



For immediate release.

Izmir, Turkey

On Tuesday, Oct 16, 2018, the house of video activist and Seyri Sokak video and documentary collective member Oktay İnce was raided by the police in İzmir and 18 hard drives were confiscated, following the accusation of members of Seyri Sokak on charges of “praising terror and terrorist organizations through social media posts.”

Seyri Sokak is a video activism collective that was established during the Gezi Park resistance in 2013 by a group of video and documentary activists in Ankara.

It is a voluntary human rights-based advocacy group supporting social struggles with social media news reports and video documentation. They have a large social media presence, with over 45,000 followers on Facebook and almost 20,000 on Twitter.

The activists of the collective have often faced police violence while documenting events on the street, and they have been taken into police custody several times and are facing various legal trials and related fees. With the raid of İnce’s house, Seyri Sokak is being accused of sympathising with a terrorist organization, with the aim of punishing them and halting their work.

Last February, 2018, the documentary filmmaker and international press card holder Sibel Tekin was also taken into custody during a raid of her house in Ankara because of her retweets associated with a hashtag opposing the Turkish military assault on Afrin. Ten hard drives full of footage and photos were confiscated during this raid. There is now an ongoing criminal investigation against her because of the two tweets she posted on the issue.



Eylül Deniz Yaşar, a video-activist, is also included in the investigation of Seyri Sokak; Eylül has been taken into custody numerous times in the past for filming demonstrations.

The following is a statement by Seyri Sokak collective member Oktay İnce on the events of Oct 16, 2018:



Photographs from Oktay İnce's house after the police raid.

On the morning of Tuesday, October 16, the police, who claimed to be part of the anti-terror unit, knocked on the door of my house in the Kemalpaşa neighborhood of İzmir. They had a search warrant issued by the court regarding “terrorist organization propaganda”. The warrant ordered the seizure of all digital materials and my mobile phone on the premise that I might have shared two

tweets on the twitter account of Seyri Sokak Video and Documentary Collective. I have spent the last twenty years of my life as a human rights defender and video activist, making news, documentaries and video art as part of the Karahaber Video Activism Collective and the Seyri Sokak Video and Documentary Collective. Over the last twenty years, our primary objective has been to create a visual archive of the social struggles of the oppressed in Turkey and to support their struggles. To this end, we have produced numerous news, documentary and campaign videos, organised video workshops, exhibitions and public screenings. The police seized the master copies of my news and documentary videos that were stored in 18 hard drives and 41 dvds at my place. Along with those fully edited works, they filled their bags with the raw footage of at least five other documentaries waiting to be edited and took them away under the pretense of forensic analysis. The eyewitness videos of the most important issues of Turkey's social struggles, including LGBT and women's rights movements, workers' and public employees' struggles, and students' movements, were thrown into the same bags. Personal and private videos and photographs of our family, including the ones we have taken since the birth of our four-year-old daughter, were also taken away to rot on the shelves of police station, as part of their investigation related to the terrorism charges.

Even though according to Turkish law, digital material should be copied in situ and the originals should be left with the owner, we were subjected to the cruelty of forcible seizure in defiance of the country's own laws. Erdoğan's administration has either bought out the mass media or oppressively silenced it. Now, they want to silence the social media channels, the only outlet where the oppressed can voice their dissent, and to stop people from posting tweets criticising Erdoğan's administration. Using two tweets to accuse Seyri Sokak of being a "terrorist organisation", is merely an excuse to silence documentary filmmakers, video and news activists. We won't be silenced, We cannot be silenced. I want my videos, footage and writings back immediately.
Oktay İnce

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<https://www.facebook.com/seyrisokak2/>

<https://www.facebook.com/seyrisokak3/>

<https://twitter.com/seyrisokak>

Seyri Sokak Youtube channel:

<https://bit.ly/2AmQfW7>

Interview With Oktay Ince on SUSMA24 by Onur Yıldırım on Oct 17, 2018:

(For Turkish:

<http://susma24.com/gitmeyin-cekmezin-kaydetmeyin-diyorlar>)

“The underlying message is ‘Don’t go there, don’t record, don’t film anything.’ ”

On Tuesday, Oct 16th, 2018 at 10am, video activist and Seyri Sokak Video and Documentary Collective member Oktay İnce’s house in İzmir was raided by the police and his 18 hard drives were confiscated, following the accusation of members of Seyri Sokak on charges of “praising terror and terrorist organizations through social media posts.”

As part of the investigation led by the Kemalpaşa District Attorney’s Office related to the social media posts, police confiscated İnce’s entire archive, including all of the footage recorded by him and the Seyri Sokak Collective, as well as the documentaries they produced.

After being released by police after his interrogation, İnce spoke to Susma Platform Against Censorship and Auto-censorship (<http://susma24.com>), pointing out that he did not write the social media posts in question, and added that: “There is no connection between the posts and the search of my house. The confiscated material is irrelevant to the twitter posts and to the charges they are bringing. These search warrants and detainments are meant to oppress and instill fear in people, they have no basis in law.”

Mr. İnce also underlined that he could have simply been called in for an interrogation and to give a statement with regards to the charges. He claims that the police are conducting psychological warfare through house raids. “I was with my 4-year-old daughter when the police came for the search. Events like these leave an impact on you. I wish my daughter had not been there with me.” he added.

Puzzled by the confiscation of his archive, which goes back 20 years, İnce added “If the content of a social media post supposedly constitutes a crime, then they should concentrate their actions on the post itself. In our case, in order to make their charges more serious, they are linking the posts to an illegal group and claiming that the posts were “praising terror”, so that they can charge all of us with terror-related crimes. All of these allegations are unfounded.”

İnce is very upset that his 20 years of accumulated work has been confiscated for no reason: “I spent a large part of my life on video activism and making documentaries on social struggles in Turkey. They (the police) confiscated the visual archive of social struggles in Turkey from the last 20 years, the documentary works, all of the raw footage waiting to be edited, and our labor. There is nothing that constitutes a crime in these archives and material; they are breaking the law themselves by taking the original material, instead of copies. My concern is not about the court case they are planning to file. What worries me is that the archive of social struggles in Turkey over the last 20 years will be destroyed while in police custody.”

Mr. İnce mentioned other incidents where the archives of other documentary filmmakers and journalists were confiscated for unfounded reasons, and that there needs to be resistance organized against such acts. İnce said “We need to make sure that our archives are not taken from us, and if the authorities have confiscated the archives, we should get organized and pressure them to make sure that we get the archives back quickly. One can not create this resistance individually. The Documentary Filmmakers Association, cultural and art institutions, and journalists’ unions should get organized to resist these confiscations. These situations do not only threaten journalism, or documentary filmmaking, but also many artistic practices. I had five documentary works in progress. I could not afford to buy new hard drives to back up of my files, and now my documentary work is effectively stopped by this raid and confiscation.”

İnce also stressed that documentarists and journalists should not be prosecuted because of the content of their recordings. After viewing the content, the police or the prosecutor might come up with a bunch of invented charges, and this poses an urgent threat to news reporting and filmmaking, he added. “How can a documentarist be charged based on the recordings he has done? Documentarists follow and record all kinds of people, institutions or events. This is also true for Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioglu’s documentary ‘Bakur’.

Their trials are based on police interrogations, during which they were asked questions like “Why did you shoot this? Why did you interview them?” It is our job to record, report and document what happens. The oppressive climate that exists today, with the house raids, detentions, and the confiscation of archives, is meant to deliver a message: “Don’t go there, don’t record it, don’t make these documentaries”, said İnce.