



## KHRAG Media Release

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### Closure of Roj TV an attack on fundamental freedoms

The Kurdish Human Rights Action Group condemns unequivocally the decision by French satellite provider Eutelsat, to close down Kurdish TV station ROJ TV, by denying it satellite services.

We are shocked by this blatant attack on freedom of expression and dismayed that a critical Kurdish voice is being silenced.

The decision by Eutelsat comes in the wake of a controversial judgement by a Danish court that found ROJ TV guilty of promoting terrorism and fined the station 894 800 dollars. This decision is being appealed by ROJ TV.

We wish to add our voice to human rights bodies and anti-censorship groups from around the world who have expressed alarm at the decision of the court and the subsequent action of the satellite provider.

The Denmark judgment holds a potential threat to all media in Europe who report on any activities of an organisation that is declared a "terrorist" organisation. This constitutes a serious threat to freedom of expression.

The shutting down of this important Kurdish voice removes an important forum of expression for millions of oppressed and displaced Kurds worldwide and reduces the possibilities for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey and beyond.

Strong perceptions that the action against ROJ TV is politically motivated are cause for deep concern. The irony that much of the action is at the behest of Turkey, currently one of the world's worst violators of media freedom, does not escape us.

The clampdown against the Kurdish media is taking place across Europe. Now the German authorities, also responding to a request from the Turkish authorities, are about to embark on legal proceedings against Yeni Ozgur Politieka, a Kurdish daily paper based near Frankfurt. Again, anti-terror laws are being invoked.

Reporters Without Borders said on Monday that it was stunned by Eutelsat's decision to stop carrying the broadcasts of ROJ TV.

We are shocked by this unilateral and outrageous decision violating freedom of expression, Reporters Without Borders said. "By suspending ROJ TV's broadcasts, Eutelsat have done what the Danish court refrained from doing. The Danish did not order the closure of ROJ TV, which has appealed against the fine it was ordered to pay.

"From China to Iran and Saudi Arabia, Eutelsat has already shown its lack of regard for freedom of information. Now it is helping to promote an 'anti-terrorist' rhetoric with broader



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political implications. This is a favourite argument that repressive regimes use to justify their media freedom violations. It is also the pretext Turkey used to jail 30 journalists a month ago. Is the French government, a shareholder in Eutelsat, ready to take responsibility for this decision?"

Swedish Member of Parliament Hans Linde said last year that the action against ROJ TV represented 'a litmus test for the freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Europe'.

Former president of plaid Cymru in Wales, Dafydd Iwan, said: "I believe the ROJ-TV trial is of very great significance. I cannot think of another case where the freedom of the press, and the public's right to information, has been so starkly challenged. And the fact that it is so politically motivated makes it all the more worrying."

He added: "The fact that Denmark, a country noted for its openness and freedom of thought, has been caught up in this political attempt at silencing what is essentially the voice of the Kurdish people is particularly sad."

The political attempt he refers to emerges from a Wikileaks diplomatic cable which suggests the action against ROJ TV was a condition for Turkey supporting the election of Anders Fogh Rasmussen as Nato Secretary General.

We call on Eutelsat to reverse its decision and we will support ROJ TV in its legal appeal efforts.

KHRAG is having discussions with pro-democracy groups from around the world to launch an anti-censorship and Freedom of Expression campaign in support of ROJ TV and Yeni Ozgur Politieka.

We have attached an article which provides more context and detail of the ROJ TV matter. It is entitled Minority media rights, terrorism laws at issue in ROJ TV case and written by Magnus Ag, Advocacy and Communications Associate of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

Issued by the Kurdish Human Rights Action Group 82 Kloof Street Sea Point

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