

## Turkey: Two Kurdish newspapers suspended; magazine copies seized



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Kurdish newspapers “Azadiya Welat” and “Rojev” have been suspended for one month under allegations of “spreading propaganda for a terrorist organization”. Similarly, copies of the left-wing “Guney” magazine were confiscated.

The “Rojev” paper had just resumed publishing after a long break on 24 August 2010 before the Istanbul 11th High Criminal Court decreed the one-month publication ban. The decision was based on the 36th issue of the Kurdish paper, published on 28 August, which featured a picture of Abdullah Ocalan, imprisoned leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and a PKK flag on the front page.

Additionally, a chart depicting Ocalan and other members of the militant organization published on page eight of the same issue was given as a reason for the ban.



On 21 August, the Istanbul 14th High Criminal Court suspended the publication of “Azadiya Welat”, the only nation-wide Kurdish daily published in Turkey, on the grounds of “spreading propaganda for an illegal organization” and “praising criminals”. The decision stemmed from the paper’s 21 August issue.

Editor-in-chief M. Nedim Karadeniz said that the newspaper has “faced unlawful bans” for eight issues within the past four years. He added that the daily had already been closed down three times since the beginning of the year.

“None of these suspension punishments were in line with universal law. As a matter of fact, Turkey was convicted by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in similar cases related to newspapers stemming from the tradition of the Free Press. Imagine a judiciary system where all the news and articles in the current issue of a twelve-page newspaper are considered a crime,” the editor-in-chief said.

The decision is based on the Anti Terror Law (TMY). While the Constitutional Court recently ruled that this law does not contravene the Constitution, the use of the law resulted in several rulings against Turkey at the ECHR. While the seizure was ordered in accordance with Article 25/2 of the Press Law (Confiscation and Prohibition of Distribution and Sale), the publication ban was based on Article 6/last paragraph (Disclosure and Publication) of the TMY.

Former “Azadiya Welat” chief editors Vedat Kursun and Ozan Kilic are still in prison, as is “Hawar” newspaper official Bedri Adanir.

The 2010 first quarterly issue of “Guney” magazine was confiscated following a decision by the Mersin 2nd Magistrate Criminal Court. However, the issue does not mention the name of any illegal organization. The police seized the copies on 26 August from the magazine’s printing house in Mersin (eastern Mediterranean coast), after informing the staff about the ruling. The police delivered a written notice about the court decision to the magazine’s central office in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul.

The article entitled “Rights of (Kurdish) children in the dungeon”, written by Ali Dagdeviren, was given as the reason for the seizure. However, the article does not mention the name of any organization. The writing criticized the “treatment of thousands of Kurdish children” despite the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, both of which have been ratified by the Turkish government.

A statement by the magazine said, “This mentality which fills prisons with thousands of children could not tolerate an article criticizing this situation”.

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