

# MİSA 2023

ANNUAL REPORT



# MLSA 2023 Annual Report

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## Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği - MLSA

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# MEDIA AND LAW STUDIES ASSOCIATION- MLSA

Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) is an NGO working in the field of freedom of expression since 2018. MLSA provides free (pro-bono) legal support to individuals whose freedom of expression is violated, particularly journalists, media professionals, and human rights defenders, and represents them in national and international legal processes. By regularly notifying international organizations, especially the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, MLSA conducts advocacy activities and aims to develop the capacities of journalists, lawyers, and NGOs through workshops focused on freedom of expression. MLSA also monitors internet freedom and censorship in Turkey with the FreeWebTurkey project. Additionally, through its civil society capacity-building program, it provides consultations to civil society organizations. The MLSA website also creates a platform for independent journalists to publish their articles and disseminate their work.

Since 2018, MLSA has been running the most extensive case monitoring program in Turkey and regularly publishes reports. To date, MLSA's Case Monitoring Program has tracked over 2,500 hearings, providing resources for many media outlets and rights organizations.

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*Co-Director*

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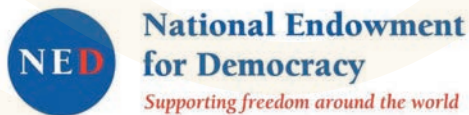
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# OVERVIEW OF 2023

While 2023 in Turkey was shaped by the agenda of earthquakes and elections, journalists and human rights defenders continued to face judicial harassment and political pressure. During this period, MLSA expanded the scope of both its legal advocacy and monitoring and reporting activities.

With the two earthquakes that occurred on February 6, the agenda focused on the earthquake region, where journalists faced judicial and law enforcement harassment. One of the government's first steps during the initial hours of the rescue operations was to restrict access to social media. The MLSA Legal Unit filed criminal complaints against those responsible.

In June, over 100 million people's e-Government data was stolen. MLSA filed a compensation lawsuit against the Ministry of Interior, bringing the issue to agenda. The lawsuit was rejected by the administrative court, and MLSA Legal Unit took the case to appeal, supported by international human rights organizations with expert opinions.

On World Press Freedom Day, May 3, journalists Dicle Müftüođlu and Sedat Yılmaz were arrested and imprisoned. Sedat Yılmaz, who received support from MLSA's advocacy, was released at the first hearing in December, while Dicle Müftüođlu was released in 2024 after more than 300 days.

The first hearing of the 18 journalists arrested in Diyarbakır in 2022 took place in July, 13 months after their arrest. All 15 journalists who were detained were released at the first hearing, supported by MLSA's Legal Unit.



Throughout the year, the effects of the Censorship Law, passed at the end of the previous year, were felt. Journalist Sinan Aygöl, whom MLSA defended, became the first journalist to be arrested and sentenced for "publicly disseminating misleading information" under this law. MLSA Legal Unit appealed the decision, which was then overturned by the Supreme Court in 2024, stating that Aygöl should be acquitted. According to MLSA data, as of May 2024, at least 50 journalists have been investigated under the Censorship Law.

In December, MLSA's 2023 data from the Journalism and Freedom of Expression Trial Monitoring Program, ongoing since 2018, was presented to the public. According to the report, MLSA monitored over 400 hearings, and in the 2023 judicial year, 314 journalists were tried as defendants in 154 cases. The total sentence for freedom of expression cases exceeded 200 years.

MLSA's FreeWebTurkey project, monitoring internet freedom in Turkey, also published its 2022 "Internet Censorship Report" this year. According to the program data, more than 60,000 URLs were blocked throughout 2022, with the most notable access ban being imposed on Ekşi Sözlük.

Towards the end of 2023, Turkey witnessed a constitutional crisis between the Constitutional Court and the Court of Cassation. The Constitutional Court's ruling that imprisoned MP Can Atalay should be released was not adhered to by the Court of Cassation, highlighting the issue of implementing Constitutional Court decisions.

# LEGAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Since its inception in 2018, MLSA's Legal Unit has been providing pro-bono legal support and defense to journalists and human rights defenders whose freedom of expression violated. As of the end of 2023, the MLSA Legal Unit represents a total of 154 individuals. The majority of its clients are journalists, while the remainder includes civil society workers, human rights defenders, lawyers, and writers.

MLSA provides free legal support at all stages of the legal process, from investigation to applications to the European Court of Human Rights, specializing in freedom of expression and press freedom.

In 2023, MLSA represented its clients in 76 hearings in seven different cities. Of these 76 hearings, 54 were in Istanbul, four in Ankara, and three in Izmir. MLSA lawyers attended eight hearings in Diyarbakır, five in Şanlıurfa, and one each in Ağrı and Bitlis.

## ACQUITTALS AND DROPPED CHARGES

In 2023, nine out of 17 concluded cases resulted in acquittals. (Table 1)

The investigation against MLSA client journalist Canan Kaya for "publicly disseminating misleading information" was dismissed.

The criminal complaint filed on behalf of journalist Bülent Kılıç, who was assaulted while covering the Pride Parade, was also dismissed. MLSA's Legal Unit appealed the dismissal of the criminal complaint against the police officers who pressed on Kılıç's throat during his arrest.

Three cases against MLSA clients result-

ed in convictions. Two cases with judicial fines and one case with a suspended sentence were taken to higher courts.

Three compensation lawsuits filed on behalf of MLSA clients were rejected. The compensation lawsuit filed by Demirören Media against MLSA client journalist Canan Kaya was also dismissed.

MLSA's lawsuit against the Presidential Decree on press and publication activities and its criminal complaint and compensation lawsuits against authorities and responsible parties for the theft of personal data were rejected, and MLSA Legal Unit appealed these decisions.

Charges	Number
Propaganda and membership of a terrorist organization	2
Insulting a public official/targeting individuals involved in counter-terrorism	2
Public incitement to hatred and hostility	1
Public dissemination of misleading information	1
Insulting state symbols	1
Recording in court without permission	1
Participation in unauthorized meetings and demonstrations	1



## Court Overturns Ban on MKM 30th Anniversary Concert

The Istanbul 6th Administrative Court annulled the decision of the Kadıköy District Governor's Office to ban the 30th anniversary event of the Mesopotamia Cultural Center (MKM), stating that it violated the freedom of expression, freedom of science and art, and the right to peaceful assembly upon the application of MLSA Legal Unit.

The concert, planned under the title "Berbang (Dawn)," was banned by the Kadıköy District Governor's Office on the grounds of "national security, public order, the possibility of committing crimes, and endangering the rights and freedoms of others."

The MLSA Legal Unit took the decision of the District Governor's Office, dated October 15, 2021, and the resulting material and moral damage to court. The administrative court annulled the decision and awarded compensation for the material damage.

MLSA Co-Director Veysel Ok commented on the decision, saying, "I believe this is the first decision acknowledging a violation of freedom of expression regarding the prevention of Kurdish art. In recent years, the cultural and artistic activities of Kurds and other social groups have been increasingly obstructed by the decisions of district governors or governors without legal basis. We see that not only Kurdish artists but also artists associated with lifestyles disliked by the government, such as Hande Yener, are being obstructed."



## MLSA Files Lawsuit over ‘Sorgu Paneli’ Scandal

MLSA filed a criminal complaint and a compensation lawsuit against the individuals responsible for publishing the personal information of citizens or residents registered in the e-Government system on a website and against the authorities who failed to take measures to prevent the theft of this data. The information made publicly accessible on the query panel (Sorgu Paneli), first revealed by FreeWebTurkey, poses a significant threat to millions of people whose data was exposed.

Speaking about what these threats mean and what can be done, Ok said that everyone whose data is found in the database should file a compensation lawsuit against the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for protecting these data, and file a criminal complaint against the responsible parties. The Whois records, showing the domain's registration and expiration date and the hosting company's name server information, revealed that the Sorgu.live website went live on June 3. On the site, users could register with an email account and easily access personal data such as names, addresses, phone numbers, and bank account information through simple searches by name or phone number.

While the MLSA Legal Unit filed criminal complaints against those responsible for leaking the data from the e-Government system, it also filed a compensation lawsuit against the Ministry of Interior.



## **Sinan Aygül Becomes the First Journalist Convicted Under the Censorship Law**

Sinan Aygül, President of the Bitlis Journalists Association, whom MLSA defended, became the first journalist to be arrested and sentenced under the Censorship Law for sharing allegations of sexual assault against a child.

The court sentenced Aygül to 10 months in prison for "publicly disseminating misleading information," rejecting the postponement of the announcement of the verdict and not deferring the sentence. The MLSA's appeal was also rejected by Regional Court of Appeals, but the Supreme Court overturned the decision in 2024, ruling that Aygül should be acquitted. This decision sets a precedent for the Censorship Law.



## **15 Journalists Released After 13 Months of Detention in Diyarbakır**

Fifteen journalists, who were detained for over a year following raids on their homes and workplaces in Diyarbakır, were released on July 12, 2023, after a two-day initial hearing in which MLSA Co-Director Veysel Ok was present. The court imposed a travel ban on the journalists and postponed the trial to November 9, 2023.

# HIGH COURT APPLICATIONS

In 2023, a total of 82 appeals to higher courts were lodged, including 11 to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and 17 to the Constitutional Court.

Of the 17 applications to the Constitutional Court, seven were due to violations of "freedom of expression and press freedom," while five applications included violations of "freedom of expression and the right to personal liberty and security."

Of the 11 applications to the ECHR, six were for violations of the "right to freedom of expression." Other applications included violations of the "prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, the right to personal liberty and security, and the right to privacy."

Two applications were made against violations of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, one application for a vio-

lation of the right to a fair trial, one application for a violation of the right to a reasoned decision, one application for a violation of the right to bodily integrity and the right to protection and development of one's material and spiritual existence, and one application for a violation of the right to respect for private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Responses were provided to the government's defenses for two previous applications in 2023.

Additionally, among the violation applications, there was a content blocking decision related to the Reuters news report on allegations of corruption against Bilal Erdoğan, stating that prosecutors in the US and Switzerland had started investigations.

Year	Constitutional Court Applications	ECHR Applications
2021	9	3
2022	7	6
2023	17	11





## **MLSA Takes Sedat Yilmaz's Detention to the Constitutional Court and ECHR**

The MLSA Legal Unit filed an application with the Constitutional Court on behalf of Sedat Yilmaz, an editor of Mezopotamya Agency (MA), who was detained in Diyarbakır in April and arrested on May 3 for "membership in a terrorist organization."

The application, which requested urgent and prioritized review as it directly concerned freedom of expression, stated that the detention process violated the "prohibition of torture and ill-treatment" under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. Yilmaz was assaulted by police while being transferred from Diyarbakır to Ankara.

The application also mentioned that Yilmaz's "right to private and family life" and "freedom of expression" were violated during the detention and arrest process.

As the Constitutional Court did not review the urgent application in a reasonable time, the MLSA Legal Unit took the case to the ECHR.

After waiting 230 days in detention before his first hearing, Sedat Yilmaz was released on December 14, 2023.

# CONSTITUTIONAL COURT AND ECHR DECISIONS

In 2023, the Constitutional Court ruled on applications filed by MLSA on behalf of clients Ali İhsan Terzi, Çiğdem Akbayrak, İnan Ketenciler, Mehmet Salih Turan, and Veysel Ok.

The Constitutional Court ruled that the right to freedom of expression was violated due to the inability to appeal decisions involving deferred sentences (HAGB) and ordered retrials and compensation.

## STRATEGIC LITIGATION

In 2023, MLSA's Legal Unit brought systematic rights violations caused by administrative practices and anti-democratic legislation to court. Notably, it conducted strategic litigation regarding the access

ban on Twitter following the February 6 earthquakes and the scandal of personal data theft affecting over 100 million people, resonating with the public.

### **Strategic Litigation Against Violence and Obstruction of Journalists**

After the February 6 earthquake, the work of three Greek journalists in Hatay's Narlıca district was obstructed by gendarmerie, police, and officers of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, and their equipment was rendered unusable. MLSA filed a criminal complaint against culprits.

A criminal complaint was filed over insulting and threatening posts on social media targeting journalist Nalin Öztekin.

On May 28, 2023, journalist Sultan Keleş's filming was obstructed while covering the second round of the presidential elections. A criminal complaint was filed against the responsible party.

MLSA Co-Director Av. Veysel Ok filed a criminal complaint against the founders of the website and the Ministry of Interior over the publication of the personal identity, contact, and address information of everyone living in Turkey on the query panel (sorgu paneli).



## **Criminal Complaint Over Twitter Access Ban**

MLSA Co-Director Av. Veysel Ok filed a criminal complaint on February 10 against the GSM operators who failed to provide service in the earthquake zone and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) officials who restricted access to Twitter on charges of "manslaughter by negligence." Ok stated, "At a time when people were trying to hold on to life through social media messages, this negligence and irresponsibility are unacceptable."

## **PRISON VISITS**

In 2023, MLSA conducted 20 prison visits on 14 different dates in Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır. During these visits, meetings were held with Sezgin Kartal in Istanbul Silivri Prison, Dicle Müftüoğlu and Sedat Yılmaz in Ankara Sincan Prison, and

Abdurrahman Gök and Mehmet Şah Oruç in Diyarbakır No. 1 High-Security Prison. During the meetings, clients were informed about the latest developments in their cases, and human rights violations in prisons were documented.



## Dicle Müftüoğlu's "Terrorist Offender" Card Imposition

Dicle Müftüoğlu, Co-President of the Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG), who was arrested in Ankara on May 3 and subsequently imprisoned, stated that she was asked to carry an identity card labeled "terrorist offender" in Sincan Prison. Müftüoğlu told MLSA lawyers visiting her on May 18 that those who refused to carry this identity card were recorded with cameras in their wards and cells.

Müftüoğlu mentioned that weekly searches in the prison were conducted as raids, with belongings being scattered and thrown around. She also noted that the water in the prison was so foul-smelling and discolored that it was undrinkable, and the prison administration responded to complaints by stating there was no problem with the water. Finally, Müftüoğlu highlighted that the prison canteen was very expensive compared to outside, creating economic pressure on detainees.

## EMERGENCY LEGAL SUPPORT

In 2023, MLSA's Legal Unit accompanied the statements of 15 journalists who were detained or subjected to investigations.

During the operations carried out in 21

provinces centered in Diyarbakır on April 25, approximately 150 people were detained. MLSA lawyers supported the journalists detained in Diyarbakır.



## WEEKLY OBSERVATION OF THE SATURDAY MOTHERS

Following the Constitutional Court's decision on Maside Ocak Kışlakçı, the Saturday Mothers/People were prevented from gathering at Galatasaray Square for their 941st weekly meeting on April 8, 2023, and were detained by the police. The obstructions continued in subsequent weeks.

MLSA, along with Amnesty International Turkey, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, and the Memory Center, formed an observation and support group, sharing weekly reports with the public about the obstructions faced by the Saturday Mothers/People.



## MONITORING PROGRAM FOR JOURNALISM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CASES

Since 2018, the "Journalism and Freedom of Expression Trial Monitoring Program," the most extensive case monitoring program in Turkey, has been observing cases related to freedom of expression, press freedom, and freedom of assembly and sharing human rights violations with the public.

Over the five years from 2018 to 2023, the program monitored over 2,500 hearings, becoming the most comprehensive and systematic freedom of expression trial monitoring program in Turkey. The program, which serves as a resource for many media outlets and rights organizations, was supported by the Norwegian Embassy, the German Federal Republic Istanbul Consulate General, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation Turkey Office in 2023.

In 2023, MLSA observers monitored 468 hearings of 278 cases throughout the year. Of these 468 hearings, 277 were monitored by full-time MLSA observers

in Istanbul and Diyarbakır. Additionally, 25 journalists monitored hearings held in 19 different cities across Turkey and reported on them.

MLSA observers' Freedom of Expression Cases Report, covering the last three months of 2022 and the first nine months of 2023, was published on December 22. The launch at Taksim Hill Hotel was attended by the German Consul General in Istanbul, Johannes Regenbrecht, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom's Permanent Representative in Turkey, Beate Apelt. The event was also attended by journalists, civil society workers, and various international representatives.

The opening speech was made by MLSA Co-Director Av. Veysel Ok, and the report findings were presented by MLSA Co-Director Evin Barış Altıntaş. During the period covered by the report, MLSA observers monitored 233 cases involving 1,646 defendants in 20 provinces. In 32 cases where decisions were made, 116 defendants were sentenced to a total of 217 years, 8 months, and 20 days in prison. Among these, 23 journalists were sentenced to a total of 67 years, 8 months, and 12 days in prison in 17 journalism cases. In six cases, 12 defendants were fined a total of 75,126 TL, while 59 cases resulted in acquittals.

The most targeted group during this period were students and activists using their freedom of expression for their rights in streets or universities. It was observed that multi-defendant cases were filed against students and activists.

**MLSA** Media and Law Studies Association  
Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği



İfade Özgürlüğü Davaları  
**DAVA İZLEME**  
PROGRAMI **RAPORU**  
**2023**



# INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

MLSA informs international stakeholders about the state of freedom of expression in Turkey and the judicial harassment of journalists through international advocacy activities.

## RULE 9.2 COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Civil society organizations can submit their observations on the implementation of ECHR judgments to the Council of Europe in the form of reports called "Rule 9.2 Communications." In 2023, MLSA lodged three Rule 9.2 submissions.

## SELAHATTIN DEMIRTAŞ COMMUNICATION

In April, MLSA submitted a notification to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers regarding the restriction of access to the social media accounts of detained politician Selahattin Demirtaş. The notification stated that restricting Demirtaş's access to social media, which he actively uses through his lawyers, advisors, and family, would add to the human rights violations he faces.



# AHMET YILDIRIM V. TURKEY: INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN TURKEY

MLSA and Free Web Turkey submitted a Rule 9.2 notification to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in October regarding internet censorship in Turkey. The notification highlighted that Turkey uses blanket access bans on domain names to silence opposition sites and Kurdish media.

# ULUSOY AND OTHERS V. TURKEY: KURDISH CONCERT AND THEATER BANS

MLSA also submitted a Rule 9.2 notification regarding the implementation of the 'Ulusoy and Others' judgment, which found the bans on Kurdish concerts and theater events to be human rights violations. The communication listed Kurdish art events banned in Turkey since 2019, stating that the government is trying to remove Kurdish from the public sphere through these bans.



# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOR LAWYERS

MLSA organizes various workshops to develop the capacities of lawyers and human rights defenders. This year, MLSA held two workshops on individual applications to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), with high participation.



## CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING ON ECHR APPLICATIONS - APRIL 15, ZOOM

The workshop held on Saturday, April 15, via Zoom attracted significant interest from lawyers from the Diyarbakır Bar Association and other regional bar associations.

The workshop featured presentations on increasing the admissibility of individual applications to the ECHR in light of Article 47 of the ECHR Rules and court practices, delivered by Dr. Atilla Nalbant, Head of the Turkey Desk at the ECHR, senior lawyer Levent Yalçın, Associate Professor Ümit Kılınc from Strasbourg University, and former ECHR Judge Dr. Rıza Türmen.



- > Seçimle belirlenir
  - > Görev süresi
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  - > Daire Yazı işleri müdürü/müdür yardımcısı
  - > Bölüm şefi
  - > Daimi hukukçular
  - > Geçici hukukçular

Levent YALÇIN  
ECHR Yazı İşleri Müdürlüğü

Av. Doç. Dr. Ümit KILINÇ  
Strasbourg Üniversitesi

Dr. Atilla NALBANT  
ECHR Yazı İşleri Türkiye Bürosu

## WORKSHOP FOR LAWYERS ON ECHR IN BATMAN – SEPTEMBER 23, BATMAN

In collaboration with the Batman Bar Association, MLSA organized the "ECHR Workshop for Lawyers" on Saturday, September 23, at the Batman Bar Association Tahir Elçi Conference Hall. The workshop featured presentations by legal professionals Levent Yalçın, Dr. Atilla Nalbant, Associate Professor Ümit Kılınc, and Dr. Rıza Türmen.

In his opening speech via video conference, Dr. Rıza Türmen emphasized that in societies where the rule of law is sidelined, trust in the law is diminished, and fundamental rights and freedoms are left unprotected, the ECHR remains the only guarantee for individuals to exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Levent Yalçın from the ECHR Registry delivered a presentation on "How to make a valid application under Article 47 of the

ECHR Rules?" Yalçın stated that in 2023, approximately 25% of the 9,000 applications from Turkey were administratively rejected, which is a significant number. He emphasized that an error in filling out the ECHR application form could affect the entire application.

In the second session, titled "Admissibility Criteria from the Perspective of Legal Practice," Associate Professor Ümit Kılınc shared information on the structure and administrative functioning of the ECHR, the admissibility criteria for applications, the work and procedures after the application, the administrative structure, jurisdiction, and relevant legal provisions.

Dr. Atilla Nalbant, Head of the Turkey Desk at the ECHR Registry, also addressed "current cases, applications under Article 141, and the functioning of the ECHR."

# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOR JOURNALISTS



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: LEGAL WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS

MLSA continued its efforts to support journalists in their professional development and careers. Collaborating with active journalists and experts, MLSA organized tailored guidance programs and workshops according to the needs.



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: LEGAL WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS – OCTOBER 1, ESKIŞEHİR

The "Know Your Rights: Legal Workshop for Journalists," organized by MLSA with the support of Freedom House, was held in Eskişehir on Sunday, October 1. In the workshop, sessions presented by Av. Tuğçe Duygu Köksal, Av. Kerem Dikmen, Av. Aynur Tuncel Yazgan, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Volkan Aslan, and Av. Emine Özhasar from MLSA's Legal Unit provided basic legal information about journalistic activities.

The sessions covered topics such as disinformation law and internet bans, the Constitutional Court's principles and decisions on freedom of expression and press freedom, the rights of journalists during arrests and searches, and the legal processes related to meetings and demonstrations in Turkey.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: LEGAL WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS – NOVEMBER 3, DIYARBAKIR

The second session of the 'Know Your Rights' workshop in 2023 was held on November 3 at Mintannia Hotel in Diyarbakır. In addition to the previous speakers, MLSA Co-Director Veysel Ok participated in this workshop, discussing freedom of expression and press freedom as concepts and rights, and reminding journalists of their rights protected by international agreements.



# GAZETEMLSA: NEWS WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG JOURNALISTS

## GAZETEMLSA'S FIFTH WORKSHOP HELD – NOVEMBER 23-26, ISTANBUL

MLSA continued its GazeteMLSA program for young journalists in 2023. Aimed at fostering a master-apprentice relationship between veteran journalists with new or aspiring journalists, the program published its fourth issue in early 2023 and started preparations for the fifth issue in November.

The fifth News Workshop for Journalists was held in Şile from November 23 to 26, supported by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Turkey Office. The workshop was coordinated by Gökçer Tahincioğlu, Ankara Representative of T24, and Banu Tuna, General Secretary of the Journalists' Union of Turkey. This year, Özlem Akarsu Çelik, Hale Gönültaş, and Uraz Kaspar shared their experiences with young journalists.

Journalist Tuğrul Eryılmaz, who participated in all the workshop sessions in Şile, also attended as the guest of honor. Eryılmaz

provided information on news writing techniques and emphasized the indispensable ethical values in journalism.

# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

In partnership with ARTICLE19, MLSA launched the "Developing the Capacity of Civil Society in Turkey for Democratic Reform" to organize capacity development workshops and simulation audits for civil society organizations. The project aims to strengthen civil society in Turkey against administrative threats.

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

In March 2023 in Istanbul and in September in Ankara, MLSA and ARTICLE19 held "Capacity Development Workshops for Civil Society Organizations" with high participation. The workshops aimed to develop the capacities of CSOs regarding increasing administrative audits following the amendments to the Associations Law in 2020.

In the workshops, trainers included Av. Kerem Dikmen, Legal Coordinator of Kaos GL, Financial Advisor Samet Güçlü, and Accounting Manager Can Deniz Akgün. They answered participants' questions about the new legislation and addressed topics such as issues to consider before audits and risk assessments.



## SIMULATION AUDITS

Following the enactment of the "Law on the Prevention of Financing of Terrorism" in 2020, the number of audits for civil society organizations in Turkey increased. To address the issues and administrative deficiencies faced by small and medium-sized associations during audits, MLSA and ARTICLE19 conducted simula-

tion audits for civil society organizations.

The simulation audits were conducted with ten associations from Istanbul, Ankara, and Diyarbakır who participated in the capacity development workshops. The audits provided information on the issues faced by the associations, identified deficiencies, and prepared them for real audits.



## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN POST-ELECTION TURKEY – SEPTEMBER 15, ISTANBUL

In September 2023, MLSA and ARTICLE19 organized a roundtable meeting titled "Planning for the Future: Democracy and Human Rights in Post-Election Turkey" with the participation of various civil society organization representatives and journalists.

The meeting covered topics such as freedom of association, online bans, and the state of social movements, future threats and opportunities, and the future of civil society.



# PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

## A DIFFERENT NEWS SOURCE: MLSATURKEY.COM

In 2023, over a thousand contents were published on the MLSA website in both Turkish and English, including news, short reports, and articles from 80 journalists. MLSA reporters and editors also prepared more than 600 pieces, with 417 trial monitoring news articles published.

Focusing on freedom of expression, press freedom, and the rule of law, the articles and news highlighted the safety of journalists and the challenges they face. In addition, the prevention and detention of journalists covering meetings and demonstrations were examined.

## JUNE ON MLSATURKEY.COM

In June 2023, eight articles themed for Pride Month were published on mlsaturkey.com. Representatives of LGBT+ organizations and LGBT+ individuals shared their expectations and experiences for the future.



## REPORTS

In 2023, MLSA published four significant reports. These reports, closely followed by civil society and media organizations domestically, were also cited as sources in the international public domain.

The reports include the "Journalism and Freedom of Expression Cases Trial Monitoring Program 2023 Report," the "FreeWebTurkey Internet Censorship Report 2022," "Intimidation, Harassment, Pressure: Journalists in Custody," and "Journalism in Turkey Report: Journalists Don't Feel Safe."



## 'INTIMIDATION, HARASSMENT, PRESSURE: JOURNALISTS IN CUSTODY'

MLSA published the "Intimidation, Harassment, Pressure: Journalists in Custody" report, revealing the experiences of journalists who were detained and subjected to verbal, physical, and psychological violence by the police while covering news. The report was also released as a documentary, supported by the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul.

In the report, journalists such as Beyza Kural, Sibel Yükler, Bülent Kılıç, Koray Kesik, Gökhan Biçici, Dicle Müftüoğlu, Zilan Azad, and Yadigar Aygün shared their experiences of physical and psychological violence, the subsequent legal process, the struggle for justice, and the impact on their journalistic activities.



## 'JOURNALISM IN TURKEY REPORT: JOURNALISTS DON'T FEEL SAFE'

MLSA released the "Journalism in Turkey: Don't Feel Safe" report in August, revealing that nine out of ten journalists do not feel safe. According to the report, 70.2% of journalists work under the fear of being detained or arrested. The report, which highlights the types and extent of violent

threats faced by journalists, was presented at an event at Istanbul Postane Galata, attended by MLSA Co-Directors Veysel Ok and Barış Altıntaş, representatives of journalist organizations, rights organizations, and many journalists.

## MLSA TV

### DOCUMENTARY: INTIMIDATION, HARASSMENT, PRESSURE: JOURNALISTS IN CUSTODY

MLSA produced a documentary titled "Intimidation, Harassment, Pressure: Journalists in Custody," in which journalists detained while covering news shared their experiences of verbal, physical, and psychological violence. Supported by the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul, the documentary features journalists Beyza Kural, Yıldız Tar, Sedat Yılmaz, and Bülent Kılıç discussing the police violence they faced while covering social events, the subsequent processes, and the challenges of working under police threats. The documentary, directed by Koray Kesik, a journalist who experienced police violence, and filmed by Musab Bayraklı, is available on the MLSA TV YouTube channel with Turkish and English subtitles.



# "UMARIM VİRAL OLMAZ"

Dijital Çağda Cinsiyetçi Saldırıları ve Gazetecilik

MLSA Media and Law Studies Association  
Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği

Activity supported by the  
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives  
Activité réalisée avec l'appui du  
Fonds canadien d'initiatives locales

Canada

## DOCUMENTARY: HOPE IT DOESN'T GO VIRAL: GENDER-BASED ATTACKS AND JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Supported by The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, MLSA released the documentary "Hope It Doesn't Go Viral: Gender-Based Attacks and Journalism in the Digital Age," which addresses the cyberbullying faced by journalists on online platforms. The documentary features interviews with journalists Sibel Yüklér, Rengin Arslan, Burcu Karakaş, Yıldız Tar, Abeer Sady, and psy-

chologist Aslı Avşar, and was launched on March 29 at Postane Galata. The launch event included a screening of the documentary followed by a panel discussion with Çiçek Tahaoğlu, Burcu Karakaş, Sibel Yüklér, Yıldız Tar, and Aslı Avşar, moderated by journalist Hazal Sipahi, discussing digital violence against journalists.

# INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS, PANELS, AND VISITS

In 2023, MLSA organized visits to civil society organizations and international institutions in different countries, participated in panels and sessions, and continued its advocacy efforts while strengthening its network of international partners.



## PRESS FREEDOM WEEK IN HAMBURG

MLSA, in partnership with Justice for Journalists (JFJ) and Hamburg-based Körber Stiftung, participated in Press Freedom Week in Hamburg. The event, held during the week of September 11, focused on the situation of journalists forced to flee oppressive countries. MLSA Co-Director Barış Altıntaş participated in the panel

"Media in Exile." MLSA also attended the #Revolutionale event in Leipzig during the week of October 10, where discussions on common solutions to obstacles to freedom of expression took place with civil society representatives from various countries.



## JOINT WORKING VISIT TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN GENEVA

During the joint working visit with ARTICLE19, MLSA participated in a panel on journalist security organized by the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Experts at the panel, held on April 25 by the UN Human Rights Council, discussed the increasing use of SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) cases worldwide to prevent public information dissemination. MLSA Co-Director Barış

Altıntaş, Projects and Grants Manager Laura Kunzendorf, and journalists from Turkey, including Banu Tuna, Can Ertuna, and Erkan Saka from Istanbul Bilgi University, attended the seminar. The impact of restrictive press laws and SLAPP cases on journalist security was discussed at the Palais des Nations building, and meetings with various UN institutions were held throughout the week.



## TURKEY-GREECE JOURNALISTS PLATFORM MEETING – NOVEMBER 5-7, ATHENS

The First Turkey-Greece Journalists Dialogue Meeting, organized by MLSA and its Athens-based partner, the Foreign Media Association, with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), brought together media representatives from both countries. The meeting, held from November 5-7, discussed how to strengthen cooperation based on professional integrity and mutual understanding.

Participants aimed to break down existing labels and stereotypes in the media ecosystems of Turkey and Greece and promote balanced journalism through a common declaration. The meeting also resulted in important decisions on combating misinformation and providing higher-quality information. Following this meeting, journalists aim to establish a network to promote cross-border journalism and develop the media community.



## PANELS



### PANEL ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM – JUNE 15, ISTANBUL

In partnership with the German Consulate General in Istanbul, MLSA organized a panel titled "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Journalism." Held at the German Consulate General in Istanbul, the event attracted significant interest from civil society and media.

Moderated by MLSA Co-Director Barış Altıntaş, the panel featured Prof. Dr. Catrin Misselhorn from Göttingen University, journalist and Bahçeşehir University lec-

turer Dr. Can Ertuna, and journalist and Director of the Turkish Journalists' Association Academy, Orhan Şener. The German Consul General in Istanbul, Johannes Regenbrecht, greeted the participants with a speech before the event.

MLSA Co-Director Av. Veysel Ok delivered the opening speech, highlighting the exciting interaction between artificial intelligence and journalism and the potential developments in this field.



## PANEL ON RESHAPING BUSINESS PRACTICES – OCTOBER 25, ISTANBUL

On October 25, 2023, the 'Reshaping Business Practices: Corporate Human Rights Responsibility and Turkey' panel was held in partnership with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) Turkey Office and the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA). The panel featured MLSA Co-Director Attorney Veysel Ok, former Human Rights Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Germany Markus Löning, TÜRKONFED Secretary General Arda Batu, and Sevda Alkan from UN Women. The panel was moderated by journalist Barçın Yinanç.

Speaking about the European Union's human rights due diligence directive, Veysel

Ok emphasized that both the media and civil society must play a supervisory role in its implementation. He highlighted that the main issue is determining who will supervise the companies responsible for human rights violations. Ok noted that the companies and large auditing firms that cause human rights violations cannot achieve the directive's goals. He added that this directive could offer new hope against discrimination faced by women, minorities, and LGBTI individuals in Turkey's business world. Ok also stressed the importance of civil society leading the way through education and workshops, and of lawyers and media professionals conducting capacity-building activities in this area.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ECHR) DECISIONS WORKSHOP, NOVEMBER 19-22 - LEIPZIG

MLSA Co-Director Attorney Veysel Ok and Projects and Grants Manager Batikan Erkoç participated in the 'Implementation of European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Decisions' workshop organized by the European Implementation Network in Leipzig from November 19-22. The workshop emphasized the importance of Rule 9.2 notifications made by civil society organizations to the Council of Europe regarding the implementation of ECHR de-

isions. Various presentations were given on how civil society can be effective in the application process, and successful examples from different countries were shared.

MLSA Co-Director Attorney Veysel Ok discussed the issues with implementing ECHR decisions related to freedom of expression and press freedom in Turkey, stating that MLSA's court monitoring program is a significant resource in this regard.

### **GGC Press Freedom Award to MLSA**

The Southeastern Journalists Association (GGC), one of Turkey's most widespread and influential press organizations, announced the winners of the 37th 'Traditional Successful Journalists of the Year Awards'. The GGC Press Freedom Award was given to the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA).

# INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN TURKEY: #FREEWEBTURKEY

Free Web Turkey initiative of Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA), aims to combat internet censorship in Turkey and defend internet freedom. This initiative focuses on monitoring and reporting online censorship, addressing increasing pressures related to access bans and internet restrictions. Free Web Turkey conducts comprehensive open-source research and analysis, presenting data on the state of digital freedom in the country to the public.

In 2023, Free Web Turkey published a total of 253 contents on its website, including news, special reports, censorship agendas, and annual reports. The 2022 Internet Censorship Report published by the FreeWebTurkey project was cited 377 times in various internet newspapers and television channels.

The 10 special reports that received the most media coverage in Free Web Turkey are:

1. Access ban on news and tweets about the then-Red Crescent President Kerem Kınık selling tents.
2. Access ban on Muhammed Yakut's YouTube account at the request of Berat Albayrak.
3. Access ban on news about the Minister of Family hosting a suspect of abuse at the ministry.
4. Theft and sale of personal data of everyone living in Turkey on a website.
5. Access ban on news about a high school principal in Çankırı forcing a female student to change her clothes in a room with cameras.



6. Access ban on 193 news articles against religious sects in the first month of the year.
7. Repeated access bans on hundreds of news articles, including those on Free Web Turkey, about journalist and TRT board member Hilal Kaplan.
8. CİMER's response to a question about Süleyman Soylu's "KİM" application use: "Go complain to the EGM and prosecution there."
9. Free Web Turkey's report on a judge allegedly issuing access bans for a bribe and the access ban on this report.
10. Access ban on posts about ships owned by former Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım's son Erkam Yıldırım continuing shipments from Turkey to Israel while Gaza was being bombed.

# MLSA IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Many news, reviews, reports, and articles written by MLSA's staff editors and correspondents or supported by external journalists were cited by numerous domestic and international institutions. MLSA's many events were also covered by national or local media.

In 2023, MLSA and its work were mentioned 952 times by 187 different media outlets. The human rights-focused news site Bianet gave the most coverage to MLSA with 68 articles, followed by Evrensel newspaper with 43 articles. The ranking continued with Duvar (37 articles), Birgün (33 articles), T24 (26 articles), Diken (14 articles), Artı Gerçek (12 articles), Yeşil Gazete (11 articles), and Cumhuriyet (8 articles).

# ACCORDING TO THE MLSA'S NEWS ARTICLE

**duvarR.**

KÜLTÜR-SANAT

## İddianame hazırlandı: Sibel Tekin için örgüt adı verilmeden 'üyelik' cezası istendi

Yönetmen Sibel Tekin'in "belgesel iddiasıyla örgüt talimatıyla hareket edildiğini" öne süren savcı, yönetmenin hangi örgüte üye olduğunu belirtmeden "üyelik" suçundan ceza istedi.

07 Ocak Cumartesi 2023 Saat: 12:08 Güncelleme: 08 Ocak Pazar 2023 Saat: 00:01



Google Haberlere Abone ol Google News

**DUVAR**- Ankara Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı, "Karanlıkta Başlayan Hayat" belgeseli için çekim yaparken ihbar edilip tutuklanan belgesel yönetmeni Sibel Tekin hakkında iddianame hazırladı. Yönetmen tutuktandıktan 16 gün sonra hazırlanan iddianamede, okul ve dolmuş görüntüleri çeken Tekin'in "örgüt talimatıyla keşif yaptığı" iddia edildi.

**MLSAdan Sibel Yücker'in haberine göre**, Tekin'in çeşitli örgütlerle bağlantılı olduğunun öne sürüldüğü ancak hangi örgüte üye olduğunun belirtilmediği iddianamede, Tekin'in "silahlı örgüte üye olma" suçundan cezalandırılması istendi. İddianamede ayrıca, Terörle Mücadele Kanunu (TMK) 5. maddesi uyarınca cezanın yanı sıra artırım talebi de vardı.

**evrensel**

SON 24 SAAT HABERLER YAZARLAR VIDEO EGE ÖZEL SAYFALAR OYUN GAILY ABONE OL

10 Subat 2023 17:08

## MLSA, GSM operatörleri ve BTK hakkında suç duyurusunda bulundu

MLSA, deprem bölgesindeki hizmetlerinde sorunlar yaşayan GSM operatörleri ile sosyal medya erişimi kısıtlayan Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu (BTK) yetkilileri hakkında suç duyurusunda bulundu.

**YAZARLAR**

- Fatih Polat Siyasete korku satarak geçimlik
- Devrim Arıcı Yapılan iş için sağlığı için sınıksız paralarla fotoğraflar çekiyor
- Ozer Akdemir Latmos'un kabine meden keşesi

**T24** Başlıca İnternet Gazetesi

Son Dakika Seçim24 Sonuçları Video Yazarlar Gündem T24 Haftalık Kitap24 Dünya Diğer

5 USD 32.70 1 EUR 35.04 1 GBP 40.92

Haberler

## Depremin yaşandığı kentlerde yerel basın çalışamaz hale geldi: "Enkaz altındayız"

"Hatay'da haber yapacak basın mensubu kalmadı"

Hatay Aktif Gazeteciler Cemiyeti Başkanı ve Hatay merkezli 32. Gün Gazetesi Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü **Serkan Köybaşı**, depremde sekiz yerel gazetecinin hayatını kaybettiğini, bir gazetecinin de yaralandığını söyledi. Köybaşı, kentte çalışan yerel gazetecilerin ev ve işyerlerinin yıkıldığını, yıkılmayanların ise ağır hasarlı olduğunu kaydetti:

"Herkes can derdine düştü. Hatay'da iki gazeteci arkadaşım dışında bütün gazeteciler şehri terk etti. Haber yapacak basın mensubu ve ekipman kalmadı. Abone ve reklam gelirimiz sıfıra indi. Bitmiş vaziyeteyiz. Kentteki siyasiler yaşadığımız bu sorunlara kayıtsız kaldı. Haber yapabilmemiz için çadır, ekipman vb. imkânlar sağlanmadı. BİK ve İletişim Başkanlığı'nın teknik ekipman ve altyapı desteği vermesini bekliyoruz."

MLSA'dan **Deniz Tekin**'ne konuşan yerel gazeteciler, Basın İlan Kurumu (BİK), Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı ve basın meslek örgütlerinden acil destek beklediklerini söyledi.

## BİR GÜN

### İstanbul ve İzmir'de ev baskınları: 19 kişi gözaltına alındı

İstanbul Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı Terör ve Örgütlü Suçlar Soruşturma Bürosunca yürütülen soruşturma kapsamında İstanbul ve İzmir'de HDP Gençlik Meclisi üyeleri ile Demokratik Modernite dergisi çalışanı Sema Korkmaz'ın da aralarında olduğu 19 kişi gözaltına alındı. Gizlilik kararıyla yapılan baskıların ardından avukat görüş kısıtlaması da getirildi.

**SPİGEL** Ausländ

Journalist der Welt

## Türkisches Gericht erlässt Haftbefehl gegen Deniz Yücel

Mit seinen Artikeln soll Deniz Yücel die Türkei verunglimpfen und den Staatspräsidenten beleidigt haben: Nun gibt es einen Haftbefehl gegen den Journalisten. Die Schriftstellervereinigung PEN Berlin reagiert empört.

28.05.2023, 18:38 Uhr

## Cumhuriyet

### Darp eden polisler takipsizlik, AFP muhabiri Bülent Kılıç'a polise direnmekten dava!

26 Haziran 2021 günü Onur Yürüyüşü'nü takip ederken Beyoğlu'nda işkence ile gözaltına alınan Agence France-Presse (AFP) muhabiri Bülent Kılıç hakkında 'görevi yaptırmamak için direnmek' ve 'hakaret' suçlamalarıyla dava açıldı.

Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği'nin (MLSA) aktardığına göre, İstanbul'da 26 Haziran 2021'deki 19'uncu Onur Yürüyüşü'nü takip ederken polislin boğazına bastırarak işkence ve ters kelepçeye gözaltına aldığı AFP foto muhabiri **Bülent Kılıç** 'görevi yaptırmamak için direnmek' ve 'kamu görevlisine görevinden dolayı alenen hakaret' suçlamasıyla yargılanacak.

**MLSA Hukuk Birimi avukatları, Kılıç'a şiddet uygulayan ve kimliği tespit edilen iki polis memuru hakkında 4 Ağustos 2021'de 'mala zarar vermek' ve 'zor kullanma yetkisine ilişkin sınıırım aşılması suretiyle basit yaralama' yönünden suç duyurusunda bulunmuştu. 16 Mart'ta takipsizlik kararı verilmisti.**

**tagesschau**

Startseite Videos & Audios Tagesthemenn "Das Justizsystem ist wie eine Waffe der Regierung", Interview mit dem türkischen Anwalt Ok

VIDEO

## "Das Justizsystem ist wie eine Waffe der Regierung", Interview mit dem türkischen Anwalt Ok

Stand: 08.05.2023 22:41 Uhr



tagesschau, 08.05.2023 22:15 Uhr

## bianet

BAĞIMSIZ İLETİŞİM AĞI

Yayın Tarihi: 22 Haziran 2023 13:45 - Son Güncelleme: 22 Haziran 2023 13:45 | Tak Okuma

### Ankara Onur Yürüyüşü Davası sanıkları: Polis LGBTİ+lara nefretle yaklaşıyor

Onur Yürüyüşü'nün yapıldığı gün kendilerine saldıran polislin LGBTİ+ karşıtı gruplara müdahale etmediğini anlatan sanıklar, LGBTİ+lar olarak can güvenliklerinin olmadığını söyledi.

5 Temmuz 2020'de Ankara'daki Kuşulu Park'ta düzenlenecek 2. Ankara Onur Yürüyüşü, polis müdahalesi nedeniyle yapılamadı ve 42 kişi darp edilerek gözaltına alındı. Gözaltına alınan 42 sanıklı davanın ikinci duruşması bugün Ankara 52. Asliye Ceza Mahkemesinde görüldü.

Duruşmada 12 sanık ve 15'den fazla avukat hazır bulunurken, Kaos GL, Pembe Hayat, UniKuir, 17 Mayıs Derneği, Gökkuşluğu Aileleri Derneği (GALADER) ve İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD) Ankara Şubesi'nin yanı sıra uluslararası sivil toplum kuruluşlarından temsilciler de izleyici olarak katıldı.