

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.¹

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

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi

Website: www.maatpeace.org | E-mail: maat@maatpeace.org

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



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

Woman make one third of employees in Turkish newspapers.³ 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.⁴

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.⁵

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

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي | PO Box : 490 El Maadi

Website: www.maatpeace.org | E-mail: maat@maatpeace.org

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

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

مرجع سابق ذکره Survey shows female journalists in Turkey subjected to discrimination, violence مرجع سابق ذکره

⁵ Turkey's female journalists doubly targeted in media crackdown. مرجع سابق ذکره



arrest was her speech on human rights violations and violent crimes carried out against women and protests in Turkey's Ida Mountains.⁶

In this light, the journalist Sadiye Eser, a reporter for the Mesopotamia news agency, was arrested on charges of alleged affiliation to a terrorist organization. Eisser is, indeed, one of the most active journalists concerned with covering the human rights violations carried out by the Turkish government. In this context, Turkey misuses law to silence female journalists, suppress their voices and impede their efforts to monitor human rights violations committed by the Turkish government. On February 27, 2020, the eighth trial of the two journalists, Samiha Shaheen and Peynar Ghayb, who have been accused of membership to a terrorist organization, was held, in a blatant attempt to intimidate and terrorize other female journalists concerned with monitoring the various human rights violations.⁸

In the same context, the German-Turkish journalist, Mesale Tolu, is being prosecuted on charges of affiliation to a terrorist organization against the backdrop of the recent coverage of a protest march against the killing of Suphi Nejat Ağırnaslı, a student at Boğaziçi University who fought against ISIS and was killed in action in Kobane. While Reyhan Çapan, Özgür Gündem newspaper's editor-in-chief, is subjected to legal harassment for alleged affiliation to a terrorist organization, against the background of the newspaper's coverage of human rights violations committed by the Turkish authorities. 10

Zehra Özdilek, Cumhuriyet newspaper reporter, is also on trial for her news report on human rights violations by the Turkish government that arbitrarily dismiss employees¹¹. Journalist

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي

Website: www.maatpeace.org | E-mail: maat@maatpeace.org

⁶ Ruken Demir . welt 03.12.2019 . http://bit.ly/2wDihgM

⁷ Journalists Sadiye Eser and Sadık Topaloğlu Arrested . bianet4 . December 2019 . http://bit.ly/2NLE2k1

⁸ Turkey: Misuse of law to silence women journalists needs to stop. THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM February 27, 2020. http://bit.lv/2TJtnbN

⁹ Türkei: Terrorprozess gegen Mesale Tolu auf Juli vertagt . .zeit online . 25. Februar 2020 . http://bit.ly/2TMcL2W

¹⁰ Turkey: Reyhan Çapan subjected to legal harassment; Turkey needs to stop persecuting journalists.

¹¹ Turkey: Persecution of women journalists continues, Zehra Özdilek of Cumhuriyet newspaper also in the line of fire. THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM. February 14, 2020. http://bit.ly/38t4hDl



Durket Süren is also on trial for terrorism-related charges, against the backdrop of the recent criticism of the Turkish government policies in the media.¹²

Turkey journalist Pelin Ünker is convicted of defamation and insulting a public official, over her reporting on corruption in government and public sector companies¹³. In the same context, the Turkish government has targeted the Kurdish journalist Ayse Guney and banned the human rights platforms she uses due to her activity in highlighting various human rights violations carried out by the Turkish government.¹⁴

Not only Turkish female journalists are harassed and prosecuted by Turkish government, but also foreign female journalists are subjected to similar treatment. A Russian journalist has reportedly said that her phone and apartment have been damaged and that she was being prosecuted by the Turkish government ¹⁵. On 2 March 2020, a group of an unidentified agents, ranging from 15 to 20, stormed the houses of three journalists, two of which working for the Turkish Sputnik News Agency. And instead of investigating the incident, the Turkish government has searched the houses of the journalists, confiscated their electronic devices, including personal computers, and detained them, which clearly reveals the Turkish government's intention not to protect female journalists from the various violations they are subjected to. ¹⁶

Within the same context, on Bianet news site, Evrim Kepenek, expressed her deep dissatisfaction with the bias in presenting the quality of the news to the Turkish public opinion, as all the news relevant to women and their suffering in the male-dominated media environment are

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

 $Organization \ in \ special \ consultative \ status \ with \ the \ Economic \ and \ Social \ Council \ since \ 2016$

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب : 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi

¹² Turkey: Legal attacks continue to threaten journalists — Durket Süren under trial for "terrorism". THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM .February 13, 2020 .http://bit.ly/2TtUnx7

¹³ Turkey: Legal attacks against Pelin Ünker for her Paradise Papers' stories must stop. THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM. January 31, 2020. http://bit.ly/2wCy7Ic

 $^{^{14}}$ Kurdish journalists appeal for international solidarity in the face of oppression . Morningstar . http://bit.ly/2lpwZdL

¹⁵ VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AGAINSTWOMEN IN THE NEWS MEDIA:A GLOBAL PICTURE . International news safety institute .p 29. http://bit.ly/2TH1ykt

¹⁶ Turkey: A new low as Turkey detains women journalists for reporting attack on their home .THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM .March 02, 2020 .http://bit.ly/2VRkYpe



excluded, adding that women are subjected to physical harassment at the hands of those vey men.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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.

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب : 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi

¹⁷ 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

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

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



• 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.²⁰

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 ²¹. 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

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road , El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41 , Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة - ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي

Tel. 00(20) (2) 25344706 Telefax. 00 (20) (2) 25344707 Mob. +201226521170

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

 $^{^{21}}$ Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Turkey . United Nations مرجع سابق ذکره



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.²²

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 state²³, 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.²⁴

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 Turkey²⁵, 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.²⁶

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة صب : 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi

Tel. 00(20) (2) 25344706 Telefax. 00 (20) (2) 25344707 Mob. +201226521170

²² Kadın gazeteciler dijital şiddeti anlattı: Şaşırmıyoruz ama mücadeleye devam! Journo . 26 Kasım 2019 . http://bit.ly/3cwSaZj

مرجع سابق ذكره Kadın gazeteciler dijital şiddeti anlattı: Şaşırmıyoruz ama mücadeleye devam مرجع سابق ذكره

²⁴ CounteringOnline Abuseof Female Journalists . The Representative onFreedom of the Media 2016. p 28 . http://bit.ly/3cCXkCX

²⁵ CounteringOnline Abuseof Female Journalists . p 37

²⁶Online violence a rampant problem for women journalists in Turkey .Duvarenglish . November 26 2019 . http://bit.ly/2TwzqS9



The Turkish journalist Melis Alphan received a number of violent and hate responses while covering a Syrian refugee issue, as one of the locals has reportedly told her, "Syrians will rape you, Inshallah."²⁷

A group of Turkish pro-government journalists are verbally and sexually bullying female journalists defending women's rights on Twitter without being punished²⁸, this in conjunction with the Turkish government imprisonment and crackdown on female journalists defending human rights violations in Turkey.²⁹

In this light, during the trial of the Turkish journalist Beritan Canözer, the Turkish public prosecutor requested handing down a prison sentence to Canözer, accusing her of online terrorist propaganda, against the backdrop of the journalist's activity in highlighting human rights violations by the Turkish government.³⁰

Pro- government news agencies and websites use a language of treason and harsh verbal messages against opposition journalists on Twitter, including in the same context, the Turkish journalists and there are some other messages that aim to undermine their credibility in front of Turkish public opinion, as they use certain words such as "Street Girl" to question the credibility of some Turkish women journalists and insult them³¹.

The transparent complaints mechanisms for both offline and online cases of violence:

Turkey has not developed any specific mechanisms to address violence against women journalists online or offline. However, it has implemented a number of general measures, including the use

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب : 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi

مرجع سابق ذکر ه Online violence a rampant problem for women journalists in Turkey مرجع سابق

²⁸ Digital Populism:Trolls and Political Polarization of Twitter in Turkey · Koç University, TurkeyUniversity of Oxford, UK 2017 · http://bit.ly/38v8WVx

 $^{^{29}}$ CounteringOnline Abuseof Female Journalists . The Representative onFreedom of the Media 2016. p 28 . http://bit.lv/3cCXkCX

³⁰ Turkey: Prosecutors want journalist Beritan Canözer behind bars for her Tweets . THE COALITION FOR WOMEN IN JOURNALISM . January 28, 2020 .http://bit.ly/2TuZFs1

³¹ Feature: Turkey trolls' use of insults stifling reporting · international press institution . Sep 13, 2016 . http://bit.ly/3az002z



of electronic handcuffs to report violence against women, along with launching the KADES application that can be installed on smartphones and used for reporting cases of domestic violence and getting help in no time.³²

The above-mentioned application facilitates the possibility of responding to the calls of women victims of violence and providing them with psychological support through a group of specialists in this regard. In this context, the Turkish state institutions have developed the third national action plan to address violence against women 2018-2023, which includes a number of studies on violence against women, its causes and how to address it. It also raises awareness about violence against women in Turkish society, and it is expected that these measures will include women journalists in Turkey.³³ However, so far these measures are still on paper and have not been implemented in reality.

• The challenges women journalists face when reporting cases of gender-based violence:

In a nutshell, and in the light of the above, it can be said that women journalists in Turkey face a number of challenges in a male-dominated work environment, with women being excluded and reports on human rights violations to which they are subjected are disregarded, along with being targeted by the government that silence their voices, detain and abuse them, whether verbally and physically, while doing their work, with the absence of programs and laws protecting them from all these abuses, in addition to the state-led defamation campaigns against them on social media and the stereotypical image portrayed in the Turkish citizens mind about these women journalists, which has been perpetuated by the policies of the Turkish ruling party and the speeches of its leaders in many occasions; among these challenges are the following:-

33 مرجع سابق ذكره المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road , El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41 , Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة - ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي

Tel. 00(20) (2) 25344706 Telefax. 00 (20) (2) 25344707 Mob. +201226521170

³² Turkey's Final Comments onlegislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic .Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) 2018 . http://bit.ly/3aBTloe



- Continue to work in the Turkish media and cover all violations of human rights to which women are subjected in a male-dominated work environment, while not tolerating with physical and verbal sexual harassment within the work environment.
- Women journalists do their work and not be afraid of the potential threats, security
 prosecutions, and abuses that they may be exposed to either on social media or in reality
 while doing their work, with the ability to respond to these violations accurately and
 decisively and not be afraid of them.
- One of the most important challenges facing these journalists is the ability of these women
 journalists to change the stereotypical image embedded in the society about them due to
 the policies of the ruling Turkish party and the speeches of the party leaders on many
 occasions.
- The lack of a law, programs and specific procedures to report discrimination, violence and abuse against women journalists in Turkey is a challenge for them, therefore, the Turkish government has adopted a set of measures to ensure safeguards for journalists from the various violations that they may be exposed to.

المنظمة حاصلة على المركز الاستشاري الخاص في المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي منذ 2016

Organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2016

Address: 148 MisrHelwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4th Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt

148 طريق مصر حلوان الزراعي - المطبعة – ح المعادي - الدور الرابع - شقة 41 - القاهرة | ص.ب: 490 المعادي PO Box : 490 El Maadi