Erdoğan's hostage diplomacy authored by former US Ambassador to Turkey Eric Edelman and former Turkish parliamentarian Aykan Erdemir. The report tracks the cases of 55 prisoners with Western ties. The report suggests that Western governments have attempted to secure the fair treatment of their nationals in quiet bilateral negotiations with Turkey, with varying degrees of success but at little cost to Ankara.

“Not only did authorities begin to target Western human rights advocates, an attempt to intimidate Turkish dissidents who collaborate with foreign colleagues, but Turkey's pro-government media also launched a slander campaign against Europeans and Americans, accusing them of supporting terrorism and conspiring coups to make them into targets for the mass crackdown,” the FDD report said.<sup>142</sup>

It is often noted that by imprisoning almost exclusively the citizens of Western countries, the Turkish government uses the victims as trump cards at the negotiating table during bilateral talks. Many observers think it was no coincidence that an agreement previously suspended by the German government concerning arms sales to Turkey had been approved shortly before Deniz Yücel was released.<sup>143</sup>

Erdoğan himself admitted that he sees foreign individuals and journalists in Turkish prisons as a useful tool to be swapped for his own opponents. Speaking at an event at the Police Academy on September 28, 2017, Erdoğan brought up the case of jailed American pastor Andrew Brunson, whose release has been demanded by President Donald Trump. “‘Give us the pastor back,’ they say. You have one pastor as well. Give him [Gülen] to us, then we will try him [Brunson] and give him to you. The [pastor] we have is on trial. Yours is not -- he is living in Pennsylvania. You can easily give him to us. You can give him to us right away,” Erdoğan said.<sup>144</sup> Despite the Turkish government's claims that the judiciary is independent, Erdoğan has clearly preconditioned the release of Brunson to the extradition of political dissident Fethullah Gülen.

141] “Turkey's New Foreign Policy Is Hostage-Taking,” *Foreign Policy*, 2 March 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/02/turkeys-new-foreign-policy-is-hostage-taking/>

142] “FDD report: Turkey's jailing of Western nationals is ‘hostage diplomacy,’” SCF, June 1, 2018, <https://stockholmcf.org/fdd-experts-turkeys-jailing-of-western-nationals-hostage-diplomacy/>

143] “Yücel'in tahliyesi öncesi Türkiye'yle silah anlaşmalarına onay (Arms sale agreement approved prior to Yücel's release),” *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/tr/yücelin-tahliyesi-öncesi-türkiyeyile-silah-anlaşmalarına-onay/a-42721295>

144] “Turkey's Erdogan links fate of detained U.S. pastor to wanted cleric Gulen,” *Reuters*, September 28, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-turkey-cleric/turkeys-erdogan-links-fate-of-detained-u-s-pastor-to-wanted-cleric-gulen-idUSKCN1C31IK>

Due to the hostage-taking operations of the Turkish government, Western leaders have to communicate with Erdoğan more often than necessary for the release of their own citizens. Erdoğan might be aiming to project the image of a prominent world leader -- rather than an isolated and marginal one -- with whom Western leaders frequently exchange views.

“The international stage is not really that cool, you know,” Macron was quoted as saying in a lengthy interview with French weekly *Le Point*. “I am the one who has to speak every 10 days to Erdoğan.”<sup>145</sup> Before the interview, President Macron had to call Erdoğan twice, on August 15 and August 28, 2017, to urge for the release of French journalist Loup Bureau.

Erdoğan’s efforts at the suppression and intimidation of foreign journalists have to some extent borne fruit for him and his government. In some cases, foreign journalists avoided covering critical topics, engaged in self-censorship and found it difficult to speak to news sources. In this way Erdoğan tries to limit negative press coverage about him in the international media. “I have been approached by several international media outlets in recent years to write on some issues about Turkey that editors found too sensitive and did not want to assign to their own reporters based in Turkey in order to avoid putting them in a more difficult position than they were already in. In several cases, reporters simply declined to write for fear of backlash from the Turkish government,” says Turkish journalist Abdullah Bozkurt, who has been forced to live in exile.<sup>146</sup>

It should also be noted that Erdoğan and his government’s pejorative language, such as “Cru-sader alliance,” “foreign powers,” “foreign agents” and “enemies of Turkey,” in reference to the foreign media has been an essential part of their nationalistic and Islamist rhetoric for consolidating the ruling AKP’s core base.

Members of the Erdoğan government often point to foreign journalists as targets. For example, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, after a meeting with his German counterpart, Sigmar Gabriel, said foreign intelligence agencies are using journalists in Turkey for purposes of spying.<sup>147</sup> Minister of Internal Affairs Süleyman Soylu, at a meeting in Trabzon with no foreign journalists in attendance, claimed that foreign journalists were trying to hold the Turkish government to account by focusing on the state of emergency (OHAL). “They should appreciate OHAL rather than hating it,” he added.<sup>148</sup>

145] “Erdoğan Is One Reason Macron Says His Job Isn’t That ‘Cool’,” Bloomberg, August 31, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-31/france-s-macron-complains-he-has-to-regularly-speak-to-erdogan>

146] “Turkey targets foreign journalists systematically and deliberately,” Abdullah Bozkurt, Turkish Minute, 27 September 2017, <https://www.turkishminute.com/2017/09/27/opinion-turkey-targets-foreign-journalists-systematically-and-deliberately/>

147] “Çavuşoğlu: Gazeteciler ajan olarak kullanılıyor (Çavuşoğlu: Journalists are used as agents),” Evrensel, June 5, 2017, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/322345/cavusoglu-gazeteciler-ajan-olarak-kullaniliyor>

148] “Bizim ilan ettiğimiz OHAL’e kurban olsun onlar (They should appreciate OHAL, not hate it),” Birgün, February 19, 2018, <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/soylu-bizim-ilan-ettigimiz-ohal-e-kurban-olsun-onlar-204931.html>

It should be added that most of the foreign journalists denied entry into Turkey had earlier written about the Erdoğan government's controversial relations with certain radical groups in Syria. Since topics such as providing arms to extremists causes political troubles for Erdoğan at home and abroad, journalists who write stories about Syria are at greater risk of retribution.

## **Conclusion**

In the aftermath of the July 15, 2016 failed coup, Turkey turned into a country where President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, bypassing the parliament, is ruling the country through repressive decree-laws. The decisions of the Constitutional Court are implemented selectively. The courts mainly operate under Erdoğan's direct or indirect orders. The release of Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel, who Erdoğan called a "spy" and a "terrorist," without any court decision and as a result of political negotiations with the German government, is a prime example of arbitrary rule replacing the rule of law in Turkey.

Freedom of expression is nearly nonexistent in Turkey. Independent and opposition media outlets have largely been silenced. A few outlets whose nationwide access is relatively low are allowed to broadcast for the purpose of saving face in the international community. Two hundred forty-two journalists and media workers are currently jailed on fabricated charges according to Stockholm Center for Freedom data. Social media tries to survive as an alternate news source under the constant threat of censorship. Thousands of Turks have been detained or arrested for content critical of the government they shared on social media. Preparations are being made to more effectively censor media broadcasting via the Internet.

In an environment where Turkish journalists cannot do their job properly, silencing foreign journalists through pressure and intimidation tactics further undermines democracy in Turkey. As a result, the tragedy of thousands of people in prison who are victims of the Erdoğan regime's arbitrary practices are not easily turned into news stories by foreign media outlets. The Erdoğan government curtails or influences the news flow due to the tendency of foreign journalists to avoid criticism and practice self-censorship in the face of deportation, detention or arrest.

Extrajudicial killings, inhumane treatment, torture, rampant corruption and controversial engagement with Islamist extremists are among some of the topics underreported from inside Turkey due to hostile actions against foreign journalists. The international community's access to facts is systematically being blocked. With a recent decree-law issued in early July

2018, Erdoğan abolished the BYEGM and transferred all its powers to his own office. This means the approval or refusal of accreditation of foreign journalists in Turkey will be decided directly by Erdoğan.

Making Turkey unsafe for foreign journalists not only damages the global image of Turkey but also complicates international relations and has negative ramifications for foreign direct investment and tourism.

It's important for the European Union and other Western countries to press the Turkish government hard on freedom of the press, not only to support and protect their own journalists but all journalists. Concrete, concerted and bold initiatives should be taken to help prevent systematic human rights violations in Turkey. The safety of foreign journalists operating in Turkey must be ensured. The United Nations, OSCE and other prominent international organizations must urge the Turkish government to facilitate the work of foreign journalists and alleviate their concerns.

The Erdoğan government expects foreign governments to accede to the threats and blackmail concerning the safety of foreign journalists in the same way they do when Ankara uses the issue of refugees as a bargaining chip. Western democracies should not yield to Erdoğan's hostage-taking policy when the rights and freedoms of millions of Turkish citizens are also at stake.

## Annex

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	NATIONALITY	MEDIA COMPANY	CASE	DATE dd.mm.yyy	NOTE
Ceylan	Yeğinsu	Turkish-British	The New York Times	Prevented from reporting	16.06.2013	
Ceren	Kumova	Turkish	Agence France-Presse	Prevented from reporting	16.06.2013	
Frederike	Geerdink	Dutch	Freelance	Detained	06.01.2015	Released on the same day
Frederike	Geerdink	Dutch	Freelance	Detained	06.09.2015	
Frederike	Geerdink	Dutch	Freelance	Deported	09.09.2015	
Jake	Hanrahan	British	Vice News	Arrested	31.08.2015	Released on 07.09.2015
Philip	Pandlebury	British	Vice News	Arrested	31.08.2015	Released on 07.09.2015
Muhammed İsmail	Resul	Iraqi	Interpreter for Vice News	Arrested	31.08.2015	Released on parole on 05.01.2016
Lindsey	Snell	American	Freelance	Arrested	07.08.2016	Released on 13.10.2016
Olivier	Bertrand	French	Les Jours	Detained	12.11.2016	Released on 14.11.2016 and deported
Dion	Nissenbaum	American	The Wall Street Journal	Detained	26.12.2016	Released three days later. Left Turkey
Beatriz	Yubero	Spanish	La Razón Bez	Detained	6.08.2016	Released the following day and deported
Gabriele	Del Grande	Italian	Freelance	Detained	9.04.2017	Released and deported on 24.04.2017
Mathias	Depardon	French	National Geographic	Detained	08.05.2017	Released 3 days later and sent to Immigration Authority Deportation Center in Gaziantep. Deported on 17.06.2017
Loup	Bureau	French	Freelance	Arrested	02.08.2017	Released on 15.09.2017

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	NATIONALITY	MEDIA COMPANY	CASE	DATE dd.mm.yyy	NOTE
Deniz	Yücel	Turkish-German	Die Welt	Arrested	27.02.2017	Released on 16.02.2018
Silje Rønning	Kampesæter	Norwegian	Aftenposten	Press credentials not renewed	08.02.2016	
Hasnain	Kazim	German-Pakistanian	Spiegel	Press credentials not renewed	17.03.2016	
Raphael	Geiger	German	Stern	Press credentials not renewed	27.04.2017	
Claus Blok	Thomsen	Dannish	Politiken	Denied entry to Turkey	09.07.2016	
Natalia	Sancha	Spanish	El Pais	Denied entry to Turkey	31.10.2015	
Volker	Schwenck	German	ARD	Denied entry to Turkey	19.04.2016	
Giorgos	Moutafis	Greek	Bild	Denied entry to Turkey	22.04.2016	
David	Lepeska	American	Freelance	Denied entry to Turkey	25.04.2016	
Rod	Nordland	American	The New York Times	Denied entry to Turkey	17.01.2017	
Tural	Kerimov	Russian	Sputnik Türkiye	Denied entry to Turkey	20.04.2016	
Serena	Shim	Iranian-American	Press Tv	Suspicious Death	19.10.2014	
Halla	Barakat	Syrian-American	Freelance	Killed	22.09.2017	A relative was convicted
Ibrahim	Abdulkadir	Syrian	Ayn-al Watan	Suspicious Death	30.10.2015	Blamed on ISIL
Firas	Hammadi	Syrian	Ayn-al Watan	Suspicious Death	30.10.2015	Blamed on ISIL
Naji	El Jerf	Syrian	Hentah	Killed	27.12.2015	A gunman convicted
Yasmine	Ryan	New Zealander	TRT World	Suspicious Death	30.11.2017	



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