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Turkey: Arrests of journalists point to continuing pattern of criminalising dissent

Amnesty International urged Turkish authorities to release journalists detained in a wave of arrests yesterday, unless they have credible evidence that they have committed a recognisably criminal offence.

Yesterday's arrests of senior journalists in a section of the media that has played a leading role in covering allegations of corruption by government officials, raise serious questions about the authorities' motivation for their detention.

The Turkish authorities have a track record of using the broadly phrased anti-terrorism legislation, under which these arrests were made, to target political opponents and there is good reason to believe that is what is happening here.

The abuse of these laws has contributed significantly to Turkey's woeful record of criminalising dissent, violating the right to freedom of expression.

In a press release issued yesterday, Istanbul Prosecutor's office stated that 31 people would be detained. In the event, 27 people were detained including six print media current and former journalists, and are being questioned on the basis of allegedly "establishing, leading or being members of an armed organisation, falsification and spreading false rumours in the context of the organization".

End/