

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 35/20 - August 28, 2020)

What happened last week?

- Turkey's Covid-19 pandemic management crisis deepens. The difference between the mortality rates coming from each province and the numbers announced officially by the ministry continue to increase. The number of those wanting for doctors working at units of pandemic to be retired and those who resign increase. It is signalled that there might be a turn back to the beginning in the fight against the pandemic.
- After Hagia Sophia, another historical place whose status as a museum was changed was the Chora Museum. The museum, which hosts some of the most important religious artwork of the Byzantine period in the post-iconoclastic period was opened for religious practice with a Presidential decree.
- Tensions continue to rise in the Eastern Mediterranean. Germany's mediation between the two NATO member countries, Turkey and Greece, still hasn't given a result. Turkey extended the working period of seismic research ship Oruç Reis once again in the Eastern Mediterranean; Greece is preparing to make a drill in the region, with the participation of France and Italy. The NATO administration called for both sides to ease the tension.
- Turkey announced a discovery of 320 cubic meters of natural gas reserve in the Western Black Sea. The profitability and the possibility of natural gas are still matters of debate in Turkey, as many political scientists remind that good news on natural gas has been given previously many times as well.
- Besides the preparations of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) that will prevent the representation of new political parties in the Parliament, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Deputy Chairman on Elections and Legal Affairs Feti Yıldız announced that they are preparing a new law draft that will make it more difficult for new political parties to be established.
- Lawyer Ebru Timtik, who was on an indefinite hunger strike for 238 days with the demand of fair trial, has lost her life. Aytaç Ünsal's state of health is worsening every day...
- Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) Academy announced the "Academics for Peace Current State Report" on the Peace Academics, who were dismissed from their positions due to signing the petition, "We Will Not Partake In This Crime." The report recorded that 622 of the 822 lawsuits filed against the Peace Academics at 57 separate courts were concluded once after another within the 1 year following the "rights violation" decree issued by the Constitutional Court, and that all files concluded with acquittal. It was also stated that local courts tend to extend the prosecution period intentionally, delaying decrees of acquittal in some of the cases

that were not yet concluded. The State of Emergency Application Committee continues to ignore the Constitutional Court decree as well. [Please click here](#) for the full report.

- President Erdoğan decided for a “Support Ready Forces Directorate” to be established as a rural organization of the Security General Directorate in Istanbul that is directly connected to the center. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu spoke about the Support Ready Forces Directorate that was established in Istanbul after Ankara and said, “We eliminate the time loss and the cost, leading to savings. Here we are talking about a mobile riot force that is bound to the Security and has the capacity to act fast. Opposition parties ask why such a unit was needed and claim that this unit will serve the ruling power.
- The intervention against nature is turning rains in the Black Sea into disasters. These human-made disasters hit Giresun, lastly. The government blamed the downpour and citizens for the disaster, whereas the actual reason of the destruction is the constructions in riverbeds, hydroelectric power plants and highways... According to the Ministry data, there are 56 hydroelectric energy plants. There were 9 positive hydroelectric decisions in Giresun in the last five years, not even the Environmental Impact Assessment was wanted for three projects. No EIA Negative decision was made for a single project during this process.



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...



Yüksel Street protesters arrested

Mahmut Konuk, Acun Karadağ, Alev Şahin, Nazan Bozkurt, Mehmet Dersulu and Armağan Özbaş were arrested due to “illegal organization membership” after being prevented by the police every time they wanted to protest with a demand of re-employment after having been dismissed with Statutory Decrees. The decree against them stated that the reason for their arrest was “them

continuing their protest heavily, despite previous judicial measures against them.” Gülnaz Bozkurt, one of the seven people detained on August 13, will stand trial on the condition of judicial measures.



Ministry targets those reacting against release of sexual assault perpetrator specialised sergeant

Specialized Sergeant Musa O. was released one week after his arrest in Beşiri district of Batman, after “raping” 18-year-old- İpek E. and then caused her death through dragging her towards

suicide. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu claimed that those who keep the topic on agenda for Musa O. to be arrested, “aim to cover up the deeds of People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MPs and other PKK members.” Afterwards, the Ministry targeted those reacting against the release of the rape perpetrator, as well as against press organizations.



Lawsuit against journalist Can Ataklı

A lawsuit was filed against journalist Can Ataklı with the allegation of “insulting the President” due to his expressions on the earthquake taxes during the show, “The Day Begins” [“Gün Başlıyor”] on Tele1 channel. The journalist faces an imprisonment sentence for up to 4 years and 8 months of imprisonment, after expressing his

criticism on where the earthquake taxes went. Ataklı will stand trial in the following days at the Istanbul Criminal Court of First Instance.



Union representative exiled due to protest participation

Following the protests made by various unions on the injustice in additional payments and other financial problems at Dokuz Eylül University, the protests were initially banned, later investigations were opened against the health workers. After the investigations, Health Workers’ Union (SES) Workplace Representative Günseli Uğur was

exiled for 6 months under the name of “assignment”. Uğur stated that the exile happened in order to prevent union activities and indicated that she will continue fighting for the rights of all health workers.



Journalist Özgür Boğatekin imprisoned

Gerger Fırat Daily News Director Özgür Boğatekin, who was sentenced to 1 year and 15 days of imprisonment in the lawsuit filed against him in 2014 due to successive slander through the news that criticized Gerger (Adıyaman) District

Governor, was imprisoned after the approval of his sentence by the Court of Cassation.



Release claims of arrested journalists denied

Istanbul 34th Assize Court denied the applications of release made by journalists Barış Pehlivan, Murat Ağirel and Hülya Kılınç, who were arrested due to revealing the Turkish National Intelligence officer, who died in Libya. The reasons for denial were suspects of obfuscating the evidence and escaping.



Journalist attacked after criticising Mayor

“Haber Ünye Portal” website owner Samet Girmec announced that he was attacked and that he was threatened with death after he criticised the Justice and Development Party (AKP) mayor in Ordu. The journalist filed a criminal complaint against Ordu Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Mehmet Hilmi Güler due to “instigating” and against two

others due to “willful injury, threat, insult, depriving one of his freedom.”



RTÜK penalizes Tele1 due to “Evrensel” ad

Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) penalized Tele1 channel from the upper limit due to “praising and promoting terrorism, showing terrorist organizations as strong or rightful” after the channel launched an Evrensel Daily ad. RTÜK based the penalty on the expression appearing on the screen, “The voice of those wanting to live together, in peace, in brotherhood and sisterhood”

as a little girl held a handkerchief with yellow, red and green colours on it.



Demirören Media files complaint due to law

Demirören Media filed a criminal complaint with a claim of moral compensation against special security officer Zeynep Tüzer, whom they fired, as well as against Medya Koridoru, İleri Haber, Tele1, Aykırı Haber and Gold Ajans due to the news on Tüzer’s dismissal. The company requested for all related news to be removed as

well. The case letter presented by Demirören Media lawyers at Bakırköy 6th Civil Judicature of Peace claims that the “news on unjust termination of employment contract are only allegations, therefore must not be reported as news.”



Lawyer Özbingöl not released

Lawyer Sevdâ Çelik Özbingöl, who was arrested after she was detained in March 2020 in Urfa, stood trial at Urfa 6th Assize Court. Charged with illegal organization membership and making illegal organization propaganda, Özbingöl will remain arrested after her meetings with her clients in prison were considered criminal evidence. The

next hearing was scheduled for September 25.



Police takes Melek Mosso off stage

Artist Melek Mosso announced that the microphone was taken from her by the police and that she was taken down the stage after she said, "Istanbul Convention lets women live" during her performance at Aqua Florya Hayal Kahvesi on August 22nd.



Union member summoned to testify

Health-Labour Izmir Chairman Adem Sarıçoban was summoned to testify at the Prosecutor's Office following the criminal complaint of Dokuz Eylül University Hospital administration. Sarıçoban indicated that he was summoned due to his press statements on the additional payments and the financial problems at the Dokuz Eylül University

hospital's circulating capital.



Continuous bans extended once again in Van

The protest ban brought by the Governorate and is ongoing for four years since the State of Emergency in Van with continuous extensions, was extended once again. The protest and demonstration ban, which became a routine in the province with copy-and-paste announcements,

was extended for another 15 days until September 4.



Investigation against student over participating in protest for Pınar Gültekin

The university administration started an investigation against Ege University student Emine Akbaba, who participated in the protest demonstration organized in Izmir against the murder of Pınar Gültekin, based on the police summary.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Kazım Öz Case

The lawsuit filed against Kazım Öz with the allegation of “illegal organization membership” due to his participation in the Gezi Park resistance in 2010 as well as in the BDP Political Academy...

September 1, Tuesday; Tunceli 2nd Assize Court

Rawin Sterk Yıldız Case

The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against Rudaw TV reporter Rawin Sterk Yıldız, who was detained and arrested in Pazarkule district of Edirne in March after he went there to report news on the state of refugees going to the Greek border, due to “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda”...

September 2, Wednesday; Istanbul 34th Assize Court

Selman Keleş and Arif Aslan Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Dihaber reporter Selman Keleş and journalist Arif Aslan due to “armed terrorist organization membership”...

September 3, Thursday; Van 5th Assize Court