

## Turkey: Prosecutor's Demand for Journalists' Photos Enrages Associations

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Turkish media organizations have decried a prosecutor's demand that newspapers hand over all images in their possession from the May 31 Hopa incidents or face trial, arguing that journalists are not "state agents."

A journalist's job is not to share information with the state, the Turkish Journalist Association, or TGC, and the Progressive Journalists Association, or ÇGD. No journalist can be forced to provide such information, the ÇGD added.

On May 31, left-wing locals of the Black Sea district of Hopa gathered to protest a campaign rally by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; during a tear gas barrage by the police, 54-year-old protester Metin Lokumcu suffered a heart attack and died. The death increased the vigor of the protests as locals stoned Erdoğan's convoy in anger at the fatality.

On Thursday, the Hopa Prosecutor's Office sent a notice to the press, giving all journalists 10 days to provide any images in their possession depicting incidents from before, during, or after – especially during Lokumcu's funeral on June 1 – Erdoğan's speech, reports said Friday. The notice also that any journalist failing to surrender images – either published or unpublished – could be subjected to criminal prosecution under article 257 of the Turkish Penal Code, or TCK, on the grounds of "misconduct of duty."

The demand has precipitated an angry response from journalists' unions and received criticism from academics.

Journalists are not security forces who are required to refer incidents to public officers, the ÇGD said in its press release.

The request is yet another example of the hatred and prejudice exhibited by Erdoğan and the government toward the press, the ÇGD's Ahmet Abakay told the Daily News.

The prosecutor's office can request the documents, but a journalist is not obliged to provide them, according to lawyer Fikret İlkiz.

The ÇGD has recommended to the prosecutor that it use the security forces instead of journalists if it is interested in pursuing alleged lawbreakers.

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