

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

|                                 |                                                                    |
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| Kilde:                          | Reporters Sans Frontières                                          |
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RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières

## Turkish public health whistleblower sentenced to 15 months in jail

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is shocked by the 15-month prison sentence that an Istanbul court passed on a whistleblower yesterday for revealing information of a scientific nature about threats to the Turkish public's health.

**Bülent Şık** was convicted (<http://bianet.org/english/health/213609-bulent-sik-sentenced-to-1-year-3-months-in-prison>) of publishing “information subject to professional confidentiality” in the series of articles he wrote for the daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in April 2018 about the findings of a scientific study in which he had participated.

Carried out under the health ministry's aegis, it found (<https://expressioninterrupted.com/food-safety-expert-bulent-sik-appears-in-court-for-article-series/>) disturbing and potentially carcinogenic levels of pollution in the water supply and agricultural products in various Turkish localities. Şık said he decided to publish out of a sense of responsibility to future generations after the authorities took no measures in response to the study.

Addressing the court at the final hearing, his lawyer, Tora Pekin, said: “This scientific information affects the public's health so it would have been crime not to publish it, not the opposite.” The court took this sign of a “lack of remorse” as grounds for not suspending the prison sentence. Şık remains free pending the outcome of his appeal.

“It was clearly in the public interest for Bülent Şık to publish this information, so his conviction is a profoundly unjust act of censorship,” said RSF's Turkey representative Erol Önderoğlu, who was in court for the sentencing. “We call for his acquittal on appeal and the adoption of legislation that complies with the Council of Europe's recommendations (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cdcj/activities/protecting-whistleblowers>) on protecting whistleblowers.”

A well-known food safety expert, Şık often works with the media. Like hundreds of other academics (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/0290/2019/en/>), he was fired by government decree from his position at Akdeniz university in November 2016 for signing a petition that called for a resumption of peace talks with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

As the rule of law is steadily dismantled in Turkey, the situation of its media has become increasingly critical, especially since a coup attempt (<https://rsf.org/en/news/abortive-coup-turkish-journalists-brink-abyss>) in July 2016. Turkey is ranked 157th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index (<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>).

### ecoi.net summary:

Istanbul: Food safety expert sentenced to 15 months in prison after writing newspaper articles about a study indicating high pollution levels in water and agricultural products



### Country:

Turkey

### Source:

RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières [\(/en/source/11433.html\)](https://rsf.org/en/source/11433.html)

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