

*22 Ocak 2013 Salt*

*The situation in Kosovo and the role of the Council of Europe*

**Ms GÜNDEŞ BAKIR (Turkey)** – We all want a stable, democratic and united Europe. If the Cold War and our memories of the two world wars have taught us anything, it is that we need a Europe that is peaceful, secure, free and undivided. However, the political and security situation in the Balkans remains fragile. All of us in the Assembly should be concerned about the possibility of a conflict in Kosovo, because such a conflict could easily spread throughout the Balkans. As President Clinton rightly put it, it would be a conflict without borders.

In order to prevent conflict, the full territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo should be respected by Serbia before its eventual Euro-Atlantic integration. The existence of parallel structures in northern Kosovo can be detrimental to the rule of law, and some have turned into criminal structures. Serbia should in no way encourage the formation of parallel governmental structures in northern Kosovo, and it should respect the Pristina Government's right to exercise its authority throughout the country.

Kosovo is an independent State in its full territory. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should oppose any discussions regarding the full territorial integrity of Kosovo. It should also be noted that it would not be just or politically correct to make the Pristina Government accountable for the full territory of the country in respect of human rights violations, corruption or criminal structures unless the parallel governmental structures and vacuums in the north are abolished, and unless the northern region is fully integrated with the rest of the country.

There are external factors behind the current situation in Kosovo. As we all know, Kosovo came from hard days, and it is now recognised by 96 countries. In order to establish an effective governmental structure in Kosovo, the country should be empowered by international recognition.

I call on all Council of Europe member States to recognise the full territorial integrity and sovereignty of Kosovo. Kosovo should be given the opportunity to develop international collaborations in order to address the concerns raised by the rapporteur, including on security. If Kosovo is given greater international recognition, that would serve to integrate the country economically and politically with the wider world, and international collaboration would give greater strength to its fight against organised crime and corruption. The former Yugoslavian States of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro are all member States of the Council of Europe, and I call on the Parliamentary Assembly to accept Kosovo as a full member as soon as possible.

Until it is recognised by all member States of the Council of Europe, Kosovo should be guaranteed observer State status. It should be given an office here, and its parliamentarians should be given the right to speak in the Chamber or to propose amendments to any resolutions concerning them. That would provide a platform for further dialogue between

Serbia and Kosovo and open up possibilities for bettering relations between the two countries. No European should be excluded from the Council of Europe.

***The activities of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)***

**Mr KAYATÜRK (Turkey)** – I thank the rapporteur for this high-quality report. The activities of the EBRD deserve special attention because of the impact of the global economic crisis on democracies throughout Europe. The role of the EBRD, as the only financial institution with the mandate of democracy, is much more vital nowadays.

Turkey is a supporter of democracy in the region, as was identified in the EBRD's Life in Transition survey of 2011, and is an example of how democracy and economic development nourish each other. In spite of the global economic crisis, Turkey recorded significant growth, concurrently with taking numerous steps to consolidate democracy.

Since the launch of the EBRD's operation in 2009, its cumulative investment in Turkey has been almost € billion. The investment projects have focused mainly on private enterprises, with the aim of developing their capacity and competitiveness. I firmly believe that those projects will contribute to the structural changes that our economy is undergoing because of the initiatives of the Turkish Government.

One of the challenges in Turkey, as was identified by the EBRD, is to increase private sector participation, sustainability and efficiency in the energy sector. The recent rise in energy prices and the consequent rise in the current account deficit showed that Turkey's energy sector can be developed with a view to strengthening the stability of the Turkish economy. The expertise of the EBRD will be an invaluable asset in those endeavours. Once again, I thank the rapporteur and all those who put a lot of effort into this important work.

***Ensuring the viability of the Strasbourg Court: structural deficiencies in States Parties***

**Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (Turkey)** – I thank the rapporteur for a comprehensive, factual and timely report. I also thank him for how he organised the report – he arranged several hearings and conferences, one of which I had the opportunity to attend – and for his full co-operation with the countries named in the report. He rightly named and criticised countries for their structural deficiencies, including my own country of Turkey.

The Parliamentary Assembly has given our full support to the reform process of the whole Council of Europe, including that of the European Court of Human Rights. Our President, Mr Mignon, has played a very important role as chairperson of the ad hoc committee and as the President of this Assembly. We also support the ideas coming from the Court, particularly about having a panel at State level, so that the Assembly has better lists and can increase the quality of judges. The Assembly proposed – paragraph by paragraph, and very precisely – other measures during the conferences in Interlaken, Izmir and Brighton.

In the end, however, we have to convince our capitals that member States have the main responsibility for taking measures to overcome the structural deficiencies and to implement Court judgments immediately and successfully. For example, two weeks ago, the Turkish

Parliament adopted a law by which Turkey made an agreement with the Court: only one law will mean that Turkey takes back 3,000 cases from the Court so that they can be resolved in Turkey. That is a good step, but it is not enough. My country, like all countries, has to take extra measures to decrease the number of applications from member States' courts, to overcome other problems and to implement all the judgments. The report covers all of that, and we fully support Mr Kivalov's very good work. I thank him and the Secretariat for the very good report.

### ***Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria***

**Mr A. TÜRKEŞ (Turkey)** – One of the most important roles of our Assembly is to encourage positive developments by providing supportive suggestions on how to improve democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights in member States. The report prepared by Mr Luca Volontè carries out that difficult task eloquently and successfully. I sincerely welcome the achievements realised by Bulgaria, which are a direct result of the commitment of the Bulgarian people to consolidating their democracy.

The positive developments in the domestic politics of Bulgaria also have implications for its foreign relations. The flourishing and increasingly cordial relations between Turkey and Bulgaria show how domestic and foreign politics nourish each other. The establishment of a high-level co-operation council, and other high-level contacts between Turkey and Bulgaria, alongside burgeoning bilateral trade and cultural contacts, will certainly enrich both countries. However, these positive developments should not overshadow the need for more reform, particularly in the field of minority rights.

The declaration adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament on 11 January 2012 regarding the expulsion of more than 360 000 Turks from Bulgaria is clearly a step in the right direction. However, this declaration should be followed by concrete measures. One concrete step should be the construction of more places of religious worship. I express my dismay at the inadequate efforts made by Bulgarian authorities to enhance religious freedoms and cultural rights for their Muslim citizens. In fact, recently, the attempt to build a mosque by the office of the grand mufti has been prevented. Furthermore, the issue of pension payments to Turks who emigrated from Bulgaria in the early 1990s should be resolved in an expedient manner.

Taking into account the track record of Bulgaria regarding carrying out reforms, I believe the aforementioned shortcomings will be overcome in the coming years. Thank you for your attention.

### ***23 Ocak 2013 Çarşamba***

### ***Georgia and Russia: the humanitarian situation in the conflict- and war-affected areas***

**Ms ERKAL KARA (Turkey)\*** – I congratulate the rapporteur on her excellent report, which focuses on the humanitarian issues and leaves to one side the political issues. I am pleased to note that Ms Acketoft's report is constructive and well balanced. It summarises the situation in that part of the world very well.

The report provides a clear and detailed map of how to deal with the internally displaced persons and with the sense of insecurity among the people who are affected by the lack of free movement. It is obvious that the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly have a role to play in improving the humanitarian situation and in restoring peace and calm to the areas affected by the conflict.

The possibility for refugees to return should not be confined to certain regions. Return to South Ossetia and Abkhazia should also be made possible. Humanitarian organisations should facilitate access to the areas affected by the conflict. It is a pity that Ms Acketoft was not able to observe the situation in South Ossetia. I share the view of some of my colleagues that new measures to build confidence should be introduced under the aegis of international organisations.

The task ahead is difficult and complex, and will require substantial resources. The Council of Europe may not have much money, but it has manpower, expertise and skills. I am delighted at how committed our Assembly has been to improving the humanitarian situation in the Caucasus. I hope that the proposals in the report will be implemented speedily.

### *Free debate*

**Mr KÜRKÇÜ (Turkey)** – I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the ongoing talks between Turkish Government officials and Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan liberation movement who is serving a lifetime sentence on Imrali island.

My group urges Assembly members to approach the Kurdish question and the need for a peaceful solution not only as a domestic issue pertaining to a member country, but as a regional and international issue. Whatever the outcome, it will have a substantial effect not only in Turkey, but in Iraq, Syria and Iran. There will be repercussions for Turkey's relations with Russia, the USA, the European Union and Cyprus.

The UEL supports the new initiative as a step towards ending the armed conflict in Turkey's south-eastern provinces, which over 27 years has claimed the lives of at least 40 000 people. Most of those people were Kurdish militants, but the number also includes thousands of foot soldiers of the Turkish Army and innocent civilians.

My group denounces the killing of three prominent Kurdish figures in Paris last week. We urge the French Government to bring the killers to justice and to clarify the reasons behind the massacre.

With the previous abortive attempts in mind, the UEL recommends that the Turkish Government provides the maximum possible transparency in the process, brings all parties to the conflict around the negotiating table and refrains from unjustified exclusions. We fully support the official participation of the Peace and Democracy Party in the process.

To prepare the ground for a genuine peace process, we recommend that the conflicting parties declare an immediate and mutual truce, and thus bring an end to the bloodshed. We also call for Mr Öcalan to be given greater access to external relations – for example, with his lawyers

and other parties to the conflict, so that those on the Kurdish side understand that this is a peaceful initiative to find a solution to the Kurdish question.

We expect the Council of Europe and the Assembly to take further initiatives through the talks with Secretary General Jagland and to provide the opportunity to discuss how Turkey can resolve the issues democratically in the April part-session.

**Mr DIŞLİ (Turkey)** – My remarks follow on from those of Mr Kürkçü, because I want to give an overview, as a member of the governing party, of the new phase that Turkey is going through vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue.

As we all know, Kurdish identity was the problem. The use of the Kurdish language in people's daily lives was not allowed. We must first separate terror from this issue. Our government has a vision to provide equal rights and opportunities for all the people of Turkey, so it has been keen to address this issue. Indeed, it was in our government's first urgent action plan.

In his speech in 2005 in Diyarbakir, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that “there have been faults in the past and we are strong enough to solve these faults and questions. And the Kurdish question is also my own problem”. That was the starting point for a new round of reforms, which we called “Kurdish opening”. We started by publicly honouring the Kurdish identity and removing the ban on the use of the Kurdish language. We have established Kurdish literature departments in universities and offered Kurdish as an elective subject in middle schools. A state-owned TV station is now broadcasting in Kurdish for 24 hours a day. We have paid compensation to displaced Kurdish people.

Equally importantly, we have allocated major resources to improve the infrastructure in eastern and south-eastern Turkey. We have provided free and good quality health care, introduced initiatives to motivate women to get into education and built new roads, airports and universities in the region. The living standards of our Kurdish citizens have improved significantly in line with the growth of the Turkish economy.

Those democratisation reforms were undertaken at a time when terror continued to claim the lives of innocent Turkish citizens. In the early days of 2013, a new round of talks has been launched to find a peaceful solution to the terrorism in Turkey, in an effort to end the cries of all the mothers who have lost their loved ones. Turkish state officials have held visits and talks with Öcalan. There is strong support for this effort from opposition parties and the public. The only distraction will come from those who benefit from the status quo. The resilience that has been shown while the funerals have been held for the three women who were killed in Paris is a sign of the support for peace.

I call on everyone to be vigilant and to refrain from any action that might be provocative. This is a sensitive issue and we must all act responsibly and carefully. Sincerity is the key word in this important effort for peace.

***The honouring of obligations and commitments by Azerbaijan and the follow-up to the issue of political prisoners in Azerbaijan***

**Mr DİŞLİ (Turkey)** – I thank the rapporteurs for their difficult work. In October 2012, the Assembly had a controversial debate on the definition of political prisoners. As we all know, Mr Strässer's report has been received with much doubt and concern. Although rejected, the amendment from the Azerbaijanis aiming to confirm that the interpretation and application of criteria defining a political prisoner are in the exclusive competence of the European Court of Human Rights set out a balanced approach. That the vote was drawn – 89 for and 89 against – showed the division within the Assembly.

Today, we are again debating political prisoners in Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, we have been obsessed with the political prisoners who might, or might not be, in prison in Azerbaijan, even though the Assembly knows that many other countries have political prisoners. This issue has been on the Assembly's agenda since 2001, which is a clear sign that our policy is not working and only leading to fruitless political debate. It would be inappropriate to call for the reassessment of the cases of political prisoners in Azerbaijan, as stated in the draft resolution, the effect of which would be to dictate to the judiciary how it should exercise its powers.

If there are deficiencies in the judicial system or any other issues relating to Council of Europe standards, the rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee will tackle them, as has happened in the report. That avoids duplicating work. Furthermore, the consolidated list referred to in the draft resolution is outdated and inaccurate, according to the Azerbaijani authorities. Last but not least, the subjectivity and imprecision of the existing definition implies much fruitless political debate and loss of energy and time in taking the necessary steps. If we want to solve the problem of political prisoners, we need to find a consensus on basic principles and stop targeting specific countries that are trying to deal with what is a worldwide problem.

**Mr A. TÜRKES (Turkey)** – I thank Mr Strässer for his efforts on political prisoners. Unfortunately, it has been a controversial subject, and the work of the Parliamentary Assembly since 2001 has not resulted in a compromise. The report on political prisoners in Azerbaijan contains two major problems. Not only is it based on a notion that cannot be precisely defined, but there are also many question marks about the list in the explanatory memorandum. In committee meetings, Azerbaijani members stated many times that the report contains factual mistakes. The list of alleged political prisoners in the explanatory memorandum includes persons already released, persons sentenced for terrorist acts, murder or corruption and even the names of persons who do not exist at all. One person had set off an explosion in an underground station in Baku, resulting in the deaths of 14 people and the injury of more than 20 children. The existence of an inaccurate list in the explanatory memorandum is a major problem, as the draft resolution that we will be voting on refers to that inaccurate list.

Furthermore, the report is a duplication, as the Monitoring Committee is already considering the issue of political prisoners in Azerbaijan. Some of our friends voiced their concerns about human rights violations, underlining that the core activity of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly is to denounce them. Of course the Assembly cannot remain silent

when the Council of Europe's values are not respected, but it also cannot vote on a resolution based on false information that would seriously harm its credibility. The Assembly cannot contribute to the politicisation of human rights problems, and it should take seriously the lack of compromise between its members in order to preserve its integrity and coherence.

**24 Ocak 2013 Perşembe**

***Urgent debate: Migration and asylum: mounting tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean***

**Ms MEMECAN (Turkey)** – I congratulate Ms Strik, and members of the secretariat, on their efficient work. I also thank Ms Strik for her continued devotion and hard work on the issues of migrants and immigrants.

Before I move on, I want to correct Mr Schennach, who I believe has been misinformed: there are no mass graves in Istanbul for migrants.

Turkey is located on a major migration route and faces increasing numbers of illegal migrants, from its economically and politically unstable neighbourhood, trying to cross its territory towards the west. More than 10 000 smugglers have been apprehended in the last 10 years. We are well aware of the increasing problem of illegal immigration in the Aegean, and we have intensified our efforts to tackle the problem more effectively. In that respect, Turkey's co-operation with Greece has been remarkably strengthened in the last two years, following the signing of the readmission protocol in 2010. We have recently taken two significant legislative steps, which will establish an immigration policies board, with a view to improving the current mechanisms.

Given the complexity and magnitude of the problem, it is clear that the solutions are beyond the means of a single country and require international co-operation and solidarity. Currently, Turkey is hosting 150 000 Syrian guests in camps all over the country. Some of our colleagues have visited the camps and expressed their appreciation for the hospitality shown to and services provided for the refugees.

Considering the quality of our efforts, which is beyond the scope of any convention, it is disappointing that the issue of geographical reservation is being reintroduced in this report. That matter was raised the last time the Assembly passed a resolution on Syria and we agreed not to make it an issue. We should be consistent and amend this report.

I remind all colleagues that the Syrian people are in urgent need of effective support from the international community. We expect the serious engagement of our Council of Europe partners to help out in these tough times. Your contribution should be more than just to debate these issues. You should do more in practice to share the burden, and sooner rather than later.

**Ms GÜNDEŞ BAKIR (Turkey)** – The geographical limitation implemented by Turkey with regard to the acceptance only of refugees from Europe and people uprooted by events in Europe is not the reservation of Turkey. On the contrary, it is a right recognised by Article 1(B) of the 1951 Geneva Convention. The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *A.G. and others v. Turkey* makes it clear that geographical limitation and

reservation cannot be considered to be discrimination under the rights defined in the European Convention on Human Rights. Given the decision of the Court, Turkey does not have to remove the geographical reservation, which is itself guaranteed as a right in the 1951 United Nations Convention. It is completely legal. Forcing Turkey to do the opposite would be a violation of its sovereign rights and would go against the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.

The border of Europe in the east is not at the Turkish-Greek border, but at the Turkish-Syrian border. We must not forget that Turkey is part of Europe. There is uninterrupted collaboration and close, friendly co-operation between the Greek and Turkish authorities to counter illegal migration and human trafficking. Numerous bilateral protocols have been signed to control human trafficking. Within the framework of the readmission protocol between Turkey and Greece, the last experts' meeting was held in Ankara in November 2012. The delegations of both countries agreed on fighting illegal migration and human trafficking in an efficient way.

Turkey is fulfilling its obligations and is hosting more than 150 000 Syrians fleeing from the Assad regime in 15 camps. Turkey has spent more than \$550 million of its own national resources on the Syrians who are sheltering in its camps. The expense of running a camp sheltering 10 000 refugees is \$2.5 million a month. The financial assistance of the international community for Syrian refugees remains too low.

We stand in complete solidarity with the Syrian people. We declare very clearly that we have given every possible humanitarian aid and support to the people of Syria, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or sect. However, it is obvious that the scale of the problem is becoming more than Turkey alone can shoulder. We expect the international community to share the humanitarian burden. It is also apparent that providing such humanitarian relief outside Syria is not sustainable. We should look to provide humanitarian solutions and camps within Syria. In that regard, my country has started to transfer humanitarian aid from the zero point on the Turkish-Syrian border via the Red Crescent.

Last but not least, we need to find clever and enduring solutions to the problem of the illegal migration of Syrian people. Building barbed-wire fences and increasing the number of police officers or border guards will not prevent such migration unless the internal war in Syria ends soon and a democratic transitional government is established. That should be our first priority.

***Urgent debate: Recent developments in Mali and Algeria and the threat to security and human rights in the Mediterranean region***

**Mr DİŞLİ (Turkey)** – The recent developments in Mali and the terrorist attack perpetrated at the gas plant in south-eastern Algeria have demonstrated once again that extremism and terrorism are gaining ground in the Sahel-Sahara region. That constitutes a direct threat to the security of the whole region and has repercussions beyond that. The international community cannot remain indifferent to the developments that are unfolding in that region.



In Mali, we should continue to support the international efforts under African leadership, with the aim of maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, achieving stability and reinstating democracy.

Turkey believes in the necessity of the rapid implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2085, which envisages the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali and supports the decisions of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

A new process has been launched within the framework of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, on the initiative of Turkey, to discuss the latest developments in Mali and to determine what common action should be taken.

The terrorist attack at In Amenas in Algeria once again demonstrates the need to combat terrorism determinedly and efficiently. Terrorism has neither religion nor nationality. It constitutes a crime against humanity. The need to combat terrorism therefore demands the unity and solidarity of the international community.

The use of expressions such as “radical Islamist terrorist” and “Islamic terrorism” in various paragraphs of the draft resolution seriously offends me, as I am sure it offends all true believers of the Islamic faith. When politicians in western Europe use the term “Islamist”, it has different connotations from the equivalent words in the languages of Muslim people, such as Turkish and Arabic. For Muslim people, the association of Islamism with terrorism is an unfortunate misunderstanding. Terrorists always hide behind something, whether it be religion, nationalism or ethnicity. However, to associate terrorism with any religion, nationality or ethnicity confuses the matter: it sends out the wrong signals and legitimises terrorist acts, with adverse consequences.

Madam Rapporteur, we must deal with the problem and try to solve it, but do not insult the whole Muslim world by using these words.

### *The state of media freedom in Europe*

**Mr KÜRKCÜ (Turkey)** – We welcome the report, which is timely and accurate. It is based on the major binding documents of the Council of Europe, and refers to indubitable facts and figures pertaining to violations of media freedom in 14 countries. It thus leaves the perpetrators no escape. The rulers criticised in this report have not displayed for investigative journalists even a crumb of the tolerance that they have shown for the murderers of those journalists. May the report embarrass them heavily and equip media rights activists with greater justification in their campaign – without borders – for greater media freedom.

The authorities from the 14 countries referred to in the report have one common characteristic. In spite of their hypocritical declarations about European values in relation to the past practices of single-party dictatorships during the Cold War and notwithstanding which camp they then belonged to, they are now perpetuating the same pattern of relations between the State and society. For them, there exists only one European value, which is not European at all in the context of the 21st century – the unlimited reign of free-market

capitalism and the unlimited use of force for the protection of the power and wealth of the new ruling classes. In their Europe, there is no place for human rights, enlightenment, critical thought, labour rights, anti-racism, anti-fascism, feminism or socialism – the genuinely European values for which the best personalities of this continent have sacrificed their lives.

Almost a third of the report rightly refers to violations committed against media freedom in Turkey, which has the largest number of jailed journalists in the world. I regret that deputies from Turkey's ruling party do not refrain – even here – from charging the victims of violations of media freedom, who are jailed under irrelevant charges, as criminals and/or as terrorists. In the post 9/11 era, “terrorist” replaces “communist” when it comes to stigmatising political opponents and critics. Just yesterday, a Turkish court arrested a 21-year-old newspaper journalist, alongside four others, on charges of terrorism. “Terrorist unarmed” is Turkey's contribution to European media law in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Look at the European Court of Human Rights 2012 balance sheet of applications by individuals against their States, issued today. Unsurprisingly, we see the same countries appearing in the top 10 as are named in the draft resolution. The gold medal goes to Russia, Turkey gets the silver, and Italy the bronze, with 37 others following. Do not blame the journalists, *Messieurs*, because you have reserved that position for yourselves. We expect the Assembly to display no tolerance for violations of media freedom and to adopt the draft resolution unanimously

**Ms GÜNDEŞ BAKIR** (Turkey) – Freedom of the media and of expression are crucial in a functioning democracy. In order for democracy to flourish, it is essential that citizens have access to numerous different sources of information and to appropriate media for open and fair discussion.

The report fails to account for the basic fact that the journalists convicted and detained in Turkey have not been imprisoned for their journalistic activities, as the report states, but in connection with offences such as murder, armed robbery, forgery of official documents, terrorism, attempted military coups, bombing, causing damage to property and placing explosives in public places. Mr Johansson's report uses the phrase “alleged Ergenekon conspiracy”, but the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Tuncay Özkan v. Turkey* states that Ergenekon is a criminal organisation thought to be engaged in activities aimed at the violent overthrow of the government, with members from every profession, including the media. Those are not my words, but the words of the European Court of Human Rights.

There are other factual problems with the report. The rapporteur claims that the 2008 legislative revision of article 301 of the Turkish penal code has not resolved the problems, but that is incorrect. On the contrary, after the revision of article 301, there was a 97% decrease in the number of cases; moreover, at present, there are no pre-trial detainees charged under article 301. Contrary to what Mr Johansson's report states, there is no sentence in the June 2011 election observers' report stating that the Turkish elections took place in a biased media environment. That is also a mistake. The election observers' report states that the ad hoc

committee concluded that the 12 June 2011 parliamentary elections in Turkey were well-managed and democratic and demonstrated pluralism.

In my country, 40 000 people have lost their lives to terrorism in the last 30 years, and there have been four military coups in the last 50 years. The rule of law and order is crucial to a country with a past like Turkey's. Nobody can be immune from the rule of law and order, including journalists. Media impunity should not encourage criminals to hide behind it; media freedom cannot be used as a shield to cover crimes. The media has substantial power, and must be accountable to the public in implementing that power. Although it is an accountability tool for powerful institutions, it must itself be accountable as well. A deficiency in media accountability would be an important failure in a democracy. A deficiency in regulating the media would cause a privatisation of democracy as a result of the control of information flows by big companies, and the limiting of the right of entry to those who can pay for it.

**Ms BILGEHAN (Turkey)\*** – I am the daughter of a journalist. My father used to tell me that his was the most beautiful profession in the world, but he paid dearly for his profession: he went to prison for two years for daring to criticise the government of the time. That was 50 years ago. It is extremely depressing to note that according to Mr Johansson's report, that kind of situation still prevails in many of the so-called civilised member States of the Council of Europe. The leaders of some countries close their eyes to violations of journalists' freedom to exercise their profession properly.

I am not thinking only of the arrest of some hundreds of journalists and their detention without trial; the trials are under way, with no judgment yet, so the principle of "innocent until proved guilty" is not being applied. They are being convicted or arrested on the basis of supposed terrorist acts after long investigation, but there is no proof. It is a question of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, although that is another issue. Media freedom is also being violated in other ways. Self-censorship is frequently employed, as is the intimidation of journalists. Tax pressure is placed on owners of media bodies, or they are threatened with closure.

Public service radio and television broadcasters should be protected from government interference in their editorial activities, but that is not the case everywhere. I will give an example that is actually a little amusing. There is bad news for the viewers of a Turkish television series that is very popular in the Balkans and other European countries as well as in the Russian Federation; apparently 150 million Russians watch it. At the personal request of the Prime Minister, the story will be changed. That is how far political interference can go. From now on, the series, about a sultan, will be much more modest.

January is a dark month. Uğur Mumcu, a well-known journalist, was killed almost exactly 20 years ago today, and the ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was also killed in January. I was in Strasbourg for the Parliamentary Assembly when it happened. The perpetrator in the first case was never found, and light has not been shed fully on the assassination of Mr Dink, although the direct perpetrator was found. Mr Johansson's report is important for all countries, and it even needs a follow-up.

**Ms MEMECAN (Turkey)** – Media freedom is a loaded topic within which there are many issues. It is also an essential element of democracy. The recent advances in digital and mobile technologies have rapidly changed the media landscape. Old-school journalists face huge cuts and unemployment. Media ownership and disguised media ownership need to be scrutinised. The fine line between freedom of expression and defamation has become even narrower and needs studying thoroughly. The ethics, rights and responsibilities of journalists must be revisited.

One would expect a report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe with the title “The state of media freedom in Europe” to offer answers on at least some of those issues. A high-quality report would have been an invaluable document, offering vision and suggesting guidelines to all member States for the creation of a free and vibrant media environment in their countries. Instead, what we find here is the naming and shaming of three countries based on unsubstantiated information and rumours. Had the rapporteur done a better job of researching and listening, he would have a better understanding of the controversial issues and be able to distinguish right from wrong.

The report has been a huge disappointment for me. What was even more disappointing was Mr Johansson’s attitude. Members of my delegation attempted to contact him to provide information and correct some of the factual mistakes. They invited him to Turkey to see the situation on the ground. He has closed himself to any communication with our members.

We should be co-operative in our work here. A little courtesy would not hurt while we go about our business. We are all equal members of this Assembly and should duly respect each other. I am confident that the Assembly will soon produce the much-needed, genuine report on media freedom by another rapporteur.

**25 Ocak 2013 Cuma**

***Gender equality, reconciliation of personal and working life and shared responsibility***

**Mr KÜRKÇÜ (Turkey)** – I fully support this comprehensive report, which addresses questions faced by women in all countries across the globe. As a man from a country where, compared with the rest of Europe, women face more difficulties in their working lives, I find the report even more important. My country’s government now encourages families to have three or more children, but has not adopted measures to allow women to compete with men in the labour market, which is causing women to withdraw from the workplace. The measures envisaged by the report would help women in Turkey and other countries that have similar conditions pertaining to women. The report takes a balanced approach to the situation of working women, urging men to share responsibilities with women, and encouraging governments to introduce reforms to allow women to have equality with men in social life, working life and private life.

I want to bring to your attention the fact that Pinar Selek, whose case has gone on for 15 years, was yesterday given a life sentence by a court in Turkey, despite there being no evidence, no witness and no just trial. Strasbourg university, where she is a doctoral student,

staged a one-hour strike in her support. I call on all women in the Assembly to support her case, in solidarity with all oppressed women across Europe and particularly in my country.

**Ms BİLGEHAN (Turkey)\*** – If more women entered the labour market and took up paid employment, world growth would receive a considerable boost according to a report by OECD experts on inequality between men and women. It is estimated that a perfect balance in the work place between women and men would lead to an increase in GDP of some 12% over 20 years. The countries in Europe that would benefit the most are Italy, Greece and Hungary.

For that to happen, a number of conditions have to be put in place and the sharing of responsibilities has to be fairer. Fewer women than men take up paid employment, but women generally spend more time on domestic responsibilities. According to OECD, women spend 4.45 hours a day on domestic responsibilities, whereas the figure for men is only 45 minutes. I think that even that figure is something of an exaggeration. A better balance is struck in the United Kingdom and Germany.

According to Ms Quintanilla's interesting report, on average, some 80% of women are involved in domestic tasks on a daily basis. The figure for men is only 45%. Of course, the inequality varies from one country to another. The lowest figure for men is from Turkey, where 17% of men are involved in domestic responsibilities. The figure is some 70% in Sweden. Those figures show a correlation between the participation of women in the work force and the sharing of domestic responsibilities. In Turkey, there has been an obvious regression in the number of women who are actively employed, with the proportion being 25%. The average in European Union countries is about 60%. It is clear, as Mr Kürkçü said, that women are being pushed out of the labour market. In Sweden, 80% of women are actively employed.

The report shows that the main reason why women are not professionally employed in Turkey is the difficulty of reconciling family life and professional life. I know about that myself, because I have three children and a family. At the same time, I have a career, so it is not impossible to reconcile the two. However, certain conditions must be put in place. Policies need to be introduced to fight against and prevent social exclusion. It is important that women take up employment for economic reasons, but also for personal reasons.

Sweden allows 13 months of parental leave but at the other extreme, some countries allow a minimum of just six weeks. It is important to have greater equality in parental leave. Both parents must shoulder the responsibility for their children. Other facilities must be put in place, such as child care services and flexible working. Employers in the public and private sectors need to enable employees to handle their working time better.

As Ms Quintanilla said, this is a question of mind-set. For example, in advertising, women are always shown as being at home, engaged in domestic activities. That is another issue that we need to tackle. Thank you for this very interesting report, Ms Quintanilla.

***Trafficking of migrant workers for forced labour***

**Ms ERKAL KARA (Turkey)\*** – I congratulate Ms Groth on her excellent report, which encourages us all to take action. Unfortunately, human trafficking is still coming to the fore in Europe. It is one of the most heinous violations of human rights. Stamping out human trafficking should be a high priority for all member States, especially given that there are more than 9 million victims throughout the world, most of whom are women and children.

Over the past few years, Turkey has become energetically involved in combating human trafficking and has introduced a series of measures. A hotline for victims was set up in 2005. Legal and health services and psychological counselling are now available to victims, who are issued with short-term visas. Effective assistance is also provided to illegal immigrants so that they do not become victims of trafficking again. The organisation of aid to victims of trafficking and further planning are carried out in close co-operation with voluntary organisations. Turkey has also passed legislative measures to stamp out organisations that exploit illegal workers. Article 79 of the Turkish criminal code was modified on 25 July 2010 to protect victims by criminalising attempts to smuggle migrants.

I underline the importance of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which lays down a legal framework and defines standards. It is up to members of parliament to ensure that governments sign it and that parliaments ratify it and scrutinise its enforcement. Turkey is one of the signatories and, with a view to finalising ratification, it is now bringing its national legislation into line with the provisions in the convention. I hope that the process will be completed very soon.