**Turkey’s journalists call for solidarity in struggle for their right to report.**

During a conference hosted by the Journalists Union of Turkey (TGS) and the Journalists Association of Turkey (TGC) leading journalists from across the political spectrum united in condemning the surge in attacks on press freedom led by the government in recent weeks.

Participants recounted how, since the inconclusive June elections and the relaunch of the conflict with the PKK in July, journalists and media have come under sustained assault from the government and their supporters. Newspapers are regularly attacked by angry mobs, numerous websites of press agencies and trade unions are repeatedly blocked, foreign journalists are being deported, while many others are subjected to a series of prosecutions for ‘insulting’ the Turkish President or simply fired from their jobs. The pressure on journalists is only expected to intensify as the country heads for an electoral re-run on 1st November.

The International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists (IFJ/EFJ), who jointly organized the international conference, added their voice to the call for an end to the oppression.

“The government must cease this campaign to silence journalists,” said Jim Boumelha, IFJ President. “Journalists must unite together across the political divide to fight the bullying, intimidation and violence that threatens to pacify the profession.”

Ugur Guc, TGS President said : “Turkish society is becoming fragmented and the country is going up in flames. As the TGS, we always call for peace instead of war. We call on our colleagues to use language promoting peace instead of using hate-speech”.

The international conference featured prominent speakers and panelists including Can Dundar, Sirin Payzin, Kadri Gürsel, Ragip Duran, Erol Önderoglu, Steven Ellis, Yildiz Tar, Hakki Boltan, Sibel Günes, Baris Ince. Frederike Geerdink, the Dutch journalist recently deported from Turkey, also participated to the conference using teleconference.

The IFJ-EFJ, TGS and TGC presented the Istanbul conference conclusions at a press conference on 18th September which set out a list of immediate actions to be taken in this electoral period and prioritized key issues for the long term reform of the media sector for the upcoming government post 1st November. Immediate actions included ending the discriminatory accreditation system, enabling journalists to report the conflict and election in total freedom, reform of the press card commission to enable the professional trade union and associations to issue press card without governmental interference; guaranteeing free movement, safety and access to information across the country; freeing remaining jailed journalists and ending all prosecutions; ending the censorship of the internet by the TIB and blocking of media websites, promote self regulation and respect of ethical and independent journalism and calling for journalists to avoid hate speech.

Central to the recovery of journalism in Turkey will be the rebuilding of the journalists trade union movement and a renewed respect for journalists employment rights that provide decent pay and conditions, professional recognition, job security and protection from political interference in the newsroom.

**The full Istanbul Conclusions can be found here**