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Reporting human rights violations in Turkey

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1. INTRODUCTION

The media in Turkey is under fire. In a climate where democratic norms are being eroded and human rights are being weakened by the state, the role of journalists in tracking human rights violations is more important than ever.

The Journalists Union of Turkey, as of 22 March 2018, reported 145 journalists and media workers have been jailed,¹ the highest number world-wide, ahead of China and Egypt. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) stated that Turkey was the worst country for media freedom in 2016. Reporters Without Borders' Freedom of Information report claims that Turkey is 155 out of 180 countries in the world rankings in 2017. A report prepared by the World Justice Project demonstrated that Turkey ranked 101st among 113 states² in the Rule of Law Index. Turkey was ranked 107th for fundamental rights, including freedom of the press.

This paper aims to show the extent of the media coverage of human rights violations based on a comparison of two periods, namely the period before the attempt of the coup d'état of 15 July 2016, and the period after. Even though Turkey's human rights record was not at its best prior 15 July³, it further declined after the declaration of the state of emergency on 20 July 2016⁴. Human rights organisations and international organisations such as United Nations and the European Union reported brutal human rights violations as well as a significant decline in the freedom of the press in

¹ <https://tgs.org.tr/cezaevindeki-gazeteciler/>

² <http://data.worldjusticeproject.org/#/groups/TUR>

³ Like many other human rights organisations, HRW's reports demonstrates the differences between Turkey's human rights record before and after the state of emergency. For 2015 report <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/turkey>

For 2016 report <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/turkey> and for 2017 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/turkey>

⁴ "Council of Europe accuses Turkey of violating human rights" <http://www.dw.com/en/council-of-europe-accuses-turkey-of-violating-human-rights/a-37567024>

Turkey. During this period the numbers of journalists being arrested increased dramatically, and several newspapers, periodicals, TV channels, publishers were shut down. Self-censorship has increased in order to avoid being seen to support the attempt of coup d'état. Any media outlet or journalist targeted by Government circles and the pro-government press has been subject to sanctions. In addition, the effect that the lack of press freedom has had on journalists will be included in this report too.

1-1 The significance of the study

With the end of the Cold War, human rights discourse occupied more space in international relations. The number of countries signing international conventions and joining UN organisations in promoting human rights increased and indeed *“violations of human rights are used as justifications for national policies and international relations and even military intervention.”*⁵

But despite this, human rights violations did not end. Indeed as trade became more global, and companies began to form more economic alliances, the issue of human rights became ever more subordinate to political and economic interests.

Turkey benefited from this situation: offering itself up as a trading country but managing somehow to avoid establishing a system respecting human rights.⁶ Throughout the years in power, the Justice and Development Party or AKP government exercised increasing pressure on media. This pressure focused primarily on journalists reporting human rights violations. Especially under emergency rule, in the absence of free press, rights violations increased dramatically.

This research aims to understand Turkish media's impact on human rights issues in general. Focusing on the coverage under the emergency rule and comparing it with the so-called standard conditions also helps it to understand the effect of the turbulent political conditions on the media as well as on freedom of the press in the country.

1-2 Research questions

This study aims to address four main questions:

⁵ Martin Ennals *“Human rights reporting”*, Index on Censorship, (1982) 11:6, 3-6
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03064228208533447>

⁶ *“Of the total of 20,657 judgments issued by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) between 1959 and 2017, 3,386 judgments (16.36%) involve Turkey as a respondent State, ranked first in the list of all member States.”* Yaman Akdeniz and Kerem Altıparmak, *Turkey: Freedom of Expression in Jeopardy Violations of the Rights of Authors, Publishers and Academics Under the State of Emergency*, Report written for English PEN by https://www.englishpen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Turkey_Freedom_of_Expression_in_Jeopardy_ENG.pdf page 4

- 1- How does the Turkish media cover human rights violations reported by human rights organisations?
- 2- How did media coverage of human rights violations change following the announcement of the state of emergency in Turkey?
- 3- What is the relationship between human rights reporting and freedom of the press?
- 4- What challenges do Turkish journalists face reporting on human rights?

1-3 Scope and limitations of the study

As primary news production takes place in printed media in Turkey, four mainstream newspapers were chosen and the research was focused on their coverage of rights violations.

Reflecting the classification of newspapers in Turkey, one pro-government (*Sabah*), one impartial (*Hürriyet*) and two opposition newspapers (leftist *Cumhuriyet* and nationalist *Sözcü*) were chosen to search.

These papers' coverage of human rights violations was comparatively examined in two periods: before and after the imposition of emergency rule. As samples, the editions from January 2015 and January 2017 were studied.

Additionally, 133 Turkish journalists responded to an online Google questionnaire.

It would seem that despite the pressure that journalists are facing, the afore-mentioned survey concerning human rights issues was able to reach a vast range of respondents. Approximately 1 in 5 respondents are working for a pro-government media outlet.

The research was carried out in 6 months, so it had some limitations. First, although a qualitative method could expose the media's discourse on human rights violations, only content analysis was used to examine the coverage of violations. Further research applying quantitative and qualitative methods together may help us to understand the media's approach to human rights violations better. Also, a comparison of reporting on external and internal human rights violations could be beneficial to understand the degree of the nationalistic approach of the mainstream media to human rights violations.

2. Political – human rights situation in Turkey

The AKP which came to power in 2002 has damaged Turkey's fragile democracy. Reports by the think tank Freedom House show that Turkey was 'a partly free country' before AKP governments and is now classified as "not free" after a steady erosion of political rights and civil liberties.⁷

Even though the AKP was established by former members of the Islamist Fazilet (Virtue) Party, initially, the party denied its Islamic identity and called itself a "conservative democratic" party. The AKP's main supporters were representatives of small and medium-sized developing businesses across Anatolia.

During the first years of AKP being in power, it pursued policies that it hoped would secure membership of the European Union. It also closely cooperated with the Gülenists - an Islamic religious and social movement founded and led by Fethullah Gülen, who is now living in the United States.

In 2010 the AKP, supported by liberals and Gülenists, changed the constitution with a referendum in order to take the judicial system under control. The success of the referendum opened the doors of an authoritarian regime with the elimination of the checks and balances role of the judiciary over the government. After a battle between Gülenists and the government which started due to the conflicts over sharing the power in the state, Gülenists lost the control of the judiciary and the AKP government could dominate the judiciary more effectively.

Turkey's human rights record, which was declining steadily after the 2010 referendum, has become worse following two significant political developments. First was the collapse of the peace negotiations and ceasefire between the state and armed the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). On 24th of the July, just a few weeks after the June 2015 general election, the ceasefire came to an end. Military operations caused many human rights violations, the right to a fair trial, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of speech.

During the clashes between militant youth organisation of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the security forces, many cities and towns were demolished, and Amnesty International reported that nearly 500.000 people were forced to migrate.⁸ The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) highlighted the human rights situation in "South-East Turkey: July 2015 to December 2016", published in March 2017. The violations explained in the report were highly concerning: *"Torture; violence against women; excessive use of force; destruction of housing and cultural heritage; prevention of access to emergency medical care, safe water and livelihoods; and*

⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/turkey>

⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/report-turkey/>

severe restrictions of the right to freedom of expression. Credible NGO sources indicate that in the first quarter of 2017, the total number of violations in South-East Turkey amounted to 7,907 and included 263 incidents of torture in detention.”⁹ This report claimed that between July 2015 and December 2016, approximately 2,000 people were killed during the security operations in South-East Turkey. The OHCHR reported this number includes close to 800 members of the security forces and approximately 1,200 local residents, “of which an unspecified number may have been involved in violent or non-violent actions against the State.”¹⁰

Additionally, approximately 11,000 members of the pro-Kurdish and leftist Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), in other words, 1 in 3 of its members, have been detained in the last two years and 3,382 of them were arrested. 11 members of parliament have been imprisoned, including the co-chairs of HDP and one MP from the main opposition Republican People’s Party CHP.¹¹

A second crucial political development was the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, initiated and conducted mostly by members of the Gülenists organisation (FETÖ/PDY - Fethullah Terror Organization / Parallel State Structures) in the military.¹² Aiming to seize power and overthrow the government and President Erdoğan, the perpetrators bombed the parliament and official buildings, including police centres, the intelligence service centre and the palace of the presidency. A TV station was occupied, and several roads, including the Bosphorus Bridge, which connects Asia and Europe, were blocked. The coup attempt was defeated by the resistance of Turkish people, the government, and the media only in few hours. 186 civilian and 63 police officers were killed during the clashes between the soldiers who attended the coup attempt and the civilian people who resisted the coup.¹³ Even though there are still some suspicions as to whether the government knew about the coup in advance, the case files demonstrated how the soldiers organised the coup attempt and their connections with the Gülenist organisation.

Following the coup attempt, a state of emergency was declared on 20 July 2016, and the Turkish government notified the United Nations of the derogation of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Turkey also declared a derogation of the European Convention

⁹ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.diken.com.tr/her-uc-hdpliden-biri-gozaltina-alinmis-uc-yilda-3-bini-askin-tutuklama-var/>

¹² “According to the Turkish authorities, on 17 - 25 December 2013 the Gülenists tried to destabilize the AKP Government by accusing some of its members of corruption. Now this incident is considered by the Government as a first coup attempt by the Gülenists. Following the events of December 2013 the Government started closing down some key entities of the Gülenist network (such as the Asya bank and the Zaman newspaper).” European Commission for Democracy Through Law’s (Venice Commission) “Opinion on Emergency Decree Laws” report

[http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2016\)037-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2016)037-e)

¹³ <http://www.posta.com.tr/isim-isim-15-temmuz-sehitleri-haberi-1315115>

of Human Rights during the state of emergency. Although all the political parties and the media were against the coup attempt, pressure on the opposition, as well as the free press, was intensified. President Erdoğan and the AKP government have enforced the state of emergency with the aim of cementing their current rule and preventing any future loss of power through free and fair elections. Since then the country has been governed by decrees under the force of law. While there seems to have been no risk of another coup attempt the state of emergency has been extended for the sixth time in January 2018.

Since the state of emergency was declared, not only Gülenists but all critics of Erdogan and the ruling AKP have been targeted. The Ministry of Justice announced that during the ongoing state of emergency 169,013 people were detained by the police. Of these 50,510 were arrested, and 43,489 were released on bail. Others were released without charge, and 8,087 people have absconded.¹⁴

The European Commission for Democracy Through Law's (Venice Commission) "Opinion on Emergency Decree Laws" report has highlighted the unlawfulness of the state of emergency decrees and criticised the Turkish government for *"legislating alone without any control by Parliament or the Constitutional Court; dismissing civil servants instead of merely suspending; making changes to the legislation, which should normally be done through the ordinary legislative process outside of the emergency period; ordering collective dismissals without individualisation; considering these civil servants as 'terrorist' even the absence of a meaningful connection with such organisations; penalising some civil servants whose family members allegedly associated with these organisations; removing crucial safeguards that protect detainees from abuses, which increases the likelihood of ill-treatment; extending the time-limit for pre-trial detention without judicial control up to 30 days, limiting the right of access to a the lawyers."*¹⁵

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, emphasised recognition of the *"complex situation that Turkey has been facing by addressing the 15 July 2016 attempted coup and dealing with a number of terrorist attacks."* On the other hand, the Committee declared its concerns *"at the adverse effects on the enjoyment of human rights of numerous measures taken following the declaration of the state of emergency"* and *"a constantly deteriorating human rights situation, exacerbated by the erosion of the rule of law."* The emergency decrees make provisions that fall short of basic human rights safeguards and Turkey's obligations under international law, which are not subject to judicial review, according to the decision of the Constitutional Court of November 2016. Under these

¹⁴ <http://ihd.org.tr/en/index.php/2018/01/08/we-will-not-allow-liquidation-of-human-rights-values/>

¹⁵ [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2016\)037-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2016)037-e)

circumstances, the decrees caused *“impunity and lack of accountability by affording legal, administrative, criminal and financial immunity to administrative authorities acting within the framework of the decrees.”*¹⁶

¹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East*, January – December 2017 http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/2018-03-19_Second_OHCHR_Turkey_Report.pdf

3. The defeat of the Turkish media

In Turkey, there is generally a trend to mark the beginning of the collapse of the Turkish media, either with the aftermath of the 2010 constitutional referendum or following the 2002 elections when the AKP came to power. However, the end of the rule of law and democracy as well as the free press did not start solely as a result of AKP's coming to power.

We can assume that the collapse of the media and the institutions of the Turkish Republic began with the 1980 coup in Turkey.¹⁷ Not only was the government overthrown, and the unions and parties shut down, without any significant resistance, but also Turkey's most democratic constitution of 1961 was abrogated by the nationalist and the US-backed junta. Members of left-wing parties and movements, and trade unionists were arrested, and a conservative-nationalist ideology became the hegemonic view, country-wide. This ideology, the so-called 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis,' became the official ideology during the administration of the junta, and throughout the following years, the right wing and conservative ANAP (Motherland Party) led the government. Many argue this ideology has been a source of the rise of Islamic movements in Turkey.¹⁸

The junta's new constitution has been the symbol of this anti-democratic era in the country. A neo-liberal economic system, which was one of the main aims of the coup, has been established. The conditions of savage capitalism, weak democracy and the lack of a robust left-wing centre party, has meant that almost everything, including the media environment, has changed dramatically.

The Turkish media has failed to hold government to power since the 1920s, as it has shaped itself around an ideological public domain and has tied itself to the state. Hence, the primary function of the media is not to control and supervise the government but has turned into a role of being the spokesperson for it.¹⁹

In the 1980s, the media's role in spreading the official ideology did not change but its power increased with the neo-liberal economic conducts. The government's decision to allow the privatisation of television and radio channels in early 1990s and the development of new broadcasting technologies, created a large, active and productive media. Media companies, most of

¹⁷ Simon A. Waldman and Emre Çalışkan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2017, page 120

¹⁸ "The AKP was the result of merging political and ideological forces following the 1980 military coup, including the religious-political Milli Gorus movement and, more generally, the opening of Islamic discourse in what was known as the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, a post-coup compromise solution that paved the way for the acceptance of Turkish Islam in the political sphere." Simon A. Waldman and Emre Çalışkan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2017

¹⁹ Ragıp Duran, "Medya", *Kavram Sözlüğü - Söylem ve Gerçek*, Ed: Fikret Başkaya, Özgür Üniversite Kitaplığı, Ankara, 2005, p. 349

which are family companies, have had significant investments from outside the media and have been competing to win public tenders from sectors such as energy, construction, and mining.²⁰

The boom in private sector media coincided with a steady weakening of trade unions within the sector, and media owners have easily been able to crush the power of the unions in the media.²¹

The Journalists Union of Turkey (TGS) points out that only 6 % of journalists are a member of a union (compared to 70 % in Germany). In addition, the average salary is just 400 Euros a month whilst the executives earn at least ten times an 'ordinary' journalist's salary²²

Differences between wages within the media increased after the liquidation of the union. Media companies moved their buildings from city centres to "plazas." Columnists, anchor-men-and women, and talk show presenters were the new stars of Turkey, and they were nearly more famous than actors and musicians, living a glamorous lifestyle.

Media coverage has also changed significantly. A new type of reporting which doesn't prioritize the truth, democracy, and human rights, but focuses instead on sensational stories, celebrities' lives, and the entertainment industry has become the dominant style adopted by the media.

Although Kurdish and socialist journalists were being arrested and killed by state agents and their offices were being bombed during the 1990s²³, media outlets were not interested in the freedom of the press and human rights violations happening in Kurdish cities. The media has evolved alongside the State and supported old-fashioned and anti-democratic, militarist secularism which has been a substantial source of Islamism despite claiming to be a supporter of democracy. The media promoted the "post-modern" coup on 28th of February in 1996, which didn't aim to overthrow the government but forced it to act in the direction of the National Security Council rules.²⁴ The military's control of the media has had a massive influence on governments and all politicians.

²⁰ Gulseren Adaklı, *The Process of Neo-liberalization and Transformation of the Turkish Media Sector in the Context of the New Media Architecture*, in *Mediating Europe: New Media, Mass Communications, and the European Public Sphere*, edited by Dr. Jackie Harrison and Bridgette Wessels, Berghahn Books, Oxford-New York, 2009-2012, page 305-306

²¹ Ceren Sözeri and Zeynep Güney, *The Political Economy of the Media in Turkey: A Sectoral Analysis*, TESEV Publications, Istanbul, 2011, page 32

²² <https://tgs.org.tr/tgss-kuleli-government-encirclement-of-the-media-has-been-getting-tighter/>

²³ Yaman Akdeniz and Kerem Altıparmak, *Turkey: Freedom of Expression in Jeopardy Violations of the Rights of Authors, Publishers and Academics Under the State of Emergency*. Report written for English PEN by https://www.englishpen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Turkey_Freedom_of_Expression_in_Jeopardy_ENG.pdf p.9

²⁴ "...on February 28, 1997, the military-dominated National Security Council (NSC) issued the Refahiyol coalition government with a list of measures designed to nullify the supposed Islamization of Turkey and fortify the secular system. Subsequent pressure from the NSC, in tandem with the civilian component of the secular establishment, led to the collapse of the coalition government in June 1997." Umit Cizre and Menderes Cinar "Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102: 2/3, Spring/Summer 2003. page 309.

Erdoğan and the AKP have fought against the older (first) Republic's institutions and the media which were a representative of them. It is evident that the AKP found a firm basis to build such an authoritarian regime in the former Republic's institutions and its media. Gülenist media and pro-government media outlets, together, were targeting journalists and journalism.²⁵ Many journalists were arrested and dismissed after Gülenists and pro-government outlets ran campaigns against them.

After the failed coup attempt and declaration of the state of emergency, the judiciary, controlled and directed by the AKP government, intensified pressure on the press. The former partner of pro-government media, Gülenist media, Kurdish-oriented and leftist magazines, newspapers, television stations, as well as publishers were all shut down by the state of emergency decrees. OHCHR noted that *"the emergency decrees, liquidated 166 media outlets, including publishing houses, newspapers and magazines, news agencies, television stations, and radios. The closing down of media outlets was accompanied by the confiscation of all their assets without compensation. Over 100,000 websites were reportedly blocked in 2017, including a high number of pro-Kurdish websites and satellite TVs. The climate of fear and judicial harassment has compelled many media and human rights NGOs to self-censorship. ... OHCHR also received reports on the arrest and detention of approximately 300 journalists on the grounds that their publications contained apologist sentiments regarding terrorism or other "verbal act offences", or for "membership" in terrorist organizations."*²⁶

Cumhuriyet, or The Republic, a newspaper that was established in 1923, has come under sustained attack. The administrators, columnists, and reporters of Cumhuriyet have been prosecuted on the charge of aiding terrorist organisations, such as FETÖ, PKK, and DHKP-C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front).²⁷

²⁵ Ruşen Çakır: "Türk medyası çabuk pes etti!"

http://www.medyagunlugu.com/Haber-813-rusen-cakir-turk-medyasi-cabuk-pes-etti.html?fb_comment_id=596551910465536_597107163743344#f2305a78695e9d

²⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the impact of the state of emergency on human rights in Turkey, including an update on the South-East* January – December 2017

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/2018-03-19_Second_OHCHR_Turkey_Report.pdf

²⁷ "A prosecutor demanded prison sentences for 14 members of the staff of daily Cumhuriyet at the 7th hearing of the trial overseen by the 27th High Criminal Court of Istanbul (on 16th of March, 2018) Those defendants, who face between 7,5 and 15 years in prison, include Akın Atalay (the Executive Chair of Cumhuriyet's Board), Cumhuriyet editor-in-chief Murat Sabuncu, members of the newspaper's executive board Önder Çelik and Orhan Erinc, editorial advisor and columnist Kadri Gürsel, columnists Aydın Engin, Hikmet Çetinkaya and Hakan Kara, senior reporter Ahmet Şık, ombudsman Güray Öz, cartoonist Musa Kart and the daily's attorneys Bülent Utku and Mustafa Kemal Güngör. Sabuncu and Şık, who have been imprisoned for nearly 500 days, were released on March 9 after the previous hearing of the case. Other defendants in the case who had been remanded in pre-trial detention were released in previous hearings."

<http://platform24.org/en/articles/601/prosecutor-demands-prison-sentences-for-cumhuriyet-journalists>

This tactic, of accusing independent media of supporting terrorism is widespread. The Turkish government and judiciary throws this accusation about news stories about the violations of human rights and democracy, the Kurdish issue, and corruption. Journalists who wrote stories considered to be undesirable by the authorities were fired. It is no longer possible to see people who are not approved by the authorities in significant positions in the mainstream media. The journalists who try to oppose the pressure and produce stories that are considered necessary can only be seen on alternative websites or a few opposition newspapers. However, if they do, they find themselves under risk of prosecuted or jail, losing their jobs, and at the very least, targeted in the social media by the supporters of the government.²⁸

Human Rights Watch's "Silencing Turkey's Media"²⁹ documented six crucial components of this crackdown on independent domestic media in Turkey:

1 - The use of the criminal justice system to prosecute journalists for terrorism, insulting public officials, and crimes against the state.

2- Threats and physical attacks on journalists and media outlets.

3- Government interference with editorial independence and pressure on media organizations to fire critical journalists.

4- The government takeover or closure of private media companies.

5- Fines, restrictions on distribution and closure of essential television stations.

6- The blocking of online news websites and internet access.

The last impact on Turkish media had happened when this research was being written. Turkey's most prominent media group (The Doğan Media Group³⁰) which owned the newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Posta*, entertainment and news channels, Kanal D and CNN Türk, was sold to a conglomerate (Demirören Holding³¹) at the end of the March 2018. Demirören Holding, which has enormous

²⁸ Kemal Göktaş, "Investigative Journalism Under Pressure: Turkey's Example' in *On a Trajectory of Revelations in Tvpatum Investigation: Media Against Corruption*" Yerevan: Media Initiatives Center NGO, 2017, p. 41

²⁹ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/turkey1216_web.pdf

³⁰ "The mainstream media outlets under Doğan, have been deeply impacted by a record \$2.5bn tax fine issued on the company, after a year-long confrontation between the government and Doğan media. The fine was based on an allegation that the company had sold 25% of the shares of Doğan Media to Alex Springer earlier than it was stated. Pro-government media try to discredit Doğan media outlets and the businessman himself, through front-page reports calling Aydın Doğan a "terror-supporter, "blaming Doğan for fuel smuggling. Doğan's leading outlets *Hürriyet* and *CNN Turk* have been criticized with softening their tones about the government after the November 2015 elections, which resulted with the AKP forming a single party government for a fourth time." *Media Ownership Monitor-Turkey*, Reporters Without Border & bianet, 2016 <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/companies/detail/company/company/show/dogan-group/>

³¹ "Erdoğan Demirören is the majority shareholder of the conglomerate 'Demirören Holding' which holds the majority shares of the companies that publish *Milliyet* and *Vatan* newspapers. The recordings of alleged phone

investments in media, tourism, energy, and construction, has become the biggest media company after this big deal.

This deal is interpreted as “The death of mainstream media (in Turkey)”³² in accordance with Media Ownership Monitor-Turkey, conducted by Reporters Without Border & bianet in 2016 (before the Dogan Media Groups’ sale.) The research exposed that out of 10 most read dailies³³ and most watched television channels³⁴, 7 belong to owners that are affiliated with the government. After the sale, under the Demirören Holding’s administration, pro-government newspapers and TV channels’ the proportion will most probably rise to be 9 out of 10. This rate will be 6 out of 10 in news portals.³⁵

conversations between Demirören and then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were leaked in May 2014, in which the Prime Minister scolds Demirören for a news story, asking for those responsible to be fired, and Demirören is heard crying.” Media Ownership Monitor-Turkey, Reporters Without Border & bianet, 2016

<https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/companies/detail/company/company/show/demiroeren-group/>

³² Ceren Sözeri, “Ana akım medyanın bitişi demek”, Daily Cumhuriyet web site

http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/946551/Ana_akim_medyanin_bitisi_demek.html

³³ <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/media/print/>

³⁴ <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/media/tv/>

³⁵ <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/en/media/online/>

4. 'Human rights' and 'human rights violations'

Human rights have been an underlying aim of many political and philosophical ideologies as well as all religions.³⁶ However, its conceptualisation and role in becoming an essential tool for a 'better life' for humanity, was only institutionalised after the Second World War. After the United Nations Charter, the *"first treaty in world history to recognize universal human rights,"* was signed by 50 states. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, was a *'milestone document in the history of human rights.'*³⁷ Despite its weaknesses on women's, children's and the disabled people's rights, the UDHR *"is often referred to as the 'Magna Carta' of human rights instruments and makes the bold claim that it sets 'a common standard for achievement for all peoples and all nations. Indeed, it is the first international document to state that all people have human rights and to specify exactly what those human rights are.'"*³⁸

International organisations such as the European Union aimed to determine the standards of human rights, in order to avoid the repetition of brutal violations, such as the abuses that occurred during Second World War. European Court of Human Rights which conducts The European Convention on Human Rights has been a fundamental mechanism to protect human rights. Not only have they redressed the damages of the violations privately, but ECHR decisions have also caused amendments in state law and helped to improve the standards of human rights.

At the same time, under the conditions of the cold war, these mechanisms tried to represent the power of capitalist democracies against the socialist system. Rights like freedom of speech and freedom of the press, fair trial, etc. have been presented as part of the distinctive nature of the liberal democracies which competed with the socialist system. After the collapse of the socialist regimes a new discourse declaring the victory of liberal democracy and claiming the end of the human history emerged in many social science studies. Supporters of globalisation argued that human rights will be the primary administrative principal in all countries and this brings world peace, democracy, and a "better life." However, liberal democracy could not be a solution to the problems of the world, especially in developing and non-developed countries, where democracies have not based on human rights. After more than 25 years, populism and right-wing movements have spread and weakened both democracy and the human rights.

³⁶ "...the quest for basic human rights and freedoms dates back a few thousand years ago. One can argue that this process started with the advent of sedentary life." Diana Papademas, *"Human Rights and Media"* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central, Created from oxford on 2017-11-10

³⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

³⁸ Ekaterina Balabanova, *The Media and Human Rights. The Cosmopolitan Promise*, by Routledge, London and New York, 2015, page 17

During this period, human rights issues were used as a tool in international relations, more often as a reason for wars and interventions in hostile countries and the increase in the media's coverage of the human rights has been directly related to this agenda. The Western media has not paid attention to the rights violated inside the country but has sent expert correspondents to report the human rights violations of those states abroad.

In fact, reporting on human rights has always been a controversial problem in the media. Most writers claim that the media and the nature of mainstream reporting is a perpetrator of the abuses of rights.³⁹ On the other hand, many international conventions and the official guides of the publishers arrange an obligation of supporting human rights to the media and the journalists. Human rights state fundamental rights so it can be said that constitutions and human rights have been considered as the basis of a social contract, in terms of living together, peace, and solidarity in a country. Therefore *"speaking of breaking a human right is speaking of breaking society and of the social contract being broken."*⁴⁰

Having accepted this idea, human rights reporting should be defined as a task for all journalists, whether they are pro-government, opposition, state-oriented, right-wing or leftist.

Reporting human rights has many difficulties which influence the structure of the media environment, ownership and the ideology of the medium.

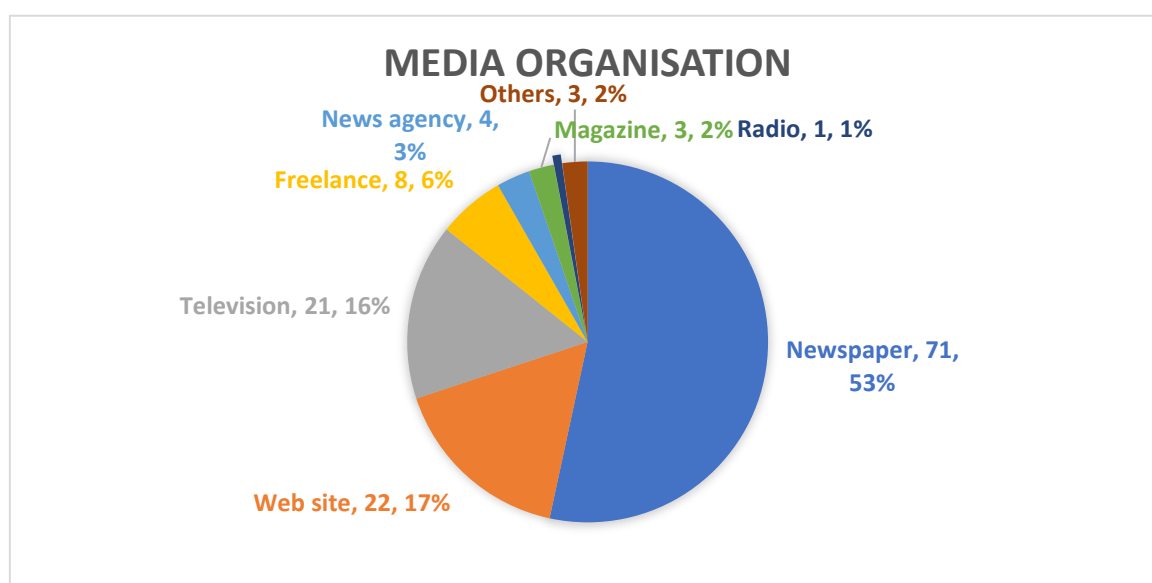
³⁹ Çiler Dursun, *Hak Haberciliğinin Doğası ve Olanağı*, In: İnsan Hakları Haberciliği (Editor: Sevdâ Alankuş), IPS İletişim Vakfı, İstanbul, 2007, page 108

⁴⁰ Ella McPherson, *How editors choose which human rights news to cover: a case study of Mexican newspapers*. In: Borer, Anne Tristan (ed.) *Media, mobilization and human rights: mediating suffering*. Zed Books, London, 2012, page 96
<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46296/>

5. Turkish journalists under the state of emergency

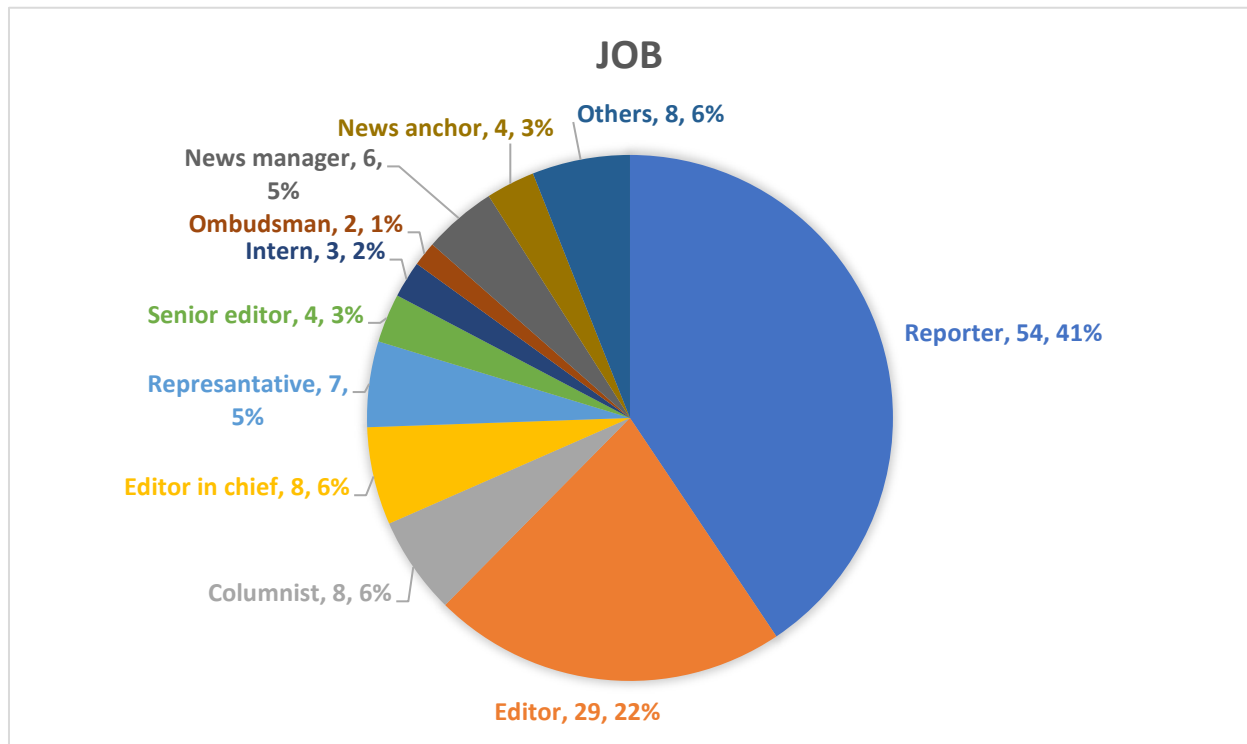
One of the two main pieces of research methodology for this project involved the administration of a survey of journalists through an online medium. The link to the Google Form containing the questions was sent out to more than 300 editors, journalists, editors and administrators, ombudsmen, etc. in Turkey. The form link sent by e-mail and Facebook messenger was opened from 10 December 2017 until 13 February 2018 and responded to by 133 journalists.

The ages of the participants' scope were broad: 9% of them were between 18-25 years old, 12% of them 25-30, 28% of them 30-40, 35% of them 40-50, 13% of them 50-60, and 3% were older than 60 years old. 108 were employed as a journalist, 7 unemployed, 3 retired, 6 employed in a job other than journalism, and 4 freelance journalists answered the questions. This scope provides an explicit representation of journalists in terms of their age and employment status. The majority of the journalists surveyed (53%) were working for a newspaper and 17% of them working for a website, 16% of them for television and the rest of them were working for a news agency, radio, magazine, and other media organisations.

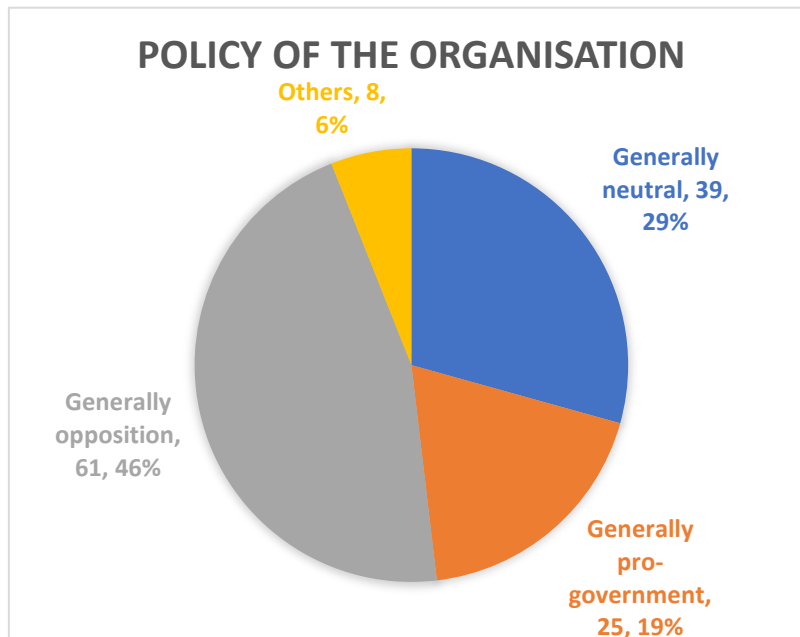


Most of the respondents were reporters (41%), while the next largest group consisted of editors (22%). There were also columnists (6%), editor-in/chiefs (6%), representatives (5%), senior editors

(3%), interns (2%), ombudsmen (1%), news managers (5%), news anchors (3%) and the others (6%).



The participants answered the following question: “How long have you been working in the media?” and the responses were as follows: 0-5 years (14%), 5-10 years (20%), 10-20 years (24%), 20-30 years



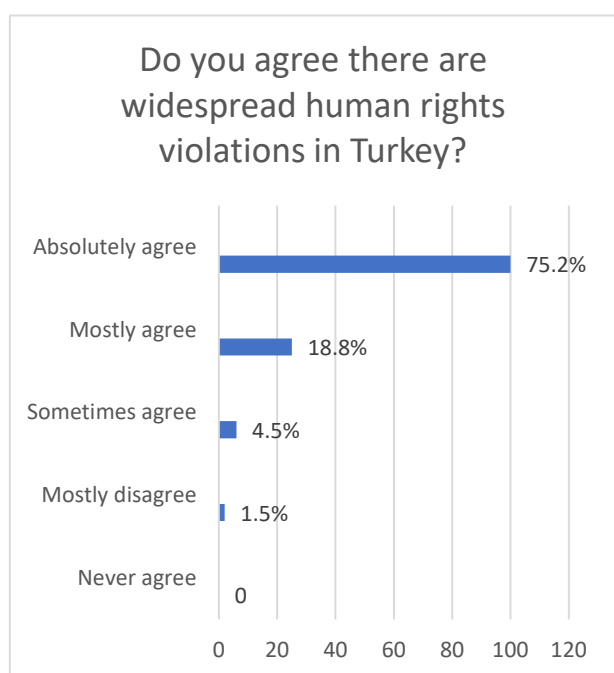
(31 %) and more than 30 (11%).

The most challenging issue with this survey was to reach the journalists working in pro-government outlets. During the research period, out of 10 most read dailies and most watched television channels, seven belong to owners that were affiliated with the government. Those surveyed defined the media organisation they work

for mostly as “generally opposition” with a rate of 46% while 29% defined them as “generally neutral,” and 19% defined them as “generally pro-government.”

Journalists in Turkey think that there are numerous widespread human rights violations in Turkey.No journalist selected the option “never agree” and only 1.5% of them chose “mostly disagree” with this

sentence. 4.5% chose “sometimes agree”, 18.8% agree, and 75.2% said they are “absolutely agree.”

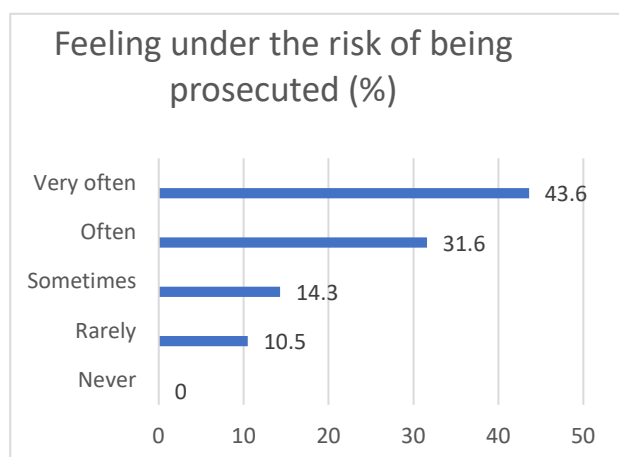


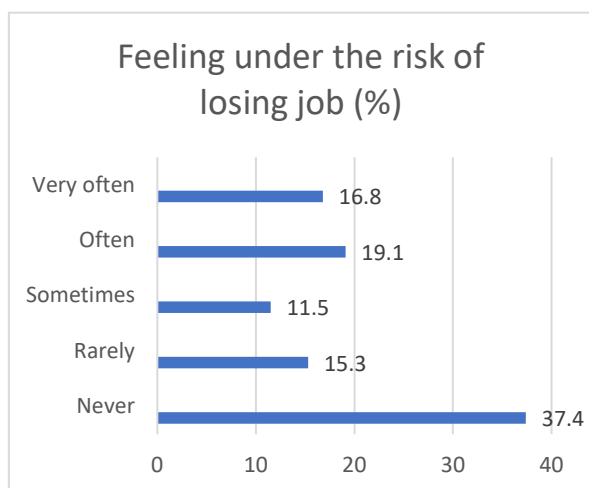
Journalists in general, agree that the area of human rights has declined significantly in the last 5 years in Turkey. 72.2% of the respondents answered this question by “much worse” and 18% of them answered by “worse.” The option of “unchanged” is marked only 9% of the surveyed, and only one respondent (0.8%) chose “much better than before” in the survey.

Although the frequency of reporting, writing or publishing “human rights violations” was high (never 4.5%, very rare 12%, rare 16.5%, often 32.3%, very often 34.6%), the surveyed journalists thought the media coverage of

reporting on the human rights violations was insufficient. 61.7% of them answered ‘never sufficient,’ 27.1% mostly not sufficient, 10.5% rarely sufficient and only 0.8%, which means only one journalist claimed it is ‘absolutely sufficient.’ The feeling of freedom while reporting or giving coverage on violations was low among the journalists. Only approximately 1 in 3 journalists felt “mostly or always free” when they report or give coverage on violations, the others did ‘sometimes feel free’ or ‘did not feel free.’

One of the most significant results of the survey was the answers to the question “How often do you feel under the risk of being prosecuted due to reporting/giving coverage of human rights violations? (If you are unemployed or currently working outside the media, answer according to the latest media organisation you worked for).” The survey exposed that without exception, all the journalists currently feel the fear of being prosecuted due to reporting or giving coverage of human rights violations. Most of the journalists, nearly 3 out of 4 feel “very often and often” feel under the risk of



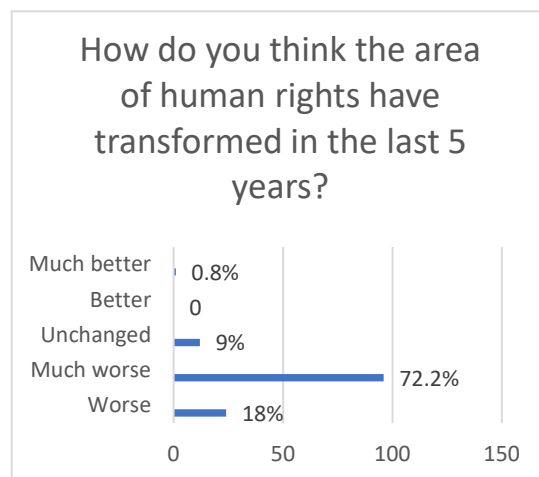


being prosecuted. 14.3% of them feel this fear “sometimes,” and 10.5% of them are feeling it “rarely.” It is remarkable that no journalist chose the option of “never.”

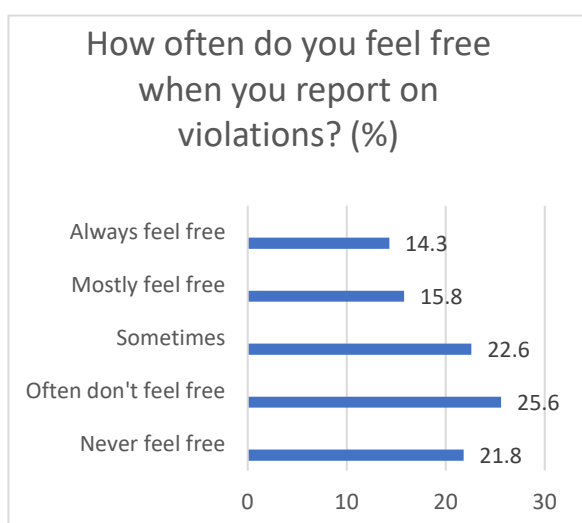
Fear of losing a job relating to reporting on violations is less than the fear of being prosecuted because most surveyed are working for generally neutral or opposition outlets. Nevertheless, slightly more than 1 in 3 journalists feel sometimes, often or very often the risk of losing

their jobs when they report or give coverage on human rights violations. The journalists who work for pro-government outlets feel much more afraid than the others. According to the survey, 81% of the journalists feel the risk of losing their jobs (sometimes, often and very often) in pro-government outlets.

The answers to the following question demonstrated that losing the job related to reporting on violations can cause a significant difficulty to find a new job. The question was “Do you think reporting on human rights affects the chances for a journalist to find a job in the mainstream media in case he/she is unemployed?” and 97% of the journalists answered, “absolutely affects” and “affects.”

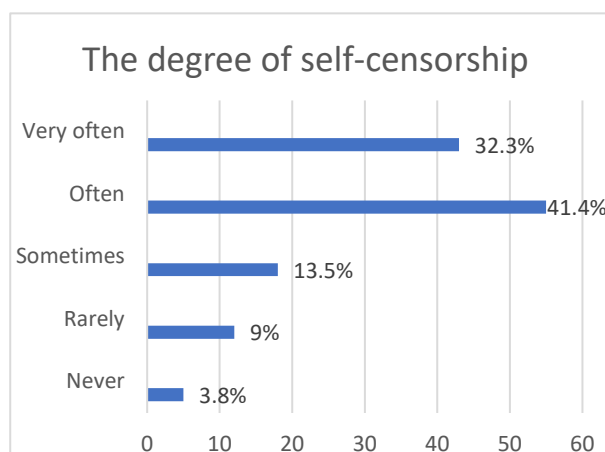


The support of the superiors or the organisation on human rights violation reporting is also asked the



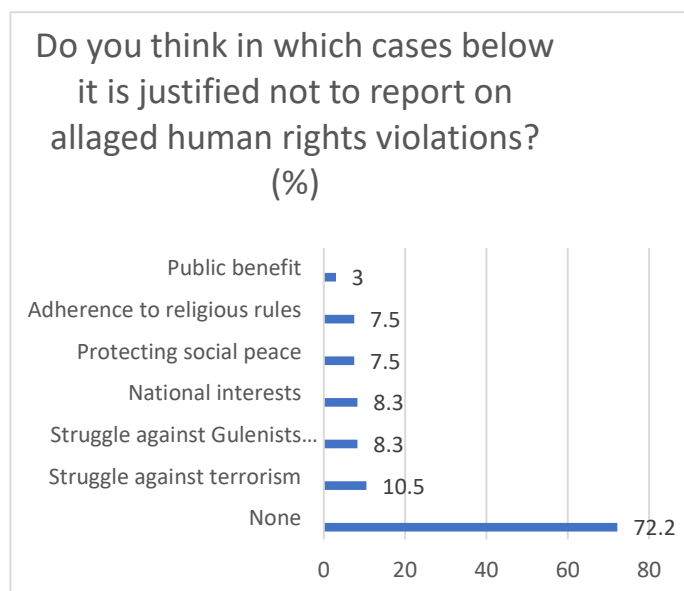
journalists. While approximately 1 in 10 journalists answered as “never” to this question, 18.8% “rare,” 15.8% “sometimes,” 24.1% “often” and 31.6% of the journalists answered, “very often.” On the other hand, 3 out of 4 journalists who are working for pro-government outlets responded as their superiors and organisations “never” or “very rarely” support reporting on human rights violation.

The journalists' observation on self-censorship regarding reports on human rights violations was not a surprise, but the solutions showed the level of pressure on the Turkish media. The question of "According to your observations, what is the degree of self-censorship regarding reports on human rights violations?" was answered by 3.8% "never," 9% "rarely," 13.5% "sometimes," 41.4% "often" and 32.3% "very often."



According to journalists responded the survey, the main reason which prevents the coverage of the human rights violations is "political pressure" by 95.5%, and the ownership of the media outlets follow it by 74.4%. The "judicial pressure" on Turkish media is seen as a third significant reason for the lack of violation coverage with 64.7% by the journalists. "Fear of losing job" (59.4%), editorial pressure (37.6%) are the other two important facts against reporting and giving coverage on the violations. "Worries about the public's reaction" (28.6%) and "the indifference of journalists to reporting on human rights violations" (18%) are the other two options which were marked by the surveyed.

Although the majority of the respondents (72.2%) thinks that it is not justified not to report on an alleged human rights violation in any case, number of substantial journalists, slightly over than 1 in 4



supported in some situations not reporting violations can be justified such as struggle against terrorism (10.5%), struggle against the failed coup attempt and other activities (8.3%), national interests (8.3%), protecting social peace (7.5%), adherence to religious rules (7.5%), and public benefit (3%).

At least 3 in 10 journalists decided not to report a violation due to fears of being investigated or prosecuted. 7.5% of journalists once, 17.3% of them more than once, 4.5 of them lots of time did not report on violations, and 1.5% of them never reported on violations because of that reason. The rates of deciding not to report a human rights violation due to fears of losing the job are

a little different: 1 in 4 journalists have decided not to write because of concerns about losing the job. 6% once, 12% more than once, 3% lots of time did not report on violation due to fears of being unemployed. 2.3% of the journalists stated that they do not report on breaches because of that fear.

The question intended to learn the sources which journalists trust more, revealed disbelief to officials and judicial. The journalists trust victims and their relatives more (89.5%), human rights organisations (81.2%), and the lawyers defending the victims (71.4%) than the judiciary (15.8%) and public authorities such as the police, district governor, governor, minister (8.3%).

The media workers in the Turkish media do not trust the reports on violations in the media in line with the survey. “Never trusting” the reports on violations is 7.5% meanwhile the percentage of the journalists “mostly do not trust” is 18%. The ratio of the surveyed who sometimes trust the coverage is the most



significant at 47.4%. Only slightly over 1 in 4 of the respondents trust the media reports “mostly” or “always.” At the same time, the participants do not trust the mechanisms established by the state to prevent human rights violations. 59.1% of them never trusts and 28.8% “mostly do not trust” and just 12.1% “sometimes” trust the state’s mechanisms in Turkey. Unsurprisingly the ratio of the “mostly” and “always” that trust these mechanisms has been zero. By contrast, the trust of the journalists on human rights and international organisations’ reports is higher. 68.4% of the journalists mostly or always trust the reports prepared by national human rights organisations, while 59.4% of them mostly and always trust reports on human rights violations published by international organizations such as the UN and EU. The highest trust rate is towards the reports published by international human rights organizations such as the Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch with 76.7%. It should be noted that although the option of “never trust” was not remarked for international organisations and international human rights organisations, 5% of the journalists said that they never trust national organisations’ reports. A few of the journalists disagreed with the claim of ‘human rights violations have become a tool for states to protect their own interests’. (5.3% absolutely disagree, and 6.8% disagree) The majority agree with this idea by “sometimes agree” 37.6%, 35.3% “agree”, and 15% “absolutely agree”. This result shows that Turkish journalists do not trust the Western states concerning human rights, but they believe international human rights organisations.

6. How does Turkish media see human rights violations?

6.1 Method

This research aimed to employ content analysis to examine the transformation of human rights reporting before and after the state of emergency in Turkey. Four newspapers were chosen to examine in the mainstream media in two periods, before the declaration of the state of emergency and after. The most effective mainstream newspapers of each political wing, so pro-government, opposition and neutral papers are determined. *Sabah* as a pro-government newspaper and *Hürriyet* as a neutral newspaper, which are the most prominent and most active newspapers in the media, were chosen. However, due to the differences in the opposition media, not only one journal, one nationalistic (*Sözcü*) and one leftist (*Cumhuriyet*) newspapers were chosen to observe the different sides of the opposition media. Even though a polarized media environment and politic climate caused a decline in the trust of the media, it can be said that these newspapers represent the encouragement of their politic views.

To examine the coverage of the violations two periods, January 2015 and January 2017 was chosen. There were a peace process and ceasefire between 2013 and 24th July 2015 between Turkey and the armed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Although it is expected that this kind of periods should cause a decline in human rights violations, Turkey's record was not at expected level. During this process violations arise from Kurdish conflict had a vital decrease, significant human rights violations privately caused by Gezi protests and demonstrations in some Kurdish towns such as Cizre, remained. In January 2017, as explained above, both clashes in the South East of Turkey and coup attempt increased violations throughout Turkey. European Convention on Human Rights and the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights Human was determined as the criteria, to distinguish the reports on violations. ECHR decisions should be implemented by the Turkish courts according to Turkish Constitution, article 90: *"In the case of a conflict between international agreements, duly put into effect, concerning fundamental rights and freedoms and the laws due to differences in provisions on the same matter, the provisions of international agreements shall prevail."*⁴¹

All the news published in four newspapers in these two periods have been scanned through, and reports about human rights violations have been chosen to see to what extent human rights violations are covered by the newspapers.⁴² This means that 25,436 articles were scanned entirely. The frequency of reports on rights violations on the front pages and evaluated how far such news

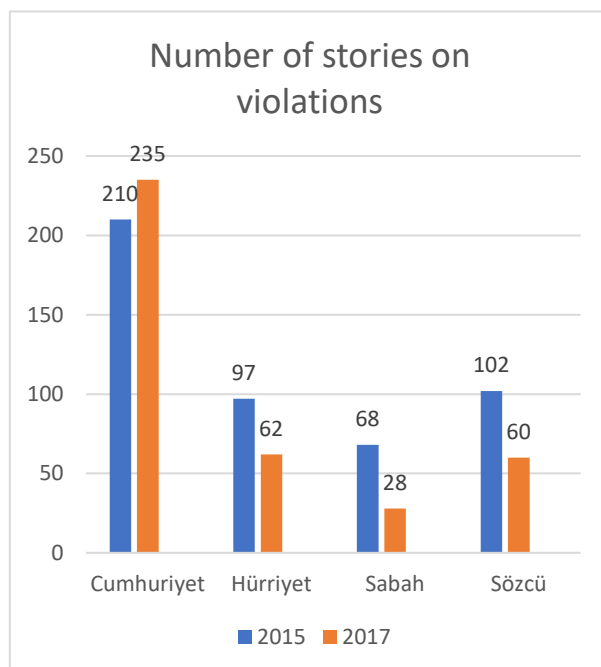
⁴¹ https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf

⁴² As Bernard Cohen stated: *"The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."*

was made visible to the public were examined. The exposure of differences in the discourse of coverages, as it concerns the victims and the perpetrators, has been examined. The sources and statements of victims, as well as officials, were studied too.

6.2 Coverage of the violations

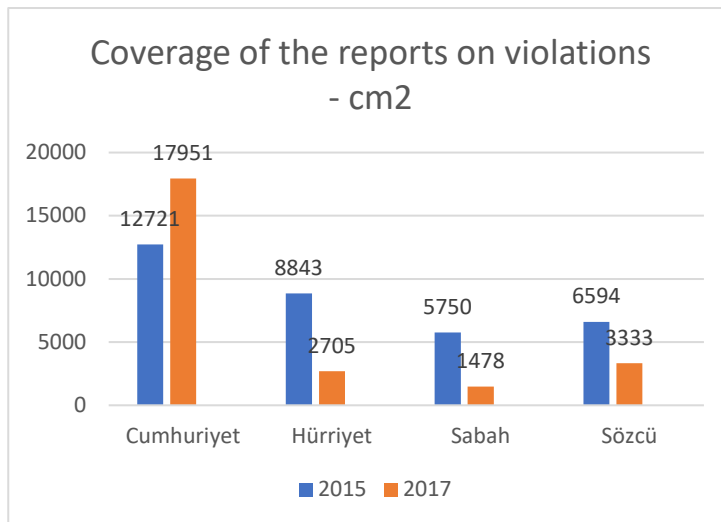
The primary solution of the examination is there was a significant decline in reporting human rights violations 2015 to 2017. Three Turkish newspapers, the pro-government, the impartial and the nationalist opposition, covered human rights violations more in 2015 than 2017, although there was an increase in violations in 2017. The coverage shrank, the number of words and the number of reports declined in 2017 in all these three newspapers. Only *Cumhuriyet*, the leftist opposition newspaper, reported slightly more on violations in 2017 than in 2015.



In January of 2015, 210 stories on human rights violations out of 3,208 stories and columns were published in the leftist opposition newspaper, daily *Cumhuriyet*. It means the newspapers' reports about violations were 6.5% of the total number of stories and columns. In 2017, the number of the stories on violations increased to 235. (12%) The area of the coverage on violations concerning square centimetres were 12,721, 6.5% of all coverage of the stories and columns in 2015. Two years later, in the same month, the area of the coverage on the violations increased 17,951-square centimetres. It was 8% of all

coverage. The *Cumhuriyet* used 57,551 words in these reports in 2015 and 2017 number of words rose to 64,548.

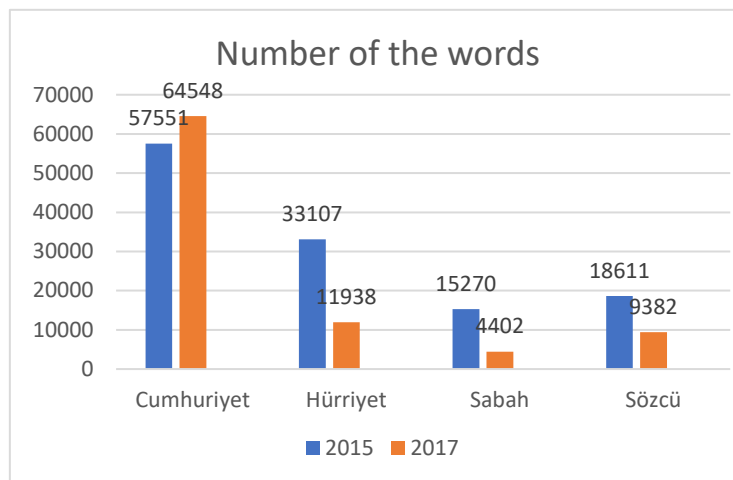
Hürriyet, the neutral newspaper, published 97 stories on violations out of 2,855 reports and columns in January of 2015. The percentage of the *Hürriyet*'s reports on violations was 3.4. In 2017, the number of reports on violations declined nearly 50%, and there were just 62 reports on violations in *Hürriyet*. This was only 2.1% of the total stories and comments in the paper. The area of the coverage on violations was 8,843, square centimetres, 3.4% of all coverage of the stories and columns in 2015. Similarly, the area of the coverage declined in 2017: The paper reserved only 2,705-square centimetres of the total 224,665 -square centimetres of the reports and columns. This means only



1.2% of the newspaper was used for reports on violations. Despite the stories on violations of the *Hürriyet* in 2015 January included 33,107 words, this number was only 11,938 in 2017.

Daily *Sabah*, the pro-government newspaper, had 68 stories on violations in January 2015. There were 3,142 stories and columns in this month in the newspaper. This means

items on violations were 2.2% of all stories and columns. In 2017, the number of the stories on violations was 28 out of 3,143, and the percentage of the violation stories were only 0.9%. The coverage of the violations was 5,750 square centimetres, and it was 2.48% of the total coverage of the stories and columns, in the first period. In 2017 the area was 1,478-square centimetres, and it was just 0.6% of the total coverage of the newspaper. Finally, in 2015 15,270 words were used in these reports in the *Sabah*, but it was only 4,402 in 2017. The second opposition newspaper,



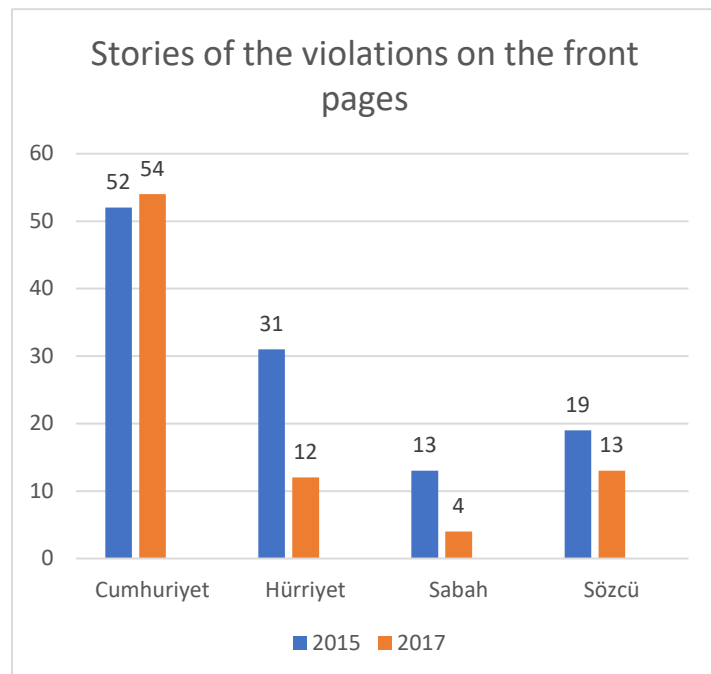
nationalist *Sözcü* had 102 (3%) reports on violations out of 3,416 stories and articles in January of 2015. In 2017, the newspaper's reports on violation were 60 (1.9%) out of 3,160 stories and columns. The *Sözcü's* area of the coverage of the items on violations was 6,594-square centimetres, 3.27% of all coverage of

the stories and articles in 2015. However, 2 years after, the area was 3,333-square centimetres, just 1.6% of the total. The newspaper used 18,611 words in these reports in 2015 and 9,332 words in 2017.

6.3 Visibility of the stories

It is generally considered that the front pages of the newspapers are the most important pages, playing the crucial role in 'agenda-setting'. Although there is a decline in circulation of the newspapers all over the world, still newspapers and their cover pages has significant effect on the

other media environments such as websites and social media: “Newspaper front pages, while declining in the total share of media attention they command, thus not only remain relevant but also continue to function as critically important spaces in the broader media ecology. The front page of the print edition of newspapers has long been, and still remains, both a powerful indicator of the



importance of a given story and a key mechanism for driving attention across all media platforms.”⁴³

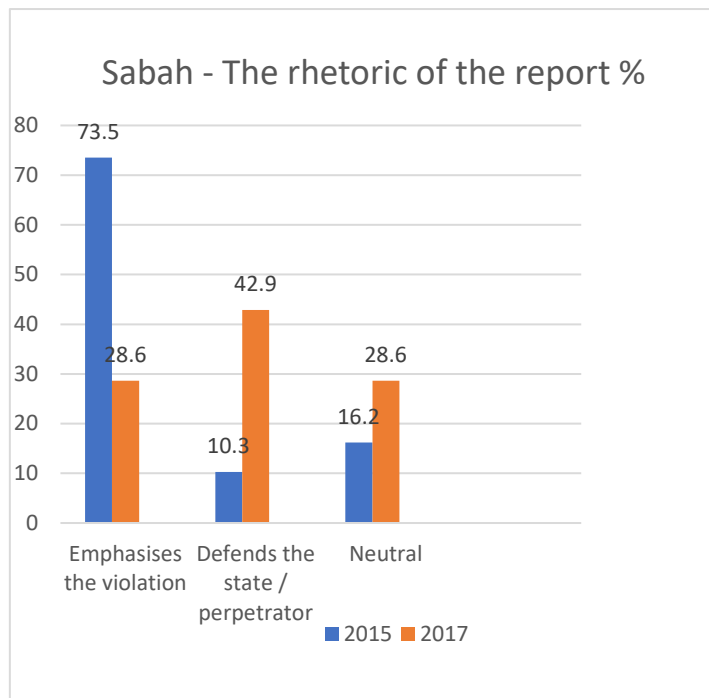
Parallel to other results, the *Cumhuriyet* was the first newspaper regarding giving more violation stories on its front page. There were 52 stories, 23.3% of all stories on violations, in the *Cumhuriyet*’s front pages, in January of 2015 and this number was nearly same (54 stories, 23% of all reports on violations) in January of 2017. All the other newspapers published fewer

violation stories on their front pages in 2017 than 2015. The *Hürriyet*’s number of reports on violations on its front page was 31 in 2015’s first month, compared to just 12 in January of 2017. This means there was decline from 27% to 17% of all violation stories. The *Sabah*’s front pages were covering 13 news on violations, 19% of all violation stories in 2015 and with the decline only four reports were published in *Sabah*’s front pages in 2017’s January. The coverage of the violations in the *Sözcü*’s front page had a decrease of 19 to 13, but the percentage of the stories published was nearly the same (18% in 2015 and 20% in 2017).

6.4 The rhetoric of the reports

⁴³ Sasha Costanza-Chock and Pablo Rey Mazon, *PageOneX: New Approaches to Newspaper Front Page Analysis*, International Journal of Communication 10(2016), 2318–2345 - USA
<http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/4442/1652>

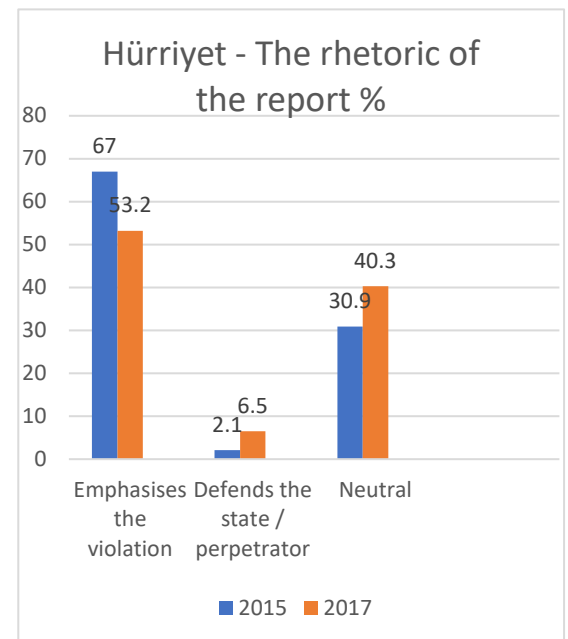
Though a content analysis method used for this research, an attempt is also made to analyse the



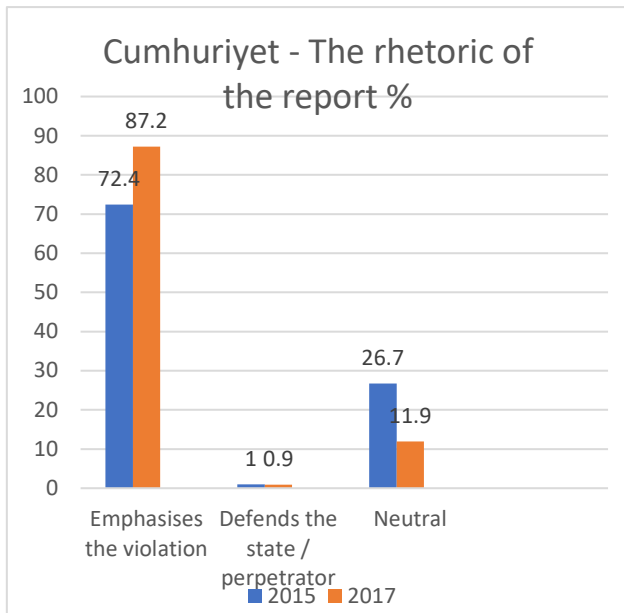
question of “the rhetoric of the reports”. Each story on the violation is questioned if it “emphasises the violation” or “defends the state / perpetrator” or has a “neutral” discourse. The difficulty of using a qualitative method in a content analysis-based research is obvious, but it is necessary to expose the encouragement of the outlets whilst reporting on violations. Having evaluated the reports in terms of the discourse, it can be easily seen that there was a decline in emphasising the

violation in reports 2015 to 2017 in both main stream and pro-government media. In January of 2015, “emphasising the violation” in all stories on violations was 73.5% in the *Sabah*, but it declined to 28.6% in 2017. Unsurprisingly, the *Sabah* defended the state or the perpetrator in 10.3% of all stories in 2015, the items defended the state, or the perpetrator was 42.9% two years later. Declining of the emphasising the violation caused the rates of the “neutral” stories. In 2015 the “neutral” stories were 16% of all stories on the violation, but it increased to 28.6% in 2017.

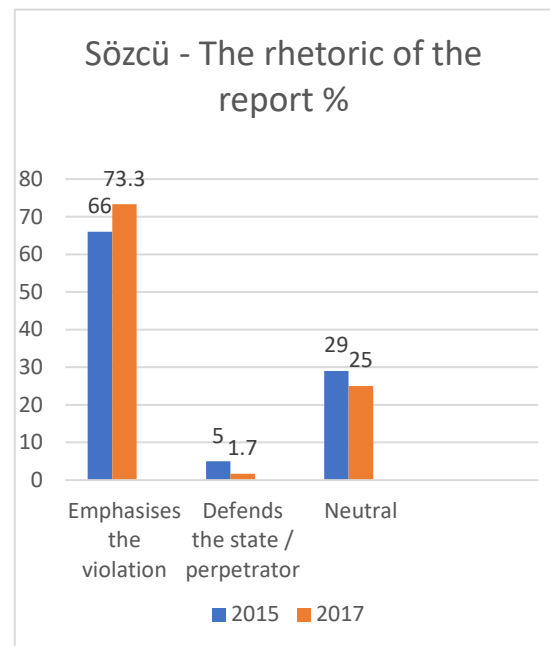
The *Hürriyet*’s stories which emphasised the violation were 67% of all stories on violations in 2015, but this percentage was 53.2 in 2017. “Defending the state and the perpetrator” was seen in 2.1% in 2015, but it rose to 6.5% in 2017. Similarly, “neutral” stories increased 30.9% to 40.3% in two years in the main stream newspaper.



Contrarily, the opposition newspapers, the *Cumhuriyet* and the *Sözcü* emphasised the violations more than 2015, in 2017. 72.4% of the *Cumhuriyet*'s reports were emphasising the violation in 2015, and it increased to 87.2% in 2017. Similarly, 66% of the *Sözcü*'s reports were emphasising the violation in 2015 and 73.3% in 2017. "Defending the state or the perpetrator" was only in 2 stories (1%) in 2015 and 2017 in the *Cumhuriyet*. The *Cumhuriyet* used a neutral language 26.7% of all reports on the violation in 2015, and in 2017 it declined to 11.9% in 2017. *Sözcü*'s reports defended the state or the perpetrator 5 times (5%) in 2015 and only one instance (1.7%) in 2017. 29% of the



Sözcü's reports were in a neutral discourse in 2015, and it declined to 25% in 2017.

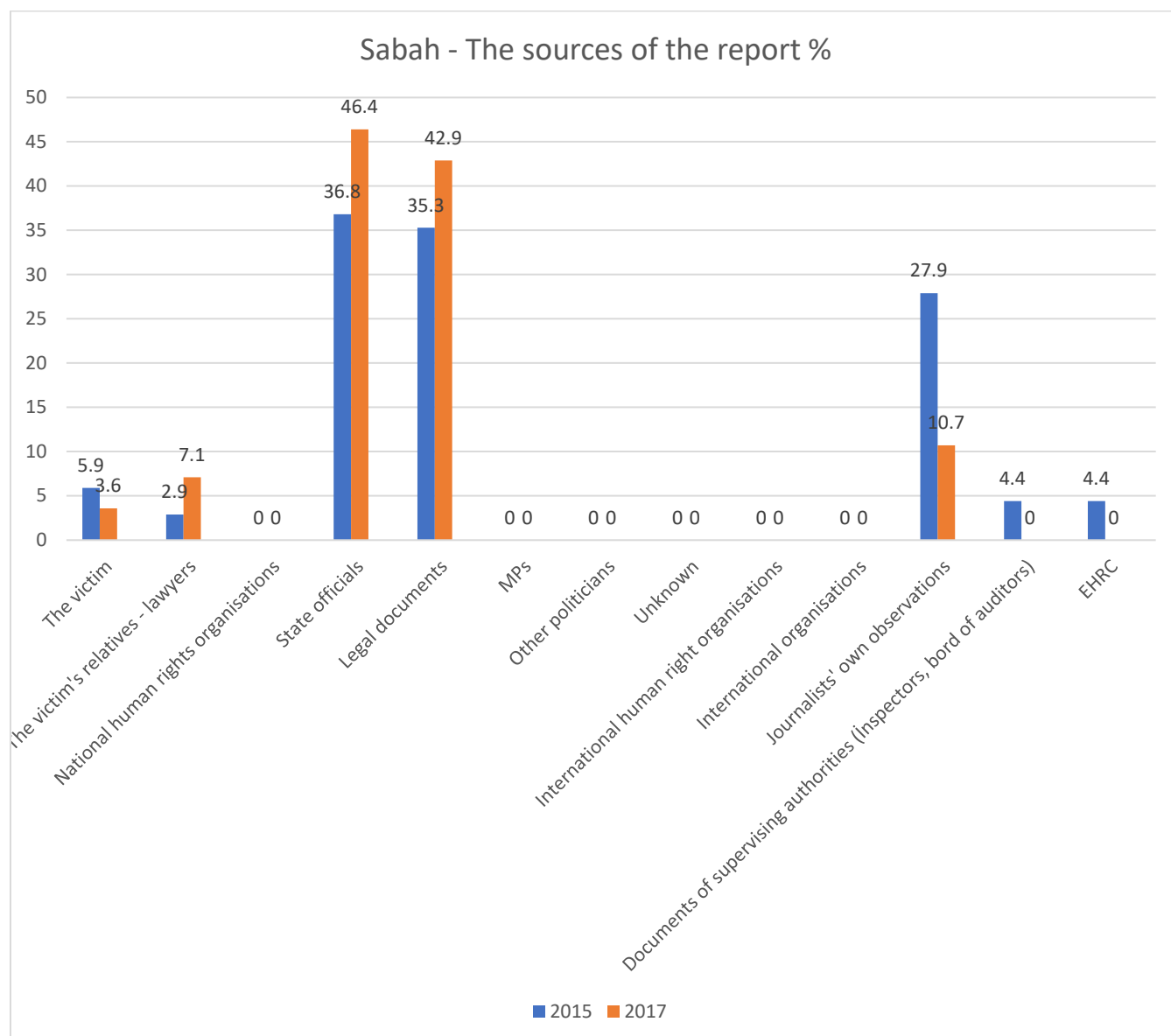


6.5 Journalists and their sources

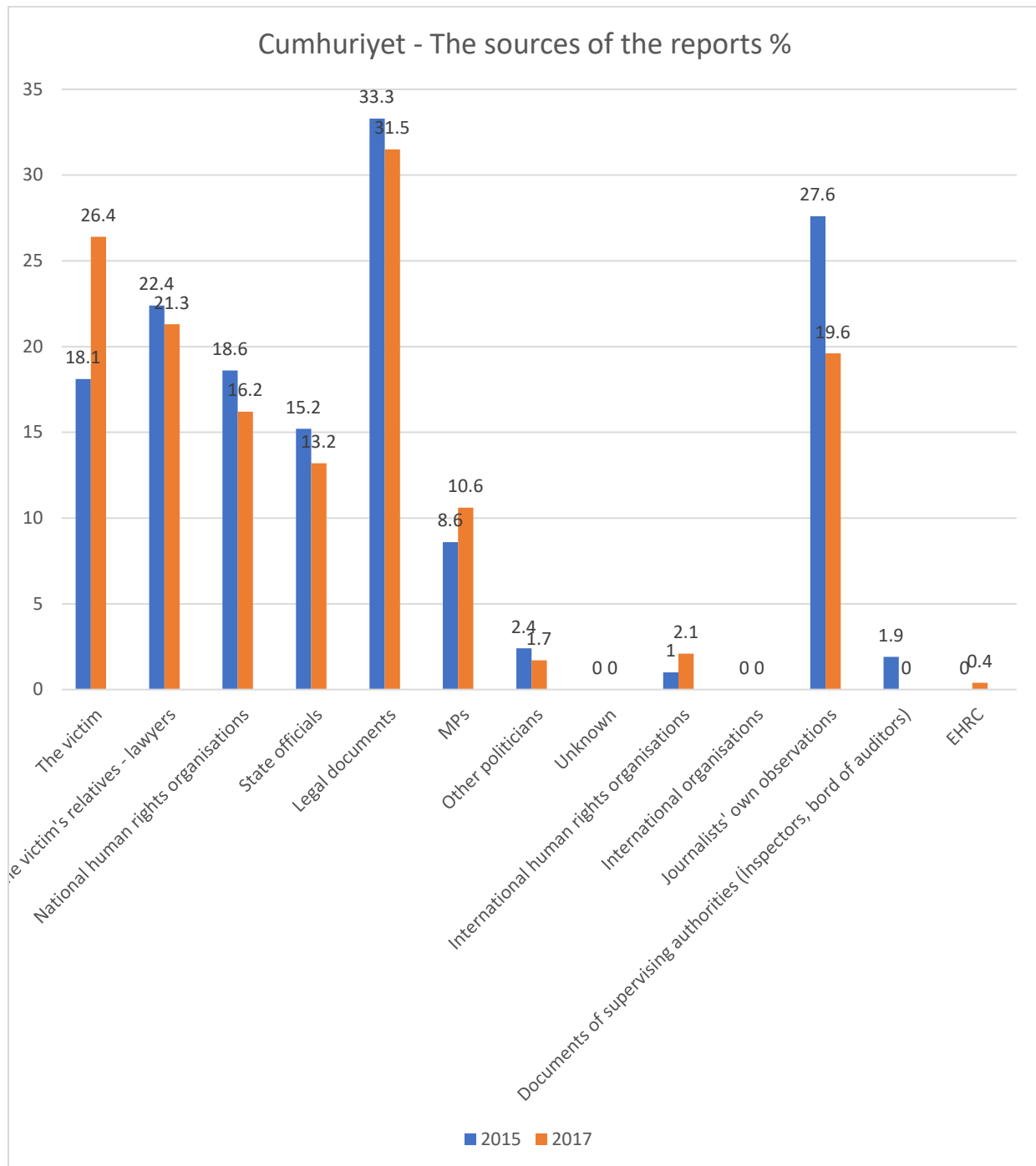
Sources are vital for balanced, objective story telling. This is key when reporting on a violation which contains a conflict between the perpetrator and the victim. To challenge this difficulty and to provide accurate knowledge in such conflictive situations, the sources have a significant role in the media.

Turkish journalists are usually criticised for paying more attention to official sources than to civil sources. The *Sabah*, the pro-government newspaper referred official sources most both in 2015 and 2017, but there was a notable increase in using official sources in 2017. In 2015, 36.8% of reports included official source's knowledge or states, and in 2017 this rate rose to 43%. The second source of the stories on the violations has been "legal documents" and remained 35.3% in 2015 and with an increased, 43% in 2017. The reports written by the journalists' own observation declined in the reports 2015 (28%) to 2017 (10.7%). The victims, victims' relatives and lawyers were only 9% in 2015

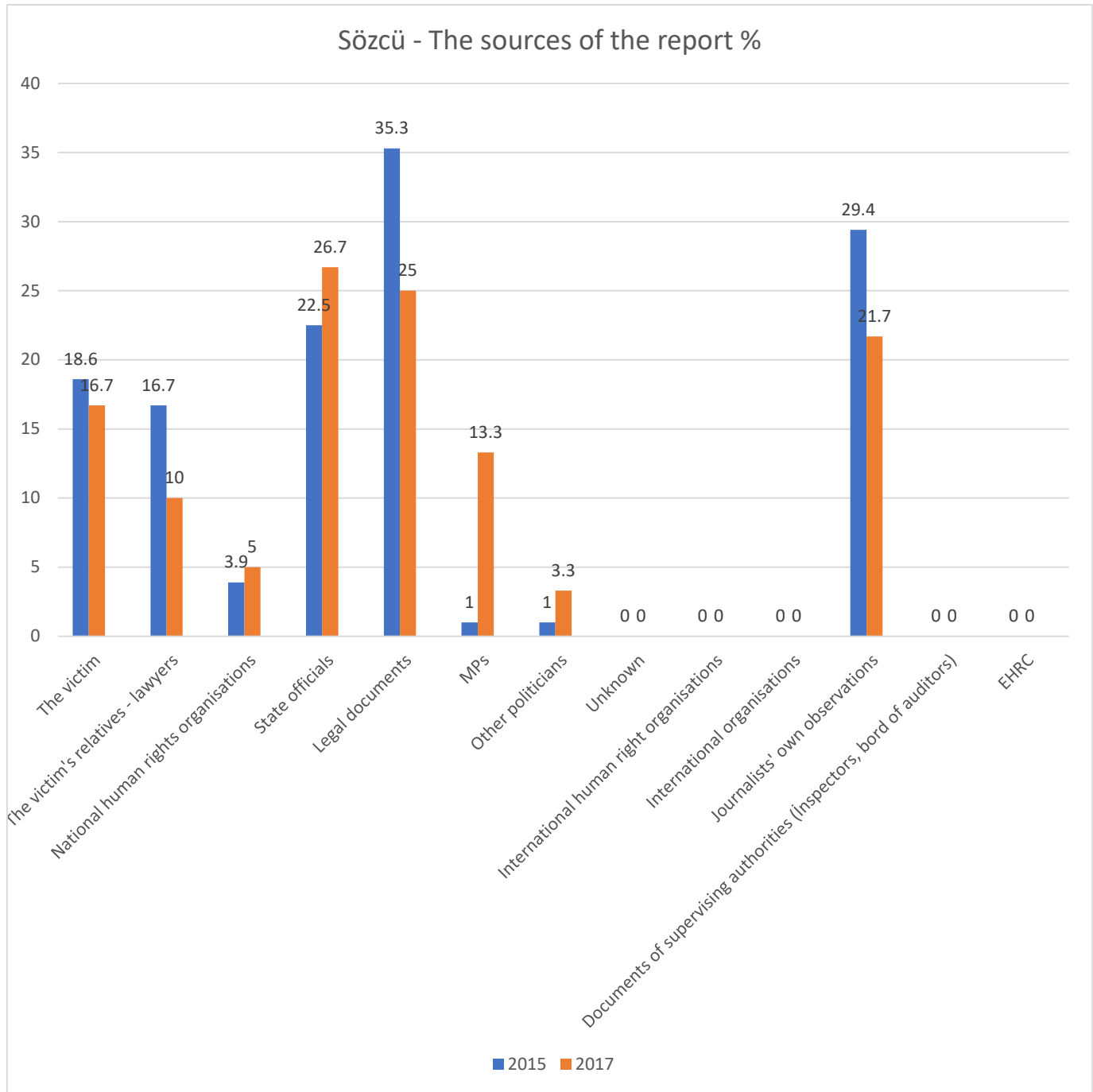
in the reports and 10.5% in 2017. It is noteworthy that the pro-government newspaper never referred national and international human rights organisations as a source both in 2015 and 2017.



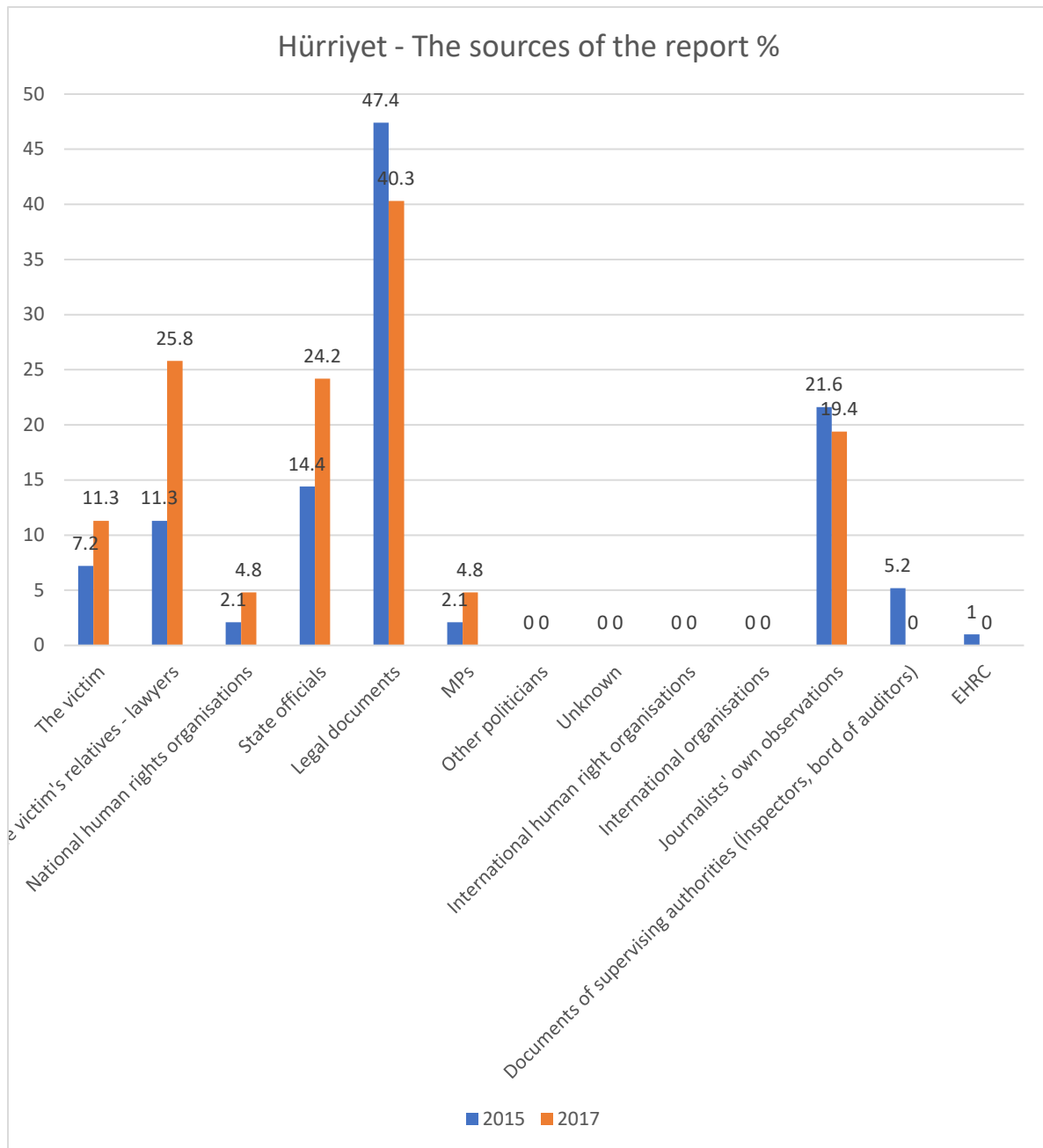
The *Cumhuriyet* has a broader range of sources than all the other newspapers in its stories on violations and expect little changes, the rates of references sources in these reports were similar and the official sources were less than the other papers: The victim, relatives and lawyers 40.5% in 2015 and 47.7% in 2017; national human rights organisations 18.6% in 2015 and 16.2% in 2017; official sources 15.2% in 2015 and %13.2 in 2017; legal documents 33% in 2015 and 31.5% in 2017; MP's 8.6% in 2015 and 10.6% in 2017; journalists' own observation 27.6% in 2015 and 19.6% in 2017.



The *Sözcü*, nationalist opposition newspaper prefers nearly equally official sources, legal documents, and victims. In 2015, official sources were referred 22.5% in the reports, and it slightly increased to 26.7% in 2017. Legal documents were used more in 2015 (35.3) less in 2017 (25), and victims, relatives, and lawyers were also used more in 2015: 35.3% in 2015 compared to 26.7% in 2017. Interestingly there is an increase in MP's as sources in 2017, 1% to 13%.



The *Hürriyet*, relies on documents more than the other sources. In 2015 47.4% of the reports were written using the legal documents, and 40.3% in 2017. The increase of referring official sources 2015 (14.4%) to 2017 (24.2%) and the increase of using victim, relatives, and lawyers as sources are (18.5% to 37%) noteworthy.



7 Conclusion

The survey shows there is widespread self-censorship in Turkish media. Journalists believe that human rights violations have increased in the last five years, but this has not resulted in a rise in coverage. Although there were significantly more human rights violations in 2017, the coverage of the violations declined in pro-government, impartial and nationalist opposition newspapers. Journalists as a whole are not happy with the quality of reporting on human rights and do not trust the information they receive. Journalists also fear being prosecuted or losing their jobs for reporting on human rights violations, and as a result, many choose not to write these stories. The journalists who work for pro-government outlets feel much more afraid than the others and reporting human rights can make it hard for them to find a new job. Political pressure, the ownership of outlets, judicial pressure, and fear of losing the job are main reasons journalists say they avoid reporting on human rights violations. Pro-government and impartial newspapers tend to defend the state and perpetrators, and less emphasise the violation in their stories under the state of emergency period when the number of violations rises. Although the *Sözcü*, nationalist opposition outlet, emphasised the violations more than 2015, in 2017 it could not report more than 2015.

Whilst journalists have more faith in victims, victims' relatives or their lawyers and human rights organisations than official sources, when reporting on a violation, the newspapers, in comparison, refer to more official sources in the stories of the violations.

The results of the content-analysis in this research demonstrates that increase in human rights violations does not cause an increase in reporting human rights violations in the media. On the contrary, the increased violations has caused a decline in the number of the stories of violations. Not only the numbers of the stories have reduced, but the visibility of the stories also declined.

Only *Cumhuriyet*, the leftist opposition newspaper, reported more on violations and gave more coverage concerning square centimetres and number of words in the stories, in 2017 than in 2015. The *Cumhuriyet* refers an abundant source in the violation stories, and it remained unchanging under the state of emergency. The *Cumhuriyet* also referred more the victims, victims' relatives and victim's lawyers than official sources before and during the state of emergency.

This research exposes that mainstream media in Turkey, under the current state of affairs and with its structure of media ownership and the nationalistic view, can never be independent and can never report on violations freely. Judicial and political pressure on journalists causes self-censorship and avoiding reporting about 'dangerous' stories. As seen in the research, independent newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* can be freer and can be brave enough to report violations. To improve journalism and to report on human rights violations in Turkey, there needs to be more independent newspapers.

Efforts aiming to finish or reduce human rights violations should prioritise promoting and supporting independent media outlets in Turkey.

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