

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/turquie-raids-on-media-linked-to-gulen-15-12-2014,47386.html>

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Europe/Ex-USSR - Turkey

Arbitrary arrest

## Gülen case: newspaper editor freed, media executive jailed

19 December 2014

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**Ekrem Dumanli**, the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Zaman*, was released conditionally today after being questioned by a prosecutor. He had been held since a series of raids against supporters of Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen on 14 December. He is banned from leaving the country.

His newspaper [said](#) the prosecutor interrogated him about his links with Gülen, Gülen's role in the newspaper's editorial policies, and several articles and op-ed pieces published in recent years.

*Samanyolu* media group chief **Hidayet Karaca** and three former police officials have been jailed. Karaca refused to answer questions put to him by judicial officials on the grounds that he regarded them as lacking in impartiality.

Reporters Without Borders calls for his immediate release and due process for all the media personnel who have been charged.

Both Dumanli and Karaca are accused of belonging to an illegal organization that is allegedly guilty of defamation and "arbitrary denial of freedom." *Zaman* said the defence lawyers are being prevented from working properly and, in particular, are being denied full access to prosecution case files.

Journalists **Ahmet Sahin** and **Fahri Sarrafoglu** were previously granted provisional releases – Sahin on 15 December and Sarrafoglu on 16 December.

*Bugün* journalist **Nuh Gönültas**, who returned to Turkey on 17 December, said on his Twitter account that he had neither been on the run nor in the United States, as some media reported, but had been in Russia covering the financial crisis.

"I am finally in Turkey," he said. "Tomorrow morning I will report to the prosecutor to ask him what happened and to answer his questions." Gönültas did indeed report to the prosecutor today and was released.

The mysterious "Fuat Avni" Twitter account, which had reported in advance that raids against Gülen supporters were imminent, has now said there will be another police operation on 25 December.

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### 15.12.2014 - Raids on media linked to Gülen movement

**In a major operation against supporters of Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's new Public Enemy No. 1, police raided the headquarters of the newspaper Zaman and Samanyolu TV yesterday in Istanbul and arrested around 30 people nationwide, including at least three journalists and media executives.**

News organizations linked to the Gülen Movement had been expecting police raids for months and, after a year of growing harassment, they finally materialized.

At total of 31 suspects named by Judge Islam Çiçek were arrested by anti-terrorist police in 13 provinces. They included **Ekrem Dumanli**, the publisher of *Zaman*, Turkey's biggest selling daily, **Hidayet Karaca**, the head of the *Samanyolu* media group, and journalist and writer **Fahri Sarrafoglu**.

They also included the scriptwriters and producers of *Samanyolu* TV series and former senior

members of the anti-terrorist police. **Hüseyin Gülerce**, a *Zaman* journalist, was released after being questioned. **Nuh Gönültas**, a *Bugün* journalist who is on the list of suspects that prosecutor Hadi Salioglu gave to the media, was said to be on the run.

Those arrested are accused of defamation and falsifying documents. They are also suspected of having "acted on behalf of an organized group aiming to seize control of the Turkish Republic's state." Judge Çiçek's warrants are based on the concept of "reasonable suspicion," which was incorporated into Turkish law by a recent reform that was widely criticized for being vague and easily abused.

*"We condemn this latest escalation in the suppression of media critics and call for the immediate release of the journalists taken into police custody,"* said Johann Bihr, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

*"These arrests cap a year of growing pressure on media that support the Gülen Movement. They also show that the corruption allegations against many government figures that erupted a year ago are now the leading taboo for the media in Turkey. Everyone who covers this story is now threatened."*

Bihr added: *"We also note that the authorities are continuing to use the methods they developed in recent years for use against the Kurdish, far-left or ultra-nationalist press."*

According to the semi-official Anatolia news agency, some of the detainees are alleged to have fabricated evidence against "Tahsiyeciler," a small, allegedly Islamist group that was investigated in 2009. *Zaman* and *Samanyolu TV* covered this investigation, while "Sungurlar" and "Tek Türkiye" – two popular TV series about Turkey's anti-terrorist units – portrayed a similar fictional investigation.

Arrested on camera inside *Zaman*, Ekrem Dumanli said the sole aim of the operation was to intimidate the Gülen Movement.

"Only those who break the law have anything to fear," he said. "I have flown in the prime minister's plane dozens of times. How can I be accused of wanting to take over the state? (...) This operation is a blow to democracy and media freedom."

Hundreds of sympathizers gathered outside the headquarters of *Zaman* and *Samanyolu TV* in response to messages on an influential Twitter account, "Fuat Avni," which began reporting on 11 December that the raids were being prepared.

The Association of Turkish Journalists (TGC), the Turkish Union of Journalists (TGS), the Press Council, the Turkish Federation of Journalists (TGF) and Freedom for Journalists (GÖP) all condemned the raids as an unacceptable assault on democracy and the public's right to be informed.

Almost exactly one year ago, on 17 and 25 December 2013, dozens of leading figures were arrested in a major corruption investigation. Those detained for questioning included the sons of three ministers, the CEO of a state bank and a construction magnate.

The government reacted angrily to what is regarded as a plot by its former political allies in the Gülen movement, an influential religious network with many members within the police and justice system.

Hundreds of police officers, inspectors, judges and prosecutors were fired during the following months, with the result that the investigation into one of the main aspects of the case was closed in October.

The authorities have repeatedly [obstructed media coverage](#) of the case as it continued to dominate the public debate during the past year. [Journalists have been fired](#), critical websites have been blocked and the intelligence services have been given [broad powers](#) to spy on the population.

At least 15 journalists of all political tendencies – pro-Gülen, republican, left-wing and nationalist – have received judicial summonses in the past month in connection with their coverage of the corruption scandal and, since late November, there has been [a complete ban on media](#) and online references to a parliamentary investigation into the allegations.

Turkey is ranked 154th out of 180 countries in the 2014 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

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