



Turkey: State of Emergency must not trample on freedom of expression and human rights

RAN 15/16

02 August 2016 – PEN International is deeply concerned that the enhanced powers afforded by the three-month [state of emergency](#) declared after the failed coup in Turkey on 15 July is paving the way for further and increasing crackdowns on freedom of expression and human rights in the country. Since the coup attempt, close to 70,000 people have been detained, under investigation, suspended or fired including at least 59 journalists and other writers, 132 media organisations have been ordered to shut down, 29 publishing houses have been ordered closed and there have been reports of wide-spread ill-treatment in custody. Turkish authorities have a disturbing track-record of suppressing freedom of expression and other forms of opposition and dissent, which has intensified in recent years. PEN International calls on Turkey to safeguard freedom of expression, human rights and respect their obligations under international law during this period of emergency.

Take Action – share on Twitter, Facebook and other social media

Send Appeals:

- Calling on Turkish authorities to not use the state of emergency to crack down on peaceful dissent, civil society, media and education;
- Urging them to stop censorship of media solely for criticising government policy;
- Calling for the immediate release of all journalists and other writers held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Calling for all detained writers and journalists to have access to lawyers and to be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried promptly in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Reminding Turkish authorities that the prohibition of torture is absolute and cannot be overruled in states of emergency.

Please send appeals reiterating PEN's calls (listed above) to:

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Vekaletler Caddesi

Başbakanlık Merkez Bina

06573, Kızılay

Ankara, Turkey

Fax: +90 312 417 0476

Email: receptayyip.erdogan@basbakanlik.gov.tr

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RecepTayyipErdogan>

Twitter: @RT_Erdogan

And copy to the Embassy of Turkey in your country. You can find embassy addresses [here](#).

Background

On 20 July 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared a three-month state of emergency and derogation from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in response to a failed military coup on 15 July – allowing him to bypass parliament when creating new laws or restricting freedoms and rights.

PEN is deeply concerned that alongside the legitimate investigations and detentions related to criminal conduct during the attempted coup, the authorities are using the state of emergency to further silence any and all critical voices in the country. As of 1 August, arrest warrants have been issued for 42 journalists (a full list is available [here](#)) in addition to 47 former employees of *Zaman* newspaper. Three news agencies, 16 TV channels, 23 radio stations, 45 papers, 15 magazines and 29 publishers have been ordered shut. For more information click [here](#).

PEN International and its Centres around the world have a long history of engagement with the challenges to freedom of expression in Turkey. The freedom of expression problems in Turkey are chronic, systemic and constantly evolving. In recent years, Turkey has consistently featured among the worst offenders on PEN International's Case List of persecuted writers. Most imprisoned journalists and other writers were jailed on charges under Turkey's broadly worded anti-terror Legislation and penal code, and many of them spent months, even years, in detention without conviction. Even before the coup attempt, the already critical situation for freedom of expression and access to information in the country had suffered further major repression. Information blackouts have prevented the international community and civil society from verifying credible reports of major violations by the Turkish security forces during the prolonged total curfew in the southeast where conflict has escalated since mid-2015.

Across the country the authorities are increasingly intolerant of political opposition, public protest, and critical media, while government interference has undermined judicial independence and the rule of law. Media ownership has been transformed, leading to a dominance of pro-government media in the country; intimidation, firing of critical journalists and denial of accreditation to foreign reporters has further eroded independent reporting. Restrictive laws have been deployed to arrest and prosecute journalists, while media groups who criticise the government have been fined. PEN International is deeply concerned that the current state of emergency will be used to crack down even more intensely on the right to freedom of expression.

For more information see [Turkey: Major deterioration of the human rights situation in the country](#).

For further details please contact Sahar Halaimzai: Sahar.Halaimzai@pen-international.org |