

PRESS RELEASE

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New guest of the foundation: Hazal Ocak Journalist for environmental issues from Turkey

The Hamburg Foundation for Politically Persecuted People has accepted the Turkish journalist Hazal Ocak as a foundation guest. The foundation supports people worldwide who courageously raise their voices against injustice and offers them protection and peace in Hamburg for a certain period of time.

Hazal Ocak (33) already worked as a correspondent for Cumhuriyet Daily while studying at the Faculty of Communication at Istanbul University. In 2014, she specialized in environmental issues, environmental policy, corruption and human rights about environmental. As an urban and environmental reporter, she wrote for the news site "Halk TV", "Gazete Duvar" and "Le Monde Diplo-matique Türkçe" and documented illegal developments in Istanbul from dubious sources of money in her book "Ihanet". She wrote the book that displays all the illegal construction that's violated Istanbul for unearned income.

She has received several awards for her research on corruption and the associated environmental destruction as the best up-and-coming journalist and the highly esteemed "Sedat Simavi Prize" from the Turkish Journalists' Association.

She was charged with defamation, identifying state officials on anti-terror duties as targets" and "violation of privacy, among other things, for her reporting on former Finance and Economy Minister Berat Al-bayrak and son-in-law of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as well as on his Communications Director Fahrettin Altun. She was initially acquitted in both cases and then sued again at the next higher level following an appeal by the respective opposing party. The lawsuit is ongoing. Last June 14th was the hearing of the case.

As part of the "Istanbul Canal Project", the government representative Berat Albayrak had acquired land at a bargain price, for which the building authorities immediately issued a development permit and allowed the construction of an commercial center and residential.

According to experts, this project, if realized, will devastate Istanbul's natural green spaces and make Istanbul more vulnerable to the climate crisis. The Istanbul Canal project is a 45 km long canal planned by the Turkish government for shipping, which is to run parallel to the Bosphorus in the western part of Istanbul and connect the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara.

In the other case, she reported on an infringement in a nature reserve on the Bosphorus. Fahrettin Altun had built illegally gazebo and fireplace here. For her report with the headline "Bilal Erdoğan's friend has received an tender", she was fined 2,180 lira for using the word "friend" as an insult, and she is currently taking legal action against this.

She wants a break from the pressure of the pending proceedings and constant intimidation.

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