The Right Livelihood Award Foundation strongly condemns the illegitimate use of anti-terrorism legislation against its 2016 Laureate Cumhuriyet’s journalists and executive staff for exercising their freedom of expression guaranteed under Turkish and international law.

“The indictment against the Cumhuriyet journalists is an indictment against democracy in Turkey. With only 10 days to go before the crucial 16 April referendum on the country’s future, these ludicrous charges against the paper that is a symbol of the Turkish republic are particularly disturbing. Jail terms should be reserved for those who commit crimes, not those who report on them,” said the Foundation’s Executive Director Ole von Uexkull.

On 4 April, the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor’s Office announced it is seeking lengthy jail sentences – up to 43 years – for 19 Cumhuriyet executives and columnists for allegedly ‘helping an armed terrorist organisation’. The indictment was published on pro-government news websites before Cumhuriyet lawyers saw it. The court now has 15 days to approve the indictment.

Cumhuriyet journalists and staff have already had to endure over 150 days of arbitrary pre-trial detention in a maximum security prison. With the indictment, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor seeks to criminalise journalists for simply carrying out their professional duties and acting in the public’s interest.

The Foundation joins the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye in calling for the immediate release of all Cumhuriyet journalists and staff, and withdrawal of all charges against them.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is currently investigating whether the detention of Cumhuriyet journalists is arbitrary under international law based on a complaint filed by the Right Livelihood Award Foundation in December 2016. The panel is set to rule on the issue later this year.

Cumhuriyet was recognised with the Right Livelihood Award, widely known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’, in September 2016 “...for their fearless investigative journalism and commitment to freedom of expression in the face of oppression, censorship, imprisonment and death threats.”
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www.rightlivelihoodaward.org #RightLivelihood #AlternativeNobel

About the Right Livelihood Award
The Right Livelihood Award was established in 1980 to “honour and support courageous people and organisations offering visionary and exemplary solutions to the root causes of global problems”. It has become widely known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’ and there are now 166 Laureates from 68 countries. In addition to presenting the annual award in Stockholm, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation supports its Laureates, particularly those who may be in danger due to the nature of their work.