



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان  
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

## Violence against Female Turkish Journalists

**Submitted to:** Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women

**Submitted by:** Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (an organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council).

**Submitted on:** Turkey.

**Date:** March 2020

▪ **The documentation of cases of gender-based violence and harassment against women journalists in Turkey:**

Turkey's Female journalists are constantly experiencing racial discrimination, physical violence, and verbal abuse in the male-dominated media workplaces. Among these prejudices and discriminatory practices are the gender wage gap between working women and men and the verbal and physical harassment, inside these institutions, by male co-workers. All this in conjunction with the sexist insults and attacks female journalists endured at the hands of Turkish security forces, during their coverage of the various human rights violations carried out by various members of the Turkish security services, especially while covering peaceful demonstrations.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that some of these women journalists are arrested or detained because of their anti-government opinions. The Turkish government, from its part, is triggering a violent crackdown on journalistic and human rights platforms that are concerned with issues relevant to women's rights violations and targets, and also women journalists working in such platforms. And

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<sup>1</sup> Turkey's female journalists doubly targeted in media crackdown. FREETURKEYJOURNALISTS. Feb 8, 2019. <http://bit.ly/2VSIstdl>

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instead of protecting women journalists from the physical and verbal violence they may experience, the Turkish government arrests and punishes them.<sup>2</sup>

Women make one third of employees in Turkish newspapers.<sup>3</sup> However, the public opinion survey, conducted by the Turkish Journalists Syndicate (TGS), showed that six out of 10 female journalists in Turkey were subjected to discrimination on the basis of their sex, including the remarkable gender wage gap between working women and men, the negative impact of marriage and childbearing on their careers as compared to males, in addition to the violence some of them are subjected to, as 53% of female journalists are reportedly exposed to violence by those in charge of media institutions and 45% are also reportedly attacked by the police during their work. Female journalists are frequently arrested for the act of producing objective journalism, criticizing the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or on terrorism-related charges or for insulting state institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, women journalists face psychological and physical attacks, insulting and threatening statements by the Turkish government, and some of them are judicially persecuted and detained. And perhaps the case of Eylem Nazlier, a journalist in the Evrencil newspaper, who was threatened and attacked by the security forces while covering Turkey's Saturday Mothers, which is a peaceful protest, is a clear example of such violations. And in the same context, journalist Gülfem Karataş declared that most female journalists are subjected to violence by the security forces while doing their work.<sup>5</sup>

The Turkish government has reportedly arrested several female journalists for covering the human rights violations carried out by Turkish government. Among these journalists is Ruken Demir from Mezopotamya News Agency, who was arrested over terrorism-related charges and alleged affiliations to the PKK and other terrorist organizations. Yet, the real reason behind her

<sup>2</sup> Survey shows female journalists in Turkey subjected to discrimination, violence. Stockholm center for freedom. March 6, 2018. <http://bit.ly/2wD5UkQ>

<sup>3</sup> Pamela Moriniere. Twitter account . May 28, 2019. <http://bit.ly/2Tt48vf>

<sup>4</sup> Survey shows female journalists in Turkey subjected to discrimination, violence مرجع سابق ذكره

<sup>5</sup> Turkey's female journalists doubly targeted in media crackdown. مرجع سابق ذكره

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excluded, adding that women are subjected to physical harassment at the hands of those very men.<sup>17</sup> In this light, four female journalists have reportedly resigned from the Turkish news site, Dokuz8 Haber, following the sexual harassment of the journalist Shafak Taymur by a male co-worker, while the management of the enterprise didn't take any measures in this regard.<sup>18</sup>

▪ **The system of warning and rapid response to protect and help threatened journalists and other media actors:**

There are no specific measures taken by the Turkish government to protect women journalists and other media actors from exposure to specific threats. On the contrary, the Turkish government shuts down all associations and human rights organizations covering the violations of women's rights or defend them. For example, the Turkish government fined a women's rights organization founded in Antioch in 2014, advocating against gender-based violence, organizing awareness-raising events and following up on issues of gender-based violence at 51.168 Turkish liras due to developing online courses dealing with human rights violations against female journalists without prior authorization.<sup>19</sup>

In this framework, the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), a research center established by Ibrahim Kalin who became an adviser to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issued a report on news coverage of services in the Turkish language to seven leading international media outlets. The report covered the attack on women working in the media and displayed everything they write on social media platforms, questioning their morals and inciting against them, indicating the lack of real mechanisms to combat the various human rights violations carried out against Turkish journalists.

<sup>17</sup> Turkey's female journalists doubly targeted in media crackdown مرجع سابق ذكره THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM . February 20, 2020 . <http://bit.ly/2PWnoiS>

<sup>18</sup> safak timur . twitter account . Nov 2, 2018 . <http://bit.ly/38vEvOX>

<sup>19</sup> Turkey: Women's Rights Defenders in the Crosshairs .The World Organization against Torture (OMCT). December 20, 2019 . <http://bit.ly/3cFtJbZ>

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▪ **The factors that increase the potential for violence and harassment in the work environment for women journalists:**

Although there are some general programs and actions taken by the Turkish authorities that aim to address the issue of violence against not only female journalists but women in general. Among these measures is the approval of the Turkish Parliament on the tenth development plan in the field of equality between women and men, which aims to achieve gender equality in the work environment at all levels. And in this light, the state adopted gender equality policies at the family and society levels in 2010 for eliminating discrimination against women in the work environment. And the Ombudsman's Office receives all complaints on discrimination against women in the Turkish society.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, the National Council for Monitoring and Coordination on Women's Affairs has been established to monitor discrimination against women as well as a number of training courses for state employees on gender equality and violence against women have been prepared; however, they did not focus on female journalists in particular<sup>21</sup>. And although these programs and laws are very general and not intended for women journalists In particular, they are also not activated, as they exist only on paper without being applied on the ground, because the official practices of Turkish government such as security restrictions and various violations impede the ability of journalists to benefit from these programs, which is a serious problem since it justifies the government's claims of providing female journalists with their the basic rights.

▪ **The cyberbullying and online violence against women journalists:**

Women journalists in Turkey are subjected to a number of cyberattacks, including harassment, threats and defamation campaigns, because of their advocacy for gender equality in all aspects of Turkish society. Most of these attacks stem from supporters of the ruling party's policies in Turkey, which results from their stereotypical images of Turkey's women journalists, who defend the violations of women's rights in Turkey, which were created by the speeches, policies and decisions

<sup>20</sup> Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Turkey . United Nations CEDAW/C/TUR/CO/7 . 25 July 2016 . <http://bit.ly/3cBHp7P>

<sup>21</sup> Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Turkey . United Nations مرجع سابق ذكره

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of the Turkish government. Turkey's women journalists are described as "prostitute", "immoral", "porn" etc... it is worth noting that pornography is frequently used as a tool to silence human rights defenders and journalists.<sup>22</sup>

In this context, and after covering the 2013 Gezi Park protests, BBC's reporter, Celine Gerrit, has been targeted on Twitter with a variety of insults and threats by supporters of the Turkish state<sup>23</sup>, while the independent journalist Aman da Smith, specialized in covering Kurdish issues in Turkey and Syria, has been subjected to harassment by the Kurds and the factions supporting them after publishing a report on war crimes carried out by the Kurds against civilians in their war against the Turkish state, and these harassments included sexual threats and accusations of treason and collusion with the Turkish government.<sup>24</sup>

The Turkish government also recruit some hacking groups for cyberbullying women journalists and human rights defenders, attacking and defaming them by all possible means available, that's in addition to hacking their social media accounts and threatening them with physical and sexual assaults. And in this context, Arzu Geybullayeva, an Azerbaijani journalist working in Turkey, has been threatened online with physical and sexual harassment due to her talks about the policies of the ruling party in Turkey<sup>25</sup>, while Büşra Cebeci, specialized in displaying the stories of Turkish women and voicing their violations, received threatening messages on her Facebook account because of her activities in exposing human rights violations and violence against women in Turkey.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Kadın gazeteciler dijital şiddeti anlattı: Şaşırmıyoruz ama mücadeleye devam! Journo . 26 Kasım 2019 .

<http://bit.ly/3cwSaZi>

<sup>23</sup> Kadın gazeteciler dijital şiddeti anlattı: Şaşırmıyoruz ama mücadeleye devam مرجع سابق ذكره

<sup>24</sup> CounteringOnline Abuseof Female Journalists . The Representative onFreedom of the Media 2016. p 28 .

<http://bit.ly/3cCXkCX>

<sup>25</sup> CounteringOnline Abuseof Female Journalists . p 37

<sup>26</sup>Online violence a rampant problem for women journalists in Turkey .Duvarenglish : November 26 2019 .

<http://bit.ly/2TwzqS9>

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