

Press release, Darmstadt, July 24th, 2017

Messieurs les Présidents,
Bay Erdoğan,
Bay Yıldırım,

I write this letter to you which you may not have time to read:

Or aren't you busy right now preparing new deals and deeds which fear daylight and critical coverage by a free press?

I write this letter to you which you may not have courage to read:

For politicians who are responsible that within a year, in their country

- at least 145,000 civil servants have been summarily dismissed
- over 47,000 people have been jailed pending trial, a majority under absurd allegations which totally lack judicial substance, and 100,000 cases have been brought to the Constitutional Court
- at least 165 journalists, media workers and writers are currently jailed pending trial – making Turkey the biggest jailer of journalists in the world
- at least 160 media outlets and publishing houses have been closed
- at least 1300 associations have been shut down –

those politicians are themselves ruled by fear, and their rule is characterized by fear and arbitrariness.

I write this letter to you which you may not have the decency to read:

For decent Turkish politicians would celebrate the Turkish Press Day on July 24th, since this was the day when censorship of media was removed in Turkey in 1908. They would invite the best journalists of their country and honour them with awards for courageous coverage, instead of placing them in the pillory and throwing them in jail.

I write this letter to you which you may not have enough love of your country to read:

For otherwise you would be proud of the almost 100-years-old tradition of the newspaper which bears the name „Republic“ and which is the oldest newspaper in modern Turkey, *Cumhuriyet*. Since 1924, the paper has survived five military coups. Many of its journalists were imprisoned, tortured, and were even victims of political assassinations. Yet never has there been such a concerted effort to completely eliminate the newspaper as today. This attack against *Cumhuriyet* is obviously a political attack, aiming directly at freedom of the press and Turkey's secular republican regime.

I write this letter to you which you may not have the magnanimity to read:

For otherwise, you would protect independent justice and judiciary powers, instead of delivering martial rhetoric threatening barbarian actions to your supposed enemies. You would meet your critics with respect and at eye-level.

Messieurs les Présidents, Bay Erdoğan, Bay Yıldırım,

I write this letter to you to urge you: Please show courage, decency and magnanimity. Please prove the love of your country by ending the state of emergency. And do end the politics of divisions and schisms – between Turkish and Kurdish people in your country, between Turkish – or German-Turkish – and German citizens in Germany. You are not serving the Turkish community in Germany well by this policy, on the contrary: You are calling for conflicts that may throw German-Turkish relations back for decades.

Messieurs les Présidents, Bay Erdoğan, Bay Yıldırım,

I urge you to send a clear signal today, on Turkish Press Day, calling for the release of all political prisoners and for the dismissal of all charges brought up against the staff of Cumhuriyet newspaper. Of the 17 members of staff whose trial starts today – the names of whom I will call to memory at the end of my letter – eight journalists and three lawyers have been imprisoned for more than nine months by now, only for publishing the news. These courageous men and women – and their families, some of whom have been brutally as well as helplessly put under the verdict of „Sippenhaft“, the barbarian liability of members of a family for (alleged, political) crimes or actions of one of its members – (it is surely no coincidence that there is no equivalent for the crude German term in the English language) – these brave men and women represent to me the most beautiful and most noble in mankind, traits that politicians like you lack. True human grandeur and magnanimity. Decency, honesty, courage. Love of truth and freedom, love of their country and of a humankind living in peace.

And as much as politicians like you rail at this and try to suppress it: Truth and Justice will prevail.

Regula Venske
President
PEN Germany

*** CUMHURİYET ARRESTEES**

Arrested since November 5, 2016

1. MURAT SABUNCU – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Chief Editor
2. TURHAN GÜNAY – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Literary Supplement Editor
3. GÜRAY TEKİN ÖZ – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Readers' Representative

4. KADRİ GÜRSEL – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Editorial Consultant
 5. HACI MUSA KART – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Illustrator
 6. HAKAN KARASİNİR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
 7. ÖNDER ÇELİK – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Executive Committee Member
 8. BÜLENT UTKU – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney
 9. MUSTAFA KEMAL GÜNGÖR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney
Arrested since November 12, 2016
 10. AKIN ATALAY- Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney and Executive
Committee Member
Arrested since December 30, 2016
 11. AHMET ŞIK – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Correspondent
- OTHER DEFENDANTS
12. ORHAN ERİNÇ – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Licensee
 13. HİKMET ÇETİNKAYA – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
 14. AYDIN ENGİN – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
 15. GÜNSELİ ÖZALTAY – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Fiscal Affairs Director
 16. BÜLENT YENER - Cumhuriyet Newspaper Former Fiscal Affairs
Director
 17. CAN DÜNDAR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Former Chief Editor
- +
- EMRE İPER – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Accountant (Arrested since April 18,
2017 on a separate court case)