



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – 6 December 2007

TURKEY: New Report Shows Increasing Repression of Freedom of Expression

ARTICLE 19 is pleased to announce the publication of a joint fact-finding mission report on the current state of media freedom in Turkey. In July 2007, ARTICLE 19 co-organised a mission with The Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP), Index on Censorship, the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) and the Centre for European Studies, Limerick, Ireland, in response to reports of rapidly increasing violations of the right to freedom of expression in Turkey.

The mission found that despite the reforms of 2003 to 2004, there has been a substantial and rapid regression in freedom of the media. This can mainly be attributed to the slow-down in the EU reform process and the manner in which new legislation is being interpreted and applied by the Turkish State apparatus.

The report underlines that the greater debate on the infamous Article 301 of the new Penal Code against Turkish intellectuals has led to a lack of discussion or awareness of equally controversial and far-reaching Articles 220 (8) and 216 of the Penal Code as well as the new Anti-Terror law. These legislation have been widely used against ordinary, notably Kurdish and pro-Kurdish journalists. Opposition journalists who are either imprisoned or under investigation are all too often dismissed by the State apparatus and larger media groups as working for 'terrorist newspapers' or not being 'proper journalists'. The mission believes that these attacks against opposition media ultimately endanger freedom of the media in Turkey as a whole.

Given that the mission found growing scepticism of both Turkey and the EU's commitment to the reform process, the mission calls on the Turkish authorities to urgently lift its prohibitive restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, and to repeal all aspects of the new Penal Code, new Anti-Terror Law and Police Powers law that are incompatible with international human rights standards. The mission further urges the EU to uphold its commitment to the reform process, by providing practical support to Turkey's accession bid and by continuing to closely monitor its performance, particularly with regard to freedom of expression.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- **The report is available at:** <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/turkey-fact-finding-report.pdf>
- **For more information,** please contact Anoush Begoyan, Europe Programme Officer, anoushb@article19.org, +44 20 7278 9292.
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression.