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Germany harboring terrorists: Turkish President Erdoğan

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan lashed out at German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Nov. 3 over her criticism of the detention of daily Cumhuriyet journalists, saying “Germany harbors terrorism.”

“They are giving us advice. But it is us who is concerned about your stance. You are aiding terror! That terror will hit you like a boomerang. We have no expectations from you, but you will be remembered by history for harboring terror,” Erdoğan said in a speech in the Turkish capital Ankara.

“We are concerned that Germany, which has been taking members of terrorist organizations such as the [outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party] PKK and the [Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front] DHKP-C under its protection, will now become a backyard of [the Fethullahist Terror Organization] FETÖ,” he added.

“Terror is like a scorpion. Eventually it will bite the one who is carrying it. I don’t see a bright future for Germany. It has become a place where terrorists take refuge. There are racist attacks against Turks in Germany. It is unacceptable that Germany protects terrorists,” Erdoğan said.

“If Germany doubts whether FETÖ is a terrorist group, I invite them to come and visit the

Turkish Parliament and Special Forces buildings, which were bombed on July 15,” he added, referring to the night of the failed military coup attempt.

Turkish authorities’ actions against freedom of opinion and the press are “highly alarming,” Merkel said on Nov. 2, referring to the detention of senior staff of daily Cumhuriyet.

“It is highly alarming that ... freedom of the press and opinion is again and again being restricted. The latest example of this already very sad development is what happened with the editors and editor-in-chief of the Cumhuriyet newspaper, and we have very great doubts that this corresponds with the principles of the rule of law,” she said in Berlin.

Merkel added that Germany will “pay close attention” to the investigation of the journalists, noting that Germany’s ambassador to Turkey visited Cumhuriyet’s offices on Nov. 1 “to underline again how important the issue of freedom of opinion and press freedom is to us.”

“Of course, such an issue also plays a central role in questions regarding membership talks with the European Union,” she said.

On Oct. 31, at least 13 Cumhuriyet staff members were detained, including editor-in-chief Murat Sabancu, columnists and a cartoonist.