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IRIS 2017-9/5

European Parliament: Resolution concerning issues of media freedom in Turkey

On 6 July 2017, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the European Commission Report on Turkey, which concerned, among a number of issues, media freedom in Turkey. The new Resolution also concerned the European Parliament's previous Resolution in October 2016 on the situation of journalists in Turkey (see IRIS 2017-2/4), and follows the adoption of the Report on attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) (see IRIS 2017-2/2).

The new Resolution begins by emphasising the fact that recent months have seen a difficult period for Turkey's population, including a string of heinous terror attacks, and a violent coup attempt in July 2016 in which 248 people were killed. The European Parliament reiterated its strong condemnation of the coup attempt, expressed its solidarity with the people of Turkey, and recognised the right and responsibility of the Turkish government to take action in bringing the perpetrators to justice. The Parliament also noted that it remains committed to cooperating and maintaining a constructive and open dialogue with the Turkish Government in order to address common challenges and shared priorities, such as regional stability, the situation in Syria, migration and security.

However, the Resolution goes on to note that the measures taken under the state of emergency have had large-scale, disproportionate and long-lasting negative effects on the protection of fundamental freedoms in the country. In particular, the Resolution condemns the "mass liquidation" of media outlets and the arrests of journalists. Further, the European Parliament condemns strongly the "serious backsliding" and violations of freedom of expression, and the serious infringements of media freedom, including the disproportionate banning of media sites and social media. Moreover, the European Parliament notes with concern the closure of around 170 media outlets (including almost all Kurdish-language outlets) and the jailing of more than 150 journalists, and stresses that Turkey's decision to block access to Wikipedia constitutes a grave attack on freedom of information. The European Parliament further notes the continuing deterioration of Turkey's ranking in the press freedom index compiled by Reporters without Borders, which now places Turkey as number 155 out of 180 countries; it also reiterates that a free and pluralistic press, including a free and open Internet, is an essential component of any democracy, and urges the Turkish government to release all unlawfully arrested journalists immediately.

Finally, it should also be noted that on 12 September 2017 the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression issued a joint statement on the urgent need to restore media freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey.

- European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2017 on the 2016 Commission Report on Turkey, P8_TA-PROV(2017)0306

<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/redirect.php?id=18675>

EN DE FR CS DA EL ES ET FI HU IT LT LV MT NL PL PT SK SL SV HR

- OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, OSCE and UN media freedom watchdogs call on Turkey to release journalists from prison and remove restrictions on media freedom, 12 September 2017

<http://merlin.obs.coe.int/redirect.php?id=18676>

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