

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin (Issue 49/19, 13 December 2019)

What happened last week?

- United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations approved the bill predicting sanctions against Turkey, which included the name of President Erdoğan as well. Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu used the İncirlik military basis card, which is brought up by Turkey in every crisis with the United States.
- Greece carried the consensus made between Turkey and Libya on the drilling work in the Mediterranean to the United Nations. *“If Libya requests, we will also send Turkish soldiers there,”* Erdoğan said. Experts warned that Turkey’s foreign policies are getting more and more *“militarised.”* Turkey has now become the second country after the United States having the most number of soldiers outside its borders.
- Erdoğan commented on the Nobel Prize winners and said, *“They have awarded a terrorist from Turkey.”* Two people have received the Nobel Prize from Turkey. Erdoğan absolved Aziz Sancar, so Orhan Pamuk was the only one left. However, Presidential Chairman for Communication claimed that Erdoğan’s expressions were not targeted towards Pamuk, and that he had criticized the award process of European organisations, which are based on ideological approaches.
- European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a decree of rights violation for arrested businessman Osman Kavala; demanding his immediate release. However, Kavala is still in prison...
- The number of People’s Democratic Party (HDP) municipalities under trustee administration reached 28 and the number of arrested co-mayors reached 20.
- Human Rights Association (IHD) and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) pointed out that Turkey is still being governed under a State of Emergency regime and that impunity has become a “law.” ***Details in the bulletin...***
- According to a research conducted by Amnesty International, 82.1% of the population in Turkey thinks that basic rights are being violated in the country. 52.4% thinks that there is no freedom of expression in Turkey. [***Please click here for details.***](#)
- Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ali Babacan, who are at the last stage of establishing their new party, were exposed to heavy accusations by Erdoğan. Erdoğan accused his former colleagues with fraud. Using the expression, “for all Presidents who are alive,” Davutoğlu said, *“A parliamentary investigation must be conducted on the increase in their wealth.”* He also announced the establishment of the Future Party.
- Central Bank has decreased the interest rate for politics by 200 basis points to 12 percent. The interest rates were at 24% in July. However, interest rates were decreased in all four meetings after the change of Central Bank administration by Erdoğan.
- [***Please click here***](#) for our report on the violations of freedom of expression as well as demonstration and meeting bans in November.



December 10, Human Rights Day: Turkey's failure

On the 71st anniversary of the “Declaration of Human Rights,” Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) evaluated Turkey on human rights. 1274 protests were intervened in 2019, with 3741 detained and 35 arrested. Protest bans were declared for 96 times. 61 events were banned or cancelled. Investigations were opened against 32 journalists and lawsuits were filed against 19. 61 journalists were sentenced to a total of 196 years and 10 months of imprisonment. At least 1784 people were detained in social media operations, 336 were arrested. [Please click here](#) for the full statement.



CPJ 2019 Report

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) announced that 250 journalists are imprisoned worldwide. The number of arrested journalists in Turkey were identified to be 68 last year, this year it was recorded as 47. In 2019, Turkey has left the title of “the country imprisoning the highest number of journalists in the world” to China after four years. The report indicated that this increase in the number can't be evaluated as a progress. [Please click here](#) for details.



288 thousand websites banned to access in Turkey

Freedom of Expression Association (IFOD) launched opinions and suggestions on the UN Universal Periodic Review on Turkey. The report stated that internet censorship mechanisms are ongoing with increasing strength, with suggestions. According to the data shared, 288,310 websites are banned to access in Turkey. Furthermore, URLs of 7,334 news articles are banned to access. [Please click here](#) for details.



ECHR: Osman Kavala must be released

In the application of businessman Osman Kavala, who is arrested in remand for more than 770 days, The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decided that Turkey has violated the European Convention on Human Rights due to Kavala being “arrested due to political reasons without reasonable suspect” as

well as the Turkish Constitutional Court “not evaluating his application within a reasonable period.” ECHR issued that Kavala must be released immediately.



6000 HDP members arrested since 2015

According to the data shared by the People’s Democratic Party (HDP), 15,530 people were detained in the operations conducted against the party since 2015; 6000 party members were arrested, including 750 members and executives. [Please click here](#) for details.



Ministry announces detained journalist “a terrorist”

Previously shut-down Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter and journalist Aziz Oruç was detained at Doğubayazıt-Ağrı highway together with People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Doğubayazıt District Co-Chair. The Interior Ministry claimed the journalist is

“a terrorist.”



Penalty against news on child abuse

Bitlis News Daily Editor-In-Chief Sinan Aygül, who reported the news on a child being sexually abused in Tatvan, was sentenced to 10 months of imprisonment in the lawsuit filed against him due to “violating investigation confidentiality.”



Imprisonment sentence against Oğuz Güven approved

The Court of Appeals approved the six-month imprisonment sentence issued against former online Editor-In-Chief of Cumhuriyet Daily Oğuz Güven due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through publishing a cartoon of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.



Appeal court reverses sentences: Hayatın Sesi TV executives acquitted

The sentence issued against the executives of Hayatın Sesi TV Channel, which was shut down during the State of Emergency, was reversed by the appeal court. The channel executives Mustafa Kara, İsmail Gökhan Bayram and Gökhan Çetin, who were sentenced to 3 years and nine months of imprisonment each by the local court, were acquitted.



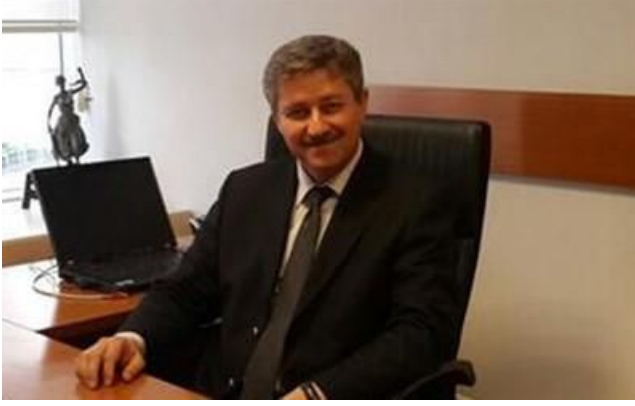
Journalist Sercan Akbaş acquitted in first hearing

haberercis.com online Editor-In-Chief Sercan Akbaş, who was charged with “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the news published on the website on the Afrin operation was acquitted in the first hearing of the case.



Journalist Ahmet Kanbal acquitted

Journalist Ahmet Kanbal was acquitted after being prosecuted due to “successively making illegal organisation propaganda through press/media” with the news he shared on social media.



Investigation and exile against interim decree by court

Ali Haydar Yücesoy was the judge of an “insulting the President” file at Istanbul 73rd Criminal Court of First Instance in the year 2015. The Ministry of Justice requested for “information on the stage of prosecution” and Yücesoy replied to this request with an investigation on “explaining the judicial reasons and basis for the request.” Yücesoy was exiled to

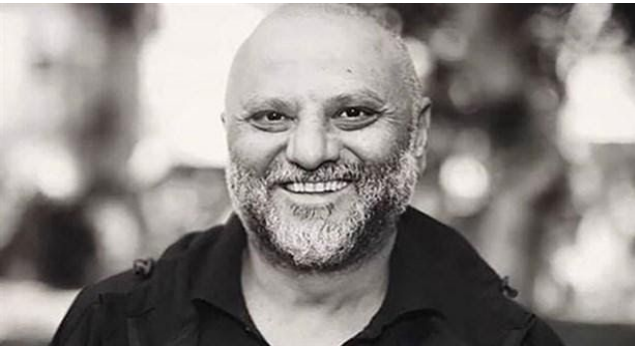
Afyonkarahisar as the investigation was ongoing; a summary was prepared against him at Istanbul 3rd Assize Court.



9-year 9-month imprisonment sentence against university student due to hat and book

Eskişehir Anadolu University student Furkan Sevim, who was detained in 2018 due to his social media posts, was prosecuted due to “illegal organisation membership” and “successively making

illegal organisation propaganda.” The book, “A Tight-lipped Hero,” which is a biography of İbrahim Kaypakkaya, as well as a black hat with a star on it were found in the house of Furkan Sevim and considered criminal elements. In the summary judgment on December 3rd, the 23-year-old university student was sentenced to a total of 9 years and nine months of imprisonment.



Artist Yılmaz Çelik arrested

Artist Yılmaz Çelik, who was detained with a police raid against his home following the concert he gave on December 8th in Dersim, was arrested by the court he was taken to due to “terrorist organisation membership” and “making terrorist organisation propaganda.”



Lawsuit filed against arrested artist Şenol Akdağ

A lawsuit was filed against former vocal soloist of Grup Munzur, artist Şenol Akdağ, who was detained on November

19th in Istanbul and was arrested three days later due to “illegal organisation membership.” The first hearing of the case will be held on February 20, 2020 at Istanbul 34th Assize Court.



Investigation against Co-Mayor over criticizing trustee assignment

An investigation was opened against Cizre Co-Mayor Mehmet Zırığ due to “insulting the President” after Zırığ criticized the trustee assignment to replace him, calling it a “dictator reflex.”



Intervention against protest “Las Tesis”

The police attacked women gathering in Kadıköy, Istanbul for the dance protest “Las Tesis”, which started in Chile as a reaction against male violence and spread all around the world. Intervening the protest due to “anti-government slogans” being chanted, the police detained seven people. The police attacked the protest in

Ankara as well, detaining eight people.



Colourful Atatürk sculpture to be taken down

A colourful Atatürk sculpture, which was exhibited in the garden of a private business firm in Urla, Izmir, was taken down after a meeting between the firm and the municipality. The incident received great reaction on social media, some demanded for the authorities to be prosecuted in accordance with the law

regulating “crimes against Atatürk.”



Protest ban in Van extended for 15 more days

Van Governorate extended the protest ban in the province for 15 more days. Thus, the ban declared for the first time on November 21, 2016 due to the State of Emergency declared following the coup

attempt on July 15, 2016 was extended once again.



Prosecutor finds it ‘lawful’ for police officer to break MP’s arm

Batman Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office issued a verdict of non-prosecution on the criminal complaint of People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MP Feleknas Uca, whose arm was broken during the police attack against a press statement. The Prosecutor’s Office called the

intervention “lawful” and the objection made against the verdict was denied by Batman 2nd Criminal Court of Peace.



“JITEM” case concludes with impunity

The “Ankara JITEM Case” on the disappearance of 19 people between the years 1993 and 1996 was concluded with impunity. The case investigation had started in 2011 and in the lawsuit filed afterwards, Ankara 1st Assize Court issued the acquittal of defendants

including former Interior Minister Mehmet Ağar and separated the file of Mahmut Yıldırım with codename Green. [Please click here](#) for all the details on the case.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Özgür Gündem Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Özgür Gündem Daily owner Kemal Sancılı and former Managing Editor İnan Kızılkaya with the allegation of “making terrorist organisation propaganda” through three news articles published in the newspaper in 2016...

Court: Istanbul 27th Assize Court

Verdict: The court decided for the file to be sent to the Regional Court for resolution following the denial of the request to combine it with the Özgür Gündem Main Case file, scheduling the next hearing for March 26, 2020.

Taraf Daily Case

The lawsuit filed against Taraf Daily executives Yasemin Çongar, Ahmet Altan, Yıldırar Oğur and Tuncay Opçin and reporter Mehmet Baransu due to “obtaining, revealing and destroying confidential documents on the security of the state” through the news article published in the newspaper on the document, entitled, “Egemen Operation Plan.”

Court: Istanbul 13th Assize Court

Verdict: Deciding for Baransu to remain arrested, the court scheduled the next hearing for April 8-9-10, 2020.

Sercan Akbaş Case

The lawsuit filed against haberercis.com online Editor-In-Chief and journalist Sercan Akbaş due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the news published on the website on the Afrin operation...

Court: Van 7th Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued the acquittal of Akbaş on the first hearing of the case.

ETHA Case

The lawsuit filed against Etkin News Agency (ETHA) editor Semiha Şahin, reporter Pınay Gayip and four others due to “terrorist organisation membership and making terrorist organisation propaganda.”

Court: Istanbul 23rd Assize Court

Verdict: The court revoked the house imprisonment decree against Şahin and Gayip, scheduling the next hearing for February 27, 2020 at 09:00.

Case Against Green Road Protest

The lawsuit filed against 13 people, who protested the Green Road project, due to “preventing freedom of labour.”

Court: Artvin Sunday Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The court issued for the file to be sent back to the Public Prosecutor’s Office for reconciliation within the newly-enacted “Judicial Reform.” The next hearing was scheduled for February 21, 2020.

Ahmet Kanbal Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Ahmet Kanbal, who was charged with “successively making illegal organisation propaganda through press/media” due to the news he shared on social media...

Court: Izmir 2nd Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued the acquittal of the journalist.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

Mehmet Tüm Case

The lawsuit filed against former Republican People’s Party (CHP) MP Mehmet Tüm with the allegation that he has insulted Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahçeli and Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, as well as praised the crime and the criminal in the person of Deniz Gezmiş...

Date: December 16, 2019; Balıkesir 1st Assize Court

Case Against News on Musa Çitil

The lawsuit filed against journalists Çağdaş Kaplan, Ömer Çelik, İnan Kızılkaya, Abdulvahap Taş, Selman Çiçek, Kemal Sancılı and Hamza Gündüz due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through sharing a news article on Musa Çitil published by Dicle News Agency on social media...

Date: December 17, 2019 at 09:50; Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court

Hilal Nesin Case

The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against acting trainer and writer Hilal Nesin due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through her social media posts on the Afrin operation...

Date: December 20, 2019; Antalya 8th Assize Court