



26 January 2017

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing regarding your imminent visit to Turkey.

English PEN and PEN International call upon you to raise our serious concerns about the grave violations being committed in the context of the state of emergency in Turkey during your meeting with President Erdoğan. We urge you to request that the President rescind or amend the emergency provisions that are inconsistent with the country's international human rights obligations. Furthermore, we ask that you use your influence to persuade the authorities in Turkey to cease all intimidation of journalists and media outlets immediately and to take necessary steps to improve investigations into attacks and threats against journalists and to bring perpetrators to justice.

PEN has long been concerned by the repression of freedom of expression and the persecution of writers in Turkey and these concerns have increased in the wake of the attempted coup on 15 July 2016. We acknowledge that the government has the right and responsibility to bring those responsible for the coup attempt to account, and recognise that the imposition of a state of emergency may have been a legitimate response initially.

However, the government is now abusing the state of emergency to restrict the right to freedom of expression and media freedom severely, and to stifle criticism and limit the diversity of views, perspectives and opinions available in the public sphere within Turkey. Restrictions on the media are not a new phenomenon in Turkey, but the breadth and scope of the crackdown on media freedom has intensified dramatically in response to the failed coup, with measures of an unprecedented scale now being justified on the grounds of ensuring stability.

Media workers and other government critics are being arrested and harassed, and independent newspapers and broadcasters are being forced to close. There are currently more than 150 writers and journalists in prison in Turkey, now the biggest jailer of journalists in the world, surpassing China, Eritrea and Egypt. This repression has been condemned by the United Nations and Council of Europe, of which Turkey is a member state. Turkey should uphold its international and national legal obligations to protect and promote freedom of expression and the independent media.

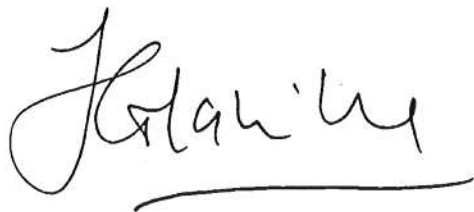
Freedom of expression and an independent media are essential for an open democracy. The continuation of the crackdown undermines not only the liberty of the Turkish people, but the future stability of the country and the region.

We are grateful to you for considering our concerns.

Yours sincerely



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President, English PEN



Jo Glanville
Director, English PEN



Carles Torner
Executive Director, PEN International