



23 September 2014

Dear President Erdoğan

We are writing to express our concerns about the threats and intimidation towards the journalist Ceylan Yeğinsu. As you will be aware, Ms Yeğinsu is a reporter for the New York Times based in Turkey and wrote an article about the recruitment of Turkish citizens by the Islamic State (ISIS) on 15 September. This was an important article in the public interest, an example of high quality and responsible investigative journalism that offers insight into ISIS at a critical time.

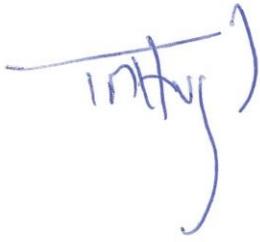
We were therefore dismayed to learn that following the article's publication, Ceylan Yeğinsu has been personally targeted by elements of the media sympathetic to the ruling AKP and on social media, with threats that pose a serious risk to her own safety. We were also gravely concerned to read reports that you yourself denounced the article as 'shameless, immoral, treason'.

This is not an isolated incident. There is now a worrying trend of publicly smearing the reputation of journalists in Turkey, including threats to their lives. You will recall that last month at an election rally in southern Turkey, you referred to the Economist's correspondent in Turkey, Amberin Zaman, as a 'shameless militant disguised under the name of a journalist'. Last year, the BBC Turkish Service reporter Selin Girit was targeted by the mayor of Ankara who accused her of being an 'English agent'. After these remarks, both journalists received a large number of threatening messages. The BBC and the Economist have voiced concerns that the Turkish authorities were intimidating their reporters. There are many other cases that offer similarly worrying examples of the hostile climate in which journalists in Turkey have to work.

As you address the United Nations General Assembly tomorrow, for the first time as head of state, we would like to remind you of the significant role journalists play in a democracy and of the protection they are afforded in Turkish law as well as international law. The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in the 1982 Turkish Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in a number of international treaties to which Turkey is a state party, including Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the ECHR.

We ask you to use your influence as President of Turkey to foster a culture where freedom of expression can flourish and where Turkey's talented community of writers, journalists and publishers can exercise their right to freedom of expression freely and without fear of intimidation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'thughes' with a horizontal line above it and a large closing flourish.

Thomas Hughes
Executive Director, ARTICLE 19

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Glanville' with a horizontal line underneath.

Jo Glanville
Director, English PEN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Deloire' with a horizontal line underneath.

Christophe Deloire
General Secretary, Reporters Without Borders