



His Excellency Mr Ahmet Vakur Gokdenizler  
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cc: The Hon. Julie Bishop MP  
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23 September 2016

Your Excellency,

You will recall that we wrote to you on August 1 to express our deepest concerns at the unprecedented clampdown on media in Turkey and to urge your government to reverse the widespread attacks targeting journalists and media outlets in the country.

We must write again to repeat our concerns, particularly in light of the escalation of the assaults on press freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey.

We also raise our concerns over an upcoming court case: you may be aware that Ms. Ayşe Çelik, a Turkish teacher, and 30 others will appear in a court hearing on September 23.

Çelik was charged for her comments after calling in to popular television program, the Beyaz Show, in which she pleaded for more media attention to killings and other abuse against civilians [ongoing across southeast Turkey](#). Her comments led to [harsh backlash on social media](#) by pro-government media outlets, and the opening of an investigation against her on the charges of “promoting terrorist organisation propaganda”.

In response to the criminalisation of Çelik’s speech, 30 people signed onto Çelik’s statement, many of whom had recently travelled to or themselves lived in Diyarbakir, the region identified in her televised appeal. The case has since been expanded to include all 30 signatories – including Sanar Yurdatapan, a spokesperson for International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) network member: the Initiative for Freedom of Expression-Turkey. If convicted, they each face up to 7.5 years of imprisonment.

MEAA, which represents 5500 Australian journalists, is also member of IFEX and is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

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We call on Turkey to cease its criminalisation of free speech, and urge the government to drop the charges against Ayşe Çelik and the 30 signatories to Ayşe's statement. By doing so during the current turmoil, Turkey will underscore its commitment to the rule of law and preserve the rights of its citizens to freely express themselves without fear of judicial reprisal.

Your Excellency, further to our August 1 letter to you, we must again raise our concerns at the clampdown on the media in Turkey. Through the IFJ, we understand that up to 100 journalists have been detained. News reports suggest that at least 30 news web sites are being subjected to censorship, many media outlets have been shut down, and there are reports suggest that up to 600 media personnel have had their accreditation withdrawn.

Your Excellency, we call on the Turkish authorities to respect international conventions protecting human rights, trade union rights and freedom of expression.

We urge you to foster a culture where press freedom is fully respected, observed and protected.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Murphy  
CEO