

公益社団法人 日本外国特派員協会

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FREEDOM OF PRESS STATEMENT ON TURKISH JOURNALISTS

FATİH ALTAYLI, EROL ÖNDEROĞLU

End the Persecution of Turkish Journalists Fatih Altaylı and Erol Önderoğlu.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan [joins](#) the International Press Institute and other journalists' organizations to condemn the arrest of Turkish journalist and columnist Fatih Altaylı over charges related to a commentary during a YouTube live broadcast. We also urge the Turkish government to drop terrorism charges against journalist Erol Önderoğlu, a representative of Reporters Sans Frontiers Turkey.

Fatih Altaylı was [arrested](#) on June 21, 2025, hours after a segment of his YouTube broadcast went viral on social media. In the video, Altaylı commented on a poll suggesting that 70 percent of the Turkish public would oppose a proposal to allow the Turkish president to remain in power indefinitely. Some social media accounts began spreading edited clips from his broadcast that mischaracterized his comments as threatening speech. Shortly afterward, Oktay Saral, a senior advisor to the Turkish President, publicly [targeted](#) Altaylı on social media, writing that he was “in hot water already”. Within ten hours, Altaylı had been detained.

Under Turkish law, if a person is under investigation for a crime that carries a maximum prison sentence of two years or less, they typically cannot be held in pretrial detention. Initially, Altaylı was held on suspicion of making a criminal threat—an offense that is applicable to threats against any individual, and falls into this category. Prosecutors later invoked a provision that increases penalties for offenses in which the president is the victim. This provision, which mandates a minimum five-year sentence, allowed authorities to place Altaylı in pretrial detention. However, legal experts [argue](#) that this provision applies only to direct physical acts – not verbal commentary – and warn that its use in this case exceeds its intended legal scope.

The Istanbul 10th Criminal Court of Peace approved the prosecutor’s request to jail Altaylı pending trial, citing the “severity of the offense” and a purported “risk of flight”.

Following his arrest, Turkey’s Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [issued a warning](#) on June 23 announcing that Altaylı’s YouTube channel must apply for an internet broadcasting license within 72 hours, submit the required documents, and pay a three-month licensing fee in advance, or be closed down.

We jointly call for the immediate release of Altaylı and urge Turkish authorities to cease exploiting vague legal provisions to prosecute journalists. A free press must include the right to freedom of expression, including the right to criticize political leaders without fear of reprisal.

We also urge the Turkish government to drop charges against Turkish journalist, Erol Önderoğlu.

In May 2016, Önderoğlu and around 50 other prominent figures took turns acting as symbolic editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Özgür Gündem* (“Free Agenda”), which was being persecuted by the Turkish authorities. Articles published during this support campaign are now being used to prosecute Erol and his two co-defendants for “terrorist propaganda”, “praising a crime or criminal” and “condoning a crime”. These charges carry a maximum sentence of 14 years and 6 months in prison under Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713 and the Turkish Penal Code.

Although they were acquitted on 17 July 2019 after three years of legal proceedings, the Istanbul Court of Appeals overturned the ruling on 3 November 2020. On 29 April 2025, Erol appeared before the Turkish courts for the 24th time. His trial will resume on 9 September.

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