

Türkiye: Media freedom groups demand release of journalists detained ahead of NATO Summit

The undersigned media freedom, freedom of expression, journalists' and human rights organisations express profound alarm at the recent wave of detentions and arrests of journalists and civil society representatives in Türkiye in the immediate lead-up to the NATO Summit in Ankara on 7-8 July.

In the last two weeks, Turkish authorities have launched a coordinated crackdown on critical voices in the country, including independent media. In this period, the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) monitoring platform Mapping Media Freedom documented [11 journalists](#) and media workers detained under vague or unjustified pretexts, many with no connection to the NATO event in Ankara.

Turkish Media regulator RTÜK also [issued](#) a written warning ahead of the NATO Summit, urging broadcasters to keep “public interest and the national security perspective” in mind when covering the event in news and discussion programs. The statement called for broadcasting to be based on verified information, to remain measured, and sensitive to “societal sensitivities,” noting that RTÜK’s monitoring experts would be watching all broadcast content.

Developments since the last week of June 2026 represent a coordinated strategy to silence critical voices in Türkiye. The targeting of critical journalists also cannot be viewed in isolation. The detentions and arrests are linked to the denial of accreditation for independent media outlets operating in the country, which previously prompted a [joint letter](#) to NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, urging the organisation to reconsider the requests of these media to cover the summit in Ankara. The targeting of journalists also coincides with the pre-emptive detention and arrest of hundreds of activists, lawyers, academics and rights defenders from diverse backgrounds.

The journalists who have been targeted in this period include:

- [Doğa Başkan](#), of Evrensel Daily, was detained and arrested on June 25 on charges of disinformation and prosecuted for uploading a text to the newspaper’s website without editorial approval, despite the content being immediately removed. She was released on June 27.
- [Yıldız Tar](#), the chief editor of LGBTI+ news portal Kaos-GL, was [arrested](#) on June 25 during the raids targeting over 200 people in Ankara; Yıldız was questioned concerning their publications about President Erdoğan’s “The Year of the Family” that highlights conservative values.
- [Ali Çağatay](#) was detained on June 25 on charges of disinformation due to one of his social media posts concerning the operations led by the police forces and was subsequently arrested on June 27.

- [Müberra Ünsal](#) was detained on June 28 while covering the banned Pride March in Istanbul; Ünsal was released later that evening.
- [Gülnur Saydam](#) of Cumhuriyet Daily was detained on charges of disinformation following her reporting on criminal gangs and was questioned for four hours on July 1.
- [Ceren Erdoğan](#) of OdaTV, [Buse Söğütü](#) of T24, and [Abbas Vural](#) of Niha+ were detained following house raids on July 5 as part of broader operations targeting politicians, journalists, lawyers, and activists ahead of the NATO Summit.
- [Berfin Ay](#), chief editor of Kurdish Daily, Azadiya Welat, was detained in Şırnak at a border check-point on July 5 due to her previously issued and then lifted international travel ban.
- [Kayhan Ayhan](#), Birgün Daily reporter known for live-tweeting from the trial hearings of imprisoned Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, was [detained](#) with a house raid on July 6, questioned specifically about his journalistic activities by anti-terrorism investigators, and accused of disinformation. Ayhan was released under judicial control order and international travel ban the next day.
- [Hazar Dost](#) of the investigative journalism platform Ortak, was [detained](#) on July 6 on the pretext of failing to give testimony in a 2018 case, a move widely seen as a pretextual harassment tactic. Dost was released the next day from police custody and revealed [mistreatment and physical violence](#) he endured during detention. Suspicions of facial recognition technology were raised with regard to Dost's detention.

Pattern of Intimidation and Legal Violations

The raids and arrests imply a broader pattern of anti-terror laws, disinformation law (Article 217/A of the Turkish Penal Code), and arbitrary police powers to criminalise journalism and intimidate journalists.

The operations targeting journalists coincided with preparations ahead of international leaders' visit to Ankara and this raised questions of a deliberate strategy to prevent independent reporting on the NATO Summit, and to intimidate those who cover sensitive political and social topics.

The confiscation of journalists' devices and demands for their passwords raise further concern, in violation of the right to privacy and correspondence under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Additionally multiple journalists were blocked from seeing their lawyers, violating the right to legal counsel. The detention and arrest of journalists for their reporting and their social media posts constitutes a clear violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and international media freedom standards.

The undersigned organisations call on the Turkish authorities to:

- Immediately cease the targeting of independent media and critical journalists.
- Release all arrested journalists, including those detained in connection with the “NATO Operations.”

- Drop all charges against journalists arising from their professional work.
- End the use of anti-terror legislation and disinformation laws to suppress independent journalism.

During coverage of an international event, journalists should be free to do their jobs without fear of reprisal, harassment or detention. We therefore call on the officials attending the NATO Summit in Ankara to raise these concerns with their Turkish counterparts and emphasise that a free and independent media is the cornerstone of democratic security.

Signed by:

- European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
- European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
- Index on Censorship
- International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
- International Press Institute (IPI)
- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
- PEN International
- PEN Sweden
- PEN Denmark
- PEN Norway
- Progressive Journalists Association (ÇGD)
- South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
- Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project (TLSP)
- Kaos GL
- 17 Mayıs Derneği
- Mersin Lgbt 7 Renk Derneği
- Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA)
- PEN Türkiye
- Dicle Fırat Gazeteciler Derneği (DFGD)
- Muamma LGBTİ+ Derneği
- Özgür Renkler Derneği
- 20 Kasım Nefret Suçlarıyla Mücadele Derneği
- Genç LGBTİ+ Derneği
- Ankara Gökkuşluğu Aileleri Derneği (GALADER)
- Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC)
- Articolo 21
- P24 Platform for Independent Journalism

Disclaimer:

This statement was coordinated by the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), a Europe-wide mechanism which tracks, monitors and responds to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries.