

The Dangers of Being a Journalist: The Case of Turkey

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Abstract

Journalism has increasingly become dysfunctional due to ‘new forms of censorship and repression, self-censorship, surveillance, monitoring and control, gatekeeping, propaganda/disinformation, acts of terror, anti-terror laws, the criminalization of encryption and/or anonymity, hate speech and harassment, and organized crime’ in so-called liberal democratic states (Carlsson & Pöyhtäri, 2017: 12). In fact, Turkey, in the front line with such practices, has recently turned into a dangerous country, where the rule of law, civil liberties and democratic governance are in sharp decline (WJP, 2018; The EIU, 2018). As confirmed by many international chronicles, reports and indexes, Turkey has now become more and more barren for democracy in general and journalism in particular. On the RSF Press Freedom Index 2018, Turkey is ranked 157th of 180 countries. In the last few years, more than 100 media outlets have been closed and 151 journalists and media workers have been put behind bars (TGS, 26 January 2018), while over 1000 journalists have been dismissed. In these circumstances, safety has become the primary problem in Turkey. According to “Freedom of the press 2017” report by the Freedom house, the sources of the threats are listed as: “heads of state: launching verbal attacks and lawsuits; trolls: abusing and threatening online; security forces: harassing, arresting and beating; violent groups: threatening attacks and death; judges: delivering draconian sentences; media owners: controlling the editorial line and job security”. In this study, we will first describe and second make an in-depth analysis of these threats in Turkey to present a more thorough understanding of the issues (e.g. freedom of thought, right to information, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press) at stake in the Turkish mediascape (Appadurai, 1990). The data will be gathered from the reports of Journalists’ Union of Turkey (TGS), Progressive Journalists’ Association (ÇGD), Bianet and several others. The time period of the study is limited to two years starting from the State of Emergency declared after the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016 to the general elections of June 24, 2018. In the end, we will offer some safety strategies and tactics for the journalists living and working in dangerous zones like Turkey to discuss further.

Key words: media freedom, safety of journalists, safeguards

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