

Think, think...

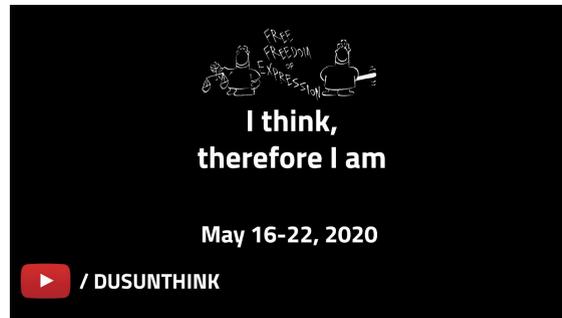


Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin (Issue 21/20 - May 22, 2020)

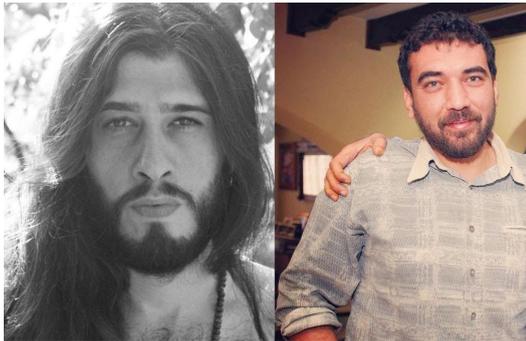
What happened last week?

- At the end of the battle with the epidemic for about 2.5 months, the Minister of Health announced that the disease is finally under control. The number of patients detected within a day in Turkey went below 1000 for the first time since the beginning of the outbreak. However, the concerns and warnings of the experts continue.
- Republican People's Party (CHP) District Youth Branches Chairman Eren Yıldırım had been detained and released upon testifying after his fight with Adana Yüreğir District Governor and Vefa Social Support team on the road. After Erdogan pointed to the incident in his speech on the same day, Yıldırım was arrested. A footage was launched, depicting the district governor's guard pointing a gun towards the family. [Please click here for details...](#)
- Iğdır Co-Mayor Yaşar Akkuş and Altınova Co-Mayor Casim Budak, who were replaced with trustees last week, were arrested. Siirt Co-Mayors Berivan Helen Işık and Peymandara Turhan, Baykan Co-Mayors Ramazan Sarsılmaz and Özden Gülmez, Kurtalan Co-Mayors Baran Akgül and Esmer Baran, Siirt Municipality workers Eref Tekin, Gülçin Köneş and Beşir Aksu were released on the condition of house arrest together with Resul Kaçar, who wasn't handed his election license even though he was elected as Co-Mayor.
- EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy High Representative and EU Commission Vice-President Josep Borrell indicated that decisions and actions against municipalities of the opposition in Turkey seem to have political origins, which create deep concern.
- The opposition took its place in Erdogan's target this week as well. Erdogan did not neglect to emphasize the coup. After Erdoğan, Nationalist Movement Party leader Devlet Bahçeli was also on the scene; immediately after the CHP announced that it could support the newly established parties. Bahçeli requested an amendment on the Political Parties Law. "The FETO project is thought to create a strong opposition element against the National Alliance and the Presidential Government System," referring to the IYI Party, established by the ones leaving his party, and the Future and DEVA Parties established by the ones leaving the AKP.
- 31 new summaries were presented to the Parliament against 19 HDP MPs. In the last 8 months, the number of summaries prepared against HDP MPs has exceeded 350.
- AKP Deputy Chairman asked people who accept the 12-article "social media ethics rules" to use the "green ball and Turkish flag" emojis in addition to their account names. "Local and national accounts" responded to the request and continue with their threats, harassment and targeting actions at full speed. [Please click here for details...](#)

- The Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly reacted against Osman Kavala still not having been released even after the final European Court of Human Rights decree of violation. The assembly called on Turkey to implement the decision immediately. [Please click here for details.](#)
- AYM concluded 9 thousand 224 out of 11,830 individual applications made in the first three months of 2020. Out of 292 violation decisions made, 127 constituted “violation of the right to a fair trial”. The supreme court ruled that at least one right was violated in 8 thousand 659 applications, 584 of which were “violations of freedom of expression” in the last eight years.



Our guest this week on our weekly video programme, in which we follow developments of freedom of expression and thought in Turkey, is Evrensel Daily’s Editor-In-Chief Fatih Polat. Evrensel Daily has recently been a target of the Press Ad Institute recently. “[COGITO ERGO SUM](#)” is on our [YouTube channel](#) every Friday and live on [CanTV](#) every Saturday at 22:00...



Journalist Kulaçoğlu arrested

Taylan Kulaçoğlu and Hakan Gülseven were detained on charges of "provoking crime", "praising crime and the criminal" and "making illegal organization propaganda" within the scope of the investigation carried out by the Balıkesir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. They were transferred to the court upon their request for arrest and were released. Kulaçoğlu, on the other hand, was detained and arrested once again after the Prosecutor’s objection.



Lawsuit filed against former Judges Union Chairman Karadağ

A lawsuit was filed against Mustafa Karadağ, the former President of the Union of Judges, for "public insults and libel" due to his words at the TV show hosted by journalist Yavuz Oğhan. Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office took place as the complainant in the indictment, which

charges Karadağ due to his statements "... *The Pelikan group lawyer works like the shadow chief prosecutor. He is consulted with the Attorney General, like the political commissioner in the former Soviet, the Chief Prosecutor cannot do anything without his consent ...*" Karadağ faces an imprisonment sentence for up to 6 years and four months.



Social media arrests

Photographer Fırat Erez, who lives in Antalya, was arrested on the charges of "insulting religious values" (in accordance with Article 216 of the Turkish Criminal Code) through a social media post. "Islam is immoral, Muhammad is immoral, his followers are immoral," Erez said in his social media post, which attracted reactions and caused a target.



Izmir Chief Prosecutor's Office start Ex Officio Investigation

The Izmir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office announced that an investigation was started "ex officio" against those who shared visuals of the song "Ciao Bella" being played from the speakers of some mosques in Izmir on May 20th on their social media accounts with "praising, supportive" comments. The social media users were charged

with "degrading religious values."



LGBTI+ Human Rights Report

Kaos GL Association shared the LGBTI+ Human Rights 2019 Report with the public. In the report, which included 72 cases and 134 violations in line with the applications and information received by the association, a significant increase was identified in the level of violations caused by public authorities compared to previous years. [Please click here](#) for the full report.



Police attack against trustee protest

Police intervened in the press statement that People's Democratic Party (HDP) Ankara Provincial Organization wanted to make in front of the provincial building with the title of "protesting the trustees." Many people, including Ankara Provincial Co-Chair Vezir Coşkun Parlak and Central Executive Board member Veli Saçılık,

were detained and beaten. The press statement against police violence was also prevented by the police.



RTÜK penalties against criticising government

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed a total of 36 penalties against Halk TV, TELE1, KRT and FOX TV; all of which have been known for their critical broadcast against the government. The four channels paid an administrative fine of 11 million Turkish Liras in total; their broadcasts were stopped 27 times. As the Council penalized channels broadcasting

critical content against the government one after another, the Council's Chairman Ebubekir Şahin stated that he received no orders from anyone so far but that he would consider a word of Erdoğan, an order.



RTUK penalizes radio program with 3 broadcast suspensions

Radio programmer Nihat Sırdar was sanctioned by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) for the radio program 'Mosquito with Nihat' [Nihat'la Sivrisinek] because of the word "beer". Sırdar's program was penalized with 3 broadcast suspensions for reading the message, "I

made my own potato chips at home. Beer goes well with it," from a listener.



Ad penalty against Cumhuriyet due to news on Fahrettin Altun

The Press Ad Institute issued a 35-day ad penalty against Cumhuriyet Daily for the news on the destruction of the fireplace and the gazebo built by Presidential Director of Communication Fahrettin Altun in Kuzguncuk on the land he rented from foundations. While it was claimed that "the news

does not reflect the truth" and "there is no public interest", it was claimed that the newspaper "has exceeded the freedom of information and expression of the press."



Constitutional Court: Prisoner cannot be prevented from writing letter to rights organization

The Constitutional Court (AYM) concluded the application of the convict, whose letter was censored. In his letter, the convict had described the legal process he experienced. The high court

ruled that it is a violation of the freedom of communication to censor the letter to be sent to the Civil Society Association in the Penal Execution System, stating that convicts cannot be prevented from writing to rights organisations.



Detainment due to towel with UK-flag pattern

A person of Iranian origin, who lives in Kayseri, was detained due to the “UK-flag patterned towel” he hung on his balcony to dry. The police came to the apartment on the complaints of their neighbours and seized the towel.



American PEN launches "Freedom to Write Report"

American PEN published its new report, based on the index of authors at risk. The report compiled 238 threats worldwide, with Turkey ranked third after China and Saudi Arabia with 30 files. [Please click here for the full report...](#)



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- All hearings were postponed in courthouses across the country within the measures against the COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, there will be no hearings held next week.