**Journalism in Turkey is in agony**

*Kadri Gürsel's speech for the conference titled 'Freedom of Expression: Still a precondition for Democracy?', at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg; October 13, 2015.*

Dear colleagues, participants and representatives,

Oppression against journalists and the suppression of media freedom in Turkey has reached an alarming rate as we are now heading to November 1st snap elections

Now we have less than three weeks until the elections and it’s depressing to see that diverse practices to silence and intimidate the independent media and critical journalists are used as an election winning tactic by the political power.

There was a dramatic surge in attacks against journalists and journalism since the beginning of September.

Mainstream media is at the top of the target list. Authorities abuse anti defamation and anti terrorism laws to muzzle the media and to supress the freedom of expression.

Last victim has been Today’s Zaman editor in chief Bülent Keneş. He has been put in jail three days ago for allegedly insulting President Erdoğan.

The number of journalists against which cases are filed for insulting Erdoğan is growing almost every day.

In a case of censorship, seven TV channels belonging to companies close to the Gülen movement, have been removed from one of Turkey’s leading pay satellite network on October the 8th, upon pressure from the judiciary.  
  
Dear Participants,

Let me summarize many aspects of the mounting pressure since September.

Hürriyet daily has been raided twice in two days interval by mobs close to power. In the first raid the mob were led by an AKP parliamentary member.

Doğan Medya Group, owner of Hürriyet, came under an investigation for supporting terrorism.

Police raided and searched the offices of Bugün daily and Bugün TV belonging to Koza İpek group, known to be close to Gulen movement.

Police also raided Nokta weekly magazine and confiscated freshly printed copies of the new issue before its distribution.

Access to several Kurdish websites and news websites critical of government was blocked. Kurdish media outlets raided, dozens of journalists have been taken into custody.

Several foreign media members were arrested in the southeast and then deported.

Media bosses close to power continued to fire critical journalists.

Intimidation, targeting and harassment of critical journalists have reached such appalling dimensions: A columnist for a pro-government daily repeatedly threatened journalists with death and got away with it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Journalism being put under unbearable pressure by criminalization is now agonizing in my country.

Journalism and press freedom are the victims of politically engineered polarization in Turkey.

If the repression is not stopped in Turkey, terribly weakened journalism and shrinking independent media will be finally lost.

Then it will be hard to call Turkey without a free press, a democracy.

I urge European community to raise its voice against the fact of sacrificing press freedom for more power in Turkey, before it is too late.

Thank you for your attention