



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Plenary sitting

12.1.2015

B8-0044/2015

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 in Turkey
(2014/3011(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the 1996 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular Article 19 thereof,
 - having regard to the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, in particular on the right to freedom of speech,
 - having regard to the Commission's 2014 Progress Report on Turkey,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 December 2014,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey's progress reports, and on its resolution of 13 June 2013 on the situation in Turkey¹,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in police operations carried out on 14 December 2014 in thirteen cities in Turkey, 31 people were arrested, most of them journalists, screenwriters or editors, including the *Zaman* newspaper editor-in-chief and the chairman of the Samanyolu Broadcasting Group; whereas four of those arrested remain in detention;
- B. whereas, according to official sources, the arrests were made on suspicion of founding, being a member of, or supporting, a terrorist organisation, or of launching propaganda against the religious community 'Tahsiye' in Turkey, alleging them to be part of a terrorist organisation;
- C. whereas these arrests were perceived as a clamp-down on government critics and intolerance of political opposition;
- D. whereas Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code, which makes defamation a criminal offence, Article 301, which criminalises insults against the Turkish nation, offences against public order, offences against constitutional order, and the Anti-Terror Law and the Press Law have been used to restrict freedom of expression;
- E. whereas newspapers writing on the Kurdish issue or publishing in Kurdish have been continuing targets for pressure, including the banning and imprisonment of journalists on terrorist propaganda charges;

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0277.

- F. whereas foreign journalists too have been threatened with arrest, the latest being Dutch journalists Frederike Geerdink, based in Diyarbakir, who was taken into custody on 6 January 2015 on charges related to ‘propaganda for a terrorist organisation’, and Mehmet Ülğur, who was arrested on arrival at the airport on 7 January 2015 for taking a picture in the courtroom;
- G. whereas this continuous campaign of intimidation and dismissal of journalists regarded as critics of the government has led to self-censorship of journalists and the media;
- H. whereas Turkey is the country with one of the highest numbers of imprisoned or arrested journalists, with 22 journalists in prison according to OSCE statistics of June 2014;
- I. whereas the arrests and campaign against government critics should not be viewed as an isolated case, but related to the overall internal and foreign policies of the Turkish Government; whereas they come as the conflict between former allies Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Fethullah Gulen and his movement is coming to a head, and is directly connected with the Ergenekon and corruption cases brought against members of Erdogan’s government and family;
- J. whereas the events of June and July 2013 around Gezi park should not be forgotten;
- K. whereas 98 workers were dismissed on 6 December 2014 from the Maltepe University Hospital in Istanbul for being members of the progressive Union of Health Workers;
- L. whereas Turkey, as a candidate for EU accession, is bound by the Copenhagen criteria and has the obligation to respect and promote democracy and reinforce democratic human rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression;
- M. whereas the Commission’s Turkey 2014 Progress Report makes extensive critical reference to the situation of freedom of expression in the country and expresses concerns about this situation;
- N. whereas the government is pursuing neo-liberal economic policies that are deepening the standard of living gap and leading more people into impoverishment;
- O. whereas Turkey’s President is pursuing a regional policy characterised as neo-Ottoman, with clear expansionist tendencies;
- P. whereas Turkey has been playing a negative role in the internal situation in Syria by allowing free flow of weapons and so-called fighters, including from EU countries, into Syria; whereas it has been accused of cooperating with the ‘Islamic State’ notably in the case of Kobane obstructing its defenders;
- Q. whereas Turkey has issued a new Navtex binding parts of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus, which is tantamount to an invasion of the latter’s sovereignty and is further escalating tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean;
- R. whereas Turkey does not respect international law and good-neighbourly relations,

including with Member States of the EU, of which it is itself a candidate member;

1. Strongly condemns the arrests and campaign against journalists, screenwriters and editors aimed at silencing government critics and opposition voices, and calls for their release, as well as for the release of all political detainees;
2. Denounces the intervention and pressure by the authorities on the judicial system, and calls for respect for the independence of the judiciary;
3. Recalls that Turkey as a candidate for accession to the EU is committed to complying with the Copenhagen criteria, and calls on the Council and the Commission to pursue strict compliance by Turkey;
4. Calls on the Council and the Commission to stop placing economic and trade interests above respect for international law and human rights and freedoms;
5. Calls for the revocation of the anti-terrorist law;
6. Denounces Turkey's intervention in Syria as a violation of international law, and demands its immediate end;
7. Condemns Turkey's new Navtex and demands that it be immediately revoked, that all Turkish ships be withdrawn from the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus, and that Turkey work for good-neighbourly relations and normalisation of relations with all EU Member States;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government and Grand National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey.