

Think, think

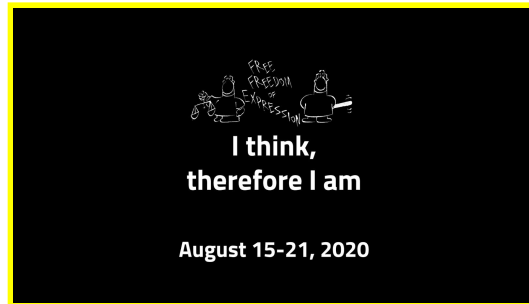


Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 34/20 - August 21, 2020)

What happened last week?

- The battle against the Coronavirus outbreak continues. The number of cases exceeded 22.5 million worldwide, casualties approaching 800 thousand. According to official records, more than 6000 people lost their lives due to the virus in Turkey and this week, the highest number of daily cases in the last 45 days was seen. The number of daily cases exceeded 1400. After the peak of case numbers in the last 45 days, Health Minister Koca stated that they expected it. The number of daily cases broke a record in the last one and a half months. It became a matter of curiosity why no measures were taken in case the Health ministry expected the increase...
- The government's strategy to fight against the outbreak is to put the entire responsibility on the citizens. Officials, even science council members, see their responsibility only to "warn" people or to "treat" the cases; blaming citizens for the lack of decrease in the infection rate. Turkish Medical Association shared the 5th-month evaluation on the pandemic with the public, saying that there are ten times more active patients than the number officially announced, claiming that the government's strategy on the virus is not successful.
- President Erdoğan announced the "good-news" that was expected on Friday. *"Turkey has completed the largest natural gas discovery of history in the Black Sea, finding a natural gas reserve of 320 billion cubic meters. Our aim is to connect the Black Sea natural gas to the use of our people in 2023,"* Erdoğan said.
- After Hagia Sophia, Chora Museum was opened for religious practice as well, with a Presidential decree.
- As reactions continues against the debating on the Istanbul Convention, Erdoğan spoke on the programme for his party's 19th anniversary. *"No understanding, no regulation, no ideology that puts a bomb in the foundations of family is neither humane, nor legitimate,"* he said." Erdoğan also added, *"We will not leave space for a handful of perverts, who try to turn this debate into a tool for hostility against our values."* It was later found out that Erdoğan spoke to the central council members of his party after the debates on the Convention and said, *"There is no need for us to spend energy on the debates, no need for arguing as well. Let the debate remain inside, not on social media."*
- The target of Erdoğan's party at the Mayors Discussion and Evaluation Meeting were the Republican People's Party municipalities. He targeted municipalities that were won by the Republican People's Party in the latest local elections, especially Istanbul, and said, *"ideological municipality administration was revived, once again."* Signalling that they are preparing to restrict the authorities of local administrations, Erdoğan further stated that the Local Administrations Reform will be presented to the Parliament in the upcoming legislative session.

- The Ministry of the Interior announced that legal actions were taken against 6,743 social media users since January 1st. The ministry further announced that actions were taken against 14,186 accounts in total within the last eight months with the allegations of making illegal organization propaganda, public incitement towards resentment and hostility, making perception operations and provocative posts.
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Our weekly video programme, “[COGITO ERGO SUM](#),” in which we track the freedom of expression agenda in Turkey, is on [our YouTube channel](#) every week...

[Please click here](#) for all our video bulletins...



We continue to record violations of freedom of expression in Turkey with the monthly video conferences we organize together with the Human Rights Association and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. [Please click here](#) to see what happened in July.



“I explained corruption, received imprisonment”

Gerger Fırat Daily news director Özgür Boğatekin, who was convicted of “insult” due to criticizing the District Governor in the news published in the newspaper in 2013 and his sentence having been approved by the Court of Cassation, received a letter for the execution of his sentence. The journalist stated, “I explained corruption, received an imprisonment sentence.” The journalist is expected to surrender in ten days for the execution of his sentence.



Constitutional Court decree - almost like death sentence

Contemporary Lawyers Association member lawyers Aytaç Ünsal and Ebru Timtik, who are on an indefinite hunger strike with the claim of fair trial, made an application of measures at the Constitutional Court and claimed for their release. Their claim was denied by the court. The court stated that the two lawyers, who are at a critical

stage in their hunger strike, are not in serious danger of health.



HDP launches trustee report

People's Democratic Party (HDP) Democratic Local Administrations Council prepared a report on the trustee appointments, which fulfilled its first year. The People's Democratic Party (HDP) had won 65 municipalities in total; of which 3 were metropolitan municipalities, 5 provinces, 45 districts and 12 towns in the local elections on March 31st. 1230 municipal assembly members

and 101 provincial assembly members were elected from the People's Democratic Party (HDP) lists. 4.5 months after the elections, on August 19, 2019, trustees were appointed to Diyarbakır, Van and Mardin Metropolitan Municipalities at the same time, giving a start for the "2nd Trustee period." After a year, trustees were appointed to 47 municipalities, 18 co-mayors were arrested, almost a thousand people were detained and the will of 4 million 268 thousand citizens were neglected. [Please click here](#) for details.



Judge Pehlivan's suspension extended for another two months

Union of Judges Chairman and İzmir Karşıyaka Judge Ayşe Sarısu Pehlivan had previously been temporarily suspended by the Council of Judges and Prosecutors three months ago due to her social media post on the right to life of Grup Yorum member İbrahim Gökçek, who lost his life after an indefinite hunger strike. The decree against

Pehlivan was extended for another two months after the fulfillment of the suspension period. The Union of Judges made a statement on the matter and expressed that both decisions are unlawful.



RTÜK penalizes documentary channel due to depiction of “homosexuality”

Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) sentenced documentary channel TLC with an administrative fine due to the programme, “My Extraordinary Pregnancy.” The Council claimed that the programme shows homosexuality as a model and presents two women as parents, explaining what they have been through as they

were pregnant and gave birth, and that this is “against the moral values of society.”



Istanbul Governorate removes municipality posters on Canallstanbul

Istanbul Governorate removed the information posters on Canallstanbul, which were put there by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as it is under their ownership, whose locations were identified with tender specifications. The process required a judicial decree in accordance with the related legislation; whereas it was executed without a

legal process.



Local journalist attacked in Bursa

Karacabey Yörem Daily Owner Şaban Önen was attacked by the Justice and Development Party (AKP member Mayor Ali Özkan’s relatives. *“...Even though our pens are attempted to be broken today, we will continue to write the truth with our understanding of true, honest and principled understanding of journalism, strengthening even more,”* Önen said.



Erdoğan files compensation lawsuit against Kılıçdaroğlu

President Erdoğan filed a 2-million-TL worth of moral compensation lawsuit against the Republican People’s Party (CHP) Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who claimed that Erdoğan has money outside the borders of Turkey in an interview he gave for Cumhuriyet Daily.



HDP statement prevented by police

The People's Democratic Party (HDP) statement organized at Bakırköy Freedom Square within the Democratic Battle Programme with the slogan, "We protect our will, altogether," was prevented by the police. The police took the square under blockade and indicated that the statement was banned by Bakırköy District Governorate, evacuating the square.



Protest bans

All protests and demonstrations in Gazitanep, Tunceli and Şırnak were banned for another 15 days. The Governorate bans were based on the Coronavirus outbreak, whereas the statement made by Şırnak Governorate added September 1, World Peace Day, as another reason for the ban.

The Governorate claimed that "provocative" protests may be organized due to the Peace Day.



Access ban against JinNews

Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) banned access from JinNews agency, which makes publications with the slogan, "From the pens of women, on the track of the truth," due to "the protection of national security and public order." Thus, the agency's website was banned from access for the 10th time since the day it was launched on September 25, 2017.



Another prevention against Özgürüz Radyo

Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) banned access from Özgürüz Radyo, which broadcasts on the Internet with Can Dünder as Editor-In-Chief. Thus, Özgürüz Radyo faced an access ban for the 21st time.

MILLİGAZETE

Cumhuriyet

SÖZCÜ

Access ban against Sözcü, Cumhuriyet and Milli Daily

Ankara 8th Criminal Judicature of Peace brought an access ban against the news on Agriculture Credit Cooperatives. Cumhuriyet Daily news with the headlines, "Salaries of AKP members in Union

of Agriculture Credit Cooperatives become ‘trade secrets’”; Sözcü Daily news with the headlines, “General Director with nine seats” and “Execution Proceeding against farmers owing to Agriculture Credit Cooperatives”; Milli Daily news with the headlines, “The minister doesn’t share number of citizens with execution proceedings against them,” “mysterious protocol by farmers’ establishment” and the column with the title, “Did it suit Anadolu Agency?” were all censored due to “violation of personal rights.”



Access ban against news on rape convict due to ‘right to being forgotten’

28 URLs with news on national wrestler Recep Çakır, who was arrested in 2008 due to rape and was sentenced to 23 years and six months of imprisonment in 2012, were banned from access by Antalya Korkuteli Criminal Judicature of Peace.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

*****There are no developments on the files we’re tracking due to the judicial recess.**