

Reporters Without Borders

http://www.rsf.org/turkey-police-arrest-25-journalists-on-20-12-2011_41578.html

Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

Mass arrests

Police arrest 40 journalists on suspicion of Kurdish separatist links

20 December 2011

Update: *One the night of 23 December, an Istanbul court ruled that the 35 journalists and media workers who were arrested in a series of raids three days earlier must remain in detention until their trial, for which no date has so far been set. They are accused of membership of the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK), an umbrella group allegedly linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).*

Update: *Since this statement was released, the number of arrested journalists has raised up to about 40.*

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the arrests of about 25 journalists in raids there were carried out early this morning under a continuing investigation into the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK), an umbrella group allegedly linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Most of the detained journalists work for pro-Kurdish media.

"The Turkish police keep carrying out the same kind of operation against journalists – searches that flout the right to the confidentiality of sources, mass arrests and confiscation of computers and articles as evidence," Reporters Without Borders said. "The Kurdish issue will not be solved by attempts to suppress dissident views in the name of combating terrorism. The authorities must stop trying to criminalize journalism, including politically committed journalism."

In raids carried out at around 7 a.m. in Istanbul, anti-terrorist police searched the offices of the *DIHA* and *ETHA* news agencies, the *Özgür Gündem* daily newspaper, the *Demokratik Modernite* magazine and the *Gün* printing press. The home of *Agence France-Presse* photographer **Mustafa Özer** was also searched. Similar raids were carried out in Ankara, Diyarbakir, Izmir, Van and Adana.

A total of around 25 journalists suspected of links to the KCK network were taken into custody during the raids, which were ordered by an Istanbul court as part of the [KCK investigation](#). Initial reports indicated that the operation targeted not only pro-Kurdish media but also mainstream media that occasionally work with them. **Ilker Yasar**, the editor of the left-wing daily *Birgün*, told Reporters Without Borders that *Birgün* reporter **Zeynep Kuray** and *Birgün* photographer **Ömer Celik** were among those detained. **Cagdas Ulus**, a reporter for the daily *Vatan*, has also reportedly been detained. "Even if this round-up seems to be targeted above all at *ANF* and *DIHA* journalists, in practice it is affecting the entire profession, *Birgün* publisher **Meriç Senyüz** told Reporters Without Borders.

The detained journalists include *DIHA* Istanbul news editor **Fatma Koçak**, *ETHA* managing editor **Arzu Demir**, *Demokratik Modernite* editorial board member **Nahide Ermis**, *DIHA* Diyarbakir bureau news editor **Ramazan Tekgöz**, *Demokratik Modernite* employee **Berxwedan Yaruk**, and the reporters **Semiha Alankus**, **Sadik Topaloglu**, **Cagdas Kaplan**, **Zuhal Tekiner**, **Kenan Kirkaya** and **Evrin Kepenek**. The *AFP* photographer, **Özer**, may also have been arrested.

Under Turkish legislation, the detainees do not have the right to talk to a lawyer during the first 24 hours and could remain in police custody for four days before being brought before a prosecutor.

During a search of Demir's home, the police reportedly took her mobile phone, notebooks, two laptops, a computer hard disk, the memory card of an *ETHA* camera, the text of the second edition of "The blood does not dry," a book by detainee **Sami Özbil**, photos of Özbil and DVDs.

In Van province, which was devastated by an earthquake last month, police also raided a tent being used by *DIHA* journalists whose office was badly damaged by the quake.
