



Istanbul, July 2017

**Dear friends,**

I would like to, invite you and your organization to monitor and observe the trial of 17 of our colleagues which will begin on 24 July 2017 and is expected to run until 28 July. We are appealing for your help, as supporters of free expression, a free media and the rule of law, at this crucial crossroads for Turkey, its journalists, and its judiciary.

We, as the remaining un-arrested employees and attorneys of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper want to show that we stand against this injustice, and they are not alone or forgotten. For this reason, we ask you to join us in solidarity on 24 July, knowing that having you, our colleagues, by our side will give us strength.

If you are available to attend the trial please let us know and we will forward you further details regarding the trial details, accommodation and logistics.

Best regards,

**Orhan Erinc**  
**Head Of the Board**

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July 24th is celebrated as Turkish Press Day since this was the day when censorship of media was removed in 1908. This year's Press Day will be celebrated in a cruelly ironic way due to the gross judicial injustice being perpetrated against the oldest newspaper in modern Turkey, *Cumhuriyet*.

*Cumhuriyet* means republic and takes its name from the Turkish Republic. Since 1924, the paper has survived five military coups and has continued to report the news under military regimes. In the past, many of its journalists were imprisoned, tortured, and were even victims of political assassinations. Yet never has there been such a concerted effort to completely eliminate the *Cumhuriyet* daily as today. This attack against the *Cumhuriyet* is purely political and is a direct assault on Turkey's secular republican regime.

Seventeen members of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, including columnists, correspondents, administrators and lawyers, are accused of helping what Turkish government calls "Fethullahist Terrorist Organization" (FETO) and the PKK. The eight journalists and three lawyers amongst the accused members of *Cumhuriyet*, have been in pre-trial detention since November 2016.

Cumhuriyet Gazetesi  
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Since July 15 coup attempt, around 4800 prosecutors and judges were either arrested or expelled, accused of being "FETO members". Among them: the prosecutor who was tasked with investigating Cumhuriyet newspaper for connections with "FETO", was subsequently himself accused of being a "FETO member" and faces two life sentences. His case, which includes 54 other prosecutors and judges, is still ongoing. Only 5 of the accused of this case are on bail, the others remain behind bars. The Cumhuriyet prosecutor's passport has been confiscated because of "flight risk." He is therefore in a position of running an investigation against a "terror organization" of which he is also accused of being a member.

The main accusation in this indictment is against the publication policy of the journal and its staff. In the 300-page indictment, the word "news" was used 662 times. There had been no evidence from the time of the investigation beginning in August 2016 until the time of arrests in November 2016. The prosecution conducted all of their research after the arrests. As a result of this research, not a single piece of evidence, aside from the news and columns, could be found to associate the *Cumhuriyet* members with any crime. Despite this, all appeals to the detentions have been rejected.

Appeals on the detentions were first made at the Turkish Constitutional Court which has not ruled on a single case relating to the attempted coup. Currently there are 100,000 cases pending before the court. We then filed the cases at the European Court of Human Rights which communicated them to Turkey in June. By the time the *Cumhuriyet* journalists make their first appearance in court for their defense on 24 July 24, they will have been in prison for more than nine months.

The course of events, the indictment, and the investigation file clearly shows that the case and the arrests are politically motivated. This court case aims to silence *Cumhuriyet*, which is one of the very few remaining opposition voices in the country. Allowing this to happen would imply that yet another significant threshold is surpassed for freedom of speech and of the press effectively silencing and in turn damaging democracy in Turkey.

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**Orhan Erinç**  
**Head of the board**

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**\* CUMHURİYET ARRESTEES**

Arrested since November 5, 2016

1. MURAT SABUNCU – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Chief Editor
  2. TURHAN GÜNAY – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Literary Supplement Editor
  3. GÜRAY TEKİN ÖZ – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Readers’ Representative
  4. KADRİ GÜRSEL – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Editorial Consultant
  5. HACI MUSA KART – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Illustrator
  6. HAKAN KARASINIR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
  7. ÖNDER ÇELİK – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Executive Committee Member
  8. BÜLENT UTKU – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney
  9. MUSTAFA KEMAL GÜNGÖR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney
- Arrested since November 12, 2016
10. AKIN ATALAY- Cumhuriyet Newspaper Attorney and Executive Committee Member

Arrested since December 30, 2016

11. AHMET ŞIK – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Correspondent

**OTHER DEFENDANTS**

12. ORHAN ERİNÇ – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Licensee
13. HİKMET ÇETİNKAYA – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
14. AYDIN ENGİN – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Columnist
15. GÜNSELİ ÖZALTAY – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Fiscal Affairs Director
16. BÜLENT YENER - Cumhuriyet Newspaper Former Fiscal Affairs Director
17. CAN DÜNDAR – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Former Chief Editor

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EMRE İPER – Cumhuriyet Newspaper Accountant (Arrested since April 18, 2017 on a separate court case)