



Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in June 2019



*** Receiving 54 percent of the votes in the renewed mayoral elections in Istanbul, Republican People's Party (CHP) candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu won the elections. The latest mayoral elections in Istanbul were cancelled with the allegation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) on the votes "having been stolen." In the renewed elections, the difference of votes increased from 13 thousand to 800

thousand. Losing blood in the local elections, the AKP started to make changes in regulations and delegations of authority to restrict mayoral areas of action.

*** In the crisis between Ankara and Washington on the S400s, announced to be delivered in July, the U.S. Ministry of Defense sent a letter to Ankara and listed possible economic effects of a possible ongoing tension on the Turkish economy. Pentagon ended the F-35 flight trainings of Turkish Armed Forces pilots. No conclusive resolution came out of the negotiations between Erdoğan and Trump at the G20 Summit in Japan; statements revealed ongoing negotiations between the two countries.

*** Tensions continue on Turkey's drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean with the search of oil and natural gas. Turkey sent the second drill ship, Yavuz, to the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's drilling activities are described "illegal" at the EU Leaders Summit, with expressed worry on the matter.

*** According to the data by the Turkish Statistical Institute, inflation in May increased 18,71 percent on an annual basis. Central Bank kept interests at 24 percent; a 12.1 billion TL budget deficit was announced in May. 82.5 percent of the deficit predicted for the end of 2019 was reached within the first five months of the year. The treasury continued to be further indebted with bond tenders. Ministry of Treasury and Finance prepared a regulation on transferring "reserve funds" to the budget. According to the law, reserve funds are put aside by Central Bank to be used in extraordinary situations.

*** The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against 16 right advocates, two of whom are arrested, due to "attempting to overthrow the government" through the Gezi Park protests, was held. The court decided for Osman Kavala, who is arrested for 19 months, to remain arrested. Yiğit Aksakoğlu, who was



arrested for eight months, was released with judicial measures and travel ban.

*** The Constitutional Court (AYM) unanimously denied the individual application of Osman Kavala. Among five members, who voted against the AYM verdict, was AYM Chief Judge Zühtü Arslan and two deputy chairs. *“His participation in and support of the Gezi Park events do not reveal a crime,”* Arslan stated. He indicated that everyone has the right to organize meetings and demonstrations and may participate in them or wish to spread them as long as they are peaceful.



*** In reasoned decrees of the Constitutional Court (AYM) announced this month, the court adopted an attitude that perceives journalistic activities as a crime in contrast with its prior rulings on press freedom and freedom of expression. AYM issued violations in the applications of some journalists and denied the applications of others; making varying evaluations on cases that are very similar to each other - with criminal evidence exactly the same in some cases. The court stated, *“Charging*

a journalist due to publishing opinions in an interview may seriously stifle press freedom,” in the case of Deniz Yücel; further looking for a condition to make a call for violence and riot in order to have connections with terrorism in the case of Kadri Gürsel. However, the court ignored these evaluations in denied applications, finding the claim, “creating perception in support of terrorist organizations” sufficient. Furthermore, the court paved the way for a collective criminalisation of Cumhuriyet Daily’s publishing policy with the reasoned decree on the newspaper’s executives.

*** Six more signatories of the Peace Petition were convicted last month. According to the data by the Academics for Peace Initiative, the number of academics with convictions against them reached 200. Prosecutions of disobedient civilians, who made criminal complaints against themselves at the Prosecutor’s Office, started as well. The first hearings of six cases among seventeen were held. The prosecutions will continue in July.



*** According to the 2018 statistics of the Ministry of Justice, 36,664 investigations were opened and 6,326 lawsuits were filed last year within the laws regulating “insulting the President” and “denigration of the Turkish nation, government and institutions.” 37 percent of 7,471 evaluated cases concluded with conviction; 31 percent were sentenced but the announcement of the verdict was deferred.

*** One citizen was sentenced to 2 years and four months of imprisonment last year due to “insulting Erdoğan” through his social media post, that stated, *“Forget about the oil prices,*

we have the world's most expensive President.” Documentary filmmaker and video activist Kazım Kızıl, who was detained and arrested during the protest against the April 16, 2017 referendum, was sentenced to 1 year, 3 months and 16 days of imprisonment due to “insulting the President.” A lawsuit was filed against former Managing Editor of Evrensel Daily, Cem Şimşek, due to “insulting Erdoğan” through a news article.



*** Turkey “failed” this year as well on press freedom in the Freedom House 2019 Freedom and Media report. [Please click here](#) for the full report.

*** According to the data by the Free Journalists Initiative, 34 journalists were detained and 11 journalists were arrested within the first six months of the year. Investigations were opened against 29 journalists and lawsuits were filed against 8 journalists within this period. 287 journalists have stood trial

within the lawsuits they were on trial; 41 journalists were sentenced to a total of 119 years and three months of imprisonment.

*** A lawsuit was filed against Yeni Yaşam Daily’s Editor-In-Chief Osman Akın due to “making successive illegal organization propaganda” through news published on hunger strikes.

*** Human rights advocate Eren Keskin shared numbers on the lawsuits filed related to the period she was a Substitute Editor-In-Chief for Özgür Gündem Daily. 122 lawsuits were filed against Keskin and she was so far sentenced to a total of 17 years, 2 months and 20 days of imprisonment, as well as 360.000 TL judiciary fine. Prosecutions continue within five lawsuits; 31 files are at the Court of Cassation and 72 files are on appeal. There is 139.000 TL of finalised judicial fine against Keskin in total in ten different files.

*** Teacher Ayşe Çelik had stated, “Don’t let children die, don’t let mothers cry” in a TV show she participated in via phone call during curfews and was sentenced to 1 year and three months of imprisonment due to “making illegal organization propaganda” with that statement. Following the right violation decree issued by the Constitutional Court (AYM) for Çelik, the teacher was acquitted in the first hearing of retrial.



As the 2.5-year unlawfulness ended, teacher Ayşe lost her job, served time in prison and her baby was deprived of a mother.

*** An investigation was started against musician Alpay, who celebrated the 50th year of his musical life with a concert organized on March 22nd, with the allegation that he has “praised terrorist organization members and denigrated the state” during the concert.

*** Another investigation was opened against Avesta Publishing House after investigations

opened against 40 books and bans against 13 books only in 2018, due to “making terrorist organisation propaganda.” The investigation file showed social media posts of the publishing house as evidence to the crime. The posts include announcements such as the book, “History of Kurdistan” being withdrawn from shelves following the verdict of Ayvalık Criminal Judicature of Peace.



*** Events within the Pride Week were banned in Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Mersin and Gaziantep. Istanbul Governorate banned the Pride March in Taksim this year as well; not giving permission for the rally to be organized at Bakırköy Square - despite the square being among demonstration areas identified by the Governorate. Before the press statement on the 17th Istanbul Pride March, the police took Taksim Square under blockade with riot vehicles

and barricades. Following the press statement on the banned Pride March, the police attacked protesters with tear gas and shields.

*** Ankara Bar Association’s Human Rights Center prepared a report on Mustafa Yılmaz, who disappeared for longer than four months; indicating that there is “strong suspect that he disappeared under life threatening conditions.” The Bar Association stated that the Chief Prosecutor’s Office decided that the disappearing individual was an adult and issued non-prosecution on the matter due to Yılmaz leaving home with his own will; therefore allegations on kidnapping not having been investigated in accordance with international laws on human rights. Yılmaz was working as a physiotherapist at a private health center and was kidnapped by unidentified individuals on February 19, 2019 while commuting to work. Yılmaz was previously sentenced to 6 years and three months of imprisonment due to “FETÖ” membership and his file is currently at a stage of appeal.

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