



Avrupa Birliđi tarafından finanse  
edilmektedir

# MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

# 2025





Avrupa Birliđi tarafından finanse  
edilmektedir

### Gazeteciler Cemiyeti Basın Evi Yayınıdır

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility  
of Association of Journalists and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Bu yayın Avrupa Birliđi'nin maddi desteđi ile hazırlanmıştır. İçerik tamamıyla Gazeteciler Cemiyeti  
sorumluluđu altındadır ve Avrupa Birliđinin görüřlerini yansıtmak zorunda deđildir.



All content in this report, produced by the Support to Media Freedom Project team of the Association of Journalists with the financial support of the European Union, drawing on open sources, media scans, applications and tips submitted to the project office in various forms, research on media capital and journalists' professional satisfaction conducted as part of project, project partner Journalists' Union of Türkiye, and Association of Journalists Press for Freedom reports, may be reproduced in part or in full provided the source is cited. The content is entirely under the responsibility of the Association of Journalists and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Editor:

**Yusuf Tuna Koç**

Typesetting:

**Yusuf Tuna Koç**

Cover Photo:

**AI Image**

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank our team members who contributed greatly to the production of this report with dedication and commitment. For their contributions, we extend our gratitude to Dr. Çađrı Kaderođlu Bulut and the members of the Media Solidarity Group, to our project partners for their valuable guidance in our work, and to Association of Journalists President Nazmi Bilgin for his support that made this work possible. Without their valuable contributions, this report could not have been completed.

Association of Journalists Press House

#### Telefon

**Mobile:** +90 533 045 08 67

**Phone:** +90 312 468 12 09

**Fax:** +90 312 468 23 84

#### E-Mail

info@gc-tr.org

#### Web Address

www.gc-tr.org

www.supporttomediafreedom.com

#### Address

Üsküp Caddesi (Çevre Sk.)

No:35, Çankaya, Ankara

# TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION .....	5
I-PRESS FREEDOM ATMOSPHERE IN TÜRKİYE IN 2025.....	6
Combating Digital Monopolies.....	9
AI Journalism: The New Threat.....	10
2-LEGAL REGULATIONS ON THE PRESS FREEDOM, STATE AND GOVERNMENT POLICY .....	11
a. Legislation, cases, journalists in prison.....	11
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT DECISIONS .....	11
ECHR DECISIONS .....	12
PRESS CASES.....	12
PRESS CARD REGULATIONS .....	15
RADYO TELVİZYON ÜST KURULU (RTÜK) VE BASIN İLAN KURUMU (BİK) .....	16
RTÜK .....	16
RTÜK 8. MADDE CEZALARI .....	18
b. Rights Violations.....	19
c. 2025 Web Access Blocks .....	21
3-POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA .....	23
a. Transparent financial policy, broadcasting principles and accountability.....	23
b. Media Ownership.....	23
c. Newspaper Circulations.....	25
d. Ratings Shares .....	27
Prime Time Rating Shares.....	28
e. Situation of Press Workers.....	28
Journalists and access to information in the news production process.....	30
Censorship and Self-Censorship Practices .....	30
4 - DISINFORMATION AND INFORMATION MONOPOLY.....	32
5-ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION, POLITICAL PARTIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL .....	33
6-CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION .....	35

CHART 1: Number of Journalists in Prison Between 2012–2025 .....	13
CHART 2: Press Card Ownership.....	15
TABLO 1: RTÜK 8. Madde Cezaları .....	18
CHART 3: 2025 Media Pluralism Monitoring Report Türkiye Results .....	24
CHART 4: 2025 Daily Average Circulation Figures of Newspapers .....	26
TABLO 2: 2025 Daily Circulation Figures of Newspapers.....	26
TABLO 3: Average Rating Shares for All Persons in Prime Time Throughout 2025.....	27
CHART 5: 2025 Prime Time Ratings Averages.....	27
CHART 6: Journalists' Salaries.....	29
CHART 7: Unionisation Rates in the Sector by Year (Percentage).....	30
CHART 8: “My news activities have been/are being censored” .....	30
CHART 9: “There have been times when I gave up on a story due to concern that the content would not be published or would be criticised” .....	31



# INTRODUCTION

---

The Support to Media Freedom Project, a collaboration of Association of Journalists, Journalists' Union of Türkiye and the İzmir Association of Journalists with EU funding, was launched in September 2025 with the aim of observing, documenting and sharing developments regarding press and freedom of expression in Türkiye. This project is not only a monitoring initiative but also a multi-layered civil society effort aimed at strengthening solidarity among journalists, making structural problems in the media sector visible and generating solution proposals for these problems..

Media Monitoring Reports have traditionally been produced covering two- to three-year periods with European Union funding as part of the Democracy for Media / Media for Democracy Project.

In this context, 2025 Annual Media Monitoring Report is a product of a combined effort including monitoring throughout the year as part of the Support to Media Freedom Project, regional meetings with journalists, and consultations with civil society actors. The report addresses in detail regulatory developments concerning press and freedom of expression, judicial processes, RTÜK and Press Advertisement Institution practices, media ownership and monopolisation problems, physical and digital threats against journalists, and economic vulnerabilities in the media sector..

This report covering the entirety of 2025 is also supported by the press freedom violations recorded daily as part of Association of Journalists' long-standing Press for Freedom (PFF) Project. This helped to produce a document that is strong not only qualitatively but also quantitatively.

Beyond all this content, the key difference of the Support to Media Freedom Project report is that it not only diagnoses problems but also generates solution proposals. Therefore, the report, in the closing section, contains concrete recommendations aimed at developing policy proposals, solidarity models and international support mechanisms that will contribute to the strengthening of press freedom in Türkiye.

# I- PRESS FREEDOM ATMOSPHERE IN TÜRKİYE IN 2025

For Türkiye, the year 2025 was marked by normalization of new pressure mechanisms against journalists in press and freedom of expression, worsening economic conditions, and media ownership that was settled on a political ground beyond transparency. Despite the foreign agents bill was not adopted by parliament, journalist Merdan Yanardağ was arrested on charges of espionage, and a trustee was appointed to Tele 1 on the same grounds although Yanardağ was not the channel's owner. Thus, the charge of influence peddling in the media has come into effect de facto. The Disinformation Law that came into force in 2022 continued this year to be one of the biggest obstacles to access to accurate news, and also became a judicial intervention that put pressure on news production and access. To date, investigations were launched against 70 journalists under the Disinformation Law, where journalist Furkan Karabay was detained under this law in 2025 and remained in pre-trial detention for 201 days.

In Türkiye throughout 2025, 57 journalists were detained, 32 journalists were arrested, and 3 journalists were sentenced to house arrest. By the end of year, at least 15 journalists were still in prison. Although this may point out a decline compared to 2024, mass operations against journalist in 2025 in fact increased compared to previous years. With operations against media outlets such as BirGün, Halk TV and Tele 1, more than 10 journalists were held in detention for varying durations. Even simple procedures such as giving testimony/statement became a direct ground to detain a journalist, along with normalization of long pre-trial detention periods, and more frequent overseas travel bans and judicial supervision measures, despite release of some journalists. Justice system is made biggest instrument of pressure against press and freedom of expression.

2025 was also marked by the wave of operations also known as the March 19 event, where hundreds of CHP municipal directors and personnel from Istanbul and other cities, notably Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor and CHP's presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu, were arrested. While police violence, waves of detentions and arrests, and bans against the March 19 protests further set back freedom of expression, protest and the press, which were already at a tragic level in Türkiye, journalists were not also spared by this. Journalists covering the protests were not only exposed to police violence but also detained at various times on various grounds. The press was put under pressure through raids on the homes of journalists. As 2025 draws to a close, investigations against journalists continue to be launched as part of the cases against Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) and other municipalities. The detention of more than 200 people from two different cases brought against İmamoğlu and the arrest of a significant portion of them started a new period of pressure in terms of political and democratic rights in the country. On the other hand, with the Medya AŞ case filed as part of the İmamoğlu investigations, many journalists were targeted both by the media and by the judiciary.

As part of İmamoğlu investigations, many journalists and media organisations were also targeted on the grounds that Public Prosecutor Akın Gürlek, who is authorised in other cases, was being targeted. BirGün executives were sued for reporting on Sabah newspaper's visit to Akın Gürlek. Likewise, cases were brought against 5 Halk TV employees, notably journalist Barış Pehlivan who broadcast the dialogue with expert witness S.B. allegedly in contact with İmamoğlu before March 19, and editor-in-chief Suat Toktaş was tried in pre-trial detention for 55 days. Journalists Soner Yalçın, Şaban Sevinç, Aslı Aydıntaşbaşı, Ruşen Çakır, Yavuz Oğhan and Batuhan Çolak were detained as part of İBB cases on charges of both the disinformation law and aiding a criminal organisation.

The attacks on journalists following March 19 were also documented in international reports. The Oxford University Reuters Institute drew attention in its 2025 Digital News Report to the government intensifying its efforts to suppress dissenting voices and independent media. The report, in which the March 19 event is covered in detail, included punitive methods directed against the press.

In 2025, journalists were the target not only of political interventions and pressures carried out through courts but also of radical changes in the political economy of the media. Flash TV, Ciner Group sales, and the operation against Halk TV led to new concerns regarding the relationship between media ownership and politics. In addition, the drugs operation against Habertürk executives created a new crisis that links crime and politics, starting from the management levels within mainstream media. Various confessions and disclosures regarding recruitment procedures within the channel following the drugs operation

revealed a worrying picture of the moral and political decay within mainstream media in Türkiye. The relationship of various executives named in this case with politics from past to present showed that the situation went beyond the manipulation of various personal relationships and the hierarchy within the media.

On top of the new pressures and crises in media in Türkiye, poverty still remains a major problem for journalists in 2025. As we have done for the year 2024, as detailed in Our 2024 Annual Report, our Professional Satisfaction Survey for 2025 revealed that journalism in 2025 still cannot escape the minimum wage trap and that low wages and insecurity, besides press freedom and democracy, are among the major problems faced by journalists. In light of the survey, analysis of wage distribution shows that earnings rise for a shrinking number of journalists higher up the professional hierarchy, while declining for a growing number lower down..

Adding the economic crisis, inflation and the gradual erosion of purchasing power to this relatively established structure results in a rather dire picture regarding journalists' wages. Accordingly, while the journalists earning up to TRY 30,000 in 2024 account for 77.1 percent (three out of every four journalists), it declined to 56.2 in 2025. The journalists earning from TRY 30,000 to 60,000 rose from 15.7 percent in 2024 to 21.3 in 2025. Despite this nominal increase, in a period where inflation continues to stay above 40 percent according to official figures, the fact that more than half of journalists earns TRY 30,000 with those earning the TRY 30,000-60,000 band still at the level of one fifth is an extremely dire situation.

Such low wages in a profession that serves the public make it difficult for journalists to make ends meet, let alone have the financial means to pursue self-development and participate in socio-cultural activities. It should be noted that this also causes a diminishing effect on journalists' professional and social qualifications..

Suppressive acts on press and freedom of expression in Türkiye in 2025 were also documented in the observations and reports of international organisations. Michael O'Flaherty, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed concern over the intense violence following the March 19 protests and attacks on the right to information, stating: 'I am concerned about reports of attacks on journalists and media workers while carrying out their duties, as well as the detention of journalists during raids in some cities today on the grounds of reporting on the protests. Journalists and media workers should not be obstructed while fulfilling their professional duties.' He thus drew attention to the impact of these actions on the media environment..

The Council of the European Union also condemned the government in its statement on the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu, stating: "We strongly condemn this detention decision, which bears all the hallmarks of pressure on a political figure seen as one of the main candidates for the upcoming presidential elections, of the democratically elected Mayor of Istanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu."

Reporters Without Borders lowered Türkiye's place in the Press Freedom Index by one more place, so that in 2025 Türkiye fell to 159th place among 180 countries worldwide in press freedom. Considering that Palestine, where journalists are being killed by Israeli soldiers, is ranked 163rd, the dramatic nature of the situation in Türkiye becomes apparent. While the report noted that authoritarianism is gaining increasing ground and raising question marks about media pluralism, it also drew attention to the use of all available means to silence criticism. According to the index, while it was pointed out that 90% of all media organisations in Türkiye are under government control, attention was drawn to the fact that mass detentions and violence against journalists covering marches and protests, especially after the 2023 elections, had increased even more. Attention was also drawn to the systematisation of online censorship, the use of the Disinformation Law to target journalists, and RTÜK's efforts to economically penalise and weaken TV channels with heavy fines.

The Oxford-Reuters Institute 2025 Digital News Report, while emphasising the numbers of detentions and arrests of journalists in Türkiye throughout 2024, also underlined the damage done to the journalism profession in our country by the Anti-Terror Law. The report also included among its significant statistics the fact that a total of 250 journalists have been prosecuted on charges of insulting the President throughout Erdoğan's presidency, with 77 journalists convicted in these cases..

In the 2025 index, the economic indicator of press freedom worldwide fell to its lowest level on record, with journalists' financial conditions deteriorating to the worst level in the profession's history. According to the data collected for the index, in 160 of the 180 countries, financial stability is either non-existent or very difficult to achieve. Financial difficulties are causing more media organisations to close worldwide. This year, 21 media organisations in Argentina, 11 in Tunisia and 2 in the USA were forced to close due to financial difficulties.

The “Journalism, Media and Technology Trends and Predictions” report for 2026 published by the Oxford Reuters Institute highlighted that journalism has been undergoing a structural transformation on a global scale. According to the report, confidence in the overall future of the sector has decreased noticeably; while only 38 per cent of participants think journalism will follow a positive trajectory in the coming period, media executives are reported to be relatively more optimistic about their own institutions’ future, with approximately half believing their current business models are sustainable..

One of the most important structural changes highlighted in the report is the transformation in traffic sources for news websites. Publishers expect traffic from search engines to decrease by more than 40 per cent over the next three years. There has already been a serious drop in referrals from social media platforms. These developments are forcing news organisations to restructure their distribution strategies.

The report foresees a significant change in content strategies in parallel with this transformation. According to the report, publishers plan to move away from general news and service content that can easily be produced by artificial intelligence towards investigative journalism, field reporting and in-depth analyses. It is also observed that human story-based content is gaining popularity. At the same time, it is predicted that investment in video and audio-based content will increase, while text-based production will play a relatively more limited role. From an economic perspective, subscription and membership models continue to be the most important source of revenue for media organisations. In addition, event revenues and content licensing agreements with artificial intelligence companies are emerging as new revenue areas. However, these revenues are predicted not to be evenly distributed across the sector, with particularly large publishers enjoying comparative advantage in this area..

According to UNESCO’s World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development 2022/2025 report , freedom of expression declined by 10 points worldwide between 2012 and 2024. The report also notes that self-censorship among journalists increased by 5% each year during the same period, becoming 63% more frequent. According to the report, between 2022 and 2025, 186 journalists lost their lives while working in conflict and war zones. In 2025 alone, 93 journalists were killed. The report, while drawing attention to the increase in international efforts, also underlines that the rate of punishment of those responsible for journalist murders has dropped from 95% to 85% from 2012 to 2024. Research conducted by UNESCO in cooperation with UN Women showed that online harassment suffered by women journalists while pursuing their profession reached 75% in 2025. This rate was 73% in 2020..

The Article 19 Global Expression Report 2025 indicates that freedom of expression significantly regressed worldwide over the past decade. According to the report, only one in every three people worldwide has the freedom of expression they had 10 years ago. The freedom of expression conditions of only 4% of the world’s population have improved further. Türkiye ranks 137th out of 161 countries in the Freedom of Expression ranking and is in the crisis country category. Türkiye scored 9 in the freedom of expression.

According to the Media Freedom Rapid Response Tracking Database, a total of 138 new attacks on press freedom occurred in Türkiye throughout 2025. In the database, the first attack on media freedom in Türkiye in 2025 was the prosecution of Aslihan Gençay over her corruption story in Hatay, while the last was journalist Murat Ağirel’s statement on 31 December that he had received death threats. According to the Media Freedom Rapid Response Database, women journalists were the target of 27 of the attacks on press freedom. The report noted “judicial attacks have caused lasting damage to national press freedom environments; journalists and media organisations have been threatened through laws, fines and arbitrary detentions” for Türkiye. The killing of journalist Hakan Tosun was also included in the report. The report stated that judicial pressure in Türkiye increased by 2.2% compared to the 2024 period, rising to 10.2%.

According to the 2025 European Press Freedom Report prepared by the Council of Europe, Türkiye this year became, along with Russia, Belarus, Georgia and Serbia, the country with the greatest concerns regarding press freedom. The Report, which covered the March 19 process, RTÜK fines, death threats against journalists and attacks on foreign journalists, also included the Press Advertisement Institution’s forcing of local media organisations to close or merge due to economic conditions..

According to the Women Press Freedom 2024 Report published in 2025, press freedom violations against women journalists worldwide increased by 56% compared to the previous year, with a total of 951 violations reported. In 2024, Türkiye was the country with the highest number of press freedom violations against women journalists. While 128 violations were identified in Türkiye, Russia followed with 105. 56 of the total 152 violations against women journalists occurring through the courts also took place in Türkiye, and our country unfortunately led in this area as well. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/reports-all/q1-2024-l2la9>

In the Freedom House Freedom in the World 2026 Report , Türkiye was placed among the Not Free Countries due to its freedom score falling by 33 points in the last year. The report stated that political interference in security and the judiciary had increased, the country had become an authoritarian regime, democracy had regressed, and the ruling Justice and Development Party had increased its influence within the state.

The European Federation of Journalists completed its annual general assembly in June of this year. At the general assembly held in Budapest, the possibilities for collective action against threats to press freedom in Europe were discussed. At the meetings, attended by two representatives from Association of Journalists, attention was drawn to the increasingly intense freedom violations and the stifled media atmosphere in Europe in general and Hungary in particular. In addition, while the need for journalists to have majority representation on media regulatory bodies was underlined, the Türkiye example was also discussed; “We cannot allow institutions like RTÜK in Türkiye to be replicated elsewhere in Europe. Media regulation should not be a tool for self-censorship or pressure” was put on record at the meeting, drawing also attention to the problems of journalists in our country..

It should be noted that although international reporting may present a justified assessment of Türkiye, many reports ignore a strict censorship and self-censorship applied in western media, primarily Germany, particularly on agendas relating to the genocide in Palestine, which censorship has been ignored by the reports. Police repression of anti-Gaza genocide protests in Germany, the banning of slogans such as “From the River to the Sea”, and the clearly partisan stance in the German press’s reporting on events means the pressure of press, expression and protest freedoms - the most fundamental democratic rights - and in this sense it is necessary to point out that the rising authoritarianism worldwide is being reproduced in different countries on different issues in the media sphere as well.

## Combating Digital Monopolies

Combating Digital Monopolies was also the main topic of this year’s Media Conference organised by the Association of Journalists with Media Solidarity Group stakeholders as part of the Democracy for Media / Media for Democracy project. With the contributions of journalists, academics, lawyers and professional organisation representatives attending the Digital Monopolies Workshop held before the conference, the “Digital Monopolies, Threats and Searches Conference Final Declaration” was created. With this declaration, both the digital problems of Türkiye’s current media atmosphere were set out in detail, and various pursuits and proposals were also submitted.

Digital monopolisation threatening internet journalism is also among the major problems of local media. Among the most commonly expressed problems at the review meetings held by the Association of Journalists with local associations and professional organisations as part of the Democracy for Media / Media for Democracy project were the problems of internet journalism. It was underlined that, in addition to the traffic and advertising crisis, the fact that the boundaries of internet journalism are being drawn only by government and state institutions is an important threat to the future of the profession. Attention was drawn to the importance of the possibilities of creating alternative income in internet journalism for local media, which occupies a special place in original reporting, to be able to exit the constant triangle of downsizing-closure-merging due to both economic and political pressures..

Monopolisation in digital media has become an increasingly recognised problem worldwide as well. In April, the US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia found that Google’s search engine was a harmful monopoly stifling competition and innovation through the digital advertising network.

The Oxford University Reuters Institute also addressed in its 2025 Digital News Report the negative effects of new developments in the digital media atmosphere on the journalism profession. The report underlined that the increased interest in social media and video platforms has turned into an opportunity to ‘bypass’ institutional media organisations, which has been exploited by politicians.

The report states: “The ever-increasing consumption of social media and video platforms is further weakening the influence of ‘institutional journalism’ and feeding a fragmented alternative media environment consisting of podcasters, YouTubers and TikTok producers. Populist politicians worldwide prefer, bypassing traditional journalism, friendly partisan media, media personalities and social media influencers who rarely ask difficult questions and many of whom spread disinformation”, underlining the gravity of the situation.

## AI Journalism: The New Threat

Another vulnerability and news production problem that journalists face in the face of technological advances, in addition to digital monopolies, is AI journalism. The proliferation of artificial intelligence tools, especially OpenAI, Grok and Gemini, in 2025 also profoundly affected news production and access. A study conducted by the European Broadcasting Union under BBC leadership in October 2025 revealed that AI assistants, which serve as a daily gateway to information for millions of people, routinely misrepresent news content. In the study, in which more than 3,000 responses from ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and Perplexity were evaluated, it was found that at least one significant problem existed in 45% of the responses given by artificial intelligence. In today's world where disinformation is at the forefront of global threats, the spread of AI journalism among both journalists and users continues to amplify this threat. According to the Oxford-Reuters Institute's Generative AI and News 2025 Report , the usage rate of leading AI tools for receiving news is still low but has doubled compared to the previous year (from 3% to 6%). According to the report, the media sector is also among the sectors where artificial intelligence is most used, at a rate of 51%..

## 2- LEGAL REGULATIONS ON THE PRESS FREEDOM, STATE AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

### a. Legislation, cases, journalists in prison

The regulation of the offence of “publicly disseminating misleading information to the public”, known as the disinformation law, and entered into force in October 2022, continues to be one of the most important obstacles to journalism in Türkiye. According to the report prepared by the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA), in 72% of cases filed in the 2024–2026 period, journalists are in the defendant’s chair. Even if journalists’ cases conclude with releases, the long case processes involving pre-trial detention become the de facto method of punishment directed at journalists. In the past 3 years, a total of 67 journalists have been tried in disinformation cases. Reports and posts on agendas that deeply shook the public, primarily earthquake and election agendas but also the Newborn gang and various abuse events, are in the target of the law. According to MLSA’s relevant report, the increase in cases under the disinformation law is concentrated most during periods of social crisis; the February 6th earthquake, the 2023 elections and the March 19 process are periods when the number of cases filed under the disinformation law increased. A significant portion of the investigations and cases were filed against journalists from opposition and independent media due to reports and articles criticising the government. For their reports on corruption at the Red Crescent, in addition to İsmail Arı, investigations were launched against Ahmet Kanbal and Gökhan Özbek a total of four times each under the disinformation law. Apart from these names, the cases of journalists Cengiz Erdiñç, Timur Soykan, Murat Ağirel, Barış Pehlivan, İsmail Saymaz, Furkan Karabay and Tolga Şardan have not yet concluded. The journalists and reports targeted by investigations and cases became almost proof that the disinformation law targets independent journalism. While the most cases were filed for earthquake reports, these were followed by reports related to corruption, elections, and the judiciary and state institutions.

### CONSTITUTIONAL COURT DECISIONS

The Constitutional Court this year issued extremely critical decisions concerning journalists, press and freedom of expression. As a result of the Association of Journalists’ application, the decision dated 17 June 2025 that would affect both the temporary advertisement suspension penalties that the Press Advertisement Institution applied to press organisations and the complete cessation of advertisements as in the case of the Evrensel newspaper was published in the Official Journal dated October 13.

The high court ruled that the law regarding in which situations the Press Advertisement Institution’s authority to cut advertisements and commercials could be applied was not clearly regulated and was based on vague reasons, and therefore was contrary to the Constitution, and annulled paragraph (a) of Article 49 of the Law on the Organisation of the Press Advertisement Institution.

The annulled provision provided for excluding newspapers, magazines and websites that do not follow the “press ethics principles” from receiving advertisement and notice jobs for two months at most. The law contained no definition of what press ethics is or its scope, or any explanation regarding the effect that violation would create in public opinion.

Another important decision issued by the Constitutional Court in 2025 was the ruling that access blocking decisions adopted under Law No. 5651 are disproportionate. The Court ruled that collective access blocks against news sites are disproportionate and that the closure of the entire website instead of URL-based intervention violates press freedom. These decisions revealed that administrative and judicial authorities need to adopt narrower and more targeted intervention methods in access blocking practices.

The Constitutional Court, in individual applications regarding criminal cases against journalists, examined lower court decisions on the punishment of reports and commentaries made as part of journalistic activities and ruled that freedom of expression and press freedom had been violated in most such interventions. The Court underlined that criticism directed at public authorities and politicians in particular must be considered within a broader area of freedom of expression, and stated that harsh and disturbing expressions used by journalists cannot alone be grounds for punishment. Together with these decisions,

a clear case-law has been established that a narrower and more proportionate interpretation must be made in the application of “insult” and similar types of crimes under the Turkish Penal Code to journalistic activities.

The Constitutional Court, in applications relating to social media posts, scrutinized the punishment and investigation practices applied especially in recent years and clearly stated that freedom of expression has the same scope of protection in digital media as well. The Court stated that a clear and imminent danger to public order must be concretely demonstrated for social media posts to be punishable, and that punishment based on abstract assessments or broad interpretations is contrary to the Constitution. This approach has created a framework that is directly referenced, especially in the application of the offence of “publicly disseminating misleading information to the public”.

In its decisions on pre-trial detention measures against journalists, the Constitutional Court considered the right to liberty and security of individual in tandem with freedom of expression. The Court clearly established that the arrest of journalists due to their reports and commentaries can only be possible in exceptional circumstances, that the pre-trial detention measure must be based on concrete evidence, and that detention cannot be resorted to in situations where alternative measures are sufficient. In the violation decisions issued in this context, it was underlined that pre-trial detention must not become an instrument of punishment, and the absence of sufficient justification in lower court decisions was counted as a reason for violation.

## ECHR DECISIONS

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the dismissal from public office of Binali Erdoğan, who worked as a chief cameraman at TRT, on charges of “insulting the president” due to his social media posts constituted a violation of “freedom of thought and expression”. The Court ordered payment of 7,600 euros in compensation to Erdoğan.

Apart from the Erdoğan decision, the decisions issued by the European Court of Human Rights on Türkiye in the area of freedom of expression and press freedom during 2025 consisted of files in which existing case-law was applied and repeated, rather than producing new case-law that resonated widely like the major cases seen in previous years. A significant portion of the decisions announced during this period were in the nature of concluding applications made in previous years, and the Court continued its established assessments regarding Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights in these files.

In the Türkiye decisions that came to public attention during 2025, the Court drew attention particularly to the disproportionality of criminal sanctions against journalists’ and individuals’ freedom of expression. However, these decisions repeated the principles of “pressing social need”, “proportionality” and “protection of offensive expression” it had established in its earlier decisions, rather than producing specific new case-law.

## PRESS CASES

Throughout 2025, judicial processes against journalists continued the trends observed in previous years but showed a notable increase in scope and intensity. Throughout the year, it has been observed that detention, arrest and judicial supervision measures were applied together and systematically. Based on the data we obtained from the database of the Journalists’ Union of Türkiye, the project executor, in addition to the information we compiled as the Association of Journalists, in 2025, in this report we prepared as part of the Support to Media Freedom Project:

- At least 57 journalists were detained,
- 32 journalists were arrested
- 37 journalists were released,
- 3 journalists were subjected to house arrest,
- By the end of the year, at least 15 journalists continued to stay in prison.

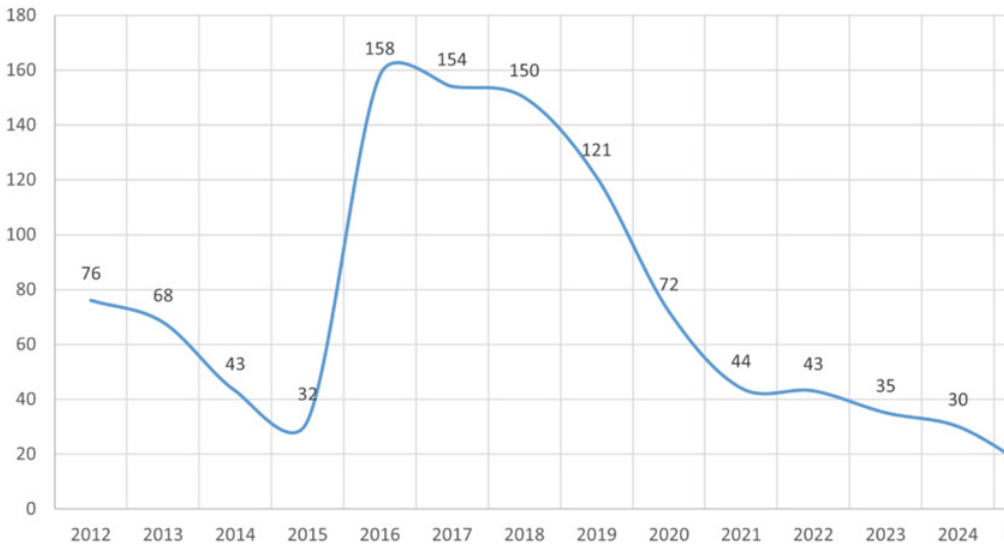
When we compare with our data in the 2024 Media Monitoring Report (112 detentions, 43 arrests), although there has been a slight decrease in the total numbers of detentions and arrests, the detention of more than 50 journalists every year and the arrest of more than 30 journalists summarises the bleak picture that the press and freedom of expression atmosphere in our country finds itself in. This picture shows that judicial processes against journalists have become not merely exceptional but a continuous practice.

Reports published by various national and international organisations throughout the year also point to a similar picture regarding the number of journalists in prison.

- According to the MLSA Legal Unit 2025 Activity Report, 29 journalists were detained during 2025.
- According to the International Press Institute (IPI) 2025 Türkiye Mission, 137 press freedom violations affecting 259 journalists occurred.
- According to the report prepared by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Türkiye Representative Erol Önderoğlu, in 2025 at least 29 journalists were arrested in Türkiye, with 3 journalists sentenced to house arrest, and 58 detained.
- According to the 2025 Press Freedom Report of CHP Eskişehir Member of Parliament Utku Çakırözer, journalists were forced to appear before a judge 610 times in 2025. Furkan Karabay spent 201 days, Ercüment Akdeniz from İlke TV 247 days, Elif Akgül 101 days, and Kaos GL Editor-in-Chief Yıldız Tar 102 days in prison.

Although the differences in different reports stem from data collection methods, the general trend shows that journalists faced imprisonment during the year, even if only briefly. According to records kept since 2012 when the Association of Journalists launched its media monitoring and reporting activities, the number of journalists in prison by the years till end of 2025 are provided in the following chart:

**CHART 1: Number of Journalists in Prison Between 2012–2025**



The sudden rise regarding 2016 that stands out in the chart is due to the 15 July coup attempt. From 2019 onwards, although the number began to fall because the sentences of those imprisoned in the coup attempt and the subsequent process were completed, it should be noted that, only in June, 6 journalists were detained. Even if the number of journalists in prison has fallen in the last two years due to a decrease in the duration of imprisonment, the number of journalists spending a certain period in prison during the year is increasing. Therefore, the declining trend in the chart does not mean normalisation and liberation.

The İmamoğlu cases became a turning point in rights violations and violence against journalists. Even before March 19, while Suat Toktaş, Serhan Asker, Kürşad Oğuz, Barış Pehlivan and Seda Selek from Halk TV were being tried for reporting on an expert witness's testimony in a case in which İmamoğlu was being tried, Suat Toktaş was released after remaining in pre-trial detention for 34 days. In February, 3 journalists from BirGün had been detained on charges of "targeting persons who have taken part in the fight against terrorism" due to their reports about Akın Gürlek, the prosecutor in the İmamoğlu cases..

Following the detention and arrest of CHP's Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on March 19, numerous journalists in Istanbul were subjected to investigation; where 13 encountered police violence, 14 were detained, 7 were arrested, and access blocks were imposed on more than 700 social media accounts.

Swedish Dagens ETC reporter Joakim Medin was arrested on the same charge upon entering Türkiye on March 27. According to Bianet's 2025 First Quarter Media Observation Report, in the first three months of the year at least 19 journalists and cartoonists were detained on charges of insulting the President. The detained journalists were Barış Pehlivan, Ozan Alper Yurtoğlu, Deniz Yücel, Ahmet Sever, Levent Gültekin, Sedef Kabaş, Hayko Bağdat, Baransel Ağca, Çiğdem Akbayrak, Erk Acarer, Julien Serignac, Gerard Biard, Laurent Sourisseau, "Alice", Ramazan Yurttapan, Haydar Ergül, Sultan Keleş, Furkan Karabay (2) and Rüstem Batum. In addition, while this report was being prepared, journalist Fatih Altaylı was also detained and arrested on charges of insulting and threatening the president.

On 21 June, Presidential Chief Adviser Oktay Saral shared a video containing a portion of journalist Fatih Altaylı's statements from his X (formerly Twitter) account with the words "Altaylı! The water is starting to heat up". Within hours of this post, an investigation was launched against Altaylı, he was detained the same day, and was arrested on 22 June on charges of "threatening the President" (TPC 310/2).

At the end of June, the process referred to in public opinion as the "cartoon crisis" began following a cartoon published in the LeMan magazine and resulted in the arrest of five magazine employees. Although the magazine stated that the cartoon published in the 26 June issue did not depict the Prophet Muhammad, the rapidly growing reactions on social media turned into protests in front of the magazine's building on the night of 30 June. While some protesters attempted to enter the building and shouted threatening slogans, police intervention prevented the attempts. Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation on charges of "publicly denigrating religious values" and in operations conducted the same night, the magazine's senior staff were detained. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya shared the detention footage and criticised the cartoon in harsh terms.

On 23 September 2025, journalist Merdan Yanardağ, programmer Musa Özüğurlu and News Director İhsan Demir were detained, citing a lower-third graphic on a Tele 1 broadcast as the reason. Channel executives gave statements in the investigation launched by Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office regarding the subtitle "What is the difference between RTE (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) and Netanyahu?" that appeared on screen in the 'Türkiye'nin Yönü' programme on 21 September. Yanardağ, Özüğurlu and Demir were released at the court they were brought to with judicial supervision measures of 'overseas travel ban and reporting to the police station'. Although Tele 1 officially apologised for this subtitle, the removal of journalists from their homes for any thought or expression, and imposition with overseas travel bans and judicial supervision penalties, summarises the point that the press atmosphere in Türkiye has reached. The reckless use of the judiciary and security against journalists has become a new norm to which people are being made accustomed.

In another incident that occurred in the same month, Sözcü newspaper reporter Enver Demirdağ was assaulted by persons of unknown identity. The attackers were quickly caught and claimed in their statements that they were drunk and did not know the journalist. The suspects were processed on charges of "simple bodily harm" and released pending the continuation of the trial process. However, no comprehensive investigation was conducted into whether the attack was linked to Demirdağ's journalistic activities or whether there was other direction behind the incident.

In October 2025, journalist and documentary maker Hakan Tosun, who mainly worked on environmental issues, was physically attacked in the street in Istanbul and lost his life at the hospital to which he was taken. The reason for the attack could not yet be definitively clarified, but serious allegations of irregularities in the investigation raised by the lawyers of the Tosun family raised important questions regarding the scope and independence of the investigation, independent of the identity of the perpetrators.

Journalist Merdan Yanardağ, after being detained in October, was indicted on charges of "political or military espionage". The Tele 1 television channel, of which Yanardağ was founder and editor-in-chief, was seized by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) before he was referred to the prosecutor's office for his statement to be taken, despite he is not owner of the channel.

Journalists Soner Yalçın, Şaban Sevinç, Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, Ruşen Çakır, Yavuz Oğhan and Batuhan Çolak were detained on 6 November as part of the investigation conducted on allegations of "corruption" regarding the İBB. The journalists gave statements at the Istanbul Police Headquarters on charges of "publicly

disseminating false information” and “aiding a criminal organisation”. The journalists were released with an overseas travel ban following their statements.

Journalist Tolga Şardan was subjected to judicial supervision measures due to his reports on a data leak in the electronic signature system owned by public institutions and imposed with a overseas travel ban. Journalist Furkan Karabay was detained due to his reports on investigations targeting Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and was kept in a solitary confinement cell.

Journalist Ercüment Akdeniz, after remaining in pre-trial detention for 247 days on charges of “membership of a terrorist organisation”, was released in October with a judicial supervision measure in the form of an overseas travel ban.

Journalist İsmail Saymaz, meanwhile, was subjected to house arrest for approximately two months between March and May 2025.

## PRESS CARD REGULATIONS

The gains obtained in the cases filed by professional organisations led by the Association of Journalists at the Council of State had been reflected in the new Press Card Regulation published on 10 April 2023 in accordance with the new Press Law. Provisions such as those whose enforcement was stayed by the Council of State - that the card could be cancelled in the event of journalists ‘performing actions that would damage the honour of the press profession’ or ‘acting in a manner contrary to national security or public order or making such behaviours a habit’ - were not included in the new regulation. However, the controversial articles stating that a journalist’s press card can be cancelled by the Commission in the event of behaviour contrary to Press Ethics Principles adopted by the General Assembly of the Press Advertisement Institution, or that public information officials can also be given press cards, continue to remain in the new regulation. Likewise, regarding the provision that a journalist whose card is cancelled within the framework of the Press Ethics Principles cannot obtain a new card for one year, the Association of Journalists and Journalists’ Union of Türkiye took the relevant articles to the Council of State in 2023, filing a case for the suspension of enforcement and annulment.

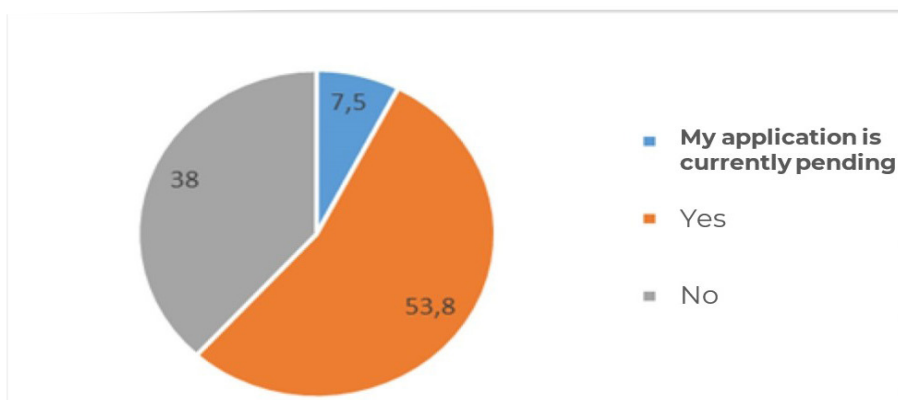
An amendment was made to the Press Card Regulation in 2024, according to which it was stated that in the calculation of the period for obtaining a permanent press card, a maximum of 24 months of the total period during which a freelance press card was held would be taken into account. In addition, with the amendment made, press cards will not be issued to those who do not work in the news field at the Anadolu Agency (AA) and the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT).

In 2024, three Press Card Commission meetings were held on March 5, June 5 and November 5; at these meetings, 2,839 employment-linked press cards, 745 permanent press cards, 6 freelance press cards and 2 press honour cards were issued. At the beginning of 2025, there are 22,929 press cards, of which 7,684 are permanent press cards. At the beginning of 2024, the number of press cards was 20,860, of which 7,076 were permanent press cards.

The Professional Satisfaction Survey we conduct as the Association of Journalists shows the picture regarding press card ownership among journalists.

53.8% of the journalists participating in the survey stated that they hold a press card, while 38% stated that they do not have a press card. 7.5% of the participants expressed that their press card application is currently pending.

**CHART 2: Press Card Ownership**



This ratio is noteworthy and should not be underestimated. The vague and selective stance taken by the Directorate of Communications of the Presidency in recent years in the process of evaluating press card applications is causing many journalists' applications to be either rejected or left unanswered for long periods. This is considered as a new form of political and administrative pressure on journalists. Journalists kept waiting without their applications being concluded continue to be one of the major problem areas of the press environment in Türkiye in the recent period.

## RADYO TELVİZYON ÜST KURULU (RTÜK) VE BASIN İLAN KURUMU (BİK)

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and the Press Advertisement Institution (BİK) are public institutions established for the purpose of regulating, supervising and supporting television and print media in Türkiye. However, throughout 2025, the practices of these two institutions were frequently discussed by the media sector and were criticised especially in terms of freedom of expression and economic sustainability. While RTÜK continued this year to maintain the heavy fines and broadcast suspension penalties that increased in intensity last year, board president Ebubekir Şahin remained in the agenda with scandalous statements directed at independent media organisations and journalists.

Following the case filed by the Association of Journalists, the Constitutional Court decision dated 17 June 2025 regarding the regulation allowing the temporary advertisement suspension penalties applied by the Press Advertisement Institution to press organisations and the complete cessation of advertisements was published in the Official Journal on October 13. The Court found that the legal framework regarding the conditions under which the authority to cut advertisements and commercials would be applied was not clear and specific and was based on a vague concept such as "press ethics principles", found this regulation contrary to the Constitution and annulled paragraph (a) of Article 49 of the Law on the Organisation of the Press Advertisement Institution.

However, the weight of the criteria relating to eligibility to publish official advertisements under the current legislation creates serious economic pressure especially on local media organisations, which causes criticism regarding the Press Advertisement Institution's role in the sector to continue.

Indeed, at the Review Meetings organised by the Association of Journalists, local journalists have expressed BİK's practices as one of the most important problem areas. Problems such as the Institution's conditions for advertisement support not being tailored to local media and the limitation of distributed advertisements in particular are causing local newspapers to be trapped in the triangle of downsizing, closure and merging.

RTÜK, meanwhile, comes to the agenda with high fines and broadcast suspension decisions directed especially at television channels that adopt a critical broadcasting policy. The partisan exemption of some media organisations, particularly from fines, is intensifying polarisation in the media atmosphere in Türkiye. These practices are discussed in the public and media circles in the context of the board's mandate and authority limits, and are sometimes considered as are incompatible with press freedom.

Both institutions' manner of applying the current legislation and their approaches that go beyond the existing authority framework are causing criticism in terms of pluralism and independence in the media.

### RTÜK

RTÜK penalises independent radio and television channels that broadcast critically towards the government, based on the first paragraph of Article 8 of the Law on the Establishment and Broadcasting Services of Radio and Televisions. The article places responsibility on broadcasters through clauses such as impartiality, rule of law, national and moral values, separatism, discrimination, incitement to hatred and enmity, insult and slander beyond the limits of criticism, unjust benefit, human dignity and privacy of private life.

However, despite the opposition of the three members elected from the CHP and DEM Party quotas, decisions are adopted by the members of the Supreme Council elected from the AKP and MHP quotas. Due to this dominance, the decisions adopted by the institution, especially the fines imposed, can be directed by political motivations.

Although RTÜK asserts that it acts within the framework of the law, the first paragraph of Article 8, which is used as the basis for penalty decisions that threaten press freedom, places responsibility on RTÜK members as well as broadcasters in the 23 separate clauses it contains. While articles such as that broadcasts 'partisan in relation to political parties' may not be made, and that 'no one may be declared guilty without a court decision and broadcasts that affect the process and impartiality of the trial may not be made' serve pluralistic, democratic and egalitarian practice on paper, in practice the principled approach in these articles is implemented according to the personal convictions of government bureaucrats.

For example, RTÜK does not penalise television channels that openly support the parties in the ruling coalition, make biased broadcasts, accuse opposition politicians with expressions amounting to insult, defame them with completely baseless slanders, target and threaten them, and spread disinformation in favour of the political power.

When we compile the survey conducted by the Association of Journalists as part of the Support to Media Freedom Project and the data shared with the public by Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) member İlhan Taşçı , RTÜK applied a total of 52 separate sanctions to media organisations criticising the government between 1 January and 31 December 2025. The total monetary value of these sanctions is calculated as TRY 92,790,898. In the fines imposed, the most common agenda was the criticism of government representatives, primarily the President, while even the criticism of reports in newspapers close to the ruling party such as Yeni Şafak was deemed by RTÜK as a reason for a fine.

Throughout 2025, no penalty was applied to broadcasters close to the ruling party. This is the strongest indicator that RTÜK is in practice applying sanctions by making a distinction between broadcasters that 'criticise the government' and those that 'support the government'. RTÜK in this state used Article 8 penalties as a stick to force journalists and media groups, so to speak, to choose sides.

A total of 29 programme suspensions, 50 administrative fines and a total of 25 days of broadcast suspension were applied to media organisations that criticise and question the actions of the government. The total financial equivalent of these sanctions was TRY 92,790,898.

## İBB CASES WERE DECISIVE

The period during which RTÜK most frequently imposed fines under Article 8 was January and March. Critical broadcasts made as the details of the judicial operation against Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality became clear in January, and after the March 19 operation, reporting on both the nature of the operation, the independence of judicial personnel and the protests also known as the Saraçhane protests were the agendas that received the most fines. RTÜK imposed 9 instances of fine on Halk TV, Tele 1, SZC TV and in this period. Among other penalty elements that could be described as tragicomic this year were criticism of RTÜK policies (2 times) and criticism of the government in Syria (2 times). In addition, Tele 1 was imposed with a fine for criticising Ferdi Tayfur after his death. Criticism of the judiciary, police officers and government representatives was also penalised more than once. In addition to politically motivated fines, the Şakir Paşa series broadcast on NOW TV receiving both a fine and a broadcast suspension on the grounds that it does not conform to family values was evaluated as censorship in general terms against freedom of expression, Türkiye's secularity and different lifestyles.

In 2025, broadcast suspension was also frequently resorted to as a censorship method among RTÜK's Article 8 penalties. Broadcast suspension penalties imposed because broadcasts involving government criticism, criticism of Ottoman history and criticism of police violence in the March 19 protests, etc. are considered as an intervention restricting television journalism. In addition to the high-amount and clearly biased fines, broadcast suspension penalties also caused serious damage both economically and democratically.

The report published by İlhan Taşçı, meanwhile, show a striking picture regarding broadcasters known for their closeness to the ruling party. Accordingly, no investigation report was prepared and no administrative fine was applied against these media organisations throughout the year. It was reported that the total amount of fines imposed for these broadcasters was "TRY 0 ". Taşçı also stated that the TELE1 channel was the most fined broadcaster until the appointment of a trustee on 24 October and faced a total of 15 sanctions.

Taşçı also criticised RTÜK's approach to press and freedom of expression in his statement, reacting to the fact that while sanctions are directed at critical broadcasts, effective supervision is not applied against daytime programmes that are the subject of intense complaints. He characterised this as "serious damage

done to society". He also noted that even the broadcasting of political events organized by the opposition was subject to sanctions, underlining that the live broadcast of Republican People's Party Leader Özgür Özel's rally was for the first time in RTÜK history used as grounds for a fine.

In 2025, it was seen that RTÜK applied sanctions not only to television channels but also to digital platforms. In this context, administrative fines were imposed on HBO Max, Disney XD, MUBI, Prime Video, Netflix, Spotify and TV+ platforms, and a total of 10 decisions to remove from catalogues were issued regarding different content items. The total amount of administrative fines applied to digital platforms was recorded as TRY2,888,844. One of the notable examples regarding RTÜK's sanctions was the application against Sözcü TV. The channel, which broadcast the protests following the arrest of Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on 23 March 2025, was sentenced to 10 days of broadcast suspension on March 27 on allegations of "inciting the public to hatred and enmity". Ankara 25th Administrative Court decided on May 30 to suspend the enforcement of this penalty. However, Ankara 7th Administrative Court later overturned this decision and the suspension of Sözcü TV's broadcast for 10 days on July 9 was finalised. The channel resumed broadcasting on July 19.

One of the most important developments of the year in terms of media ownership and broadcasting was the appointment of a trustee to TELE1. On 24 October 2025, as part of the 'espionage' investigation conducted by Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, investigations were launched against individuals including Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, campaign director Necati Özkan and TELE1 Editor-in-Chief Merdan Yanardağ.

While a search was conducted at the TELE1 building as part of the investigation, Merdan Yanardağ was detained. It was reported that police teams conducted a search in Yanardağ's room during the channel's live broadcast but did not directly intervene in the broadcast. In the evening hours of the same day, the public prosecutor's office announced that a trustee had been appointed to ABC Radyo Televizyon ve Dijital Yayınçılık A.Ş., which owns the channel.

The TMSF delegation appointed as trustee requested the suspension of the broadcast during the main news bulletin. The broadcast was ended following journalist Murat Taylan's closing speech to viewers and the channel switched to recorded broadcast.

TELE2 Haber, established by journalists who left the channel following the trustee appointment, started its online broadcasting life on 15 November 2025. The broadcast launched at 19.28, the time at which TELE1's broadcast was cut, carried a symbolic emphasis on continuity.

## RTÜK 8. MADDE CEZALARI

**TABLO 1: RTÜK 8. Madde Cezaları**

### BROADCAST SUSPENSION PENALTIES

- TELE1  
5-day broadcast suspension  
Reason: Criticism of government  
(July 2025)
- HALK TV  
10-day broadcast suspension  
Reason: Criticism of the Ottoman Empire  
(June 2025)
- SZC TV  
10-day broadcast suspension  
Reason: Criticism of police violence  
(March 2025)
- NOW TV  
3 instances of programme suspension  
Reason: Content that does not conform to family values  
(February 2025)

Channel	Number of Fines	Total Penalty (TRY)
HALK TV	12	TRY 7.026.109
TELE1	15	TRY 2.737.602
NOW TV	7	TRY 62.180.225
SZC TV	16	TRY 13.487.540
FLASH TV	2	TRY 391.086

## b. Rights Violations

Throughout 2025, arrest practices against journalists were mostly concentrated around specific political investigations and mass operations compared to the previous year. Journalists became the target of “bundle” operations. The March 19 protests, the HDK investigation, the Halk TV case and the operation against Tele 1 were among the leading cases that caused many journalists to be tried for pursuing their professions.

The arrests that began in the first months of the year continued to expand in scope in subsequent processes within the framework of different files and investigations. The inclusion of politically motivated cases and the reporting of societal events in particular among the main grounds for arrest decisions intensified violations against journalists and press freedom in 2025 in our country, where political pressures continue to override judicial independence.

In parallel with this, it can be seen that a significant number of journalists were released during the year. However, the fact that a large portion of the releases also occur together with restrictive measures such as judicial supervision, overseas travel bans and reporting obligations, and that such measures have become routine when journalists are involved, is worrying for the press atmosphere in Türkiye. This shows that arrest and release processes form a cyclical pressure mechanism that follows one another. Despite being released for short periods, journalists are faced with judicial processes that continue for long periods.

In 2025, cases were most frequently filed against journalists for offences of violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstration Marches No. 2911, organisation propaganda, ‘publicly disseminating misleading information to the public’ (disinformation law), insulting the president and attempting to influence judicial organs.

The increase in such types of criminal charges that criminalise journalism and the proliferation of cases filed for these offences was turned into a new and intensified form of restricting press and freedom of expression through the judiciary.

In 2025, it can be seen that freedom-restricting practices against journalists were not limited to arrest alone, and that alternative supervision mechanisms were also used intensively. Measures such as house arrest, reporting obligations and overseas travel bans have become systematic practices especially as part of political cases. According to data we compiled together with TGS as part of the project, in 2025 Özlem Gürses is imposed with house arrest, with İsmail Saymaz to weekly mandatory signature affixing and overseas travel ban, and Ender İmrek to both house arrest and travel ban penalties.

### HOUSE ARREST AND TRAVEL BANS HAVE BECOME THE NORM

2025 was a dark year where house arrest became the norm for journalists. Journalist İsmail Saymaz was detained on March 19 as part of the Gezi investigation conducted by Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office. On March 21, he was imposed with house arrest at the request of the prosecutor’s office. Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office accused the journalist in its statement regarding Saymaz’s detention of ‘aiding an attempt to overthrow the Government of the Republic of Türkiye’.

In the statement, certain allegations were made regarding Saymaz’s participation in the 2013 Gezi Park events as grounds for this. It was asserted that Saymaz ‘had conversations with persons who took a role in the preparation of Osman Kavala’s website and in the establishment of the television channel he planned to set up for the purpose of spreading the events through the press’. It was also stated that he had intense contact with main defendants of the Gezi case Osman Kavala, Can Atalay, Çiğdem Mater and Mücella Yapıcı during these events. İsmail Saymaz was released after 56 days of house arrest with a overseas travel ban and judicial supervision. The house arrest penalty against Saymaz is critical not only in terms of the normalised pressure mechanisms such as house arrest, travel ban and judicial supervision directed at journalists. At the same time, a new threshold has been crossed in which the extremely vague and dangerous grounds on which participation in democratic protests 12 years ago can be considered a crime creates a climate of fear into which journalists will be pushed over the possibility of events at indeterminate dates being considered crimes.

Journalist Özlem Gürses was also imposed with a house arrest penalty due to a phrase she used while reporting on developments in Syria in a broadcast she made in late 2024. Despite stating that her phrase was a slip of the tongue, she also became the target of the judiciary because a small portion of the video recording was turned into a lynch campaign on social media. Gürses, released on 12 February 2025 after 52 days of house arrest, became a new and bitter example of the proliferation of social media lynching especially for journalists who make video and TV broadcasts.

## 2025 WAS A YEAR OF OPERATIONS

2025 was marked by comprehensive operations against journalists. In addition to the Halk TV, BirGün and Tele 1 operations, many journalists were also detained in the waves of detentions that began after March 19. In the first month of 2025, journalists Necla Demir, Rahime Karvar, Ahmet Güneş, Welat Ekin, Vedat Örüç and Reyhan Hacıoğlu were detained on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation. On 20 January, 6 journalists were also arrested on these charges.

On 29 January, journalists Barış Pehlivan, Serhan Asker, Seda Selek, Suat Toktaş and Kürşat Oğuz were detained due to Barış Pehlivan's report on the İBB case in a Halk TV live broadcast. Halk TV Editor-in-Chief Suat Toktaş was acquitted on March 4 after being held in prison for 34 days as part of the case.

On 8 February, Uğur Koç, Berkant Gültekin and Yaşar Gökdemir from BirGün newspaper were detained because BirGün included in their reports a visit to Akın Gürlek that was reported in Sabah newspaper. This detention, in a sense, also clearly revealed the double standard of the judiciary towards press freedom. The 3 journalists detained on 8 February were released on 9 February.

On 18 February 2025, journalists Elif Akgül, Ercüment Akdeniz, Ender İrmek and Yıldız Tar were detained as part of the HDK investigation conducted by Istanbul chief public prosecutor's office. As a result of the large wave of detentions including artists and politicians on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation as part of the retrospective investigation into the Peoples' Democratic Congress, journalist Ercüment Akdeniz was only able to be released after 243 days. In the retrospective operation similar to the Gezi case, journalists were tried due to directly professional activities such as following HDK meetings.

Ruşen Takva, Rabia Önver, Bilal Babat, Mehmet Güleş, Medine Mamedoğlu and Behçet Bayhan were detained on 15 February for reporting on the removal of Van Metropolitan Mayor Abdullah Zeydan from office.

### March 19: A TURNING POINT

The main breaking point that distinguishes the rights violations experienced in 2025 from previous periods was the marked increase in violations relating both to judicial processes and the reporting of street protests following March 19. The detention on March 19 of numerous municipal directors and employees, notably Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, led to widespread protests, and this process was considered as a critical threshold in Türkiye's democracy debates. Protests that lasted for days in different cities encountered harsh police interventions; detention and arrest decisions deepened authoritarianism debates both domestically and internationally.

Throughout the period, approximately 2,000 people were detained, thousands were subjected to police violence, and interventions against the constitutional right to assembly stood out. Journalists also directly became targets during this period. Journalists following the İmamoğlu cases and protests were detained, some were arrested; Suat Toktaş remained in pre-trial detention for 34 days. Investigations were launched against numerous journalists following the protests in Istanbul, where 13 journalists were subjected to police violence with 14 detentions and 7 arrests. During the same period, access blocks were imposed on more than 700 social media accounts.

Journalists working in the field were also exposed to physical violence. Reporters from Anadolu Agency, AFP, Reuters, Bianet and various media organisations and independent journalists were assaulted and injured with rubber bullets. Journalists working at different media organisations on the same days were also exposed to intense police intervention during the protests. A total of 11 journalists were detained in simultaneous operations in Istanbul and İzmir and some were held in detention for two days. Home raids were carried out on BirGün employees in İzmir.

The international press was also affected by the process. BBC News reporter Mark Lowen was detained in Istanbul and was deported the following day. Swedish journalist Joakim Medin, detained on the same day, was arrested on charges of "insulting the president". Sendika.org reporter Zişan Gür was injured as a result of police intervention during detention and was later released under judicial supervision conditions.

When evaluated in general, the developments following March 19 revealed a period in which detentions, arrests and physical interventions against journalists intensified and rights violations regarding press and freedom of expression deepened noticeably.

On March 19, journalist İsmail Saymaz was detained in a case filed 12 years later for reporting on the Gezi events, on 'charges of aiding an attempt to overthrow the Republic of Türkiye', and as a result of the case spent 56 days under house arrest.

On 10 April, Timur Soykan from BirGün and Murat Ağirel from Cumhuriyet were taken from their homes and detained on charges of "threat and blackmail".

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, characterising the HDK established in 2011 as "PKK grassroots organisation" in February of this year, issued a detention order for 60 people. As part of the operation, journalists Yıldız Tar, Elif Akgül and Ercüment Akdeniz were also detained for attending legal meetings held during the period when the HDK was established. While Tar and Akgül were released in recent days, at the time this report was being prepared, journalist Akdeniz had been held in prison for more than 120 days.

With the scope of the Gezi Case being expanded, businesswoman Ayşe Barım and actors Halit Ergenç and Rıza Kocaoğlu were detained. Ayşe Barım had been in pre-trial detention for 5 months at the date this report was prepared.

Journalist Furkan Karabay was tried in pre-trial detention for 201 days on charges of 'insult', 'spreading misleading information to the public' and 'targeting' due to a report he made following the arrest of Esenyurt Mayor Ahmet Özer.

In the Artvin-centred operation in June, 6 journalists were detained up to the date the report was prepared; of these journalists, Ozan Cırık, Dicle Baştürk and Eylem Emel Yılmaz were arrested on charges of 'membership of a terrorist organisation' without any evidence being presented.

Journalist Fatih Altaylı, following the words he used while commenting on the news agenda on his own YouTube channel, was first targeted and lynched on social media, then in a highly controversial manner, under the influence of the reactions received, Altaylı was first detained and then arrested.

Investigative journalist Aslıhan Gençay was investigated under the disinformation law due to her corruption reports in Hatay and her article was blocked from access.

T24 columnist Şirin Payzın was subjected to investigation on allegations of 'terrorism propaganda' due to her social media posts.

In 2025, Murat Ağirel, Timur Soykan, İsmail Saymaz, İsmail Arı, Barış Pehlivan and Furkan Karabay also stated that they received death threats.

The charge of 'insulting the president' continues to lead among arbitrary rights violations against journalists this year as well. In just the first month of the year, Sultan Keleş was sentenced to a 1 year and 2 month prison in the case where she was tried on charges of insulting the president.

#### JOURNALIST HAKAN TOSUN WAS KILLED

Journalist Hakan Tosun lost his life on 11 October 2025 as a result of being assaulted by two attackers while going home. In the attack, in which the prosecutor's office reached the conclusion of 'intentional homicide', it emerged that in addition to the attackers there was also a getaway vehicle and that it was an organised attack. Tosun, known throughout his journalistic life especially for his reports on environmental massacres, had been targeted by various circles on many occasions. Allegations of instigation regarding Tosun's death are still being investigated.

The Uğur Mumcu and Hrant Dink cases have still not been clarified.

### c. 2025 Web Access Blocks

The EngelliWeb 2025 summary published by the Freedom of Expression Association revealed the scope and intensity of access blocks in the internet sphere in Türkiye. According to the summary, throughout the year access blocks expanded through both content and platform restrictions as well as bandwidth

throttling practices. Users were unable to access social media platforms for a total of 63 hours, which stemmed from bandwidth throttling practices, in particular.

The report found that the most common justification for access blocks was “protection of national security and public order”. This justification was repeated in the vast majority of decisions made throughout the year and showed that the practice of access blocking has become a standardised administrative reflex.

Among the most active actors in the application of access blocks were the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK), criminal peace judgements, prosecutors’ offices and some administrative institutions. This demonstrated that the access blocking mechanism is intensively operated not only through judicial but also through administrative instruments.

Platform-based blocks also continued in 2025. Platforms such as Discord, Roblox and Wattpad that were blocked in 2024 remained closed throughout 2025. In addition, it was seen that content and account-based blocks also became more widespread; users frequently encountered warnings such as ‘account access blocked’ or ‘not available in Türkiye’.

When considered in general, 2025 showed that access blocks not only increased but also transformed into a more systematic and multi-layered structure.

## CONTENT AND NEWS SUBJECT TO ACCESS BLOCKS

In 2025, a significant portion of access blocks was directed at news content and posts relating to the public debate space. Corruption allegations, news about public officials and politically oriented publications in particular were among the main targets of access block decisions. In June, access blocks were imposed on a full 7 news reports published by BirGün newspaper between 2021 and 2025, including news about Sedat Peker’s words regarding Süleyman Soylu, and reports about SADAT, Korkmaz Karaca and Sezgin Baran Korkmaz.

According to the report and its reverberations during the year, news relating to Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality investigations in particular was systematically subject to access blocks. It is ascertained that criminal peace judgements made various news content relating to these investigations invisible and imposed URL-based access blocks.

In addition, some religiously and politically oriented news items that caused public debate were also blocked. For example, it is observed that news relating to an investigation file connected to the person known in public as “Cübbeli Ahmet” was blocked from access and decisions were made for the deletion of the content. In addition, blocks on content shared on social media platforms also increased. With the proliferation of account and post-based interventions, users’ individual expressions were also included in the scope of the access blocking mechanism. Ekrem İmamoğlu’s social media accounts were repeatedly closed and their views were reduced.

According to FreeWebTurkey’s 2025 Internet Censorship Report , in the first seven months of the year, 1,306 pieces of content and 3,330 URLs were blocked from access by decisions adopted by courts and administrative institutions. It is observed that censorship practices targeted especially journalistic activities and social media posts. In the same period, thousands of news items, social media content and user accounts were blocked from access. The report stated that using publicly available documents and data shared by BirGün, ANKA News Agency, T24 and Medya Koridoru as a basis, a total of 105 access block decisions issued by 70 different courts against news websites, non-governmental organizations and journalists were examined.

## 3- POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA

### a. Transparent financial policy, broadcasting principles and accountability

While media ownership in Türkiye continues to be an area of direct government intervention, the non-transparent financial relations of the sector's largest holdings reached a new level in 2025.

The holdings that dominate the sector continue their activities outside the media sector. There is still no transparency in the financial relations of Turkuvaz, Demirören, Doğuş and İhlas with public institutions for their investments in the media sector. This continues to be a determinant indicator in terms of government control over the media. One of the most striking examples for this problem that were revealed in 2025 is that \$800 million loan extended by Ziraat Bank to Demirören Holding to purchase the Doğan Media Group has still not been repaid. On the other hand, the sales processes of media organisations such as Ciner Medya and Flash Haber that began at the end of 2024 showed both media ownership and ownership changes in the media as being far from transparency and linked to politics. Likewise, many newly established TV channels also harbour doubts and question marks in terms of their financial relations.

It continues to be an area in which the relationships between media, the business world and the government are determinant. Some data from Doğuş Holding, İhlas Holding and Hürriyet Gazetecilik ve Matbaacılık affiliated with Demirören are open to the public. It is possible to access their independent auditor reports and annual consolidated financial statements from their 'investor relations' websites that they are required to publish. However, these data do not meet the transparent financial policy and accountability criteria relating to their investments in the media sector.

### b. Media Ownership

The 2025 Media Pluralism Monitor Report states that basic protection in Türkiye's media is at high risk with 78%. The most important factors raising the risk level are regressions under the headings of basic safeguards, market pluralism, political independence and social participation. Last year, Türkiye's risk score was stated as 75% in the report.

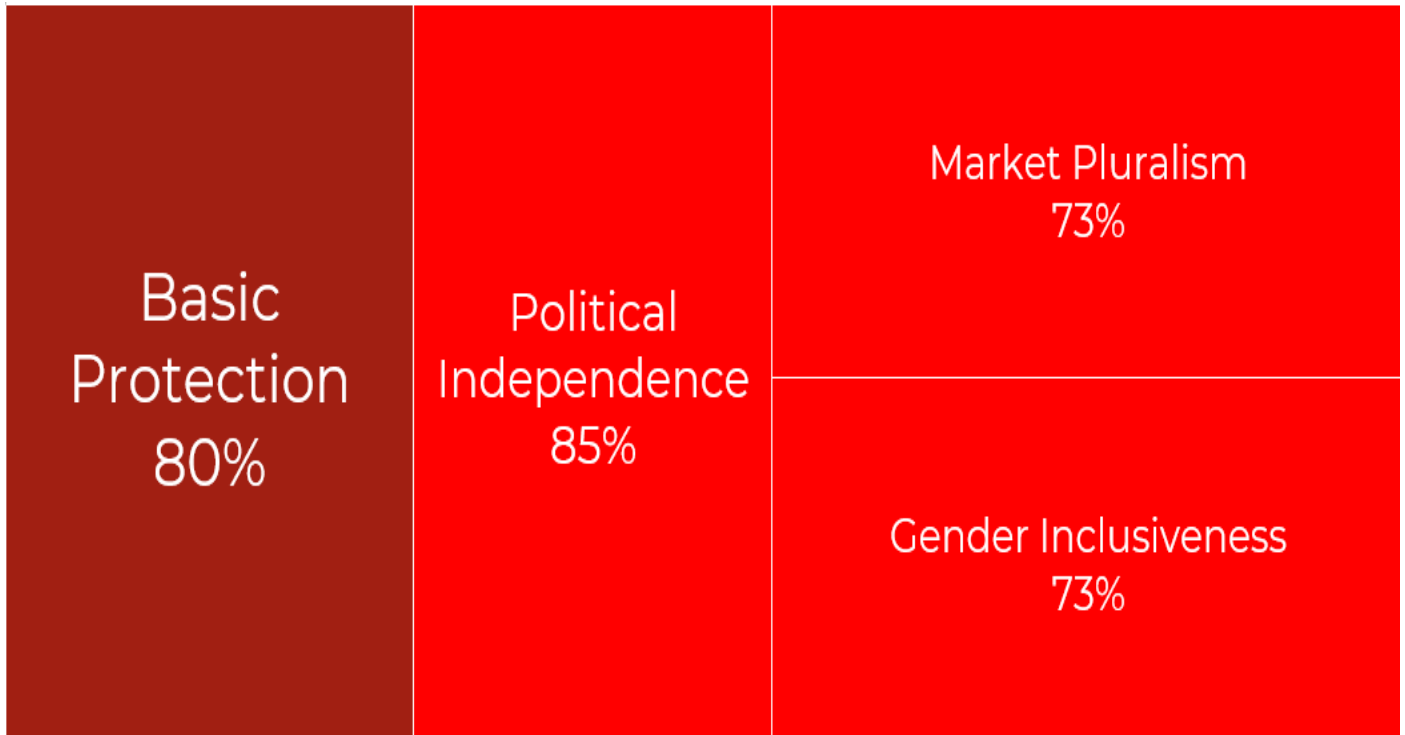
Among the most important factors endangering market pluralism in Türkiye, the lack of transparency regarding the media ownership structure and financing stands out. In addition, the low unionisation rates and wages among journalists are also another important factor endangering market pluralism.

Under the title of gender inclusiveness, limited employment and underrepresentation of women employment in the profession is noted as a key concern. The report emphasises that the detentions and arrests by the government following the 2024 local elections are an important turning point in terms of regression.

According to the 2024 Report prepared in the light of more detailed data, access to traditional media and the internet is at medium risk at 63% due to accessible but slow internet levels. However, the protection of freedom of expression and the right to access information are at high risk at 83% and 88% respectively. In the report's risk assessment, the continued arrest of journalists in 2023, the unfair distribution of fines and access blocks were determinant. The report also identified the journalism profession, its standards and security at high risk at 69% in our country, pointing to low-paid and precarious employment and the prevalence of censorship and self-censorship as reasons. The independence and efficiency of official authorities relating to the media was also found to be at high risk again due to the increasing pressures of competent authorities in supervising the media.

The report finds that market pluralism in Türkiye is at high risk at 74%, based on indicators of transparency in media ownership, pluralism in media provision and digital markets. While editorial independence against media ownership and commercial influence is stated to be at 9 points higher risk than the previous year, attention is also drawn to the unchanged structure of media ownership and monopolisation in the media market. The data limitation and reactions in the May 2023 parliament elections and the effects of the February 6th earthquake are factors that increase the risk to media sustainability and independence.

### CHART 3: 2025 Media Pluralism Monitoring Report Türkiye Results



#### TMSF CENSORSHIP OF TELE 1

One of the most notable examples of media ownership and state intervention debates in 2025 was the process directed at the Tele1 television channel.

In October 2025, a detention was carried out as part of the investigation conducted against journalist and Tele1's founder Merdan Yanardağ. However, the process did not remain limited to an individual judicial action; the intervention by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) in the Tele1 television channel even before Yanardağ's statement was taken moved the scope of the event directly to the matter of media ownership.

The most controversial aspect of the said intervention is the lack of relation between Tele1's legal ownership structure and Yanardağ's personal situation. Despite the channel not being directly Yanardağ's personal property, the taking of action against the media organisation as part of the conducted investigation was evaluated as exceeding the limits of the right to property.

This caused wide-ranging criticism not only as an administrative action directed at a media organisation but also because it meant establishing a direct link between the judicial process and media ownership.

The picture that emerged in the Tele1 example, although different from a classical sale or trustee appointment process, was characterised by many legal experts and media analysts as 'de facto seizure'. While many Tele 1 employees resigned, a significant portion of the employees continue to maintain the broadcasting life censored by TMSF by opening the Tele 2 channel, which can currently only broadcast via YouTube.

In the appointment of a trustee to Tele 1, the intervention in the media organisation was carried out before the judicial process was completed, without the ownership relationship being clearly established and without distinguishing between the company structure and individual responsibility. This was in fact not "now publicly accustomed" practice of TMSF involving but a new threshold pointing to the formation of a more broader and flexible domain of intervention.

Despite these types of interventions by TMSF in the media sphere could be considered as a continuation of the trustee and seizure practices observed in previous years as well, the occurrence of 3 critical TMSF seizures in one year has increased the concerns that political intervention in media ownership may intensify. As of 2025, it is observed that these practices are not limited to economic reasons alone but also proceed in parallel with judicial processes.

## FLASH TV SALE COMPLETED

2025 was a period in Türkiye during which large-scale sales in terms of media ownership remained limited, but the dynamics of repositioning in the sector came to the fore. Flash TV's sale to Halk TV was first blocked, then the sale was completed and the companies owned by Erkan Kork, claimed to be close to the ruling party, were seized by TMSF. As part of the illegal betting investigation conducted by Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, TMSF appointed trustees to 23 companies including Flash TV, Pozitifbank and Payfix. In the operation, a total of 6.9 billion TRY in assets were confiscated based on the allegations that illegal betting revenues were used in the financial system. In October 2025, Flash TV was sold by TMSF to Eşref Keleş, a former AKP parliamentary candidate and owner of Öz Er-Ka Construction Company.

The company entered to the public agenda for being awarded numerous construction contracts following the February 6th earthquake. Flash TV's sale, which summarises the relationship between politics and the media in Türkiye in different ways at every step, concluded with the channel ultimately passing to a name whose main area is not media and who is closely related to politics. This became a new example of the highly controversial and non-transparent relationship between media investments and public tenders.

## HABERTÜRK GROUP UNDER TMSF MANAGEMENT

Ciner Group's decision to exit the media sector was one of the most important developments regarding media ownership in 2025. Although Ciner Group's desire to exit the media sector, known for its closeness to the government, brought with it different debates, a more critical development occurred while the sale of the media group to Can Holding was on the agenda. As part of the investigation conducted by Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, it was decided to appoint TMSF as trustee to a total of 18 companies operating under Can Holding and Ciner Group. The statement from the chief public prosecutor's office stated that the investigation launched against Can Holding officers on grounds of 'establishing an organisation for the purpose of committing crimes', 'managing' and 'membership of the established organisation', 'laundering the proceeds of crime' and 'qualified fraud' was continuing. As a result of the operation, 6 people including Can Yayın Holding Board of Directors Chairman Kenan Tekdağ, who came from Ciner Medya, were detained, and trustees were appointed to Habertürk Gazetecilik, Ciner Medya TV Hizmetleri, Show Televizyon Yayıncılık, Boğaziçi Radyo Televizyon Yayıncılığı ve Reklamcılık, Enerji Petrol Ürünleri Pazarlama, Doğa Okulları İşletmeciliği, Bilgi Doğa Eğitim İşletmeciliği, Turktobacco Sigara İç ve Dış Ticaret Pazarlama, HT Spor Televizyon Yayıncılık and Bosphorus Medya Grubu Radyo ve Televizyon Yayıncılığı Anonim Şirketi. As of December 2025, according to the TMSF statement, these media companies continue to broadcast under TMSF control.

## c. Newspaper Circulations

Printed newspapers in Türkiye continued to lose circulation as of 2025. The Turkish Statistical Institute's Print Press Statistics and the Press Advertisement Institution's official advertisement data, being primary data sources regarding circulations, were shared with limited transparency in this period as in previous years. Data compiled in cooperation with media monitoring companies as part of the project were included in the report; however, sector representatives and journalists maintained their views that official circulation figures do not fully reflect reality. This limitation in data transparency made it difficult to conduct a sound and independent assessment.

The main revenue sources of newspapers consisted of advertisements, official announcements, subscriptions and distributor sales. While sales data were compiled through distribution companies, official announcement revenues were determined according to publication scale and sales rate. However, the Press Advertisement Institution's failure to disclose detailed data on advertisement distribution since 2020 created serious uncertainty regarding the distribution of public announcements. This led to the strengthening of structural problems and concentration tendencies (monopolisation) in the sector in terms of both economic sustainability and media ownership.

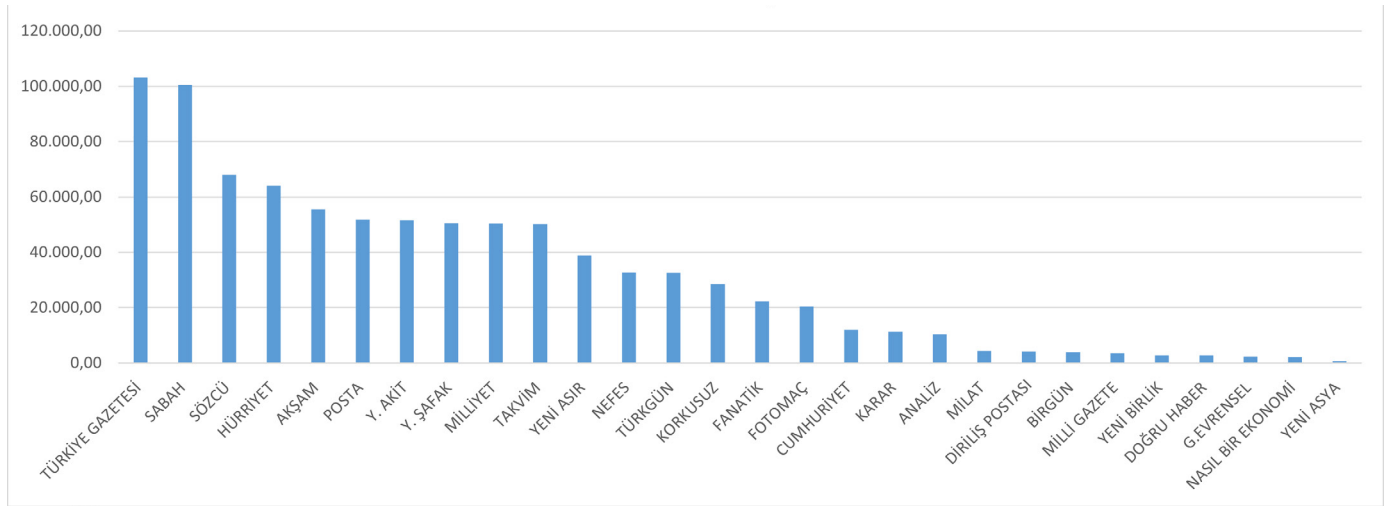
2025 data showed that the large majority of newspapers were concentrated in the 50,000–100,000 circulation band. Türkiye Gazetesi ranked first with approximately 103,000 circulation and Sabah came second with approximately 100,000; Sözcü and Hürriyet were positioned in the 60,000–70,000 band. In contrast, many newspapers fell below 10,000. This picture shows the weakening of printed newspapers' capacity to reach mass audiences.

Türkiye Gazetesi's circulation performance was again a subject of debate in 2025. The newspaper's high

circulation figures continued to raise question marks in the sector. Journalist Faruk Bildirici noted in an article he wrote in 2024 that, in addition to Türkiye Gazetesi’s sudden and unexplained rise, access to newspapers in local areas had decreased, the stated circulations were not independently verified and actual sales could be below these figures. This discussion brought back onto the agenda the structural problems relating to the reliability of circulation data and measurement methods.

In general, 2025 data showed that printed journalism continues its existence within an economically and structurally shrinking field. The decline in circulations pointed to a multi-layered transformation shaped not only by changes in reader habits but also by the lack of data transparency, uncertainty in the distribution of public announcements and concentration tendencies in the media economy.

**CHART 4: 2025 Daily Average Circulation Figures of Newspapers**



**TABLE 2: 2025 Daily Circulation Figures of Newspapers**

Newspapers	2025 daily average circulation figures
TÜRKİYE GAZETESİ	103,103.71
SABAH	100,467.29
SÖZCÜ	67,933.43
HÜRRİYET	63,927.57
AKŞAM	55,556.86
POSTA	51,713.29
Y. AKİT	51,628
Y. ŞAFAK	50,522
MİLLİYET	50,398.43
TAKVİM	50,216
YENİ ASIR	38,871.43
NEFES	32,759
TÜRKGÜN	32,479.57
KORKUSUZ	28,511
FANATİK	22,284
FOTOMAÇ	20,477.29
CUMHURİYET	11,902.86
KARAR	11,142.43
ANALİZ	10,252
MİLAT	4,222
DİRİLİŞ POSTASI	4,171.57
BİRGÜN	3,799.71
MİLLİ GAZETE	3,540.43
YENİ BİRLİK	2,763.43
DOĞRU HABER	2,682
G.EVRENSEL	2,335
NASIL BİR EKONOMİ	2,212.14
YENİ ASYA	647.00

## d. Ratings Shares

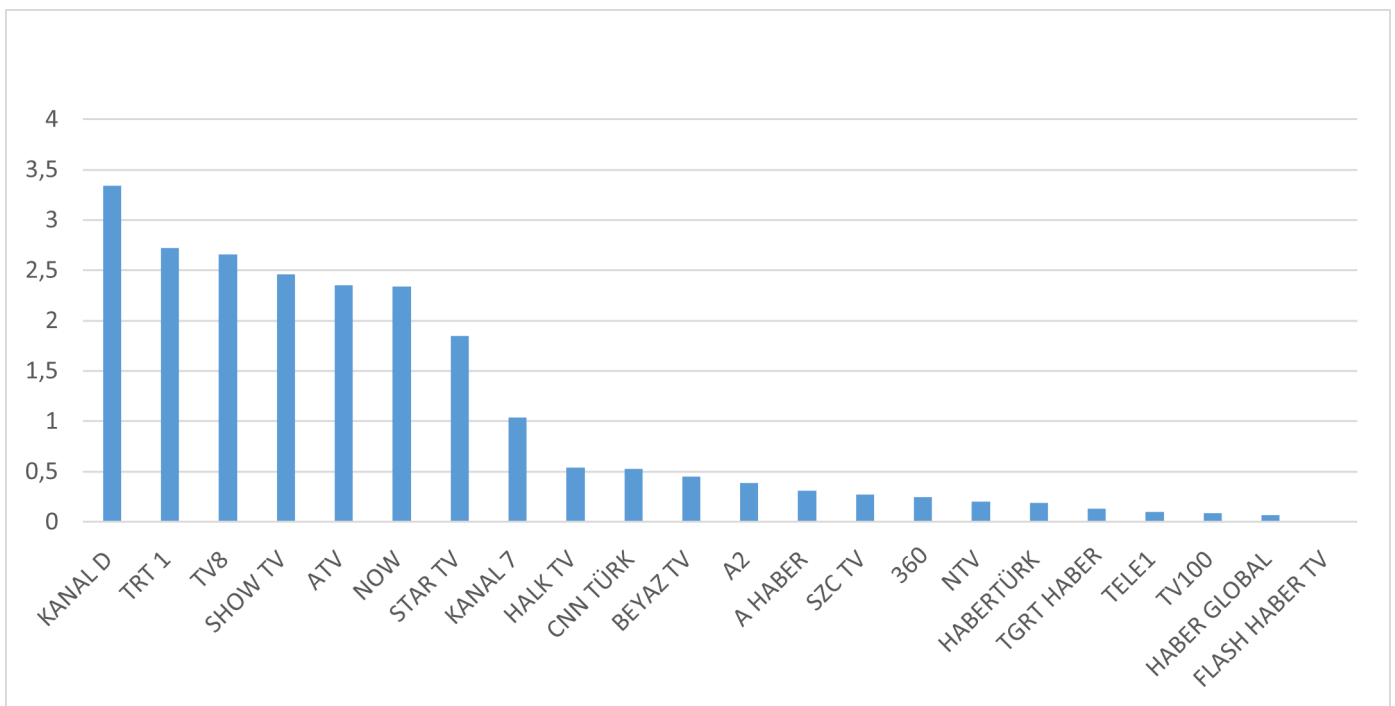
According to the Oxford-Reuters Institute 2025 Digital News Report, while television continues to be an important and influential news source in Türkiye, interest in print media continues to decline, and weekly newspaper readership has dropped to one-third of its level 10 years ago.<sup>1</sup> According to the report's findings, the main source of access to news in our country is news websites, news platforms and artificial intelligence on the internet, followed respectively by TV, social media and finally print publications.

However, trust in news in Türkiye is showing its lowest level since 2015. According to the report's findings, news sources most trusted by viewers such as NOW TV, SZC TV and Halk TV are known for their oppositional stance, while media organisations known for pro-government broadcasting such as TRT have less credibility in an atmosphere of high polarisation.

**TABLE 3: Average Rating Shares for All Persons in Prime Time Throughout 2025**

Channel	RTG%
ATV	2.35
KANAL D	3.34
SHOW TV	2.46
NOW	2.34
STAR TV	1.85
TRT1	2.72
TV 8	2.66
KANAL 7	1.04
HALK TV	0.54
SZC TV	0.27
TELE1	0.10
CNN TÜRK	0.53
NTV	0.20
HABERTÜRK	0.19
HABER GLOBAL	0.07
TGRT HABER	0.13
A HABER	0.31
TV100	0.09
FLASH HABER TV	0.01
BEYAZ TV	0.45
A2	0.39
360	0.25

**CHART 5: 2025 Prime Time Ratings Averages**



## Prime Time Rating Shares

In 2025, NOW TV ranked among the top-rated television channels in prime time with 2.34 points in the 19:00–24:00 time slot; KANAL D occupied the top of the year with 3.34 points. KANAL D was followed by TRT 1 with 2.72 and TV8 with 2.66. SHOW TV and ATV were the other channels maintaining their positions at the top with 2.46 and 2.35 points respectively.

Compared with 2024, NOW TV lost its leadership position and competition among mainstream channels acquired a more balanced structure. The rise of KANAL D in particular and the ranking of TRT 1 and TV8 at the top showed that prime time viewer preference spread across a wider channel distribution. When the ratings performance of news channels is examined, low levels were also maintained in 2025. While Halk TV was the most watched channel among news channels with a rating of 0.54, CNN Türk was at a similar level with 0.53. A Haber remained at 0.31, NTV at 0.20 and Habertürk at 0.19. TELE1, meanwhile, had one of the lowest viewing rates with a rating of 0.10.

Compared with 2024 data, the news channels generally continued to remain in the low ratings band, but showed a tendency towards stagnation rather than a dramatic decline. This showed that television's position as a news source continues to weaken and that viewers' orientation towards alternative channels for news consumption continues.

On the other hand, despite significant political developments and an intense agenda in 2025, there was no noticeable increase in news channels' ratings. This picture pointed to a permanent change in viewer behaviour and showed that television has a more limited sphere of influence compared to previous years, particularly in terms of news consumption.

## e. Situation of Press Workers

One of the biggest problems facing journalism continues to be non-unionisation and insecurity. Due to wages remaining trapped in the minimum wage, low unionisation rates and turbulent developments in media ownership, journalists in Türkiye continue to be concerned not only about their democratic rights but also about their economic future.

According to the Professional Satisfaction Research conducted as part of the project with 297 journalists in 2025; while working journalists continue to earn largely at and around the minimum wage, unemployment, and being able to receive secure and satisfying wages are among the most important concerns.

In the first 6 months of 2025, a positive development regarding the situation of press workers was the strike of KRT television channel employees that concluded with a gain. Due to non-payment of salaries at KRT, employees took action on 4 June and by using their right to refrain from work under Article 34 of the Labour Law, broadcasting at KRT was suspended and the channel switched to recorded broadcast.

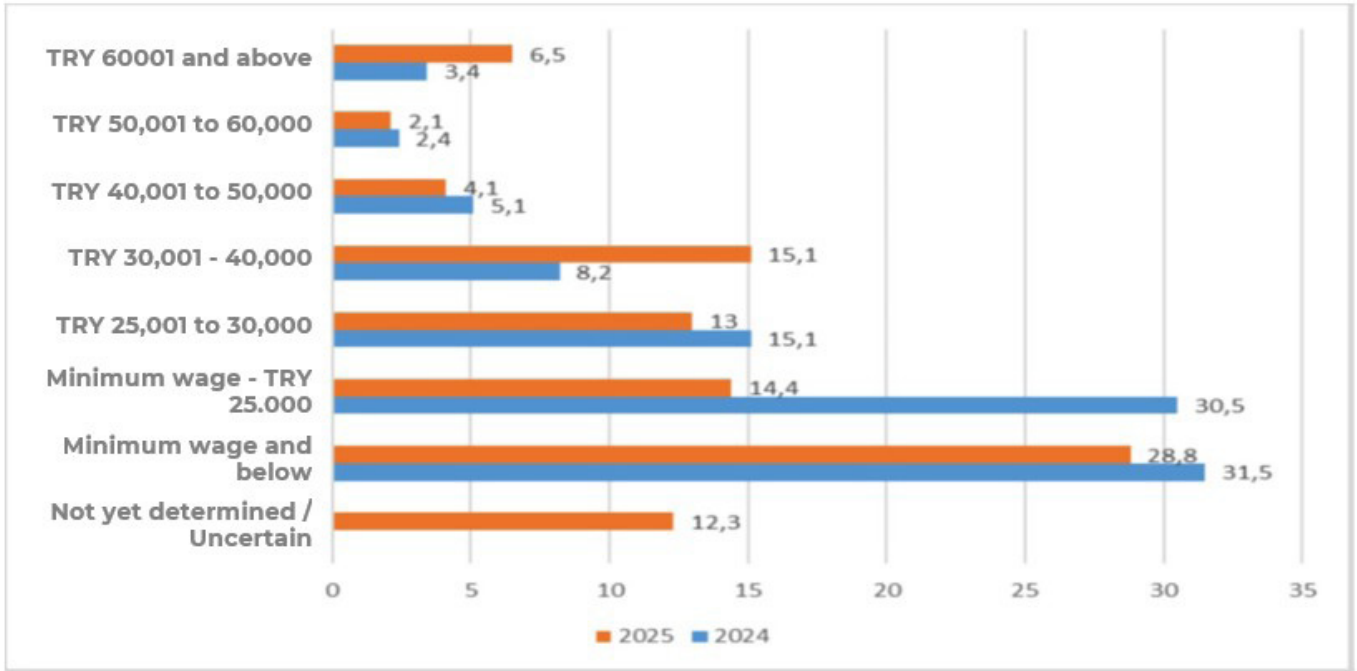
DİSK Basın-İş announced that negotiations with the employer that began on Thursday 19 June concluded on 23 June 2025 and that an agreement was reached as a result of discussions with workers.

The public statement noted that:

“One month's salary, the first part of the payments, was won on 18 June 2025 after a 15-day struggle. The payment of remaining salary payments and meal allowances was put on a schedule and agreement was reached on the payment of remaining receivables within July. An assurance was obtained that the agreed payment schedule would not spare anyone and would be shared with the public in a transparent manner by KRT management. In the KRT resistance, which has few examples in world press history and in which broadcasts were suspended for 20 days, we once again saw that when we stand side by side, we can win.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dw.com/tr/disk-basin-is-krt-emekcilerinin-eylemi-kazanimla-sonuclandi/a-73018674>

**CHART 6: Journalists' Salaries**



The Ministry of Labour and Social Security published the January 2026 Statistical Communiqué on the Number of Workers and Union Members.

The number of workers employed in the Press, Broadcasting and Journalism sector fell by 6,000 in the last 6 months to 90,293, while the number of unionised workers in the sector increased by 149 compared to the previous year to 12,397. Although the proportion of unionised workers in the sector rose from 12.5% to 13.7% compared to the previous year, the unionisation rate in journalism and press broadcasting is still very low; moreover, the 6,000-person decrease in the proportion of registered workers in the sector is also an important factor in the rise of this percentage. According to the July 2025 communiqué, the Press, Broadcasting and Journalism sector still has the lowest number of members of any sector. In 2025, the number of positive authorisation determinations by sector was 24 in the Press, Broadcasting and Journalism sector. This number is 1,255 in general services and 464 in the Metal sector.

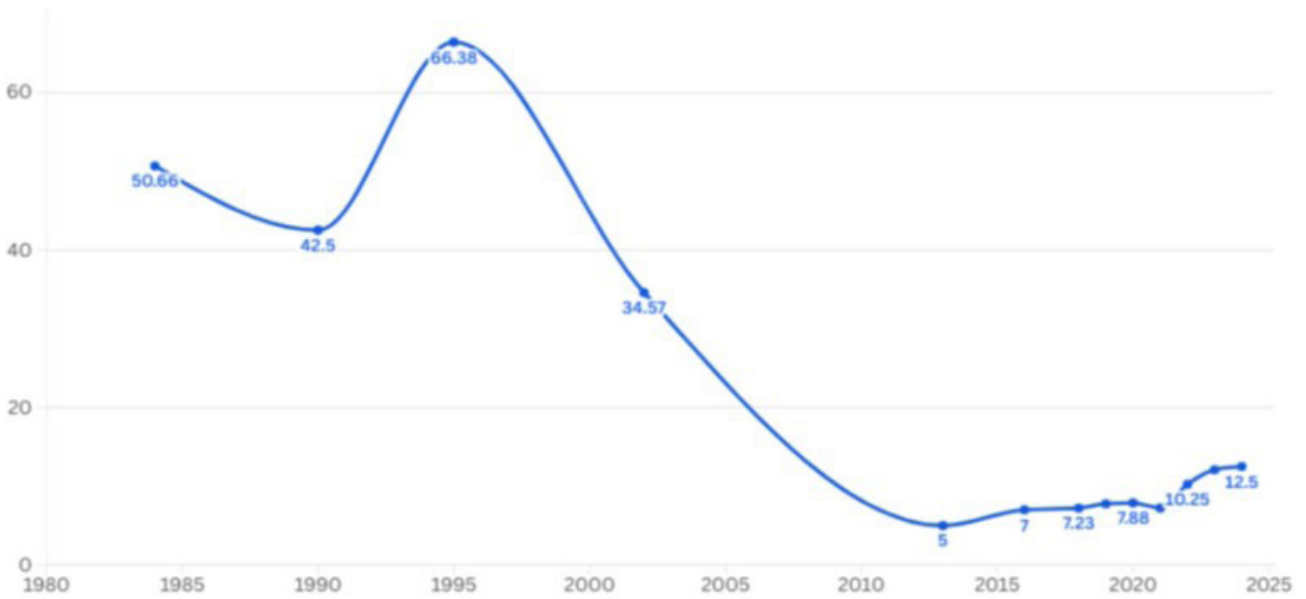
Unions and their member numbers are as follows:

- BASIN-İŞ: 2,418 members (2.677%)
- TGS (Journalists' Union of Türkiye): 1,743 members (1.930%)
- DİSK BASIN-İŞ: 917 members (1.015%)
- MEDYA-İŞ: 7,317 members (8.103%)
- LİDER MEDYA-SEN: 2 members (0.002%)
- BASIN POL-SEN: 8 members (0.008%)

In light of the latest data, it is observed that 4 unions (Medya-İş, Basın-İş, DİSK Basın-İş and TGS) have passed the 1% threshold required for collective bargaining agreement signing authority. DİSK Basın İş's crossing of the threshold for the first time in many years was noted as a very important achievement. However, journalism being the sector with the lowest overall unionised worker rate among all sectors further reinforces the insecurity in professional life.

Likewise, in the Professional Satisfaction Survey we conducted as part of the project, more than half of the journalists asked to make a comparison between job security and high wages (54.1 per cent) stated they would prefer job security, while one third (32.1 per cent) stated they would prefer the high wage option. It can be noted that both demands are a result of concern about the future as well as the lack of organising in the sector.

**CHART 7: Unionisation Rates in the Sector by Year (Percentage)**



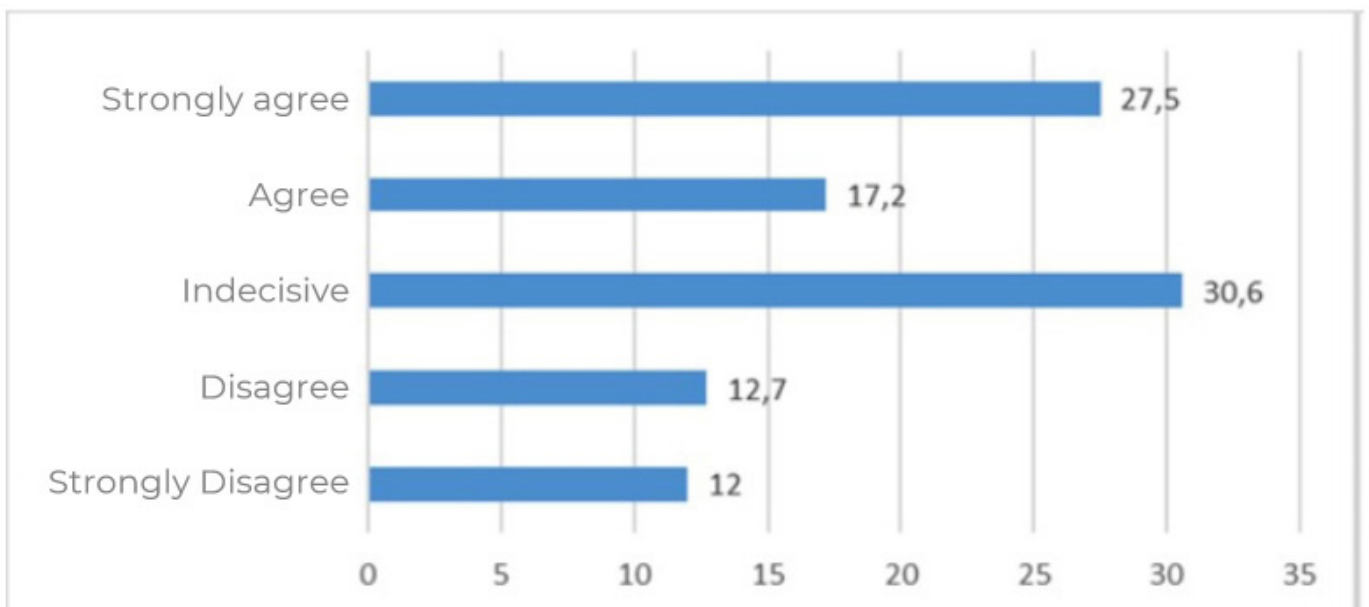
### Journalists and access to information in the news production process

The findings relating to the news production process are important in terms of also showing the limits of freedom of expression. In this context, topics such as censorship and self-censorship practices, threats, attacks, prosecution and gender-based discrimination practices will be addressed. The news production process, as the core of journalism, is important as the main point at which professional values and qualifications come to the fore and journalists' experiences and problems are concretised.

### Censorship and Self-Censorship Practices

One of the most important findings relating to the news production process is whether news activities have been subject to censorship. Close to half of the journalists participating in the survey (44.7 per cent) stated that they strongly agree/agree that their reporting activities have been subject to censorship. This picture shows that the media in Türkiye is in a very challenging process with regard to censorship.

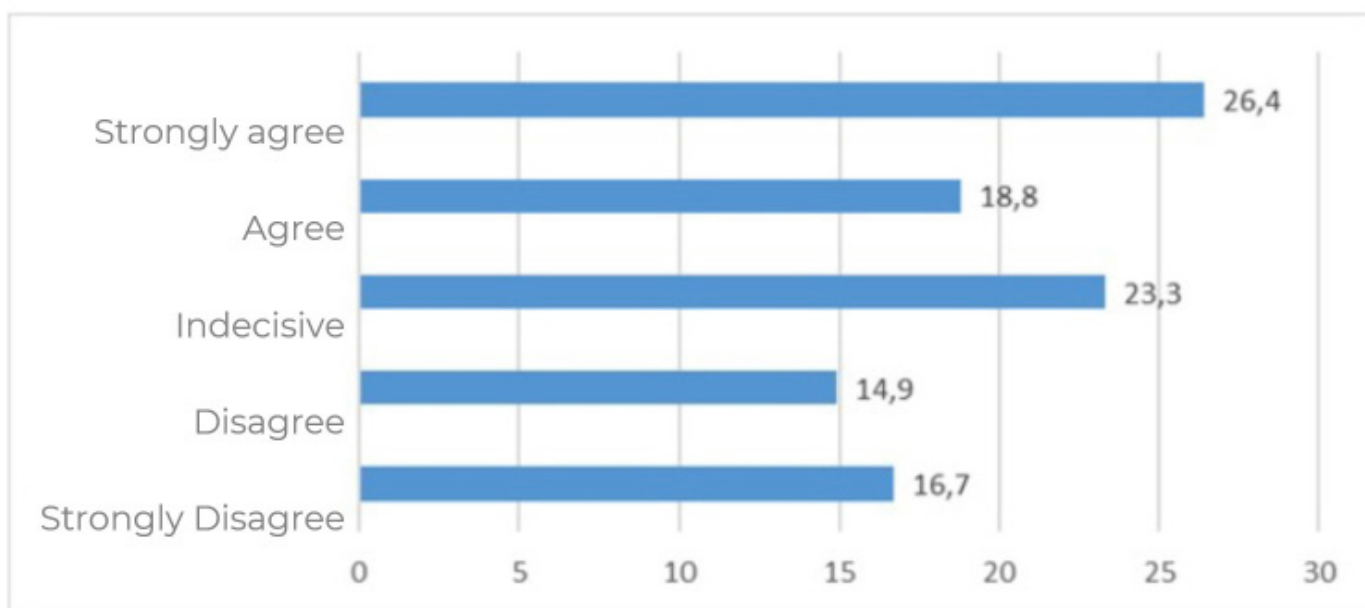
**CHART 8: "My news activities have been/are being censored"**



The proliferation of censorship reveals how deep the pressure environment to which the media is exposed is, while at the same time bringing the danger of censorship becoming normalised over time. For this reason, it is of great importance to separately investigate through which institutional or informal channels censorship is applied on journalists and who the actors operating these mechanisms are.

Another phenomenon as important as censorship in the news production process is self-censorship. Self-censorship can be defined as journalists giving up their stories or censoring some elements of the story through their own practices due to concern that it will not be published or will be criticised. In authoritarian political climates, self-censorship emerges as a problem almost as widespread and serious as censorship. Close to half of the journalists participating in the research (45.2 percent) stated that they strongly agree/agree with the sentence 'There have been times when I gave up on a story due to concern that the content would not be published or would be criticised while producing news'. Approximately one

**CHART 9: “There have been times when I gave up on a story due to concern that the content would not be published or would be criticised”**



## 4 - DISINFORMATION AND INFORMATION MONOPOLY

---

The Disinformation Law that entered into force in 2022 continues in 2025 to be abused as a method of punishment against journalists and to serve the construction of the government's monopoly on information. The Disinformation Law this year also continued to be one of the biggest obstacles to access to accurate news and also became a judicial intervention that puts pressure on news production and access processes. To date, investigations were launched against 70 journalists under the Disinformation Law, where journalist Furkan Karabay was detained under this law in 2025 and remained in pre-trial detention for 201 days.

The Disinformation Law, as seen in examples from many countries in the world, is not the only method used by autocratic regimes to create an information monopoly. Disinformation exclusively in the name of the law is today one of the most priority threats both in Türkiye and in the world, and political control over the media is one of the most important factors in the proliferation of disinformation.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Risk Report[1], disinformation and misinformation are among the top priority short-term risks for the entire world. The fact that these threats lead in particular to a loss of trust and fuel social polarisation makes them critical problems at the global level. Among the long-term risks in the report, technological threats such as the negative impacts of artificial intelligence stand out alongside disinformation. Disinformation is accepted in the report as a serious threat at the same level as regional military conflicts and the climate crisis.

In Türkiye, meanwhile, various disinformation and misinformation-focused reports spread by media organisations close to the government during the March 19 events regarding both judicial processes and the protests are, in addition to triggering social polarisation, poisoning the media environment in the country. Some media personalities' targeting of opposition figures on various TV channels and providing various pieces of information whose accuracy regarding the content of the case cannot be questioned are, in addition to inciting the public to hostility, increasing the flow of disinformation and strengthening social unrest.

In addition, anonymous news-making without citing sources through blue check accounts on X is also one of the important threats as part of disinformation. This 'blue tick journalism', of which we now see many examples in Türkiye as well, has created numerous anonymous news accounts that reach millions of people with attention-grabbing posts without citing any source and without fulfilling any journalistic principles including the five Ws and one H. These accounts direct platform users with manipulative messages, images of uncertain date and location, sometimes to get clicks and sometimes through their political goals, fuelling social polarisation. X's new algorithm, which focuses on attention span and multimedia use, also promotes this type of blue tick journalism that spreads disinformation.

## 5- ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION, POLITICAL PARTIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL

2025 was marked by struggles against digital monopolies whose influence in Türkiye's media atmosphere is increasingly growing and examples of solidarity shown against political cases in which journalists are targeted.

The theme of the Media Conference held by the Association of Journalists, planned together with Media Solidarity Group stakeholders, was this year 'Digital Monopolies, Threats and Pursuits'. At the Workshops held on the first day, both the problems experienced by local media and the pursuits in the struggle against digital monopolies were included in the agenda. At the end of Workshops, the Local Media Declaration and the Rights and Freedoms Declaration II – Journalism in the Face of Digital Monopolies texts were drafted.

At the Media Conference, the necessary methods of struggle and pursuits for the protection of journalists' economic and democratic rights against digital monopolies were discussed. The conference and workshop declarations, in which lawyers, academics and journalists participated, were an important step for a roadmap in local media and digital media fields.

The Rights and Freedoms Declaration II – Journalism in the Face of Digital Monopolies text drafted by the Media Solidarity Group was characterised as 'a call to all our colleagues for common struggle to defend our labour rights, our profession and freedom of expression against the new colonialism of transnational digital monopolies'.

The Local Media Declaration drafted with local professional organisations was shaped around certain demands to combat local journalists' economic, legal, political and qualitative problems. The text was drafted with the contributions of various academics as well as 16 local professional organisations present at the Workshop.

In the first months of 2025, a Professional Satisfaction Research was conducted as part of the project with the participation of 297 journalists. The research, whose results were reported by Prof. Çağrı Kaderoğlu Bulut, presented important findings not only on journalists' professional, political, union and economic conditions but also on their demographic change.

The 2024 Media Monitoring Report prepared by the Association of Journalists was published last May. The report included important findings and discussions regarding both the developments that most affected the media atmosphere in Türkiye during the year and the current problems and future of the profession in Türkiye and the world.

The European Federation of Journalists held its 2025 General Assembly in Budapest. While two members from the Association of Journalists participated in the General Assembly, in the discussion on regulatory institutions at the congress, the statement 'We shall not allow institutions like RTÜK in Türkiye to be replicated elsewhere in Europe. Media regulation should not be a tool of self-censorship or pressure' was included. The right to access information series organised by the International Press Institute (IPI) was held in different cities in Türkiye. The training held in Ankara in November was conducted at the Association of Journalists.

Uluslararası Basın Enstitüsü (IPI) tarafından düzenlenen bilgi edinme hakkı serisi Türkiye'nin farklı şehirlerinde düzenlendi. Ankara'da Kasım ayında yapılan eğitim Gazeteciler Cemiyetinde gerçekleştirildi.

Some reports concerning press and freedom of expression in 2025 are:

Oxford Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025

[https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital\\_News-Report\\_2025.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf)

Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index 2025

<https://rsf.org/en/country-türkiye>

Article 19 Global Expression Report 2025  
<https://globalexpressionreport.org>

Media Freedom Rapid Response Database  
<https://www.mfrr.eu/monitor/>

Freedom House Freedom in the World Report, February 2025  
[https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/FITW\\_World\\_2025\\_Feb.2025.pdf](https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/FITW_World_2025_Feb.2025.pdf)

Bianet Media Observation Report First Quarter, 2025  
<https://static.bianet.org/2025/05/bia-medya-gozlem-raporu-2025-ilk-ceyrek.pdf>

Media Pluralism Monitor Report 2025  
<https://cmpf.eui.eu/country/turkey/>

TGS Press Freedom Report (2024–2025)  
<https://tgs.org.tr/tgs-basin-ozgurlugu-raporu-2024-2025/>

MLSA Turkey Journalists and Media Workers in Prison Report  
<https://mlsaturkey.com/tr/cezaevindeki-gazeteciler-ve-medya-calisanlari-listesi-y>

World Economic Forum Global Risks Report 2025  
<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2025/>

MLSA Legal Unit Activity Summary 2025  
<https://www.mlsaturkey.com/tr/mlsa-hukuk-birimi-2025-faaliyet-ozzeti-durusmalar-gozaltilar-ve-mucadele>

IPI Türkiye Mission Report 2025  
<https://turkiye.ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2025-Turkey-mission-report.pdf>

Utku Çakırözer Press Freedom Report 2025  
<https://t24.com.tr/politika/chpli-cakirozerden-2025-basin-ozgurlugu-raporu-tmsf-turkiyenin-en-buyuk-medya-patronu-oldu-95-gazeteci-gozaltina-alindi-39-gazeteci-tutuklandi,1289674>

UNESCO World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development Report 2022/2025  
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/new-report-unesco-warns-serious-decline-freedom-expression-and-safety-journalists-worldwide>

Council of Europe European Press Freedom Report 2026  
<https://rm.coe.int/europe-press-freedom-report-2026-tipping-point-platform-partners-web/48802ac366>

## 6- CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

---

By the end of 2025, Türkiye entered an extraordinary period in terms of democracy, freedom of expression and media freedom; a period where new instruments of pressure were put into operation, judicial independence was largely rendered dysfunctional, structural problems deepened and intra-professional solidarity acquired a vital quality.

Pressure mechanisms established through legislative acts, economic interventions supported by administrative decisions and discriminatory practices directed at media workers' rights weakened the journalism profession at the institutional level.

Regulations that entered into force or came onto the agenda in recent years, particularly the 'anti-disinformation' law and the subsequent 'influence agency' definition, were not limited to merely increasing criminal sanctions with vague expressions; they also became a deterrent instrument that weakens journalists' motivation to produce news. While these regulations criminalised critical journalism, they also severely restricted the public's right of access to information.

The display of political stances by supreme councils headed by RTÜK, which should be subject to constitutional oversight, in imposing disproportionate penalties on critical broadcasts and their restriction of access to digital channels through access blocks and bandwidth throttling practices further deepened the structural inequalities in the media environment. In particular, the structure of local media's dependence on public announcements largely eliminated its capacity to distance itself from government policies, and this became one of the main elements threatening media diversity.

Field observations and data analyses showed that journalists' physical and digital security could not be sufficiently ensured and that numerous journalists were detained or subjected to judicial processes. It was also seen observed the press card practice is being operated in an increasingly arbitrary and exclusionary manner. 2025 Professional Satisfaction Survey results revealed that economic insecurity and livelihood concerns in the sector directly affect more than 80 percent of journalists. This picture threatened not only individual living conditions but also the sustainability of ethical standards in news production.

However, as also revealed in the report, the increase in cooperation between professional organisations, media coalitions and international actors both enabled the threats directed at journalists to become visible and contributed to the development of a long-term culture of solidarity.

Joint declarations, education and capacity development activities, digital security programmes and monitoring activities stood out as the concrete instruments of this solidarity.

In conclusion, the protection of freedom of expression and press freedom in Türkiye has now ceased to be solely the responsibility of journalists or media organisations. This area must become the common struggle of all segments that demand a democratic society. Media policies must be restructured on the basis of the principles of independence, transparency and equality; the rights of press workers must be placed under legal guarantee and a determined struggle must be conducted against the environment of censorship and self-censorship.

Otherwise, the public's right of access to information and democratic oversight mechanisms will suffer damage that is difficult to reverse; the media will become not the voice of the public but the voice of the government. The strongest response to this risk will be a stronger ground of solidarity to be established between journalists' ethical responsibility and society's moral sensitivity.

### Suggestions

The sustainable protection of press and freedom of expression in Türkiye is possible not only through the diagnosis of existing pressures but also through solution-oriented structural recommendations. The recommendations presented below have been prepared with the aim of responding to the multi-layered crisis in which the media sector finds itself, strengthening the culture of solidarity and making the support mechanisms of international actors such as the European Union more effective.

## 1. Legal Reform and the Establishment of Judicial Independence

\*Legislative acts open to vague and arbitrary practices such as TPC 217/A (Disinformation Law) and the 'Foreign Influence Agency' brought onto the agenda must be repealed, removed from the agenda, and a new framework that respects freedom of expression must be established.

\*Anti-terror legislation must be rewritten so as not to criminalise journalism; articles such as TPC 299 and ATL 7/2 must be removed..

\*European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decisions must be implemented immediately and in full, and lower court resistance to Constitutional Court decisions must be ended.

## 2. Transformation in Media Ownership and Economic Structure

\*Cross-ownership restrictions must be introduced against concentration in media ownership, and transparent and fair access must be ensured by breaking up distribution monopolies.

\*Institutions such as RTÜK, BİK and BTK must be transformed from being instruments of political control into independent and accountable mechanisms.

\*Discriminatory public announcement practices directed at local and independent media must end, and media funds must be restructured with equitable criteria.

\*The strengthening of institutional structures must be included as an important heading in financing support packages.

## 3. Strengthening of Solidarity and Collective Resistance Mechanisms

\*Structural and long-term funding must be provided to platforms such as the Media Solidarity Group; these networks must be encouraged to develop their roles of coordination, advocacy and resource sharing.

\*Shared legal support, technical infrastructure, training content and digital security resources must be made available to collective access; local media in particular must be the priority beneficiary of these systems.

\*Intergenerational knowledge transfer focused on mentoring and ethical journalism between senior journalists and young colleagues must be supported..

## 4. Transformation of International Support Mechanisms

\*Donor support programmes must be directed towards structural and sustainable resources rather than short-term projects; application processes must be simplified and made accessible to small local actors.

\*The EU and other donors must assume an active partner role that not only provides financial support but also increases the visibility of journalists, provides diplomatic protection and accompanies demands for reform.

\*Rapid response and solidarity mechanisms must be established for urgent legal and physical threats directed at journalists.

## 5. Media Literacy and Public Awareness

\*The struggle against disinformation must be conducted not only with criminal measures but also with media literacy campaigns. Critical thinking skills of the public must be fostered and the public role of journalism in the struggle against misinformation must be strengthened.

These recommendations concern not only journalists but also directly relate to information-based decision-making processes, democratic oversight mechanisms and the future of society. Protecting press freedom is not merely a sector matter but a shared democratic responsibility.



**Association of Journalists  
Support to Media Freedom Project  
Üsküp Street, No:35 Çankaya/Ankara**



+90 312 468 12 09



<https://supporttomediamfreedom.com>  
[www.gc-tr.org](http://www.gc-tr.org)  
[www.24saatgazetesi.com](http://www.24saatgazetesi.com)



[www.facebook.com/media4democracyx.com/  
Support2media](https://www.facebook.com/media4democracyx.com/Support2media)  
[www.instagram.com/media4democracy/](https://www.instagram.com/media4democracy/)



Click here to access previous reports published by the Association of Journalists.