

Statement on World Press Freedom Day

3 May 2021

As the access to information is a human right and a fundamental means of keeping the authorities in check, freedom of press is a vital component of democratic regimes. The oppressive regimes, on the other hand, control the overall access to information by imprisoning dissident voices, shutting down media outlets, and filling the venues of social media with armies of troll.

In its recent descent to authoritarianism, Turkey has become an inferno for the journalists who are outside the enormous propaganda machinery of the AKP government. As the dissident voices are silenced in a systematic manner, the country has turned into a massive prison for the journalists.

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

- While more than 2000 journalists have been prosecuted for their political stance, 135 of them are currently in jail, making Turkey a leading jailer of journalists. To make the matters worse, long detention periods without a court trail has been made into a deliberate norm for the dissidence and specifically for the journalists.
- Over 85% of the existing media outlets are functioning under strict government control. The remaining 15% is functioning with the shutdown risk on a daily basis.
- While about 500 journalists left the country out of political pressure and prosecutions, more than 7000 other media workers lost their jobs as a result of systemic media takeover of the AKP government in recent years and tens of them are physically attack by the hooligans of the government who enjoy impunity for their acts.
- In the evaluations of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Turkey ranked 154th out of 180 countries in 2020.

This outlook- needless to say- is a result of the authoritarian drift of the Erdogan government that subverted the separations of power and undermined the stipulations of the Constitution regarding the freedom of speech and access to information. On the face of that, we celebrate the journalists who keep doing their jobs under the contemporary codes of media ethics despite all the pressure and express solidarity with those who lost their jobs and freedoms doing their jobs.

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