

FreedomOfNewsIsARight



2024-2025 PRESS FREEDOM REPORT

PREPARED
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PRESS FREEDOM REPORT 2024-2025



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INTRODUCTION

PRESS FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

The state of the press and freedom of expression in a country is directly related to the level of democracy. Turkey transitioned to a presidential system in 2018, following the 16 April 2017 referendum, granting all powers to the President. Over the past seven years, the totalitarian regime that was established has grown stronger every day. Democracy has been destroyed. In the two local elections held over the past seven years, although ballot boxes were placed before the people, the results were not respected. Sixty-nine municipalities elected by the will of the people were placed under the control of appointed trustees. Citizens who opposed this usurpation of their will were silenced through police violence, detention, arrest and trials.

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, who announced his candidacy for the presidency, was arrested along with many other municipal officials. Millions took to the streets in response to the usurpation of the will of the people in Istanbul. Nearly two months have passed, and street protests are still ongoing. Detentions and arrests continue unabated. Many people, from students participating in the protests to political party leaders and journalists covering the events, have been arrested.

Over the past seven years, 18 out of 21 planned strikes in sectors such as metal, rubber, glass, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and banking have been banned on the grounds of ‘national security.’ Thus, the right of workers to the right to strike arising from collective bargaining agreements has been directly violated by the President. Tens of thousands of workers were fired during the same period for unionising. Looking at the media sector alone, 45 journalists from Hürriyet Newspaper and 26 journalists from Sputnik Turkey were collectively dismissed for the same reason. Dozens of journalists from various media outlets were fired individually for attempting to join a union.

The situation is also not at the desired level for journalists working in institutions with union membership and collective bargaining agreements. Despite being the union with the highest number of collective bargaining agreements in the sector, economic conditions are also putting pressure on our members in authorised workplaces. Although we have managed to secure relative privileges and improvements in economic and social rights through the agreements we have signed, their lifespan is short due to high inflation. The deteriorating state of the national economy is weakening the protective shield gained through unionisation.

Over the past seven years, according to data from the Workers' Health and Safety Council (İSİG), at least 13,505 workers lost their lives in workplace accidents. According to data from the Platform to Stop Female Murders, 2,537 women were killed. It is impossible to keep track of the

number of women who have suffered violence at the hands of men.

The pressure on journalists has not eased at all in the same period. When the presidential system was introduced, 142 journalists were imprisoned. In the following six years, 113 more journalists were arrested. Today, 18 journalists are imprisoned for their journalistic activities. The total number of prisoners and convicts in Turkish prisons is over 400,000.

The judiciary, which collapsed after the transition to the presidential system, has lost its independence and impartiality to such an extent that it is trampling on the Constitution and the laws. Even the decisions of the Constitutional Court, the highest court in Turkey's legal system, are not being implemented. Elected Member of Parliament Can Atalay has been in prison since the 2023 General Elections, despite the Constitutional Court's ruling.

In a country where democracy has been destroyed, we cannot speak of the existence of the press and freedom of expression, nor of the independence of the law.

As the Turkish Journalists' Union, we are sharing our report with you on “World Press Freedom Day” on 3 May, as we have done for the past six years.

And, as we do every year, we gathered with our team to decide on a theme for the report. We intended to highlight “poverty” again this year. However, less than a week later, a major crisis began in the online media due to Google's algorithm change. We then decided to change our theme to ‘media closures’ due to financial problems. Just as we were preparing for this topic, journalists were detained and arrested. This time, we changed our theme to ‘a look at press freedom from prisons.’ Then, with the protests that began with the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, violence against journalists, arrests, the detention of students, and penalties imposed on television stations and newspapers, our agenda changed again.

With so many pressing issues and such a volatile agenda, it was impossible to settle on a single theme. Thus, our 2024-2025 Press Freedom Report focuses on democracy, press freedom, trade union rights, and the freedom of journalists. We hope that this issue will comprehensively reveal the state of the media and press freedom in Turkey in 2025, support future work in these areas, and serve as a document for the future.

Today is the day to defend democracy and fight harder for freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

GÖKHAN DURMUŞ
President Of The Journalists' Union Of Turkey

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We would like to thank Prof. Dr. Ceren SÖZERİ ÖZDAL for her valuable article and contribution to our report, our imprisoned colleagues Yıldız TAR, Ercüment AKDENİZ, Elif AKGÜL, Öznur DEĞER and Vedat ÖRÜÇ for sharing with us what it means to be a journalist behind bars through their letters,

We would like to thank the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA), the P24 Independent Journalism Platform, the International Press Institute (IPI), the Media Monitoring Database, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Freedom of Expression Association (İFÖD) for their collaboration in the field of press freedom. .

We hope that the detained journalists will be released as soon as possible...

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anadolu Agency
EU	European Union
AFP	Agence France-Press (French News Agency)
AKP	Justice and Development Party
AP	Associated Press
AYM	Constitutional Court (CC)
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BİK	Press Advertising Authority
BİSAM	United Metal Workers' Union Research Centre
CBA's	Collective Bargaining Agreements
CHP	Republican People's Party
DEM	People's Equality and Democracy Party
DW	Deutsche Welle (German Broadcasting Corporation)
DMM	Centre for Countering Disinformation
EFJ	European Federation of Journalists
EPA	The European Pressphoto Agency B.V (European News Agency)
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
ILO	International Labour Organisation
İBB	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality
İFÖD	Freedom of Expression Association
İSİG	Occupational Health and Safety Council
MA	Mesopotamia Agency
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
RTÜK	Radio and Television Supreme Council
SGK	Social Security Institution
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TCK	Turkish Penal Code
TİS	Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)
TGS	Journalists' Union of Turkey
TMK	Anti-Terrorism Law
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT)
VOA	Voice of America

INTRODUCTION

The TGS Press Freedom Report was prepared to identify and expose all aspects of interventions against the press during the one-year period from April 2024 to April 2025.

Under the heading **‘Journalists in Prison and Under House Arrest, Arrests and Releases,’** the report includes a list of journalists in prison, the distribution of charges against journalists in indictments, the status of journalist arrests in the last year, and releases. As the number of cases has increased rapidly, this year we have also included data on the judicial control measure known as ‘house arrest,’ which prohibits individuals from leaving their homes.

The section titled **‘Investigations’** contains data on the detention and investigations of journalists, while the section titled **‘Trials’** contains data on the legal proceedings against journalists over the past year. We have also included summaries of individual application decisions published by the Constitutional Court.

In the **‘Disinformation Crime Report,’** you will find an up-to-date overview of the crime of ‘publicly disseminating misleading information’ under Article 217/A of the Turkish Penal Code, which has been used particularly against journalists since it came into force in 2022. Under the heading **‘Attacks and Impunity,’** we present numerical data on physical and verbal attacks against journalists and media organisations. We then provide an update on the status of cases involving the murder of journalists and attacks against them.

Under **‘Interventions Targeting the Internet,’** we discuss decisions to block access to and remove content from online media. The section titled **‘Interventions Targeting Media Organisations’** provides detailed explanations of interventions by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and the Press Advertising Board (BİK). All of this data can be found in the tables in the ANNEX. Under the heading **‘Legislative Changes,’** we provided information on legal changes that closely concern journalists and media organisations.

This year, unlike previous years, you will find another report within the report. It was necessary to include a separate section on the interventions directed at the press during the two weeks following the arrest and detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and presidential candidate of the CHP, on 19 March 2025. We have provided detailed information on the events that took place during this period under the heading **‘Saraçhane Protests: 19 March-1 April Special Report on Press Freedom.’**

The **‘Sector Overview’** section of this year's report sheds light on the economic and social conditions of media workers, particularly journalists, in the context of collective rights. You will find the current number of registered workers in the sector, the three factors that have been exerting pressure on journalists' collective rights for a long time, data on unionisation in the media, and the latest information on the unionisation efforts of the TGS. In order to reveal the extent of poverty experienced by media workers and their economic and social conditions, we have included a study titled **‘Economic and Social Conditions Survey’** in our report.

One difference between this report and previous ones is that it includes letters sent to TGS by our imprisoned colleagues. These were written in prison by Elif Akgül, Ercüment Akdeniz, Yıldız Tar, Öznur Değer and Vedat Örüç. The texts revealing the professional cost of imprisoning a journalist can be read throughout the report under the heading **‘Letters from Prison.’** In this year's report, we also sought to contribute to the discussion on the burning issue facing online media with Prof. Dr. Ceren Sözeri Özdal's article **‘Why Was Gazete Duvar Closed?’**

METHODOLOGY

The report covers data from 1 April 2024 to 1 April 2025. The primary sources of data used are applications, complaints, information and requests for support received directly by the TGS; data obtained from open sources; and interviews and observations made by the union during visits to cities, prisons and workplaces. Legal proceedings and detention monitoring conducted by the legal unit, lawsuits filed against regulatory actions, and information requests submitted to official institutions also serve as primary sources for the report. During the preparation phase, data from official institutions, labour and professional organisations, particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, were used to obtain an up-to-date picture of industrial relations in the sector. In addition, academic texts on press freedom, journalism and the profession, as well as TGS's work, press releases and news articles on the subject during the period in question were also used in the report. Traditional and social media were scanned daily, and news and posts were processed. The websites of official institutions containing updates on legislation and court precedents, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Official Gazette were also monitored daily during this process, and the relevant data were included in the report.

However, as in previous years, some difficulties were encountered during the preparation of this year's report. The fact that official institutions only provide data on registered employment has made it relatively difficult to make a general assessment of the sector. Verifying the information accessed during the source search, difficulties in accessing some journalists who have been subjected to rights violations and file information, and the attitude of official institutions that violate the right to information have narrowed the data set included in the report. Due to these limitations, the report has been prepared based on the most recent information available. Despite the number of cases, issues, and violations that could not be included in the report due to such obstacles, it is believed that the data presented in the report identifies the minimum level of problems and demands. Solution proposals have been developed for the problems identified by following this methodology.

The data source for the survey titled 'Economic and Social Level' is the TGS member list for the March 2025 period. The members on this list were divided into two categories: those working in authorised and unauthorised workplaces. Members working in workplaces not engaged in journalistic activities (e.g., printing houses, publishing houses, packaging, etc.) and members without email addresses were excluded from both lists. Although the majority of the questions overlapped, two separate surveys were prepared for authorised and unauthorised workplaces. The surveys were sent via email to a total of 1,207 members. The survey, which remained open for approximately two weeks, was completed by 41 (13.7%) participants from workplaces with collective bargaining agreements and 168 (18.5%) participants from workplaces without collective bargaining agreements. Among those who participated in the survey for authorised workplaces, 78% were journalist members, while 96.4% of those who participated in the survey for unauthorised workplaces were journalist members. When examining the gender distribution, 51.2% of participants from authorised workplaces were women, while 48.8% were men. These ratios were 29.8% and 70.2%, respectively, for unauthorised workplaces.



I. JOURNALISTS IN PRISON AND UNDER HOUSE ARREST, ARRESTS AND RELEASES

In this section, information about journalists in prison as of the date of the report and data on the charges against them will be shared. Then, data on journalists who were arrested and released in the last year will be listed. Finally, information will be provided on the judicial control measure known as ‘house arrest,’ which has become increasingly common in recent years.

A. Journalists in Prison

- The list of journalists who have been deprived of their liberty due to their professional activities, as determined by the TGS after reviewing court files, can be found in **Table 1**. According to the latest information available to us, as of 1 April 2025;
- **19 journalists** are deprived of their liberty in various prisons in Turkey due to their professional activities;
- **12 of the journalists in prison are under arrest**, and **seven are convicted**.
- **COF the journalists in prison, 12 are men, six are women, and one is LGBT+.**



Photo: TGS

Table 1: List of Journalists in Prison as of 1 April 2025

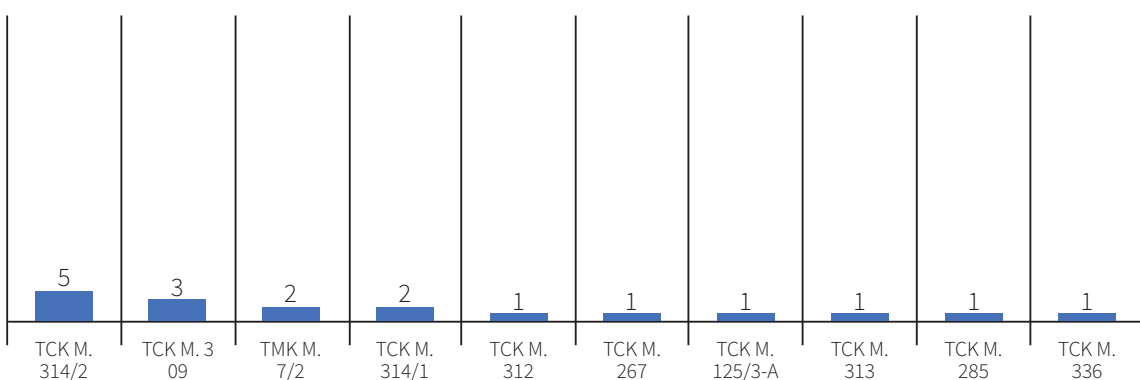
	NAME-SURNAME	INSTITUTION	POSITION
1	Ali Barış Kurt		Freelance reporter
2	Ali Ünal	Daily Zaman	Columnist
3	Elif Akgül		Freelance Reporter
4	Ercüment Akdeniz	İlke TV	Programmer
5	Erdal Süsem	Eylül Arts and Literature Magazine	Editor
6	Erol Zavar	Odak Magazine	Owner and the Editorial Director
7	Gültekin Avcı	Daily Bugün	Columnist
8	Hatice Duman	Atılım Newspaper	Owner and the Editorial Director
9	Kenan Karavil	Radio Dünya	General Publication Coordinator
10	Mehmet Baransu	Daily Taraf	Columnist
11	Mustafa Gök	Ekmekeç ve Adalet Magazine	Ankara Representative
12	Necla Demir Arvas	Güncel Production	Reporter
13	Öznur Değer	Jin News	Reporter

14	Rahime Karvar	Güncel Production	Reporter
15	Reyhan Hacıoğlu	Güncel Production	Reporter
16	Sami Tunca	Mücadele Birliği Magazine	Editorial Director
17	Velat Ekin	Güncel Production	Owner
18	Vedat Örüç		Freelance Reporter
19	Yıldız Tar	Kaos GL	Editor-in-chief

B. Charges Against Journalists in Prison

The numerical distribution of charges brought against detained and convicted journalists in the indictments is presented in **Table 2**. It should be noted that a journalist may face multiple charges in their indictment. Accordingly, four of the 13 journalists in prison are charged with ‘membership of an armed organisation’ under Article 314/2 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK), and three journalists are charged with ‘violation of the constitution’ under the repealed Article 146 of the TCK (now Article 309 of the new TCK). A journalist accused of membership in an armed organisation is also charged under Article 7/2 of the Anti-Terrorism Law (TMK) for ‘terrorist organisation propaganda’; another journalist is charged under Article 285 of the TCK for ‘breach of confidentiality’ and Article 336 for ‘disclosure of prohibited information.’ Two journalists are in prison on charges of ‘Establishing or Leading an Armed Terrorist Organisation’ under Article 314/1 of the Turkish Penal Code; one journalist is in prison on charges of ‘Crimes Against the Government’ under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code; one journalist is in prison on charges of ‘Armed Rebellion Against the Government of the Republic of Turkey’ under Article 313 of the Turkish Penal Code; and one journalist is in prison on charges of ‘Slander’ under Article 267 of the Turkish Penal Code. and TCK Article 125/3-a ‘Insulting a Public Official in the Course of Their Duties.’

Table 2: Numerical Distribution of Charges Against Journalists in Prison



C. Journalists Arrested

According to the data we have obtained over the past year, **29 journalists** have been imprisoned. The journalists arrested in the past year are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Journalists Arrested Between 1 April 2024 and 1 April 2025

	NAME-SURNAME	INSTITUTION	POSITION	DATE OF ARREST
1	Mehmet Aslan	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	26 April 2024
2	Esra Solin Dal	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	27 April 2024
3	Erdoğan Alayumat	Yeni Özgür Politika	Reporter	28 April 2024
4	Furkan Karabay	10Haber	Editor	8 November 2024
5	Pınar Gayıp	Etkin News Agency	Reporter	22 December 2024
6	Hayri Tunç		Freelance Reporter	22 December 2024
7	Serpil Ünal	Mücadele Birliği Magazine	Reporter	22 December 2024
8	Enes Sezgin	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper		22 December 2024
9	Osman Akın	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper	Legally Responsible Editor	22 December 2024
10	Can Papila	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper		22 December 2024
11	Gülistan Dursun	Jin news	Reporter	22 December 2024
12	Ahmet Güneş	Güncel Production	Reporter	20 January 2025
13	Eylem Babayiğit	Güncel Production	Reporter	20 January 2025
14	Necla Demir Arvas	Güncel Prodüksyon	Reporter	20 January 2025
15	Rahime Karvar	Güncel Production	Reporter	20 January 2025
16	Reyhan Hacıoğlu	Güncel Production	Reporter	20 January 2025
17	Velat Ekin	Güncel Production	Owner	20 January 2025
18	Vedat Örüç		Freelance Reporter	20 January 2025
19	Suat Toktaş	Halk TV	Editor-in-chief	30 January 2025
20	Elif Akgül		Freelance Reporter	21 February 2025
21	Ercüment Akdeniz	İlke TV	Programmer	21 February 2025
22	Yıldız Tar	Kaos GL	Editor-in-chief	21 February 2025
23	Ali Onur Tosun	Now TV	Reporter	25 March 2025
24	Bülent Kılıç		Freelance Photo Journalist	25 March 2025
25	Gökhan Kam	Bakırköy Belediyesi	Photo Journalist	25 March 2025
26	Hayri Tunç		Freelance	25 March 2025
27	Kurtuluş Arı	İBB	Photo Journalist	25 March 2025
28	Yasin Akgül	AFP	Photo Journalist	25 March 2025
29	Zeynep Ceren Kuray		Freelance Photo Journalist	25 March 2025

D. Journalists Released

In the past year,

- According to the information we have received, a total of 24 journalists have been released from prison.
- Of the 21 journalists who were detained, 11 were released after the court accepted the indictment against them; 7 were released by the prosecutor's office on its own authority, and one journalist was released following an appeal. Another journalist was released after the court issued a ruling at his first hearing.
- Four journalists who were serving sentences were released after their sentences were completed or they became eligible for parole.

The journalists who were released and the manner of their release are presented in **Table 4.**

Table 4: List of journalists released from prison between 1 April 2024 and 1 April 2025 and the manner of their release

	NAME-SURNAME	INSTITUTION	POSITION	METHOD OF RELEASE
1	Mehmet Aslan	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	Release by Approbation
2	Esra Solin Dal	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	Release by Approbation
3	Erdoğan Alayumat	Yeni Özgür Politika	Reporter	Tensiple Tahliye
4	Diren Keser	PIRHA	Reporter	Serving the Full Sentence
5	Furkan Karabay	10Haber	Editör	Release Upon Objection
6	Süleyman Gençel	A3 News	Editor-in-chief	Serving the Full Sentence
7	Pınar Gayıp	Etkin News Agency	Reporter	Release by Approbation
8	Hayri Tunç		Freelance Photo Journalist	Release by Approbation
9	Serpil Ünal	Mücadele Birliği Magazine	Reporter	Release by Approbation
10	Enes Sezgin	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper		Release by Approbation
11	Osman Akın	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper	Managing Editor	Release by Approbation
12	Can Papila	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper		Release by Approbation
13	Gülistan Dursun	Jinnews	Reporter	Release by Approbation

14	Ahmet Güneş	Güncel Production	Reporter	Release by Approbation
15	Murat Çapan	Nokta Magazine	Editor-in-chef	Serving the Full Sentence
16	Sertan Önal	Halkın Günlüğü Newspaper	Reporter	Serving the Full Sentence
17	Eylem Babayiğit	Güncel Production	Reporter	Release by ex-officio
18	Ali Onur Tosun	Now TV	Reporter	Release by ex-officio
19	Bülent Kılıç		Freelance Photo Journalist	Release by ex-officio
20	Gökhan Kam	Bakırköy Municipality	Photo Journalist	Release by ex-officio
21	Hayri Tunç		Freelance Photo Journalist	Release by ex-officio
22	Kurtuluş Arı	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality	Photo Journalist	Release by ex-officio
23	Yasin Akgül	AFP	Fotomuhabiri	Release by ex-officio

24	Zeynep Ceren Kuray		Freelance Photo Journalist	Release by ex-officio
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E. House Arrest (Domestic Detention) Judicial Control Measure

In recent years, even if journalists are not arrested, they are subject to various judicial control measures. The most common judicial control measure is a ban on leaving the country. However, in recent times, we have witnessed courts imposing the judicial control measure of house arrest on journalists as an alternative to detention. This measure, which is more news centres by confining them to their homes with electronic ankle monitors, thereby directly affecting their professional activities.

Last year, **six journalists** were subjected to judicial control measures in the form of house arrest. Three journalists were unable to leave their homes for approximately one year.

Table 5: Journalists Subjected to Judicial Control Measures in the Form of House Arrest Between 1 April 2024 and 1 April 2025

	NAME-SURNAME	INSTITUTION	POSITION	DECISION DATE	REVOCATION DATE
1	Melike Aydın	JinNews	Reporter	13.02. 2024	10.02.2025
2	Tolga Güney	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	13.02.2024	11.02.2025
3	Delal Akyüz	Mesopotamia Agency	Reporter	13.02.2024	12.02. 2025
4	Özlem Gürses	SZC TV / TV OZ	Presenter	21.12. 2024	12.02. 2025
5	Ender İmrek	Yeni Yaşam Newspaper	Columnist	21.02.2025	Ongoing
6	İsmail Saymaz	Halk TV	Columnist/ Programmer	20.03.2025	Ongoing



LETTER FROM PRISON

Every journalist will one day taste Silivri-Yıldız TAR¹

We need to revise the phrase ‘Every living thing will taste death one day’ at Zincirlikuyu Cemetery to ‘Every journalist will taste Silivri one day’ for journalists. Just as we share news with each other when there are too many reporters to cover the intense news agenda, we share the Silivri watch.

I still don't know why I was arrested. Even if I try to guess based on the questions asked during the interrogation, I can't figure out the 5W1H. As a result, I can't produce any news to share from my shift in Silivri. This is a first in my 12-year career. For the first time, I can't put together the elements of a news story and produce a complete news article. During the interrogation, I came across recordings of phone calls from 2012 and 2013. The recordings from 2012 consist of phone calls related to the activities of the LGBT+ student group at Boğaziçi University during my time as a student there, statements and information I gave to journalists about what was happening at the university, and conversations I naturally cannot remember after so many years. In 2013, a conversation I had with my news editor at the time in front of the DİSK building in Şişli during the May 1st protest and the news report I sent from my phone were included in the file. These questions made me feel strangely nostalgic. I found myself saying to my young friends in the cell, ‘We didn't have smartphones back then, or they were inadequate. We couldn't just write and send the news via WhatsApp. We dictated it over the phone.’ I immediately reminded myself: “You're not that old yet; these words don't suit you. Pull yourself together, take care of your skin, and be happy with your glowing face.” However, since I don't have the tools for skincare, this plan also fell through. For now, I'm relying on the miracle that white soap will work on my skin.

Our news sources are very limited. Add to that the fact that the LGBT+ agenda, which I am particularly interested in, is hardly ever covered by any newspaper or TV channel, and I can't say I'm not a little frustrated. When I saw that almost no newspaper had reported on the government's draft bill to punish LGBT+ people for expressing themselves with imprisonment, I decided to take matters into my own hands and started writing something based on the information I could gather from lawyers. As you can see, my situation is the same both inside and outside. However, being inside gives my colleagues the opportunity to pass on news to me. Please take advantage of this opportunity and put this intense attack on LGBT+ rights on your news agenda. Although your letters and messages of solidarity make me very happy, it would make me even happier to see this issue in the news and for the public to be able to access information about what is being done to LGBT+ people.

¹ For the letter: Recipient: Tarık Yıldız Address: Marmara 5 No'lu Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu Semizkumlar Mah. Marmara Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Kampüsü Marmara Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu Silivri / İSTANBUL

II. INVESTIGATIONS

Journalists face new investigations every day. So many journalists are unaware of how many investigations are open against them. Some journalists do not share their situation with the public in order to avoid becoming the subject of news stories about the investigations opened against them. Although the country's agenda changes every day, the only thing that remains unchanged is that journalists are forced to defend their news stories in police stations and courthouses.

According to the data² we have received between April 2024 and April 2025, at least

- **313 investigations** were opened against journalists.
- **123 detention procedures** were carried out against journalists.
- Journalists were summoned to give statements in **90 investigations..**

III. TRIALS

Judicial interventions against journalists continued this year as they have every year. The trials examined under this heading are those that are currently ongoing at the first instance level, or those that have been referred back to the first instance for retrial, and those that have been reported in the press and compiled based on applications received by the TGS. Cases at the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court levels are not included in these data. However, these trials are undoubtedly just the tip of the iceberg. We are aware that there are numerous cases continuing outside Istanbul, particularly at the local level, which have not been reported to the press or professional organisations. Under this heading, we will provide numerical data on criminal and compensation trials. We will share numerical data on disinformation crimes in a separate report.

According to the data we have received in the last year, at least 311 journalists were tried in 212 cases. Of these trials, 196 were criminal trials and 16 were civil lawsuits seeking compensation³.

A. Criminal Trials

- Last year, **300 journalists** were tried in **196** criminal cases.
- **117** cases are still ongoing, while **44** cases have been decided.
- A total of **137 years and 23 days** of imprisonment were handed down.
- **57** journalists were acquitted.
- A total of **161,980.00 TL** in fines was imposed.
- The verdict was postponed for **12 journalists**. The sentences of **3 journalists** were suspended. The cases of **3 journalists** were dismissed.

B. Compensation Trials

According to the latest information we have received during this period,

- **16 compensation claims with a total value of at least 3 million 850 thousand TL were heard.**
- **11 journalists and 4 institutions** were tried in these cases.
- Of the cases heard, **1 case with a total value of 50,000 TL was partially accepted.** A total of **12,500 TL** in compensation was awarded in these cases.
- **2 cases with a total value of 40,000 TL** were rejected.
- **13 cases** are still pending.

² The details of the investigation data can be found in the **Annex**

³ The details of the judgment data can be found in the **Annex**.

C. Constitutional Court Decisions

i. Constitutional Court Block on the Center of Countering Disinformation

On 2 August 2024, the Constitutional Court published its decision dated 27 December 2023, numbered 2020/88 E. 2023/224 K., in the Official Gazette, annulling certain articles of the Presidential Decree No. 66 on the Organisation of the Directorate of Communications on the grounds that they were contrary to the Constitution⁴. Among these provisions are paragraphs (c) and (ç) of Article 6/A, added to the 14th Presidential Decree on the Directorate of Communications, which pertain to the authorities exercised by the Directorate of Communications Center of Countering Disinformation (DMM). These provisions were as follows: ‘c) To analyse internal and external threats to the Republic of Turkey and implement necessary measures from the perspective of strategic communication and crisis management, ç) To identify psychological operations, propaganda, and perception operations targeting the Republic of Turkey and take action against all forms of manipulation and disinformation.’

The Head of Communications, under the name of the Center of Countering Disinformation, has been publishing bulletins for approximately three years, classifying numerous news items as ‘disinformation’ and sharing them on social media.

In its response to TGS's request for information, the Directorate of Communications stated that the Centre's powers were to ‘monitor psychological operations, propaganda, perception operations, internal and external disinformation activities carried out against Turkey and to take action against manipulation and disinformation directed against our country.’⁵

As can be seen, the powers exercised by the DMM, established by presidential decree, have been revoked, particularly with regard to clause (c).

The Constitutional Court ruled that these regulations constitute an intervention in the freedom of expression and dissemination of thoughts enshrined in Article 26 of the Constitution and the freedom of the press enshrined in Article 28 of the Constitution, and that, in this regard, the scope of the regulations falls within the prohibited area that cannot be regulated by a presidential decree in accordance with the second sentence of the seventeenth paragraph of Article 104 of the Constitution, as they contain provisions related to the rights and duties of individuals set forth in the Second Part, Second Section of the Constitution.

Another provision of the decree that was annulled is Article 13/B, which was added to Presidential Decree No. 14. This article provided for the establishment of a Revolving Fund Management Directorate within the Directorate of Communications. The Constitutional Court ruled that the establishment of the revolving fund, its capital structure, and regulations regarding its revenue-generating activities must be exclusively regulated by law, as the revenue generated from its activities constitutes public revenue, and therefore annulled the article as unconstitutional.

The second sentence added to the first paragraph of Article 21 of the decree granted Communication Experts and Assistant Communication Experts the authority to conduct research, analysis, inspection, supervision, investigation, and inquiry. In its decision, the Constitutional Court ruled that the duties, powers, and responsibilities of civil servants and other public officials must be regulated exclusively by law in accordance with Article 128 of the Constitution, and therefore annulled the decree.

Following the publication of the Constitutional Court's reasoned decision in the Official Gazette, the DMM issued a statement on its social media account. The statement noted that the decision would have ‘no effect on the DMM's work.’⁶ However, as explained, according to information provided by the Directorate of Communications itself, the DMM was exercising its authority under the repealed Article 6/A(c). Although the AYM revoked its authority, the Directorate of Communications continues to publish its disinformation bulletins.

4 Constitutional Court, App. No: 2020/88, Decision No: 2023/224, 27/12/2023, <https://normkararlarbilgi.bankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/ND/2023/224?EsasNo=2020%2F88> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

5 TGS, “No Information Emerged from the Right to Information Application”, 08.11.2022, <https://tgs.org.tr/bilgi-edinme-basvurusundan-bilgi-cikmadi/> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

6 AA, “Statement from DMM Regarding Allegations About the Constitutional Court's Decision Concerning the Presidency of Communications”, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/dmmden-aymin-iletisim-baskanligina-iliskin-verdigi-kararla-ilgili-iddialara-yonelik-aciklama/3293321> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).



Photo: Ozan Köse

ii. AYM: A Fair Balance Must Be Established Between Freedom of Expression and the Right to Protect Honour and Reputation⁷

The applicant, journalist Nezir Asaroğlu, published an article titled 'Ö.M.'s Fetö Burden!' on 9 May 2020 on the news website www.sehirmedya.com, of which he is the administrator. Following a complaint by Ö.M., the Bursa Commodity Exchange President mentioned in the article, Asaroğlu was tried and sentenced to a fine of 1,300 Turkish Lira.

Asaroğlu, who appealed to the AYM, stated that he did not claim that the complainant was a member of FETÖ, but only criticised his membership in an association known to be affiliated with FETÖ. He emphasised that he had criticised the complainant for criticising the closure of private tutoring centres while he was president of the chamber of commerce, and that he had shared his assessments of the complainant in the article, taking into account the complainant's actions and his close connections, and that this was part of his duty as a journalist. In his application, Asaroğlu also emphasised that the first instance court's decision on conviction was not based on any grounds and claimed that his right to a fair trial and freedom of expression had been violated. In its opinion, the Ministry of Justice stated that it was necessary to assess whether a fair balance had been struck between freedom of expression and the right to protection of honour and reputation.

The Constitutional Court found that the applicant journalist criticised the complainant for focusing on politics and chamber elections, which he considered to be his main duty, and that at the end of the article, he drew some conclusions from the complainant's actions, which attracted the attention of the local public, and posed some open-ended questions to the reader. According to the AYM, the court of first instance had failed to assess the manner in which the statements were made and the reasons behind them, whether there was any background to the statements, the complainant's previous behaviour, and whether the statements were made in the context of a public debate, and had failed to take into account the meaning of the statements in their context. It was assessed that the first instance court, without taking into account the criteria set forth by the AYM, failed to strike a fair balance between freedom of expression and the right to protection of honour and reputation, and therefore did not provide a relevant and sufficient justification for the interference with the applicant's freedom of expression. As a result of the application, in which it was decided that the freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 26 of the Constitution had been violated, it was ruled that a retrial should be held and that 30,000 TL in moral damages should be paid.

⁷ Nezir Asaroğlu [1st Section], App. No: 2021/41253, 6/6/2024
<https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2021/41253> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

iii. AYM Repeated: Article 49 of the BİK Law Constitutes a Structural Problem⁸

As we have previously reported, the Constitutional Court, in its pilot decision in the case of *Yeni Gün Haber Ajansı Basın ve Yayıncılık A.Ş. and others* (Case No. 2016/5903), determined that Article 49 of the Law on the Establishment of the Press Advertising Authority, titled ‘Penalties,’ of the Law on the Establishment of the Press Advertising Authority constitutes a structural problem and decided that it should be revised and that the examination of applications to be made after the decision should be postponed for one year⁹.

In the application of *Bülten Basın Yayın Reklamcılık Ticaret Ltd. Şti.* and others, the Constitutional Court similarly examined claims of violations of freedom of expression and press freedom due to decisions to suspend official announcements and advertisements for various periods in relation to news articles and opinion pieces. In the specific applications, the Constitutional Court determined that there was no situation requiring a departure from the principles and conclusions reached in its decision regarding the application of *Yeni Gün Haber Ajansı Basın ve Yayıncılık A.Ş.* and others, and reiterated its view that the interventions arising from Article 49 of Law No. 195 did not meet the legality criterion. The Court ruled that the freedom of expression guaranteed by Articles 26 and 28 of the Constitution had been violated, ordered the files to be returned to the first-instance court for retrial, and awarded separate compensation of 30,000 TL to each applicant for non-pecuniary damage.

iv. AYM: It Cannot Be Expected of a Journalist to Act Like a Prosecutor¹⁰

On 11 July 2013, the *Sözcü* Newspaper, owned by the applicant Burak Akbay, published a news article titled ‘The Minister’s Son is Studying with a Poverty Scholarship.’ The then-Minister of Foreign Affairs filed a lawsuit claiming that the news article was published despite knowing it was untrue and that it violated his personal rights, seeking 20,000 TL in moral damages.

The applicants argued that the article was based on a document belonging to the Turkish Education Association, that the article was not contrary to the truth, and that it stated that the minister’s son had received a scholarship for the upcoming academic year, with no claims regarding previous years. The applicants also stated that they could have applied to the court to investigate whether the document on which the news was based was forged, but despite informing TED, no steps were taken in this regard, and no information was provided to the parties.

As a result of the trial, the Civil Court of First Instance partially accepted the claim for moral damages and ordered the applicants to pay 8,000 TL in moral damages. In its reasoning, the court considered that, taking into account the Turkish Education Association’s press release and the decision of the scholarship student identification committee and the board of directors attached thereto, as well as the invoices related to the payments made by the plaintiff, the news report was found to be contrary to the truth.

In its decision, the Constitutional Court emphasised that, referring to previous decisions, it could not be expected of a journalist to act like a prosecutor in proving the truth of a statement when fulfilling their burden of proof. The main issue to be addressed in the case was the limits of a journalist’s obligation to investigate the truth of a news report. The Court reiterated that the journalist’s duty to investigate should not be understood in terms of concrete reality, but rather in terms of conformity with the form in which the events appeared at the time of publication, and that it was sufficient for the applicant to demonstrate whether the news sources were reasonably reliable in relation to the allegations in question and whether the applicant had made efforts in good faith to provide accurate and reliable information.

⁸ *Bülten Basın Yayın Reklamcılık Ticaret Ltd. Şti. and Others* [1st Section], App. No: 2020/29073, 17/7/2024 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2020/29073> (Access Date: 01.04.2025)

⁹ TGS 2022–2023 Press Freedom Report, pp. 42–43 <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TGS-Basin-Ozgurlugu-Raporu-2022-2023.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025)
¹⁰ *Burak Akbay and Others* [2nd Section], App. No: 2022/61371, 2/10/2024 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2022/61371> (Access Date: 01.04.2025)

The Court noted that, in the specific case, it could not be said that the applicants had published the news based on rumours and without conducting any investigation into the accuracy of the facts; indeed, in the case of a news report based on a document, subjecting journalists to sanctions solely because those whose rights are allegedly violated claim the contrary, without objectively establishing that the document on which the news report is based is false, would have a deterrent effect on freedom of expression.

The Court ruled that it cannot be said that the judicial authorities struck a fair balance between freedom of expression and the plaintiff's right to protection of honour and reputation, and decided that freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 26 of the Constitution had been violated. and ruled that the freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 26 of the Constitution had been violated. It referred the case back to the court of first instance for retrial and awarded the applicant 30,000 TL in non-pecuniary damages.

v. AYM: You cannot evaluate statements out of context¹¹

Sinan Aygöl, President of the Bitlis Journalists' Association, published an article titled "Jeo-Vurgun!" on the website *bitlisnews.com* on 4 September 2014. Aygöl was fined 1,500 TL by the Tatvan Criminal Court of First Instance, and the court decided to postpone the announcement of the verdict after the politician mentioned in the article filed a complaint. According to the first-instance court, the statement 'A politician-trader who is too cunning to let such a big piece of the pie be eaten' constitutes a criminal accusation, damaging the complainant's reputation and insulting his honour, dignity, and respect.

In its decision, the Constitutional Court concluded that the first instance court had convicted the applicant by removing a sentence containing a value judgment from its context, without discussing the circumstances in which the statements in question were made, the context of the statement, or the social status of the plaintiff, and had therefore convicted the applicant. The reasons put forward by the court for the applicant's conviction were not considered relevant and sufficient to justify the interference with the applicant's freedom of expression, and the first-instance court failed to strike a fair balance between the applicant's freedom of expression and the complainant's right to the protection of his honour and reputation. Therefore, the Constitutional Court ruled that the applicant's freedom of expression had been violated, that a retrial should be held, and that the applicant should be awarded 20,000 TL in non-pecuniary damages.

vi. AYM: It is not the duty of the judiciary to take the place of the press and determine the form of news¹²

The internet news site sendika.org published a news article on 8 July 2019 titled 'TRT "honoured": They received a plaque from HTŞ, which Turkey considers 'terrorist', claiming that the article constituted an attack on personal rights, that the statements made about it exceeded the bounds of harsh criticism, and that the facts had been manipulated, and demanded 20,000 TL in moral damages. TRT and TRT World teams received a plaque from the Salvation Government for their contributions to the revolution, and that the claim was baseless. They argued that the aim was to damage their reputation in the eyes of the public by implying a connection to an illegal organisation. They emphasised that they were awarded the plaque for objectively reporting on the humanitarian crisis in the region.

The court of first instance ruled that the news report was within the bounds of criticism and did not constitute an attack on the plaintiff's personal rights, and dismissed the case. Upon appeal, the Regional Court of Appeal upheld the plaintiff's claim and ordered the defendant to pay 20,000 TL in moral damages. According to the Regional Court of Appeal, TRT violated the plaintiff's personality rights by creating the impression that the plaintiff was associated with a terrorist organisation, making irrelevant and unfounded statements and comments, using provocative language that incited hostility and suspicion in the public, undermining trust, failing to maintain a balance between content

11 Sinan Aygöl [1st Section], App. No: 2021/59847, 21/5/2024 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2021/59847> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

12 Ali Ergin Demirhan (3) [2nd Section], App. No: 2022/48653, 22/5/2024 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2022/48653> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

and form, and publishing false information.

According to the Constitutional Court, the fact that an official media outlet of the country received a plaque from an organisation whose assets were frozen is a current issue of public interest and newsworthiness. Moreover, TRT, which claims that its personality rights were violated, has the opportunity to respond to the applicant and to present this response to a wide audience.

According to the Human Rights Court, the Regional Court of Appeal disregarded the fact that the second paragraph of Article 26 of the Constitution leaves very little room for restricting freedom of expression in matters of public interest, and without discussing the parties' positions in society by disregarding the fact that the second paragraph of Article 26 of the Constitution leaves very little room for restricting freedom of expression in matters of public interest, without discussing the parties' positions in society and without considering the evidence presented by the applicant, accepted that the news report contained "unhelpful and irrelevant characterisations and comments" about the plaintiff. Moreover, the Regional Court of Appeal did not explain which statements in the news report were irrelevant or unrelated. According to the Constitutional Court, it is not the duty of judicial authorities to determine the form of news reporting that should be adopted in a given situation by substituting themselves for the press. Therefore, in the present case, it cannot be said that the interference with the applicant's freedom of expression was necessary to meet a pressing social need, especially when it comes to news about a media organisation, as in the present case, restricting freedom of expression with an abstract justification has a deterrent effect on journalists, so the balancing of conflicting rights must be carried out with due care, and the courts must justify their decision in a relevant and sufficient manner.

On this basis, the Constitutional Court ruled that sendika.org's freedom of expression had been violated, that a retrial should be held, and that the applicant should be awarded 30,000 TL in non-pecuniary damages.

vii. AYM: Principles for Publishing Content Related to Child Sexual Abuse on the Internet and Restricting Access¹³

Following a series of news reports about the sexual abuse of a five-year-old child in the Küçükçekmece district of Istanbul, news articles published on the websites 'www.diken.com.tr' and 'www.sendika63.org' were blocked at the request of the Ministry of Family and the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. After the appeal against the decision was rejected, the applicants filed an individual application with the AYM.

The court decision regarding the blocking of access did not provide clear information on which legal provision was invoked to impose the access restriction. Since the reason for the access restriction decision was determined to be the protection of the personality rights of a child victim of sexual abuse and their family, the Constitutional Court concluded that the basis for the restriction was Article 9 of Law No. 5651 on the Regulation of Publications Made on the Internet and the Fight Against Crimes Committed Through Such Publications. In its previous decision in the case of Abdullah Kaya and others, the Court also ruled that the aforementioned article did not meet the legality criterion and therefore the applicants' freedom of expression and freedom of the press had been violated. However, the Constitutional Court, considering the sensitivity of the case at hand, which concerned the reporting of a child's sexual abuse and the protection of the personality rights of the child and his relatives, examined the fair balance that must be struck between the child's personality rights and freedom of the press in the specific case.

According to the AYM, when reporting on such matters, the personality rights of the child who is the victim of sexual abuse must not be outweighed by the value of press freedom. In this context, one of the most important issues to be considered when reporting on children who are victims of sexual abuse is the need

¹³ Keskin Kalem Publishing and Trade Inc. and Ali Ergin Demirhan [2nd Section], App. No: 2019/20812, 11/12/2024 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2019/20812> (Access Date: 01.04.2025)

to take measures to prevent the disclosure of the child's identity. Turkish law contains certain provisions prohibiting the disclosure of the identity of child victims of crime. The Press Law No. 5187 of 9 June 2004 criminalises the identification of child victims, the disclosure of their identities, or the publication of news in a manner that would reveal their identities. In our criminal procedure legislation, special procedures have been adopted to prevent victimisation and protect victims of sexual assault and sexual abuse crimes. The unlawful acquisition and dissemination of personal data, where the subject matter of the crime is the statements of the victimised child recorded within this scope, has been determined as an aggravating circumstance. With these regulations, the legislator has sought to prevent child victims of sexual crimes, who are at a disadvantage in terms of overcoming the trauma they have experienced and restoring their physical and mental integrity, from being forced to repeat their experiences, while also seeking to prevent them from being victimised again through the dissemination of their identities and images in cases where confidentiality cannot be sufficiently ensured.

According to the Constitutional Court, the obligation to take measures to prevent the disclosure of the identities of child victims of sexual abuse in news reports becomes even more important in the context of online journalism. Indeed, if the necessary sensitivity is not shown, the information about the child's identity may continue to exist in the internet environment independently of time, considering that it will spread much faster than in traditional media, and this may render efforts to prevent the child from being recognised meaningless. In the news reports in question, it is understood that the child's or family's name, address, photograph, images, or any other information that could lead to their identification has not been disclosed. When examining the language used in the news or the manner in which the news was presented, it does not appear possible to argue that the child victim of sexual abuse suffered any harm that would necessitate swift action within the framework of the doctrine of *prima facie* violation.

Following these findings, the Constitutional Court ruled that, given the sensitivity of the case in question, the publication of other news articles that did not seek to protect the rights of the victimised child, and the obligation of the criminal courts of peace to make decisions within a short period of twenty-four hours, the decision to block access to the news articles in question at the initial stage could be deemed justified. However, the Court ruled that the authority reviewing the appeal had failed to conduct any examination, evaluation or distinction, and that this did not meet a compelling social need.

On these grounds, the Constitutional Court ruled that the applicants' freedom of expression had been violated, that a retrial should be held, and that the applicants should be awarded separate compensation of 30,000 TL.

viii. Constitutional Court Plenary Decision: Courts Must Apply a Three-Step Test Regarding the Right to Correction and Reply¹⁴

In the decision, in which Aydın Gelleci, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper Günebakış published in the Black Sea Region, was the applicant, the claim that the applicant's right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press had been violated due to the court's acceptance of the request for correction and reply against a column titled 'The President Did Not Say Anything New' was examined on the grounds that the court's acceptance of the request for correction and response violated the freedoms of expression and the press.

Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality Mayor O.F.G. sent a correction and response text to the applicant after the publication of the news article, but the applicant refused to publish it on the grounds that it contained insults. Upon the applicant's request, the Trabzon 1st Criminal Court of Peace ruled that the correction and response text should be published in the same font size on the page and column where the relevant publication appeared. Although the applicant appealed the decision, the appeal was rejected on the grounds that there was no error in the decision, no deficiencies requiring correction, and that the decision was in accordance with the law and procedure.

The applicant, who is the responsible editor-in-chief of the newspaper, published an article containing arguing that the correction and response text of the complainant, in response to the column article in question, which did not contain insults and remained within the bounds of criticism, consisted of statements that were clearly contrary to the law and contained insults, and that, in accordance with the decision of the Criminal Court of Peace, the newspaper was compelled to publish the complainant's text containing insults and defamation through the aforementioned text. According to the applicant, the first-instance court's decision prevented the newspaper from reporting on the complainant and the metropolitan municipality under its administration, and that the decision was made without examining the truthfulness, legality, or content of the critical statements in the column in question. The applicant argued that this violated the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and a fair trial.

In its comprehensive assessment, the Constitutional Court has provided a three-stage test for judicial authorities to evaluate the conflicting rights in the context of the right to correction and reply, in order to strike a balance between them. Since the test is a step-by-step process, there is no need to subject a request for correction and response that fails to pass the first stage to the second stage, or a request that fails to pass the second stage to the third stage, as a rule. The test is as follows:

First Stage: At least one of the following conditions must be met in the specific case: the dignity and honour of individuals must have been violated, or publications contrary to the truth must have been made about them. The following points must be taken into account:

- Imposing obligations on media organisations that impose excessive burdens in terms of providing space or time for responses or corrections may harm their editorial independence and jeopardise their ability to effectively fulfil their social functions. Furthermore, editorial discretion recognises that journalists are professionals who exercise judgement and expertise in selecting, interpreting, and presenting information to the public. Filling newspaper pages with mandatory publications that do not possess these qualities may violate this discretion and potentially lead to censorship, self-censorship, or the devaluation and loss of seriousness of journalistic standards. The decision should be made taking into account that the acceptance of the request to publish a correction and response text supersedes the will of the media organisation's owner to determine the content of the periodical publication, and therefore constitutes a serious interference with press freedom.

- Not every interference with honour and reputation falls within the scope of the right to correction and response. Such an acceptance would result in an arbitrary interference with press freedom. Therefore, for the request for correction and response to be accepted, the interference with honour and reputation must

¹⁴ Aydın Gelleci [GK], B. No: 2018/18910, 5/9/2024, <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2018/18910> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

have reached a certain level of severity or crossed a certain threshold. This threshold varies depending on the specific case. However, in the specific case, the existence of such a level of severity must be capable of convincing an objective observer. The subjective perception of the person making the request cannot be decisive in determining whether a right of reply arises under Article 32 of the Constitution. In any case, the court decision must demonstrate, with relevant and sufficient reasoning, that the interference with honour and reputation constitutes an interference of sufficient gravity to require the publication of a correction and reply and that it meets a pressing social need.

- Freedom of expression is a requirement of pluralism, tolerance, and open-mindedness, without which a democratic society cannot exist. Although subject to certain exceptions, these exceptions must be interpreted narrowly, and any limitation of this right must be convincing. The right to correction and reply enables individuals to reach the press through state intervention, and this inevitably has the effect of restricting and weakening press freedom. In this regard, it should be borne in mind that ensuring that the aforementioned right is exercised with broad justifications or expanding the scope of this right may result in a violation of press freedom. Therefore, when evaluating requests for correction and response, no broad interpretation that would eliminate editorial independence should be made.

Second Stage: If at least one of the necessary conditions is met, it must be determined whether the text requested to be published technically corresponds to a correction and response. Accordingly;

- The correction and response text must correspond to the news item. Elements other than the content constituting the correction and response to the claims made in the news item do not fall within the scope of this right, and therefore, the press organisation cannot be expected to publish such irrelevant content. Consequently, the correction and response text must not exceed the scope of the news item or article published in the periodical, and there must be a conceptual link between the subject matter of the text and the expressions used.

- The correction and response text must not contain any criminal elements or violate the legally protected interests of third parties.

Third Stage: If the text is technically of a corrective and responsive nature, a proportionality assessment must be carried out. In this context, it should be noted that the length of the correction and response text significantly exceeding the length of the publication may raise issues of proportionality.

In the case in question, the column article related to the provincial congress of the AKP in Trabzon primarily commented on the speech delivered by the President at the congress. However, the author also touched upon two issues concerning O.F.G., the mayor of Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality: First, the journalist shared his opinion that the provincial chairman of the party had influenced the formation of the party organisation through his relationship with O.F.G., who is a member of parliament and mayor of the metropolitan municipality, and assessed that an organisation formed in this manner was not inclusive. Secondly, the author claims that the public did not allow O.F.G. to assign a structure, which had been agreed to remain a museum and green space, to another purpose through secret cooperation with a minister. The article contains information about O.F.G.'s relations related to the duties he performed, but does not contain any statements or criticisms targeting his personality or private life, nor does it contain any subjective assessments of his person.

The Constitutional Court, in its examination based on the three-part test it established, determined that the first condition was met, as it concluded that at least one of the conditions of the Peace Criminal Court's decision—namely, that the publication infringed upon the dignity and honour of individuals or contained false statements about them—was present in the specific case. In the second stage of the test, the AYM recalled that it was necessary to determine whether the text accepted for publication technically constituted

a correction and response, and concluded that the content of the text indicated that the columnist targeted the complainant's personal character rather than his professional competence in response to the complainant's statement regarding his role in the formation of the party organisation. O.F.G.'s assessments that the writer was a slave to his ambition, that his passions had clouded his judgment, and that he was in a disturbed state of mind were value judgements directed at the writer rather than the column itself. When considered together with serious allegations against the writer, such as 'divisiveness, fragmentation, creating discord, and attacking party unity,' it is clear that O.F.G.'s words go far beyond responding to the criticism directed at him and constitute a personal attack. According to the Constitutional Court, the court's reasoned decisions did not discuss whether the correction and response text technically constituted a correction and response, or which parts of the publication constituted a correction and response to the allegations made in the news article, and did not provide an examination of the quality required by the second stage of the test.

According to the court, it must be emphasised that the editorial discretion to select articles to be published in a publication generally lies with the publisher. In this context, the right to correction and reply, which is part of the state's positive obligation, does not grant individuals the right to intervene in the press in an unlimited manner through correction and reply. Therefore, to reiterate, the right to correction and reply is only granted to individuals in exceptional cases and is limited to news items relating to the individual. According to the Constitutional Court's assessment, the applicant was compelled to publish irrelevant content that did not correspond to the allegations made in the news item, in other words, elements that did not constitute a correction and reply in the technical sense. It is not possible to accept that such an intervention in the press and freedom of expression corresponds to a necessary social need. Furthermore, given that the statements regarding O.F.G. correspond to a very limited section of the column, the excessive length of the correction and response text clearly renders the intervention in the editorial freedom of the press disproportionate. For these reasons, it has been concluded that the intervention in the applicant's freedom of expression and press freedom is not in accordance with the requirements of a democratic society.

On this basis, the Constitutional Court ruled that the applicant's freedom of expression had been violated, that a retrial should be conducted, and that the applicant should be awarded 10,000 TL in moral damages.

D. Disinformation Crime Report

The crime of ‘Publicly Disseminating Misleading Information’ added to the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) as Article 217/A by Law No. 7418 dated 13 October 2022 began to be used against journalists as soon as it came into effect. Despite the ruling party, which proposed the law, claiming that its target was not journalists, the implementation of the law has proven the concerns of press professional organisations, which had been striving to have it withdrawn even during the proposal stage, to be valid. The law was used against everyone who spoke out, but most of all against journalists.

According to the data presented in the ANNEX, between October 2022, when the regulation came into force, and April 2025, at least¹⁵.

- **67 journalists were investigated a total of 85 times under Article 217/A of the Turkish Penal Code for ‘publicly disseminating misleading information.’**
- **15 journalists were detained.**
- **Four journalists were arrested. One journalist was placed under judicial control in the form of house arrest. Other judicial control measures were applied to eight journalists.**
- As a result of the investigations, **27 cases** were opened. **Eleven cases** resulted in acquittal at the first instance. **One case** resulted in a 10-month prison sentence, but the acquittal was upheld on appeal. **In one case, a 10-month prison sentence was handed down, and the pronouncement of the sentence was postponed. One case was dismissed. 13 cases are still pending trial.**
- **40 investigations were dismissed, and 18 investigations** are ongoing.

Meanwhile, Zeynep Oduncu Kutevi, a member of parliament from Batman representing the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), recently submitted a bill criticising the TCK 217/A regulation, which has become a tool for pressuring journalists, saying that it punishes critical reporting and should be repealed. Oduncu said, “The offence of ‘misleading information’ in the Turkish Penal Code must be immediately repealed, and arbitrary restrictions on press freedom must end. This proposal is a necessity for protecting not only journalists but also the entire society's freedom of information and expression. The rule of law, democratic values, and human rights can only be protected in a free media environment.”¹⁶

¹⁵ You can access the details of investigations related to the crime of disinformation from the ANNEX.

¹⁶ Gazete Duvar, “DEM Party MP Oduncu Proposed to Repeal the ‘Censorship Law’”

<https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/dem-partili-oduncu-sansur-yasasinin-kaldirilmasini-teklif-etti-haber-1762094> (Access Date: 01.04.2025)



LETTER FROM PRISON

Is this how a journalist is arrested? -Ercüment AKDENİZ¹⁷

On February 18, 2025, at 5:30 a.m., I left my home as usual to go to the TV station. I work for İLKE TV and host the program HABER ZAMANI/MEDYA ZAMANI (News Time/Media Time) five days a week during the morning broadcast. On my way, I read digital newspapers, and when I arrive at the TV building, printed newspapers arrive, and program preparations begin. Strangely enough, I was detained right in front of my home. Despite saying, “I have the keys to the house,” I was not allowed to open the door. The doors were beaten, and my home was raided with noise. Is this how a journalist is detained?

The charges against us are both baseless and devoid of legal foundation. Political freedoms and press freedom are guaranteed by the constitution, yet we are in prison. Unfortunately, arrests are turning into actual punishment. If they had called us, we would have gone to give our statements. Connecting to Hayat TV is also among the charges.

Every journalist friend of mine who has been arrested, like me, is actually working for the people's right to information. The right to report the news should not be so easily imprisoned behind bars. Already, 85% of the media-TV sector is made up of dominant media institutions and holding companies. The remaining 15% continue to work as journalists under difficult conditions. Every arrest case means that the independent opposition media is pushed further into difficulty.

As is well known, one of my areas of special interest is reporting on migration and refugees. Hundreds of news articles and essays I have written on this subject have been published. I have been awarded various prizes. I have five books published on the subject of migration. My appointment notes for book signings, seminars, and interviews related to my latest book, “Migration and Municipalities,” are also among the charges. My greatest sorrow is being unable to report on migration, especially Syrian workers. Because refugees need us journalists more than ever. They are among the most disadvantaged groups in society. Our health and morale are good in prison. My friend Elif Akgül from TV was also sent to Bakırköy Women's Prison. Unfortunately, we cannot watch İLKE TV and TELE 1 here. Yet we should have the right to watch the channel we work for. We are allowed to read three newspapers a day. Our ward receives Hürriyet, BirGün, and Karar newspapers, but this restriction makes it difficult for us journalists to follow the media. Another problem is that we do not have sufficient reference books on migration and the media.

Finally, the support provided by press professional organizations has boosted our morale. It is essential to continue solidarity and raise awareness for the release of detained journalists and their access to freedom and journalism. Warm greetings to everyone who has shown solidarity. Journalism is not a crime! We will continue on our path without dropping our pens...



Photo: Fatoş Erdoğan

IV. ATTACKS AND IMPUNITY

In the 2024-2025 period, journalists also faced serious threats to their physical safety. In the past year, journalists covering the Sinan Ateş murder case were threatened with death by MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) leader Devlet Bahçeli and members of the Ülkü Ocakları (Nationalist Movement Youth Organization). In the political tension that rose after the March 31 local elections, journalists were subjected to attacks regardless of whether they were national or local, and regardless of whether they were in public or private spaces.

In April 2024, Abdullah Zeydan, who was elected mayor of Van Metropolitan Municipality, was denied his certificate of election, and in March 2025, Ekrem İmamoğlu, mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, was detained and arrested. In the days that followed, journalists became the clear target of police violence.

On December 20, 2024, it was announced that journalists Nazım Daştan and Cihan Bilgin were killed in an attack carried out by an armed unmanned aerial vehicle on a vehicle marked “press” in northern Syria.

This section will first present numerical data on physical and verbal attacks against journalists over the past year, followed by recent developments in ongoing trials related to unsolved murders of journalists and attacks against journalists that have gone unpunished.

According to the data we have received¹⁸, in the past year alone, at least,

- **56 journalists** were physically attacked.
- **90 journalists** were verbally threatened.
- **3 media organizations** were attacked.
- **3 media organizations** were targeted.

The biggest reason for the increase in attacks on the press is undoubtedly the policy of impunity. The main practices of this policy are the protracted nature of trials against attacks on journalists, the statute of limitations, and the failure to identify the perpetrators.

In recent years, the dismissal of the Musa Anter case on the grounds of statute of limitations, the transfer of the Cemal Kaşıkçı case to Saudi Arabia, and the failure to remove the “bricks” behind the murders of Uğur Mumcu and Hrant Dink despite the passage of time are emboldening potential perpetrators.

During the 2019-2020 period, it is necessary to investigate the allegations¹⁹ that the attacks against numerous journalists and TV commentators, particularly those critical of the People's Alliance, such as Yeniçağ newspaper columnist Yavuz Selim Demirağ, were not isolated incidents but the result of a systematic and organized movement.

Looking at the cases of journalist murders and attacks on journalists over the past year,

A. Hrant Dink Murder Trials

Efforts to shed light on the murder of Hrant Dink, editor-in-chief of Agos newspaper, who was killed on January 19, 2017, are ongoing. Many people have been tried in the case so far, but those who were involved in the process leading up to the murder and those who targeted Dink have not yet been brought to justice.

The Dink murder case is continuing on three fronts. In 2021, a decision was made in the main case²⁰, and the appeal against the decision was finalized by the Court of Cassation in 2023. With this decision, the acquittal and confirmation decisions were upheld, while the decision regarding 15 public officials was overturned. Following the Court of Cassation's decision, Dink's family's lawyers appealed to the Constitutional Court on the grounds of violation of the right to life and the right to know the truth, and requested a retrial. However, the application has not yet been finalized²¹. In the retrial that began on September 5, 2023, following the overturning of the decision, a verdict was handed down on February 7, 2025, and nine defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment for “violating the Constitution” and to varying prison terms for “premeditated murder.”

*“Our request was for a decision to be made that would reveal all aspects of the material truth with an approach that is not redefined at every political turning point in this country. However, the decision handed down on February 7 does not, unfortunately, mean that all aspects of this murder have been revealed and that all those responsible for the murder have been punished.” The Dink family's lawyers announced that they would appeal the decision on the grounds of insufficient investigation and prosecution.*²²

The other branch of the case was opened following the charges brought by the court in the 2021 decision in the main case. In this new case, which was opened with an indictment prepared in 2023, 11 defendants,

¹⁸ Details of the attack data can be found in the **ANNEX**.

¹⁹ T24, “Ayşe Ateş stated: ‘It was done on MHP’s orders’: Here are the journalists beaten during Sinan Ateş’s term” <https://t24.com.tr/haber/ayse-ates-mhp-nin-talimatıyla-yaptirdi-demisti-iste-sinan-ates-doneminde-dovdurulen-gazeteciler,1172663> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁰ TGS 2020-2021 Press Freedom Report, pp. 79-80. <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-2021-BASIN-%C3%96ZG%C3%9CRL%C3%9C%C4%9E%C3%9C-RAPORU.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²¹ Agos, “Lawyers of the Dink Family Applied to the Constitutional Court” <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/28921/dink-ailesi-avukatlari-anayasa-mahkemesi-ne-basvurdu> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²² Agos, “It was not disclosed who decided on the murder” <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/31929/cinayetin-kim-veya-kimler-tarafından-karara-baglandigi-aciga-cikarilmadi> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

including Erhan Tuncel, Ramazan Akyürek, Yasin Hayal, and Ali Fuat Yilmazer, were charged with “violating the Constitution,” “committing crimes on behalf of an organization without being a member of it,” and “intentional murder.” The case against Samast, who was released in November 2023, on charges of “committing crimes on behalf of an armed terrorist organization without being a member of an armed terrorist organization” was merged with this case on the grounds of factual and legal connection²³. At the hearing on June 12, 2024, the prosecutor presented his opinion. At the hearing on October 16, 2024, the final defences were presented against the opinion on the merits. On January 10, 2025, the verdict was announced in the case. The court ruled that the charges of “committing crimes on behalf of an armed terrorist organization without being a member of an armed terrorist organization” against Ahmet İskender, Erhan Tuncel, Yasin Hayal, Tuncay Uzundal, Zeynel Abidin Yavuz, Ersin Yolçu, and triggerman Ogün Samast were dismissed due to the statute of limitations; the files of the fugitive defendants were separated; Ali Fuat Yilmazer, former head of the Security Intelligence Department, and Ramazan Akyürek, former head of Branch C of the Security Intelligence Department, were sentenced to life imprisonment for “violating the Constitution.” Adem Sağlam, who was the head of the Trabzon TEM branch at the time, was acquitted of the charges of “violating the Constitution” and “intentional killing through negligence,” but was sentenced to 6 years, 10 months, and 15 days in prison for “membership in an organization.” The court ruled that the travel ban on the defendants whose cases were dismissed would remain in effect until the decision became final²⁴.

Finally, in the ongoing trial²⁵ of defendants whose cases were separated from the main case in 2021, including Fethullah Gülen, Adem Yavuz Arslan, Ekrem Dumanlı, and former prosecutor Zekeriya Öz, the execution of the arrest warrant is awaited. In this process, the case against Gülen was dismissed because he had passed away.

B. Uğur Mumcu Murder Case

The case against Oğuz Demir, who is accused of planting a bomb in the car of journalist Uğur Mumcu on January 24, 1993, causing his death, and who is alleged to have been sought through Interpol, is ongoing at the Ankara 5th Heavy Penal Court on charges of “violating the constitution.” Demir is believed to be responsible for 17 murders and acts, including the 1999 bombing that killed journalist Ahmet Taner Kışlalı²⁶.

At the hearing on May 30, 2024, lawyers representing the family of Uğur Mumcu submitted a petition to the court requesting that the investigation be expanded and that evidence not included in the indictment be examined. Güldal Mumcu, the wife of Uğur Mumcu, met with Deputy Interior Minister Mehmet Aktaş, and during this meeting, Aktaş provided information about intelligence reports indicating that Demir was in Iran, had been seen in Chechnya, and had taken his family abroad. The petition also requested that memoranda be sent to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Intelligence Organization regarding the matter. The petition also requested that Mehmet Ağar, the former police chief and former interior minister, be heard. At the end of the hearing, the court decided to send a letter to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding whether a joint commission had been established with the Islamic Republic of Iran to investigate the Mumcu murder. It was also decided to request information from the Security Directorate regarding the exit of Demir's family from the country. The court decided to rule on the request to hear Ağar after the necessary documents were received²⁷.

²³ TGS 2023-2024 Press Freedom Report, p. 26 <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/TGS-BASIN-OZGURLUGU-RAPORU-TAM-METIN.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁴ Agos, “Statute of limitations decision for Samast, Yilmazer and Akyürek sentenced to life imprisonment” <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/31712/samast-hakkinda-zamanasimi-karari-verildi-yilmazer-ve-akyurek-muebbet-hapis-cezasina-carptirildi> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁵ Agos, “Dink Murder: Those separated from the case are being tried” <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/29080/dink-cinayeti-dosyasi-tefrik-edilenler-yargilaniyor> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁶ Bianet, “Day-by-day violations of media/freedom of expression for three months (Full Text)” <https://bianet.org/haber/gun-gun-uc-aylik-medya-ifade-ozgurlugu-ihlalleri-tam-metin-290411> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁷ Bianet, “Day-by-day violations of media/freedom of expression, October–November–December 2024 (Full Text)” <https://bianet.org/haber/gun-gun-uc-aylik-medya-ifade-ozgurlugu-ihlalleri-303454> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

At the hearing on January 16, 2025, Turgut Kazan, one of the Mumcu family's lawyers, recounted Güldal Mumcu's meeting with Ađar, saying that Mumcu had said, "A wall is constantly being built in front of us," to which Ađar replied, "If we pull out one brick, the wall will collapse." Kazan stated, "Ađar knows what is happening, but he says he cannot remove the brick because he believes it is being done for the sake of the country. This is also clear from the Susurluk Report, where Ađar was at the center of everything. We also know about the efforts to save Ođuz Demir. We know where he was in Turkey at the time. But we couldn't do anything back then. Accept the request to hear Mehmet Ađar's testimony so we can learn everything." The court, in its interim decision, accepted the Mumcu family's requests and decided to summon Mehmet Ađar, the former Director General of the Police, as a witness at the next hearing and to instruct the General Directorate of the Police to conduct an investigation into whether the defendant Ođuz Demir and his family are living in Turkey. The court postponed the next hearing of the case to May 12, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.²⁸.

C. Attack on Yavuz Selim Demirađ

Yavuz Selim Demirađ, a writer for the Yeniçađ newspaper, was seriously injured with a stick attack after participating in a television program on the night of May 10, 2019. Three and a half years later, an indictment was prepared against six individuals on charges of "intentional assault with a weapon, threats, and insults," and a case was filed in the criminal court of first instance. Demirađ and his lawyer's objection that the act was not simple assault but attempted murder resulted in the case being tried in a high criminal court. After nearly three years of trial, on June 12, 2024, the Ankara 36th High Criminal Court sentenced the six defendants to nine years in prison for "intentional assault and threats."²⁹

D. No Prosecution for Police Violence Against Journalists During the 2021 Gezi Commemoration

On May 31, 2022, during the 9th anniversary of the Gezi Park resistance, Halk TV journalists Erdiñ Yılmaz and Ozan Demiriz, Tele 1 TV reporter Engin Ađar, and cameraman Umutcan Yitük, Hayri Tunç, a reporter for Gazete Fersude; Fatoş Erdođan, a reporter for Dokuz8 Haber; and Sezgin Kartal, a reporter for Karşı Mahalle, were taken into a police corridor, beaten, and targeted with pepper spray. The journalists were subjected to insults and threats. Meltem Akyol from Evrensel, Gökay Başcan from BirGün, Ozan Demiriz from Halk TV, Dilan Polat, Nil Derin Aydođdu, and Sevda Dođan from Flash Haber TV were handcuffed and detained for hours. In the investigation opened following the criminal complaint filed by TGS in 2022, the Istanbul Governor's Office did not grant permission to investigate, but the decision was overturned upon appeal³⁰.

As a result of the ongoing investigation following the decision, a decision not to prosecute was issued on May 2, 2024. The decision stated that the actions of the police officers suspected of wrongdoing were carried out within the scope of the legal authority to use force, that the minor injuries sustained by the complainants could have been caused by this, and that there were no cards or other signs indicating that the complainants were members of the press in the camera footage submitted regarding the incident. Therefore, it was stated that the actions of removing certain complainants from the area, whose status as press members was unknown, did not constitute the elements of the crimes of violating the freedom of work and employment or abuse of authority due to the absence of intent.

The decision was appealed by the TGS Legal Unit.

²⁸ T24, "Umut Trial | Former Director General of Security Mehmet Ađar to testify; investigation to be launched into suspect Ođuz Demir," Cengiz Anıl Bölükbaşı <https://t24.com.tr/haber/umut-davasi-eski-emniyet-genel-muduru-mehmet-agar-in-dinlenilmesi-ve-sanik-oguz-demir-e-iliskin-arastirma-talebi-karara-baglanacak>, 1210655#google_vignette (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

²⁹ 12punto, "Prison sentence for stick attack on journalist Yavuz Selim Demirađ: 'Linked to Sinan Ateş murder'", Müyesser Yıldız, https://12punto.com.tr/gundem/gazeteci-yavuz-selim-demiraga-sopali-saldiriya-hapis-cezasi-sinan-ates-cinayetiyle-baglantisivar-40645#google_vignette (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³⁰ TGS 2022-2023 Press Freedom Report, p. 11-12 <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TGS-Basin-Ozgurlugu-Raporu-2022-2023.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

E. No Prosecution for Armed Attack on Azim Deniz

Azim Deniz, owner of Deniz Postası Newspaper and Anadolu TV, was attacked with a firearm on the morning of February 5, 2024, as he was leaving his home. The attacker, who wounded Deniz in the leg and abdomen, was apprehended in the Sorgun district of Yozgat. After four months in custody, the attacker, Adem T., was released by the Kayseri 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace on the grounds that there was “no suspicion of escape.” The Kayseri Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office prepared an indictment against Adem T. on charges of “attempted murder” and “unlicensed purchase, carrying, or possession of a firearm and ammunition.”³¹

F. Fist Attack Case Against Deniz Önal

On October 3, 2022, Deniz Önal, editor of Şarköy’ün Sesi, a newspaper published in Tekirdağ, was attacked with fists by Alper Var, the brother of Alpay Var, who was elected mayor of Şarköy from the CHP, for reporting on an irregularity case for which the Ministry of Interior had granted permission to investigate. His father, Yakup Önal, the owner of the newspaper, was also threatened with death. As a result of the trial, on January 27, 2025, the Şarköy 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced Var to 8 months and 19 days in prison and a fine of 7,500 TL for intentional injury, insult, threat, and damage to property.³²

G. Yaman Kaya Acquitted in Assault Case

Yaman Kaya, editor-in-chief of another news website, was attacked with a firearm while travelling in traffic on November 13, 2023. At the first hearing on May 8, 2024, the defendants denied the charges, claiming they did not know Kaya. Witness R.Y., who had previously identified the defendants in the prosecution’s statement, changed his testimony, stating that he could not identify the defendants. Kaya’s lawyer, Dilan Firik Akkuş, stated in a statement after the hearing, “The current state of evidence in the case file, the concrete evidence, HTS records, and PTS footage prove that the defendants personally carried out this act, that the defendants were there, and that the defendants committed this act with the intention of participating in it, yet the defendants were released on the first hearing. We do not understand this decision from a legal standpoint.” The Bursa 6th Heavy Penal Court released defendants Zülküf B. and Sedat M., who were being tried for ‘attempted murder’³³. The second hearing of the trial took place on October 2, 2024. The witnesses who testified changed their statements to the police. The prosecutor, presenting his opinion, requested the acquittal of the defendants on the grounds that no evidence was found in the swap samples (bullet traces), there was no eyewitness who saw and identified the person who actually committed the crime, and there was no convincing evidence that the defendants committed the crimes they were accused of. The court ruled that defendants Zülküf B. and Sedat M. should be acquitted due to insufficient evidence. Journalist Kaya’s lawyer Akkuş, said they would appeal the decision and take it to the Court of Appeals. Commenting on the decision, journalist Yaman Kaya said, “We will continue to fight to the end against the gangs that are plundering Bursa. So if I had died as a result of this attack, the perpetrator would have remained unknown due to insufficient evidence. There is evidence for all the construction corruption I wrote about, but those who attacked me were released due to insufficient evidence. I am still receiving threats almost every day because of my articles.”³⁴

³¹ Bianet, “Perpetrator of armed attack on journalist released after 4 months”, Hikmet Adal, <https://bianet.org/haber/gazeteciye-silahl-saldirida-fail-4-ayda-serbest-296116> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³² Bianet, “Assault, insult, threat, and property damage: Total sentence 8 months and 19 days, and 7,500 TL fine”, Hikmet Adal, https://bianet.org/haber/yaralama-hakaret-tehdit-ve-mala-zarar-bu-suclarin-toplami-8-ay-19-gun-hapis-ve-7-bin-500-tl-303986#google_vignette (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³³ Artı Gerçek, “Defendants released in case of armed attack on journalist Yaman Kaya: “We will never give up”, Ezgi Bulut, <https://artigercek.com/emek/gazeteci-yaman-kayaya-silahl-saldiri-davasinda-saniklara-tahliye-mucadelemizden-asla-vazgecmeyecegiz-303783h> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³⁴ Gazete Duvar, “Journalists acquitted in armed attack trial in Bursa” <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/bursada-gazeteciye-silahl-saldiri-davasi-saniklar-beraat-etti-haber-1724686> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

H. Death Contract for Murat Ağirel

Journalist Murat Ağirel shared on social media that a “murder contract” had been issued against him. On September 4, two people were detained in Izmir. The General Directorate of Security stated, “In recent days, intelligence investigations conducted by our Intelligence Directorate regarding videos circulating on various social media platforms containing claims that organized crime leader Mahsun Kuruçay would carry out an armed attack on journalist Murat Ağirel have revealed that the masked individual in the videos is O.Ö., and the individual who recorded the videos is Y.K.” It was reported that three guns, a quantity of drugs, four cell phones, and a tripod were seized along with the individuals. O.Ö. was found to have 12 separate charges against him, while Y.K. had two separate charges³⁵. Those taken into custody were released after four days.

I. No Prosecution for “Bullet” Threats Against Journalists Reporting on Sinan Ateş

On July 5, 2024, Burak Kılıç, Deputy Chairman of the Ülkü Ocakları, threatened journalists İsmail Saymaz, Erk Acarer, Barış Terkoğlu, Alicaan Uludağ, and Timur Soykan in a post on his X account. Kılıç said, “We are not pens filled with EU and US funds, we are lead pens. You will definitely see that lead pens will prevail one day!” The message, which was viewed by more than a million people, was later deleted³⁶.

The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office decided not to prosecute Uludağ, the journalist who filed the complaint, on the grounds that the words in the post in question did not constitute a threat. Uludağ reacted to the decision, saying, “The judiciary did not consider the targeting of journalists who wrote about the Sinan Ateş murder with bullets as a threat.”³⁷

According to the indictment regarding the murder of former Ülkü Ocakları General President Sinan Ateş, Ülkü Ocakları Deputy General President Kılıç sent videos of reconnaissance conducted in front of Ateş's home before the murder to Tolgahan Demirbaş, who was sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment for conspiring to deliberately kill Ateş.

³⁵ Bianet, “Daily record of media/freedom of expression violations, July–August–September 2024 (Full Text)”, <https://bianet.org/haber/gun-gun-uc-aylik-medya-ifade-ozgurlugu-ihlalleri-300525> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³⁶ Medyascope, Deputy Chair of Ülkü Ocakları Burak Kılıç threatens journalists, then deletes post” <https://medyascope.tv/2024/07/06/ulku-ocaklari-genel-baskan-yardimcisi-burak-kilic-gazetecileri-tehdit-etti-ardindan-paylasimini-sildi/> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

³⁷ Bianet, “Prosecutor closes investigation into ‘bullet threat’ against journalists.” <https://bianet.org/haber/savcilik-gazetecilere-kursun-gondermeli-tehdit-dosyasini-kapatti-298926> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).



LETTER FROM PRISON

We are unable to read many opposition publications – Elif AKGÜL³⁸

On February 18, at 6:04 a.m., I was detained by police who came to my home. A superficial search was conducted in my home. The notes I had kept since university and the notebooks I had accumulated throughout my journalism career were examined. A photo was taken of the “Resistance” agenda published by Metis Publications on the first anniversary of the Gezi protests.

From the moment they arrived, I realized that this was a major operation. Although I initially thought it was an operation targeting the press, I learned at the police station in Vatan that it was related to the HDK. During this time, they allowed me to call my colleague to inform them that I would not be coming to work, but they did not permit me to mention that I was under arrest.

I was handcuffed behind my back when I left the apartment and when I entered the police station. The most difficult part was the four days in custody. For two days, we were not allowed to see anyone due to a confidentiality order. The food was inedible. The constant light was exhausting. We felt a little relieved when we were brought before the Criminal Court of Peace.

When I was referred for arrest, I had already guessed that I would be arrested, so it wasn't very surprising. After that, it took a long time to enter the prison. After waiting for five hours, we were taken to observation. After two days of observation, we were transferred to a cell.

Since it was a new cell, there was nothing there at first. We had to get everything from scratch: a TV, a table, chairs, a tea maker... When the TV arrived, we saw that the channels were very limited. Even TRT wasn't available. The only newspapers we can read are the announcements from the Press Advertising Agency. This means that we can't read many opposition publications.

We've been waiting for the indictment for two months. There's a growing concern that this process could drag on, especially since those arrested during the İmamoğlu protests are also involved. I already knew that the detention reviews were just a formality, but experiencing it firsthand is still frustrating. During my first detention review, I could see on the screen that the “Decision Made” section had already been written before I even made my statement. This alone shows that both our process and the justice system are not based on a legal process.



Photo: TGS

V. INTERVENTIONS TARGETING THE INTERNET PRESS

Last year, the Constitutional Court issued another important decision overturning access restriction decisions, repealing Article 9 of Law No. 5651. The court decided that the decision would enter into force nine months after its publication in the Official Gazette, i.e., on October 10, 2024³⁹. This led to a numerical decrease in access restriction decisions issued under Article 9.

According to the data we were able to access⁴⁰, in the last year at least,

- **26 websites** were blocked,
- **90 news articles** were blocked by URL,
- **38 news articles** were deleted,
- **3 topics** were removed from search engines under the right to be forgotten.

³⁹ TGS Press Freedom Report 2023–2024, s. 28 <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/TGS-BASIN-OZGURLUGU-RAPORU-TAM-METIN.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁴⁰ The details of the interventions against the online press can be found in the Annex.

On March 19, 2025, following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a bandwidth restriction that began at 7:00 AM and affected the entire city of Istanbul ended 42 hours later, at 1:00 AM on March 21, 2025. For 42 hours, access to X, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitch, Telegram, Signal, and WhatsApp was unavailable in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, numerous decisions to block access to journalists' social media accounts have been made in recent days. The X accounts of journalists such as Metin Cihan, Erk Acarer, Zeynep Kuray, Hasan Sivri, Nisanur Yıldırım, and Emre Orman, as well as *bianet*, *Gazete Yolculuk*, *Evrensel Gazetesi*'s youth supplement *Genç Hayat*, and *BirGün Gazetesi*'s Aegean Region supplement *Ege'de BirGün* were blocked⁴¹. X announced that it had appealed the decisions to the Constitutional Court⁴².

VI. INTERVENTIONS AGAINST MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

A. RTÜK Interventions

This year, RTÜK imposed high fines on media organizations for news and critical program content. According to the Supreme Council Decisions detailed in **ANNEX**, which mainly penalized criticism of the government⁴³,

- 59 separate administrative fines were imposed on press and broadcasting organizations, totalling approximately 87 million TL⁴⁴. The highest fine was imposed on Show TV in a single instalment of 11,883,211 lira. The institution that received the highest total fine was NOW TV, with approximately 44 million TL.
- The institution with the most penalty decisions was SZC TV with **14 administrative fines**, followed by Tele 1 with **13**, Halk TV with **10**, Flash Haber TV with **7**, and Now TV with **6** administrative fines.
- **A total of 21 broadcast suspension decisions were issued in 5 separate decisions.**
- It was decided to black out SZC TV's screen for **10 days**.
- When we examined the reasons for the decisions, we found that 32.6% of the 49 decisions published by RTÜK over the past year were based on Article 8(1)(c) of Law No. 6112, which states: "It cannot be contrary to the principle of respect for human dignity and privacy of private life, *cannot contain expressions that are defamatory, degrading, or slanderous beyond the bounds of criticism*." **24.4%** of the decisions were based on subparagraph (c) of the same article, which states that "It cannot be contrary to the principles of the supremacy of law, justice, and impartiality." and **14.2%** of the (i) clause "*It must be based on the principles of impartiality, truth, and accuracy and not prevent the free formation of opinion in society; news that can be investigated within the framework of press ethics principles cannot be published without investigation and without being sure of its accuracy...*" principle; **12.2%** of (i) "*No one may be declared guilty or portrayed as guilty until proven guilty by a final court decision; during the trial period, matters referred to the judiciary may not be reported in a manner that affects the impartiality of the trial, except in the context of news reporting.*" We see that these principles have been used as grounds for penalties.

⁴¹ Freedom of Expression Association (İFÖD), "Access to X accounts sharing information and content about street protests was blocked," <https://ifad.org.tr/engelliweb/sokak-eylemeleriyle-ilgili-bilgi-ve-icerik-paylasan-x-hesaplari-erisime-engellendi/>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁴² X, Global Government Affairs, <https://x.com/GlobalAffairs/status/1904865920042045668>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁴³ You can find the details of RTÜK decisions in the Annex.

⁴⁴ Although some RTÜK decisions were reflected in the press, the monetary values were calculated approximately because the reasoning was not disclosed.

Table 5: Distribution of Fines Imposed by RTÜK Between April 2024 and April 2025 by Institution

NAME OF THE INSTITUTION	DECISION NUMBER	ADMINISTRATIVE FINES (TL)	BROADCAST SUSPENSION
SZC	14	7.043.300,00	8 kez yayın +10 gün
TELE 1	13	2.124.278,00	5 kez yayın
Halk TV	10	5.794.764,87	8 kez yayın
Flash Haber TV	7	1.010.703,00	-
Now TV	6	44.375.328,50	-
Akit TV	1	145.558,00	-
Beyaz TV	1	361.195,00	-
Bursa'da Bugün	1	13.532,00	-
CNN	1	1.034.635,00	-
Kanal 3	1	135.860,00	-
Meltem TV	1	135.860,00	-
Show TV	1	11.883.211,00	-
TGRT	1	395.993,00	-
TV100	1	135.860,00	-

- Açık Radyo's terrestrial broadcasting license was officially revoked by RTÜK⁴⁵. The radio station, which had been operating for nearly 30 years, ceased broadcasting.
- Under Article 10, titled "Broadcasting services provided without obtaining a license from the internet environment," Cumhuriyet TV, Ulusal Kanal, Fatih Altaylı, and Nevşin Mengü YouTube channels were required to obtain licenses.
- A broadcasting ban was imposed on the brutal murder of two young women in Istanbul, the TUSAŞ attack, the Narin murder, and most recently, the Bolu Grand Kartal fire.

⁴⁵ RTÜK, "Statement on decision regarding "Açık Radyo" made during RTÜK's 03.07.2024 meeting", <https://www.rtuk.gov.tr/radyo-ve-televizyon-ust-kurulu%E2%80%99nun-03072024-tarihli-toplantısında--%E2%80%99Cacik-radyo%E2%80%99D-ya-dair-aldigi-kararin-detaylarina-iliskin-aciklama/4841> , (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁴⁶ Açık Radyo, "Public announcement: Açık Radyo's terrestrial broadcast to be shut down.", <https://apacikradyo.com.tr/duyuru/kamuoyuna-duyuru-acik-radyonun-karasal-yayini-kapatiliyor>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

B. Press Advertising Authority Interventions

The Constitutional Court ruled in its 2022 pilot individual application decision that the arbitrary advertisement and advertising suspension penalties imposed by the Press Advertising Authority (BİK) violated the freedom of expression and the press. The high court ruled that Article 49, titled “Penalties,” of Law No. 195 on the Establishment of the Press Advertising Authority, which served as the basis for the penalties, had structural problems and needed to be revised, and that the examination of applications to be made after the decision should be postponed for one year⁴⁷. However, more than three years have passed since the publication of the decision, and no regulation has been made on this issue. Last year, the Constitutional Court reiterated its finding of structural problems in Article 49 and ruled that it violated freedom of the press⁴⁸.

Meanwhile, Evrensel's struggle to obtain official announcements continues. Evrensel Newspaper, whose right to publish official announcements and advertisements was suspended in September 2019, had this right completely revoked in 2022. The Istanbul 2nd Administrative Court rejected Evrensel's lawsuit against the BİK's revocation decision. The appeal process is ongoing.



Photo: TGS

⁴⁷ For decision review TGS Press Freedom Report 2022–2023, s. 42-43 <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TGS-Basin-Ozgurlugu-Raporu-2022-2023.pdf>. Yeni Gün Haber Agency and others (App. No. 2016/5903), <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2016/5903> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁴⁸ See “AYM Repeated: Article 49 of the BİK Law Constitutes a Structural Problem ” in the Constitutional Court Decisions section under the Trials heading.



LETTER FROM PRISON

This letter was confiscated by the prison administration - Öznur DEĞER⁴⁹

Öznur Değer, the news director of JINNEWS, who was arrested on February 7 and subsequently detained, wrote a letter for TGS. The letter was confiscated with the following justification: “It was determined that this letter is objectionable as it is believed to facilitate communication among members of a terrorist or criminal organization or other criminal groups for organizational purposes and contains elements that enhance the organization's motivation.” In a phone call with her family, Değer said the following about the contents of the confiscated letter: “In the letter, I wrote about the situation of imprisoned journalists, how many journalists are imprisoned in Turkey, and press freedom. I discussed both the perspective of journalists inside on freedom and the perspective of journalists outside on freedom. I wrote that while imprisoned journalists inside are physically and intellectually free, journalists outside who are physically free are subject to all kinds of censorship and self-censorship and are therefore not free due to the monopolization of the press.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mailing Address: Erzincan L Tipi Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu 24002 Gümüştarla, Organize Sanayi Bölgesi Erzincan Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Kampüsü/ Erzincan L tipi Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu Merkez/ ERZİNCAN

⁵⁰ JINNEWS, “Prison blocks letter written for TGS report”, <https://jinnews.net/TUM-HABERLER/content/view/255814>, (Access Date: 23.04.2025).

VII. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Over the past year, there have been significant developments in our legislation. The first of these was undoubtedly the regulation known in public as “Influence Agent” which was submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly twice and withdrawn. The Cyber Security Law, which followed this proposal, entered into force. Amendments were also made to the Press Card Regulation and the Official Announcement and Advertising Regulation, and the General Directive on Austerity Measures was published.

A. Influence Agent Law Proposal

One of the most alarming regulations for journalists last year was undoubtedly the proposed law on “influence agents.” The proposal, which was presented in two different omnibus bills, was withdrawn twice due to the reactions it received.

The criminalization was first proposed in May 2024 as Article 22 of the 9th Judicial Package, to be added after Article 339 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237⁵¹.

The regulation drew criticism for its vague language, such as “disinformation crime,” and the risk that journalists working for international media could be charged as “influence agents,” and was removed from the draft⁵².

However, the regulation reappeared in October 2024 in Article 16 of the Draft Law on Amendments to the Notary Law and Certain Other Laws. The proposal envisaged the addition of Article 339/A under the heading “Committing crimes against the security or political interests of the state” after Article 339 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237, as follows⁵³. The crime regulation envisaged to be added by Article 16 of the proposal was as follows:

“(1) Subject to the condition that they do not constitute the crimes set forth in this Section, those who commit crimes against the security of the State or its internal or external political interests in accordance with the strategic interests or instructions of a foreign state or organization shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three to seven years. The perpetrator shall be sentenced separately for this crime and for the related crime they committed.

(2) If the act is committed during wartime or endangers the State's war preparations, war activities, or military movements, the offender shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of eight to twelve years.

(3) If the crime is committed by persons employed in institutions or organizations responsible for units, projects, facilities, or services of strategic importance to national security, the penalty shall be increased by one-half.

(4) Prosecution for this offence is subject to the approval of the Minister of Justice.

⁵¹Other activities

Article 339/A- (1) Provided that they do not constitute the crimes stipulated in this section, acts committed in accordance with the strategic interests or instructions of a foreign state or organization against the security of the State or its internal or external political interests;

a) Those who conduct or commission research on Turkish citizens or institutions and organizations, or foreigners residing in Turkey,

b) Those who commit crimes in Turkey, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three to seven years. If the act constitutes another crime in addition to those specified in this section, separate penalties shall be imposed for both crimes.

(2) If the act is committed during wartime or endangers the state's war preparations, war operations, or military movements, the perpetrator shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of eight to ten years.

(3) If the crime is committed by persons employed in institutions or organizations responsible for units, projects, facilities, or services of strategic importance to national security, the penalty shall be increased by one-half.

(4) Prosecution for this offence is subject to the approval of the Minister of Justice. Anka News Agency, “Details of the “influence agent” clause in the 9th Judicial Package.” Esra Tokat, https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/9_yargi_paketi_taslagina_anka_haber_ajansi_ulasti_iste_etki_ajanligi_duzenlemesinin_ayrintilari_179456 , (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵² Medyascope, “Influence agent clause removed from 9th Judicial Package”, Özgecan Özgeçen, <https://medyascope.tv/2024/06/13/etki-ajanligi-duzenlemesi-9-yargi-paketinden-cikariliyor/> , (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵³ Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), Draft Law Amending the Notary Law and Some Other Laws <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D28/Y3/T2/WebOnergeMetni/3aca4b31-1380-4c71-8a85-658f4dd61a19.pdf> , (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

The amendment was approved by the Justice Commission of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey⁵⁴. The proposal was met with strong opposition, particularly from press organizations. Ten organizations, including the TGS, which are members of the Media Solidarity Group, issued a press statement pointing out that the law was designed to suppress criticism of the government and push journalism into an area of legal uncertainty. The statement noted that the addition of the concept of “influence agent” to the criminal code constitutes a serious threat to press freedom, and that the ambiguity introduced by the phrases “against internal and external political interests,” “foreign organization,” and “war activity” indicates that this regulation has the potential to exert pressure on all forms of journalistic activity. The Media Solidarity Group emphasized that this regulation would create an environment in which journalists would face the risk of being labelled as “influence agents” at any moment while performing their profession⁵⁵.

The proposal passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 11 did not include the “influence agent” regulation. On November 13, 2024, CHP Deputy Murat Emir announced that the regulation had been withdrawn from the current proposal⁵⁶. However, it was claimed that a new regulation, prepared with the opposition's views also taken into account, would be presented after the budget discussions⁵⁷.

Whether the ruling party will continue to insist on the regulation will become clear in the coming period, but even if “influence agent” legislation is not enacted, it has already begun to be implemented. Manager Ayşe Barım was accused of being “one of the persons who planned, organized, and directed the events during the 2013 Gezi protests, whose will was sought and who made decisions in this direction, thereby playing a guiding and decisive role.” Barım, who was accused of “aiding an attempt to overthrow the government of the Republic of Turkey or prevent it from performing its duties,” was also described in the referral document as “noteworthy in terms of her intention and the nature of her actions as influence agent.”⁵⁸ This situation caused considerable concern among journalists, who are the primary risk group targeted by the influence agent bill.

B. Cyber Security Law

Journalists faced a new crackdown in 2022 with the Disinformation Law, followed by two Influence Agent Law Proposals in 2024, and then the Cyber Security Law. The draft law was submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly on January 10, 2025, which is Working Journalist Day.

According to Article 16, Paragraph 5 of the bill submitted to parliament, “Those who carry out activities targeting institutions or individuals by creating the perception that data has been leaked in cyberspace, even though no data leak has occurred, shall be punished with imprisonment of two to five years.” During the National Defense Commission stage, the phrase “creating the perception” was changed to “creating content as if a data breach had occurred.”

Furthermore, the fifth paragraph of Article 8 of the proposal, which states, “In cases where delay is not permissible, the Cyber Security President may, upon written order, conduct searches in residences, workplaces, and closed areas not open to the public, and carry out copying and seizure operations,” poses a significant threat to the data security of journalists and the confidentiality of news sources.

In a statement on the proposal, the TGS said, “We do not accept this regulation, which targets journalism and the public's right to information. We oppose this approach, which views journalists as enemies and journalism as a crime.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ BBC, ““Influence Agent” clause approved by committee, journalists express concern”, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/ceq5x57wrzo>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵⁵ TGS, “Influence Agent regulation is a direct attack on press and freedom of expression!”, <https://tgs.org.tr/etki-ajanligi-duzenlemesi-basin-ve-ifade-ozgurlugune-acik-bir-saldiridir/>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵⁶ <https://x.com/muratemirchp/status/1856658509779107908>

⁵⁷ BBC, “Notary Law passed by Parliament: “influence agent” regulation removed from final text”, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cy7de56mmz6o>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵⁸ BBC, “What is “influence agent” highlighted by Ayşe Barım's arrest?” <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c1lv828e039o>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁵⁹ TGS, “Stop targeting journalism!”-<https://tgs.org.tr/gazeteciligi-hedef-almaktan-vazgecin/>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

After the commission stage, the proposal was discussed in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and the president's authority in Article 8, Paragraph 5 was removed. However, the criminal provision in Article 16, Paragraph 5 was accepted with a few minor changes and became law as follows:

“(5) Those who create or disseminate content contrary to the truth regarding a cyber security data breach, with the intent to create anxiety, fear, or panic among the public or target institutions or individuals, despite knowing that no such breach has occurred, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of two to five years.”

The regulation was published in the Official Gazette on March 19, 2025, and entered into force⁶⁰.

C. Amendments to the Press Card Regulation

Several articles of the Press Card Regulation were amended by a regulation published in the Official Gazette on June 6, 2024⁶¹.

The last paragraph added to Article 14 of the Regulation stipulates that, for the purpose of calculating the minimum professional service requirement of eighteen years for media professionals and the eighteen-year press card holding requirement for information officers, the total duration of periods during which a free press card was held shall be taken into account, provided that such periods do not exceed twenty-four months.

The amendment made to Article 23 has revised the titles eligible for press cards at the Anadolu Agency. A provision stating that “press cards shall not be issued to those not working in the news field” has been added to the Anadolu Agency. The amendment made to Article 24 has removed the requirement for publications to be issued at intervals of 15 days in the regulation regarding the titles and quotas eligible for press cards at news and photo agencies. A provision stating that press cards will not be issued to those not working in the field of news at TRT has been added to Article 25. The term “private” has been removed from Article 26, which regulates the titles eligible for press cards at private radio and television stations, and photographers are now also eligible for press cards.

D. Amendments to the Official Announcement and Advertising Regulation

Over the past year, three amendments have been made to the Official Announcement and Advertising Regulation. The first amendment, made on September 19, 2024⁶², extended the two-day deadline for newspapers to deliver their printed copies to the Press Advertising Authority branches to three days. Effective as of October 1, 2024, the daily minimum visitor traffic information for internet news sites has been reduced by half, and for internet news sites in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th The average daily page visit duration for visitors to online news websites in these categories was reduced from at least 1 minute to 30 seconds, while the requirement for the General Category was lowered from at least 2 minutes to 1 minute⁶³. With the amendments made to Article 67, it has been stipulated that internet news websites that employ at least twice the minimum number of editorial staff for their respective categories and have at least twice the minimum number of unique visitors will be granted a 50% bonus, while those that employ at least three times the minimum number of editorial staff and have at least three times the minimum number of unique visitors will be granted a 100% bonus.

⁶⁰ Cybersecurity Law, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2025/03/20250319-1.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶¹ Amendment to the Press Card Regulation, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/06/20240606-13.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶² Amendments to the Regulation on Official Advertisements and Announcements, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/09/20240919-3.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶³ Regulation on Amendments to the Official Announcement and Advertisement Regulation, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/10/20241012-5.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

With the amendment made on October 12, 2024⁶⁴, the sixth paragraph of Article 107 of the Regulation was amended to stipulate that, in the event that the BİK Management Board decides to suspend official announcements and advertisements for newspapers or internet news sites within two months, the decision shall become final before the application is made by reducing the indicator in the monthly official announcement quotas and distribution tables. In addition, it was stipulated that the internal instruction letter regarding this application would be published through İLANBİS.

In the amendment made on December 10, 2024⁶⁵, with the amendments made to Articles 82 and 88, it was made mandatory for newspapers, magazines, and online news sites to employ one responsible manager (editor-in-chief) in their minimum intellectual staff. The requirement to have at least one reporter on staff has been removed. A provision has been added to Article 92 allowing inspections related to the right to publish official announcements to be conducted electronically. The procedures and principles for this will be determined by the Press Advertising Authority's Board of Directors.

E. General Directive on Economic Measures

Following the 2021 General Directive on Economic Measures, which caused serious damage to the Turkish press⁶⁶, the press faced new economic measures last year. In accordance with the Presidential Circular dated May 16, 2024, “public institutions and organizations shall take measures to ensure savings in their expenditures, reduce bureaucratic procedures, and use public resources effectively, economically, and efficiently, in line with the principle of maximum savings in the use of public resources for their intended purposes.” Within this scope, a cost-cutting measure was introduced stipulating that *“public institutions and organizations shall not purchase daily newspapers under any circumstances and shall not subscribe to publications unrelated to their field of activity”*⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Regulation on Amendments to the Official Announcement and Advertisement Regulation, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/10/20241012-5.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶⁵ Regulation on Amendments to the Official Announcement and Advertisement Regulation, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/12/20241210-11.htm>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶⁶ Bianet, “TGS protested in six cities: “There is no saving from the news”, https://bianet.org/haber/tgs-alti-ilde-sokaktaydi-haberdan-tasarruf-olmaz-246950#google_vignette, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁶⁷ Circular on Austerity Measures, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/05/20240517-5.pdf> (Access Date: 01.04.2025).



LETTER FROM PRISON

I am aware that I am subject to these conditions because I am a journalist - Vedat ÖRÜÇ⁶⁸

Greetings,

First of all, I would like to thank you for your solidarity and support. I wish that, as a journalist, I were in the news for my reports, but unfortunately, journalists in Turkey are constantly in the news due to detention, arrest, and censorship. I was detained in a dawn raid at my family home in Mersin on January 17, where I had come to visit my sick mother. Later, without even being allowed to give a statement to the prosecutor, I was arrested along with six other colleagues on baseless and fabricated charges and sent to prison. For over two and a half months, I have been held in a 4-square-meter cell without any justification. An indictment seeking up to 10 years in prison has been prepared against me without any evidence. Moreover, my personal information is being used as evidence against me in an unlawful and arbitrary manner. The charges against us are an attempt to portray us as “potential terrorists” based on our work as journalists. We are aware that systematic pressure and censorship, from our workplaces to our private lives, are aimed at discrediting and intimidating independent journalism. As free journalists, we are being punished for not bowing to this pressure. In particular, the stick of the law is always felt over our heads. Indeed, in recent times, the courts and the legal system have been used as a weapon to suppress the opposition, punish protesters, and intimidate journalists and the media. The purpose of this method, imported from repressive regimes and referred to as “lowore,” is to suppress democracy. This method is even applied in prisons. For example, based on my own experience, all my rights have been taken away from me due to the conditions and circumstances I am in. I am experiencing the deepest form of censorship. Our access to the media is limited to television channels designated by the Ministry of Justice. All of the permitted channels are pro-government channels managed by a single center. Similarly, books brought by our relatives are either censored or not given to us for various reasons, except for the prison library. At the same time, not all opposition newspapers are given to us. The basic principle of journalism, which is following the agenda, is not progressing very well from my point of view. The voices coming from television channels and newspapers managed by a single center are like echoes in a 4-square-meter echo chamber. Our communication with the outside world is limited to one 10-minute phone call per week, restricted to family and lawyer visits. If we wish to speak with someone outside our family, that person is subject to a security investigation, and permission is granted only if the Ministry of Justice deems it appropriate. None of these practices apply to “criminal” offenders. For example, someone convicted of rape can have a 45-minute video call with their family, while I, as a journalist, am denied this right. We have limited access to healthcare and basic necessities. We are also informed that these restrictions are being enforced in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Justice.

Essentially, a journalist is not only punished by being imprisoned. They are deprived of their profession for months, and their professional reputation is damaged by pressure, censorship, and systematic restrictions. We are cut off from the outside world and forced to watch a pink-tinted world through censorship.

However, I will not submit to all this pressure. I am aware that I am subjected to these conditions because I am a journalist. I will continue my independent journalism with honor and freedom. #JournalismIsNotACrime

With solidarity and love...

⁶⁸ Mailing Address: Tarsus 3 No'lu T Tipi Kapalı Ceza İnfaz Kurumu C-24 Koşuşu Alifakı Mahallesi Alifakı Sokak Tarsus Ceza İnfaz Kurumları Kampüsü No:246 Tarsus/MERSİN



Photo: Gökhan Kam

VIII. SARAÇHANE PROTESTS: MARCH 19–APRIL 1, 2025 PRESS FREEDOM SPECIAL REPORT

We have examined the events that unfolded in the days following the arrest warrants issued against over 100 individuals, including Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor and CHP presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu, on various charges. The events that took place over the course of approximately two weeks are of particular importance in revealing the extent of the government's intervention in the press.

A. First, They Restricted the Internet

On March 19, 2025, following the detention of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor, a bandwidth restriction that began at 7:00 AM and affected the entire city of Istanbul ended at 1:00 AM on March 21. For 42 hours, access to X, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitch, Telegram, Signal, and WhatsApp was unavailable in Istanbul.

B. At Least 13 Journalists Were Beaten by Police

From the evening of March 19 to March 26, protests were held at Saraçhane Square, where the İBB is located, to protest the arrests and to prevent the appointment of a trustee to the İBB.

The Istanbul Governor's Office had banned all kinds of protests. Despite this, there was no intervention by law enforcement in the first few days. Police violence began on March 22, as İmamoğlu's detention process was nearing its end. Nefes newspaper reporter Egemen İşar, AFP photojournalist Yasin Akgül, Anadolu Agency reporter Hakan Akgün, İlke TV reporter Eylül Deniz Yaşar, Özgür Gelecek reporter Yusuf Çelik, Reuters reporter Dilara Şenkaya, and freelance reporters Rojda Altıntaş and Tansel Can were injured by plastic bullets fired by the police and beaten by the police.

Ziştan Gür, a reporter for sendika.org, was beaten and detained on March 23 in Saraçhane. BirGün reporters Ebru Çelik and Deniz Güngör reported that they were kicked and beaten with batons by the police. Yağız Barut, a member of the İzmir Journalists' Association Executive Board, was also beaten on March 22 while covering protests in İzmir; police officers pinned Barut to the ground and pressed their knees on his face.

Both professional organizations and the public reacted to this violence against journalists. The TGS demanded that the Minister of the Interior instruct law enforcement agencies not to prevent journalists from doing their jobs.

C. 14 Journalists Detained, Seven Arrested

On the night of March 23, 2025, during the police attack in Saraçhane, Ziştan Gür, a reporter for sendika.org, was detained. Gür's gas mask was removed, he was beaten, and his nose was broken. Gür, who was severely beaten on the head, was subjected to torture with handcuffs behind his back in the detention vehicle. The police did not leave the examination room, where they were not supposed to be during the forensic examination. At the end of the maximum detention period, he was released on March 27 with the condition of signing a statement and a ban on leaving the country.

On the morning of March 24, 2025, 99 people, including seven photojournalists and mostly students, were detained. AFP reporter Yasin Akgül, Now Haber reporter Ali Onur Tosun, photojournalist Bülent Kılıç, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality photojournalist Kurtuluş Arı, Bakırköy Municipality photojournalist Gökhan Kam, and reporters Zeynep Kuray and Hayri Tunç, who were closely following the protests in Saraçhane, were detained in Istanbul. Journalist Emre Orman was not found during a raid on his home. The journalists, who were detained by the Anti-Terrorism Branch (TEM) police and had their homes searched, were held in the TEM Branch detention center for a day. All procedures were carried out as if they were "terror suspects" in the TEM units. However, the charges against them were for violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations.

During the police interrogation, the journalists were shown a single photograph taken during the protests and asked why they had participated in these actions. The cameras, cameras, and press cards that the journalists had hung around their necks were not visible in the photographs placed before them during the interrogation. The police officers who prepared the investigation report had worked specifically to portray the journalists as protesters, effectively setting them up.

They were transferred to the courthouse on the morning of March 25, 2025. The prosecutor did not take their statements. At around 11:00 a.m., three police officers assigned to the TEM unit read out instructions given by the prosecutor at intervals of 10-15 minutes and posted the list on the wall. According to this list, everyone except 13 people would be released under judicial control. However, approximately two hours later, it was learned that the prosecutor had changed his decision regarding the referral and ordered the arrest of all those who had been detained, in an unprecedented move. This unusual situation strengthened suspicions that "orders had come from above."

Following the defences presented, 66 people, including seven journalists, were arrested. On March 26, Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç responded to a question about the detained journalists by saying that there was a request

regarding the arrested journalists and that the files would be reviewed. Following the journalists' reactions, two days later, on March 27, 2025, they were released on the prosecutor's own initiative, again in an exceptional move.

On March 24, journalist and member of the İzmir Journalists' Association Board of Directors Yağız Barut, who was beaten and handcuffed despite showing his press card while covering news in İzmir, was released on March 27 without being referred to court after police procedures. Barış İnce, a writer for BirGün, and photojournalist Murat Kocabaş, who were detained in İzmir on March 24, were released on judicial control conditions after being referred to the courthouse four days later.

Evrensel newspaper reporter Nisa Sude Demirel and Etkin Haber Agency reporter Elif Bayburt, who were covering the Saraçhane protests, were detained again in a morning raid on March 27. Despite being detained on charges of violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations, they were held at the Anti-Terrorism Branch. Demirel and Bayburt were released on March 28 under judicial control.

On March 25, TGS made a press statement in front of the Istanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan calling for the release of the detained journalists. On the same day, five press organizations, including TGS, issued a press statement demanding an end to interventions against the press. On March 27, the TGS İzmir Branch gathered with press organizations at Cumhuriyet Square and declared, "Journalism is not a crime."

Throughout this process, the TGS publicized the legal violations, strengthened solidarity among professional organizations, and sought to build public pressure.

D. Live Broadcasts Interrupted, RTÜK Imposed Maximum Fines, DMM Supported

RTÜK President Ebubekir Şahin, on March 19, when detention orders in the investigation targeting the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality began to be implemented, effectively threatened broadcasters on his personal social media account. He emphasized that it is of great importance for news anchors and program commentators not to shape events based on their personal political views, to ensure the public is accurately informed, and to avoid undermining trust in society. He also stated that broadcasts are constantly monitored, and those violating regulations will face the maximum penalties.

RTÜK member İlhan Taşçı, in a post titled "RTÜK imposes penalties on channels over İmamoğlu" on March 20, stated that RTÜK President Ebubekir Şahin had arbitrarily removed five separate reports from the agenda 20 minutes before the Supreme Council meeting and imposed a 3% administrative fine on Now TV, a 3% administrative fine on Tele 1, Halk TV a 3% administrative fine and three program suspensions, and SZC TV a 3% administrative fine and three program suspensions. The decisions were made by a majority vote.

RTÜK Chairman Şahin; On March 23, while Ekrem İmamoğlu was expected to appear in court at 1:00 a.m., he stated on his personal social media account that the media should act with restraint regarding the investigation and announced that "sanctions, including long-term suspension of broadcasting and ultimately license revocation, will be imposed on broadcasters." Şahin said, "I would like to note that we have issued a final warning to a few broadcasting organizations that continue to broadcast illegally."

RTÜK member İlhan Taşçı shared that television channel owners were contacted by RTÜK bureaucrats, who demanded that they stop live broadcasts, threatening that their licenses would be revoked otherwise.

The Disinformation Center, affiliated with the Presidency, issued a statement saying, "The claim that 'all live broadcasts on television were cut off on the instructions of RTÜK' is not true. RTÜK has issued a 'reminder' in accordance with Article 8 of Law No. 6112," thereby acknowledging that the channels had been contacted.

On March 27, following the Supreme Council meeting, member İlhan Taşçı announced that the most

severe penalties in the council's history had been imposed by a majority vote, ranging from a 10-day broadcast suspension—the harshest penalty before license revocation—to the suspension of broadcasts, in connection with the coverage leading up to İmamoğlu's arrest.

According to Taşçı's statement, Sözcü TV was imposed a 3% administrative fine in addition to the broadcast suspension penalty; Halk TV was imposed two separate administrative fines of 5% and 3%, along with five program suspensions; Tele 1 was imposed two separate administrative fines of 5% and 3%, along with five program suspensions; and a 2% administrative fine for Now TV.

Thus, four news channels were penalized as summarized in Table 6 during this process. The total monetary value of the administrative fines amounts to approximately 21 million TL. It is estimated that the advertising revenue the channels will lose due to the broadcast suspension decisions will be much higher.

Table 6: Fines imposed by RTÜK after March 19

RTÜK DECISIONS DATED MARCH 20		
INSTITUTION NAME	ADMINISTRATIVE FINE	BROADCAST SUSPENSION
NOW TV	%3	
TELE 1	%3	
Halk TV	%3	3 times
SZC TV	%3	3 times
RTÜK DECISIONS DATED MARCH 27		
INSTITUTION NAME	ADMINISTRATIVE FINE	BROADCAST SUSPENSION
NOW TV	%2	
TELE 1	%5 + %3	5 times
Halk TV	%5 + %3	5 times
SZC TV	%3	10 days

E. BBC Reporter Deported

BBC reporter Mark Lowen was detained on March 26, 2025, and after being held for 17 hours, was deported on March 27. The notice issued to Lowen stated that he “posed a threat to public order.” The Directorate of Communications announced that Lowen was deported “for engaging in journalistic activities without an accreditation application.”

F. Social Media Accounts of Journalists and News Sites Blocked

- Access to X accounts that shared information about the events and criticized what happened was blocked “for the protection of national security and public order.” Among the blocked accounts were bianet, Gazete Yolculuk, Genç Hayat, an additional publication of Evrensel Gazetesi, Ege'de BirGün, an additional publication of BirGün Gazetesi, and the accounts of journalists Erk Acarer, Zeynep Kuray, Nisanur Yıldırım, and Emre Orman.
- During protests in Kocaeli, a post showing a dispute between the police chief and a commissioner over the use of pepper spray was also blocked on the grounds of “national security and public order.” Mezopotamya Agency's Instagram account with 116,000 followers and the domain name mezopotamyaajansi42.com were also blocked.



Photo: TGS

IX. OVERVIEW OF THE SECTOR

A. General Assessment of the Sector

As we do every year, we begin this section with data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. TGS operates within the “press, publishing, and journalism” business line. According to the latest statistics released by the ministry⁶⁹, there are 96.711 registered workers in the business line. We know that this number includes not only journalists but also all employees working in sectors such as printing, packaging, and publishing within the industry.

B. Number of Employees in Press Organizations

Table 7 shows the number of registered employees in companies in our industry that carry out journalism activities and the changes over the last six years⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ The Ministry of Labor and Social Security shares statistics with the public every January and July on the number of registered workers in the country, the number of unionized workers within this number, and the unionization rate. For detailed information: <https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/istatistikler/calisma-hayati-istatistikleri/sendikal-istatistikler/isci-sayilari-ve-sendikalarin-uye-sayilari-hakkinda-tebligler/>

⁷⁰ At the beginning of each month, the Ministry publishes the “Occupational Group Workplace List,” which is only accessible to union headquarters managers. Access is restricted to the public. The table is based on the “Sector Workplace List” published for the periods April 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and March 2025.

Table 7: Number of Registered Employees in Businesses Engaged in Journalism (2020-2025)

	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES					
SUB-SECTOR	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Printed Newspapers	9.748	10.105	10.148	11.934	12.145	12.216
Television Broadcasting	7.139	8.038	8.354	9.341	9.666	10.049
News Agencies	3.920	4.097	4.378	4.969	5.281	5.269
Radio Broadcasting	945	1.184	1.027	997	951	983
Total	21.752	23.424	23.907	27.241	28.043	28.517

As can be seen from Table 7, the number of registered employees in businesses engaged in journalism has been on an upward trend over the last six years. The highest employment is in the “printed newspapers” sub-sector, while the lowest employment is in the “radio broadcasting” sub-sector.

It is noteworthy that newspapers rank first in terms of employment in all four sub-sectors. While it is known that circulation figures are declining day by day and are not verified by independent sources, there are strong allegations that circulation figures are inflated in order to obtain official advertisements from the Press Advertising Agency (BİK). We also know that the distribution company, which has a monopoly in the sector, stopped distributing newspapers to 146 settlements as of June 1, 2024⁷¹. In addition, according to a survey on media usage habits, newspapers and magazines are the least preferred resource for following the news (after television, social media, internet news sites, and radio)⁷². Despite all this, the increase in the number of registered employees in newspapers is a situation that needs to be considered.

While journalists constitute the overwhelming majority of the total number of registered employees in Table 7, we know that administrative staff, who can be considered as auxiliary workers in journalism, are also included in this number⁷³.

C. The Devil's Triangle: Unemployment, Insecurity, and Economic Uncertainty

During this period, two factors—unemployment and insecurity—continued to exert pressure on journalists' editorial freedom and economic and social rights.

According to data released by TÜİK on March 20, 2025⁷⁴, the unemployment rate among journalism graduates is 18.3%, which is twice as high as the general unemployment rate (8.7%) and the unemployment rate among higher education graduates (9.1%). The scale of unemployment among journalism graduates is striking. This reality can be interpreted as follows: every year, more journalism graduates enter the labour market than the sector needs; this influx feeds the reserve army of labour, and this perpetuates precarious working conditions.

The interviews and observations we conducted in the field during this period once again reveal the pressure that unemployment and precarious working conditions exert on collective rights, as has been the case in previous years:

⁷¹ Faruk Bildirici, “Hundreds of settlements no longer receive newspapers,” <https://www.birgun.net/makale/yuzlerce-yerlesime-gazete-gitmiyor-artistik-562821>, (Access Date: 15.03.2025).

⁷² RTÜK, “Medyametre Media Usage Habits Survey,” <https://www.rtuk.gov.tr/medyametre-medya-kullanim-aliskanliklari-arastirmasi/4856>, (Access Date: 15.03.2025).

⁷³ Administrative staff refers to employees in departments such as human resources, finance, advertising, security, transportation, and catering.

⁷⁴ TÜİK, Labor Force Statistics 2024, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Isgucu-Istatistikleri-2024-54059>, (Access Date: 23.03.2025).

- 1.** Especially in local media, a wage policy that does not take into account seniority and experience is applied, and wages are kept at the minimum wage level.
- 2.** Many media organizations operating at the local and national levels offer uninsured work under the guise of “trial” and “internship” when hiring new employees.
- 3.** Inexperienced journalists who are hired for the first time are offered wages below the minimum wage for several months.
- 4.** Many local media organizations do not employ the number of journalists required to receive advertisements from the BİK, and some companies continue to employ fictitious staff,
- 5.** Job descriptions, working conditions, and working hours are vague and flexible to the detriment of employees,
- 6.** The workload is constantly increasing, making it difficult for journalists to specialize in a particular field,
- 7.** Especially in local media, news is tracked through agencies instead of employing reporters,
- 8.** In many media companies, young journalists who live with their families are preferred in the hiring process because they have relatively fewer housing and food expenses,
- 9.** Unionization is not allowed, and union membership is not tolerated,
- 10.** With one exception, none of the newspapers belonging to associations operating in different cities have collective bargaining agreements.
- 11.** We have found that journalists who want to unionize in local media have difficulty gaining a majority due to registered employees who are relatives or close associates of employers.

This reality of the sector opens the door to networks that may be seen as “well-intentioned” by some but should be criticized because of the exploitation they create. Academies (!) established by television companies or in collaboration with them⁷⁵ are reminiscent of vocational high schools established in industrial zones to ensure a continuous supply of cheap labour. We know that young journalists invited to academies with flashy promotions are not given job security, are subjected to a selection process after their internships, and that those selected start work at low wages. We also learned through our interviews that those who complain about their wages are threatened with unemployment.

Another dilemma facing the media sector is economic uncertainty. Disruption or collapse in the continuity of the economic model directly leads to unemployment or deterioration in wages and working conditions for employees. Monopolization is causing a decline in journalists' editorial independence and economic and social rights. The “Media-Politics-Trade” triangle pointed out by Nail Güreli years ago⁷⁶ continues to explain the interest of pro-government media owners in the sector. Media organizations that are outside such commercial relations are trying to practice journalism under the political commissariat of RTÜK and BİK, which are reminiscent of the censorship institutions of the 2nd Abdülhamid period. The experiences of Evrensel newspaper, one of our authorized workplaces, are a striking example. BİK suspended Evrensel's right to publish official announcements and advertisements in September 2019 and completely revoked this right in August 2022. Despite the Constitutional Court's ruling that it has been turned into a punitive tool and causes a systematic problem, the BİK ban continues⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ One is Acunmedya Academy, which is part of İstanbul Nişantaşı University, and the other is Halk Academy.

⁷⁶ Nail Güreli, “Şu Bizim Medya” (Our Media), Bas-Haş, July 2004, İstanbul.

⁷⁷ See the section on Constitutional Court decisions under the heading “Trials” in the section on “Structural Problems.” Article 49 Constitutes a Structural Problem”.

Google, which has come to the fore in recent years in the search for alternative revenue models, has caused a serious decline in the revenues of many independent or opposition media companies with its algorithm changes. On the other hand, we see that Google is promoting pro-government media companies in its search results, without even taking basic human criteria into account⁷⁸. The closure of Gazete Duvar, which our union represents, for these reasons highlights the economic fragility of companies that insist on journalism⁷⁹.

The negative developments we have mentioned show that the problem cannot be solved by simply improving the conditions of journalists, but that it is structural and deep-rooted. Discussing an economic model that is not dependent on reader/viewer/listener income, official subsidies, or page traffic from private companies, but rather draws inspiration from successful examples around the world, has become one of the urgent tasks of sector representatives.

D. A Tough Struggle: Union Activities

TGS continues to defend the economic and professional rights of journalists through its union activities. The table below, based on ministry data, shows the unions active in the sector and their unionization rates⁸⁰.

Table 8: Unionization Rates and Numbers in the Sector

PERİOD	TGS	Medya-İş	Basın-İş (TÜRK-İŞ)	Basın İş (DİSK)	Lider Medya Sen	Basın Pol-Sen
2025 Ocak	1975 / %2,05	7277 / %7,53	2400 / %2,49	1004 / %1,04	2 / %0,01	8 / %0,01

⁷⁸ For more detailed information:

Adem Özgür, "Media ownership: 100 news organizations and investments in non-journalism sectors," <https://journo.com.tr/medya-sahipligi-2025>, (Access Date: 25.03.2025).
Journo "News Monitor Investigates Turkish Media Practices, Exposes Google's Pro-Government Bias", <https://journo.com.tr/journo-news-monitor>, (Access Date: 26.03.2025).

⁷⁹ TGS, "Unfortunately, @gazeteduvar, which our union has been organizing for six years and with which we have signed a collective bargaining agreement, has ceased publication today," https://x.com/TGS_org_tr/status/1899762090023264411, (Access Date: 15.03.2025).

⁸⁰ Ministry of Labor and Social Security, January 2025 Statistics, <https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/istatistikler/calisma-hayati-istatistikleri/sendikal-istatistikler/isci-sayilari-ve-sendikalarin-uye-sayilari-hakkinda-tebligler/>, (Access Date: 14.03.2025).

As can be seen from Table 9, there are four unions that have exceeded the 1% sector threshold and are eligible to sign collective bargaining agreements. Three of these unions (TGS, Basın İş affiliated with Türk-İş, and Medya-İş) have signed collective bargaining agreements. The overall unionization rate in the sector is 13.13%, which is below the national average unionization rate of 14.97%.

Based on this general overview of the sector, the institutions where TGS is authorized as of April 2025 and the start dates of the agreements are as follows:

Table 9: Institutions Where TGS Is Authorized

NUMBER	INSTITUTION	First CBA Start Date
1	Evrensel	July 2014
2	Bianet	February 2016
3	Dokuz Eylül	September 2017
4	Reuters	April 2019
5	Refinitiv	April 2019
6	İz Gazete	March 2021
7	AFP	March 2021
8	BBC	August 2021
9	AP	October 2021
10	Dokuz8 Haber	February 2022
11	Medya A.Ş.	March 2022
12	Yenigün	July 2023
13	EPA	December 2023
14	Diken	December 2023

Despite all these negative developments in the sector, TGS continues to be the union with the highest number of collective bargaining agreements in the media sector.

In addition to the table above, there are also media companies where TGS has secured a majority, but the process has been referred to court due to employers' objections to authority or where strikes are ongoing. These are shown in the following two tables:

Table 10: Workplaces in the Judicial Process

NUMBER	INSTITUTION	BEGINNING OF THE TRIAL
1	Hürriyet	November 2019
2	Halk TV	June 2021

The legal proceedings for the Discovery Channel, which were included in our previous report, concluded in our favour in March 2025. However, as of the date of this report, the Ministry has not yet sent the authorization document to our union, preventing negotiations from beginning.

Table 11: Workplaces Where Strikes Continue

NUMBER	INSTITUTION	STARTING DAY OF STRIKE
1	Sputnik	17 August 2023

Although the first instance court decisions in favour of our members who were unlawfully dismissed from Sputnik were issued, the appeals and Supreme Court proceedings had not yet been finalized at the time of writing the report⁸¹. Both the ongoing authority lawsuits in Hürriyet newspaper and Halk TV, as well as the union compensation and reinstatement lawsuits we filed for our members at Sputnik, have exceeded the maximum time limits specified by law. The fact that these trials have taken so long, regardless of intent, encourages employers to engage in anti-union actions rather than deterring them.

X.POVERTY SURVEY: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LEVEL SURVEY⁸²

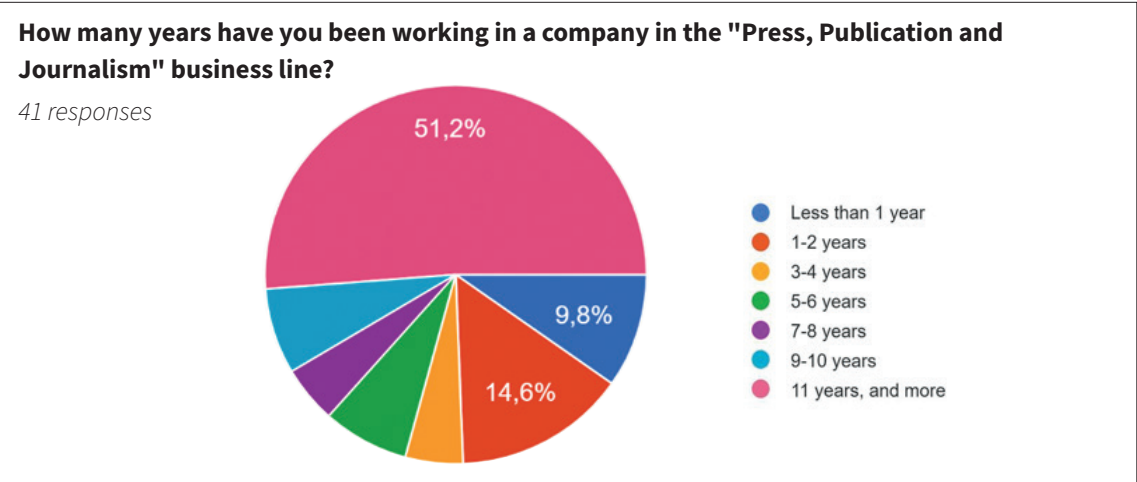
This year, TGS conducted its second survey to measure the perception of poverty among workers in the media sector and to gather information on their economic and social consumption behaviours. The results of the survey, which included questions different from last year's, can be found below.

i.Relatively Senior Members Stand Out

In both surveys, approximately half of the participants stated that they had worked in a company in the “Press, Publishing, and Journalism” business line for 11 years or more.

1- Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

The majority of survey participants, 51.2%, reported having worked in the industry for “11 years, and more”. Those with “1-2 years” of experience followed at 14.6%. Third are those with “less than one year” of experience at 9.8%, followed by “9-10 years” and “5-6 years” at 7.3% each. Last are “7-8 years” and “3-4 years” at 4.9%.

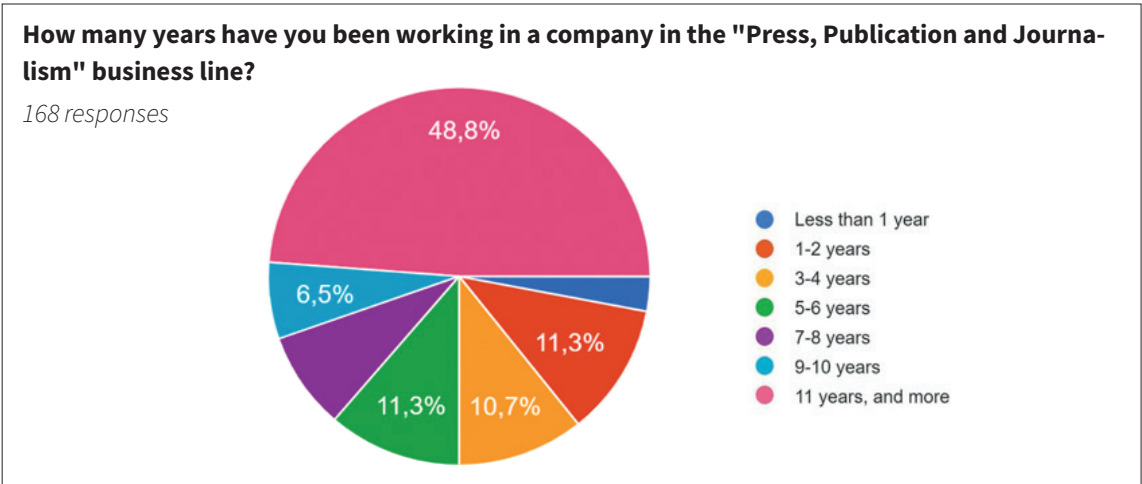


⁸¹ For detailed information on the strike process at Sputnik and the human rights violations that took place, see: TGS, Press Freedom Report 2023-2024, pp. 39-41, <https://tgs.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/TGS-BASIN-OZGURLUGU-RAPORU-TAM-METIN.pdf>, (Access Date: 24.03.2025).

⁸² The survey's research universe can be found in the Methodology section of the report.

2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

Nearly half of the survey participants, 48.8%, stated that they have worked in a company in the “Press, Publishing, and Journalism” business line for “11 years, and more.” The second most common responses were “5-6 years” and “1-2 years,” each at 11.3%. Immediately following this was “3-4 years” at 10.7%. Following this, “7-8 years” accounts for 8.3%, “9-10 years” for 6.5%, and those who stated “less than one year” make up 3%.

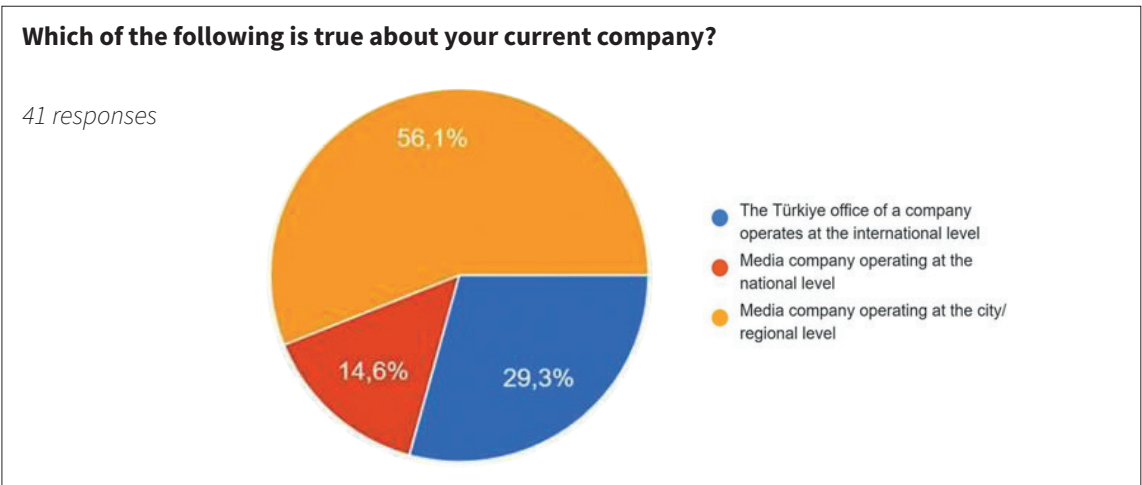


ii. Members from Local Media Stand Out

As mentioned above, the union currently has collective bargaining agreements in place at 14 different workplaces. Six of these are the Turkish offices of companies operating at the international level, five are national-level media companies, and the last three are media companies operating at the city/regional level, which can be referred to as “local media.” When examining the distribution of members across these companies, national-level media companies come first, followed by the Turkish offices of companies operating internationally, and finally local media companies.

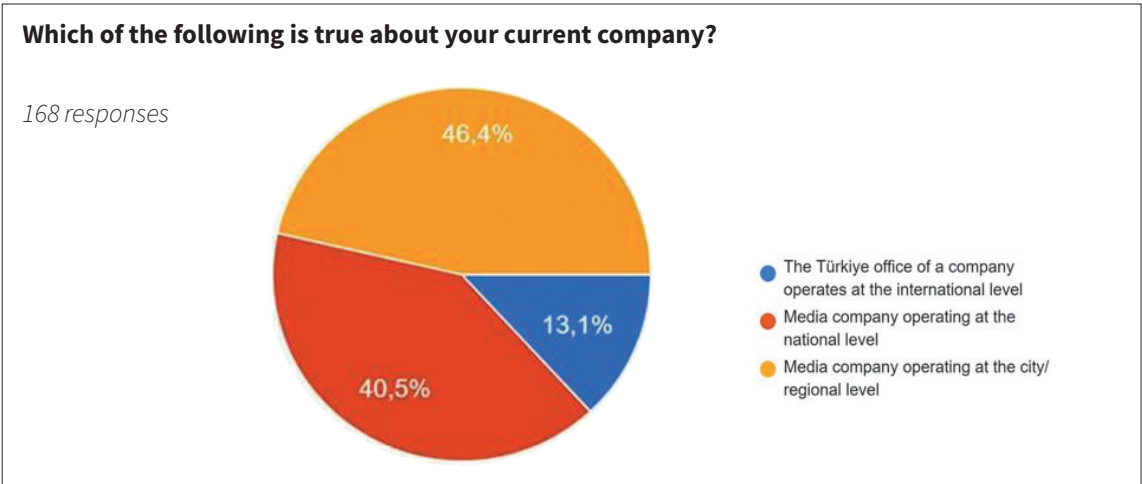
1- Results of the Authorized Workplace Survey:

The majority of participants, 56.1%, say they work for local media companies. Second are those working for the Turkish offices of companies operating internationally, at 29.3%. Last are those working for national media companies, at 14.6%.



2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

Approximately half of the participants (46.4%) stated that they work for local media companies. In second place are employees working for media companies operating at the national level, with 40.5%. In last place are employees working for companies operating at the international level in Turkey, with 13.1%.

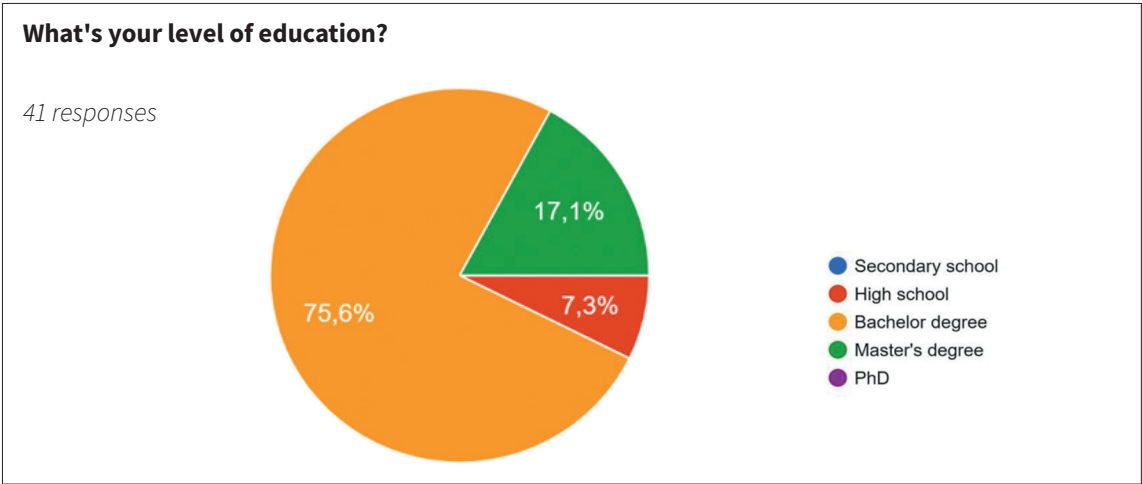


iii. Education Level is Quite High

In both surveys, nearly two-thirds of participants have a bachelor's degree. When we include those with master's degrees, we see that a significant proportion of participants have a bachelor's degree or higher.

1- Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

5.6% of participants have bachelor's degree, 17.1% have a master's degree, and 7.3% are high school graduates. No participants indicated that they had a secondary school or PhD.

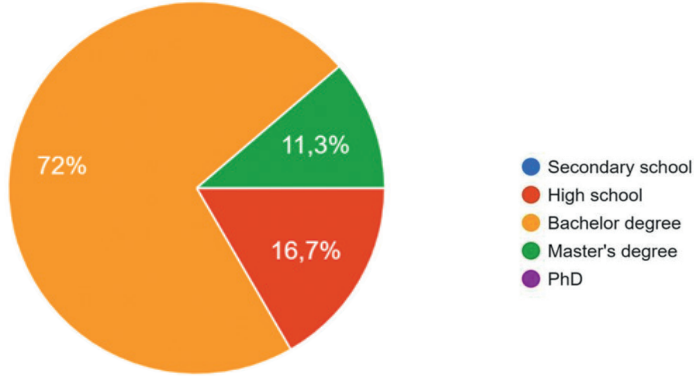


2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

72% of participants reported having a bachelor's degree, 16.7% reported having a high school diploma, and 11.3% reported having a master's degree. Similar to the other survey, there were no participants who reported having a secondary school or a PhD.

What's your level of education?

168 responses



iv. CBAs Help Reduce Hunger and Poverty

During the survey period, the minimum wage was 22,104.67 TL net. According to BİSAM's calculations for the February 2025 period, the hunger threshold was 22,886 TL, and the poverty threshold was 79,165 TL⁸³. According to TÜRK-İŞ's calculations for the March 2025 period, the poverty line was 23,615 TL, and the poverty threshold was 76,922 TL⁸⁴. Considering the hunger and poverty threshold calculations of the two confederations, approximately 7% of those who participated in the survey from authorized workplaces appear to have a monthly net income at the poverty line. Only 21.9% of those who participated in the survey from authorized workplaces stated that they had a monthly net income between the minimum wage and 30,000 TL, while this rate reached 43.5% among those who participated in the survey from unauthorized workplaces. Those with a monthly net income above the poverty line account for approximately 24%.

Approximately 28% of those who participated in the survey from unauthorized workplaces appear to have a monthly net income at the poverty line. Those with a monthly net income above the poverty line do not exceed 10%. On the other hand, among the 16 members who reported a monthly net income of "70,001 TL and above" in the unauthorized workplace survey, 11 work in the Turkish offices of companies operating at an international level, while only five work in a media company operating at a national level. These figures highlight the economic benefits provided by collective bargaining agreements, despite all their shortcomings and weaknesses.

1- Results of the Authorized Workplace Survey:

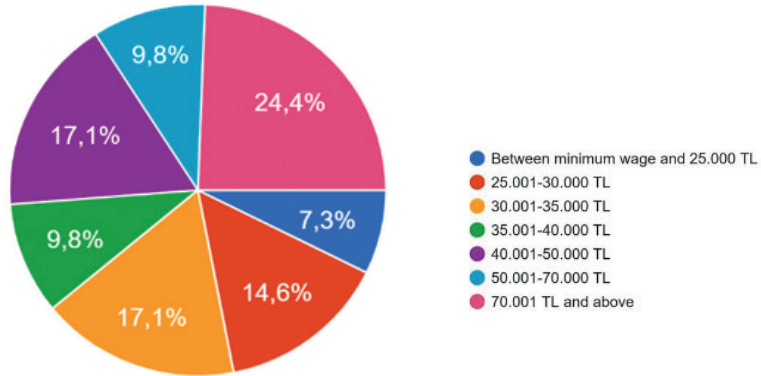
24.4% of participants reported a monthly net income of "70,001 TL and above," ranking first. Following this, those reporting a monthly net income of "40,001-50,000 TL" and "30,001-35,000 TL" shared the second position with 17.1%. The "25,001-30,000 TL" option follows with 14.6%, while the "50,001-70,000 TL" and "35,001-40,000 TL" options, each with 9.8%, come next. Lastly, the "between minimum wage and 25,000 TL" option accounts for 7.3%.

⁸³ "BİSAM: In February 2025, the hunger threshold is 22,886 TL, and the poverty threshold is 79,165 TL", <https://arastirma.disk.org.tr/?p=12702>, (Accessed on March 15, 2025).

⁸⁴ Turkish-İş, March 2025 Hunger and Poverty Threshold, [https://www.turkis.org.tr/turk-is-mart-2025-aclik-ve-yoksulluk-siniri/#:~:text=FOUR-PERSON%20HOUSEHOLD%20MONTHLY%20FOOD,POVERTY%20THRESHOLD\)%20İS%2076,922%20TL](https://www.turkis.org.tr/turk-is-mart-2025-aclik-ve-yoksulluk-siniri/#:~:text=FOUR-PERSON%20HOUSEHOLD%20MONTHLY%20FOOD,POVERTY%20THRESHOLD)%20İS%2076,922%20TL). (Accessed on March 29, 2025).

What is your monthly net income (including benefits)?

41 responses

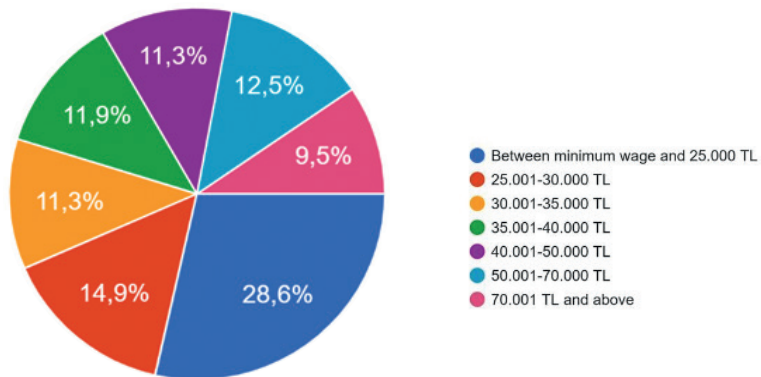


2- Results of the Survey on Unauthorized Workplaces:

Those with a monthly net income of “between minimum wage and 25,000 TL” rank first with 28.6%. Following them are “25,001-30,000 TL” with 14.9%; “50,001-70,000 TL” with 12.5%; 11.9% with “35,001-40,000 TL”; 11.3% with “30,001-35,000 TL” and “40,001-50,000 TL”. The last category includes those earning “70,001 TL and above”, at 9.5%.

What is your monthly net income (including benefits)?

168 responses



v. “Equal Pay for Equal Work” Still a Cause for Struggle

The percentage of those who believe that the “equal pay for equal work” policy is implemented in their workplace is 43.9% in the survey of authorized workplaces and 53% in the survey of unauthorized workplaces. There may be two reasons for this unexpected result.

Teen out of the fourteen collective bargaining agreements currently in effect include provisions on “positive discrimination” and “ensuring gender equality.” The positive discrimination clause essentially guarantees “gender equality in the workplace and that women, young people, the elderly, migrants, people with disabilities, and LGBT workers are not discriminated against in any way.” The article on ensuring gender equality guarantees that members will not be discriminated against “on the basis of being a woman and/or having children”⁸⁵. Despite both articles, the main reason for the 43.9% “yes” rate in the authorized workplace survey may be that the members who participated in the survey had relatively little knowledge about the current CBAs. The second reason may be that the existing articles are not yet sufficient to resolve gender-based wage discrimination in the workplace.

The primary reason for the 53% “yes” response in the unauthorized workplace survey is that wages in these workplaces are already equalized at the lowest possible level. The extent to which wage levels are particularly low in unauthorized workplaces is evident from the responses to the previous question.

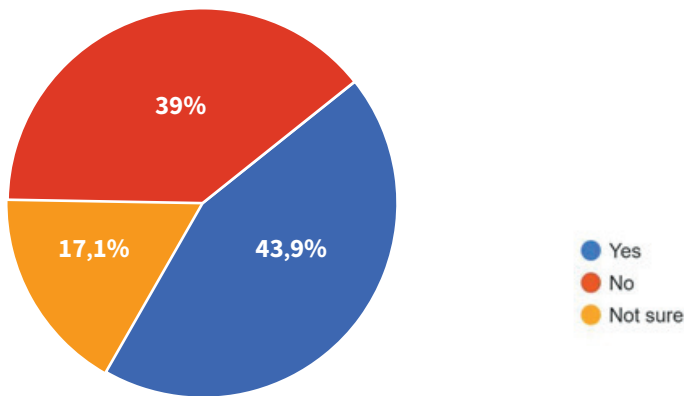
1- Results of the Authorized Workplace Survey:

43.9% of participants believe that their workplace has an equal pay for equal work policy. On the other hand, 39% answered “no” to this question, while 17.1% said “not sure”.

"Equal pay for equal work means that employees performing the same work at the same workplace are paid the same wage, regardless of their gender."

Based on this definition, do you believe that your company has such a policy?

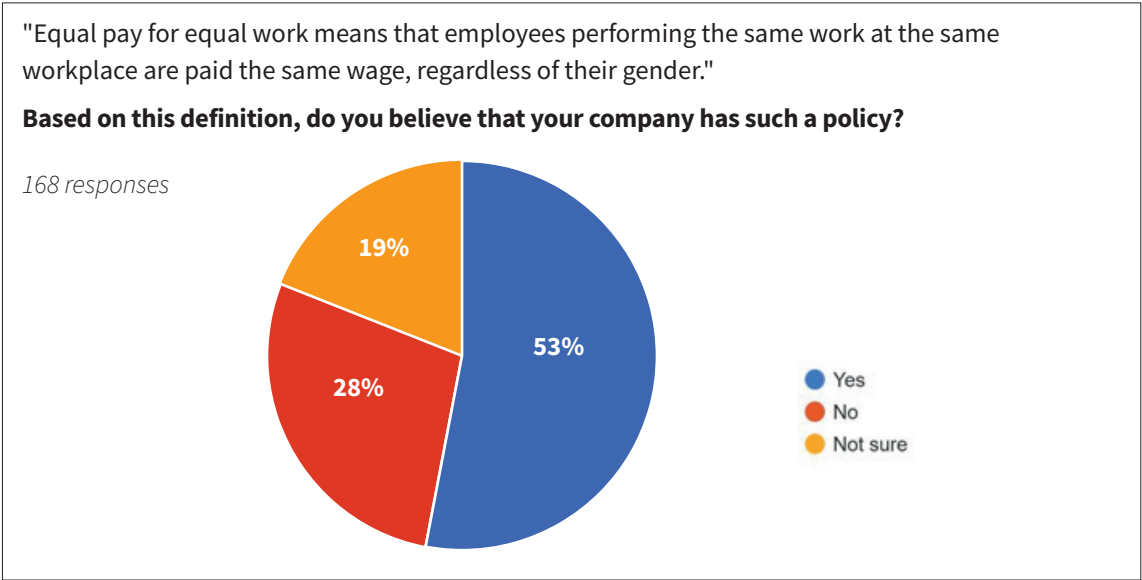
41 responses



⁸⁵ For the collective agreements signed by the union: <https://tgs.org.tr/konu/toplu-is-sozlesmeleri/>, (Access Date: 29.03.2025).

2- Results of the Survey of Unauthorized Workplaces:

More than half of the participants, 53%, answered “yes” to this question, while 28% answered “no.” 19% of the participants responded “not sure”.

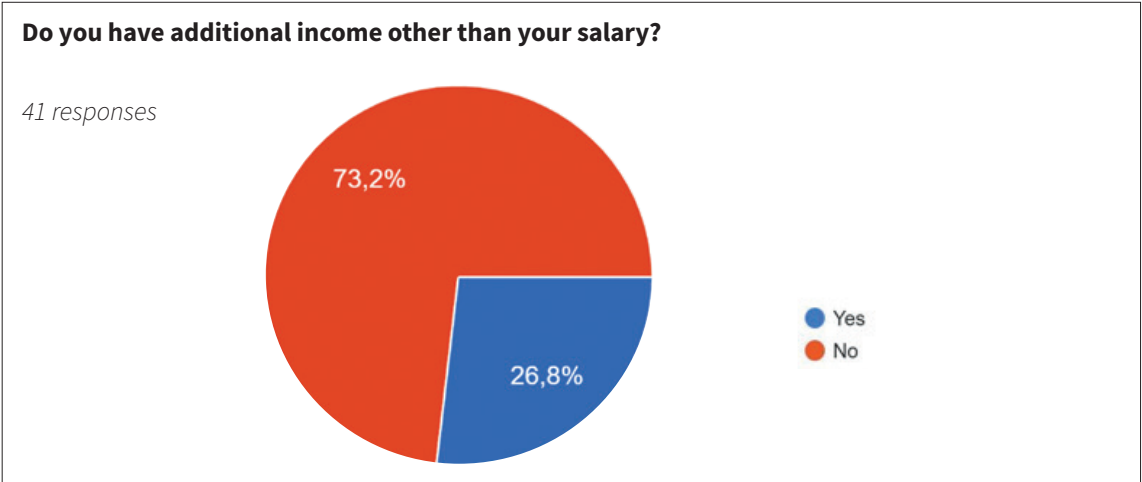


vi. Main Source of Income: Wages

The responses to both surveys reveal that journalists' primary source of income is their wages, and they lack other/secondary income.

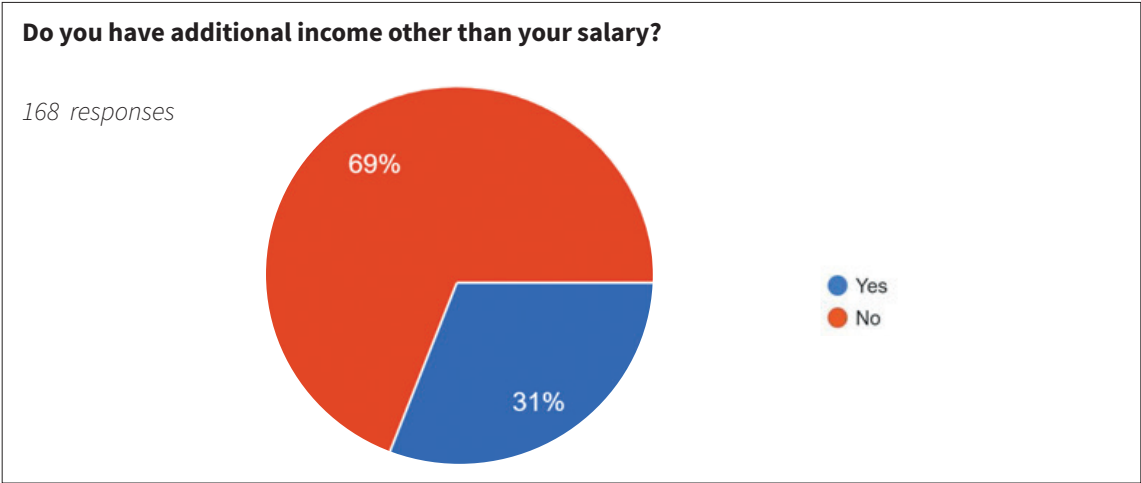
1- Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

73.2% of participants stated that they have no additional income besides their wages, while 26.8% answered “yes” to this question.



2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

69% of participants answered “no” to this question, while 31% answered “yes.”

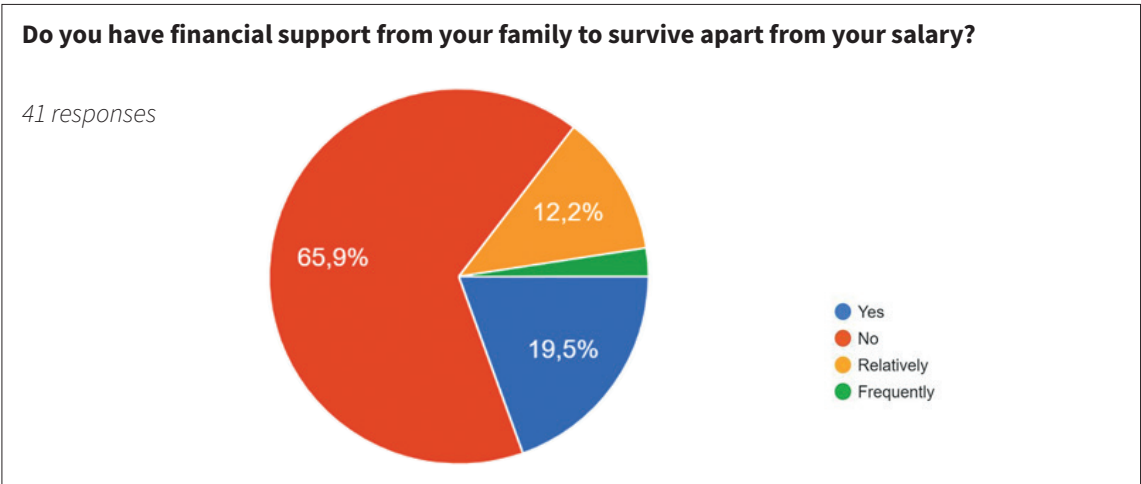


vii. Majority Do Not Require Family Support

In both surveys, the majority stated that they did not receive financial support from their families to make ends meet, with this rate being 65.9% in the authorized workplace survey and 56.5% in unauthorized workplaces.

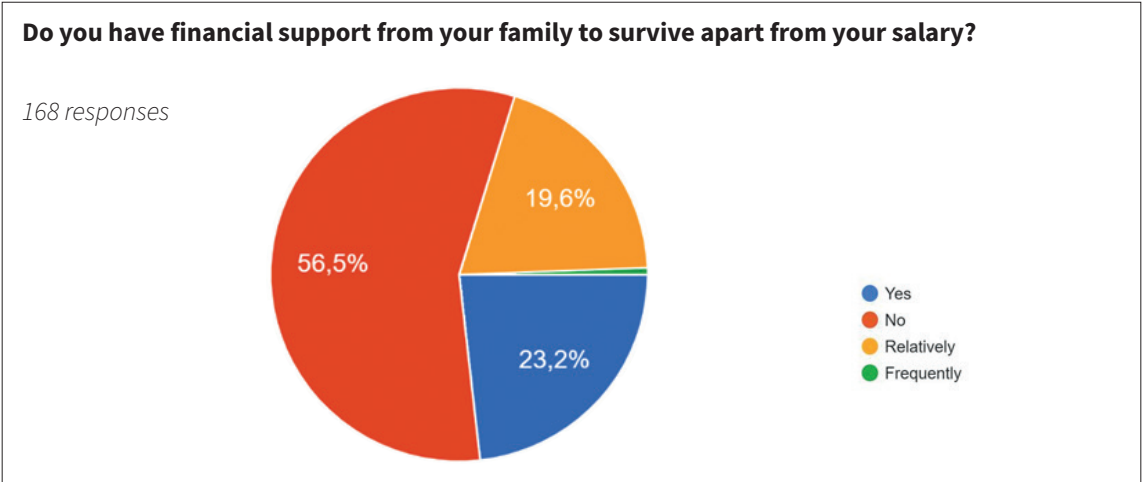
1-Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

65.9% of participants stated that they do not receive financial support from their families to make ends meet, while 19.5% answered “yes” to this question. 12.2% of participants stated that they receive “relatively” support, while 2.4% stated that they receive “frequently”.



2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

56.5% of participants answered “no” to this question, while 23.2% answered “yes.” The percentage of those who receive “relatively” financial support from their families is 19.6%, while only 0.6% answered “frequently”.

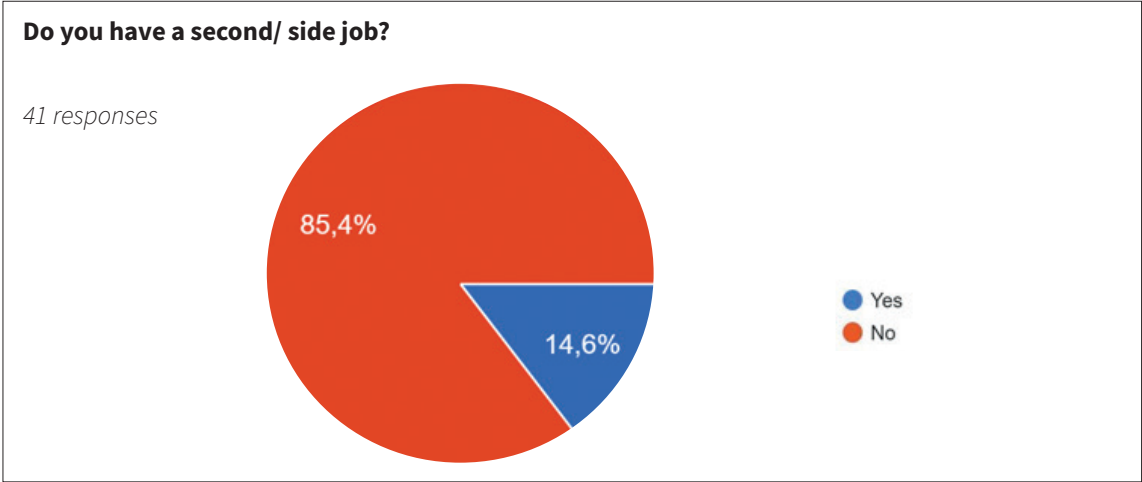


viii. Most Do Not Have a Second Job but Are Willing to Do So If Given the Opportunity

Part-time work is more common among members working in unauthorized workplaces. Additionally, when considered alongside the following question, the majority of participants in both authorized and unauthorized workplaces are willing to take on part-time work if given the opportunity. Although the term “opportunity” was not explicitly mentioned in the question, possible scenarios include having more free time, being able to give up responsibilities such as caring for the elderly or children, or obtaining permission from the primary employer.

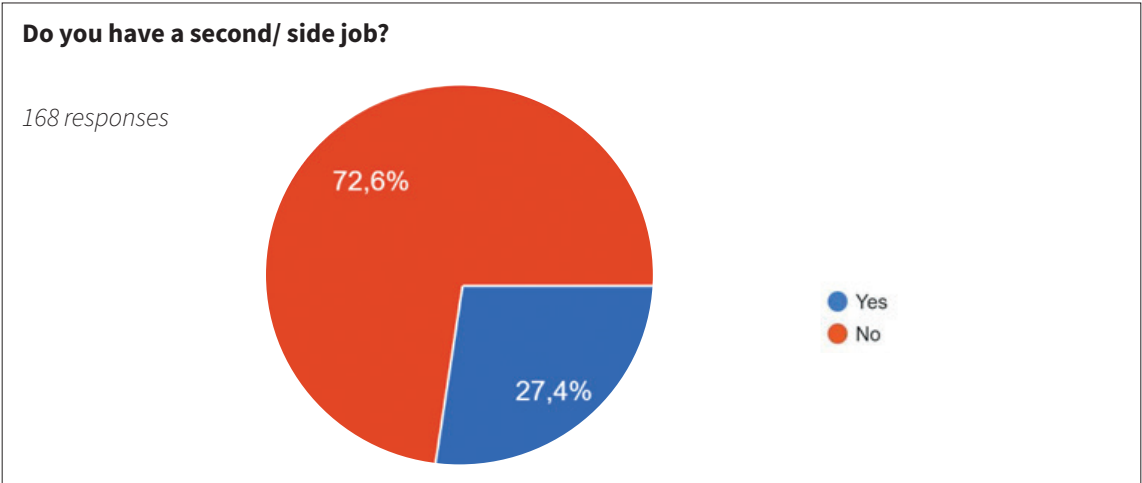
1- Results of the Survey on Authorized Workplaces:

85.4% of participants stated that they do not engage in additional work, while only 14.6% answered “yes” to this question.



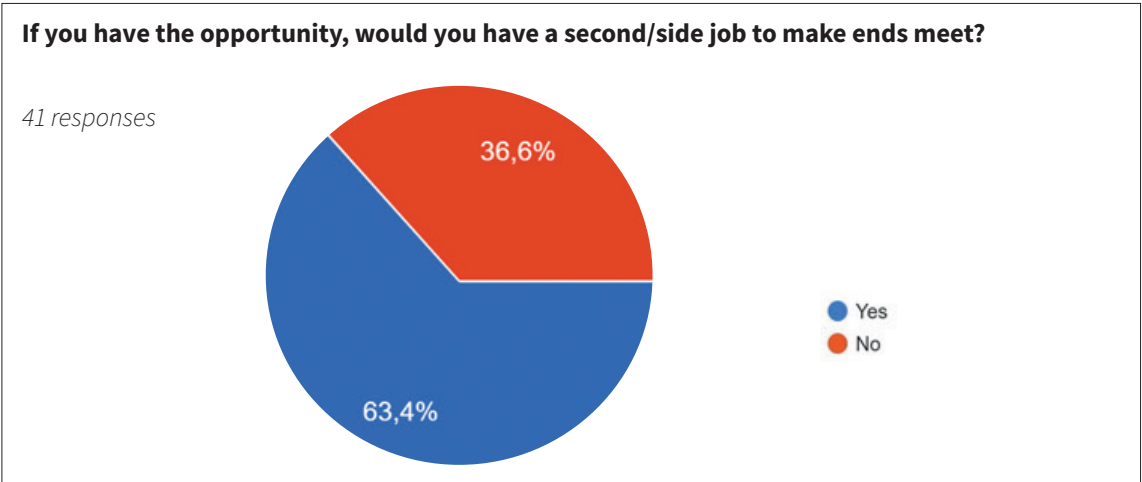
2- Survey Results for Unauthorized Workplaces:

Similar to the other survey, 72.6% of participants answered “no” to this question, while the percentage of those who answered “yes” remained at 27.4%.



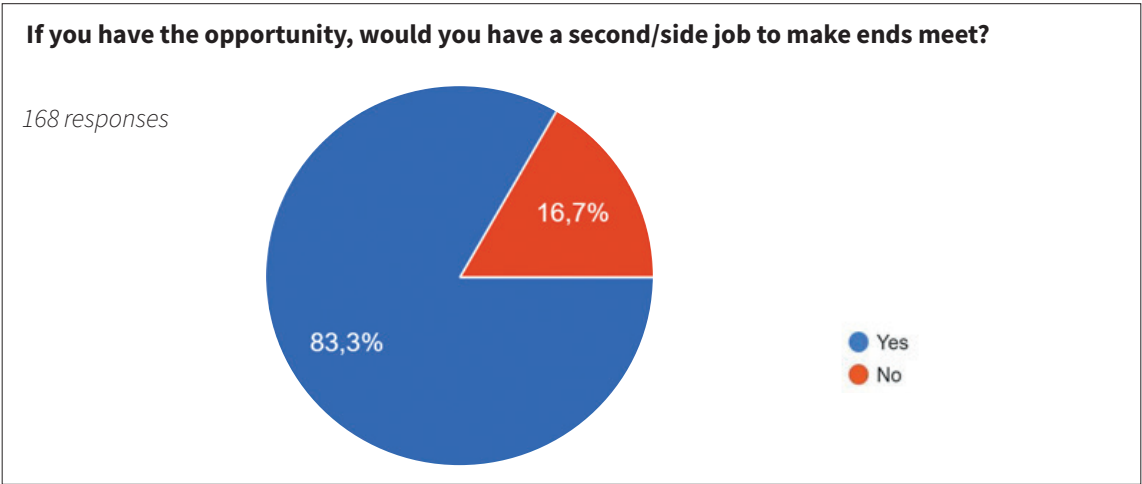
1- Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

63.4% of participants stated that they would take on additional work if given the opportunity, while 36.6% answered “no.”



2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

83.3% of participants answered “yes” to this question, while the percentage of those who answered “no” remained at 16.7%.

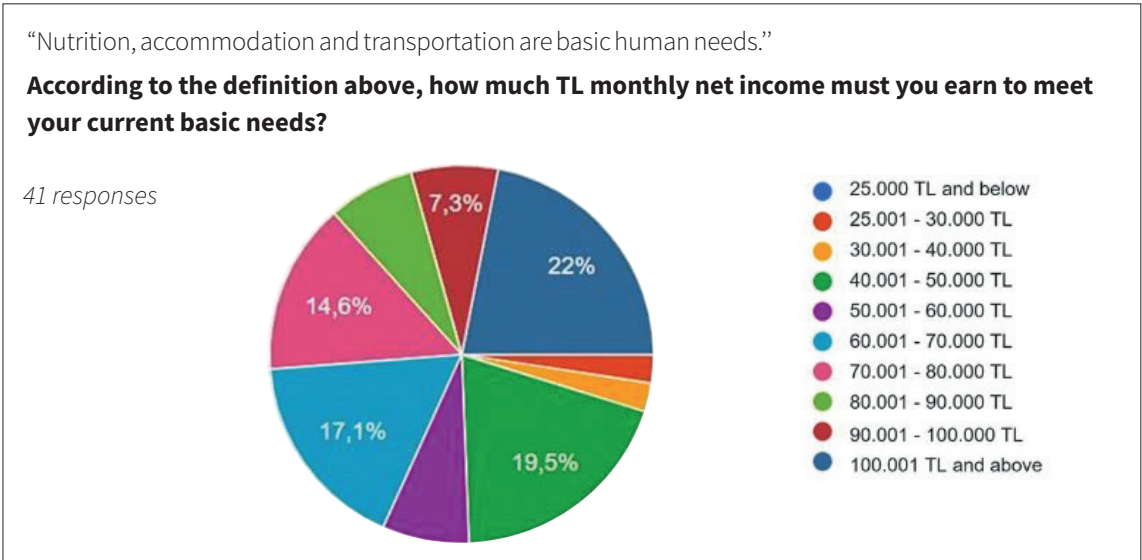


ix. CBAs Increase Income Expectations

The most common response in the authorized workplace survey was “100,001 TL and above” at 22%, while in unauthorized workplaces, it was “50,001 - 60,000 TL” at 20.8%. The economic capacity of workplaces and their varying degrees of value creation may account for this difference. Additionally, it can be confidently stated that CBAs not only improve economic and social rights but also raise income expectations.

1- Results of the Authorized Workplace Survey:

”100,001 TL and above” with 22%; “90,001 - 100,000 TL” with 7.3%; “80,001–90,000 TL” with 7.3%; “70,001–80,000 TL” with 14.6%; “60,001–70,000 TL” with 17.1%; “50,001–60,000 TL” with 7.3%; “40,001 – 50,000 TL” with 19.5%; “30,001 - 40,000 TL” with 2.4% and “25,001 - 30,000 TL” with 2.4%.



2- Results of the Survey on Unauthorized Workplaces:

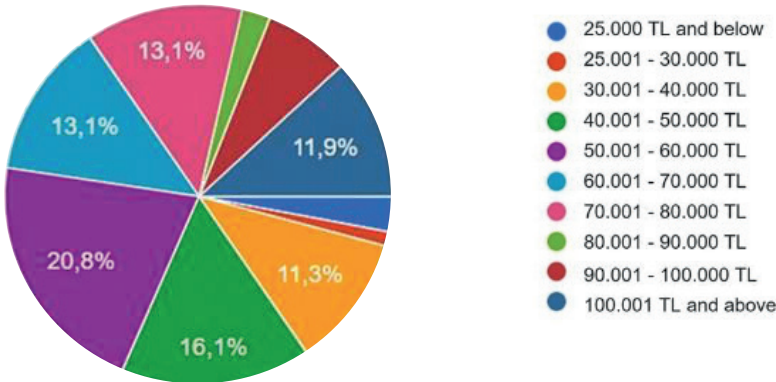
When we rank the options by amount from highest to lowest, as in the survey above, the following table emerges:

”100,001 TL and above” with 11.9%; “90,001 – 100,000 TL” with 7.1%; “80,001 – 90,000 TL” with 2.4%; “70,001 – 80,000 TL” with 13.1%; “60,001 – 70,000 TL” with 13.1%; “50,001 – 60,000 TL” with 20.8%; “40,001 – 50,000 TL” with 16.1%; “30,001 – 40,000 TL” with 11.3%; “25,001 – 30,000 TL” with 1.2% and “25,000 TL and below” 3%.

“Nutrition, accommodation and transportation are basic human needs.”

According to the definition above, how much TL monthly net income must you earn to meet your current basic needs?

168 responses

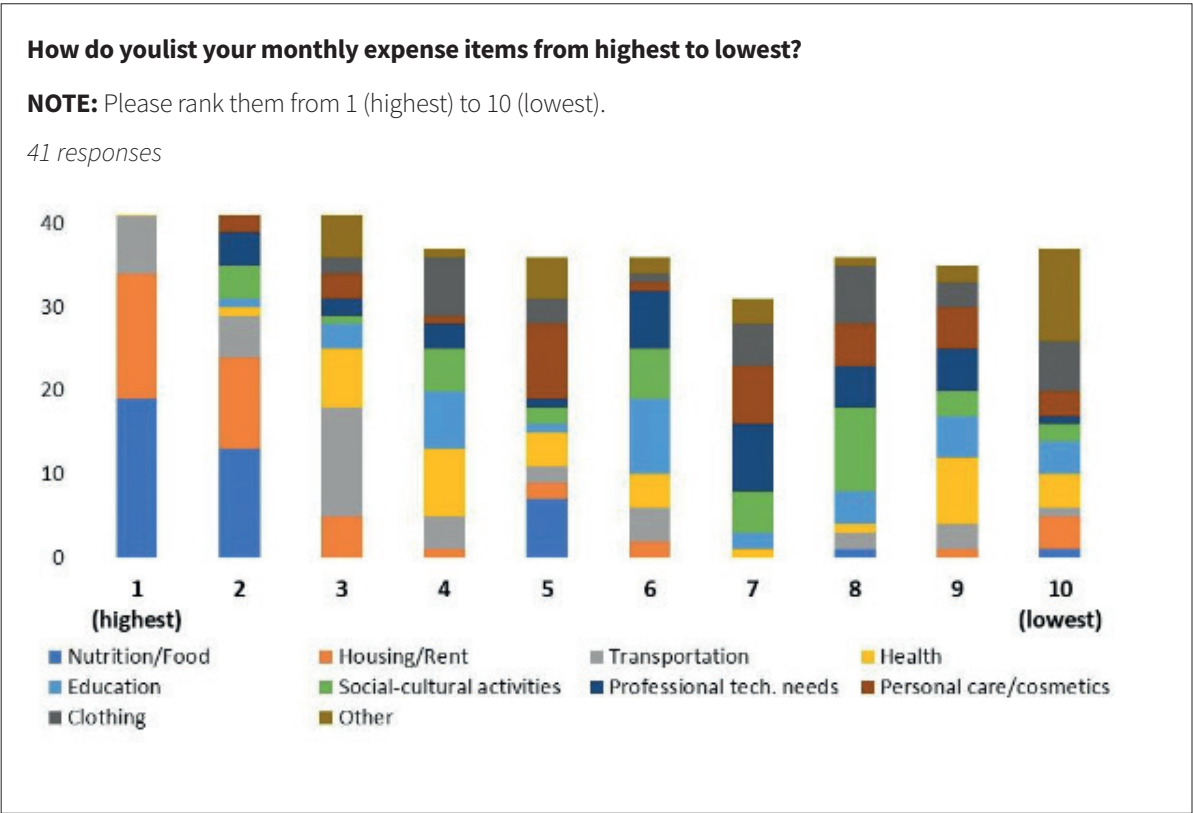


x. The largest expenditures are on food, housing, and transportation

As can be seen from the responses to both surveys, “food/nutrition,” “housing/rent,” and “transportation” are the largest expenditure items. In the authorized workplace survey, the “food/nutrition” option was indicated by nearly half of the participants as the most frequent expenditure item, while in the unauthorized workplace survey, the same option was indicated by the majority of participants as the first choice.

1- Results of the Survey of Authorized Workplaces:

When we ranked participants’ monthly expenditure items from highest (1) to lowest (10), “food/nutrition” ranked first with 46.3%. “Food/nutrition” also ranked second with 36.6%, followed by the “housing/rent” option with 26.8%. The third largest expenditure category is “transportation” at 31.7%. In fourth place are “health” and “clothing” expenditures at 19.5%. In fifth place are “social-cultural activities” at 21.9%. In sixth place, “personal care-cosmetics” is the most preferred option at 24.4%. In seventh place is “professional technical needs” at 19.5%. In eighth place is “education” at 21.9%. In ninth place, “health” and “personal care- cosmetics” share the same percentage at 17%. In tenth place, the smallest expenditure category is “other” at 26.8%.



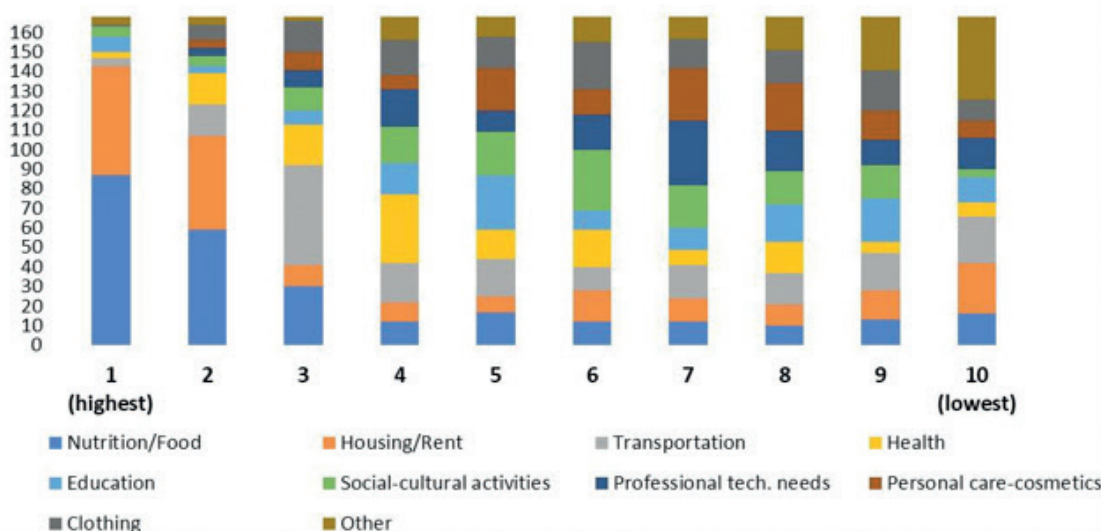
2- Results of the Survey on Unauthorized Workplaces:

In this survey, “food/nutrition” ranks first with 51.7% as the largest expenditure item. “Food/nutrition” ranks second again with 35.1% as the most preferred option, followed by “housing/rent” with 28.5%. The third largest expenditure category in this survey is also “transportation” at 30.3%. The “health” option is in fourth place at 20.8%. The “education” option is in fifth place at 16.6%, while “social-cultural activities” is the most preferred expenditure category in sixth place at 18.4%. In seventh place is “professional technical needs” at 19.6%. The eighth largest expenditure item is “personal care and cosmetics” at 14.2%. In ninth place is the “other” option at 16%, followed by “education” at 13%. The “other” option is the most preferred choice at 25%, followed by “housing/rent” at 15.4%.

How do you list your monthly expense items from highest to lowest?

NOTE: Please rank them from 1 (highest) to 10 (lowest).

168 responses



xi. Most People Are Concerned About Losing Their Jobs

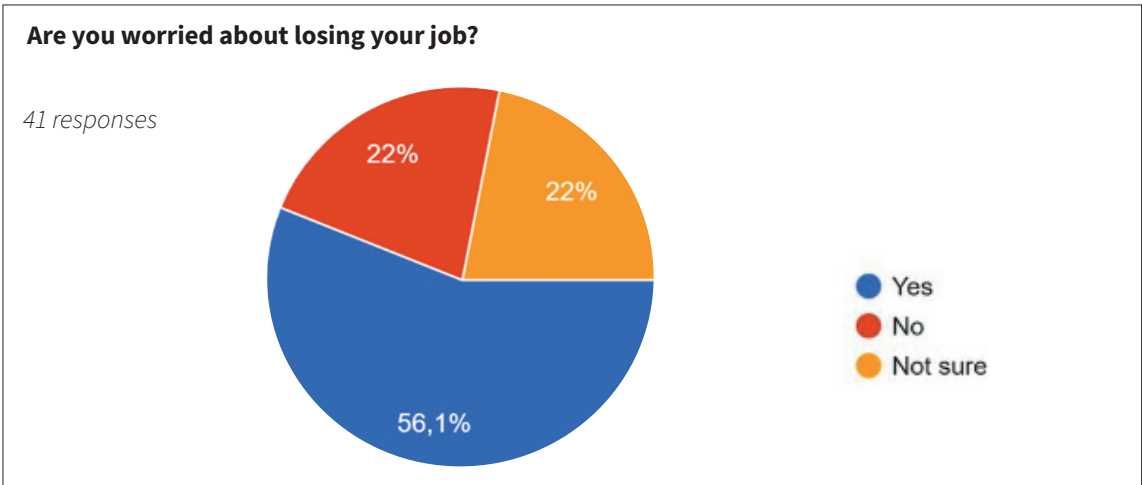
In both surveys, the majority of respondents expressed concern about losing their jobs. When including those who answered “not sure,” this percentage reaches a serious level.

Nine out of the fourteen collective bargaining agreements signed by the union include an expanded job security clause. This clause extends the scope of job security granted by law to workplace representatives to include members of the union's central and branch management, audit, and disciplinary committees (if applicable). Members not involved in these roles are also covered by the “dismissal and job security” clause. Despite these protective provisions, the significant proportion of union members in authorized workplaces who are concerned about losing their jobs necessitates the union to develop new solutions.

The higher rate observed in the survey of unauthorized workplaces should be considered in conjunction with the unemployment, insecurity, and economic uncertainty in the sector, as discussed in detail above. Of course, we can easily say that these three factors also exert pressure on members in authorized workplaces.

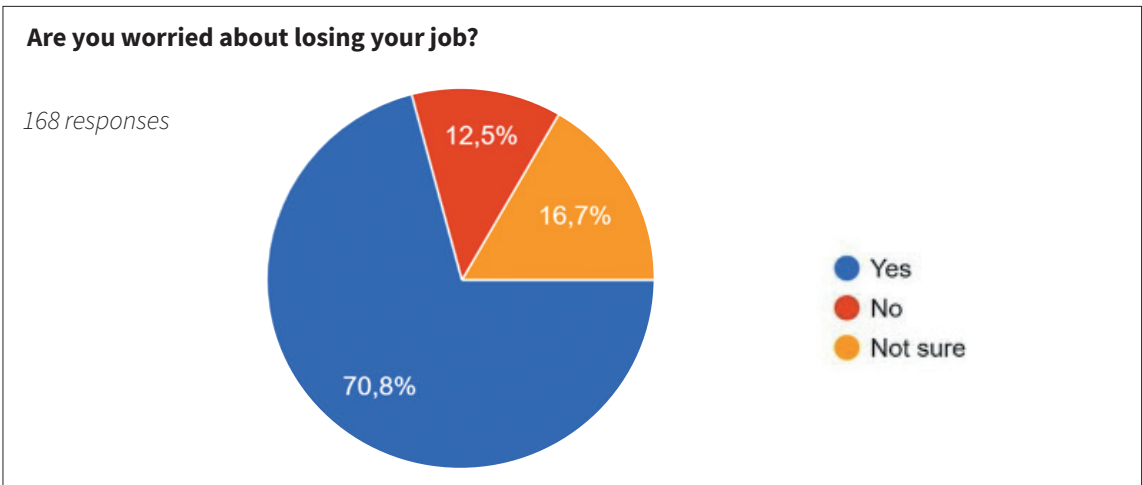
1- Results of the Survey of Authorized Workplaces:

The majority of participants, 56.1%, say they are concerned about losing their jobs. Those who answered “no” and “not sure” share the same percentage, 22%.



2- Unauthorized Workplace Survey Results:

70.8% of participants answered “yes” to the question, while 16.7% answered “not sure,” ranking second. The lowest percentage, 12.5%, answered “no.”

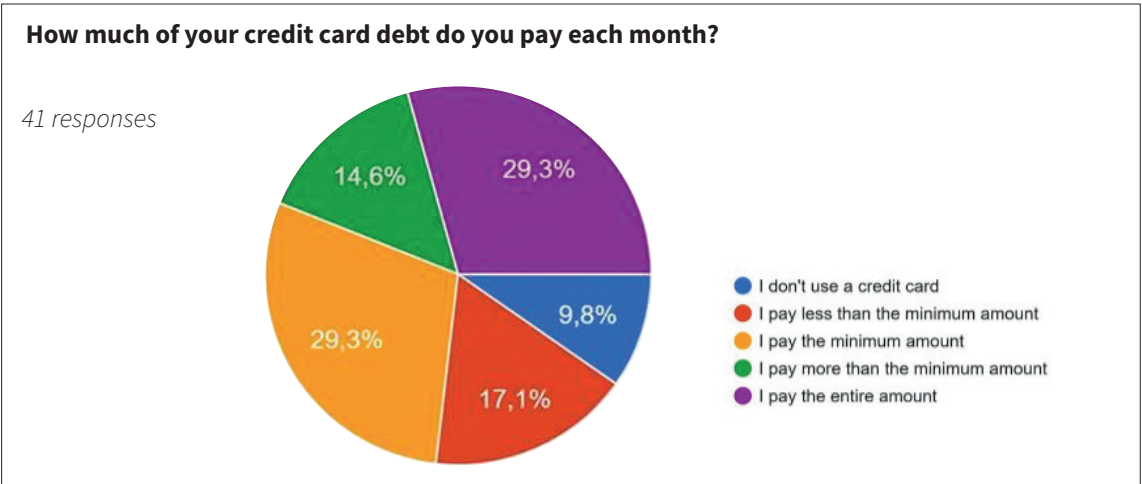


xii. Few Can Pay Off Their Entire Credit Card Debt

In the authorized workplace survey, the percentage of those who pay off their entire credit card debt each month is 29.3%, while this rate drops to 23.2% in the unauthorized workplace survey. Considering that more than two-thirds of participants in both surveys use credit cards, we can conclude that credit card-based borrowing is widespread among journalists.

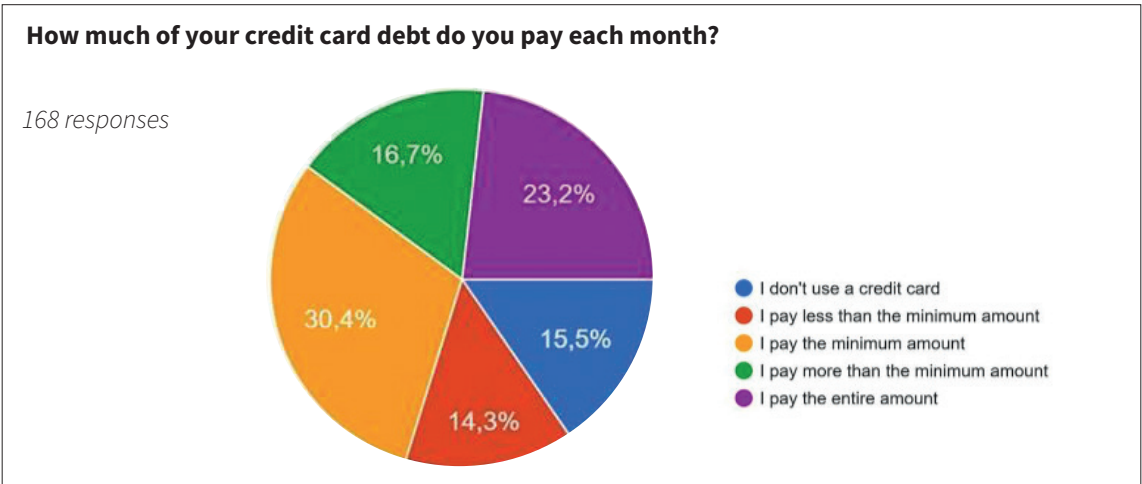
1- Authorized Workplace Survey Results:

Those who answered “I pay the entire amount” and “I pay the minimum amount” share the same percentage of 29.3%. Those who answered “I pay less than the minimum amount” come in second with 17.1%. Next is the option “I pay more than the minimum amount” at 14.6%. The last category is “I do not use credit cards” at 9.8%.



2- Results of the Unauthorized Workplace Survey:

The first category is “I pay the minimum amount” at 30.4%. Next, 23.2% of respondents said they pay the full amount. 16.7% of participants said they pay more than the minimum amount, while 15.5% said they do not use credit cards. The last category, with 14.3%, consists of those who pay less than the minimum amount.

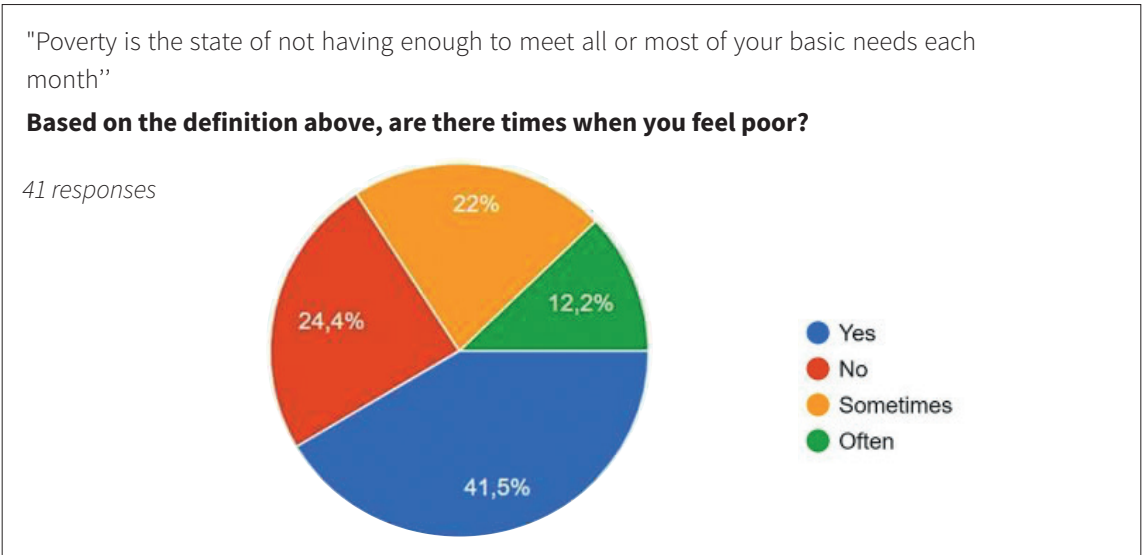


xiii. Approximately Half Feel Poor

In the authorized workplace survey, 24.4% of participants do not feel poor, while this rate drops to 12.5% in the unauthorized workplace survey. These data reveal that, despite the relative improvement in economic and social rights brought about by CBAs, they are insufficient in alleviating the sense of poverty among members, particularly in authorized workplaces.

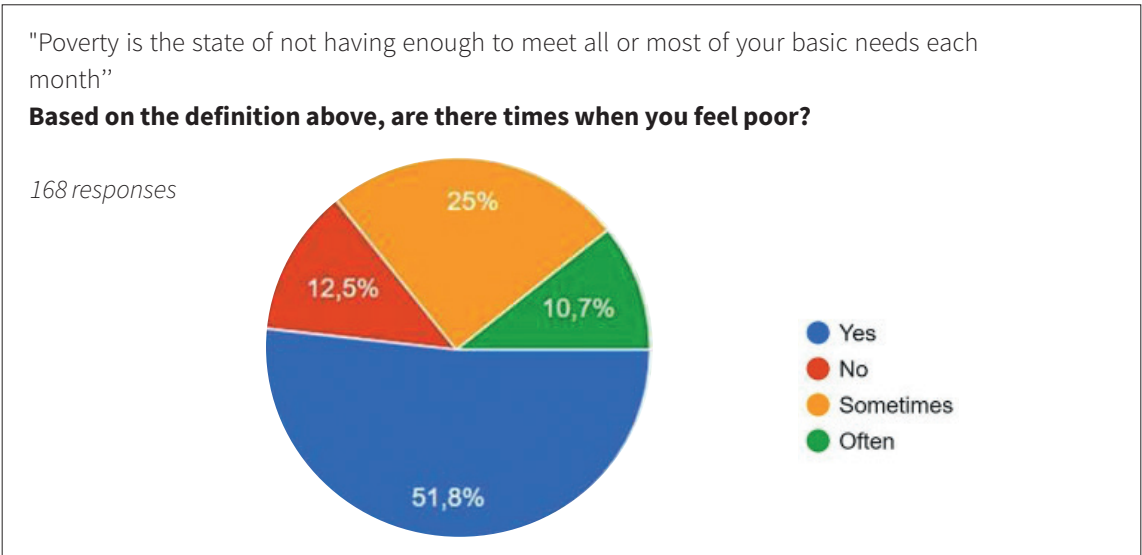
1- Results of the Survey of Authorized Workplaces:

41.5% of participants answered “yes,” while 24.4% answered “no.” The percentage of those who said they “sometimes” feel poor is 22%, and 12.2% said they “often” feel poor.



2- Results of the Survey of Unauthorized Workplaces:

As in the other group, those who answered “yes” ranked first with 51.8%. Those who answered “sometimes” ranked second with 25%, and those who answered “no” ranked third with 12.5%. Those who answered “often” ranked last with 10.7%.



xiv. Insufficient Budget Allocated for Social and Cultural Development

In the authorized workplace survey, the total percentage of those allocating an average monthly budget of 2,501 TL or more for social and cultural development was 19.6%, while this percentage dropped to 13.1% in the unauthorized workplace survey. Although the situation is relatively better in authorized workplaces, we can say that neither authorized nor unauthorized workplaces allocate sufficient budgets for social and cultural development. These data reveal that a profession such as journalism, which should be open to learning and intellectual development, is not sufficiently nourished in social and cultural terms.

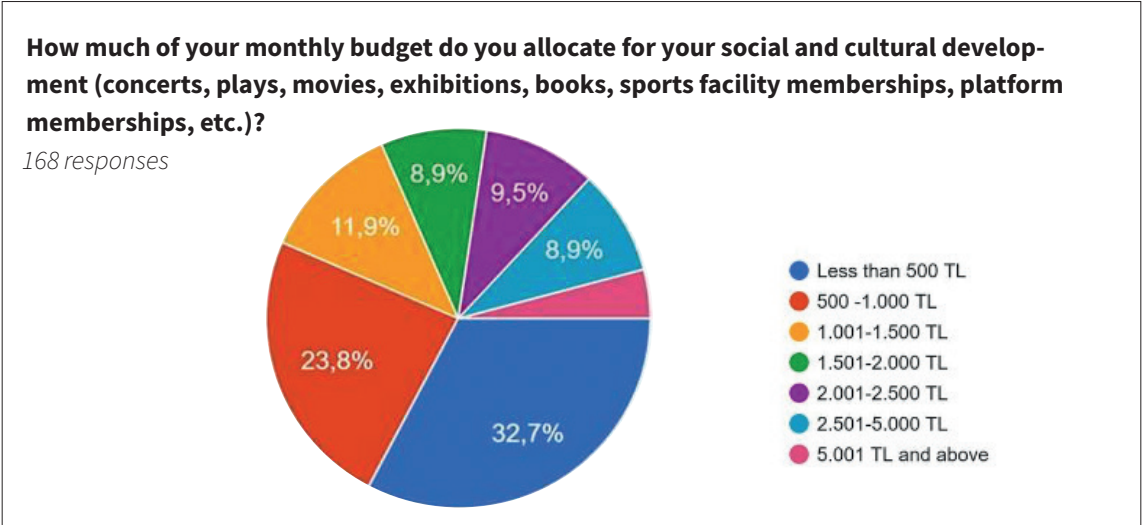
1- Results of the Authorized Workplaces Survey:

The first category, at 26.8%, consists of those who allocate a monthly budget of “less than 500 TL” for social and cultural development. Second place is occupied by those who allocate “500-1,000 TL” at 22%. Following this, 19.5% allocate “1,501-2,000 TL”, while 9.8% choose “2,501-5,000 TL” and “5,001 TL and above” share the same percentage. 7.3% of participants allocate a monthly budget of “1,001-1,500 TL” for social and cultural development, while the last category “2,001-2,500 TL” accounts for 4.9%.



2- Results of the Survey on Unauthorized Workplaces:

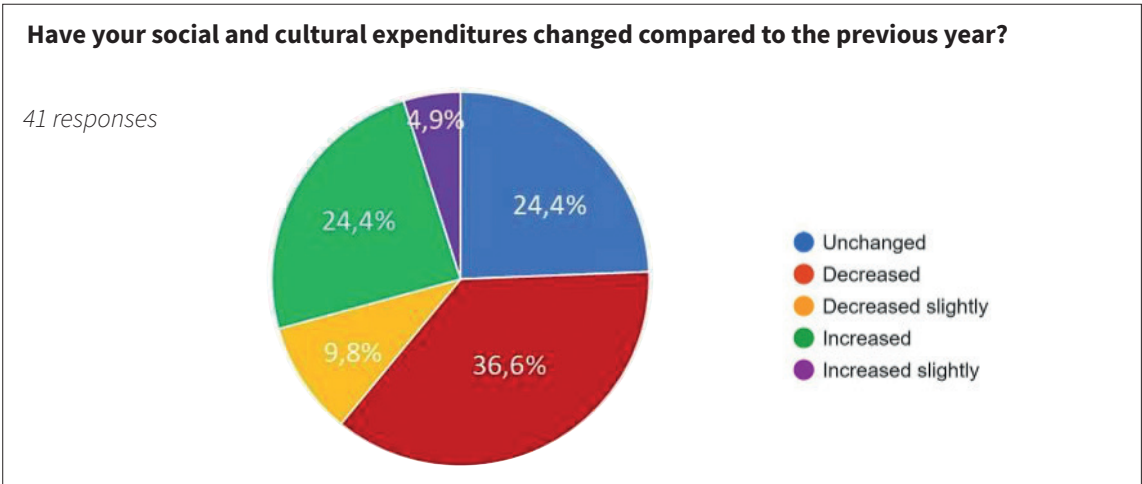
32.7% of participants stated that they allocate “less than 500 TL” for social and cultural development, while 23.8% chose the “ 500-1,000 TL” option. Those who allocate a budget of “ 1,001-1,500 TL” come in third place with 11.9%, followed by “ 2,001-2,500 TL” with 9.5%. Next are the options “ 1,501-2,000 TL” and “ 2,501-5,000 TL” with 8.9%. Finally, those who allocate a budget of “5,001 TL and above” account for 4.2%.



The next question we asked was about the change in social and cultural spending compared to the previous year. In the survey of authorized workplaces, the total percentage of those who answered “decreased” and “decreased slightly” for social and cultural spending compared to the previous year was 46.4%, while this percentage rose to 64.3% in the survey of unauthorized workplaces. When we include those whose spending remained the same in both surveys, we see that a significant proportion of participants are unable to allocate sufficient budget for social and cultural development.

1- Results of the Survey of Authorized Workplaces:

The first place is taken by those who said their social and cultural spending “decreased” compared to the previous year, at 36.6%. Those who answered “unchanged” and “increased” shared second place with 24.4%. Those who said “decreased slightly” account for 9.8% in third place, while those who answered “increased slightly” make up 4.9% in last place.

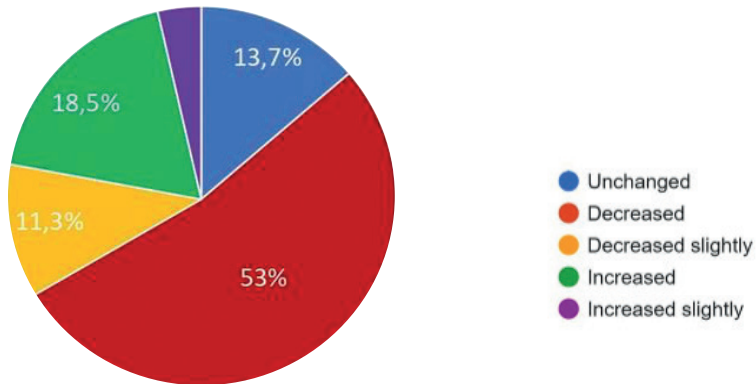


2- Results of the Survey on Unauthorized Workplaces:

More than half of the participants, 53%, answered “decreased” to this question, while 18.5% answered “increased.” The percentage of those who answered “unchanged” was 13.7%. 11.3% of participants responded “decreased slightly,” while those who answered “increased slightly” were at the bottom with 3.6%.

Have your social and cultural expenditures changed compared to the previous year?

168 responses



xv. Economic Outlook Pressures CBAs and Economic Rights

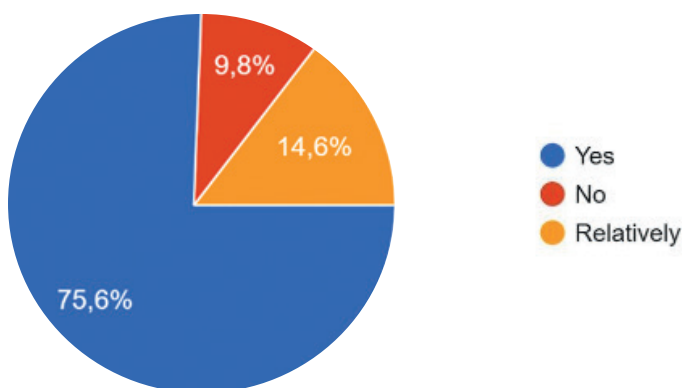
When asking our members in authorized workplaces about the impact of the country's economic situation on the implemented CBA, we also asked our members in unauthorized workplaces about the impact on their current economic and social rights. The high percentage of “yes” responses in both surveys is noteworthy. Although CBAs are intended to create a protective shield for members, the deliberate organization of the economy against wage earners weakens this protective shield. This situation compels labour and professional organizations to speak out more on issues affecting the entire national economy rather than individual workplaces and to question the economic policies being implemented.

1-Results of the Survey of Authorised Workplaces:

A significant proportion of participants, 75.6%, believe that the economic situation in the country exerts pressure on the CBA in effect at their workplaces. The percentage of those who answered “relatively” to this question was 14.6%, while only 9.8% answered “no.”

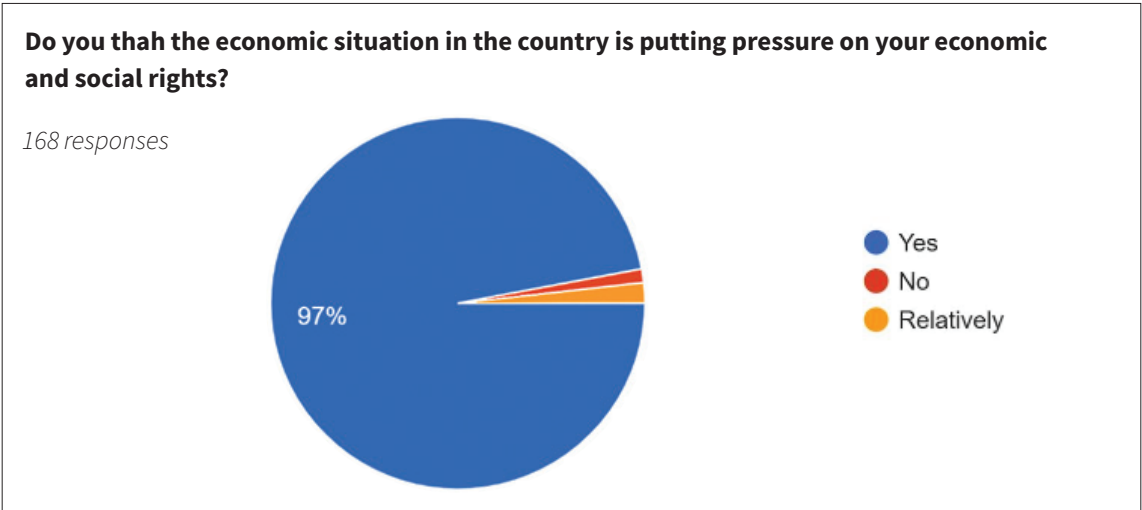
Do you think that the economic situation in the country is putting pressure on the terms of the collective bargaining agreement in effect at your workplace?

41 responses



2- Survey Results from Unauthorised Workplaces:

Nearly all participants, 97%, answered “yes” to this question. The percentage of those who answered “relatively” was 1.8%, and those who answered “no” was 1.2%.

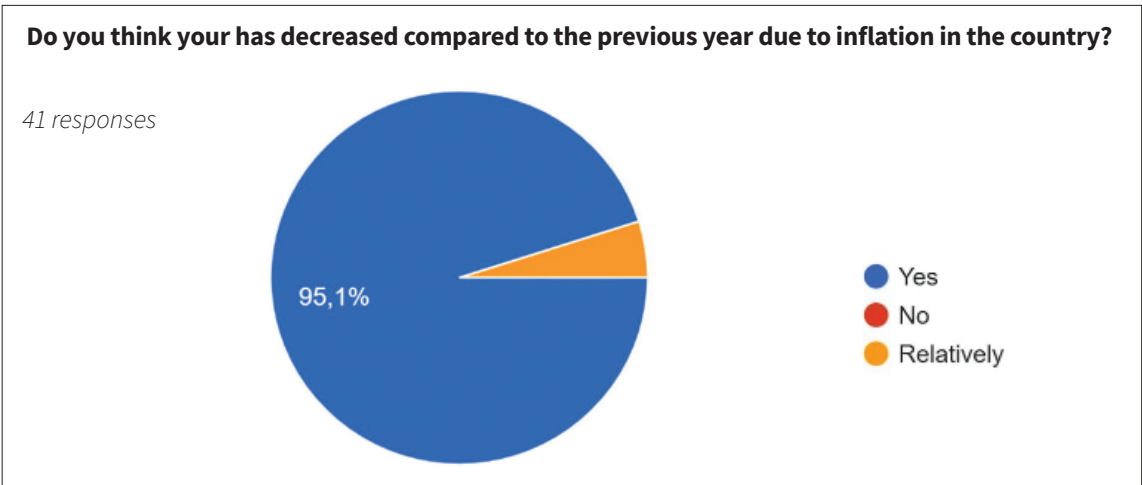


xvi. Inflation Is Eroding Income

Nearly all participants in the surveys stated that their income had eroded compared to the previous year due to inflation.

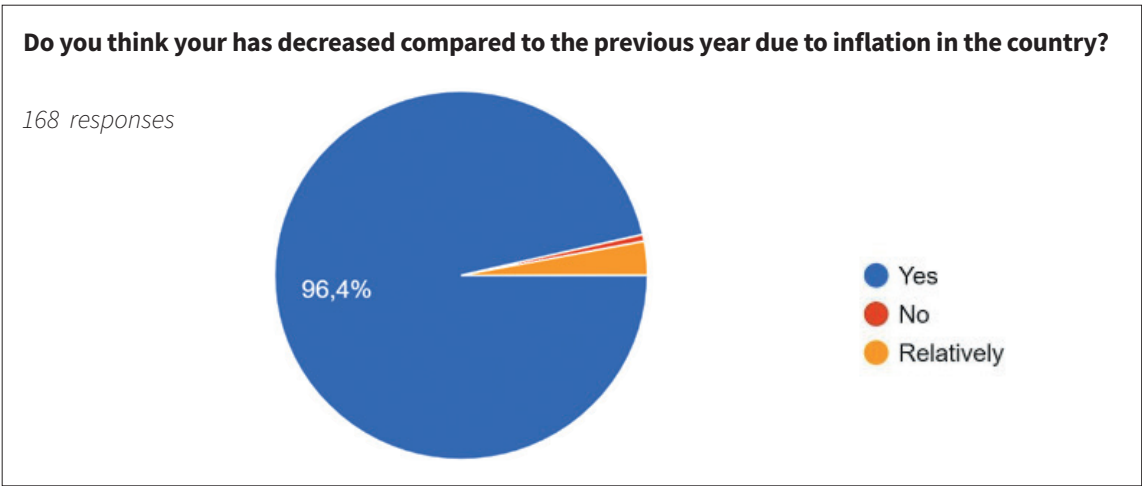
1- Authorised Workplace Survey Results:

95.1% of participants believe that their income has eroded compared to the previous year due to inflation in the country. No one answered “no” to the question, while only 4.9% answered “relatively”.



2- Unauthorised Workplace Survey Results:

In this survey as well, an overwhelming majority, 96.4%, answered “yes” to the question. Those who said their income had “relatively” eroded accounted for 3%, while those who answered “no” made up the lowest percentage at 0.6%.

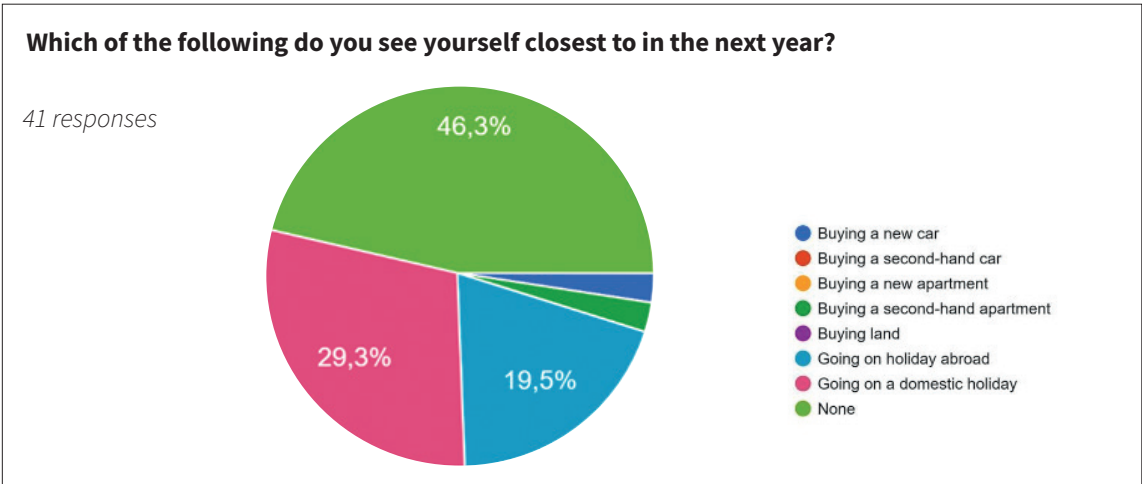


xvii. Most Likely Option: Domestic Holiday

In both surveys, it is striking that participants do not see themselves as close to any option. The options with the highest rates are domestic and international holiday possibilities.

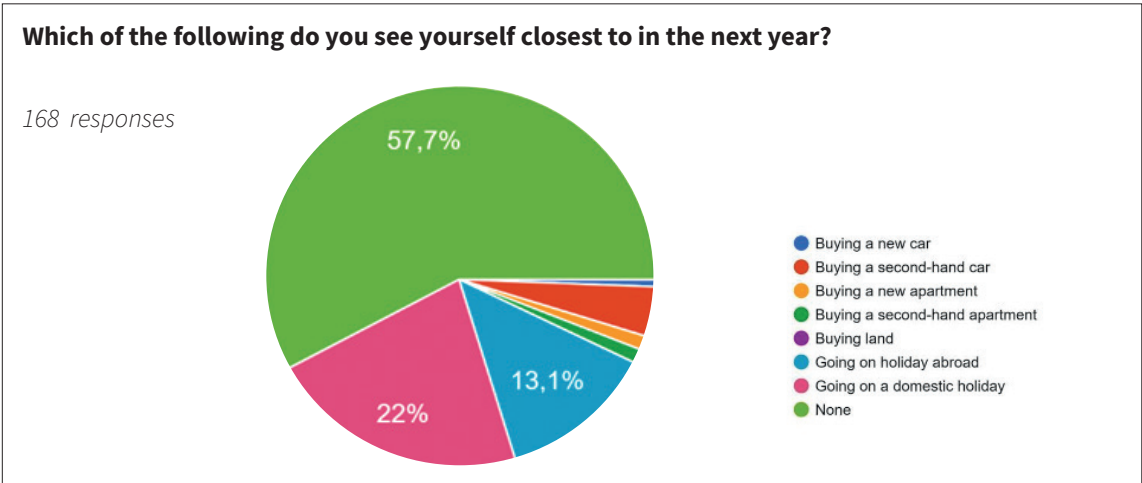
1- Results of the Survey of Authorised Workplaces:

Nearly half of the participants, 46.3%, do not see themselves close to any option. The percentage of those who see themselves close to “going on a domestic holiday” is 29.3%, while those who see themselves close to “going on holiday abroad” is 19.5%. The two options, “buying a second-hand apartment” and “buying a new car,” each share the same percentage of 2.4%. The other three options— “buying a second-hand car”, “buying a new apartment”, and “buying land”—are not preferred at all.



2-Unauthorised Workplace Survey Results:

More than half of the participants, 57.7%, do not see themselves as close to any option. In second place is “going on a domestic holiday” at 22%, followed by “going on holiday abroad” at 13.1%. In fourth place, “buying a second-hand car” is preferred at 4.2%, while “buying a new apartment” and “buying a second-hand apartment” share the same percentage at 1.2%. In last place, “buying a new car” is chosen at 0.6%. The option “buying land” is not preferred at all.



xviii. İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir Stand Out

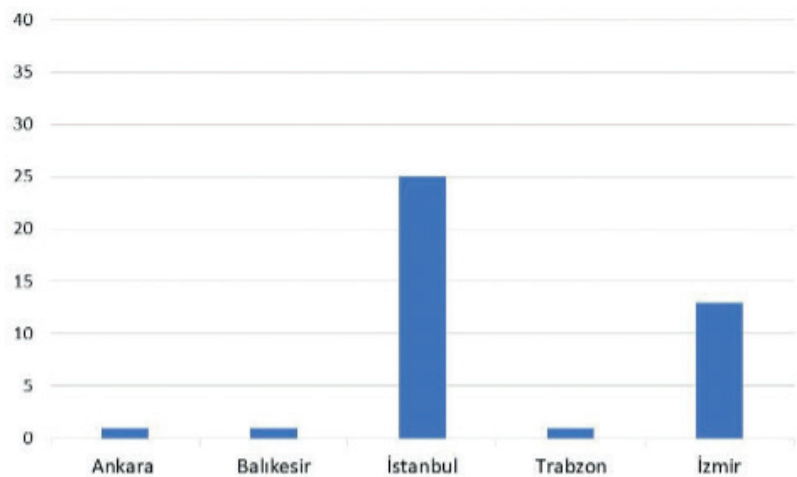
In both surveys, the three major cities of İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir stand out.

1- Authorised Business Premises Survey Results:

Participants are distributed across five cities. The highest participation rate is 61% from İstanbul. İzmir follows with 31.7%. Ankara, Balıkesir, and Trabzon are at the bottom with 2.4%.

Which city do you live in?

41 responses

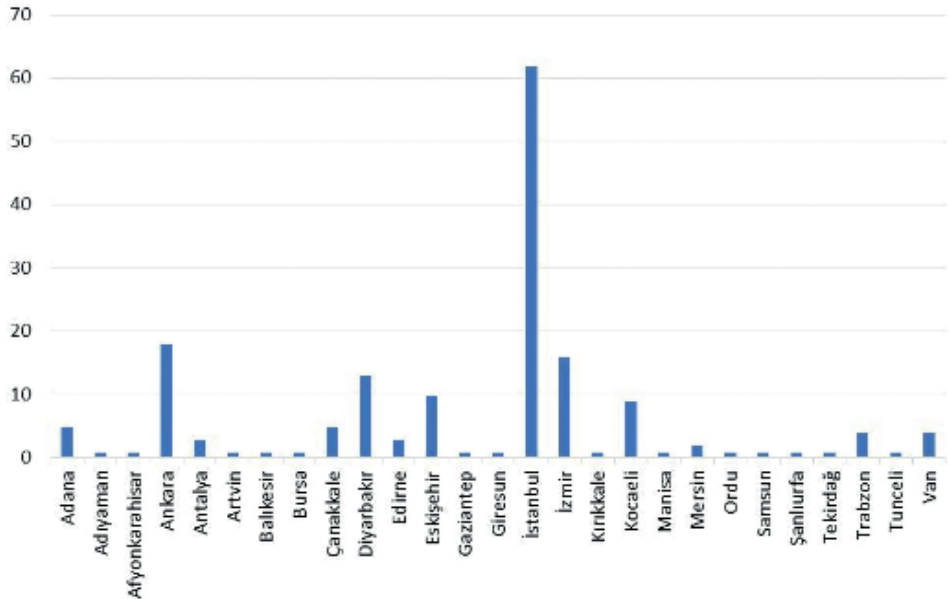


2- Unauthorised Workplace Survey Results:

This survey shows participation from many more cities than the other survey. Once again, İstanbul has the highest participation rate at 36.9%. Ankara ranks second with 10.7%. İzmir, Diyarbakır, and Eskişehir follow with 9.5%, 7.7%, and 6%, respectively. The other cities are ranked as follows: Kocaeli 5.3%; Adana and Çanakkale 2.9%; Trabzon and Van 2.4%; Antalya and Edirne 1.8%; Mersin 1.2%; Adıyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Artvin, Balıkesir, Bursa, Gaziantep, Giresun, Kırıkkale, Manisa, Ordu, Samsun, Şanlıurfa, Tekirdağ, and Tunceli 0.6%.

Which city do you live in?

168 responses

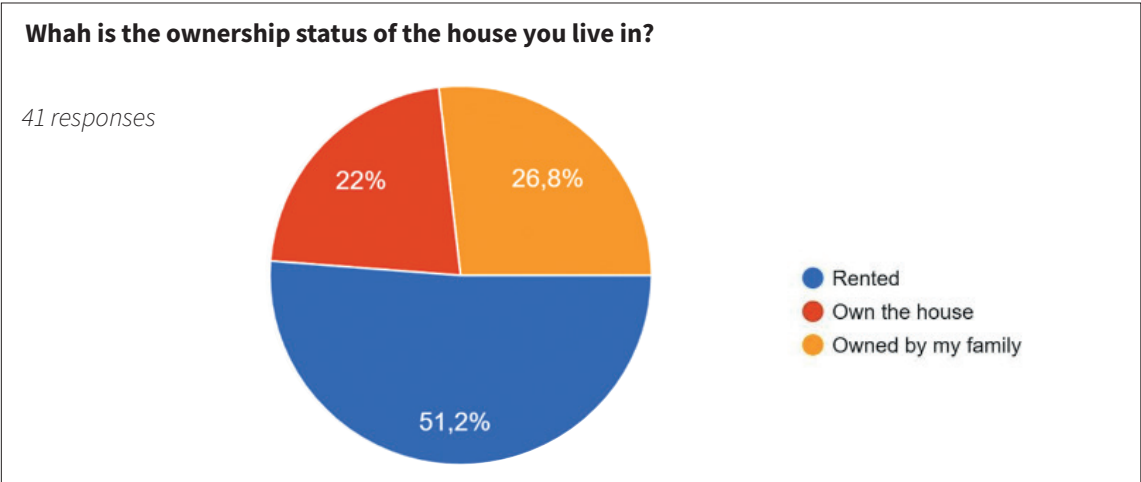


xix. Very Few Own the Homes They Live In

In both surveys, approximately one-fifth of participants appear to own the homes they live in. The remainder are either tenants or live in homes owned by their families.

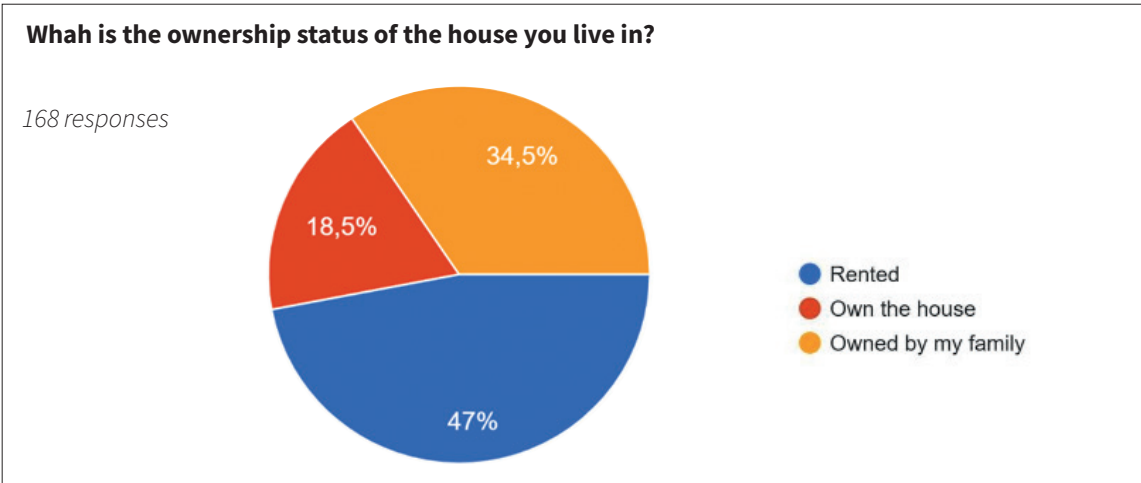
1- Results of the Survey of Authorised Workplaces:

More than half of the participants, 51.2%, said that the house they live in is “rented.” Those who answered “owned by my family” came in second with 26.8%. Those who said they own the house came in last with 22%.



2- Results of the Survey of Unauthorised Workplaces:

47% of participants stated that the home they live in is “rented.” The second most common response, at 34.5%, was “owned by my family”. The last category, at 18.5%, was “own the house”.

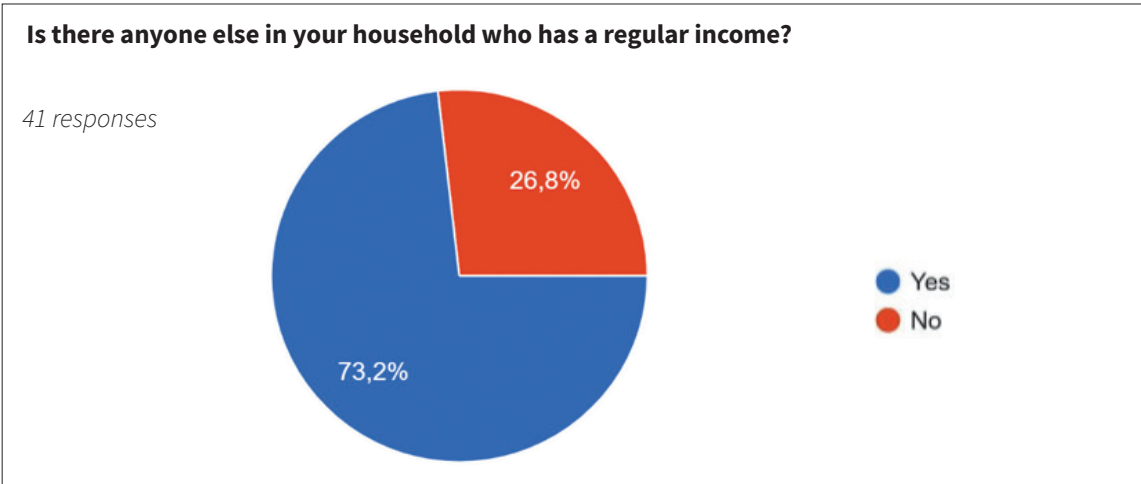


xx. More Than One Regular Income Earner in the Same Household

In both surveys, the majority of participants stated that there was more than one person in the household with a regular income. Considering that nearly half of them feel poor, we understand that this feeling persists despite the presence of multiple regular incomes in the household.

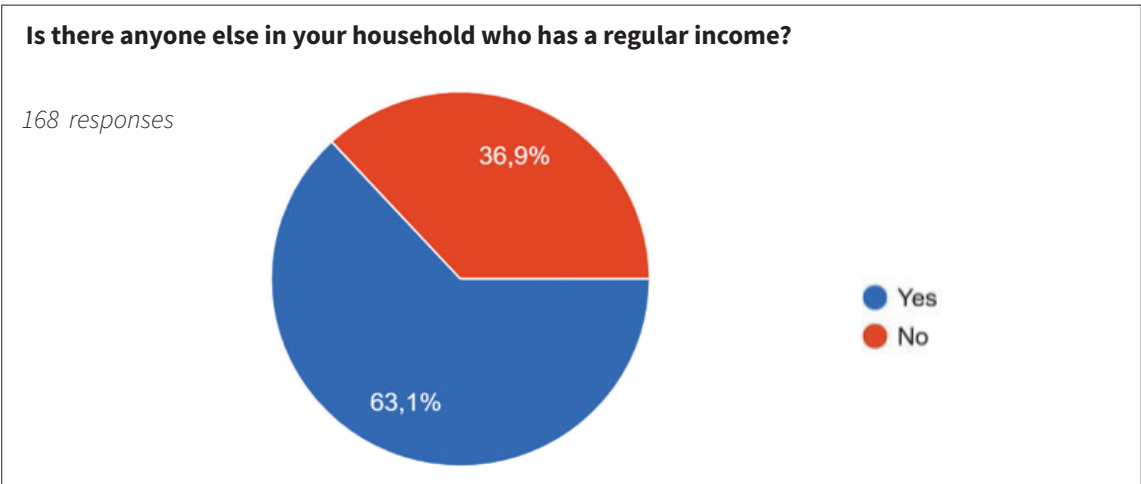
1- Authorised Workplace Survey Results:

73.2% of participants stated that there was another source of regular income in their household, while 26.8% answered “no” to this question.



2- Unauthorised Workplace Survey Results:

63.1% of participants answered “yes” to this question, while 36.9% answered “no.”

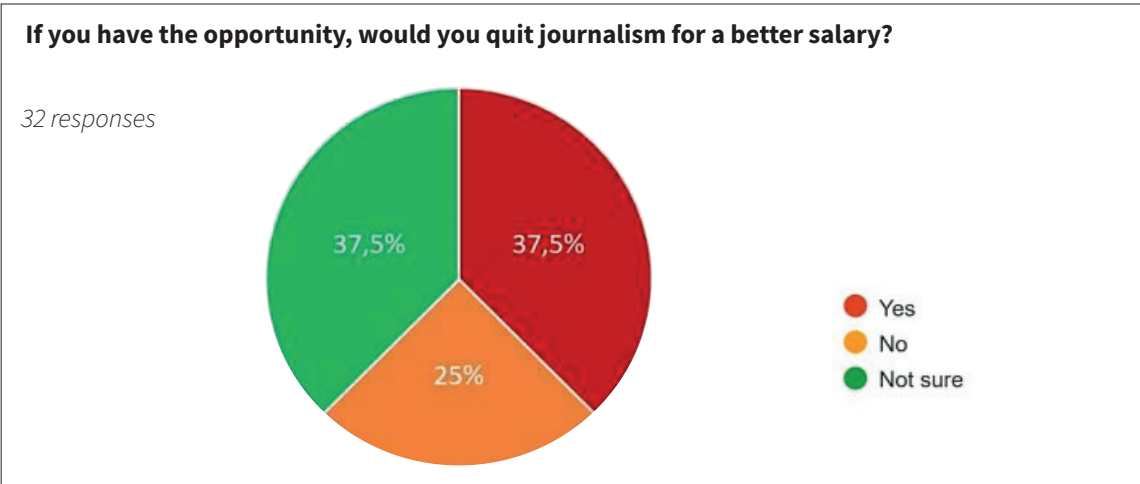


xxi. Majority Ready to Quit Journalism

Nine respondents in the unauthorised workplace survey and six in the authorised workplace survey answered “I am not a journalist” to this question. By filtering out these options, we categorised the responses as “yes,” “no,” and “not sure.” In both surveys, those who answered “yes” to quitting journalism for a better salary, along with those who answered “not sure,” accounted for a significant proportion. The data once again highlights the extent of economic dissatisfaction.

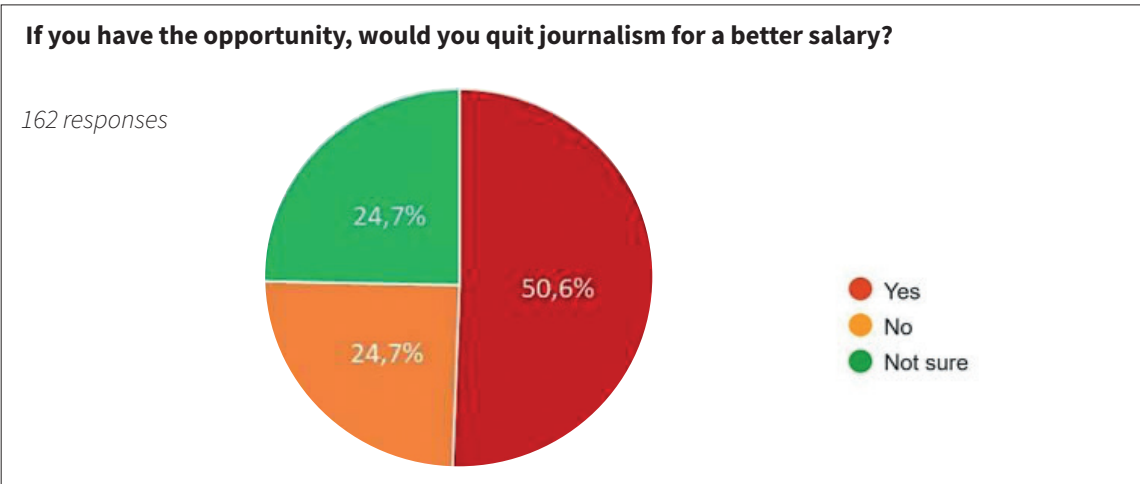
1- Authorised Workplace Survey Results:

Those who answered “yes” to leaving journalism for a better salary and those who answered “not sure” share the top spot at 37.5%. Those who answered “no” to the question were followed by 25%.



2- Unauthorised Workplace Survey Results:

50.6% of participants answered “yes,” while those who responded “unsure” and “no” shared second place with 24.7%.

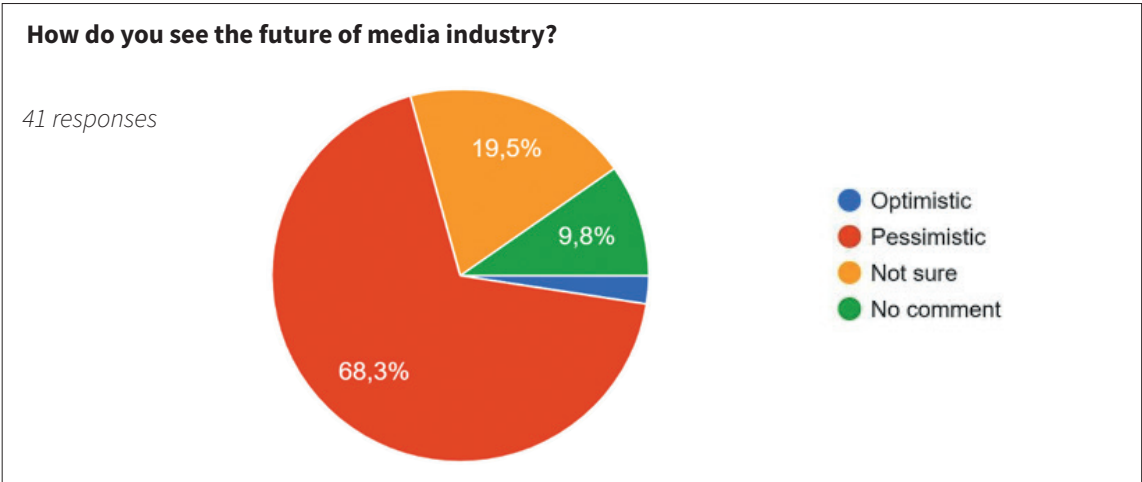


xxii. Majority Pessimistic About the Future of the Sector

In both surveys, a significant proportion of participants are pessimistic about the future of the media sector. Although the reasons were not asked in the survey, we believe that we have addressed them in different dimensions (unemployment, insecurity, economic uncertainty) above.

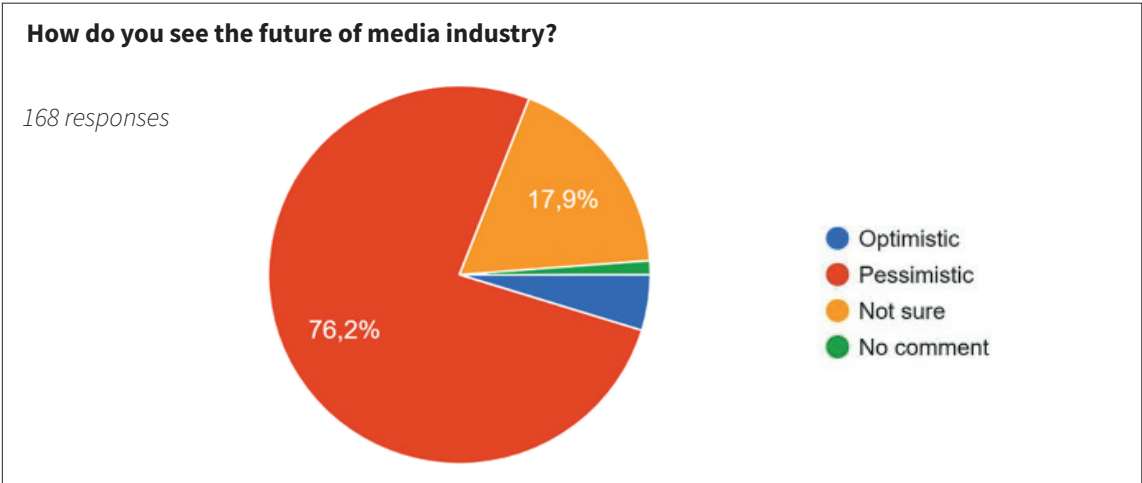
1- Authorised Workplace Survey Results:

68.3% of participants say they are pessimistic about the future of the media sector. The percentage of those who are not sure about the future of the sector is 19.5%, while 9.8% answered “no comment” and 2.4% answered “optimistic”.



2- Results of the Unauthorised Workplace Survey:

76.2% of participants say they are pessimistic about the future of the media sector, while 17.9% say they are “not sure.” Only 4.8% of respondents answered “optimistic,” while the lowest percentage, 1.2%, said “no comment”.



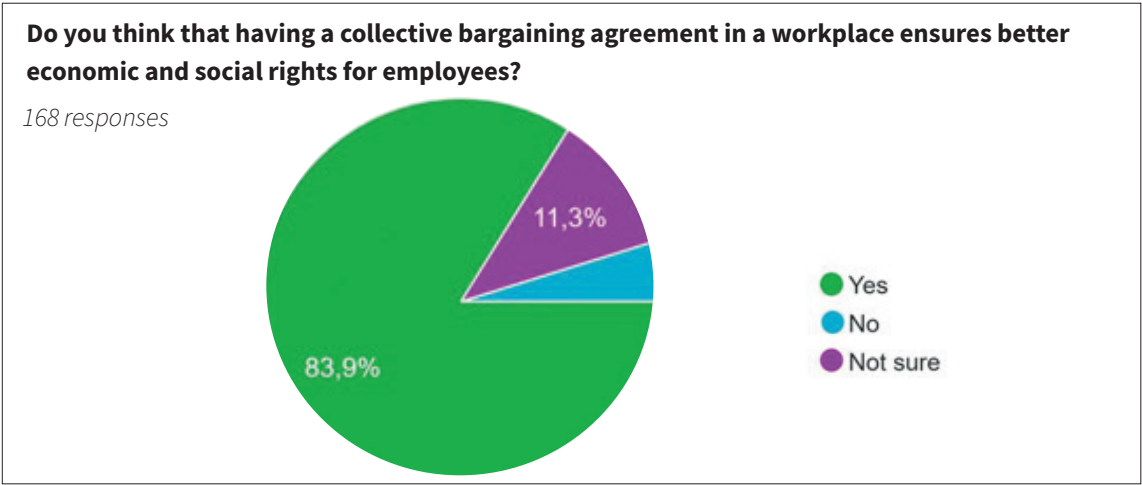
xxiii. Despite reservations, members want collective agreements

The next three questions are directed only at members in unauthorised workplaces. Our aim in these questions is to identify the desires, expectations, and any concerns of our members in unauthorised workplaces regarding collective bargaining agreements. When we evaluate the results of the three questions together, we find that.

- 1- Over 80% of participants believe that collective agreements will improve economic and social rights at their workplaces.
- 2- Over 80% want a collective agreement at their workplace.
- 3- When considering the possibility of improving rights through a collective bargaining agreement at their own workplace, the optimism rate drops to 70%. Some participants, while generally wanting to work at a workplace with a collective bargaining agreement and desiring such an agreement at their workplace, believe that such an agreement would not be beneficial for improving their rights at their current workplace.

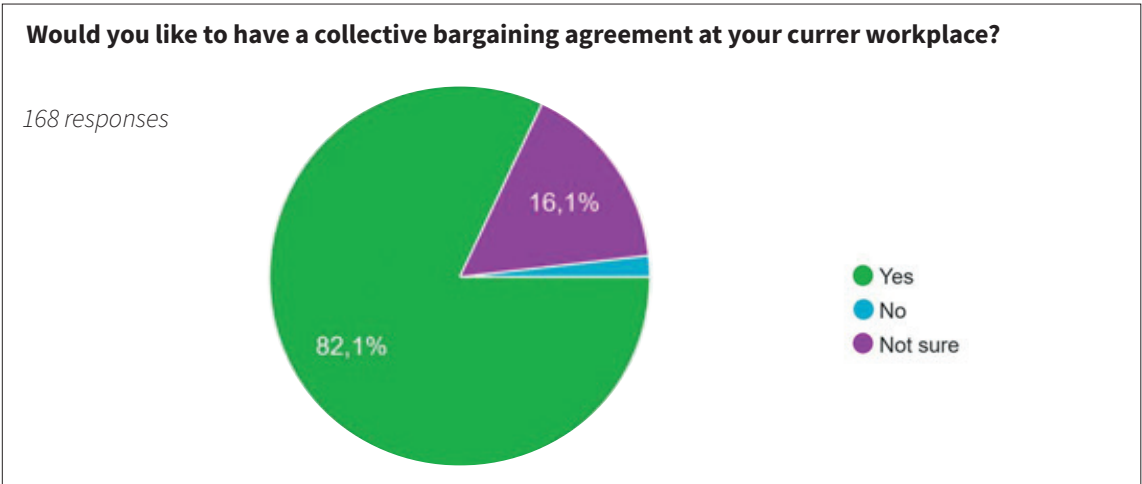
These three findings are consistent with the notes from our face-to-face interviews with our members at unauthorised workplaces. Many members, especially those working in local or opposition media companies, believe that despite wanting a collective bargaining agreement, the company’s fragile economic structure would likely restrict potential rights and make it difficult to negotiate a good collective bargaining agreement. In this context, our first question concerns the link between CBAs and economic and social rights. 83.9% of participants believe that the existence of a collective bargaining agreement at the workplace improves economic and social rights at that workplace. The percentage of those who answered “not sure” was 11.3%, while only 4.8% answered “no.”

1. Question:



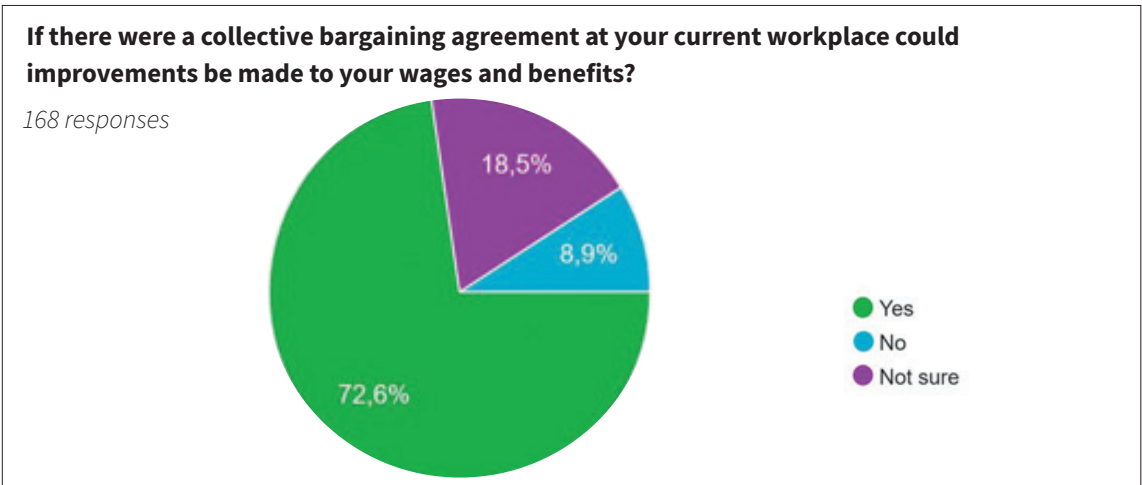
2. Question:

Among respondents from unauthorised workplaces, 82.1% want a CBA at their current workplace. This response is highly similar to the “yes” response to the previous question. The percentage of those who do not want a CBA at their current workplace and answered “no” is 1.8%, while those who answered “not sure” account for 16.1%.



3. Question:

72.6% of respondents from unauthorized workplaces believe that a CBA at their current workplace would improve wages and benefits. 18.5% responded “not sure,” while 8.9% responded “no.”



xxiv. Open-ended responses in the survey

At the end of the survey, we created a section for participants to add any notes they wished to make. While there were no notable notes in the survey of authorized workplaces, we would like to share a number of notes from unauthorized workplaces here. In a way, these notes summarize the issues we discussed under the heading “View of the sector” and stand out as striking data from real life:

Participant 1:

“I started working at this office in November 2023. My salary is still the same; it's a very difficult situation.”

Participant 2:

“I still haven't received the February raise as of March 21, 2025, at 11:30 AM. It's supposed to be paid today.”

Participant 3:

“There's no overtime pay, not even transportation allowance!”

Participant 4:

“I haven't received my salary for one and a half months at the channel where I work. Please bring this up.”

Participant 5:

“Unfortunately, as a country, we are in a very serious economic crisis. The end of this economic crisis does not seem to be near. The current political environment is only making things worse. Unfortunately, we, the media workers, including legal professionals, are among the most affected by this situation. This concerns me because, in the current situation, it is not just what media workers say that is at risk—their lives are in danger.”

Participant 6:

“As the local press, I would like to point out that conditions are getting worse by the day, that workers are forced to work seven days a week, and that our salaries are practically zero. I would advise children who want to pursue this profession to think twice.”

Participant 7:

“Local journalism is facing the threat of extinction if it continues this way. Although the national media is in a relatively better position, the sustainability of local democracy is weakening day by day. Today, journalists who can maintain their independence and freedom of the press mostly work in national media. However, no matter how developed national journalism becomes, the decrease in news spreading from local to national levels, local journalists leaving the profession, or news not being reported by journalistic principles due to reasons such as censorship or self-censorship will have serious negative consequences for the country. Local journalism does not merely provide news flow; it also ensures the transparency of local administrations and social oversight. Therefore, strengthening local journalism is an indispensable element for the healthy functioning of a democratic society. Economic difficulties are driving local journalists to other sectors.”

Participant 8:

“Routine journalism was not enough to make ends meet. Research and consulting work, which feed journalism, keep me afloat.”

Participant 9:

“The Press Advertising Agency, which supports newspapers, should set a minimum wage for intellectual workers. Journalists should not be left at the mercy of their employers.”

Participant 10:

“They have abandoned young journalists to their deaths. I wish I could find work in another sector. I know I am the best in my field, but I am certain I will never receive the treatment I deserve. I am eagerly awaiting the day when I can go back to university and completely erase this sector from my life.”

Participant 11:

“The workplace I am in does not have the economy to meet the conditions of the collective bargaining agreement. However, it is trying to stay open.”

Participant 12:

“If my budget were not shared with my spouse, I could not possibly live my current life with this salary.”

xxv. General Evaluation of Survey Data

We can summarize the survey results discussed in detail above as follows:

1. Relatively senior members stand out.
2. Members from local media outlets stand out among survey participants.
3. The education level of members in both authorized and unauthorized workplaces is quite high.
4. Despite the pressure on them, collective agreements are keeping members away from the poverty line.
5. The policy of “equal pay for equal work” is still a cause for struggle in workplaces.
6. According to the responses, journalists' main source of income is their salaries. The majority of journalists seem to be deprived of other/side income.
7. In the authorised workplace survey, 65.9% of respondents stated that they do not receive financial support from their families to make ends meet, while this rate stands at 56.5% in unauthorised workplaces.
8. The majority of participants do not have additional jobs but would be willing to do so if given the opportunity.
9. Collective bargaining agreements raise income expectations. The most preferred option in the authorised workplace survey is “100,001 TL and above” at 22%, while in the unauthorised workplace survey, it is “50,001 - 60,000 TL” at 20.8%.
10. Participants in both authorised and unauthorized workplaces reported spending the most money on food, housing, and transportation, respectively.
11. In both surveys, the majority expressed concern about losing their jobs. This rate was 56.1% in the authorized workplace survey and rose to 70.8% in unauthorized workplaces.
12. In both surveys, those who said they paid off their credit card debt in full each month did not reach one-third of the total.
13. Approximately half of the participants feel poor. On the other hand, 24.4% of participants in the authorized workplace survey do not feel poor, while this rate drops to 12.5% in the unauthorized workplace survey.
14. Participants in unauthorized workplaces, in particular, do not allocate sufficient budget for their social and cultural development. In the authorized workplace survey, the total percentage of those who allocate an average monthly budget of 2,5001 TL or more for their social and cultural development is 19.6%, while this rate drops to 13.1% in the unauthorized workplace survey. Moreover, the budget allocated to this area appears to have decreased compared to last year, especially for participants in unauthorized workplaces.
15. The poor economy is putting pressure on collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and economic rights. In the authorized workplace survey, 75.6% of participants believe that the economic situation in the country is putting pressure on the CBAs in effect at their workplaces. In the unauthorized workplace survey, 97% of participants (163 people) say that the economic situation in the country is putting pressure on their economic and social rights.
16. In both surveys, almost all participants stated that their purchasing power has decreased compared to the previous year.
17. For participants who work almost every day of the week, the closest option is a domestic vacation. Buying a house or a car is a distant possibility for many.
18. In both surveys, Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir stand out as the three largest cities.
19. Approximately one-fifth of participants appear to own the homes they live in. The remainder are either tenants or live in homes owned by their families.
20. Most participants have someone else in their household with a regular income.
21. One-third of participants in authorized workplaces and the majority in unauthorized workplaces are willing to leave journalism for a better salary.
22. In both surveys, the majority are pessimistic about the future of the sector.
23. Despite their reservations, members of unauthorized workplaces want collective bargaining agreements in their workplaces.

Why did Gazete Duvar close? -Prof. Dr. Ceren SÖZERİ ÖZDAL

Google's algorithm changes made toward the end of 2024 not only reduced the traffic of news sites but also deprived them of a significant source of income. Indeed, Artı Gerçek quietly ceased its publications, followed by Gazete Duvar closing with a great deal of noise. The difference in tone stemmed from Artı Gerçek's long-standing economic difficulties. Gazete Duvar's closure, however, came as a surprise because it had a larger readership and had met the conditions for receiving advertisements from the Press Advertising Agency, even going so far as to create a plan to get its affairs in order. In their own words, Google's changes, made without any explanation, had thrown their plans into disarray, leaving the newspaper unable to continue operating under those conditions. It would either have to undergo major cuts and lose its identity or close down. It chose the latter. Gazete Duvar, which began publishing immediately after the coup attempt in 2016, achieved significant success in a short time, and expanded with its domestic news service, is now gone. Other media outlets that continue to publish are in a very difficult situation.

To understand how we arrived at this point and analyse the issues, let's take a step back. In Turkey, newspapers began moving their content online in the late 1990s. After the dot-com bubble burst in the 2000s, only those supported by traditional media revenues remained. A few years later, new media outlets that existed solely online began to emerge. However, the fundamental problem was revenue. As newspapers lost advertising revenue, the digital share grew. Advertisers preferred the internet because it was cheaper and allowed them to target their audience more precisely, but they wanted to be visible on social media, where people spent more time, rather than on news sites. The crises and social movements of 2011-2014 gave rise to their own media outlets. Media preferences changed, but new competitors that were not considered "players" in the market emerged. The answer to the question "Where do you get your news?" was now mostly "Twitter." As platforms captured more than 50% of digital advertising revenue, they also developed new revenue models for media outlets based on ad clicks. Meanwhile, the proliferation of media outlets in the digital space led to the spread of copy-and-paste journalism, and readers lost the habit of paying for news. In this new environment where everything was accessible from everywhere, subscription-based models failed to take hold. Traffic coming from social media turned it into a new distribution channel. Now, topics that social media focuses on become news, and journalists' social media performance affects newspaper traffic. Institutions are no longer the stars; individuals are. Ultimately, newspapers became dependent on platforms for revenue. This dependency had its advantages. Thanks to platforms, journalists could follow what people were talking about and what topics they were interested in moment by moment, see which news stories were clicked on the most, how long readers stayed on a story, what they shared, their gender, and even the cities they lived in. This huge "gift" completely changed the game and increased dependency. In a short time, "news that readers like" turned into "news that Google highlights" and "headlines that YouTube prefers." Newspapers began to spend part of their energy and income on efforts to get highlighted and increase traffic. "Social media experts" and "SEO specialists" became part of journalism. It was clear that the 3-5 cents Google paid per click on ads was not enough to keep a news site afloat. More emphasis was placed on YouTube videos, which generated slightly higher revenues. However, YouTube also had its own stars and rules.

In the history of the press, laws that restrict freedoms usually come with carrots. The

ensorship/disinformation law (TCK 217/A), which has led to the investigation and prosecution of many journalists today, was also included in the “Law Amending the Press Law and Certain Other Laws.” The issuance of press cards to those working in online media and the requirement for online newspapers to publish official announcements were added as two carrots to the package. The criteria related to the staffing and personnel rights of the Press Advertising Authority (BİK), which is responsible for the distribution of official announcements and advertisements, as well as the daily minimum number of news articles, unique visitor numbers, and page views (including those that include time periods), were designed to increase rather than reduce dependence on the platform economy. When Google updated its algorithm and traffic declined, it became difficult to meet BİK’s traffic criteria. Some media outlets even began spending the revenue they received from BİK to maintain their traffic. With the increase in staff and rising inflation, it became impossible for a media outlet to survive without patronage or funding.

The day after Gazete Duvar announced its closure on March 12, nine media outlets published a letter titled “We protest Google’s destructive embargo”⁸⁶. The letter highlighted the damage caused by changes made in October 2024 and January 2025 to the “Discover” and “News” sections, as well as the inability to find a point of contact. Google officials, who did not respond to the publishers individually, said in general statements that they had announced the changes in advance, that their aim was to improve their products, and that they did not target any specific sites⁸⁷. Although some publishers in Turkey claimed that they were censored because they were “oppositional,” similar declines in news sites were also seen in other countries⁸⁸. Moreover, some news sites classified as “oppositional” in Turkey were not affected by these changes. So is Google innocent in this case? Of course not. The situation described by Efrat Nechushtai as “infrastructural capture” is exactly that⁸⁹. Companies such as Alphabet (the parent company of Google and YouTube) and Meta have taken control not only of the news production processes mentioned above but also of distribution. Google has a near monopoly on the search engine market (Chrome). Lawsuits alleging that it hinders competition in the US are ongoing. It does not define itself as a publisher, so it has no responsibility to act in the public interest and is not regulated. It does not produce anything itself; it makes money from the content produced by publishers, and its revenues and revenue distribution models are not transparent. Publishers in many countries are fighting for Google to share the money it makes from them. There is no success story to point to as an example. In some countries, large media organisations receive payments, but smaller ones do not get a share. There are two options: enforce competition laws or demand revenue through copyright. Since competition laws in Turkey are not suitable for this, preparations are underway to establish regulations through copyright, following the path taken by Europe, particularly Italy. Anadolu Agency is leading this initiative. This is not surprising,

⁸⁶ Gazete Duvar, “Open letter to the public: We protest Google’s destructive embargo”, March 13, 2025, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/kamuoyuna-acik-mektup-googlein-yikici-ambargosunu-protesto-ediyoruz-haber-1763452>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁸⁷ For an example, see Eray Özer’s two-day interview with Danny Sullivan, Google Search’s international spokesperson: <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/eray-ozer/google-arama-nin-dunya-capinda-basin-sozcusu-t24-e-konustu-trafiklerde-yasanan-sorunu-anlamaya-ve-daha-iyi-hale-getirmeye-calisiyoruz/48996>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁸⁸ For the example of the United Kingdom: <https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/first-google-core-update-of-2024-brings-bad-news-for-most-news-publishers/>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

⁸⁹ Nechushtai, E. (2017). Could digital platforms capture the media through infrastructure? *Journalism*, 19(8), 1043-1058. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917725163>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

as it is the largest player that can sit at the table with global giants due to its widespread reach. The proposed regulation pits Google or Meta against publishers, and if no resolution is reached, a public authority is appointed as an arbitrator. If that fails, the matter is resolved through the courts. In Australia, following a change in the law, only large media groups sat down at the table with Google and Meta, which increased monopolisation in the media market. In Canada, a more transparent process was planned, but the state's power was not enough to control the platforms. Today, they have Trump behind them. In short, it will be difficult for the nine news organisations that signed the letter to find a solution. In South Africa, there is a frequently mentioned recommendation to impose a fine of \$27.29 million on Google, Meta, and X. This fine, imposed for hindering competition, will be enforced if the platforms do not take measures to allow publishers to generate revenue. The platforms are appealing the fine, and it is still unclear whether it will be enforced⁹⁰.

Proposed solutions:

Examples show that generating revenue from platform giants is not easy. However, it is not impossible. First and foremost, legal regulations must not be shaped around unfair bargaining between platforms and publishers. Just as the state collects taxes from Google's commercial activities, it should directly engage with platforms and impose taxes to strengthen journalism. Under current conditions, there is likely to be a problem with the fair distribution of this tax, but if legal regulations are to be introduced, a public institution should be responsible for ensuring that this revenue is distributed fairly. It may also be useful to combine efforts at the international level. At the very least, joint pressure can be exerted on states that are reluctant to introduce taxation.

Perhaps most importantly, journalism needs to break free from its dependence on platforms. This requires investment in technology, which in turn requires resources. News organisations can join forces for this purpose and guide their readers.

Under current conditions, BiK is essentially saying, "You bow down to Google, and I'll give you money." BiK, which is responsible for distributing public resources, should support good journalism, not traffic. Updating the criteria with the participation of press organisations and establishing a more equitable distribution system in the public interest and through public institutions will also improve the quality of journalism in the country.

Finally, it is essential to inform readers about the conditions in which newspapers operate. Waking up one morning to learn that the media outlet they rely on for news has closed due to economic conditions damages readers' relationship with newspapers. Purchasing power is declining in Turkey, but this does not mean that readers have completely given up on journalism. There are other examples besides giants like The New York Times and The Guardian that survive on reader revenue. For example, Mediapart in France has been standing strong for years with its exclusive news stories. In Turkey, too, good journalists are producing very successful investigative journalism reports. However, we are faced with another obstacle here. A corruption report may receive reader support, but this will not prevent these journalists from being taken from their homes in a dawn raid. Our path winds back to press freedom.

⁹⁰ For the situation in South Africa: <https://www.reuters.com/technology/google-meta-face-penalties-anti-competitive-behaviour-towards-south-african-news-2025-02-24/>, (Access Date: 01.04.2025).

CONCLUSION

Due to the complete loss of the rule of law and the intensification of injustice, journalists spent this year in prisons, courthouses, and police stations. Despite press freedom being guaranteed by Articles 26-28 of the Constitution and Article 3 of the Press Law, we see that these principles are not being implemented. Journalists are being detained as part of investigations that should never have been opened, tried on the basis of documents that do not even constitute indictments in legal terms, and imprisoned. During these “trials,” judicial control measures such as detention or house arrest are being applied as if they were legal requirements, even though the conditions for their application do not exist.

Members of the press are arrested and deprived of all freedom of movement, including personal liberty and security, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. They are imprisoned in a world where freedom of expression is non-existent. As in the case of Öznur Değer, their letters are confiscated for arbitrary reasons, and they are prevented from communicating with the outside world. With very limited means, they try to keep up with current events and continue their work where they left off when they are released.

We are going through a dark period in which even the decisions of the Constitutional Court are not being obeyed, meaning that all constitutional guarantees have been lost. The government and its national and local partners are recklessly threatening the independent media.

Journalists who shine a light on the truth are also the primary targets of the police when it comes to covering social events. This is because the perpetrators of violence know that they will not be prosecuted, or even if they are prosecuted one day, they will not be punished. Because the “bricklayers” do not want to be exposed.

Access to news unfavourable to the government is blocked or completely deleted. Thus, social memory is being erased. Independent media is being economically destroyed by threats of license revocation and official advertising bans. RTÜK, taking advantage of the ambiguities in its regulations, is imposing fines on opposition channels, suspending their broadcasts, and blacking out their screens. All this is not enough; after the Disinformation Law, the government continues to intimidate journalists with functional regulations such as the Influence Agent Bill and the Cyber Security Law.

Bandwidth throttling to block public access to the internet, the beating of journalists, the police's conspiracy against photojournalists covering protests, detentions, arrests, controversial statements by the RTÜK chairman, record fines, and the blocking of journalists' social media accounts in Turkey...

All of these are a brief summary of the process that began with the detention of Istanbul Mayor and presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu on March 19, 2025, or the result of years of intervention in the press. The antidote to this atmosphere of lawlessness is to stand up for democracy, solidarity, and unity.

One of the issues the report focuses on is the extent of poverty experienced by those working in the media sector and its economic and social repercussions. The survey we conducted for this purpose contains striking data about our members working in both authorized and unauthorized workplaces. The survey data shows that, similar to last year, poverty remains a significant and pressing issue for journalists. The relatively better situation in authorized workplaces can be explained by the economic and social benefits provided by contracts. On the other hand, the economic situation in the country is significantly shortening the lifespan of rights obtained through collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). It is weakening the protective shield provided by union membership day by day. This situation is forcing labor and professional organizations to speak out more on issues affecting the entire national economy, rather than individual cases, and to question the economic policies being implemented.

Journalists, who practice a profession that requires continuous learning and the development of skills,

knowledge, and abilities, are unable to allocate sufficient budget for their social and cultural development due to poverty. Moreover, the budget allocated to this area appears to have decreased compared to last year. This situation leaves journalists both poor and deprived. Two of the survey results particularly project the future of the sector. According to the survey, one-third of participants in authorized workplaces and the majority in unauthorized workplaces are ready to leave journalism in exchange for better pay. Furthermore, the majority of participants from both authorized and unauthorized workplaces are pessimistic about the future of the media sector.

For journalists struggling to practice their profession under conditions of unemployment, insecurity, and economic uncertainty, struggle remains the only way forward. Low unionization rates and employers' objections to unionization are obstacles to this struggle. Despite everything, the improvements in economic and social rights provided by the collective agreements signed by the TGS are evident in the survey data. Coming together under the union umbrella still retains its importance. Persistent progress on this path will both foster solidarity to repel attacks on press freedom and elevate economic and social rights. As survey data also shows, despite concerns, journalists want to unionize and work under a collective bargaining agreement. The only thing that needs to be done is to unlock this potential.

