

The Region is blocked in Turkey and we are not surprised

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On the 22nd of January 2018, the Information Technologies and Communications Authority of Turkey officially blocked local access to *The Region* amid the Afrin attack. *Jinnews*, explicitly defining its foundation as an extension of the brave women struggle, has also shared the same fate.

 Court's decision

Turkey's crackdown on its media has turned the country into the world leader in locking up journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Turkey remains the world's "worst jailer" for the second year in a row, with dozens of media workers imprisoned.

Turkey has intensified its crackdown on the media since the failed coup attempt of 2016. During the state of emergency, the government has given itself the authority to rule by decree and has ordered the closure of more than 100 news outlets, including, 50 newspapers, 16 TV channels, three news agencies, 23 radio stations, 15

magazines and 30 publishing houses.

As for those media agencies who managed to evade the purge, they have run into another obstacle instead. The Government has engineered the take over of privately-owned media by appointing government-approved trustees to run them.

Last week, since the Turkish army advanced with tanks into the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northern Syria, the Turkish government has been doing what it can to form and influence the narrative over the attack to forge Turkish and Western public opinion. The ruling party, AKP, even went so far as to instruct media owners on how to report on "Operation Olive Branch."

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım met with Turkish media owners and presented a 15-point list as a "guide" to reporting on the Afrin attack.

"We are a democratic country, and different voices are possible," said Yıldırım. "However, while the eyes of the world public are focused on Turkey, it is important to stand together", he stressed.

To what extent Turkey is a "democratic country" is still a mystery, especially when it comes to the way it treats journalists. Just two days ago, Mezopotamya News agency reporter Hayri Demir, Arti TV/Al-Monitor writer Sibel Hurtas and T24 writer Nurcan Baysal became the latest journalists to be detained in Turkey's crackdown against all who oppose the Afrin operation.

And in some ways, the Turkish Government has succeeded. How can one explain a situation where some of the world's most respected media outlets like AFP and Reuters regurgitate Ankara's talking point that the Islamic State (IS) is also in Afrin, and that Turkey is attacking them alongside its fight with the YPG? It should not take an expert on the Middle East to tell you that IS is not, or has never been in Afrin.

For all of the reasons above, we must say that we are honoured to disturb the world's worst jailer of journalists. Since the first days of Turkey's Afrin attack, we have been using the #JournalistsAgainstWar hashtag.

We promise to work twice as hard for the suppressed critical, dissenting voices, imprisoned journalists and human rights activists of Turkey.