

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/turquie-universal-periodic-review-26-01-2015,47538.html>

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Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

United Nations

## Universal Periodic Review – international community must remind Turkey of its pledges

26 January 2015

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The United Nations Human Rights Council will begin reviewing Turkey's respect for fundamental freedoms tomorrow. Reporters Without Borders, which has consultative status with the UN, provided with council with a written contribution on freedom of information in Turkey last July. The situation has continued to worsen since then.

[Download the Reporters Without Borders contribution \(June 2014\)](#)

The Turkish authorities have steadily abandoned the undertakings they gave four years ago during the [Universal Periodic Review](#)'s first cycle. Established in 2008, the UPR is a mechanism by which the human rights performance of each of the UN's 193 member states is reviewed every four years or so. The second cycle offers an opportunity to evaluate how each country has done since its first review.

*"Four years ago, the Turkish government said that continuing improvements in respect for media freedom were 'one of the fundamental aspects' of its human rights reforms,"* said Johann Bihl, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

*"But progress in the past four years has in practice been very limited and the government has instead embarked on an increasingly authoritarian and repressive course. This second UPR should be used to remind the Turkish authorities of their past undertakings and to make them face up to their responsibilities."*

The army's self-appointed right to influence political developments has been rightly curtailed and a number of taboos linked to the Kemalist heritage have gone, but new taboos are emerging and the government is becoming more and more authoritarian.

The legislative shackles inherited from the military era have been loosened only slightly, while new repressive measures keep on being adopted, facilitating cyber-censorship and generalized surveillance. Bans on any reference to certain subjects of public interest are becoming more and more frequent.

Media pluralism is being undermined by growing self-censorship and the concentration of ownership in ever fewer hands. Hostages to the relentless power struggles between the government and its rivals, more and more journalists are being prosecuted or stripped of their accreditation, while the police continue to use violence against media personnel with complete impunity.

*Reporters Without Borders again calls on the Turkish authorities to:*

- Reform the penal code in order to decriminalize media offence and increase the space for democratic debate; above all, repeal articles 125, 299, 300, 301 and 305, which criminalize criticizing state institutions, and Law 5816, which criminalizes attacking the memory of the Turkish Republic's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.
- Adopt legislation that enshrines the right to information about matters of public interest, in order to counter-balance the priority given to the confidentiality of judicial investigations, state security and respect for privacy.
- Go further with reforming the anti-terrorism law so as to bring it into compliance with the

international conventions ratified by Turkey.

- Repeal recent draconian reforms, especially the February 2014 Internet law and the April 2014 law on the intelligence services; reform Internet legislation in order to provide for better judicial control of decisions to block websites, instead of facilitating censorship.
- Continue the overhaul of the Code of Criminal Procedure in order to make provisional detention an exception and ensure that it cannot be used for media offences; guarantee journalists the right to a fair trial.
- Guarantee protection for journalists while they are covering demonstrations; bring those responsible for police violence against journalists to justice.
- Respect media pluralism and independence by not meddling in editorial policies, not putting pressure on media owners, not issuing press accreditation in accordance with political affiliation, and not imposing "publication bans."
- Set an example as regards respect for civil liberties and civil society, end inflammatory verbal attacks on critics, consult civil society before adopting reforms, promote media self-regulation and foster an evolution in judicial attitudes.

*(Photo: Mustafa Ozer / AFP)*

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You can download those documents on our website :

- RSF: UPR Turkey 2014, (PDF - 179.7 kb)
  - , (JPEG - 59.6 kb)
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