

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/turkey-climate-of-hostility-towards-news-20-06-2013,44825.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

Criminalized protests

## Climate of hostility towards news media

19 June 2013

Reporters Without Borders is [again](#) very worried by the repressive nature of the Erdogan government's response to Turkey's three-week-old protest movement. Ever since [the police stormed Istanbul's Gezi Park on 15 June](#), the government has been making very [aggressive statements](#) about the movement's organizers and supporters, and those who cover it.

They are accused of acting at the behest of "external actors" or in collusion with "terrorist organizations" with the aim of destabilizing the country. The police operations currently under way suggest that these implicit threats are being translated into action.

"The protest movement's criminalization is being accompanied by an unacceptable and dangerous climate of hostility towards the media," Reporters Without Borders said. "We call for immediate explanations of the arrests of journalists in recent days. Raids on journalists' homes and news media violate the principle of the protection of sources, the cornerstone of media freedom.

"Inciting violence and hatred must of course be punished but the government's current rhetoric suggests that this need is being used as a pretext for political revenge against outspoken journalists. The Turkish authorities must stop brandishing conspiracy theories and stop attacking media and social networks."

## Raids against far-left journalists

The Istanbul anti-terrorism police raided dozens of addresses in the early hours of 18 June, including the headquarters of the Etkin News Agency ([ETHA](#)), with the official aim of conducting an operation against the outlawed Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP).

The homes of **Sedat Senoglu**, publication coordinator of the far-left weekly *Atilim*, and **Selvi Cosar**, an employee of Istanbul-based [Özgür Radyo](#), were among those searched. These two journalists are still in police custody.

The homes of *ETHA* editor-in-chief **Derya Okatan** and *ETHA* editor **Arzu Demir** were also targeted. According to *ETHA*, these two women journalists are currently under a form of house arrest but it is not known if they are going to be taken into police custody. *ETHA* said the police had a list of 90 persons suspected of colluding with terrorist groups.

Interior minister Muammer Güler said 62 people were arrested in Istanbul and 23 in Ankara in the course of this police operation. The raids were said to be part of a year-old investigation into MLKP by the Ankara prosecutor responsible for terrorism cases. But those arrested are reportedly also suspected of damaging public property or inciting violence against the police in "Occupy Gezi" protests.

## More police abuses, manipulation of information

Turkish and foreign journalists continue to be the victims of police violence, especially in Istanbul, where the anti-government protests began on 31 May. Police attacked **Kemal Sogukdere** and **Alper Cakici**, two cameramen with Qatar-based *Al-Jazeera TV*, near Taksim

Square on 17 June.

**Gökhan Biçici**, a reporter for pro-Kurdish *IMC TV*, and **Emre Fidan**, a cameraman with the nationalist TV station *Ulusal Kanal*, were released on 18 June, two days after being forcibly arrested near Gezi Park. *Today's Zaman* journalist **Rumeysa Kiger** was held for several hours on 18 June after being arrested as she crossed Taksim Square to get to a meeting.

Finally, the daily newspaper *Takvim* splashed with a fake interview with well-known *CNN* anchor **Christiane Amanpour** on its front-page on 18 June. Headlined "Dirty confession," the bogus interview had Amanpour confess that *CNN* had slanted its coverage of Turkey's protests "for money" and "under pressure from international lobbies."

The Association of Turkish Journalists (TGC) condemned the *Takvim* story as a "grave violation of professional ethics." Because many leading Turkish media censored their coverage of the protests during the first few days, Turkish viewers turned to *CNN* and other international TV stations, as a result of which these stations have repeatedly been attacked by the government.

## Social networks targeted

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by the interior minister's 17 June announcement of new measures to combat "false or provocative" information on online social networks – which have been massively used by protesters in the past few weeks – and will monitor the government's actions closely.

The minister said freedom of expression would not be restricted by any new law, but Reporters Without Borders is worried by the government's tendency to criminalize protesting. Inciting violence is already punished by existing legislation that applies to online social networks.

The protest movement has lost steam since the police used force to clear Gezi Park on the evening of 15 June but new forms of protest are being tried out, including [standing still while saying nothing](#) in public places, as a peaceful protest, and the organization of ["forums" in public parks](#) throughout the country.

Sporadic clashes with the police are still occurring, such as in the western Anatolian city of Eskisehir on the 13th of June.

**[Read the five preceding RWB press releases on the crackdown on Turkey's protests](#)**

*(Photo: Burak Kara / Getty Images / AFP)*

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