

BİA MEDIA MONITORING 2007 / APRIL – MAY - JUNE

The last three months (April to June), have witnessed the trial of 132 people and seven media organs. The quarterly bianet media report lists information on them and many other forms of harassment.

The [full report is presently available in Turkish](#) and will be published in English by the end of this week, too.

The bianet report lists the trials at Turkish courts and appeals to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Report headings

The bianet report is organised under different headings:

- * attacks and threats
- * arrests and detentions
- * trials and interferences
- * corrections and seeking justice
- * European Court of Human Rights
- * Reactions to censure
- * RTÜK implementations

It has become obvious that neither the government nor the opposition are interested in changing the controversial Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which obstructs the freedom of expression and has arguably also lead to the targeting and later murder of journalist Hrant Dink.

Court cases continue

In the last three months, twenty-one court cases have continued:

- * Twelve cases under Article 301
- * Five under Article 216, "inciting hate and hostility"
- * Four cases for "spreading propaganda for a terrorist organisation"

For instance, following a complaint by the Gendarmerie General Command, Ahmet Sik and Lale Sariibrahimoglu are on trial for "degrading the armed forces", with three-year sentences being demanded. The trial, to start on 24 October, is based on an interview which Sik conducted with Sariibrahimoglu for the "Nokta" magazine.

Haci Bogatekin, owner of a local newspaper in Adiyaman (south-east Turkey), will appear in court on 25 July for "degrading the state" in an article criticising Turkey.

Eren Keskin, lawyer and former president of the Istanbul Branch of the Human Rights Association (IHD), is on trial for using the term "Kurdistan" at a panel condemning sexual violence towards women in 2004. He is accused of "inciting hate and hostility".

Reporting has become a crime

Sait Bayram, news director of Söz TV channel and newspaper in Diyarbakir (south-eastern Turkey), and Firat Avcı, reporter for the same employer, were arrested on 18 June for alleging that a judge had been transferred because he had been taking bribes. They have been accused of "insulting through the media" and are being held in a Diyarbakir prison. Their appeals have been rejected and their trial begins on 20 July at a penal court in Diyarbakir.

In the previous quarter, Sinan Kara from Batman and Mustafa Koyuncu from Afyonkarahisar were arrested for similar cases.

Thirteen months in detention

23 people, among them journalists and writers, were arrested in September 2006 in an operation targeting the Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP). Their trial begins on 26 October at a heavy penal court in Besiktas, İstanbul. Among them are Füsün Erdoğan, broadcast coordinator of Özgür radio station, Ibrahim Cicek, editor-in-chief of the Atilim newspaper, and Sedat Senoglu, publishing coordinator of the same newspaper. Life sentences of over 40 years are demanded for them and some others. The reason for their arrest is being kept secret. By the time the trial starts, they will have been in detention for thirteen months.

Attacks and threats

The worst physical attacks on journalists this year were experienced when they were covering the syndicate 1 May rally in Taksim, İstanbul. Despite obviously being journalists, many were attacked by the police. Hundreds of journalists later marched in protest against the police and the governor.

In the last three months, there have been 17 attacks and 6 cases of threats, compared to nine attacks against media institutions in the first quarter of this year.

European Court of Human Rights

In this quarter, the ECHR has sentenced Turkey to paying a total of 78,250 Euros (around 140,430 YTL) in twenty-five appeals concerning the freedom of expression. In all of 2006,

Turkey had to pay a total of 398,000 YTL. In this year's first quarter, Turkey was sentenced to paying 18,000 YTL.

And the good news...

In three cases, courts rejected claims for compensation:

- * A paper and carton company in Dalaman, MOPAK, had demanded 300,000 YTL compensation from the Güney Ege newspaper. The demand was refused.
- * Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's claim for 25,000 YTL compensation from the caricature magazine Lemar was rejected.
- * In a case of former Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım against journalist and writer Saruhan Oluc, the former was not successful in claiming 50,000 YTL compensation. (EÖ/AG)