

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 1/21 - January 8, 2021)

What happened last week?

- President Erdoğan appointed Professor Melih Bulu as the Boğaziçi University rector. Bulu is the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Sarıyer District Provincial Organisation founder, 2009 Ataşehir Mayor candidate and 2015 Parliament member candidate. Students and academics reacted against this appointment. As reactions turned into protests, the police locked the campus gate during the protest on January 4th with handcuffs, which led to a historic scene. Immediately afterwards, student housings were raided by special operations forces and the number of detained students reached 40. The [conquest of universities](#) under the AKP ruling is not news...
- Speaking on the appointment of Bulu, Erdoğan said, “I deemed it appropriate, appointed him.” He further targeted students protesting the appointment by calling them “terrorists” and targeted Republican People’s Party (CHP) Provincial Chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who supports the protests, by calling her a “militant.”
- Even though the Turkish Statistical Institute announced the 2020 inflation rate as 14.6%, a significant part of shop owners and citizens agree that the real rate is much higher than what was announced. The [Inflation Research Group](#), consisting of independent academics, announced that they have found the 2020 inflation rate to be 36.72%.
- The amendment made on the Legislation on the Movable Properties of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT) and the Security Directorate was published on the Official Gazette: ammunition and vehicles belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces will be able to be transferred to the Security Directorate and the Turkish National Intelligence Agency upon approval by the minister during “incidents of terror and social events.”
- The first immunity summaries have arrived at the Parliament. The names with summaries against them are People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Parliament members Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, Remziye Tosun, Ömer Öcalan and Nusrettin Maçın.
- In the 117th hearing of the lawsuit on the assassination of Agos Daily’s Editor-In-Chief Hrant Dink, Istanbul 14th Assize Court indicated that former Trabzon Gendarmerie members Veysel Şahin and Volkan Şahin were “aware of the assassination beforehand” and issued their arrest.
- The indictment prepared against Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul Provincial Chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu due to “incitement towards committing a crime” and “praising the crime and the criminal” was accepted. The first hearing of the lawsuit filed at Istanbul Anatolian 13th Criminal Court of First Instance will be held on May 21st with Kaftancıoğlu charged due to taking a photo of the house of Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun.
- Tracking discriminative speech against the LGBTI+’s, Kaos GL Association identified 1476 discriminative speech and hate speech in local and national

newspapers in the year 2020. The association indicated that public officers used discriminative speech against the LGBTI+s in the period when the hate speech in newspapers made a peak and stated the most striking example of this was the Directorate of Religious Affairs targeting LGBTI+s and those living with HIV during a Friday after-prayer lecture on April 24 and that hate speech in newspapers in the same period increased with a serious rate. [Please click here](#) for details.

- Independent information and research company [TotalAnalysis](#) launched a transparency report of countries on COVID-19. In the report, Turkey was ranked 97th among 100 countries.



Handcuff on university gate...

President Erdoğan appointed Professor Melih Bulu as the Boğaziçi University rector. Bulu is the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Sarıyer District Provincial Organisation founder, 2009 Ataşehir Mayor candidate and 2015 Parliament member candidate. Students and academics reacted against this appointment, which was made without their

consent and outside of Boğaziçi University, and said, “We don’t want a trustee rector.” A group of Boğaziçi University faculty members launched a petition that states that they don’t accept this appointment, which “openly violates academic uniqueness, scientific independence and democratic values.”

As reactions turned into protests, the police locked the campus gate during the protest on January 4th with handcuffs, which led to a historic scene. Immediately afterwards, student housings were raided by special operations forces and the number of detained students reached 40. Istanbul Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations in Sarıyer and Beşiktaş. The Governorate based the ban on the pandemic. As protests continued, faculty members turned their backs to protest the incidents during the handover ceremony at Boğaziçi University, with Bulu appointed as the rector. Afterwards, there were resignations from the university administration.

Even the fake rectorate elections were removed with the State of Emergency and now the entire rectorate elections are now solely on Erdoğan in Turkey. Many university rectors are either former MP, an MP candidate or an MP relative. Tens of rectors on duty have not one international publication and those who have were never referred to...

The state of the Turkish academy is obvious with the photo above - from 2020, when academic robes were trampled under police boots, to 2021, when university gates were handcuffed...



“Kobani” indictment accepted

The 108-defendant “Kobani incidents” indictment prepared by Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office was accepted at Ankara 22nd Assize Court. 108 people will be tried due to “homicide” and “disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of the state,” as well as other crimes. 27 politicians are arrested within the investigation, in which former People’s

Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ are arrested since September 20, 2019 and which was extended on September 25, 2020.



15-year imprisonment claim against Kars Co-Mayor

A lawsuit was filed against Kars Co-Mayor Şevin Alaca, who was detained, replaced with a trustee and was arrested on October 8, 2020, due to “illegal organisation membership.” In the indictment prepared by Kars Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Co-Chairmanship system took place as a crime element. It was further shown as a crime that Alaca took place

as the Kars Co-Mayor on Kars Municipality’s Twitter account, brochures, interviews and Alaca’s personal twitter account; as well as the events, protests she participated in, her dance with a Kurdish folk song and the “Sister Family Campaign” started by the municipality due to the pandemic.



2020 summary for journalists: Detainments, arrests, investigations, lawsuits, imprisonment, censorship...

Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG) announced its 2020 Report on Rights Violations Against Journalists with a press meeting organised at the association building. According to the report, 79 journalists were detained, 24 were arrested and 43 journalists were sentenced to a total of 150 years and 15 days of imprisonment in total; 19 journalists

were attacked and access bans were issued against 1960 news articles in 2020. By January 4th, 90 journalists were deprived of their freedom in prison.



Investigation against journalist Pelin Ünker

An investigation was started against Deutsche Welle (DW) Turkish reporter Pelin Ünker and news director Peter Limbourg after the complaint of Aktif Bank due to the news

published with the headline: “Accusation from US banks: Aktif Bank mediates suspicious transactions.” The news involved the report of US Treasury’s intelligence unit Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and the report accused Aktif Bank with supporting the Taliban as well as mediating a “suspicious” transaction that is worth 91.6 million dollars.



Lawsuit against journalist Ayten Akgün

Journalist Ayten Akgün was sentenced to 11 months and 20 days of imprisonment due to “insulting the President” through her social media posts. Istanbul Anatolian 6th Criminal Court of First Instance deferred the announcement of the verdict.



Journalist Mehmet Aslan arrested

Mesopotamia News Agency reporter Mehmet Aslan was detained with a police raid organized against his home in Istanbul. In the operation made within the investigation conducted by Antalya Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, the journalist’s home was searched and all digital materials found were seized.



Lawsuit against journalist Cem Bahtiyar

A lawsuit was filed against journalist Cem Bahtiyar due to “insulting the President” on Twitter after he replied to President Erdoğan’s tweet, that said, “I call out to the world, that no matter what the price is, we will not allow a government to be established in Northern Syria, in the south of Turkey,” with the expression, “Yeah, right.”



Continuous protest bans continue in the new year

The protest ban applied in Van since November 21, 2016 due to “security” was extended once again for 15 days by the Governorate. The ban in the province continues in the new year due to the protection of “national security,” “public order” and due to the pandemic. The protest and demonstration ban in Hakkari was also

extended for another 15 days by the Governorate.



Investigation against Fikri Sağlar

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office announced that it started an investigation against former minister Fikri Sağlar due to "public incitement towards resentment and hostility as well as denigration" based on the opinions he expressed on a TV show. Sağlar had said, "I have doubts that when I am in front of a judge wearing a headscarf, that she

will defend justice. Some have militant and ideological stances and this has to be fought against."



Investigation against journalist Can Ataklı

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office started an investigation against Can Ataklı, who said on a YouTube broadcast, "It doesn't seem possible to me that Tayyip Erdoğan may now leave the authority with an election." The journalist was charged with "public incitement towards resentment and hostility." Announcing the investigation against the journalist, pro-government Sabah Daily asserted that

Ataklı implied a coup.



Successive access bans

A new access ban was added against those brought on the news regarding the construction tender for the land of the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund being won by the President's son's friend. Istanbul Anatolian 7th Criminal Judicature of Peace almost gave consecutive issues of ban and banned access to news on the access ban as well.



Another children's book declared "obscene"

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services Council to Protect Children from Obscene Publications decided that the book, entitled, "I Read As Well Story Series 3 - Magical Rainbow" "has the quality of having an obscene influence on the morality and development of children under 18."



Constitutional Court issues third violation decree for Şahin Alpay

The Constitutional Court (AYM) issued a rights violation decree for the third time in the individual application of journalist Şahin Alpay. This application was on the house imprisonment applied against Alpay after his release. The High Court decided for the “the requirement of a judicial measure predicting him not leaving a residence, that is, heavy

criminal suspicion, was not fulfilled” and issued 20 thousand Turkish Liras of moral compensation to be paid to Alpay.



“Mistreatment investigations not bound to permission”

Istanbul Regional Administrative Court decided that the investigation of “beatings, insult and torture” by security forces are not bound to permission. The court decree was issued after the police intervention against the statement attempted to be made by the relatives of hunger-striker prisoners in Gebze Prison in

2019. An administrative investigation had been started after the complaint of the prisoners’ relatives and Gebze District Governorate didn’t give permission for a judicial investigation due to the security performing its duty.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Müyesser Yıldız and İsmail Dükel Case

The lawsuit filed against OdaTV Ankara News Director Müyesser Yıldız and TELE1 Ankara Representative İsmail Dükel due to “disclosing confidential information on the security and interests of the state”...

Court: Ankara 26th Assize Court

Verdict: The court decided for Erdal Baran to remain arrested, requested a mental health report for him, for Hanefi Avcı and other journalists to be listened to as witnesses and denied the claims to determine whether Yıldız’s phone was tapped or not. In the second hearing, it was revealed that a second indictment was prepared against the journalists due to “successively obtaining information on the security of the state” and was included in the file on December 14.

Hrant Dink Case

The lawsuit filed against 76 defendants on the assassination of Agos Daily’s Editor-In-Chief Hrant Dink, which is ongoing for 13 years...

Court: Istanbul 14th Assize Court

Verdict: The court indicated that it is final with the evidence in the file that former Trabzon Gendarmerie Intelligence Officers Veysel Şahin, Volkan Şahin and Okan Şimşek were informed of the assassination beforehand, issuing arrest warrants against them.

Hacı Yusuf Topaloğlu Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Dicle News Agency reporter Hacı Yusuf Topaloğlu, who was arrested on December 5, 2019 and was released in the first hearing, with the allegation of “illegal organisation membership”...

Court: Adıyaman 2nd Assize Court

Verdict: The journalist was acquitted.

Poet Ahmet Telli Case

The lawsuit filed against poet Ahmet Telli with the allegation of “insulting President” due to his social media posts...

Court: Ankara 22nd Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The court issued for the acquittal of the poet in the second hearing.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

Case Against News Train Station Massacre

The lawsuit filed against journalist Alican Uludağ and the newspaper’s Managing Editor Olcay Büyüktaş due to “disclosing the identity of those taking part in the fight against terrorism” through the news published in Cumhuriyet Daily with the title, “Secret file in Train Station massacre”...

January 12, Tuesday at Istanbul 32nd Assize Court

Özgür Boğatekin Case

The lawsuit filed against Gerger Fırat Daily News Director Özgür Boğatekin due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through his social media posts...

January 12, Tuesday at Adıyaman 2nd Assize Court

Gezi Park Case

The lawsuit filed against seven people, including journalist Can Dündar, whose files were separated from the main Gezi Park Case, due to “attempting to overthrow the government and to prevent government officers from performing their duty”...

January 14, Thursday at Istanbul 30th Assize Court

Ruken Demir Case

The lawsuit filed against Mesopotamia Agency reporter Ruken Demir due to “illegal organisation membership” through the news he reported...

January 14, Thursday at Istanbul 19th Assize Court

Rojhat Doğru Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Rojhat Doğru due to “disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of the state,” “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the news he reported as he was following Kobani protests...

January 14, Thursday at Diyarbakır 8th Assize Court

Case Against Lawyers Protesting Massacre

The lawsuit filed against 19 lawyers, who protested the Ankara Train Station Massacre at Çağlayan Courthouse on October 12, 2015...

January 15, Friday at Istanbul 13th Assize Court

Engin Korkmaz Case

The lawsuit filed against Contemporary Journalists Association (ÇGD) Mediterranean Chairman and Antalya Körfez Daily's Managing Editor Engin Korkmaz due to "insulting the President" through a social media post...

January 15, Friday at Antalya 19th Criminal Court of First Instance