



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Plenary sitting

12.1.2015

B8-0045/2015

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, media executives and systematic pressure against the media
(2014/3011(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

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

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Turkey,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs Council of 16 December 2014,
 - having regard to the joint statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of 14 December 2014,
 - having regard to the statement by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights of 15 December 2014,
 - having regard to the Turkey 2014 Progress Report of 8 October 2014,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 14 December 2014 the Turkish police arrested journalists and media executives, including Ekrem Dumanlı, editor-in-chief of the Zaman newspaper, and Hidayet Karaca, general manager of the Samanyolu broadcasting group; whereas a warrant, issued by a judge in Istanbul, states that they were under criminal investigation for forming an organisation that had ‘by pressure, intimidation and threats attempted to seize state power’ and that they had done so ‘through lies, depriving people of their liberty and falsifying documents’;
- B. whereas a number of persons arrested in December 2014 have since been released; whereas on 19 December 2014, an Istanbul court announced the release of Ekrem Dumanlı, subject to probation and a travel ban pending completion of a criminal investigation; whereas, however, Hidayet Karaca remains in custody pending completion of the investigation;
- C. whereas these arrests are part of a general crackdown by the Turkish authorities on the network of US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, accused of running a ‘parallel state’ within Turkey, and his alleged supporters;
- D. whereas Turkey in recent years has been sliding down press and media freedom indices as more and more journalists, bloggers, media owners and others are threatened, intimidated and even imprisoned for criticising Turkish President Erdogan and the Davutoğlu government;
- E. whereas the EU and its Member States have strongly criticised the arrests which took place on 14 December 2014, saying that they are ‘incompatible with European values’

and ‘incompatible with the freedom of media’; whereas, however, President Erdogan has told the EU to ‘mind its own business and keep its own opinions to itself’;

- F. whereas in the Turkey 2014 Progress Report the Commission notes that positive steps were taken with the adoption of the Action Plan on Violations of the European Convention on Human Rights and a reduction in the length of pre-trial detention, following which many journalists were released from custody; whereas, however, the Commission also notes that legislation further limiting freedom of expression, including on the internet, was adopted and the effective exercise of this freedom, and press freedom, was restricted in practice;
- G. whereas Turkey has been a candidate for EU membership since 1999 and accession negotiations started in 2005; whereas the country is a major emerging economy, a member of NATO and the G20 and is considered a key partner for the EU;
1. Condemns the recent police raids and the detention of a number of journalists and media representatives in Turkey; stresses that these actions call into question respect for freedom of the media, which is a core principle of democracy;
 2. Underlines the fact that a number of provisions of the Turkish legal framework and their interpretation by members of the judiciary continue to hamper freedom of expression, including freedom of the media; recalls that freedom of expression and media pluralism are crucial to a democratic society, as they enable citizens to take an active part in the collective decision-making processes on an informed basis and therefore strengthens democracy; expresses its serious concern about the number of journalists in pre-trial detention and calls on Turkey’s judicial authorities to review and address these cases as soon as possible; points out that progress in the accession negotiations depends on respecting the rule of law and fundamental rights;
 3. Notes that, as is highlighted in the Turkey 2014 Progress Report, court cases against journalists and writers, together with numerous dismissals of journalists, continue to cause widespread self-censorship by media owners and journalists, including on issues of public interest, such as corruptions allegations;
 4. Urges the Turkish Government to reverse course and to work on reforms which should provide for adequate checks and balances fully guaranteeing freedom, including freedom of thought, expression and of the media, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, anchoring Turkey in the western democratic, economic and security sphere;
 5. Notes that, as concluded by the Council on 16 December 2014, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) for the period 2014-2020 sees the introduction of enhanced coherence between EU financial assistance and the overall progress made in the implementation of the pre-accession strategy;
 6. Notes the adoption of the Action Plan on Violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, which envisages revision of some provisions of the Turkish Criminal Code that restrict freedom of expression and freedom of the press in the areas where the European Court of Human Rights found Turkey to be in violation of the European

Convention on Human Rights;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Government and Parliament of Turkey.