

**7 Nisan 2014**

***Free Debate***

Mr GÜR (*Turkey*) – We have been debating freedom of expression and the freedom of the media. Unfortunately that is under threat in Turkey. Forty four journalists are still in prison there. If you ask the government, it will say that they are all terrorists, but if you ask journalism organisations or organisations of humourists, they will say that those people have been imprisoned because of the work they have done. The issue is one of freedom of expression.

Füsan Erdoğan is one of them She is 54 years old, and was arrested and detained seven years ago. She is still in prison and is quite ill. She needs to be released as soon as possible. Just a month ago, the Turkish Parliament amended the law about long-term detentions. As a result many people have been released, but unfortunately a court has decided that she will not be. That is a complete violation of the law.

Füsan Erdoğan was the editor of Özgür Radyo, which is a small radio station in İzmir in west Turkey. She has been detained as a member of an illegal organisation for seven and half years. She has not been able to communicate with her family up to this time. She has received treatment for cancer. She needs to be released as soon as possible. But she is not the only one. There are hundreds of other trials of journalists pending in the Turkish courts.

Another problem is the banning of social media. Last week, the Turkish constitutional court made an important decision, as it lifted the ban on Twitter. We are expecting another good decision from the court about YouTube. But the area of social media is still problematic in Turkey, as social media are still under threat. I ask the Assembly to focus on freedom of expression not only in Turkey but in all countries that violate the rights of media freedom.

***Free Debate (Addendum)***

Mr DISLI (*Turkey*) – Recent developments in Ukraine had the United States and the European Union focusing all their attention on Ukraine and we all closed our eyes and ears to what is happening in Syria.

I would like to draw your attention to the humanitarian situation and the aid provided by Turkey to the Syrians. Turkey strictly complies with the principle of non-*refoulement* at the border and, in accordance with international procedures, offers "temporary protection" without any discrimination, which has been appreciated by the international community.

I am deeply dismayed by the Armenian parliamentarians' statement which distorts the facts. Therefore, I would like to inform the Assembly that, contrary to allegations, Turkey is not providing support to the opposition forces by letting them use its territory or by any other means during the conflict which has intensified recently in the Latakia/Kesab region. These unfounded allegations try to draw an analogy between the developments in the Kesab region and the painful incidents of the past in an attempt to spread confrontational political propaganda.

I would like to bring to your kind attention the fact that, in accordance with its humanitarian and conscientious responsibility, United Nations bodies were informed that Syrian Armenians residing in the Kesab region could be permitted entry to Turkey. Furthermore, the

representatives of the Armenian community were informed of the matter through official channels. Therefore, necessary steps are being taken to meet the needs of Syrian Armenians, as is the case for all other Syrians. Following such consultations, 18 Armenian families were accepted in Turkey. I reiterate that Turkey provides assistance to every Syrian regardless of their gender, ethnicity and religion.

**8 Nisan 2014**

***Request for Partnership for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic***

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – Thank you, Madam President. I, too, warmly welcome the delegation from Kyrgyzstan. I have had the good fortune to visit that wonderful country. I also welcome our former Assembly President, Mr Çavuşoğlu, who initiated the report.

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination agrees with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy that Partnership for Democracy status should be accorded to the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic. Our committee believes that giving the parliament that status could be a way of assisting it in moving towards the establishment of a democratic State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, but we have some reservations. We expressed a concern about violence and discrimination towards LGBT persons, violence against women, and the situation of minorities. The committee therefore calls on the Kyrgyz authorities to take the necessary steps to promote equality and condemn all forms of violence and discrimination on any grounds whatever.

The draft resolution has a gender perspective and refers to equal opportunities for women and men in political and public life. It also refers to promoting equality between women and men, and fighting any form of gender-based violence and discrimination. It also refers to the fight against xenophobia and all forms of discrimination and the promotion of the rights of minorities.

Missing from the draft resolution, however, are several important issues, such as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, participation in political and public life, the linguistic rights of minorities and the fight against human trafficking. Accordingly, the committee has tabled several amendments to cover those issues.

I want to say a few words about the protection of human rights promoters, who play an important role. Representatives of non-governmental organisations who work to protect the rights of minorities have been harassed and intimidated and, in order to demonstrate its commitments to the values and standards of the Council of Europe, the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic should do whatever it can to protect human rights defenders and make it possible for them to do their work.

Partnership for Democracy status is just a first step in a long process. It is the initiation of a dialogue. The status should be granted, as recommended by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, and I wish our Kyrgyz friends good luck in their future endeavours.

***Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic (Addendum 1)***

Mr TÜRKEŞ (*Turkey*) – First, I would like to express my astonishment at hearing remarks full of hatred and of an islamophobic nature in this Assembly. I strongly condemn the unacceptable remarks made by Ms Faber-van de Klashorst. It dishonours our Assembly and it shows the need to be vigilant against such growing tendencies in Europe. Secondly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, former President of our Assembly and former rapporteur of this report, and to Mr Andreas Gross for their tireless efforts in preparation of this report.

The integration of Central Asian countries with international organisations has been an important element for stability and security in the region. On the basis of this understanding, I strongly support efforts to intensify collaboration between the Council of Europe and Kyrgyzstan, and believe that granting Partnership for Democracy status to the Kyrgyz Parliament will be an important step in this direction.

As stated in the report, we observe the political commitment by the Kyrgyz Parliament to work towards compliance with the basic values and principles of the Council of Europe. Partnership for Democracy status will provide an appropriate framework for strengthening the involvement of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan in the implementation of necessary reforms. I also encourage the Kyrgyz national authorities to make full use of the Council of Europe's expertise and standards and to benefit from the values it enshrines. The Parliament of Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated its will to embark on this path and its readiness to learn from best European practice, so we should give a positive response to this request.

Based on these findings, I share the conclusions arrived at by the rapporteur: we believe that the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan meets the criteria for, and consequently should be granted, Partnership for Democracy status.

**9 Nisan 2014**

***Joint debate: Improving user protection and security in cyberspace and the right to Internet access***

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – Colleagues, even Pope Francis has said that the Internet is a gift from God conferred upon humanity, and it has become a central part of the life of 2.5 billion users throughout the world. The opinion that prevails today is that access to the Internet should be recognised as a fundamental right. Indeed, our President, Anne Brasseur, even compared the use and democratisation of knowledge to the invention of printing.

The web is a major tool for us all, and it opens up a tremendous area of communication, meeting and exchanging ideas, and mobilisation. For example, when the ban on Twitter was lifted in Turkey, an appeal was launched by Internet surfers to try to find a little boy just three and a half years old, who was lost in the outskirts of Istanbul. The Internet and Twitter are therefore also used for perfectly beneficial purposes. The effectiveness of the Internet has been proved over

and over again in political movements such as that of the Indignados in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in the United States, the Arab Spring, and also the Turkish demonstrations. Many millions of people, who are normally a silent majority and even apolitical, get together on specific issues that affect them directly.

We also know that the impact of social media is much more intense for young people because they can see topical events on their mobile phones, and they immediately have the possibility of commenting on and criticising those events. They are no longer passive readers; thanks to the Internet they have become active writers, sometimes in 140 characters. The Internet is also particularly important where democracy is jeopardised or where the media are no longer playing their role of informing people. Sometimes, when informing people about power the Internet becomes an area for censorship under different pretexts.

The two reports by Mr Fischer and Ms Pelkonen raise the fundamental questions of how we can find a model of governance for the Internet that allows us to preserve freedom on the net, and also provide online security while respecting human rights and freedom of expression as defined by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We must also consider the other side of the coin. How can we protect individual users from criminal activities perpetrated online? I am happy to hear that a forum on the governance of the Internet will soon take place in Istanbul, which, I think, is the ideal place for such a meeting.

### ***Improving user protection and security in cyberspace***

#### ***The right to Internet access (Joint debate)***

Ms ERKAL KARA (*Turkey*) – I would like to convey my sincere thanks to both rapporteurs for their reports, which provide us with the chance to take stock of the opportunities, as well as the challenges, faced by member States in the governance of the digital world.

The World Wide Web has created many opportunities and certainly revolutionised our way of life. However, we should also be aware of the risks posed by new communications technologies. In this regard, it is of the utmost importance that we strike the right balance between the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy.

Improving user security and protection requires strong co-ordination among all stakeholders, including governments and companies in the internet industry. This co-ordination needs to be carried out in accordance with a legal framework, which should be respected by all related parties. All actors have to abide by the rulings of court.

I would like to draw your attention to the ongoing debate regarding the court rulings and administrative measures taken in Turkey against Twitter and YouTube. Preventive measures against Twitter and YouTube were taken in response to their defiance to comply with court rulings on violations of personal rights and the right to privacy. Please allow me to remind you that similar measures have been taken on the same grounds in several other countries. Removal requests by the governments and other authorities have increased fivefold in 2013. I should

underline that these measures have been taken in the interests of national security, and for the protection of personal rights, as well as the right to the respect for one's private life.

A free society needs free individuals. Turkey remains committed to the protection of the rights of its citizens, including their right to privacy. With this understanding, Turkey will continue to follow the Council of Europe's values and work in this field. However, there is also a need to reconcile the freedoms with the responsibilities and adopt ethical principles ensuring this delicate balance. I call on all stakeholders, and first and foremost on all companies, to comply with the legislation and court rulings of the States in which they provide services.