

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı
06560, Beştepe
Ankara
Turkey

29 October 2015

Dear President Erdoğan

We are writing to express our profound concern regarding the deteriorating conditions for press freedom in Turkey. We urge you to use your influence to ensure that journalists, whether Turkish citizens or members of the international press, are protected and allowed to do their work without hindrance.

Over the past two months, attacks and harassment of journalists have increased to an alarming degree. Incidents include: two attacks on the offices of the newspaper *Hurriyet*, including one supported by a serving Member of the Turkish Parliament; the physical assault of leading journalist Ahmet Hakan Coskun following an organised campaign of threats led by press outlets sympathetic to the government and the President; the raid and seizure of Koza Ipek Media, known for being critical of the President; the detention of three journalists working for Vice News (including Mohammed Ismael Rasool who is still in prison), court cases against journalists and further arrests.

In this climate of intimidation, there is also the worrying rise of a culture of impunity which serves to deprive journalists of the necessary safeguards to do their essential work and leaves them vulnerable to bullying and even physical harm. The government's reluctance, and in some instances failure, to condemn attacks on journalists independent or critical of them is an especially alarming development.

On the eve of an important election on 1 November, which will be of concern and interest to those in Turkey and internationally, the Turkish government's failure to support and to protect journalists where necessary is undermining the country's international reputation and damaging its standing as a democracy. We share widespread concerns that recent events are part of a concerted campaign to silence any opposition or criticism of the government in the run up to the election.

We recognise that Turkey is facing a period of considerable tension. It is at such times that the role of a free press becomes ever more critical. Turkey is a state party to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Turkey's 1982 Constitution makes the rights contained in these international instruments available to its citizens at home. All Turkish state institutions therefore have an obligation to respect and to take steps to uphold the right to freedom of expression. The media has long been recognised in international law as having an essential role to play as a watchdog.

As editors, we are dismayed to see individual journalists, along with publications and media groups, targeted in this way. We are increasingly concerned at the impact on reporting events in Turkey fully and accurately, both at home and abroad.

We urge you to foster a culture where press freedom is fully respected.

Yours sincerely,

Zaffar Abbas, editor, Dawn, Pakistan

Mahfuz Anam, editor, Daily Star, Dhaka

Martin Baron, executive editor, the Washington Post, USA

Dean Baquet, executive editor, the New York Times, USA

Thomas Baumann, editor-in-chief, ARD German Television, Germany

Eniola Bello, managing director/ chief operating officer, THISDAY Newspaper Group, Nigeria

Ole Kristian Bjellaanes, managing editor, Norwegian News Agency (NTB), Norway

Erik Bjerager, editor-in-chief/managing director, Kristeligt Dagblad, Denmark

Mario Calabresi, editor-in-chief, La Stampa, Italy

David Callaway, editor-in-chief, USA Today, US

Kathleen Carroll, senior vice president and executive editor, the Associated Press, US

Antonio Caño, editor-in chief, El Pais, Spain

Michael Cooke, editor-in-chief, Toronto Star, Canada

Patrick Daniel, editor-in-chief English and Malay Newspapers Division, Singapore Press Holdings Ltd, Singapore

Montserrat Domínguez, editorial director, El Huffington Post, Spain

François Dufour, editor-in-chief, PlayBacPresse, France

Alexandra Föderl-Schmid, editor-in-chief, Der Standard, Austria

Janine Gibson, editor-in-chief BuzzFeed UK

Daniel Hadad, CEO, Grupo Infobae, Argentina

Ferial Haffajee, editor-in-chief, City Press, South Africa

Andrew Holden, editor-in-chief, The Age, Australia

Vinod K Jose, executive editor, Caravan, India

Hiroshi Komatsu, chief editorial writer, the Mainichi Shimbun, Japan

Wolfgang Krach, editor-in-chief, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany

Michèle Léridon, global news director, Agence France-Presse (AFP), France

Gwen Lister, founder, The Namibian, Chairperson of the Namibia Media Trust, Namibia

Lisa MacLeod, head of digital, Times Media, South Africa

Philip Mathew, managing editor, Malayala Manorama, India

Ezio Mauro, editor-in-chief, La Repubblica, Italy

Fred M'membe, editor-in-chief & managing director, Post Newspapers Limited, Zambia

Jason Mojica, VICE News, editor-in-chief, US

Tom Mosoba, managing editor, the Citizen, Tanzania

Soe Myint, editor-in-chief/managing director, Mizzima Media Group, Myanmar

Andrew Nachison, founder, We Media, US

Kaius Niemi, senior editor, Helsingin Sanomat, Finland

Anders Nyland, editor-in-chief, Bergensavisen, Norway

Joseph Odindo, media consultant, former editorial director, Nation Media Group, Kenya

Toyosi Ogunseye, editor, Sunday Punch, Nigeria

Torry Pedersen, editor-in-chief, VG, Norway

Jan-Eric Peters, editor-in-chief, WELT Group and N24 TV, Germany

Javier Garza Ramos, journalist, Mexico

N Ravi, director, the Hindu, India

Marcelo Rech, executive director of journalism, RBS Group, Brazil

David Remnick, editor, the New Yorker, US

Jim Roberts, Mashable, executive editor & chief content officer, US

Rajdeep Sardesai, consulting editor, India Today Group

Ben Smith, BuzzFeed, editor-in-chief BuzzFeed, US

Shane Smith, founder, VICE Media

Zafar Sobhan, editor, Dhaka Tribune, Bangladesh

Elmar Theveßen, deputy editor-in-chief, ZDF German Television, Germany

Siddharth Varadarajan, founding editor, the Wire, India

John Yearwood, executive board chairman, International Press Institute