



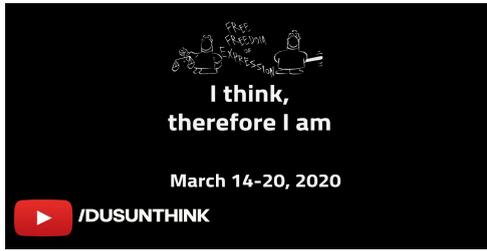
Think, think...

Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin

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What happened last week?

- After the first Coronavirus case was officially confirmed in the early hours of March 11, the first deaths due to Coronavirus were also announced by the Minister of Health within the second week. According to official records, four people have died and the number of identified cases reached 359. 9,800 people were announced to be kept under quarantine.
 - Turkish Medical Association demanded an increase in Coronavirus tests and for the results to be shared transparently, indicating that they presume the number of cases to be much higher.
 - The Ministry of the Interior has stopped the activity in all theaters, cinemas, concert halls, wedding halls, restaurants, cafés, pubs, coffee shops, swimming pools, spas and gyms. All NGO meetings and activities bringing people together, including general assemblies and trainings, were temporarily suspended. Football, basketball, volleyball and handball leagues were cancelled. 149,382 workplaces were announced to have temporarily suspended commercial activity. All meetings and events to be organized in open or closed spaces were postponed until the end of April.
 - All group meetings of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Republican People's Party (CHP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), İYİ Party and the People's Democratic Party (HDP) were cancelled. General Assembly and Department meetings will not be held except letters for measure and emergency issues.
 - There are currently three-hundred-thousand arrests and convicts and one-hundred-and-fifteen thousand prison workers in three-hundred-fifty-five prisons across Turkey. The prisons are almost at full capacity and the wards are used in turns, therefore there is still worry that measures in prisons are insufficient. Thirty-three Bar Associations, including the Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Diyarbakır Bar Associations, made a common declaration and called for all arrests to be released and for the convicts' executions to be temporarily suspended.
 - Erdoğan announced a one-hundred billion Turkish Lira economy pack, named the "Economic Stability Shield." The pack includes provisions for the postponement of loans received by business owners, however lacks many provisions on unemployment and the banning of unpaid leave. Credit encouragements are in the pack; no postponements on utility bills, however.
 - Journalists and social media users were detained due to news and social media posts on the Coronavirus. *Details in the bulletin...*
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[Please click here](#) to watch our weekly video programme, “**COGITO ERGO SUM**” in which we track the freedom of expression agenda in Turkey. “**COGITO ERGO SUM**” is on our [YouTube channel](#) every week...



Two journalists detained over reporting news on Coronavirus

Editor-In-Chief of a local news website in Ankara, Idris Özyol, as well as the Editorial Coordinator Ebru Küçükaydın were detained with a house raid due to the news they reported with the title, “Coronavirus case in Demre”.

The two journalists were taken to Antalya Security Directorate and were later released, due to “public incitement towards panic and spreading news on Coronavirus before official announcements.” After the journalists were released, the news article related to their detainment was taken off the website.



Journalists detained due to news on Coronavirus

Owner of local Halk Daily and Pusula Daily in Bartın, Mustafa Ahmet Oktay and Managing Editor Eren Sarıkaya were detained. The journalists were charged with “public incitement towards panic” due to the news published in the newspaper with the headline,

“A practitioner diagnosed Corona positive in Bartın.” However, the Governorate confirmed the case as the journalists were under detainment. The journalists were kept under detainment for five hours and were later sent to the Prosecutor’s Office. They were released.



Investigation against journalist over sharing news on Coronavirus

An investigation was started against journalist Aydın Atay with the allegation that he has incited worry, fear and panic among the people over sharing news through his social media account, regarding measures against the Coronavirus taken by Diyarbakır Courthouse.



64 detentions over social media posts on Coronavirus

The Ministry of the Interior announced that 24 of the 137 social media users, who posted on social media about the Coronavirus, were detained and that detentions continue. The related posts include those that state that the Coronavirus has turned into an epidemic in Turkey, sufficient measures aren't taken by

related officials and the matter is being kept from the Turkish people. The Ministry described these posts as "baseless and provocative."



Release decree for journalist Alptekin Dursunoğlu

The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against Yakın Doğu News Editor-In-Chief Alptekin Dursunoğlu was held. Dursunoğlu has been arrested on March 1 due to his social media posts on the military operations in Syria. In the first hearing of the case, Istanbul 49th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced the journalist to 50 days of imprisonment due to "praising the

offense and the offender" and turned the sentence into 1,000 TL judicial fine. Dursunoğlu was released.



#AreYouAware of Arrested Journalists? (#HaberinVarMı)

A group of journalists came together as an initiative with the title, "Are You Aware" due to the detentions of 28 journalists and the arrests of eight only in March. The initiative launched a [video](#) on Twitter with the [related hashtag](#) and said, "We will break those iron

bars together for all imprisoned journalists. Our loyalty is for our profession, which is to transfer the truth to the people. We will not bow to anyone. We will continue doing journalism, for the right of people to find out the truth. We will not keep quiet."



Ongoing censorship against OdaTV

Three more website URLs of OdaTV news portal were banned from access after the arrests of two executives and one reporter due to the news reported on the channel related to the Turkish National Intelligence officer, who

recently died in Libya. Three more URLs of OdaTV have been banned from access, just last week.



Detained attorneys

20 people, including 10 lawyers, have been detained with house raids in Diyarbakır, Urfa and Şırnak on March 12 within the investigation started by Şanlıurfa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. 17 of those detained were released with judicial measures. Attorney Sevda Çelik Özbingöl, Kurdish writer Halil Çay and İlyas Çakır were arrested and sent to Urfa Type-T Closed Prison. Urfa Bar

Association Chairman Abdullah Öncel indicated that Özbingöl was arrested based on his professional activities and that they will keep on fighting until his release. Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Cihan Aydın also indicated that Özbingöl was arrested due to his professional activities as well as his meetings with clients and a secret witness statement, further stating that Turkey is facing a serious legal crisis and that this crisis has spread to the attorneys who spend effort to help victim citizens to reach to justice.



Intervention against indefinite hunger-striker Koçak with torture

Mustafa Koçak has been sentenced to heavy life imprisonment and was on an indefinite hunger strike for 254 days with a demand for a fair trial. Koçak was taken out from his cell at İzmir Şakran Prison with force and was taken to the hospital. His attorney Ezgi Çakır told what her client Koçak has been through, that he was tortured and intervened with force. Çakır

said that her client was forced to receive medical treatment for five days under torture by three doctors, including the chief physician of the campus hospital. During the treatment, he was conscious and he declared that he doesn't accept forced medical intervention, whereas they put him on 73 serums and popped all of them. The attorney said that her client showed her his arms, and that his arms were all dark, full with needle marks.



Investigation on mistreatment against journalist Barış Pehlivan

Camera recordings of violence against arrested OdaTV Editor-In-Chief Barış Pehlivan at the entrance of Silivri Prison were revealed. An investigation was started on the matter by the Ministry of Justice. Bakırköy Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has previously denied allegations of beating.



Constitutional Court: Non-violent slogans cannot be penalized

The Constitutional Court issued a decree of freedom of expression in the application of two citizens, who have been convicted due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the slogans they chanted in the protest they participated in. The high court stated that

the slogan can't be described as propaganda by itself and that non-violent expressions cannot be penalised.



Protest ban in Hakkari

Hakkari Governorate announced that all protests and events were banned within the province for fifteen days. In the statement made, the ban was based on the protection of the indivisible integrity of the state and nation, national security, public order as well as the prevention of possible provocation.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- All hearings were postponed across the country within the measures due to CoVid-19. No hearings will be held next week due to the measures.