

Amsterdam, 20 October 2016

Turkish Embassy
Mr. Sadik Arslan
Ambassador
Prinsessegracht 29
2514 AP Den Haag

Your Excellency, dear Sir,

Thank you for your invitation to the reception at the Turkish embassy on Friday 28 October 2016.

First of all, on behalf of the board of the NVJ, I would like to congratulate you on the 93rd anniversary of the proclamation of the republic. We appreciated your invitation, since we regard this as your recognition of the NVJ's national and international objectives. The NVJ has been busy organising, and has been involved in, activities in support of press freedom, both at home and abroad.

However, in view of the current climate with regard to freedom of press and freedom of speech in Turkey, we feel that at present the NVJ must decline your invitation. Media freedom and freedom of expression in Turkey has come under attack the last six months once again and we feel that it's no time to celebrate.

Hundreds of journalists have been arrested, sacked and harassed following Turkey's attempted coup.

Together with our international affiliates, the International and European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ), we unreservedly condemn the use of force against journalists and media companies. The failed coup was followed by a state of emergency and excessive and indiscriminate measures towards journalists and media companies. The Turkish authorities are now jailing journalists, shutting down radio and TV channels and censoring the internet in an attempt to silence criticism. More than 90 journalists are in jail and more than 130 media publications have been banned since mid July. Some 2500 journalists have lost their jobs and arrest warrants have been issued for dozens of media workers. Some families of journalists, who are in hiding or have fled, have been arrested to force them to surrender. Media workers, journalists and press freedom campaigners all over the world have joined the protests

Furthermore, the state of affairs in Turkey has had, and still has, its repercussions in the Netherlands: verbal threats in the media as well as on social media made to various journalists and other editorial/media personnel residing in the Netherlands and reporting on the political situation in Turkey, resulting in difficulties on a personal as well as a financial level.

The NVJ has a clear standpoint with regard to press freedom and freedom of speech. We are calling for the release of all jailed journalists in Turkey. Press freedom is essential for democracy. Journalism is not a crime.

We would welcome a meeting with Your Excellency to discuss these issues and different points of view.

Pending such a meeting however, the NVJ board is of the opinion that if we were to attend the reception at the Turkish embassy without having been able to discuss the current lack of guarantees for journalists in Turkey to exercise their profession freely, it would be inconsistent with our standpoints and an injustice to the affected journalists and media personnel whom we support.

We trust you will understand our position. In the meantime, we hope that a constructive meeting with Your Excellency may be arranged in the near future to build on renewed mutual respect and understanding.

Yours sincerely,

on behalf of the NVJ board,



Thomas Bruning
General secretary NVJ