

# TURKEY

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## Profile

- **Area:** 783,356 square kilometers
- **Population:** 79 million (2016)
- **Capital:** Ankara
- **State form:** Parliamentary Republic
- **Official language:** Turkish
- **Religion:** Islam (96.5 per cent), Other(3.5 per cent)

Flag of Turkey

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## Analysis

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### – Abstract

The Turkish media landscape is a highly differentiated, liberal and dual system. Most private media organizations are owned by large crossholdings being involved in diverse industrial sectors. Since lucrative contracts for these sectors are frequently awarded by the government, this cross-ownership led to a widespread form of pro-government self-censorship among the mainstream media. Combined with state-controlled media like the public broadcaster TRT, a large majority of the Turkish media is under direct or indirect control of president Erdoğan or his business associates. The government continues to use financial and administrative leverage

to influence media ownership structures and media coverage. Journalists who don't comply with a non-critical, pro-government coverage are intimidated, prosecuted, dismissed or forced to leave. However, independent and critical media still exist but have mainly moved to the internet. Though freedoms of opinion, speech and the press are guaranteed in the constitution of 1982, these rights can easily be restricted by general laws or executive institutions. Vague and broadly phrased anti-terror laws allow for an extensive prosecution of, primarily left-orientated or Kurdish, journalists with just a minimum amount of evidence. Union organising is not tolerated by media authorities. As a consequence, especially young, educated journalists have a strong feeling of insecurity.

This country report was issued in June 2016, a few weeks before the attempted coup by parts of the Turkish military on July 15th. Following this incident, the Erdogan administration has strengthened its oppression of disagreeable journalists or media outlets and put several reporters in jail, quadrupling the number of incarcerated journalists in Turkey. Thus, though the scale of executive, direct state influence has undoubtedly increased since July 15th, the here explained basic mechanisms of indirectly restraining journalist's autonomy, largely via economic entanglement and administrative leverage, remained the same. The future implications of the failed coup for media freedom in Turkey are not yet assessable.

#### – Communication policy and regulations

Though formal guarantees of freedom of opinion (article 25), freedom of speech (article 26, 1), and press freedom (article 28, 1) are defined in the Turkish Constitution, these basic rights can easily be undermined by provisions. Freedom of speech as well as press freedom, for example, can be judicially restricted based on laws regarding the protection and preservation of the national security, public order and safety, the unity of the republic or personal reputation, to name just a few (Turkish Constitution, 1982; latest update: April 4th, 2016). In total, up to fifteen different general laws are frequently used to restrain press laws and press freedom. Especially the penal code is utilised to initiate lawsuits against journalists or publishers. For instance, article 301 (insulting of the Turkish culture, republic and state institutions), which can result in a two year prison term, as well as article 305 (performing activities against elementary national interests) are commonly used and subjectively interpreted by judges to justify their verdicts against members of the media (Sümer, 2006: 673).

In addition, anti-terror laws with vague and broadly phrased definitions allow for an extensive prosecution of journalists with just a minimum amount of evidence: „The antiterrorism laws make it possible to prosecute journalists for producing ‚propaganda‘ for terrorist organization (...) with a low burden of proof. The definitions of ‚terrorism‘ continue to be so open-ended that interviews with PKK leaders or descriptions of PKK activities (...) could easily be used for prosecution of journalists“ (Corke et al., 2014: 14). Especially article 314 of the penal code (membership in an armed organization) is regularly used to primarily prosecute Kurdish or left-wing journalists for their coverage (Freedom House 2016: 3). For instance, in 2012, out of 75 journalists who were listed as imprisoned in Turkey, 64 were working for Kurdish or left-wing media companies (Sweeney, 2012). Furthermore, defamation as a criminal offense is commonly used by prominent officials, including Erdoğan, to charge critical journalists or cartoonists, both Turkish or foreign, with high fines or prison terms (Freedom House, 2016: 4). In an interview, Doğan Tilic, a journalist and active member of the Turkish journalist union, adequately sums up the issues with Turkish press legislation: „It is not a matter of the press law. There are many articles of the Turkish Penal Code, under which you can persecute journalists or writers (...). This country has a problem of democratic culture.“

Even though there has been a marginal improvement in press laws during the years of the EU accession negotiations from 2001 until 2005, this has merely been a formal concession to the EU. Despite numerous modifications of the press law during the EU reform process, still many provisions exist that extensively limit press freedom. Ayca Söylemez, journalist at the independent online news service Bianet reports: “Even though those laws look good on the paper, that often has nothing to do with their implication.” However, the EU continues to assert pressure on the Turkish government to revise its anti-terror-laws. In May 2016, during the implementation of the infamous refugee convention with Turkey, the EU threatened to block the previously arranged visa facilitation for Turkish citizens if Turkey wouldn't comply with loosening its anti-terrorism regulations. Since Erdoğan in return threatened to send refugees back to Greece (Klingst & Thumann, 2016), this issue still hadn't been solved during the creation of this country report.

Besides judiciary to prosecute journalists based on restrictive laws, there are two executive institutions that are entrusted with extensive powers to control media usage as well as the production of media content:

- First, the Presidency of Telecommunication and Communication (TIB), which is entitled to block access to internet websites without prior judicial review, delete online content if it violates national security and arbitrarily obtain information on citizens' internet usage (Yanardagolu & Gökdemir, 2014: 10).
- Second, the Supreme Council for Radio and Television (RTÜK), whose members are elected by the parliament, is empowered to grant broadcasting licenses and to supervise broadcasting organisations. Furthermore, RTÜK has the authority to sanction broadcasters and to close down print outlets if they are not in compliance with the law (Freedom House, 2016: 5). Currently composed of five members of the ruling party (AKP) and four members of the opposition, it serves as a mean for the government to regulate the broadcasting market (Yanardagolu & Gökdemir, 2014: 10). It regularly makes use of its authorities and has been widely criticized by the EU for this action (European Commission, 2013: 52).

In total, there are three different types of communication policies and regulations that exert pressure on the press and thus limit

press freedom in Turkey:

- First, the judicial prosecution of media companies and journalists based on the previously mentioned restrained press laws and biased judges: “Journalists do not generally receive fair treatment in the judicial system, and the courts’ handling of media-related cases in 2015 showed a lack of impartiality and independence” (Freedom House 2016: 5). Thus, detentions of journalists, compulsory acquisition of media companies or lawsuits against publishers are common: On December 1st 2015, for example, fourteen journalists were imprisoned in Turkey according to an annual census of journalists jailed around the world (Committee to Protect Journalists a). In October 2015, a court in Ankara disposed that Koza Ipek Holding and its companies, allegedly tied to Erdoğan-rival Fethullah Gülen, to be brought under the control of government-appointed trustees (Freedom House, 2016: 10). Due to its non-conformant media coverage, the Gülen-Holding is accused of “organizing structures against the sovereignty of the state of the Turkish republic” (Kazim, 2014). In December 2014, at least 32 employees of the until then biggest Turkish newspaper Zaman, among them the chief editor, were arrested due to accusations of corruption against government officials (ibid.).
- Second, the surveillance and sanction of media companies with the help of executive institutions such as the TIB (internet) and the RTÜK (broadcasting and press). According to a report on the Turkish media landscape, more than 32.000 websites were not accessible in Turkey as of September 2013 due to TIB blocking (European Commission, 2013: 52). In 2015, RTÜK issued 69 warnings and 168 fines to TV channels, and four warnings and four fines to radio stations (Freedom House, 2016: 5).
- Third, the restructuring of media ownership and creation of so called pool-media with the help of the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF): The TMSF is an institution directly attached to the prime minister’s office that recovers debt owed to banks or financial institutions. It seizes control over media companies which ran into financial trouble and resales them to media organizations sympathetic to the government. These newly created pool-media then serve as a mouthpiece for Erdoğan and the AKP. In 2007, Sabah-ATV group, which had been critical of the government, was sold via TMSF to Calik Holding (Corke et al. 2014: 13), a media organization with close ties to the government.

Despite many warnings and appeals by the EU or organizations like Reporters without Borders (RWB) and Freedom House to change Turkey’s restrictive press policy, president Erdoğan and the Turkish government do not show any consideration towards these requests. In fact, a few weeks before the creation of this country report, Erol Önderoğlu, RWB Turkey’s representative, and Şebnem Korur Fincancı, president of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, had been demanded in custody on June 20th 2016. Though an Istanbul court released Önderoğlu from pre-trial detention ten days after, both still faced terrorism charges for their official support of articles published in the Kurdish newspaper *Özgür Gündem*. They had been acting as co-editors of *Özgür Gündem* for a day in order to protest against the authorities’ consistent judicial harassment of its staff. (Committee to Protect Journalists b)

According to Freedom House, Turkey’s press is “not free”. The country’s score declined from 65 to 71, since the “government (...) aggressively used the penal code, criminal defamation legislation, and the country’s antiterrorism law to punish critical reporting (...). The authorities continued to use financial and administrative leverage over media owners to influence coverage and silence dissent” (Freedom House, 2016: 1). In The World Press Freedom Index 2016, Turkey was ranked 151, two positions worse than in 2015. RWB stated that “President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has embarked on an offensive against Turkey’s media” (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). Since he first took power in March 2003, Turkey’s rank has declined 52 positions compared to 2002 (ibid.)

#### – Media offers

The Turkish media landscape can be defined as highly differentiated, liberal and economically concentrated. It is a growing market sector with a value of \$11.6 billion and an expected annual growth of 11.4 per cent until 2017 (Corke et al., 2014: 5). The implementation of a liberal market economy (in late 1980s) as well as the dissolution of the state monopoly of national broadcasting (in 1990) severely shaped the Turkish media market. It both put an end to the dominance of the four authoritative family businesses leading the press market and to the dominance of the state owned Turkish Radio and Television Organization (TRT) on the broadcasting sector. Hence, large business holdings seeking to expand their influence on opinion making, and thus their profits, began entering the now liberalized media market acquiring media organizations (Sümer, 2009: 672-676).

Today, these business holdings operate in many different branches of industry, foremost the construction and energy sector, and are dependent on lucrative contracts frequently awarded by the government. In order to win government contracts, the media companies of these holdings established a form of self-censorship to generate pro-government coverage (Kurban & Sözeri, 2012: 50-51). Yavuz Baydar, a well-known Turkish journalist and blogger, depicts a decisive meeting called by prime minister Erdoğan in October 2011: “This was a meeting that resulted in the media owners accepting the terms of self-censorship as a systematic method in the newsrooms. It was a very critical meeting. In that meeting even media owners like Doğan and others themselves starting suggesting that they would establish some sort of censorship committees, joint censorship councils in the media, so that news that will be disturbing to the government would not be printed or published or broadcast.”

As a result of self-censorship due to political pressure exerted by the government, media coverage of the mainstream media has become uncritical and uniform. Prof. Ali Murat Vural, a communication researcher at Istanbul University, states that formerly anti-government media and pro-government media now almost identically report about certain incidents and even make use of identical headlines and captions. This became most evident after the Gezi protests in 2013 and even led to demonstrations in front of media buildings, when most of the Turkish TV channels ignored covering the riots in Istanbul and showed cooking shows or documentaries about penguins instead (Schmitt, 2013). Yavuz Baydar describes the situation: “After that we came to the Gezi Park protests, where people again saw immense self-censorship. When the Gezi protests happened all of these TV channels, big newspapers were acting

like three monkeys and this led to people protesting in front of NTV buildings, CNN Turk sending penguins became a ridicule of the world." In addition to pro-government coverage, there has always been a form of self-censorship among mainstream media companies due to general economic interests of their holdings. These interests, however, are not linked to contracts awarded by government. Doğan Tilic reports that for example many media owners had economic ties with the mining industry and would thus not allow for a critical coverage about negative issues of this sector, like for example ecological devastation or working conditions. Luc Walpot, foreign correspondent head of the German ZDF-studio in Istanbul, states that today, due to self-censorship by media owners, about "80 per cent of the press is under direct control of the government, respectively Erdoğan and his business friends."

Today, the largest media companies, Doğan Media Group and Turkuaz Media Group, whose holdings are both active in the energy, construction and finance industry, account for 82 per cent of the press market and 52 per cent of the TV market (Yanardagoglu & Gökdemir, 2014: 34). Turkuaz Media Group belongs to the Calik Holding, whose CEO is a friend of Erdoğan and secretary Erdoğan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak (Kalnoky, 2009). The most viewed and most important news source is Kanal D, owned by Doğan Media Group (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2014: 21).

Further important media companies are Cukurova Group, Dogus-Group, Ciner-Group and Ihlas Group. Doğan Tilic states, that "under these financial and economic conditions, it is very difficult, almost impossible, for the independent media to compete with the mainstream media." However, independent, critical media like Birgün, the Kurdish financed IMC TV or Bianet still exist in Turkey, but have mainly moved away from traditional media channels to the internet, which has become an alternative for both undesired, journalists and critical media recipients. While the former now write for smaller online media organizations that are less prone to political pressure (Freedom of the Press, 2016: 8), the latter turn to these online outlets or social media to receive critical and unbiased news coverage, especially during exceptional circumstances like riots. In an interview, Turkish communication researcher Ceren Sözeri states that the Gezi protests again showed the importance of social media and independent alternative media. For instance, during and after the Gezi protests, small online newspapers experienced an immense increase in visitors, while the number of Facebook users approached 90 per cent and Twitter users increased ten per cent.

However, due to this importance of social media for non-conformant coverage, Twitter-, Facebook- and Youtube-usage are regularly curtailed for several hours or days by the government to prevent critical coverage. For instance, the TIB "restricted access to Twitter hours after its prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, threatened to 'root out' the social media network where wiretapped recordings have been leaked, damaging the government's reputation (...)'We are determined on the issue, regardless of what the world may say,' Erdoğan said. 'We won't allow the people to be devoured by YouTube, Facebook or others. Whatever steps need to be taken we will take them without wavering.'" (Rawlinson, 2014).

Despite the importance of social media, according to a study by the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 2014, Television still is by far the most important source of information for Turkish people (90 per cent), followed by the internet (42 per cent), social networks (26 per cent), SMS (22 per cent) and the radio (19 per cent). 99 per cent of the population have at least one TV set per household, 47 per cent a radio and 72 per cent a computer, with 68 per cent of those having an internet access (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2014: 18-19). The internet penetration rate in Turkey is 51 per cent (Freedom of the Press, 2016: 1).

The Turkish broadcasting market is a dual, liberal, and highly differentiated system. Besides privately owned broadcasting channels like *Kanal D*, *ATV* or *Star TV*, there is also a public broadcaster called *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation* (TRT), which has dominated the market until the dissolution of its state monopoly in 1990. It comprises 15 TV channels and nine radio channels and is financed by taxes, allocations from national budget and advertising. Since the TRT board of administration is appointed directly by the government, its program is loyal to the state and propagates the official views and opinions of the government (Yanardagoglu & Gökdemir, 2014: 11).

Until the 1980ies, the Turkish press market had been dominated by four big daily newspapers (*Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Tercüman* and *Hürriyet*), which were all owned by family enterprises. This changed, when commercial enterprises started expanding into the press market and purchasing old publishers. "This transformation of the press from family-owned to media enterprises owned by large holdings changed all organisational fundamentals of the press sector from ownership structure to editorial management" (Sümer, 2009: 674, following Adakli, 2009).

Today, the Turkish press market is dominated by Doğan Media Group, which now owns the highest-circulation newspaper *Hürriyet* (Medyatava a) and furthermore controls most of the distribution of the entire print media. Until the 4th of March 2016, when the government seized control and raided its editorial office, *Zaman*, published by Erdoğan-rival Fethullah Gülen, used to be the highest-circulation newspaper in Turkey (Yücel, 2016) with a daily edition of up to 650.000 (Medyatava b).

Recent government statistics show that today, there are about 3.000 active newspapers in Turkey, including 180 with a national reach. 18 per cent of all newspapers are dailies. Though some remaining independent print media carry diverse news and opinions, most of the Turkish print enterprises contain a high percentage of opinion articles opposed of pure news (Freedom of the Press, 2016: 9). Even though the newspaper market features a large number of publications, the nationwide absolute circulation of 5.1 million is pretty low, regarding a population of 78 million (Doğan Yayın Holding A.S., 2014: 37). One explanation for the low reach of newspapers might be the, compared to other European countries, relatively high illiteracy rate of about ten per cent among women and three per cent among men (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). And even many of those who can read still are, as Doğan Tilic

calls it, “victims of this communication system” and unable to correctly process the information they perceive. He states that “many people who are buying and reading newspaper are not media literate. (...) Without knowing the relationship between the media owner and the government, without knowing the relationship of a news piece you read in a paper and the media owners business, it is really impossible to understand what really is meant in the news. (...) Many people reading the newspapers cannot get the secrets behind what they read.”

### – Journalists' autonomy

Yavuz Baydar gives a proper impression of the big picture behind president Erdoğan's efforts to limit press freedom and undermine journalist's autonomy: “The most interesting aspect is that Erdoğan and the AKP government realized that you don't have to jail journalists to punish and restrict and block journalism.” However, this strategy of forcing journalists into self-censorship shows to be highly effective. Due to the fear of prosecution or losing their jobs, most journalists comply with a non-critical, pro-government coverage as demanded by their editors in charge. Thus, journalistic autonomy in Turkey has been deteriorating within the last years and has reached a startling level. Eylem Yanardagolu, communication researcher at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, best describes the current situation of journalists: “It is a media that is under immense pressure, it cannot offer stable working conditions, wages are low, social security is not fully offered and journalists fear legal action and imprisonment. The freedom of press and freedom of expression are at its lowest degree.”

In 2014, there were 95.442 people working in the media sector, about 35.000 of those directly involved in content production (Yanardagolu & Gökdemir, 2014: 64). While a chief editor's monthly income can reach up to 15.000 Euro, entry-level salaries usually vary between 280 and 420 Euro, which barely is a solid basis for livelihood in cities like Istanbul (ibid.: 62). The average length of employment as a journalist is five years (Sözeri & Güney 2011: 35) As stated before, the main reasons for the loss of journalists' autonomy are unstable working conditions in Turkish media companies. “A journalist's main concern at the moment is keeping his job”, explains Turkish journalist Ayca Söylemez, who is working at the independent online news-service Bianet. Critical coverage about the government or subjects that don't comply with political or economic interests of the media company, usually lead to journalists losing their jobs. In 2015, at least 348 journalists, columnists, and media workers were dismissed or forced to quit (Freedom House 2016: 6). This “process of establishing a homogeneous, politically affiliated staff” (Yanardagolu & Gökdemir, 2014: 56) in media houses is often directly triggered by Erdoğan himself. Luc Walpot reports that many times, the president calls media executives and demands suspension of anti-government journalists: “[He] calls the holding and says, you must fire this journalist from that newspaper now. And the next day, they get fired. That's the way it goes.”

Furthermore, the influence of the only Turkish journalist workers union (TGS) is marginal and almost non-existent in most media companies. Doğan Tilic states that “[mainstream] media owners put a kind of precondition for every person that it would employ, that they shouldn't join the union.” Journalists who join the union nevertheless are fired or don't even get hired. Thus, the relative share of journalists being a member of TGS is low. According to Yavuz Baydar, only four per cent of the 16.000 journalists in Turkey are unionists: “No security means no editorial independence. (...) People in the newsrooms are completely frightened every day expecting to be fired just arbitrarily.”

Besides, though there is a great number of Associations of Journalists, they are not assertive due to their internal fragmentation (Baris, 2010). This is also confirmed by communication researcher Ceren Sözeri: “There is no reliable self-regulatory organization in the media.” Another critical issue is the education of journalists. In Turkey, there are over 60 faculties of communication study and journalism, generating an excessive supply of young, educated journalists (Interview Tilic). This leads to growing competition, strong rivalry and an eroding solidarity between Turkish journalists. They know they are easily replaceable and thus comply with mainstream media guidelines of pro-governmental coverage out of fear of losing their jobs (Baris, 2010). Schamberger & Schreiber adequately sum up the current issues of journalistic autonomy in Turkey: “The low wages, unsafe employment relationships and the imminent loss of job in case of non-compliant coverage leads to a restricted press freedom. Due to a low level of self-regulation in working unions and other professional institutions, journalists can barely defend themselves” (2015: 20).

Hence, due to political pressure, unsafe working conditions and self-censorship, certain journalistic self-images or self-concepts, which used to be common in the beginning of the 2000s, cannot be implemented anymore in the Turkish media system. Journalists with long-term working experience still regard professional journalism as being independent from the ideology or policy of your own media company (Yanardagolu & Gökdemir, 2014: 55). However, since “the ethics of journalism are no longer open to debate” (ibid.: 57) this former ideal of journalistic self-concept can no longer be practiced among most of the Turkish mainstream media. Therefore, according to a study of Turkish journalist Mustafa Dagistanli, many journalists are struggling with identifying themselves with their work and being proud of what they produce (Dagistanli, 2014: 142). Doğan Tilic points out that “every journalist feels the pressure between being a professional of a profession, which has its own truth and its own codes and on the other hand being an employee of an employer who is paying his salary”.

This editorial pressure and the polarization of the media into compliant mainstream media and non-compliant independent media has led to the formation of two main types of journalists:

- First, a majority of journalists, who have adapted to the circumstances and, albeit reluctantly, comply with pro-government and non-critical media coverage. Almost all of the interview partners confirmed that, apart from those who genuinely support Erdoğan and the AKP, most journalists of this type have a very negative self-image. They don't value their job and have a very

pessimistic view on their own profession (Interview Baydar). They are aware that they are not doing good journalism and thus question their work (Interview Vural). Eylem Yanardagoglu almost conciliatory sums up the self-image of this type of journalists: “[these] journalists somehow learn at an early stage that this is a profession which does not offer stability in terms of its working conditions. They know that they will be somehow facing limitations either in the form of pressures from authorities or from their own editors, but (...) [however] strive to stick to the ideals of the professions such as duty to inform the public of the wrongdoings in the society or politics.” The question remains, how successful they are in trying to follow these journalistic ideals within corrupted mainstream media. Yavuz Baydar points out this complex of problems: “How can journalism survive in environments where media employers media proprietors are being entangled with the political corruption, political powers. When media itself becomes drawn into corruption. Do we have any chance for proper journalism?”

- › Second, a minority of journalists, who have rejected self-censorship under one of the big mainstream media companies and thus either quit their jobs or switched to independent media, primarily online: “Online outlets are increasingly popular as venues for critical journalism, particularly by reporters who have been dismissed or forced to resign from traditional outlets for political reasons” (Freedom House, 2016: 9). Ayca Söylemez gives an impression of her own self-image as an independent journalist, working for the non-partisan online news service Bianet: “Right now, what is most important for journalists is uncovering all the things the political authority/the president is trying to hide and to bring reality, which they try to disguise by force, closer to the people.”

The journalistic public-image, thus the way Turkish journalists are perceived in society, however, is relatively hard to capture. Due to the heavy polarization of the Turkish society into Erdoğan's supporters and opponents, it is almost impossible to gain a unitary view of the general reputation of journalists and the media. On the one hand, according to Sabine Küper-Büsch, a German foreign correspondent and documentarian, “journalists traditionally enjoy a high reputation (...). Due to the AKP still being widely accepted in the general population, their voters perceive the media system and its journalists as less corrupt as it really is.”

On the other hand, there has always been a basic mistrust of the press (Interview Walpot) and the political polarization of the media has had a negatively influenced the credibility and the esteem of journalists (Interview Sözeri). Prof. Vural describes a study he conducted in 2011, which showed that only four per cent of the young Turks trusted the media and journalists. Probably the most adequate explanation of the journalistic public-image is given by Ayca Söylemez: “The reputation of journalists is developing in parallel to the situation of the media. I can say that never before, media workers have had as little reputation as today. The people consider them as even worse than policeman. This opened the door for a division. While one part turned towards independent outlets, another much important part decided to become a mouthpiece of the government. This division lead to some journalists being regarded by the people as heroes, while others don't have any reputation at all.”

## — Sources

*This country report is largely based on a seminar paper composed by Kerem Schamberger and Marius Schreiber at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich in 2015. All interviews have been conducted by them from December 2015 until January 2016. The author thanks Mr. Schamberger and Mr. Schreiber for their work, without which this country report wouldn't have been possible.*

### **Interviewed experts (remote via Skype and written questionnaires, December 2014 and January 2015)**

- › Ayca Söylemez, a Turkish journalist at the independent online news service Bianet (Interviewed on December 21st 2014)
- › Ceren Sözeri, a Turkish communication researcher at Galatasaray University (Interviewed on January 6th 2015)
- › Doğan Tilic, Turkish journalist at the left-oriented daily newspaper Birgün and active member of the Turkish journalist union (Interviewed on December 15th 2014)
- › Eylem Yanardagoglu, a communication researcher at Kadir Has University in Istanbul (Interviewed on December 25th 2014)
- › Luc Walpot, foreign correspondent and head of ZDF-studio Istanbul (Interviewed on January 21st 2015)
- › Prof. Ali Murat Vural, a communication researcher at Istanbul University (Interviewed on December 18th 2014)
- › Sabine Küper-Büsch, a German foreign correspondent and documentarian (Interviewed on January 12th 2015)
- › Yavuz Baydar, well-known Turkish journalist and blogger, commentator for the big Turkish daily newspaper Zaman (Interviewed on December 17th 2014)

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