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Deputy Chief of Mission of the Turkish Embassy  
Turkish Embassy  
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0244 Oslo

Oslo, 14 March 2016

Firstly, we, the undersigned, express our deepest sympathy to the Turkish people after the latest brutal attack in Ankara.

We are extremely concerned about the increasing climate of fear and censorship and the stifling of critical voices in Turkey.

Freedom of expression is one of the most frequently violated rights in Turkey. According to statistics by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Turkey single-handedly surpassed the 46 other states in the Council of Europe (CoE) in terms of cases involving violations of the right to freedom of expression in 2014 and 2015.

Turkish authorities are persecuting citizens that exercise their right to freedom of speech by criticizing the Turkish president and government. Judges, academics, writers and journalists are imprisoned.

Many journalists are imprisoned because of their critical articles, and even more writers and journalists are awaiting punishment for having performed their duty towards society.

Prosecution solicitors, having investigated allegations of serious corruption in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's family and associates, have lost their jobs and been prosecuted. Judges have been jailed because of their rulings.

Academics, who asked the government to resume the peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), have been accused of supporting terrorism and several of them have lost their positions.

We regret to learn about the police attack on the offices of Kurdish PEN in South East Turkey on 2 February. Rohat Aktas, editor of the Kurdish daily Azadiya Welat was killed 24 February while reporting from Cizre in southeast Turkey.

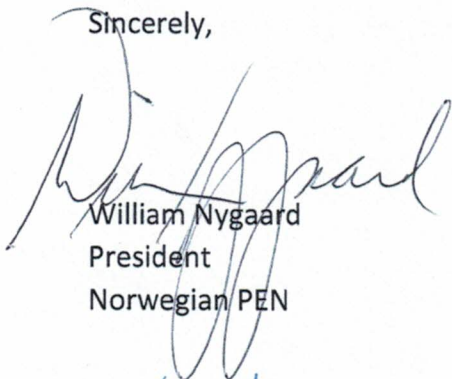
Both leading international human rights organizations, the Council of Europe and the EU have strongly criticized the Turkish authorities. In the Reporters Without Borders' ranking of press freedom in the world's states, Turkey holds a dismal 149th place out of 180.

Freedom of expression - a right enshrined in Turkey's constitution - is the cornerstone of a democratic and fair society. For a society to be open, free and diverse, individuals must be able to live without fear of reprisals or censorship for what they believe or express.

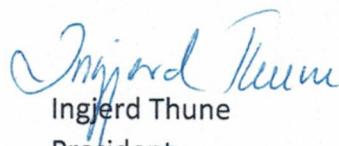
We, the undersigned organizations therefore call on Turkish authorities to:

- Ensure free and open debate and expression, offline and online;
- Respect the independence of judges and the judiciary;
- Abstain from undue pressure on judges;
- Re-establish the independence of the Turkish High Council of Judges and Prosecutors in order to restore its competence as an efficient guarantor for independent judges and an independent judiciary;
- Release the judges Metin Özçelik and Mustafa Başer from imprisonment
- Review all relevant articles of the law with a view to bringing them into accord with international human rights standards, in particular the ICCPR and the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a state party;
- Drop the charges against Can Dündar and Erdem Gül;
- Release all other writers and journalists detained or on trial in violation of their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Conduct a swift, transparent and thorough investigation into the death of Rohat Aktaş and urge the government in Ankara to look for a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the conflict in southeast Turkey.


Sincerely,



William Nygaard  
President  
Norwegian PEN



Ingjerd Thune  
President  
Norwegian Association of Judges



Vidar Strømme  
Board member  
ICJ-Norway



Kjersti Løken Stavrum  
Secretary General  
Norwegian Press Association