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Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

Arbitrary detention

RWB calls on Turkish judiciary to drop charges against German photojournalists

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Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that three German journalists arrested in Diyarbakir on Saturday have been released pending further investigation. The organization calls on the Turkish judiciary to immediately drop all charges against the journalists and allow them to continue their work without restrictions.

"Journalists must not be criminalized for reporting on protests and unrest. The three Germans and all other journalists need to be able to report freely on the current protests and the events taking place at the Turkish-Syrian border", said Christian Mihr, executive director of Reporters Without Borders Germany. "Blaming the media for the current unrest is an irresponsible allegation by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and will contribute to further amplifying the hostilities against journalist in the affected regions."

The German photojournalists **Björn Kietzmann**, **Chris Grodotzki** and **Ruben Neugebauer** were arrested on Saturday in Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey. They had been reporting on the protests against the jihadi group Islamic State's (IS) attacks on the Kurdish city of Kobane in neighbouring Syria. According to the Diyarbakir Bar Association, they were held in the anti-terror section of the Diyarbakir Security Directorate. They were scheduled to appear before the prosecutor this Monday for supposedly "provoking or directing a group of 20 protesters".

Working conditions for journalists especially in the southeastern part of Turkey have become difficult since the start of riots linked with the IS siege of Kobane. A number of journalists were [physically attacked](#) by both police and by protesters, several were injured.

Turkish authorities also bar journalists without official accreditation from accessing certain regions along the Syrian border that have been declared military zones. Many journalists have been denied entry on these grounds. The same restrictions apply in regions that have been subjected to governmental curfews since October 7.

In [a speech](#) on Saturday, president Erdogan accused a supposed coalition of the banned Kurdish PKK, the Syrian regime of president Bashar Al-Assad and international media of obstructing the peace process in Turkey by provoking the protests.

Turkey is ranked 154th of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index published annually by Reporters Without Borders.

(Photo: Adem Altan / AFP)
