

Turkey: Trustee appointment at Halk TV must be reversed

The International Press Institute (IPI) and 12 press freedom, freedom of expression, and human rights organisations call on the Turkish authorities to immediately end the takeover of Halk TV's management and restore the broadcaster's editorial independence. A criminal investigation into the channel's owner cannot justify seizing control of a newsroom and silencing its coverage.

On October 14, 2026 as part of an investigation into Halk TV owner Cafer Mahiroğlu, a Turkish court [ordered](#) the seizure of companies linked to him and appointed the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) as trustee, according to the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. Police then raided Halk TV, one of the main critical voices in Turkey's broadcast media, took the channel off air, and reportedly barred its journalists from the premises. The channel's social media accounts were also [blocked](#).

The investigation into Mahiroğlu is based on suspicion of bribery, bid rigging, and laundering of proceeds of crime. The Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) alleged that the declared incomes of Mahiroğlu and his relatives did not match their assets and financial transactions. Prosecutors [issued](#) detention orders for 17 people, including Mahiroğlu, the channel's former deputy board chairman, a former board member, and its accountant, as well as the person listed as the company's legal owner, according to reports.

Eleven people have been detained. No journalists or editorial staff are reported among them. Mahiroğlu has rejected the allegations, saying the claims built on MASAK reports are baseless.

Allegations against an owner or executive concern individual responsibility, and an independent judiciary must examine them in line with the presumption of innocence. They do not, in themselves, justify taking over an entire newsroom, cutting off its broadcasts, and depriving its journalists and audience of their right to produce and receive news as a pre-trial measure.

This is a glaring example of how the authorities use allegations against media owners to bring critical outlets under state control. It comes amid a continuing deterioration of press freedom in Turkey, where judicial measures, from [internet censorship](#) to continued arrests and detentions of journalists, increasingly target independent journalism.

A recurring pattern of media takeovers

In a similar decision in October 2025, authorities [placed](#) TELE1 under the control of a TMSF trustee, following the arrest of its editor-in-chief Merdan Yanardağ in an espionage investigation launched by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. Yanardağ remains in prison as his trial on espionage charges proceeds. The allegations differ in the two cases, but both began with an investigation into an owner or manager, followed by the seizure of a critical outlet's management and the end of its independent editorial line.

The impact extends beyond individual outlets. The [Systemic Siege of Independent Journalism in Turkey](#) report, published by eight international press freedom, free expression and human rights organisations, found that a series of media confiscations has made the TMSF the country's largest media employer, raising serious concerns about media pluralism and the concentration of ownership.

Several reports also [noted](#) the timing of the Halk TV operation, which coincided with the day the defence phase in the trial of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu was due to begin. That timing reinforces public suspicion that the measure aims to silence independent reporting rather than to ensure accountability.

Trustee appointments to media outlets conflict with Turkey's own constitutional guarantees. Article 28 of the Constitution states that the press is free and cannot be censored. Where prosecutors allege criminal liability, less intrusive measures exist that do not shut down a newsroom's editorial operations.

We call on Turkish authorities to:

- Immediately revoke the trustee appointment at Halk TV, allow the channel to resume broadcasting without interference, and guarantee its editorial independence;
- Lift the restrictions on Halk TV's social media accounts and ensure that the channel and its journalists can publish and distribute news freely across digital platforms;
- Ensure that any investigation into media owners or executives respects due process and the presumption of innocence, and limit any precautionary measures to the individuals concerned rather than the editorial operations of the outlet;
- Refrain from using criminal investigations to interfere with editorial independence, and ensure that any restrictions on media outlets are strictly necessary, proportionate and consistent with freedom of expression and media pluralism;
- Review and reform the legal framework governing trustee appointments and the seizure of media assets to prevent disproportionate interference with independent journalism and bring the relevant laws and practices into line with Turkey's constitutional guarantees and international human rights obligations.

The undersigned organisations stand in solidarity with Halk TV's journalists and with all journalists and media organisations in Turkey who continue to pursue independent journalism under systematic pressure. Media pluralism and the public's right to access information, including reporting that holds those in power to account, must be protected.

Signed by:

International Press Institute (IPI)

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Foreign Media Association (FMA) Turkey
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South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)

This statement was produced by IPI as part of 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, funded by the European Commission.