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Kurdish Center for Human Rights
CENTRE KURDE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

**REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
IN TURKIYE :
VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
AND REPRESSION
AGAINST JOURNALISTS THE KURDISH COMMUNITY**

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REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TURKIYE : VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND REPRESSION AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND THE KURDISH COMMUNITY

This report aims to examine the human rights situation in Turkiye, with a particular focus on the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, violations of journalists' rights, and the systematic repression of the Kurdish community. These practices, which are part of a broader policy of controlling the opposition and marginalizing critical voices, raise serious concerns regarding Turkiye's compliance with its international human rights commitments.

Repression of Efforts for a Peaceful Resolution of the Kurdish Issue

In Turkiye, the debate on a democratic and peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue is increasingly hindered by government actions. Despite efforts by civil society, political parties, and international organizations to promote inclusive dialogue, Turkish authorities continue to pursue hostile policies against those advocating for a non-violent solution.

A consultation process had been initiated by various political representatives and members of civil society, including the People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) and other organizations, to gather opinions on a peaceful resolution. However, these initiatives have been systematically obstructed through arrests, the closure of organizations, and increased pressure on engaged activists.

At the same time, Turkiye continues a policy of transnational repression targeting the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and its own territory by conducting airstrikes against Kurdish civilian institutions and carrying out mass arrests of democratically elected representatives. These actions, which violate international law, undermine any hope for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Deterioration of Freedom of Expression and Criminalization of Journalism



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Turkiye is among the countries with the most restricted press freedom. In recent years, the situation has significantly worsened, with a growing number of arrests and legal prosecutions targeting journalists, particularly those working for Kurdish media or critical of the government.

According to collected data, in June 2022 alone:

- 25 journalists were assaulted;
- 25 searches were conducted at journalists' homes ;
- 35 journalists were detained;
- 49 journalists were subjected to ill-treatment;
- 35 journalists faced obstacles in their work;
- 27 journalists were placed under judicial investigation ;
- 16 journalists were convicted;
- 76 journalists were imprisoned as of July 1, 2022.

These figures illustrate the systematic repression of independent journalism and the right to information.

In 2018, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, David Kaye, noted that Turkiye had regressed even beyond the restrictive standards set by the 1982 Constitution. He condemned the closure of 177 media outlets, the arrest of 231 journalists, and the imprisonment of more than 150 of them on vague charges of "terrorism."

The prosecutions against journalists often rely on spurious grounds, such as possession of press articles, social media posts, or testimonies from anonymous sources. This manipulation of the judicial system against the press aims to silence any criticism and create a climate of fear.

Repression of Civil Society and Kurdish Political Representatives

In addition to the press, repression also affects civil society organizations and Kurdish democratic institutions. Elected mayors in Kurdish provinces are regularly dismissed and replaced by state-appointed administrators (kayyum), in blatant violation of democratic principles.

Former co-chairs of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) remain imprisoned alongside many activists and local elected officials, under the pretext of "terrorist" activities, even though they have only exercised their right to political participation.

The policy of criminalization is not limited to political figures ; lawyers, academics, and human rights defenders are also targeted, often charged based on unfounded evidence or coerced testimonies.

Arrests and Attacks on Kurdish Journalists

Kurdish journalists are particularly targeted by repression. In June 2022, a large-scale operation against the Kurdish press led to the arrest of 30 journalists, 16 of whom were imprisoned after eight days of arbitrary detention. Among them were reporters from the Mezopotamya Agency and JINNEWS, who document human rights violations in Kurdish regions.



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Kurdish media outlets are not only censored; their offices are raided, equipment is seized, and their journalists are threatened. In April 2023, several journalists were arrested in Istanbul, Ankara, and Şanlıurfa. Some were held incommunicado and questioned about their sources and journalistic work, without any evidence of their involvement in criminal activities being presented.

Assassinations of Kurdish Journalists by Turkish Drone Strikes in Syria

Attacks on the press are not limited to Turkish territory. On December 19, 2024, two Kurdish journalists, Mr. Nazım Taştan and Ms. Cihan Bilgin, were killed by a Turkish drone strike while covering clashes near the Tishrin Dam in Syria.

On February 15, 2025, another Journalist, Egîd Roj, was assassinated by an airstrike while covering a peaceful protest against Turkish military Offensives in northeastern Syria. These attacks, targeting information professionals clearly identified as such, constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law and must be subject to an independent investigation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The documented facts in this report demonstrate a systematic and widespread repression of fundamental rights in Türkiye, particularly against the Kurdish community and journalists. Turkey is using vague anti-terrorism laws to justify the criminalization of political opposition and independent journalism, in violation of international human rights standards.

We call on the international community, especially the United Nations, the European Union, and human rights organizations, to :

1. Demand the immediate and unconditional release of journalists, activists, and elected officials imprisoned for their legitimate opinions or activities.
2. Establish an independent investigation mission into crimes against journalists, including the assassinations carried out by Turkish drones in Syria.
3. Publicly condemn the Turkish government's repressive policies and strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and targeted sanctions against those responsible for human rights violations.
4. Call for legislative reforms that guarantee freedom of expression, protect journalists, and uphold democratic principles.

Impunity can no longer be tolerated. Türkiye must respect its international commitments and immediately cease its attacks on press freedom and the fundamental rights of Kurds.



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