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Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

Bloody crackdown

At least 14 journalists injured by security forces since start of protests

4 June 2013

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Reporters Without Borders condemns [the brutal police action against media workers](#) covering the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. We understand that 14 journalists have been injured, some seriously, since the protests began in Istanbul and elsewhere. Dozens of other people have been affected by tear gas, which has been used widely against the protesters.

See the *CNN Turk* video

"The riots are turning into an anti-government protest movement and two people have been killed and many injured among participants and observers," the press freedom organization said. "We regret that, despite many appeals for calm made since late last week and the partial withdrawal of police from Istanbul's Taksim Square, police violence has continued.

"We strongly condemn the deliberate targeting of journalists by the police during the protests. In common with dozens of organizations, including the Journalists' Association of Turkey, we express our outrage. We call for the safety of journalists covering the protests to be guaranteed and for the protest movement to be treated fairly impartially by government media."

The demonstrations began in protest against the government's plan to develop Gezi Park, located on the symbolic Taksim Square on the city's European side. Media workers have been hit by water hoses and tear gas directed against the demonstrators.

The photojournalist **Osman Orsal** of the *Reuters* news agency was seriously injured when he was hit on the head by a tear gas grenade last Friday. He was near the French consulate in the Beyoglu district at the time and was taken to Taksim Hospital where he received nine stitches. His condition is reported to be improving.

Orsal took [the photograph that symbolises the police crackdown on the Gezi Park occupation](#).

Hail of bullets

On Friday night, another photographer, **Selçuk Samiloglu** of the daily *Hürriyet* was hit by a rubber bullet, wounding him on the right hand, then he was injured on the head by a projectile. He underwent surgery in a nearby mobile clinic before he, too, was taken to Taksim Hospital where his wound was stitched. His life is not in danger.

Ismail Afacan, a reporter for the left-wing newspaper *Günlük Evrensel* and the national TV station *Hayat TV*, was injured in the eye when a water hose was used by a police armoured vehicle on Friday. He was knocked to the ground and his video camera damaged. A reporter for the newspaper *Sol*, **Onur Emre**, was among journalists who were injured by tear gas canisters. His Ankara-based colleague **Fatos Kalaçay** was reported to have been assaulted by police officers as he covered the demonstrations held in the capital in solidarity with the Taksim protest.

Two other reporters were roughed up — **Ugur Can** of the *Dogan News Agency* and **Tugba Tekerek** of the *Taraf daily*, who was also verbally abused.

Mesut Ciftçi, a reporter for the privately-owned pro-government TV station *ATV*, and cameraman **Ismail Velioglu** were injured in the shoulder and the hand respectively by rubber bullets. They were treated in Taksim Hospital and are not in life-threatening condition. **Olgu Kundakçi**, a reporter for the left-wing daily *Birgün* was also hit by a rubber bullet and injured on the head.

Erhan Karadag, a journalist with the privately-owned national TV station *Kanal D*, was questioned by police in Ankara on Saturday night on the grounds that he was believed to support the protests in the capital. He was held at Ankara security headquarters and released the next day. His lawyer said he was detained for taking milk to the demonstrators so they could use it on their faces to soothe the effects of tear gas.

Ahmet Sik, who was hit on the head on Friday, left hospital the next day, after his wound was stitched. His stitches will be removed after 10 days.



Media silence

The demonstrators in Taksim Square were also protesting against the main media organizations including rolling news channels that have remained silent on the protests. Actors, writers, musicians and intellectuals have all expressed their objection to the attitude of the main media outlets since the start of the demonstrations.

They accuse the television stations *NTV* (whose bus was overturned by demonstrators), *CNN Türk*, *Haber Türk*, *Kanal D*, *ATV*, *Star TV*, *Show TV* and *TRT*, as well as the newspapers *Star*, *Sabah* and *HaberTürk* of biased coverage. Moreover, some of these outlets broadcast a speech by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan to a group of businessmen in which he accused the Republican People's Party (CHP) of exploiting the protests for political ends.

Erdogan called for an end to the demonstrations but admitted that the Istanbul police had used excessive force, particularly regarding tear gas. A judicial inquiry is under way.

The demonstrations were organized using social networking sites that allow instant access to information. On Sunday, Erdogan expressed his hostility to social media, Twitter in particular. Internet access was suspended for several hours in some parts of Istanbul and the websites of some news organizations have been hacked. Cell phone networks were also reported to have been disrupted. The cause is unknown as yet.

Photo : Ibrahim Halil Cekici / Anadolu Agency

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