

FREEDOM CONVENTION 2020

GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
IN TURKEY

DECEMBER 9-10

directorhg@
silencedturkey.org

WHO WE ARE



AST is a 501(c)(3) Not for Profit charitable and educational organization based in NJ exclusively for defending human and civil rights. AST aims to:



address all human rights violations in Turkey regarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural as contained in the basic human rights documents,



prevent genocide, crime against humanity, arbitrary detention, torture and ill treatment, discrimination and to defend right to life, rule of law, right to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of associations,



utilize all human rights advocacy tools, mechanisms, and systems that can possibly be used to protect and promote the human rights of those whose voices are being silenced in Turkey and beyond,



hold accountable the perpetrators of Human Rights in Turkey and beyond together with the opportunity for victims to obtain justice and reparation, in order to do so, it uses the power of the law to fight the impunity of perpetrators, accomplices and instigators of crimes, defends the interests of victims before national and international courts and brings cases before the appropriate international human rights bodies, in close collaboration with its local partners and the victims to get authorities to take firm action against violations.



FREEDOM CONVENTION


TURKEY 2020

WWW.SILENCEDTURKEY.ORG

OVERVIEW

Turkey Freedom Forum is a unique convention for human rights activists, intellectuals and policy makers focused on human rights violations in Turkey organized by AST. Participants and experts will not only learn the ongoing violations and persecutions in Turkey but also be able to develop strategies and recommendations to Turkish government and international bodies to end those grave violations through the panel discussions.

In pursuance of justice and peace, this forum aims to bring hundreds of human rights defenders and activists together and also to foster the dynamics to mobilize.



CONFIRMED SPEAKERS



ABDULHAMIT BILICI

Former CEO of
Zaman Newspaper
USA



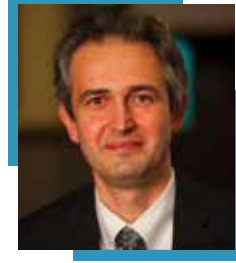
AHMET NESIN

Journalist & Author
Germany



ALON BEN-MEIR

Senior Fellow at New York
University's Center for Global
Affairs & Senior Fellow at the
World Policy Institute
USA



ALP ASLANDOGAN

Executive Director of
Alliance for Shared Values
USA



ARZU YILDIZ

Journalist, Recipient of
Media Ethics Award &
The Bravest Woman Award
Canada



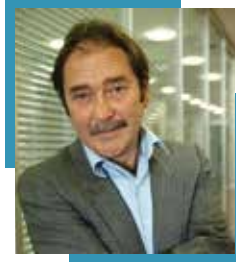
BULENT CEYHAN

Journalist, Recipient of
Metin Goktepe Journalism Award
Sweden



BULENT KENES

Former CEO of
Today's Zaman Daily
Sweden



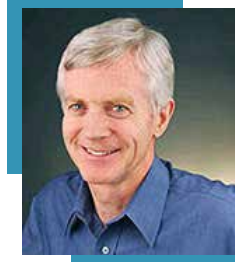
CENGIZ AKTAR

Professor of Political Science
at the University of Athens
Greece



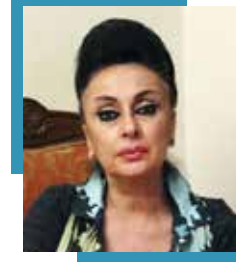
CRAIG SHAGIN

Professor of Immigration Law
at the Widener University
Commonwealth Law School
USA



DAVID KILGOUR

Fellow of the Queen's University
Centre for the Study of Democracy;
Director of the Council for a
Community of Democracies (CCD)
CANADA



EREN KESKIN

Lawyer & Human Rights Activist
Turkey



ESER KARAKAS

Professor of Public Economics at
the University of Strasbourg
France



EUGENE CHUDNOVSKY

Co-Chair, The Committee of
Concerned Scientists
USA



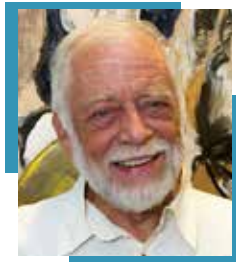
HAKAN YESILOVA

Editor of the Fountain Magazine
USA



HILAL AKDENIZ

Sociologist
Germany



JAMES HARRINGTON

Founder of Texas Civil Rights
Project & Human Rights Attorney
USA

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS



JOCELYNE CESARI

Senior Research Fellow at
Georgetown's Berkley Center for
Religion, Peace and World Affairs
USA



KATRINA LANTOS SWEET

President of Lantos Foundation
for Human Rights
USA



KERIM BALCI

Research Fellow & Communications
Officer at London Advocacy, Journalist
UK



KISTEN GOVENDER

Elected Member of South African
Legal Practice Council
South Africa



MEHMET EFE CAMAN

Professor of Political Science at
Memorial University
Canada



MICHAEL RUBIN

Resident Scholar at AEI
USA



NATALI AVAZYAN

Human Rights Activist
Turkey



**OMER FARUK
GERGERLIOGLU**

Member of Parliament (HDP)
Turkey



RABIA CHAUDRY

Attorney, Advocate,
NYT Best Selling Author
USA



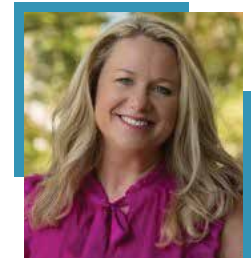
SOPHIA PANDYA

Chair of Religious Studies
Department at California
State University Long Beach
USA



SUMEYYA AVCI

Purged Teacher
Turkey



VONYA WOMACK

Director of the Center for
Global Learning at Cabrini University
USA

CONFERENCE AGENDA

PANEL SESSIONS

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION (December 9th, 10 AM - 12 PM)

1. *Hakan Yesilova*
2. *Arzu Yildiz*
3. *Abdulhamit Bilici*
4. *Ahmet Nesin*
5. *Eugene Chudnovsky*
6. *Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu*

In the aftermath of the failed coup, the government closed down 179 media outlets – including 53 newspapers, 37 radio stations, 34 TV channels, 29 publishing houses, 20 magazines, and six news agencies – with accused links to the Gulen movement, Kurdish opposition, or Leftists groups. Consequently, a total of 2,308 media workers and journalists have lost their jobs. The government cancelled hundreds of press accreditations and revoked passports of an unknown number of journalists and their family members to ban them from traveling abroad. In addition, the government imprisoned a record-breaking number of journalists in the wake of the coup attempt – with that, Turkey became the world's largest prison for journalists. The Platform for Independent Journalism (P24) reported that at least 126 journalists and media workers were in prison in Turkey as of October 2019 – among them, many were put in long solitary confinement.

The absence of freedom of expression is not only a recurring problem for journalists but for citizens as well. In 2018, the Ministry of Interior reported that more than 7,000 individuals were detained for their social media posts after investigating 631,233 digital materials. In relation to the censorship and content restrictions in the country, Wikipedia has been blocked in Turkey since April of 2017. Currently, out of the 180 countries, Turkey ranks 157 th on the Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders and are listed among 'not free' countries by the Freedom House.

COLLAPSE OF RULE OF LAW (December 9th, 1 PM - 3 PM)

1. *James Harrington*
2. *Kisten Govender*
3. *David Kilgour*
4. *Eser Karakas*
5. *Alp Aslandogan*

With approximately 4,200 judges and prosecutors (including two judges from the Turkey's highest court) dismissed permanently, over one-fifth of Turkey's judiciary has been removed. Of those dismissed, at least 2,200 were jailed with their assets frozen. Consequently, the climate of fear paralyzed the judges and prosecutors who still have their positions. The fear combined with the heavy government influence in the court system led to the collapse of the judiciary system and the deterioration of human rights in the country. As a result, Turkey ranked 109 out of 126 countries in 2019 on the rule of law index of World Justice Project.

SHIFT FROM DEMOCRATIZATION TOWARDS AUTHORITARIANISM IN TURKEY : THE RISE OF POLITICAL ISLAM (December 10th, 10 AM - 12 PM)


1. *Alon Ben-Meir*
2. *Rabia Chaudry*
3. *Katrina Lantos Swett*
4. *Bulent Kenes*
5. *Jocelyne Cesari*
6. *Cengiz Aktar*

There is an emerging widespread consensus among scholars and journalists over the nature of the political regime in Turkey. One chief assumption rests at the center of countless diverse studies — Turkey is no longer a democracy and there is little space for free speech. Whether Turkey could be identified as a dictatorship still remains a matter of an ensuing academic controversy. The scholarly position oscillates between divergent viewpoints from “smart authoritarianism” to emerging fascism. The debate is not just about semantics or the epistemological dimension, it is about the essence and soul of the living system in Turkey.



POWER, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND VIOLATIONS OF MINORITY RIGHTS
(December 10th, 1 PM - 3 PM)

1. *Kerim Balci*
2. *Michael Rubin*
3. *Mehmet Efe Caman*
4. *Bulent Ceyhan*
5. *Craig Shagin*
6. *Sumeyya Avci*




The so-called coup attempt was a watershed moment in Turkey's modern history. The government immediately declared a state of emergency and ruled the country with decrees, which had the full force of law, for two years. Although the emergency regime officially ended last summer, the measures taken by the government during the emergency rule remain in place after authorities enacted a new set of laws that made decrees permanent. The abortive coup provided President Erdogan and his party the much-needed pretext and unlimited latitude to embark on a massive purge to dismiss their real and perceived political opponents from public service. As one of the most obvious targets of government, Kurdish people have been exposed to harsh violations. As indicated in the first OHCHR report,¹⁰³ Decree 674 of 1 September 2016 permitted the Central Government to appoint "trustees" in lieu of elected mayors, deputy mayors or members of municipal councils suspended on charges of terrorism.¹⁰⁴ Since September 2016, 87 out of 105 mayors were imprisoned, including 35 women and 52 men. All are of Kurdish origin. Within the security operations taking place in areas home to, in large part, to Kurdish residents and targeted citizens of Kurdish origin of all ages for their perceived affiliation to the PKK, individuals have been killed, women have been sexually assaulted, and many acts of torture have been committed. Over 100,000 websites were reportedly blocked in 2017, including a high number of pro-Kurdish websites and satellite TVs.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS in TURKEY (December 10th, 4 PM - 6 PM)

1. *Sophia Pandya*
2. *Vonya Womack*
3. *Hilal Akdeniz*
4. *Natali Avazyan*
5. *Eren Keskin*



The prison conditions for women and children are exceedingly alarming. According to the Justice Ministry, as of 2017, nearly 10,000 women and 3,000 children under 18 are in Turkey's prisons. The inhumane prison conditions also hold weight in women prisons. They face additional issues of the male security staff frequently obstructing their privacy during hospital visits, often times leading to incomplete examination. Among the prisoners, there are pregnant women or women who just gave birth and 677 children under 6 years old imprisoned along with their mothers – including 149 infants under 1 year old. Pregnant women were forced to stay with other inmates in overcrowded cells, also denied access to proper prenatal care – posing serious risks to their well-beings.



www.silencedturkey.org

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