



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

12.1.2015

B8-0041/2015

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on freedom of expression in Turkey: recent arrests of journalists and media executives, and systematic pressure against the media
(2014/3011(RSP))

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

European Parliament resolution on freedom of expression in Turkey: recent arrests of journalists and media executives, and systematic pressure against the media (2014/3011(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey, in particular those of 12 March 2014 on the 2013 progress report on Turkey¹, of 13 June 2013 on the situation in Turkey² and of 13 November 2014 on Turkish actions creating tensions in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus³,
 - having regard to the arrests of a number of journalists, media executives and others throughout Turkey on Sunday, 14 December 2014,
 - having regard to the fact that Turkey has been one of the worst countries in the past few years as regards press and media freedoms, in particular as regards the number of jailed journalists, as around 70 journalists are in prison, books have been banned, and self-censorship and tax fines on critical media are cause for great concern,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the latest arrests are part of the systematic undermining of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers and the respect for democratic values and fundamental freedoms; whereas members of former Prime Minister Erdogan's government were charged with corruption polarisation, and crackdowns intensified;
- B. whereas these arrests seems to be part of President Erdogan's ongoing conflict with the Hizmet movement, led by the US-based Muslim scholar Fethullah Gulen, and come one year after police and prosecutors targeted members of Mr Erdogan's government on corruption charges;
- C. whereas Turkey already holds a large number of jailed journalists and the pressure against the media has increased over the past few years, including against owners and executives of media groups as well as online and social media platforms;
- D. whereas Freedom House ranked Turkey's press as 'not free' in 2014, while in 2013 it was 'partly free';
- E. whereas pre-trial detentions can last for months in Turkey and have been extended in the past to effectively punish suspects before they had even faced trial;
1. Deplores the mass arrests in Turkey on 14 December 2014, and calls on the authorities

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0235,

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0277.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0052.

to urgently produce credible evidence to back up the accusation that the arrested individuals have committed the criminal offences in question and to proceed speedily with the judicial proceedings, in full transparency and with adequate legal safeguards ensuring due process and fair trial; calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to intensify its attendance during trials of journalists and human rights defenders;

2. Deplores the provocative arrest and raid of the home of Dutch journalist Frederike Geerdink by counter-terrorism units on 6 January 2015 while Foreign Minister Koenders was in Turkey; calls for full transparency regarding this case;
3. Reminds the Turkish authorities that the utmost care must be taken when dealing with the media and journalists, as freedom of expression and freedom of the media remain central to the functioning of a democratic and open society;
4. Notes with great concern that Turkish society remains highly polarised, and political debates often include speculative rumours, illegitimately obtained phone taps and recordings, conspiracies and irrational complots; underlines that only a transparent and well-functioning rule of law and civil society can build trust and confidence between different institutions and among people in a mature and democratic society;
5. Notes that the arrests on 14 December 2014 fall into a deplorable pattern of increased pressure and restrictions on press and media outlets, including internet-based social media and fora, for which the Turkish Government and the highest Turkish leadership bear the ultimate responsibility;
6. Welcomes the statements from the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and from the Commissioner responsible for accession negotiations, which underlined that the worsening of press and media freedoms in Turkey go against EU values and, as such, represent a step away from accession;
7. Stresses the need for a new approach to EU-Turkey relations, in parallel with the stalled accession negotiations, focusing on pragmatic cooperation in the many fields of common interest between the EU and Turkey such as foreign policy and trade; reiterates, however, that respect for the rule of law, democratic values and fundamental rights are key criteria for the EU; encourages the Turkish Government to reform its judicial system towards respect for the rule of law and fundamental rights;
8. Calls on all EU institutions and on all actors in Turkey to seriously improve and overcome the current stalemate in EU-Turkey relations through concrete actions and benchmarks within a set period of time, with the EU making it indisputably clear that regression of the rule of law and fundamental rights under the government's leadership has concrete, negative consequences;
9. Reminds Turkey of its obligations as a member of the Council of Europe, and of the need for further judicial reforms; recalls the many cases against Turkey before the European Court of Human Rights;

10. Asks its President to forward this resolution to the Parliament and Government of Turkey, the Member States, the Commission and the European External Action Service.