



The Role of Local Media in Conflict Resolution

DPI Roundtable Meeting, Istanbul

14th November 2012





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Foreword

This report details the discussion that took place during the Democratic Progress Institute's roundtable meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on 14th November 2012, regarding the role that local media can play in conflict resolution. The media are crucial actors in peace building and democratic reform at local, national and international levels, and can influence and shape debate. We hope that this record of the discussions that took place during this roundtable will provide a step towards tackling issues surrounding media bias, self-censorship, the language of the media and approaches to journalism at the local level, helping to influence the tone and language employed in local media organs. This roundtable discussion is one of a series of the Institute's Turkey seminars and is something DPI very much hopes to continue. Many thanks to everyone who participated and made this dialogue so spirited and thought provoking.

DPI aims to foster an environment in which different parties share information, ideas, knowledge and concerns connected to the development of democratic solutions and outcomes. Our work supports the development of a pluralistic political arena capable of generating consensus and ownership over work on key issues surrounding democratic solutions at political and local levels.

We focus on providing expertise and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvements in promoting

peace and democracy building internationally. Within this context DPI aims to contribute to the establishment of a structured public dialogue on peace and democratic advancement, as well as to create new and widen existing platforms for discussions on peace and democracy building. In order to achieve this we seek to encourage an environment of inclusive, frank, structured discussions whereby different parties are in the position to openly share knowledge, concerns and suggestions for democracy building and strengthening across multiple levels. DPIs objective throughout this process is to identify common priorities and develop innovative approaches to participate in and influence the process of finding democratic solutions. DPI also aims to support and strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society and policy-makers through its projects and output. Comparative studies of relevant situations are seen as an effective tool for ensuring that the mistakes of others are not repeated or perpetuated. Therefore we see comparative analysis of models of peace and democracy building to be central to the achievement of our aims and objectives.

This report was prepared with the kind assistance of Graeme MacDonald.



Kerim Yildiz, Director
Democratic Progress Institute
November 2012

DPI REPORT:

Roundtable: The Role of Local Media in Conflict Resolution

Istanbul, Turkey

14th November 2012



Participants in DPIs roundtable meeting at Cezayir, Istanbul:

Eleanor Johnson, Nevzat Cingirt, Ayla Akat, Ömer Büyüktimur, Cümhur Kılıçcıoğlu, Dr Paul Moorcraft, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Bejan Matur, Sinan Hakan, Sidar Basut, Ferman Salmış, Emine Üçok Erdoğan, Ayhan Bilgen, Kerim Yıldız, Ali Bayramoğlu, Nurettin Memur, Kadri Salaz, Mustafa Arısüt, Cengiz Çandar, Ahmet Akgül, Selçuk Küpçük, Dursunali Sazkaya, Ömer İdris Akdın, Yavuz Baydar, Aslı Tekinay, Betül Aydın, Necip Capraz, Bekir Ağırđır, Naci Sapan

Session One

Moderator: Ali Bayramoğlu¹

Firstly, a warm welcome to you all on behalf of the Democratic Progress Institute. Many thanks for joining us today – I know many of you have travelled far to be here, to take part in what we hope will be a very valuable discussion on the subject of local media's role in conflict resolution. The roles of regional journalists, and the subject of press conditions in Turkey in political terms, are serious issues for us all. The role of regional and local media must be balanced against that of the national media in Turkey, and both of these entities make reference to one another. Many of the crucial events that are taking place today are happening in Eastern Anatolia, and the conflicts, engagements, sensations and emotions flowing from those events directly affect public perceptions across the country. This only further underlines and stresses the importance of local media today.

The role of regional and local media in conflict resolution is vitally important. This is the subject of today's meeting. Shortly Mr. Cengiz Çandar will take the floor, and after him our guest Dr Paul Moorcraft, will speak to us. Before that, however, let me say a few words myself.

¹ Ali Bayramoğlu is a writer and political commentator. He is a columnist with the daily newspaper *Yeni Safak* and a presenter with Turkey's '24 TV' television channel. Mr. Bayramoğlu is widely published in the area of social and political analysis.

The press, as you may know, has traditionally been labelled the '*Fourth Estate*', but what do we mean by this? It is largely a function of editing. Those with political responsibility, as well as regional and local partners, shareholders and stakeholders in the political area inform society and also control any editing. They indirectly admit the public into the decision making process. I believe this subject to be very important in an ethical sense, and it is, perhaps, one of the most important responsibilities of journalism.



Moderator Ali Bayramoğlu

Moreover, broadcasting organs: newspapers and television - these are the product of politics. The core of this business is that it is a product of politics. For this reason, it is the function, and the hierarchy of the news, and also the writing of news, as well as the approach of the news and the definitions it gives that are essential. If it is a political product, and if politics directly affect the dialogue around the definitions and perceptions of different nations, then all of the norms and rules, such as news hierarchy, the writing of news, the norms of the news and all the ethical codes, combine different segments of society and throw together ethical rules and thoughts. All of these are functions of news products, especially in countries like Turkey, where there are many conflicts. And for the audience or the reader as well as for the conflict participants, this creates a number of reactions and national opinions.

This functionality of the products of news and its responsibility to interact are highly important. Creating a reaction based on news is also important, but we should not forget that one of the most important issues to hand is resolution and solution; so the important thing is to be part of the political discourse. As a last remark, let me tell you that in Turkey the media is experiencing problems. I am not only talking about the local press and media; it is the same for the national media. These ethical norms and codes; approaching the news and social sensitivity and reactions; creating a public arena for everybody and also how to effect a solution, directly and indirectly are at issue. These are the general norms of broadcasting and news. On the other hand, what we see is that there is an encouragement of conflict and engagement by the

media. This is the general tendency in Turkish media, although it is not something that we expect or wish for. Furthermore, in the interpretation of news and the making of news, the language that we use, now tends towards militarism. The words that we use are often a little bit chauvinist; for example when discussing the ‘positioning of arms’. People employ this vocabulary in a way that shows which side we are on. Sometimes labels and other things directly transform the news so that it is not healthy – for example of *Hürriyet* newspaper, which is the most popular newspaper in Turkey. When we talk about the role of broadcasting and the press, we can say that broadcasting and newspapers are now encouraging conflicts, rather than peace, which is very concerning for me. That is why I see DPI’s meeting today as highly important for us. I look forward to Cengiz Çandar’s contribution to this topic, as this approach that I describe is now directly affecting our country as a whole. So again, I would like to welcome you all and I hope that our discussion will be highly active and interactive also. I now welcome our first speaker on the panel, as you know, a very important senior journalist: Mr Cengiz Çandar.

Opening Statement: Cengiz Çandar²

Thank you very much indeed. So today we will talk about the role of the media, and I am very curious about it, just like you. I would also like to hear all of your opinions. The title of today's meeting focuses on the role of local and regional media in conflict resolution. To be frank, I don't have a clear idea myself, but I believe that by talking, by sharing, we can define it and maybe draw some conclusions.

Let me also say a few words about the DPI. I would like to talk about the objectives of this Institute and then I will talk about the general concept. The director of DPI is here with us, Mr. Kerim Yildiz. A year and half ago the idea of undertaking comparative studies to help improve conflict resolution prompted Kerim and his friends to establish this organisation. By the way, DPI does not only focus on Turkey, but on other countries as well. It focuses on conflicts and conflict regions across the world. Among these areas we can mention Africa, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, among others. So academics and journalists from these countries, as well as ex-diplomats, and senior diplomats participate as well. Some wise people have spoken at the events of this organisation. And there is also the Northern Ireland peace process, which has been focused on. Tony Blair was represented by Jonathan Powell, a member of DPI's Council of Experts, during the peace process in Northern Ireland. Such names have contributed to the structure of DPI. So

² Senior Journalist and columnist for Radikal Daily News, expert on the Middle East and former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to then Turkish president Turgut Özal.

we in Turkey are just one reflection of this whole organisation, although Galatasaray University hosted the first meetings. The Turkey project of DPI examines the Kurdish Question: we are looking for the solution.

DPI's activities have included all of Turkey's main political parties, including the governing AK Party and also the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). Members of Parliament from all of these parties have attended the meetings of DPI and have taken part in various studies. The Comparative Study Visit to Northern Ireland was of particular interest and relevance to participants.



Speaker Cengiz Çandar

Other Comparative Study Visits have taken place in Scotland, which now has a different governance model. The Members of Parliament from Turkey learned a lot about this governance model, and tried to understand more about the position of Scotland with regards to devolution and so forth. A few months afterwards a study was held in the Republic of Ireland. Participants visited Dublin, in a visit hosted by the Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They met with different political segments and learned about the past conflict in Ireland and about the different political elements of the whole region. Last summer, a Comparative Study Visit took place in Wales, and participants learned about the Welsh position and the way in which they perceive the future; their expectations; their principles and they talked about the whole process. In the near future, a Comparative Study Visit to South Africa is planned, as well as other studies in different areas of relevance. Other planned studies include a visit to Spain, to learn about the issues of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. This is also on DPI's agenda right now. Even Sri Lanka is on the agenda. As my colleague who sits to my left, Dr Paul Moorcraft is aware, achieving peace takes time, the whole process takes energy. As for Turkey's Kurdish Question, we are now very far from the solution and we have the sensation that it will take years and years to resolve, even though it is in fact an emergency. This is a 'hot topic', and we see that now we may have to wait a few years more for a resolution, but all of the experiences of other countries can help us. All of the experiences and learnings gained during DPI's activities are recorded and transcripts of all discussions and meetings held are published by the Institute on its website.

The subject of media that affects the whole country; we see reflections of it in every city: you see the funerals of Turkish soldiers coming from Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Mardin, or Şırnak and affecting other cities such as Denizli, Çankırı, Tekirdağ, Zonguldak, Muğla, Sivas, Nevşehir and other places in the country.

So we see reflections everywhere, and when we say ‘media’ we do not mean only the media Istanbul and thus the national media. The centre of Turkey is not only Istanbul, but also comprises other cities, and the solution to this conflict, and the importance of the media and its results and effects *can* be seen in a positive way. We can see the potentially positive effects of the national media on the problem; the representation of the media is very important. My friend Hassan Cemal who could not be here today, unfortunately, would have talked longer than me, so I feel secure in prolonging my speech by a few more minutes, if you will let me!

I have my own personal experience in the media. I have 30 years experience of being a war correspondent and I am also a reporter. I spent 30 years in war zones and it was not ceaseless, but it was very intense. In many war regions I served as a correspondent and as a journalist. So I have my own experience, I know my colleagues’ experiences and have listened to the stories of friends. In conflict issues, serving as a journalist is very hard. When look back at my past I understand now that it was a very difficult responsibility, being a journalist. The Lebanon War took place in the 1970s and the Palestinian organisations were also part of the whole civil war. Civil wars are extremely harsh, we can see in those contexts very un-military things that can be very upsetting and, as a journalist,

if you are serving in these regions your duty is to directly transfer all of your knowledge and information to your nation's people. Journalists are human beings, and after a while you may just lose control of your emotions. I also remember my American and European colleagues in those years. Even though they did not have any connections culturally or locally with the people, even though they were only there for professional reasons, they were usually approaching things from a particular side; either that of the host country or of the other country, or one segment or another segment. They just picked a side. The European and American journalists did not have any context with regards to local people so this was natural. And in the resolution of conflicts today, local media, national media and international media and the rules of all three are now overlapping. This is what I see.

Should journalists judge things as 'right and wrong'? Should a journalist be a soulless person who says 'Ok, today we have seen two bombs and five people were killed' – should this be the role and the duty of a journalist? Or should a journalist also express and define the pain and suffering of the local people and be the one who takes a side? This job is very difficult and there are very difficult dimensions to it. Our next speaker Dr Moorcraft lost an eye in a conflict and there are other colleagues who lost their lives. When we think of the internal wars of countries, it is very hard to survive. I also personally endured a lot of difficulties, and internal war or internal conflicts, whether they are ethnic or regional or religious, can be very meaningless and we know that they can be very wild and barbaric.

Let me tell you my own story. A few years ago in Baghdad, President Jalal Talabani invited me to be his guest. I was there, but my reason to be there was to watch the trial of Saddam Hussein. A few days later, there was the trial. I went to lunch and Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Ambassador, was also at the lunch, and he received some news. The news was that the trial of Saddam Hussein had been delayed; I asked by how many days. They answered, 'we don't know because this is Baghdad, and you can never know. It might be one day or it might be five days. Nobody knows. Of course, the trial will be held one day, but we don't know when.' This was an unexpected situation and my journalist friend who works at the Arab Al-Hayat newspaper was a Kurd. He did not know either. 'You go back to your country, then when we know the exact date we will call you and you can come straight back,' they told me. 'But give us your passport information because we would like to prepare you a journalist's badge, and it might take a few days so let's not waste time. All the security at the Baghdad trials belongs to the Americans, so we can distribute your passport ID information to the American officers and when the exact date is known you can come directly from Turkey.' I agreed and I gave them the name that is on my passport: Osman Cengiz Çandar. They asked me, 'where does this name Osman come from?' and I told them that this is my second name and that my family refer to me as Osman. My friend was surprised. He said 'They will transfer you directly from the airport. There used to be direct flights from Ankara to Baghdad, but following the bombings and security issues, they sometimes block the airport. So if a problem occurs during your

transfer from the airport, then if you take a taxi from the airport you know directly where to go, but we may not greet you at the airport.’ I agreed and asked what I should do? They advised me not to show my ID and not to mention that my name was Osman. I asked them why anyone should have a problem regarding my name, and I was told that it was because my relationship with the Islam religion was only based on the country of Iran (because I have visited Iran many times and have met with very important representatives of the religion in Iran). I assured them that I would be alright because of the fact that I have very good friendships with the Shia people. Then he told me that I would not have time to explain all of these things to anyone, because the person in control, if they saw my name, Osman, would shoot me with this gun. So I would not have time to explain the meaning of my name or talk about my Shia friends.

With only a finger on a gun or a move of the lips one can lose one’s life because there is war and internal conflict and therefore control is in the hands of whomever. We don’t know or have to clarify ourselves as in other times, so a serious war situation is different. Like the war in Turkey that we have now.

I am concerned about the many affected areas and also about the martyr funerals and all of the reference points in our country and specifically in Istanbul. Other places are being affected more than Istanbul and there is a lack of communication between local media and broadcasting in the cities. That is why I am encouraging the local media to let your voices be heard. Your ideas and your

negotiations are essential for us. And by the way, when we say local, life is even harder because we know the conditions of our country. The governor or the director of police, the prosecutor or the judge or the important person of this or that province and all the political elements of the city are all together. They spend time together, so the local media has to survive despite the stress of being under the control of all of these people. It is not as safe as in other cities as it is in Istanbul; preparing news and making free broadcasts is almost impossible in smaller cities. As I said, my friend Hasan Cemal, who had hoped to attend today's roundtable meeting, would have spoken longer than me – but thank you for your patience and attendance.

Moderator – Ali Bayramoğlu

Thank you very much indeed Cengiz Çandar for your words. Now we will give the floor to Dr Paul Moorcraft. He is the director of an independent think tank institution established in London, the Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis and is also working as a crisis management advisor for international organisations. Additionally, he is working as a Professor at Cardiff University in the Department of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. Dr Moorcraft has worked in Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, in more than 30 conflict zones and is a freelance television producer and war correspondent, and he has also worked as a journalist with many journals and newspapers. He has written with a variety of very politically diverse journals and newspapers, including the liberal Guardian in the United Kingdom to the conservative *Washington*

Times, from the *Canberra Times* to Johannesburg's *Business Day*. He also appears on the BBC, Sky, and Al Jazeera and others as a military affairs specialist, and is the former editor of a number of UK security and foreign policy magazines, including *Defence Review* and *Defence International*. Additionally, he has lectured at ten major international universities in the US, Europe, Africa and Australasia on journalism, politics and international relations. I offer a warm welcome to Dr Moorcraft today, and look forward to hearing him share with us today. Many thanks.



Speaker Dr Paul Moorcraft

Speaker - Dr Paul Moorcraft³

Bore da i chi gyd, a diolch yn fawr iawn am y croeso! I am speaking my native tongue, Welsh, the old language of Great Britain. I say Great Britain to differentiate it from England. To translate – good morning to you all, and many thanks for the welcome.

I have found myself in many warzones with sturdy people and I come to these issues and this language (English) as a stranger. First of all, thank you to DPI for inviting me; I've experienced tremendous hospitality and the privilege of working with many Turkish journalists. Journalism is about stories, so please forgive me if I tell some.

I particularly enjoyed working with Turkish students at Cardiff University. Although I worked with the military and Congress, I am *primarily* a journalist. I don't believe in advocacy journalism: I tell what I see. I've worked in South Africa, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. I never felt that it was my job to end a war, I simply reported on what I saw. I also worked in Spain and I spent the last 18 months writing a book on Sri Lanka. That was the first time in 26 years that a government has defeated an insurgency. Let me confess that I have gone over to the dark side because I have worked as an advisor to commerce and to governments too. There is more money there and I made very little money all my life

³ Dr Paul Moorcraft is the Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis, London and Professor at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. He has also worked as a TV producer and war correspondent in over thirty war zones.

as a freelance war correspondent. I worked with the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and we saw combat every day. I even lost a third of my bodyweight. As a correspondent the two things I hate are communal living and walking long distances but most of my life I have worked with insurgents around the world so I have been drawn to these things. So I am primarily a journalist. I want to talk about the different aspects of covering conflict, both as a journalist and from a government perspective.

I say that I am a 'recovering interventionist'. I believed in the War in Iraq and supported the War in Afghanistan but since the disaster of the occupation of Iraq I have dedicated most of my life to setting up a think tank to help with conflict resolution. I have spent time in Sudan and as an advisor to the President of the Maldives. I am doubtful about intervention and I come to you with humility because I don't think we have the answers in Britain. The War in Afghanistan is lost and Britain has no moral authority. Britain tried to do a good job in Afghanistan and Kosovo, but I only have my own experience. The BBC is in a mode of self-destruction at the moment and I can only discuss what we did in Britain and learn lessons from it. Afghanistan was the most frightening experience of my life; I was wounded by the Russians. I vowed never to go back to Afghanistan, but I did go back and I was also a witness to apartheid and the wars in Angola and Mozambique. I believe in the truth and reconciliation process, this wasn't Nuremberg. People confessed and moved on. Things could have been far worse. The truth and reconciliation process was a milestone in conflict resolution and the same process was applied in Mozambique.

Is peace the only thing that matters? No peace means no security or development. I spent time in Zimbabwe and that was another massive mistake of mine.

One comic story I share with you is this: a female correspondent I was working alongside was learning Arabic, just after the conquest of Baghdad. A militia grabbed her suddenly when we are on the ground. She had not yet learned to say 'I'm a journalist, leave me alone!' in Arabic, so she ended up saying that she was a vegetarian instead! Luckily, marines were on hand to rescue her.

In terms of reconciliation, the ICC (International Criminal Court) can be counter-productive. Mugabe was a genius but turned into a monster. Talk of dragging Mugabe to the ICC and of indicting Bashir may not help the situation in those countries and I wonder if the ICC disturbs notions of peace to some extent. Dictators will not give up power in order to avoid the ICC; they will stay president to retain immunity so it can be counterproductive.

One of the wars I spent a lot of time in was that of Palestine/Israel. I was at the siege in 2002 and I was stopped by Israeli security because they thought I had explosives. We witnessed what happened there. Al Jazeera was important in that conflict. There were accusations of a massacre, but although it was a bloody fight it was not a massacre of Palestinians. Al Jazeera said that and lowered the temperature. As a journalist, you are a witness to history and I quote CBS' Allen Pizzey: 'the main role of correspondents in a war

zone is to bear witness so the politicians can't say "we didn't know that happened".'

There were concentration camps in the Balkans, so I believe that journalists have a highly moral role. The highest calling of a journalist is to report the truth without fear or favour. I was an instructor at Sandhurst and that is why I have been called back by the government or military to advise in war zones. My colleagues like that because I help them and I've seen both sides.

I think the Israelis are slick with regards to media. You get your visa very quickly there and they provide good English speakers for media relations. I've been arrested many times there but you can get access. Last year in Juba I covered the referendum for independence in South Sudan. The people in Juba made it impossible to gain access. It was so corrupt. It was chaos. This upset the UN. It was so corrupt and inefficient that every journalist felt aggrieved. Really, you need to 'feed the reptiles' (that is, the journalists); do not make it difficult for them. Every general thinks that every journalist is out to destroy his reputation. It is not the case! Journalists are busy, you can hand things on a plate to them.

In war and peace there is a difference in UN operations. Sri Lanka was reacting very strongly to the UN estimates of 40,000 people being killed in the last days. Rwanda is upset. The UN is extremely useful. I have worked with them very closely; they transported my observers in Sudan. There is a difference in peacekeeping operations.

When the UN acted in the Balkans, journalists felt differently and the relationship changed. I think military newspapers did a lot of good in the Balkans. Politicians created the hostility during the Yugoslav break up. It was fresh, not ancient.

I was in Sarajevo to see people working together. The Serbs whipped up hostility. The UN and NATO created local newspapers. This sounds like psychological operations. They removed rumours that prevented further ethnic cleansing. They tried in Iraq but it did not work very well.

Most Americans still believe that they lost Vietnam because of television. They lost because the northern Vietnamese won the war, not CBS. Today military thinkers in the US believe the myth. Journalists do not have that much influence. I do not believe in the 'CNN effect'. It is nice to think you can create some effect but I don't think so. Unless there is a policy vacuum and politicians are caught, journalists do not influence foreign wars.

Under then Prime Minister John Major, the British government created safe havens for Kurds in northern Iraq because there was pressure and no policy. Wikileaks has swamped governments. It is too fast and too much. Wikileaks swamped American operations for good and for bad. NATO operations in Libya acted as an air wing for al Qaeda. There could be tremendous unintended consequences for Libya and Syria.

I was asked to talk about how media can be both good and bad. There are many examples of war mongering by newspapers. There were terrible headlines about the Falklands, and radio stations propagating mass murder in Rwanda. The same thing happened a few years ago following the elections in Kenya, with many people killed. Local media can remove some of the ethnic tensions. I mentioned Sudan. I think Darfur was a very badly reported war, not least by the BBC. In recent years, people have created a situation where the peace process could work. After 50 years of war, there has been an election and some development.

Sri Lanka was first time that a government destroyed terrorism. It did it ruthlessly. It was as though the Northern Ireland could be ended in months by the UK wiping out IRA gunmen – that is the equivalent. Colombo was determined. It kept out its political enemies, such as the British and French, who tried to intervene whilst also keeping the UN at bay. It manipulated the Chinese, India and Pakistan into supporting them and supplying weapons. What took place was a government-coordinated campaign to physically destroy the Tamil Tigers. Since then there has not been a single attack. This is the only example since 1945 of ending insurgency by force of arms. How do you resettle the country? Many military people in the west are asking how they did that. They kept the journalists out. Why?

I still believe passionately that journalists are there to report.

These amulets make them believe that bullets won't hurt them. Should we drag Mugabe off to The Hague and entrench him in power? Should there be a local truth and reconciliation commission?

Finally, I will talk about 'crisis communications'. What should be remembered are the 'three C's': concern, control and commitment. The BBC is an example of a central institution in chaos, which is today largely reporting on itself, and trying to gain control. They will need to adopt the 'three C's' to succeed.

Thank you for listening to my stories, I think you have the most important job in the world and I'm sure that you are doing it without fear or favour.



Sinan Hakan, Ali Öztürk, Betül Aydın, Cemile Bayraktar, Işın Eliçin

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

Thank you very much indeed Dr Moorcraft for those very interesting thoughts. So let's build on the speaker's points and the important things that can be drawn out. We will now open the meeting up for discussion.

Regarding conflict resolution and the location of local press, what type of a role has the local press played up until now? The language that we use is very deterministic. Saying 'PKK' or 'terrorist' or 'militant', for example, has great implications. Language can therefore be a core aspect of our discussion today. We can talk about human rights abuses, perhaps, and also discuss the relationship between the government and the press. Who would like to take the floor first?

Participant

I would like to discuss the role of the local press. Unfortunately they, local press does not have a powerful impact because the press is so heavily influenced by the government., especially the press and the newspapers in the southeast and also in the eastern part of Turkey can only survive with the advertisements and notices by state institutions. Therefore this media is audited by the Press Notice Institution, a government institution. That is why they cannot make news freely. Especially during the conflict, when we should consider the losses as much as we can, they continue to use hateful language.

Many of the journalists work with the State. They have no freedom. They are like public officers, they do not have freedom. My colleague says he did not have the opportunity to meet the governor, because State officials do not give appointments to journalists working freely. I would like to mention the deaths of 17 soldiers, which took place a few days ago in the country. There are terror issues, but on the other hand, we have the hunger strikes in the jails and in the prisons. These are important issues and cannot be solved with hate language. In Batman we had a meeting and they asked for our recommendations. I said that we have tried everything and now we should put pressure on the government party Members of Parliament because nobody can say anything to the Prime Minister. However we could not do it. In the last meetings of the parliament, the Members of Parliament for Siirt said that the next day they would see the Prime Minister. I told them that this person is selected from the province with all votes. Unfortunately, no solution came out of the meeting. So there are journalists who will be named as 'journalists of the government'. A senior journalist called Güneri Civaoglu had travelled to the region (southeast) by helicopter (belonging to the Turkish army). He got off in a hilly area in Şırnak, took a few photos and went back, but he wrote about it for perhaps one month! Imagine! I see that this problem cannot be solved like that. This is what I see.



Participants during DPI's roundtable on the role of local media in conflict resolution

Participant

Let me say something about the previous speaker's words. You mentioned about monetary dependency. This is important, especially because the freedom of the local press is important. Moreover, organic relations between the government and the press matter. Could you really describe the Turkish press like that? I do not know, but we should speak about this.

Participant

We will not receive any news, but the journalists that are close to the State or to the government or the military, will publish stories the next day because they receive news from sources that we simply do not have.

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

I understand but let's try to focus on the local press please. I agree with your important remarks.

Participant

Mr Bayramoğlu mentioned an important analysis concerning the sides with which the local media is in dialogue. This then leads to extensive self-censorship. Local newspapers mostly cover issues related to that city. If they do not have monetary aid or receive advertisements then the business will not work; they will not be able to report freely. My point is about language and also about perception. The message is one of the most problematic issues for us. To transfer the news, we also write to the national newspapers. When you write about something in a local newspaper, this news can be, exaggerated in Istanbul. Then you have to deal with people who misunderstand the news because of this. I believe that the local media should be more active, more powerful and freer. It is what we are looking for. Our friend here importantly says that there is monetary power. I believe that the local press should be supported, because if you receive monetary support from certain corners you might have to echo their opinions rather than be neutral.



*Ahmet Akgöl, İhsan Dağı, Dursunali Sazkaya,
Selçuk Küpçük, Ömer İdris Akdın*

On the Kurdish Question: the type of solution that can be found also depends also on the media and on the politicians, and on the relations between them. I would like to see local media be more active and be freer in terms of identity and reporting policies. As mentioned, local media should be supported financially. If you get a regular income from one place then you will come to depend on that. I would like to talk about how we can find solutions to the conflict and also about the relationship between politics and media. Because I would like to see media to have more freedom as opposed to political power. I think that politicians should be freer in their relationship with the party leaders. The BDP should distant

itself from the conflict and impose more political will. We all say that the parliament is the only place in which to find a solution to the Kurdish problem. However we don't see the ruling party, main opposition and BDP showing their determination; but rather they only try to attack one another. It does not help anything. The local press must write our news, but we are limited. Based on your region you have to 'pick a side', but on the other hand, a company can also make you follow their ideas if they give you money. If you live in Diyarbakir province, the money providers of the publishers wield influence over your news. This is what we experience. You have to 'pick a side', and I believe that we should remove this 'picking a side' and create reconciliation, because the current approach is not helping at all.



*Naci Sapan, Sidar Basut, Ayhan Bilgen, Kadri Salaz,
Sinan Hakan, Betül Aydın, Cemile Bayraktar, Işin Elişin*

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

Could you please clarify what you said about autonomy and ownership? These are important points, but your point could suggest self-censorship.

Participant

That is true. Why do we engage in self-censorship? Because it is necessary for a proper news flow. On the other hand, somehow you hide the effects or somehow you even stress the effects of news. Say you are going about your day and you learn about a murder. You know the murderer and you know he is guilty, but you have to look at his face every day because you live in the same neighbourhood. Then you write the news, choosing your words very carefully. In a rural area, you must imagine that there is a conflict and that you are writing about the PKK. You can choose to pick your words in wither a positive or a negative way. If you increase the positivity, you must consider the reaction from the PKK. If you increase the negativity, they you will see the reaction of the military and the government, especially in the south/eastern provinces. If your newspaper has a political identity it is like wearing a shirt on fire. You have to create a balance. When we got the news about the 17 soldiers, it was a mystery, because the government said one thing, the military was saying something different and the local press was saying something different again. How can you write news about that? I got some reactions by calling it a 'mystery' in my title.

Participant

Dr Moorcraft mentioned about his misconception about the Iraq war. I am somebody living in a rural area and even I could have guessed that such a country would not have such weapons of mass destruction. If somebody with such international experience can have such a misconception then we, the local media have much more difficult tasks to deal with. If somebody like Dr Moorcraft, who advised governments, and has been to frontlines, can have such misconceptions, then a local media journalist who deals with people like governors, prosecutors and judges, are in an even more difficult situation. I am somebody of Laz origin living in the Black Sea area. After the 90s television stations in the Black Sea area of Turkey, trapped by the Kemalists, nationalists and intellectuals related with them. My friends working in the eastern region have their problems, but for the people living in the other regions, understanding the other party's pain is harder. In the meetings that I go to at universities and in conferences, I say that we can only make peace with our enemies. Nobody is doing anything about that and the dimension of education is important. There is supposedly a class in school called 'human rights and democracy', but really we see no classes in the schools of this kind. In general, people think that the Kurds are a problem for the country. We know there is a big military operation and we are just taking our part in this.

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

I have a question to you about the Kurdish issue. What is the approach of the press to the Kurdish Question? What is your

language or tone? How much do they mention? Nationalism? Militarism? What is the general perception?



*Bejan Matur, Dursunali Sazkaya and other participants
in discussion*

Participant

We have channel broadcasting on an intellectual level. However, the majority of the channels have a nationalist tone. Some other channels have a militarist tone, but this channel is rather intellectual. The channel has a more liberal and intellectual approach but the channel's owners are conservative with a conscience. There are some civil initiatives and this helps to generate changes of opinion. These people then start thinking about what the Kurdish issue is. How did it start? I can say that it is still much polarised. As we have liberal and conservative or nationalist approaches in mainstream

media, we have the same in local media. I am a psychological consultant and I see that older people say that we should not give this nation away or any part of this country. However the young people prefer to use more liberal language.

Participant

I work in Mardin province in an international statistical research centre and I write as a columnist. Mr Çandar talked about military language; this is a heritage from our ancestors, because it was used very commonly. Some of the news was minimised and filtered. Today we do not experience this as much we used to. Dr Moorcraft also mentioned that in war journalists are the observer or the witness, so maybe the local press is a witness in Turkey and thus the density is reduced. There is a transformation here and both sides put pressure on our shoulders. One pressure comes from the neighbourhood and one comes from the government. Being a conciliator is important. I believe that the local media is also working for the national media. The reporters approach the news in a soft way first because they are scared, but I believe that they are really transferring the news to the national newspapers and probably making a blunder. Let us remember the bombs in emdinli, because they killed civilians. Two friends of mine made news about that. My friend used peaceful language but faced a negative reaction in national press because he described people who gathered in a peaceful way. This is the situation that we have nowadays: very conflictive.

Participant

I do not have any contacts with the local media, but I would like to give some examples about south-eastern parts. There has been a national operation in the last six to seven years in the Black Sea region. There are provocations in this region. There is a local micro-nationalism being established against the Kurdish people and they are reporting the news in this fashion. During the reporting process in Ordu there are some local newspapers that are not linked to the government party but they have religious links. There were some friends from the left, from the ÖDP, and they organised a 'yes' campaign for the referendum. This was important. For approximately 20-25 years we have been receiving migrant workers from Kurdish regions into the Black Sea region. Their housing and living conditions are actually inhumane. They were forced to live in tents. Also, depending on the governors, there were some perceptions of security from the state. These people are exiled from cities. They can only go inside through a security check; there was a very wrong perception. The Prime Minister issued a memorandum to improve housing conditions for the people. These people got 24-hour hot water, hot bread, consultancy services, healthcare facilities and childcare. After this we entered a process and paid a visit to these people. It was the first of its kind in the region. Although the people are coming to this region, they are being isolated. There is a functionalist approach rather than organic relations. Under this restructuring, independent from the state, we visited these people. The state was carrying out improvements. We cannot talk about the conscience of the state. There should be some superior authorities'

legislation to improve the conditions; otherwise one cannot expect the emergence of a local conscience. The Kurdish issue is just as tragic outside of the Kurdish regions.

We have learned news from the national newspapers but as both these and local newspapers have become more diversified, we have learned that there were stories in other parts of Turkey too. Different stories started to emerge. First, it was around the time of Ramadan, there were around 90 tents and inside these there were families. We provided food aid to help open lines of communication. Secondly, we organised a dining event but there were floods in the rivers and these flooded their tents, clothes and food. In two to three days we provided clothes. People came in from the hazelnut gardens and we could not develop a kitchen for them. This is the first thing I would like to say.

In Trabzon we tried to measure perceptions of the Black Sea people against Kurdish people. We were taken to Diyarbakir and we had the opportunity to encounter our Kurdish colleagues. Thanks to this encounter we managed to listen to different opinions and perspectives. Such opportunities should be increased.

Participant

Our friends mentioned the problems of the media. In order to become a newspaper journalist you face very hard conditions: I have been involved for 20 years. The biggest problem in Turkey is the Kurdish problem. But should we phrase it this way? Are the

Kurdish people a 'problem'? This is a struggle for the democratic rights and freedoms of the Kurdish people and they call it the 'Kurdish problem' as if the Kurds were the problem themselves. We have many friends from different regions here today and this is a great opportunity in fact.

There is the economic dimension of the press. Newspapers should be renewing themselves. In Turkey's national newspapers you can find the same news reporting untouched in terms of commas and dots on many different websites. They should be extending their horizons and diversifying their reporting system. In such war situations, news resources are very important. In the national media there were formerly military generals, but in the east/southeastern region there are police chiefs who are responsible for news reporting. They prepare scenarios and video montages for the media, depending on the channel. Such scenarios are sent to the national media. This situation totally has killed journalism in Turkey. As local journalists, we have our own local newspaper but there are some people who are the real workers of the media. Journalists of various press institutions are being exploited from every perspective. We witness this. I was also being exploited. They send news reports but the headquarters of these press institutions change the text in order to misreport and manipulate the judgments of people. So there is a gap between local and national media. There is a price to working in the local media. You will get clubbed, your camera broken, you might be arrested, face tear-gas or be beaten. I have experienced all of these.

We face a war situation in Turkey today, like it or not, and we are the journalists of such an environment. As for the Prime Minister and the government, we can see that they are wrongly informed about the developments in our region. They have a problem in terms of their news resources. There is much incorrect news being published and broadcast, and this is sometimes touched on by the Prime Minister. In emdinli, for example, the BDP delegates were not accepted by the families of one of the martyrs; BDP members and people came together with the PKK militants. Local media reported it totally differently. With the same news on different channels from national journals and local journals, you will see a huge gap. Our editor was there, and the meeting between the PKK and party members was a total coincidence.

We are not like Dr Moorcraft. We do not go abroad like him. We are trying to become the correspondents of our own war. Sometimes we have to take sides, unlike Dr Moorcraft, because we feel emotions. You have to control the ethical dimension, but you have to keep yourself from acting emotionally too. It's impossible because your mother, your brothers and sisters are living here. Our friend mentioned the difference between being a journalist in Istanbul and one in southern Turkey. You have to go against many institutions. That is why you have to be very careful. Although we complain a lot, as we can see with the Roboski massacre. Social media is widely developed in eastern/southeastern Turkey and I can absolutely say that the old former national media is not as strong today as it has been in the past. The facts cannot be hidden

any more. You can share the facts quickly with thousands of other people today. Thank you.



*Moderator Hilal Kaplan, speaker Dr Paul Moorcraft
and other roundtable participants in discussion*

Participant

I have worked as regional representative of a private news agency therefore I know the gap between national and regional media in terms of their reporting. With regard to news from local media; when we were changing such news it was very easy to feel ownership and to overcome copyright barriers. Old news had a similar rule: although there is a separation between the journalists, all journalists

have the same resources and communicate. Some make slight changes, but if you make some small changes inside the text then it suddenly becomes different news. Behind this handicap there is the existence of non-professionalised journalism in the national media.

Internet media has been introduced, but there are some handicaps as well. They are addicted to ‘readymade solutions’. They do not update themselves. The same institutions are doing this. Even the interpretations and comments do not change. I would like to tell a story with regards to the internet’s role in social events. In Adiyaman the houses of Alawites were marked by red paint. I went to Hatay, a conflict zone, and there I managed to observe the effects of local and national media on people. The local people said that when they saw the local news reports about the marking of the houses they wanted people to go away from Adiyaman. They mentioned this event from only one side. Unfortunately, the tendency to show events from only one side is very common in local and national media here. But the same tendency of manipulation and addiction to readymade solutions exists in Kurdish television, too. During Ramadan, a man committed suicide, but the newspapers blamed the State and the district governor. It was very emotional news, and it is said that the man had killed himself because of poverty. As a person living in that region, I thought: If you commit suicide in southeast Anatolia, in Siirt, this is doomsday for Turkey. These events can be experienced in Istanbul, but in Siirt it is impossible. I just called a colleague and discovered that the man’s suicide was not akin to how it was depicted in the local media. It was not a

situation that necessitated the blaming of the government; it had nothing to do with this.

What is the solution? We have emphasised the role of social media. We have to stop our addiction to readymade news and stop distributing news quickly without proving it to be correct. Social media is the best tool to feed the fury. Sharing tweets and Facebook messages without checking contents leaves one vulnerable to false news. Although the truth may emerge, the number of people being influenced is still very high. There is a double standard in terms of hate speech and authorisation. For example, you can quickly adopt the authorisation of the hostile party. Nobody previously checked the tweets of a national twitter body, but when he said a couple of words about the suicide I mentioned, the newspapers quickly used his tweets to show nationalist language. There was news about the martyrs, and they were mocking the martyrs and mocking the holy values of the people. People quickly shared this, even the BDP Members of Parliament, but they did not understand that it was a promotion of hate speech. We should give up this double standard. Professionalization in the local media and national media is a must. 'Copy and paste' journalism should be given up. Thank you.

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

We are trying to identify the problems. There are some underlying issues. Firstly, local newspapers need financial autonomy. Second is editorial autonomy. Thirdly, there is a need to grasp the cultural, economic and political dynamics of the region. These are

pressuring issues and establish self-censorship within newspapers. There is a tendency to take sides because of conflict in the region or the relations between local and national media. National media manipulates local information. The quality of journalism is very low. The language used is conflictive language, dominant especially in terms of the Kurdish issue. Becoming oppressed does not prevent you from using hostile language.



Ali Öztürk and Naci Sapan

Participant

In my journalism I write about a different geography, irrelevant to the Kurdish issue. Konya does not have such things on its agenda. The Kurdish problem is simply not on our agenda. Every year we organise meetings on issues but non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) do not care about this. NGOs in the region also participate in these meetings, but we have never discussed the Kurdish problem in the last ten years. In Konya, the local media mentions martyrs' reports. The only relevant news about the Kurds was news about supporting a demonstration for hunger strikers, and local people attacked this by chanting slogans such as 'down with the PKK!'. I have experienced this myself and have left the newspapers because of censorship. I have been an author for many years and have worked for human rights organisations I never used the expression 'martyrs.' It is a very big problem, as I was getting criticism for not using it. I believe it is a problem that such issue never gets onto the agenda in Konya. When I listened to Dr Moorcraft, there appeared to be a thin line between ethics and the actual situation. The following events would be under your responsibility. The biggest problem is to recruit news subscribers. For example, if you cannot hire any journalists, an accountant may suddenly become a journalist. Financial autonomy is very difficult. None of the columnists receive copyright fees because of what they have written, for example.

Participant

I wish we could have heard about the experiences learned about in Ireland during DPI's visits there. Being a journalist in the south east is much more difficult than being a journalist in a war zone. Would you like to elaborate on the Northern Irish experience Dr Moorcraft?

Dr Moorcraft

A few general comments first of all; I can sense the hurt and the anger. I was not being dismissive of your concerns. I know very little about this situation. We have all paid our dues regarding injuries and the deaths of comrades, so I felt I had the right to talk. The only way to stay sane is to have 'black humour'. I apologise if it is mistaken here. I believe even more that one should attempt to be an objective journalist about one's own conflict. It is much easier to go abroad. It is more difficult at home. It's hard to see people getting killed, and to report on your own forces. But it is absolutely imperative that you say *British* forces not *our* forces, for example. You have to be as *neutral* as you can be. There can be no exceptions. In the end you would have so many exceptions. I'm not lecturing; I try to do it myself. It is very hard. Unless you have this neutrality there is no point in being a journalist. Journalists should not take up arms.

I spent a lot of time in Northern Ireland and that was the longest war in Europe. It was settled by a peace agreement, which brings me back to my other point. There are no military solutions to political problems. The military are always saying that they hold the ring for the politicians to make the deals in. Many thousands of people had to be killed and there are still several hundred who need to fight on. I am sorry, but I feel that the idea of neutrality is important and when you talk about the problem of local media and money it is important. There is no money for local media at all. Social media provides alternatives. Nobody said journalism was easy.

Nobody wants war in Ireland any more. There is war-weariness in a lot of conflict and it is a tiny minority who want to continue. I think

the British army were very clumsy in 1969. I personally believe in a united Ireland. I think Scotland will become independent in two years' time. We have not solved our problems, but all I know is that war is not the way. There has been little conflict in Wales, however.



*Moderator Ali Bayramoğlu, speaker Cengiz Çandar
and speaker Dr Paul Moorcraft*

Participant

I am a television broadcaster and columnist. The city I come from is called Malatya . The city is a small model because you can see the east and the west of the country from there. I am originally from Diyarbakir and I know the area very well. We lived where there is bloodshed therefore whatever news you cover it will hurt both sides. We consider with sadness the Kurdish youngsters and the many people who are dead. The second important remark is the making of the news and its interpretation. Of course we need a new language because words prevent you from seeing the whole picture. I agree with this expression. We use our language from our own perspective, but if we do so we do not do anything objective. Everybody writes from one angle. Maybe some people do it because of security reasons, while some do it for human rights

and freedom. These are discourses. By the way, there is a discourse of hate in our country. There is a lack of legal regulation and I think the media is under the thumb of the newspapers, so it is all related to financing. I believe in improving the peace language and that we should handle the problem from a very peaceful angle. The newspapers are making news under the influence of the political parties' parliamentary group meetings that take place on Tuesdays. I believe that developing a language of peace through the media will help to generate empathy. We may not be professional journalists, but we are also human beings and we must reconcile our consciences. I believe that when we look from the perspective of the liberal media it will help to solve the problem of the hunger strikes.

Moderator - Ali Bayramoğlu

We will now break for lunch and reconvene in the afternoon for the second session of today's roundtable meeting. Thank you very much.



*Cumhur Kılıçcıoğlu, Necip Capraz, Yavuz Baydar, Ayla Akat,
Ömer Büyüktimur*

Session Two

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan⁴

Welcome back. I am sure you are all eager to engage with our speakers on the topics discussed. This morning's session provided some very valuable insight into the various roles that local media could play in conflict resolution both on a national and local scale. I now have the pleasure of introducing the first of this afternoon's speaker, Mr. Yavuz Baydar.

Speaker – Yavuz Baydar⁵

We are today in an environment where stress is escalating. A special committee for protecting journalists came to me in May, and I told them they must discuss the freedom of the press and the freedom of media. This is related to freedom of expression. The Kurdish problem as a whole has to do with freedom of expression. Some Kurdish prisoners are editors and journalists. Without a solution to the Kurdish problem we cannot talk about freedom of expression in Turkey.

The report of this committee mentioned these topics. It said that the problem with freedom of expression depends on ethnic borders. Turkish media these days are impossible to compare with that of neighbouring countries. There is a wide spectrum: 40

⁴ Hilal Kaplan is a journalist, television presenter and columnist with *Yeni Şafak* Daily Newspaper.

⁵ Yavuz Baydar is a Columnist for *Today's Zaman*, and News Ombudsman with *Sabah* Newspaper. He is presenter of the weekly current-affairs programme, *ACIK GORUS* (Open View) on Turkey's *Channel 24*.

papers, 250 private television channels, 18 private news channels (which is unique), 1,300 radio stations - and if you include state channels (which is about 8). The number of local newspapers is around 1,500, Internet access is 65 per cent and we have 100-150 news portals. This is a wide spectrum. If we depart from this point, it is impossible for a government to become the sole dominator of such an environment. There will always be opposing voices. There is a developing infrastructure in visual and textual press. This infrastructure is being used very effectively. We are the second largest country in terms of Facebook use. Social media is increasing and there is huge competition and it is positive, but negative sides are dominating. Behind all of these positive developments there is the oppressed journalism or reporting environment. It does not overlap with the infrastructure. Comment and opinion producing rather than news producing is dominating the weekly periodical press. There are some taboos and obsessions and mental blocks that go against this infrastructure. In editorial boards there is a distorted mentality, and this plays a negative role. In terms of the resolution of conflict, journalism is not a job of fear. We have heard some voices that say 'I am a journalist and I'm afraid.' If you are afraid you should not become a journalist. You cannot establish freedom with such fears.

Cold-bloodedness is an important element that we lack in the press; I do not mean the partisan press. There are some press institutions taking sides on the left or the right but we must protect freedom and have no prejudices. This is especially important in bloody environments where people are being killed. Independence

is one of the most important issues. It slows us down if you do not have an independent press. We can see this over the last ten years in our country. This has to do with the social role of our job. Although there is huge competition, we must remember that we have something in common with our colleagues. We must protect the integrity of our profession.

Mistakes are our headaches and prevent us from reaching the truth. If you pay attention to the national newspapers, you do not see that there are not only nationalist or Kemalist newspapers, but also the Islamic press. Here, you can see a half-page photo of Atatürk. The state ideology is so internalised that if you place Kemalism and journalism side by side, Kemalism still determines journalism.

The second dependency of the press is on organisational ideology. Feeling the urge to take sides in a polarisation is taking the independence away from journalists, and instead of resolution they are strengthening the conflict. They are like mirror images of one another. This is either naivety or hypocrisy.

There is a vertical media hierarchy, especially for large media institutions that occupy the centre. They are the ones closer to the government and also the ones who do not feel close to the government. They expand to decision makers in Ankara and, on the other hand, the media bosses. There are some sock puppet editors and self-censorship is a fact that prevents conflict resolution. This is also widespread in social media. Instead of resisting the flow, most are dragged by the flow and are prisoners of their emotions.

It is a learned role. Irresponsibility is one of the most important elements that prevent reconciliation. The fictionalising of the news, the imbalance inside the news, giving a voice to only one side, is how it shows itself. When you pay attention to the media of Turkey, why don't we vote in favour of peace? Why can't we walk towards peace and social reconciliation? We can see bans and provocation. On the first layer there is the existence of laws, and their oppression is marked by the progress of the European Union. The anti-terror law is one of the most important obstacles as well as Internet law and press law, the Turkish penal code, radio and Television law, TRT law are also some other problematic laws that can be mentioned. There are about 40 articles, a kind of 'sleep walking law' that are sometimes used to oppress freedom of expression and thought in Turkey. There are some enforcement agencies, public prosecutors, and the judiciary. They have an interpretation habit that belongs to the old Turkey. Unfortunately political power and parliament are not taking any action to prevent this.

Nobody has protected this from misinterpretation. Political power is using instruments to influence the media. It is using the same patterns as the old Turkey and they are continuing to use these methods to control the media. There are some patronage and political relationships between journalists and politicians because of media work in order to protect their interests in some other fields. Some bosses are very greedy and work inside the media field as if it were a similar business field. They cannot recognise the difference and because of such a mentality, conflict resolution is being blocked.

I am sure you all know about the meeting in Ankara after the incident in Silvan. The government believed that the media has a responsibility therefore decided to talk with the media. It gathered all the media bosses around a table in Ankara and in this meeting - a meeting which should be rejected under normal conditions - the Prime Minister and deputy Prime Minister were using tolerant language, but if you pay attention to recordings you see a heartbreaking picture. The media bosses totally submitted to the will of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister proposed the blackout on the subjects of martyrdom and conflict news. The media bosses offered government officials the chance to 'make news however they wish' and asked them whether they wanted news about martyrs to be covered in 15 seconds or 1.5 minutes.



Naci Sapan, Ayla Akat and Ahmet Ay

Unfortunately we saw the results of this meeting after the Roboski massacre; the media applied a blackout to this for 17 hours, with the exception of social media, the only thing we could follow. Inside this vertical hierarchy there is self-censorship: people are afraid to lose their jobs. This is the dominant fear amongst journalists and all editors are structured in line with this mentality. During the conflict for thirty years there were some connections between journalists and intelligence service officers. The majority of the population is unsympathetic to journalism because of ‘readymade’ news, produced by officers of the intelligence agencies.

What would be the contribution of the media? I can humbly say the following: language is very easy to handle. If we insist, we might see some results, for example, phrases such as ‘terrorists’, and ‘baby murderer’ changing. Such language is produced by the military headquarters and is still being used. We should rather use a language that fits our journalism. This has been our demand for years and is still valid.

Secondly, journalism has become infertile and has been narrowed down. We should emerge and unveil our personal histories. Let’s not just focus on funerals and corpses, but on actual experience. If there is a blackout on news in some media, other media should be exposing it, by saying how it serves to block attempts at solutions. It is easy. The use of social media and social networks is very important and has emerged thanks to the alternative digital environment. We saw the same thing with Roboski. It is also the same with Syria: we saw that it is a useful means of gathering alternative information.

We should not freeze discussions or limit them. We must keep this discussion within our democratic approach. The separation between politics and media is important. If you think of South Africa, political will either has to produce a solution or not. If the political will is against the solution, what can the media do?

The media in Turkey, to some extent, managed to adopt this language but the Uludere massacre was a turning point. At some point, politics will make wrong decisions, but the media should not follow. The internal mechanisms of political parties are very important, especially those of the current ruling party.

Behind and inside this party, there is a huge coalition that gathers. Inside the structures of the party there are confusions and separations. In the separation between media and political power, to have a strong media sector might mean adopting a collective stance. If there is a horizon in sight, they can adopt a parallel press mentality, although it might look somewhat different.

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

Many thanks. Yes, to our next speaker.

Bekir Ağırdır⁶

Today I would like to share some figures and conclusions with you. If we focus on the tensions caused by political problems, then we cannot position ourselves in correct ways because we all have

⁶ Bekir Ağırdır is General Director, KONDA Research Organisation and Founder of the Democratic Republican Programme. He is an active member of several non-governmental organisations.

political ideas, and in place of the tensions we sometimes prefer not to understand the whole concept and situation because of our own personal ideologies.

There are six major newspapers in Turkey, and if you scan them you will see around 130 news items, including short news. So in the front pages you see 10-17 news items, including the headlines. But the agencies that the newspaper subscribes to, you see that they receive 5,000 news items per day. So they pick 100 items out of a pool of 5,000. How do they choose? They pick based on their professional ethics or their audience or politicians. We see that the power of the news, and also freedom to receive the news, is directly related to the position of the journalists. In these 5,000 items, there may be 100 concerning the ruling party or 100 about the opposition. So the journalist is picking either side based on his own preference and ideology. I think this preference is essential for us. We mentioned hate discourse and the Armenian genocide and Kurdish problems; these are all contentious terms. There are many examples.

I have a simple approach. I analysed six newspapers over ten years, searching for key words. I will discuss the results of three papers only; by the way you can do internet scanning to get information too. Firstly, *Hürriyet*. This is the annual average ration for news, including sports and political news. You can see the increase in use of words equated with risk: dangerous/scary/fear/disaster. For example the word '*risk*', which has no political meaning was used

in 703 news items in 2001 and this number rose to 1,080 in 2004. If you consider that a newspaper covers 110 news items per day, which makes 36,000 news items per year, among 36,000 sources, you would see 18,000 uses of the word ‘*risk*’. In 1,335 news items you can see of word *danger*, in 625 news items the word *disaster* is used while in 437 news items the word *fear* used. These words stick in people’s heads. I turn to another newspaper, *Milliyet*. You can see a sharp increase after 2006; you can analyse by month and see the figures right after the election. There are other examples besides politics. Bird flu for example – according to Ministry of Health’s figures there were only 38 cases in Turkey, but for five months there were thousands of news items about bird flu! This is not only relevant to Turkey, it is a universal case. This is the core of the media problem.

I would like to give you figures based on other research. As you know Turkey is facing political polarisation. In research we conducted on polarisation we found that 63 per cent of the population have an attitude of polarisation. This figure was 48 percent previously, however this figure has risen significantly. This is a dangerous situation. I would like to mention another piece of research.

If, for example, the preferred job for your son or daughter is to be a nurse or to be a banker or living in a city or village, this does not require any explanation. The only explanation is that of political opinion. The people who say ‘I want my son to be a police officer’ are less than 10 per cent, but someone who is pro the opposition would never say that. However those who say I would like my son

to be soldier are all pro opposition. There is no one from the ruling party among the people who would give this answer. We can no longer rely on indicators such as age, gender or profession to gauge someone's views. We sometimes ask which channel or programme a person watches, but now we ask according religion, politics, and so on. Reliance on the media is low.

8 out of 10 newsreaders do not believe in the news, 7 out of 10 feel the same about television. But they believe in their own newspaper or channel. They believe in their own personal ideology, we understand this.

There is a function of the media in the spaces in daily life. When you are far away, people might be Turkish, Kurdish or whatever else, but if you are not close to the event or the problem then you ignore it. But of course, immigration has changed everything as has the internet and transportation too. There is contact in social life between people because they live in the same geography. So, if the media were using a particular terminology against people, then we would have a prejudice against those people that we do not know. We automatically describe things based on the language of newspapers. It affects our social lives because you are supposed to live in the same apartment block. Also if you separate friends and enemies, you are 'othering' some people. We come across new terms, all the time, and while the media discusses unknowns or events in Syria, or Rwanda, if the media is discussing a society we do not know, then its language directly affects our minds, so that we consider the people discussed as 'friends' or 'enemies'. We know

that the chemicals and rhythm of daily life have changed. We use different devices today. We are in a transformation process. In France, Turkey, America and Algeria, for every person, this creates a concern because it is now a world that includes a lot of actors and dimensions, even the decision of an NGO or a company affects the depiction of the lives of other people. The rhythms of places are different from one another. In Istanbul we do not have a code of conduct anymore because it is a metropolis.

By the way, many people also do not believe in the courts. 50 per cent of people in Turkey think that a judge would give a decision not based on their own background, that is to say, based on whether he were Turkish or Kurdish or Alevi but for being rich or poor. 40 per cent think that politicians cannot solve the problems. A high percentage of people are unemployed, so we have no confidence in institutions and corporations. At the moment the media and politicians use it as a medium. If they create some fear scenarios then all that hate would start, so not only the media is guilty but there are also other actors at play. 85 percent of the people have no defined job. They say they can do whatever they can in terms of a job. This shows that we have no self confidence, we have a very low level of trust of social structures and institutions. This picture naturally creates concern and fear. If the media uses such fear as political tool, if they create policies of fear and then hate language, conflict and polarisation starts.

Of course media is not alone in this. Politics also makes such concerns bigger and puts it in front of us. This is not only the case for Turkey. In France one can read every day about immigrants in

the press; if you take out the word ‘Tunisian’ and replace it with ‘Kurdish’, you can see that the newspapers are the same in Turkey as they are in France. The basic struggle is that we should fight against this misunderstanding. I believe that language can change everything. I believe it is the hardest part: without creating a new language, you cannot change the habits of the people. It is not a coincidence. Maybe some of them are without conscience, but journalists are using those terms and their use is becoming a habit. Habits are like a computer in sleep mode – they take no decisions while on standby.

In the last eight months our organisation conducted some research. We mentioned politics and almost everything else – language, education, and health. But we forgot that two million people in this country do not speak Turkish. This is a reality. Maybe part of this topic should be discussed. All of the ideologies in the country, including those of Hezbollah and the PKK, the socialists, nationalists and conservatives, they are ideological representatives. They might have the power to affect public perceptions. We picked five of these groups, and talked about the space surrounding the possible solutions. We just talked about the system and whether change can be realised.

For example there are no differences between their approaches to a subject like human rights. But where are the differences then? They have differences in emotional embargos. When a person is against an idea, they start by saying ‘I’m not against anything’, but they carry on anyway. In the model that was discussed, there was

no Sharia, Islam or terrorism but the people used their emotional embargoes, so maybe we should make contact with each other. We should create platforms and discuss our emotions and our senses together.

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

Many thanks indeed for that insightful talk. I now open up the floor for discussion.

Participant

Through the talks we have heard we learned about the definition of being a war correspondent. I am a columnist, not a journalist. In Syria, Israel, Palestine and Vietnam you can be a war correspondent. You can take sides and try to protect yourself from the USA. If you are in *our* region, in Turkey's Kurdistan, if you are a journalist or columnist in *this* country, whatever you write is published in the morning and later that day you will see whomever you hurt face to face. There might be some statists or pro-PKK people in your family. You might have a family with different political opinions. The region is highly politicised, even if you say something like 'the bread is very good in our region', it is political. If you try to speak with Kurdish children, after the third sentence the child will say 'our village has been burned'. When I write my column I am not worried about what the state will do against me. I was tortured as a child and my father was hanged. There are martyrs in my family. Instead of being afraid, I am trying to offer some words to serve

towards peace and eternal brotherhood. I hesitate to use the word 'united'. We should focus on being together. When we use the concept of 'unity' it is in fact statist language. Rather, let all elements be together. But we should be together under good conditions. I am an Islamist. I have faith. There is a very good quote by Hazrat Ali: 'You should not enslave the free people of Allah'. We should be free, together and united under the same conditions. Verses of Allah should not be said against each other. Because of these conditions, Turkish might be a more useful language but this does not mean that we should ignore other languages, and we should not say that people do not have the right to use their own language. The language of the media is very important. We have been the subject of the Jacobin Kemalist language and the education of the state because the new republic needed a certain people. They wanted to shape the people for their own republic.

There were two funerals and a famous anchorman presented the news. The mother of the martyr was seen crying, she is the mother of the soldiers. The press said that our 'hearts were broken' by the tears of the mother of the soldier. And then the news zoomed to a 'terrorist' funeral. And the press said that 'the mother of a terrorist is crying'. This does not serve towards peace. I would like to exclude you from this generalisation. There are of course journalists who respect values, but republican ones act like this. Whatever we write as local journalists, our columns are less important than Mr Cengiz Çandar's or Mr Ali Bayramoğlu's. Even the most correct facts given by local media sources are denied by the most respectful of the

biggest media institutions. Sometimes our columns are directed to Burhan Kuzu, who throws them in the rubbish bin.

I come from the east of the Euphrates. Sometimes called Kurdistan, sometimes eastern Turkey. I am a member of a platform called the East-West Platform. All of the participants of this platform are conservatives and think they are Islamists, but when we had a meeting it was broadcast in the media under the headline 'pro-PKK NGOs come together to discuss Kurdish issue'. Why was this? Do they know Turkey? The conditions here? The processes of Turkey? It is not important, they are just writing. They have references from big people. What should we do? Form a new language. Inside this language we should be able to criticise the language used by main television channels and diversify ourselves, and develop a language that addresses all 75 million people. Turkish people are Muslims. I am a Kurdish Muslim. We should be aware that the values of the Turkish and Kurdish people are the Islamist values. Kurds are not Syrian migrants coming because of the war. We provide them with electricity, meat, and bread. No, friends. Kurdish people are the unique people of this country. We have opened this rich geography to our friends and have said 'let us eat and produce together'. All the rights and freedoms of the Kurdish people should be granted. Instead of using the phrase 'we are united'; let us say 'we are together'.

4,000 villages have been burned. The media should start from this fact. Yes, there is a terrorist organisation in existence - a

sledgehammer, but almost all of these 4,000 villages were burned by the ‘deep state’ organisation JITEM. What happened to the 12 year old shot with 13 bullets? In Istanbul there was a girl burned by PKK sympathisers. Thus *we* were burned as well. Others were killed by military weapons; killed by the officers of the state. While saying this I am not ignoring the unjust approach of the PKK, but we should rather base ourselves on the language of peace. We have been together for 100 years and we should prepare the infrastructure for another 100 years.

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

Are there any further questions?

Participant

I would like to take the opportunity to ask a question regarding a survey on nationalism. Could you give a short evaluation of the rise of nationalism and its current situation?

Participant

I would like to share something. As far as I understand it, there are facts and figures, in terms of CCTV. I checked 400 news items. Almost 95 were positive and the Cihan news agency was responsible. Only a few criticised the cameras, coming from leftist media. But the majority of the supporting articles belonged to Cihan.

Participant

I am interested in knowing which television channels or agencies are being followed in the Kurdish regions?

Cengiz Çandar

It was a striking presentation – Konda is an important research institute, it has close ties with the national press. Do you have any plan to share all of these studies and findings with main national channels? And secondly, when you share this information after they received the findings, do you have any expectations that they will change their attitudes when they see them?

Bekir Ağırdir

The system is not monopolised by the nationalist party but the reactions of the public sector are similar. For example 72 per cent of MHP sympathisers and 67 percent of AK Party sympathisers believes that ‘those who used bullets and who received bullets for the State are honoured people’ is a correct quotation. But also 67 per cent of CHP sympathisers believe in this sentence as well. Say that this is correct. It’s a memorising habit. We don’t that think nationalism is increasing; it is a kind of catchphrase used by the media. Nationalism is becoming a lumpen, common discourse. Regarding the television channels of the different regions, Roj TV has an important share and is watched more than the state Kurdish channel, TRT 6. We ask, what is the preference for watching news in terms of channels? Local television is not watched that much. Roj TV has more viewers than TRT 6, Kanal D, and ATV.

To answer the question by Cengiz Çandar, we are trying to do two things in terms of warning the media. Is it useful to expose this? Inside the civil society organisation in which I am involved we have dedicated our efforts to exposing these issues. People assume that when people are exposed, they will not repeat things. But as a result of polarisation there is no shame. I know some people from my childhood, and in 2008 when we first discovered the figures about polarisation I went to these people and two said that ‘I am already “taking sides”. Of course I will act like this. I am a side and I will of course act accordingly’. If you have such editorial offices as those that exist, then the exposing does not work. It can sometimes work to create a certain awareness within society, but we are trying to understand the politicians and bureaucrats. Can we influence them in this context? I tried to find some people to speak to about it in the great national assembly. Are we achieving any results? That is open to discussion.

Some of the movements that are occurring are produced thanks to an ideological change in society. We are trying to bring some facts and figures to the media. Although there are many reasons for which to be pessimistic in terms of a political perspective, from a social perspective I can say that this society wants change without being hurt, without wounding or breaking the wings of one another. When situations occur, the people are turning to themselves and building walls around themselves. Unfortunately, for a couple of years, politics has continued this language of hostility.



Kadri Salaz, Sinan Hakan, Betül Aydın, Cemile Bayraktar

Cengiz Çandar

Yesterday the Prime Minister made a speech and he used a sentence that was very disturbing. He said that of the dead bodies, it should be considered that on the one side there are ‘martyrs’ and on the other, there are ‘terrorists’. If you ask people from the AK Party about this, what would be their opinion? This sentiment does not sound very compatible with Islam to me.

Bekir Agırdır

So if you were to ask people about the Prime Minister’s sentence, it, I believe that 60 per cent of people would say that his sentence is true. Let me mention two findings that support my guess. Once a year we do a survey related to the Kurdish Question: 52 per cent

of Turkish people say that they would prefer not to have a Kurdish neighbour, while 25 per cent of Kurds say that they would prefer not to have a Turkish neighbour. Turks are stricter as you can see. Perhaps a manipulation of politicians or nationalism is the source of this polarisation. The basic problem here is the ideas of the people: the survey is valid and shows the reality of opinions. Surveys can measure opinion, but adopting this into policy is not possible. One can understand the sensitivities and emotions of society, but one cannot use these ideas directly as state policy. In 2009/10 the Prime Minister convinced this same group about the Kurdish Question and now he is canvassing against the Kurdish people. By the same token, he previously did not support the death penalty but now he suggests that he supports a return of the death penalty. But you cannot bring the death penalty back because of international human rights standards.

Participant

Let us not discuss religion here. When someone dies then this person is a dead person.

Hilal Kaplan

There was much discussion, and last year there were some torture videos featuring the tortured bodies of the PKK. The Prime Minister did not offer any words of mercy for those tortured people. We expect mercy from the ruling party but we see the opposite: arrogance. As they rule the whole of society they increase their level of arrogance and decrease their level of mercy.

Participant

Our magazine is published in the Black Sea area. It has been in publication for the last 10 years and distributed around the campus of a university in the city. The general structure of the publication is one of ideas, opinions and literature. I remember today a Kurdish folk song related to the words of the heart and the Quran. If we use these types of heartfelt words, we can understand one another more. We should try to express ourselves like this. Our magazine was published on 28th February as a reaction. We had a strict discourse, and we use poems to open youngsters' minds. In the prisons in the south east they made a huge amount of demands for our magazine and we put a note in every copy making it free for prisoners and the poor. Merciful language has the capacity to create a bridge between the hearts of the people. We can break the cold mentalities and hearts of the ruling people with the media. There is a lack of intellectualism; there is instead a culture of gossip and of judgment in local journalism. It is not possible to discuss these issues on the Black Sea coast. The Black Sea coast is much sterilised. There is no Kurdish population or immigration. After the Uludere incident we put a headline directed to the Prime Minister saying: we told him to be scared of the gods for the massacred people of Uludere. After that release, the governors put pressure on us. The governor invited me to his mansion. I said 'we have existed for ten years but you only talk to us because of the bad news and you want it deleted from the website'.

We will solve the problem without using violence. I am a Muslim.

I am an Islamist and I have to say that if they use the language of God, not the language of people who use Islam as a political tool, but the *real* language of Islam, then we will be able to understand each other, because Islam brings people together in a peaceful manner.

Participant

We have been talking about a long war. I am from Diyarbakir. The language used cannot change in the space of a week. I worked in a national paper for 20 years so I am from the source. In the year 2000 I switched to local newspapers. I made the switch and created the language myself and I can create *my* language in my newspaper. I do not use the word 'guerrilla' a lot and I do not say 'terrorist'. My colleagues are sensitive about it, and I said that they should respect that. This is a new language that we have created. I wish that local newspapers could adopt this too. In the morning session, you talked about concerns regarding the monetary sources of local papers. We should not have any concern. I will not take a step back. Moreover, the language of violence in our local newspapers exists because of the national paper tradition. We have our own way. We can also get rid of that. If in our own local newspapers we show the opposite behaviour, maybe we can affect people a little bit.

Turning to the hunger strike, now there is a demonstration; some Members of Parliament tried to show support but the police stopped them. So the next day we saw in the papers that the Members of Parliament had stormed the governor's office, but this was not the

case. The people entered the office, but they were merely protesting. They were gas bombed and opposed by the police.

Participant

When we say ‘media and conflict resolution’, we clearly see the importance of local newspapers. People grow up in their own lands and experience the media every day. Everybody accepts that the media is the ‘fourth estate’, but for politicians it is the *first* power. Political actors try to express themselves through a media vehicle. We say that this reality has damaged the freedom of the press. I cannot say that media could play a role right now, if the political segments did not support the media. They cannot see themselves in the reality of the news, so they do not read it anymore. Their newspapers are all different. So you can separate the Turks and Kurds very clearly. It was not like that before. Now we are seeing the result of the whole experience. In the past there were some extraordinary experiences and politicians were meeting with media bosses, but today the Prime Minister releases the names of the media bosses in an open way and explicitly tries to lead the media throughout the whole country.

The news is very inaccurate and now fuels prejudices. The Turkish people believe in the Prime Minister’s discourses, so they affect the situation negatively. I was born in Diyarbakir and so I share a similar history with my colleagues here today. My friends are witnesses and defendants, and have been in prison for a while before. National figureheads in their local newspapers pressurised

some of our friends. In war conditions you serve as a journalist and a named war correspondent, but for our local journalist friends there is no *official* war environment; yet they are trying to survive in the circumstances of a war - nobody appreciates this.

On 9th October and in November we were gas bombed and the police attacked us. If you reveal your ideology and organisation, even though you are named as a journalist, in the perception of society you are deemed a terrorist. This is the biggest success of the ruling party: whatever the Prime Minister says, society believes. In Batman they have five operations. Within one year our president was in prison and then deputy after deputy after deputy. So sometimes you are making neighbourhood coalitions with every party. If you organise Kurds in a neighbourhood you are deemed a terrorist. Let us remember not only the Kurdish issue but also Ergenekon.

I met a young lady, a graduate from Batman school, the only daughter of her family who wanted to participate in the political activities of our party. She was very successful at school. Her mother came and told me 'I have four sons and one daughter, but I want her to study and my sons to work for your party'. But this is not a decision for me to make. I could only show emotional acceptance of her request but it was daughter's decision. This girl has been imprisoned three times now in Istanbul. I visited her and she said, 'I tried to explain to my mother. She told me that I am very hard working and I could be a journalist, a lawyer or a doctor.' Now I am in prison and there are lawyers, doctors and professors here, too. She is 19. I am 36 and I was touched by her comment. The

local journalist makes his news and then the national media just pick out whatever they like. But what I understand is that if there is no army engagement your region, if there is no fight, then you are not in the national media. The European Court of Human Rights is now punishing Turkey because they badly mutilated the bodies of guerrillas . We don't even discuss this. We don't get mentioned in the media as if there is no conflict.

You have spoken about the hunger strikes, 40,000 protested against this in cities like Batman, where people are significantly religious. But national media did not see this as news, instead they covered a provocative attack on our joint leader's car during the same event. None of their comments appeared in the papers. Their democratic reaction is not reflected, but you see the Molotov's. I don't think the Turkish population have any responsibilities in this because the media are portraying us like this therefore they believe what they hear from media.

It is very hard to change these perceptions. I am a Member of Parliament of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). We are deeply connected to the problem. Not solely, but we are the most powerful and we are ready to play our role. As for the BDP, think that its willingness and tradition has not changed. We still believe in a democratic solution, and we support the Kurdish language and freedom of conscience. We support the renovation of citizenship. It should be visible to public opinion.

The only thing changing is the people who hold the guns. They have

changed their demands from Marxist and Leninist independent Kurdistan to today's demands. Turkey and Turkish public opinion should observe this. For us, using the same language is very important, but we cannot say 'we have given up our power'. We have still adopted our own ideology. For the majority of Kurdish groups, we cannot criminalise them or create a perception of terrorism. Unfortunately Turkey has highest numbers of terrorists in a country because people are easily labelled as 'terrorist'. The top country for the number of journalists imprisoned is also Turkey as the country labels them as 'terrorists' too.

Those in the press who believe in freedom should be organised and show our struggle. They created a new model for us, but they are now resistant to the hunger strikes and gas bombs. Sometimes I watch myself on television and ask 'is this really me?' I know the conditions are hard for local journalists.



Cemile Bayraktar, Işın Eliçin, Arife Köse, Nevzat Cingirt

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

Thank you. We now turn to the next participant.

Participant

First of all, I have to say the following. The figures for ‘those who use and received bullets for the state are honoured people’ quotation can change depending on how you ask the question. Who uses the bullet and who receives the bullet will change the figures. I have identified four problems: One of them is the financial issue. The second is the fact that local oppression is more intense compared to that of the national media. The third is nationalism; local nationalism. By its very nature nationalism is local. If you go down to the local level then the tone of nationalism becomes darker. I would like to assert that local media workers, except for our friends here, operate on a lower intellectual level. This should be accepted, and also this influences the local press, which, when compared with the national press has less power to influence society. The national press is carrying blood to the main arteries of society, but the small veins are just as important. In Malatya during Ramadan there was a conflict caused by a dahool player. On behalf of MAZLUM-DER I went to a place to meet a Kurdish Alevi family which was attacked.. I could not see any burning barn, but in one of the papers I read that one of the barns was burned down. I went back to the field and asked the owners, and they no such thing had happened. But the majority of papers had mentioned that. I got the sense that some Members of Parliament and press members were thinking,

and there was such an atmosphere among journalists too, that unfortunately nobody has been killed.

As far as we can follow from the local press, one set of journalists went to the person on one side of the conflict and the other went to the people in the house who were Kurds and Alevis.

There were some children, 10 or 12, who came together in order to study a Kurdish language course. But the school forced them to stop. I called and said ‘why don’t you report this?’ They said that unfortunately because of prejudice it cannot be reported. Another issue broadcast by local media in the same papers was when the majority of children selected Islamic courses.

I have read two news sources, one is *Radikal* one is *Taraf*, but there are no reports about the hunger strikes. Nobody has the right of medical intervention against those who carry out hunger strikes. I think it is a way of saying ‘let them die’ because such an approach does not have to do with human rights. Human rights cannot be given up or transferred. This is why we prevent people from committing suicide. We *can* intervene with the hunger strikers. In the news they were clearly taking sides.



Participants and speakers during DPI's roundtable on the role of local media in conflict resolution

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

It is not for us to locate ourselves politically; we do not have enough time. Keep your speeches in the context of media and media language please.

Participant

In the Iraqi Kurdistan region there were two languages on our plane trip: Kurdish and Arabic. People approach Arabic as a holy language but don't care what is said in Kurdish. In social media, we have created a tag called 'sayings from mothers'. Such tags have triggered nationalism and people have begun to swear.

What you say is not important, what is important is that speaking Kurdish attracts violence and anger. To Turkish society, Kurdish is the language of terrorism. Some journalists write extensive columns about Diyarbakir without being physically present there. So nationalism rises, the regional locations are in a hard place to access. We are trying to follow the agenda in Diyarbakir. The mayor made a speech mentioning the services in the region and one of the national press journalists said ‘we have no need to listen to this because we have selected our own headlines, regardless of what you say in your speech.’ The journalist only wants to promote his own views. The solution to the Kurdish problem is difficult in this situation. We were participating in a press conference by the Mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, where he was talking about services for Diyarbakir. He was, from time to time criticising the government for delaying support for some of the services. There was a journalist from the national media sitting next to him, who said ‘we got the headline for our newspaper. We don’t need to listen anymore’, when the Mayor was criticising the government. Nobody listens to what local media says. The most important thing is the way in which these news stories are covered by national media. I believe the Kurdish Question cannot be solved if we cannot find a way to express the language of peace.

Participant

I am the owner of a newspaper from the Black Sea region. I am also the general director of the newspaper. We have talked about financial and ownership dependency of newspapers. If the local press

has a certain selling ratio then it is possible to become independent from advertising income. We do not have the compensation paid by the state. In terms of ownership, this pressure is not possible. If the owner is dedicated to selling more and more papers, it is impossible for them to sell only what they think. Local papers are very important for me because the local population can directly audit them. If your comments appear in a local paper, you can directly encounter one of the addressees of your column.

It is very important to be faithful to the truth. I have listened to my Kurdish friends; they are carrying out a certain way of journalism. We are a regional newspaper and if we compare our papers with theirs; I wish that God might help them because their condition is very difficult. I am attaching huge importance to the role of media in conflict resolution. I cannot call terrorists 'guerrillas' because I sell 4,000 papers and in Istanbul I sell 2,000 copies, if I call them 'guerrillas' then I will only sell 100 or be closed down. I am doing this because I sincerely believe that terrorists are terrorists. But I think the Kurds have tried for assimilation into the Republic. Yes, they have right to be educated in their mother tongue and to keep their culture alive. It is possible to find a federal solution, but I am calling the terrorists 'terrorists'.

Hilal Kaplan

What are the reactions to the Prime Minister's words about the bodies of the PKK members?

Participant

The words of the Prime Minister are being echoed in our region and the people consider these words to be true. If he had said anything about the dead bodies of terrorists, the perception of the people would be different. They have a different view from those in the southeast. But the Prime Minister is widely trusted in the region. People believe him here. He recently made a declaration and the words are formed headlines. I know I have said different things but I am just trying to identify the situation. There were two homicides in our region. Could it be our duty to praise the wrongs of the political party?

Participant

I can see something wrong in your approach because you believe everything the Prime Ministry is saying.

Cengiz Çandar

If you say 'guerrillas' instead of 'terrorists', my sales will decrease but if you do the reverse in Diyarbakir they won't be able to sell their newspapers. You could say 'PKK members', instead, rather than saying 'guerrillas' or 'terrorist'. It could help. That is, to use the concept of PKK.

Participant

In the perception of local people, to them, a terrorist is equal to a PKK member. Sometimes the state kills people and they appear not to be PKK members.

Moderator – Hilal Kaplan

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an important discussion. But please let us discuss things in more detail after the meeting and, for now; focus on the subject of today's roundtable.

I turn to our next participant.

Participant

The fight for terminology is one of the main pillars of this unsolved state. We are experiencing this in our region as well. The problem is with the Turkish democrats. When they become real democrats we will solve this issue. But may God protect us from democrats like the man sat next to me, because such democrats will not bring any solution. Since 1977 I have been involved in the civil society struggle. It is not possible to tell of our experiences. Being a local journalist and representing a national paper in our region is very difficult. We feel a huge pressure. My declaration is that when we express opinions they are oppressed by one of two sides. That is why we think twice and speak once. When we say something, whichever party is disturbed tries to oppress us. It is reflected in our future and in our children we are paying the price. My friend says if I call terrorists 'guerrillas' I pay the price, but there is another side to this.

We all know that the local press can achieve many good results if they can stand tall. I have been in this field for years and I see some journalists in the region who have been working as local journalists for over 20 years . They are always respected because they stand tall.

He does not defame any newspapers, so they do not write baseless praise for any party. A few years ago an important Armenian church opened for worship thanks to the government. A late journalist friend of ours started a campaign through his local newspaper. The campaign slogan was ‘our house is your house.’ Thanks to this, the Armenian taboo was totally crushed. One journalist changed the perceptions of thousands of people living in Van. Thousands of Armenians who came to the city shared the same bread and ate with the Kurds. Brotherhood was formed.

Participant

Our friend said ‘may God protect us’ from democrats like me, so I believe I have a right of reply. As I understand it, we are departing from the expression of calling terrorists ‘terrorists’. I respect this, but I cannot also understand the approach of calling terrorists ‘martyrs’ when they die, may God help them.



*Ahmet Akgül, DPI Director Kerim Yıldız,
speaker Yavuz Baydar and Işın Eliçin*

Participant

I am the manager of the business executive board of a region. I have written a column over the years. Some of the colleagues here came to Van and together we have carried out a programme. The local government of Van also participated in this meeting where a journalist who wrote book about Öcalan also was. And I gave some closing remarks in Kurdish. But today relations are strained. Political breaks are becoming social breaks; people do not feel relaxed; they want to write columns yet they do not want to touch upon certain issues. I know the local press is having difficulties. I have been inside and outside of this issue. Somehow there was a democratic opening process between 2003-2009. And look where we are now. There is serious polarisation and bureaucratic oppression, and on the other hand the politics of the PKK apply a pressure. We are trying to survive in such a situation. As Dr Moorcraft mentioned, our colleagues do not have the mentality of being war correspondents, they are *personally* experiencing this war. When I wake up I do not think about the Tokyo stock exchange for example, I just think about how to bring goods to eastern Turkey. It does not make sense to expect so much from the local media.

We have written some articles there as well. There is a huge tension in the region and I am not as enthusiastic as I was two years ago when there was a certain hope or process, and a region in the centre where we could build some sentences. At the end of this process we expected to reach a certain conclusion. At this point, we have become a group that thinks about these issues, but I do not envisage

a solution. There is no solution to make us enthusiastic citizens of the Turkish republic. In our minds we are asking, ‘what will be the results of the hunger strikes?’

Participant

The Kurdish problem is an institutionalised and structural problem. The media is the ideological device of politicians. This device is related to social memory, the positioning of the politicians and also violence, all in the same meaning. In creating a symbol of the ‘enemy’, I believe the media does its duty and especially in Turkey with nationalism, they use this ideology a lot against the Kurdish, Armenian and even Jewish people. Let us think about the external policy; we can observe it very well. At the funerals of martyrs, nationalism plays an important role. The children of the soldiers cry, and details such as widows being pregnant, the wife and parent’s profession and so forth are all-visible on television.

So we can see peace journalism and a nationalistic journalism approach in Turkey at this point. Maybe we should create some new discourses to integrate peace journalism into nationalist journalism.

Participant

I come from the Black Sea area as well. However I left the Black Sea area for good and moved to Istanbul. The Black Sea is an area open to provocation. I have tried to stay but could not. I wish all the best for the friends who stay there. I don’t want to sound cocksure

while journalists are here but I have no hope left in the media. On top of that there is a reality of social media today. Through social media now everybody speaks. Of course there is false news on social media but in general it's an effective form of media. Somebody in America or Kurdistan speaks as well as high school students and university students, who express themselves through social media. I believe people can express their feelings through social media. I do not use the word 'martyrs' in my writings, rarely use the word 'terrorist' and use PKK in my writing. That's why nobody believes I am Turkish or somebody from Rize. But they would believe that I am a PKK member so easily because of the terminology I use. I am a theologian. I feel like it's more effective when I explain why I don't use these words as a theologian. I was criticised by the conservative and nationalist circles but am now criticised by the BDP supporters for criticising them. Please show some mercy for this.

Participant

I would like to express some opinions on the talk made by Yavuz Baydar. Journalism is not a profession that produces news according to demand, including the demands of the people but it is a profession that takes risks. Therefore not only for south east Turkey but journalism is a risk every part of the world. This risk is valid for the act of writing in general. I would like to give you some examples regarding the way in which media creates moral ground and how effective it is. For example, over the years, Fox news had a subtitle saying 'Iraq in Freedom'. The media became a more

active part of the invasion. The best example for this in Turkey is the 28 February period. We faced a coup d'état by the media at that time. And it was a successful act by the media. One author in America said the following in terms of the Iraq war: 'don't blame American people for this because they don't get real news. The news gets blackened'. Despite this, over a million people marched in New York to oppose the war against Iraq. This shows that there is another media that overcame the 'blackened media'. That media paid a price in America. We have to take them into account. We are a group of people which does not get much chance to write in mainstream media. When Uludere happened we went there as group of people. Then houses that belonged to Alevi people were marked with red and we sent a delegation to investigate this. We also made a declaration for the Sivas massacre.

You can do your duty and how this will get distributed is beyond your power. Secondly the media is based on identity; however a person has more than one identity. A person can be a Kurd but at the same time could be woman who wears a headscarf. This person can feel that he or she belongs to both east and west. In order for a journalist to look in to such a vision it should have the vision first. Journalists need to be fed with philosophy, history, art and literature in order to cover such issues. They need to make news engage with the process. They should be able to create a language that is compatible with the past and present. Peace is not only about non-violence but also about creativity. In order to have long lasting peace we should have the moral ground. This brings a lot

of responsibility to the journalists. I think the most effective media in Turkey is visual media. The majority of people in Turkey form opinions by watching the television. There is need for transparent reporting with a proportional voice given to everybody. There is a lot to talk about it but if we have moral stand then it is not important how many people we are.

Participant

I believe that this conference is important; it allows me to hear local voices. I have brought my own perceptions too. Dr Moorcraft made a distinction, and as he might understand from our interventions here today; we are not in a position to make ‘witness news’. Everybody has a side here. As a result of the fact that one has a side and is also performing as a journalist at the same time, then of course one’s job will be very difficult. Maybe we *should* carry out ‘witness journalism’. I believe that this is the most important thing, for example in Uludere. The news of Uludere was important. It proved that a journalist could leave their ‘side’ and make impartial news about an event. Because sometimes, we analyse the news *and* our critics. Maybe we should give this up and redefine the meaning of journalism. Get close to the journalism of witnessing; be as detached as the international comments are in different countries. They are impartial. Then we will be successful at both local and international levels.

Participant

This discussion has been crystal clear for me. Thank you everyone. We shall be very careful about the evaluation of the media here, but there are also some other findings that show that in a different environment, the media has no power.

I would like to give some examples based on my interviews. I think the most important matter is witnessing media. Uludere is the most important example of this. Mainstream media did not cover the news for hours. However social media shortly covered the news. Despite the later coverage by mainstream media I went there by myself. I thought that if I am going to do this profession then I should go there by myself.

If we talk about a coup d'état then we should not only talk about the generals but also the victims. I know the media is a huge industry but those who are more aware of this should do their best to implement things.

Participant

The paper I work for has been a daily for seven years and it is popular. Every 15 days we publish a hard copy of the website. Düzce caters for many parties and has segments in 21 different languages. When I first started there I met a friend of whom everyone asked the ethnic origin, and he told me he is one part Turkish. You have the pressure of the government and of neighbours. We live with the same difficulties; there is a dark nationalism in Düzce. It is not easy to discuss the Kurdish problem there. The Prime Minister sometimes raises tensions and citizens also contribute to it; yesterday somebody said we would hang posters of Öcalan on the walls. If

you say such a thing as Kurds you cannot convince Turkish nationalists of a peaceful solution.

For almost 65 days there has been a hunger strike. In none of the local news was anything published about this. We should think about this. As for the constitution discussions: we created a platform that says that the constitution will be reformed. The ruling party was the facilitator of the problem and helped to organise such events. Believe me; everybody spoke there, even the general director of police and the governor. Many different people are adding their voices to discussions in Istanbul.



Moderator Hilal Kaplan

Participant

I live in Mardin and am the president of a think tank there. We have seen two sides of one coin; the gap between two sides of the scissors is getting bigger. The reason behind this is nationalism. This is not a good development. In order to stop this there is a duty for the media. The distancing between sides will increase if this generation cannot make peace - it will be very difficult for the next generation because they are more radical. There is a nationalism growing in Mardin. Some people for example created an Arab platform. Mardin is known as a place for all languages and religions. But this rising nationalism gives me the feeling that secret hands are trying to create a problem in the city. Nationalist discourse is expressed and local media empowers this. Sometimes I read comments on news items and get shocked at how such things can be published. There is attempt to create tension between the Kurds and Arabs.

Participant

Düzce is a settlement set up by Sultan Abdülhamit and is believed to be a place where 72 different identities live. If there is such nationalism there then we have a very difficult task to face. In my opinion if the conservatives in Turkey do not cut their ties with Sunni Turkish understanding then we are in a difficult situation. Kurdish friends should not show such reaction to our friend from Trabzon because Trabzon is a place that needs to be examined. I don't think the Prime Minister in an easy situation either.

Participant

The Black Sea area is the region where you have the least Kurdish population. There are Laz, Georgian, Circassian and Alevi people in the region. The area was turned into a security zone thanks to exaggerated Kurdishness. When you start a journey from Samsun to the Georgian border you can see that all the names of the crossovers bear the names of soldiers who died in conflict. How can you change the intellectual understanding of an ordinary person living in this region? I felt this when I was working with the seasonal Kurdish workers who came to work in hazelnut fields.

Participant

We came here to discuss the role of the media in conflict resolution. Respected members of the local and national media are participating this debate. We talk about how we can change our language and what we can do. In the south east we are stuck between bread and freedom. We say let's get freedom first then we look for our bread. We did not have proper childhoods, teenage years or middle ages. Let's solve the problem in our country first then we can solve the issue in Palestine.

Participant

I don't know why but when a PKK member dies they bring the body to Trabzon Forensic Institute for the autopsy. Their families face a lot of problems. IHD (Human Rights association) in Trabzon comes to me when they have a problem. I try to help these people as much as I can. This is something different. Two Kurdish men from Ağrı came to Trabzon to sell their sheep and they died as

result of a fault by a local businessman. We have taken up a court case against this businessman to help the families of these Kurdish men. This is something else. We had an aid campaign after the earthquake in Van, hundreds of families in Trabzon gave shelter to families from Van. I know that the Kurds are treated as second class citizens since the beginning of the Republic. I read about their uprisings. I read about Sheikh Said's rebellion. The image in my mind of him is that he is an oppressed, victimised person of this country. However taking up guns to gain rights is terrorism in my understanding. This is what I say.

Participant

Do you call those Chechens who fought against Russia 'terrorists' as well?

Participant

No, I do not.

Hilal Kaplan

I am sure you would call it so when they kill the civilians. You know they had this attack on a school?

Participant

I consider them people fighting to defend their lands against invaders. I separate them therefore. If our Kurdish brothers and sisters believe that their land is under occupancy then they should act according to that. If they want a separate state then they should do that.

Participant

I would like to congratulate you for having a much civilised discussion. A while ago you said ‘PKK member’s corpse’ instead of ‘terrorist’s corpse’. This change in use is an important step to create such language. We have been criticising the language of the Prime Minister but we can also speak in the same manner sometimes.

Participant

I have spent time in many meetings over 25 years organised by agencies like the BBC and CNN. It is sometimes appropriate to use the term ‘terrorists’. However, this should be interpreted correctly. For example a bomb attack in Antep should be labelled as a ‘terrorist attack’. If you are organising meaningless actions against innocent people, such as car bombs, we should think carefully. It is categorically wrong to use the concept of terrorism. However it would be wrong to say that I never use this concept. It must be asked: ‘what is war?’. A conflict between men in uniforms – this is war. In other areas there is conflict, in regions for example, but we can have different perspectives. We need to pay attention to who the victim is. In addition we should pay attention to language. We must neutralise language as much as possible. Because we are addressing a mixed audience. There are Kurdish readers of newspapers as well as Turkish readers. Or people from different origins read such news. If we say ‘militants’ or ‘PKK members’ for example, we are not taking a side. However it is not so difficult to find suitable language. If you give meaning to a word then people will start thinking ‘oh, now I am listening biased news’. People are not stupid; they will know whether news is impartial or not.

Closing observations – Bejan Matur⁷



Bejan Matur

First of all I would like to thank all of the participants. I think it is very important that you came here to attend this meeting today. There can be differences in terms of use of terminology and it is important to hear them. It is very important to have both Yüksekova Haber and Mr Ali from Trabzon in this room to discuss these matters. I hope we will continue to do so in the future. We know that becoming authoritarian is a big issue in Turkey. We see this and we are experiencing it. But I think cultural shallowness is a bigger issue compared to authoritarianism. In the previous discussion session, we saw how the language of the media is shaped and influenced by the state and militarism. One side says ‘guerrilla’, the other side says ‘terrorist’. However, the main subject here is

⁷ Bejan Matur is a renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakir Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

human beings. There is a norm when there is death; death makes human beings equal. All religions tell us this. But we forget about human beings when we use the language of media.

This shallow position has an influence on our reporting too. It prevents us from using deep and sophisticated discourse. I believe we need to talk about this more and more. We either talk very openly or become very silent about issues. We don't have a middle ground. We need to use sophisticated methods to find the middle ground. For example, people have managed to find special methods in countries where there is a dictatorship - there is Iranian cinema, there is the use of language in the Iranian press. The media manages to find some sort of channel to give its messages even in Arab countries that are under dictatorship.

Unfortunately we have not managed to achieve this in our country. In my opinion it is very important to develop these methods here. We were in fact talking about the general problems of the media when we were talking about the local media. We talked about the issue of getting advertising from state institutions, dependency on bureaucracy, pressure from bureaucracy, local pressure, and so forth. However, the world is changing today. There is a media outlet called Yüksekova Haber. It is an advantage to be in the heart of reality within this communication environment, in this global age with this technology. We can provide more concrete and truthful information by using technology. Today we see a lot of the news on Düzce Haber's website. There is this concept of

Düzce Haber in the media. Local media is not fully aware of the fact of how useful it will be to use these channels. This is how I see it. We need to realise our power. This is not a world administrated in one centre and divided into two blocs anymore. The concept of power, the focal point of power and power itself has changed and will continue to change. Nobody is the sole power anymore and they will not be in the future. The world is not such a place anymore. Therefore the local media and people should realise their own power and develop a discourse. This is very important. Thank you very much.

Participant

We would like to thank you for bringing us together and giving us such opportunity to share our opinions.



Nevzat Cingirt, Sylmar Ensarolu and Ayla Akat

Closing observations – Yılmaz Ensaroğlu⁸



Yılmaz Ensaroğlu

Dear participants, we are about to conclude our meeting. We should have finished it about 15 minutes ago. However you came from different parts of the country. It would not be right to finish the meeting before you could make your final remarks. Our aim with today's meeting from the beginning was to discuss what role the local and regional media plays in conflict resolution? What role can they play? What kind of role should they play? We wanted to find answers for these questions collectively, with you. We wanted friends from Hakkari, Trabzon, Mardin, Urfa, Izmir, Konya,

⁸ Yılmaz Ensaroğlu is Director, Law and Human Rights Studies, SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

Malatya and other places to come together as they work in local media, that appeals to readers from different political opinions, social backgrounds and religious structures. We wanted journalists from the local media to participate in this meeting.

In the age of the internet, being regional or local is not so important anymore, for instance if I would like to follow any news on the Kurdish question, I check Yüksekova Haber. Yüksekova Haber is not a website that only appeals to the people of Hakkari or Yüksekova anymore. This in turn brings a responsibility for the editors and journalists working for Yüksekova Haber to bear in mind that people like me also follow their website so they can balance their language. The same is valid for the newspapers in Trabzon and Samsun because the readers in Hakkari, ırnak, Mardin and even in Erbil follow them.

There are people involved in conflict and they are already fighting with each other. It is not very difficult to extend that conflict into media. There are people in the media that use every word and sentence like a gun. However when we decided to organise this meeting, we wanted to face each other rather than conflict with each other. We wanted people to face colleagues from other parts of the country who also care about a solution. Let me tell you something that I would say right towards the end and this is more a message to our Kurdish friends: if you cannot get along with Ali Öztürk and believe how democratic he is then you have a lot of work to do! Why? Because you don't know him but I know him very well. For example, when a football team from Trabzon

went to play a game with a team in Diyarbakır and the chairman of the team from Trabzon met with Osman Baydemir, the man behind this arrangement was Ali Öztürk. He was the man to sort it out when there was a lot of fuss in Trabzon, when the Diyarbakır municipality donated a fire engine to another local municipality. For all these reasons, he is here today. I know you have never met face to face before. Let's say this discussion has happened because you have never met before.

We prepared our invitation list on the basis of recommendations and you all kindly accepted to join us. Can we really get away with putting all of the blame on the State, this party, that organisation or the national press at the end of this meeting? I believe we have to think about these questions really hard. Whether we are a civil society organisation, a media organisation or a political party, we have to go through certain stages in terms of conflict resolution. I would like to mention a few points regarding this and then conclude the meeting.

As suggested by our friend from Hakkari, let's take a step. I hope what I will say now that we will make a contribution to that step. Although today we have discussed this matter mostly in relation to the Kurdish Question, in actual fact the source of conflict in this country is not only ethnic or Kurdish. This country has experienced religious, sectarian, ideological and institutional confrontations. It is because the Kurdish question is a topical matter that it dominates the discussions. Of course conflict is not something that only the Kurds and Turks are facing. There have been many conflicts in

the history of the world. The aims of the strategic work that we do as part of DPI's activities are to see how Turkey can learn from succesful or unsuccesful international experiences. This does not mean that one conflict can be an example for another one. Despite each conflict being unique, there are examples that we can benefit from or take lesssons from. We can draw lessons from each conflict. These are the findings by the experts, it is not my own creation.

I think the first step we can take is to agree on the sentence that 'we have a problem'. In political conflicts, rather than seeing their common points each side sees each other as the problem. We can easily say that this is the case for the actors in Turkey. As result they are trying to destroy ecah other rather than eliminating the sources of the problem. Firstly, as the media we need to concentrate on real issues rather than buying the manipulations of the actors. Secondly, in order to allow the issue to be understood in full we need to inform our readers with a correct and healthy language - something we can do in order to create a solution based angle. Thirdly, it is important have correct analysis of the actors of the conflict, because in general the actors do not have a healthy analysis of each other. They would not share some of the truth even if they knew it. They would try to manipulate us, talk about their success, they would not like us to know their mistakes and defeats. I am sure you journalists have experienced this more. Therefore you journalists have a greater responsibility to avoid allowing actors to deceive society.

It is important to have a third party in the conflict - this is something new for us and that we are experiencing slowly. I personally believe

that media, especially local media have a very strategic importance in terms of feeding third parties with information. This third party can be a mediator, a facilitator, those who make shuttle diplomacy or those who advise actors. How can we influence somebody who is close to a Prime Minister, a political party or actor in the conflict? How can we make them get closer to peace? Would doing so make the process faster? The advisers in our cases mostly act in a different way. There is a phrase in Kurdish that explains how they act - it says 'they make fire stronger and put themselves aside'. Maybe we should feed the advisers with the correct information. By doing that we would be influencing the actors and informing them too.

We can do something to bring just, strong and experienced third parties into this process. Abandoning the language of conflict is more for media than the politicians. You have explained your own experiences by giving some examples. But we have all complained about one another. Because in a conflict situation, sides would blame each other, talk badly about them, alienate the other side and say that the other side is the source of everything bad. According to them all the bad things come from the other side. They themselves are not responsible for any of the problems. All the sins and mistakes belong to the other side. From the State's point of view this is the BDP, the PKK or the KCK and the media are supporting them. For the other side it is the State, the government and those in the media who support them that are the ones responsible for all the bad things. This language of conflict from both sides supports the language of the other side and eliminates dialogue, speeding up separation and division within society.

People will engage in conflict but no conflict will go on forever. It will come to an end at some point. But those who manage to put an end to conflict are those who can create a relationship with each other, to talk and discuss with each other. Keeping this alive means keeping the hope for peace and a solution alive within society. Therefore I believe when we receive information on an incident we should be able to think ‘how can I approach this information in order to inform my reader correctly but at the same time contribute to the process of finding a solution?’. It is very easy to criticise whilst showing the empty half of a glass. This will make a solution much more difficult. I say ‘let’s look at ourselves in the mirror and think hard about what we can do’.

Mr Naci has mentioned that mass media reported an incident by saying that ‘Members of the Parliament raided the Governor’s office’ while his newspaper headlined the same incident by saying ‘Members of the Parliament pounded on Governor’s door’. As a reader in Ankara I would find a great difference between the two. I am not a good reader but saying ‘pounded the door’ would give the same connotaion in people’s minds. That’s why we have to soften our language a bit more. It would be better to choose a language that makes such language used by mass and national media ineffective. In this country we pay a huge amount of attention to this and this deepens the divisions within the society. I wish Bekir Ağırđır were still here because he said that the Prime Minister prepared the society in 2009. I don’t agree with this. If the society were ready for the process then it would not end. I think we should have more responsibility for preparing society than the politicians.

I have more to say about the talks we have had here today. I noted a sentence used by one participant who she said ‘no other region can be identified as a region more open to provocations’. There are people open to provocations in *every* society and region. Some of you come from the Black Sea area for example so let’s not be unjust to each other. Wherever you go you can find people thinking like us or people thinking another way. She also said that she gains no hope from the media. I would like to respond and say please don’t make us hopeless like this. We love all of you, care about what you say and take yourselves seriously. If we say the media is a hopeless case then this meeting means nothing, we have just wasted a day. We have to keep the hope alive so we can prevent hopelessness becoming widespread across the country.

After talking for this long, I would like say something else. Although some friends had to leave a bit early, we use Chatham House rules for our meetings, meaning you can write as much as you want about this meeting and its contents but do not give any names of participants please. I say this to friends involved in the Peace Assembly as well. I tell them, if your feelings and ideas have not become stronger when you leave a meeting on peace, then either that meeting was not succesful or we are not sincere people.

I would like to thank the DPI Director Kerim Yildiz, Eleanor Johnson and other staff members for organising this meeting. Also thankyou all for coming all this way, freely sharing your opinions, anaylsis, criticism and concerns during this time with us. I would like to thank our speakers Yavuz, Cengiz and Paul as well as Bekir

and Ali. I would like to thank our interpreters who have helped us to understand Paul's presentation. I hope this is the beginning of an era focused on conflict resolution in Turkey. We had a similar meeting on the role of women and wanted to create an email group for example. This group can share if they find an article or something similar to inform each other – do feel free to create an email sharing group. I would like to thank you all again. I hope you will leave this meeting feeling that it has been valuable. Many thanks.



Roundtable participants and speaker Cengiz Çandar

Conclusion

The roundtable meeting held by the Democratic Progress Institute in Istanbul on the subject of local media's role in conflict resolution this November brought attention to numerous issues in this area, and facilitated valuable and engaged discussion. The day brought together many participants from both local and national media, as well as those from the worlds of academia, politics, diplomacy, the non-governmental sector, policy makers and international experts. Participants came from very diverse provinces within Turkey, as well as from Istanbul and Ankara. The role that media can play in conflict resolution was discussed on a local, national and international scale; with particular emphasis on the language of the media, and the important influence this can have with regards to preparing the public for peace, or conversely, contributing to conflict. The large and varied turnout as well as the extensive media coverage that followed this event, within local, national and international media, demonstrates the positive response it received and the strong engagement of participants. On the whole, this roundtable was very successful and we hope the discussion that was generated provided useful insight into this important issue, and that it will continue to occur.

The Institute will continue to organise similar roundtable discussions, both in Turkey and abroad.

DPI thanks all participants and contributors for their much-appreciated participation in this activity.

Appendix

Participants from Turkey

- Bekir Ağırđır, General Manager of *KONDA* Research and Consultancy, İstanbul
- Ömer İdris Akdın, *Yolcu* monthly magazine, Samsun
- Ayla Akat, Member of Parliament for Batman Province (Peace and Democracy Party), Batman
- Ahmet Akgöl, Head of International Strategic Analysis and Research Center (*USTAD*), Mardin
- Mustafa Arısüt, Journalist at *İpekyolhaber* Newspaper, Şanlıurfa
- Ahmet Ay, Journalist at Diyarbakır *Olay* Newspaper, Diyarbakır
- Betöl Aydın, *Selçuk Üniversitesi*, Konya
- Sidar Basut, Representative of *Gele Kurdistan TV*, Diyarbakır
- Yavuz Baydar, News Ombudsman for *Sabah* Newspaper, İstanbul

- Cemile Bayraktar, Journalist and Author
- Ali Bayramoğlu, Journalist, Columnist and Political Commentator at *Yeni Şafak* Newspaper, İstanbul
- Ayhan Bilgen, Peace activist, Human rights defender and Columnist for *Özgür Gündem* and *Evrensel* newspapers, Ankara
- Ömer Büyüktimur, Chief Editor of *Diyarbakır Söz* Newspaper and *Söz TV*, Diyarbakır
- Cengiz Çandar, Journalist and Columnist, *Radikal* Newspaper
- Necip Çapraz, Owner of *Yüksekova Haber* Newspaper, Hakkari
- Nevzat Cingirt, Editor of *Düzce Yerel Haber* Newspaper, Düzce
- İhsan Dağı, Columnist for daily *Zaman* Newspaper, Author, Editor-in-Chief, *Insight Turkey* Journal, Lecturer at Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara
- Işın Elçin, Journalist at *Turkish Radio and Television (TRT)*, İstanbul
- Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, Director, Law and Human Rights

Studies, *SETA* Politics Economic and Social Research
Foundation, Ankara

- Emine Üçok Erdoğan, Author, İstanbul
- Sinan Hakan, Writer and Columnist, *Van TV Haber*, Van
- Hilal Kaplan, Columnist at daily *Yenişafak* Newspaper, İstanbul
- Cumhur Kılıçcıoğlu, Owner of Siirt *Mücadele* Newspaper, Siirt
- Arife Köse, Journalist, *Altüst Dergisi*, İstanbul
- Jenna Krajeski, freelance international Journalist, İstanbul
- Selçuk Küpçük, freelance local Journalist, Ordu
- Bejan Matur, Author and Poet, İstanbul
- Nurettin Memur, General Manager of *Kanal 35 TV*, İzmir
- Ali Öztürk, Journalist at *Günebakış* Newspaper, Trabzon
- Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Columnist at daily *Zaman* Newspaper, İstanbul
- Kadri Salaz, Former Presenter and Columnist for local media in Van, Chairman of VANGIAD, Solidarity Council member for Civil Society Organisations in Van, Member of Van Economy Council

- Ferman Salmış, Journalist, *Günes TV*, Malatya
- Naci Sapan, Chief Editor of Diyarbakır *Özgürhaber* Newspaper, Diyarbakır
- Hüseyin Sarıgül, Producer at *Güneş TV*, Malatya
- Dursun Ali Sazkaya, Author, Ordu
- Adem Seleş, Former Columnist of *Merhaba*, Konya
- Aslı Tekinay, Head of Press and Public Affairs, British Consulate-General, İstanbul
- Ömer Tur, Editor in Chief, *Gün TV*, Diyarbakır
- Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokuş, Lecturer at Kocaeli University, İstanbul

UK Contributors

- Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, Democratic Progress Institute
- Graeme MacDonald, Assistant, Democratic Progress Institute
- Dr Paul Moorcraft, Speaker

DPI Board and Council of Experts

Director:

Kerim Yildiz

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

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Christine Bell

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

Cengiz Çandar

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

Yilmaz Ensaroğlu

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHAD) and Human Rights

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Salomón Lerner Febres

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

Professor Mervyn Frost

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

Martin Griffiths

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

Dr. Edel Hughes

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

Professor Ram Manikkalingam

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

Bejan Matur

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

Jonathan Powell

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday

Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

Rajesh Rai

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

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