

Erdogan's witch hunt against journalists continues with the latest decree

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As the sweeping crackdown in Turkey following a failed coup continues, purges are being extended to censor media houses and journalists, including those critical of government policy. The Turkish representative for *Reporters Without Borders* called the arrests "a witch hunt against journalists". David Kaye, the UN special rapporteur on the right to freedom of expression [said](#) that "the attempted coup cannot justify such a broad attack against almost all voices, not just critical ones but analytic and journalistic."

The crackdown reached exceptional proportions in Turkey. Turkey's media purge after the failed coup in 2016 resulted in the shutdown of at least 131 media outlets and the arrest of 117 journalists – at least 35 of whom have been indicted for "membership in a terror group".

As a result of the crackdown, 2,308 media workers and journalists have lost their job. Turkey's media purge has also occurred online: regulators blocked at least 30 news-

related websites. Websites not linked to Gulen's movement, such as Wikileaks, the Turkish satirical weekly *Leman*, our website *The Region* are among those blocked inside Turkey. In addition 48 online news stories from outlets including *The Independent* have been censored. Three stories were about corruptions allegations involving the president's son Bilal Erdogan. In addition, Wikipedia is blocked in the country since April 2017. *The Committee to Protect Journalist's* program coordinator for central Asia, Nina Ognianova, [said](#) that the "scale of this rout of the media is staggering," and added, "The government is exploiting a failed coup to silence the critical press when Turkey most needs pluralistic media."

Turkey issued a decree on Sunday dismissing more than 18,000 civil servants, half of which were from the police force, ahead of this month's expected lifting of a two-year-old state of emergency imposed after an attempted coup in July 2016. In addition to that, the decree issued the ban of three newspapers and a TV station. However, one "small detail" shows the motive behind the decrees.

The banned newspapers have no link to the Gulen movement, they are rather pro-Kurdish newspapers including *Halkin Nabzi* (People's Pulse), *Ozgurlukcu Gundem* (Libertarian Agenda), and the Kurdish newspaper *Welat*. Besides media conglomerates linked to Gulen, Kurdish outlets have also been hit hard. They, at least, are used to crackdowns: In the past, Kurdish journalists in particular often ended up on trial for "terror propaganda" if seen to write or speak about the Kurdish question. When it comes to Kurdish journalists, newsgathering activities such as fieldwork, covering protests, and conducting interviews are seen as evidence of a crime.

With dozens of journalists under arrest, pending arrest orders on the way and multiple news outlets shut down, accused of aligning themselves with the Gulen movement - where will Turkey draw the line with its current media purge?