

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 9/21 - March 5, 2021)

What happened last week?

- The government's little partner Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)'s leader repeated his call for the People's Democratic Party (HDP) to be shut down and congratulated that the Court of Cassation has started an examination on HDP. Hours later, Erdoğan announced the "Human Rights Action Plan" that consists of 9 purposes, 50 targets and 3393 activities. Erdoğan repeated the principles of basic human rights and freedoms that Turkey is already responsible for applying, thus admitting that they do not exist in Turkey. *Details on our video newsletter...*
- New Parliamentary summaries arrived this week against Parliamentary immunities. There are currently 1336 summaries against 195 Parliament members. *Details in the newsletter...*
- Turkey entered a phase of a new unpredictability in the pandemic. As the Ministry of Health tried to categorise the provinces in terms of their risk, Erdoğan attempted to announce normalisation updates for each category, for no one understood what he announced. Good news expected by shop owners didn't come, in the meantime, the Turkish Medical Association announced that the frequency of cases of the "mutant virus" is at a worrying level and that urgent measures have to be taken.
- Erzurum Karaçoban Co-Mayor from the People's Democratic Party (HDP), Halit Uğun was detained. Thus, the number of People's Democratic Party (HDP) municipalities under trustee administration has reached 49.
- AKP member Boğaziçi University rector Melih Bulu didn't recognise the elections made for the Directorate of the Institute for Social Sciences and made an appointment that is against the university's practices. Physicist academic Prof. Dr Naci İnci, who accepted Bulu's assistance, became a director for the Institute for Social Sciences.
- Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office started an investigation against the ad on Times Square in New York, U.S. that says "Stop Erdoğan," "5000 women and 780 babies are political arrests in Turkey."
- Journalist and writer Ahmet Altan celebrated his fifth birthday in prison, entering his 71st birthday behind bars.
- Three NGOs pointed out that the Kavala case is a symbol of the crisis of civil society and the supremacy of law in Turkey; calling the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to apply sanctions against Turkey after its fourth evaluation on Turkey's non-application of the European Court of Human Rights decree for Kavala. [Please click here for details...](#) The rights organisations further wanted the Council of Europe to abide by the European Court of Human Rights Grand Chamber decree and to release Selahattin Demirtaş. [Please click here for details...](#)
- In the second hearing of the lawsuit on the killing of former Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Tahir Elçi, the claim for the defendant police officers to be arrested was denied once again. Before the hearing, University of London Forensic

Architecture Department reminded their report on the incident and that the evidence shows that one of the three defendant police officers is indeed the true perpetrator.

- The final hearing of the lawsuit filed against public officers on the killing of Agos Daily's Editor-In-Chief Hrant Dink was held. The next hearing was scheduled for March 26 due to one of the judges being excused.
- The Turkish economy managed to grow by 1.8 percent in 2020 under the conditions of the pandemic. The growth was provided with the credit packs announced by the economical administration, whereas didn't reflect on the income of the citizens. The income per capita decreased by 6.7 percent in dollars and regressed to the lowest level of the last 14 years.
- According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) data, inflation in February reached 15.61 percent. Thus, the highest level was seen in yearly inflation since July 2019. In the meantime, the Chairman of the TUIK keeps changing after debates on the questionable data announced by the Institution. Prof. Dr. Sait Erdal Dinçer became the 5th Chairman of the Institute since 2019.
- The public damage identified as a result of the monitoring made by the Court of Accounts at public institutions became 4.5 billion Turkish Liras in 18 years. The damage caused by public officers became 9 million TLs in 2002 and increased to 216 million TL 18 years later.
- The Constitutional Court found the one-day ad ban issued by the Press-Ad Institute against Açık Mert Korkusuz Daily against the Constitution. The ad ban had been issued due to the news article on former Interior Minister Efkan Ala residing in the ministry housing after his resignation from the position, which was published in the newspaper on August 3, 2015. The Constitutional Court decided that the ad ban has violated freedom of expression and press freedom.
- The fourth Censorship and Self-Censorship Report of the 'Don't be Silent' Platform in Turkey was launched. The report evaluates the period between December 2019 and December 2020. According to the report, the COVID-19 outbreak became a reason for all preventions in general and public institutions are the ones applying such preventions. One third of all such violations are applied through legal methods.



Our weekly video programme, “[COGITO ERGO SUM](#),” in which we track Turkey’s freedom of expression and thought agenda, is on our [YouTube channel](#) every Friday and on CanTV every Saturday at 22:00...

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



Freedom House 2021 Report: “Democracy Under Siege”

Freedom House launched its “Freedom in the World 2021” report. According to the report, which carries the title, “Democracy Under Siege”, freedoms are regressing for 15 years across the world. The report categorised Turkey under the “Not Free Countries” as with the past years. [For details...](#)



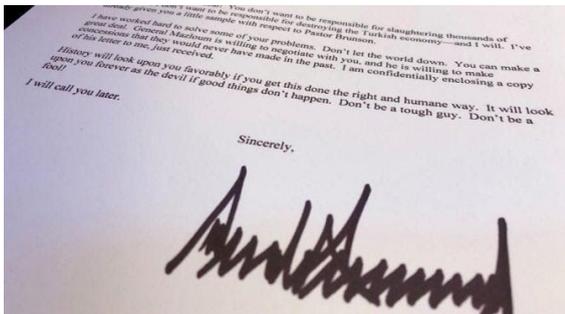
Boğaziçi University protests...

A lawsuit was filed against university student Beyza Buldağ due to the posts made from the Twitter account, named, “The Boğaziçi Solidarity.” Buldağ was arrested on February 7 with the allegation of managing “The Boğaziçi Solidarity” Twitter account and was released on February 12 after objections. [For details...](#)



Parliamentary summaries

Summaries against Parliamentary immunities continued to arrive at the Parliament this week. 10 new summaries were prepared, six of which were against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) members. There are currently 1336 files of immunity against 195 Parliament members. [For details...](#)



Lawsuit against citizen over sharing letter written to Erdoğan by Trump

A lawsuit was filed against a citizen residing in Diyarbakır due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through his social media posts. The indictment prepared was accepted by Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court. The citizen is charged due to the social media posts on the letter written by the former President of the

United States Donald Trump to President Erdoğan in 2019. [For details...](#)



Press freedom in February...

Dicle Fırat Journalists Association announced their February 2021 report. According to the report, 6 journalists were detained, one journalist was arrested, two journalists were

attacked, 8 journalists were exposed to mistreatment, 2 journalists were threatened and 2 journalists were violently prevented from following news information in February. [For details...](#)



Investigation against Mesopotamia Agency news

The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office started an investigation against the news reported by the Mesopotamia Agency on January 27 with the headline, "Isolation protested with march in Sur" and one on January 28 with the headline, "109th monthiversary of the Roboski Massacre." The

agency's Managing Editor Ferhat Çelik testified within the investigation.



Actors Akpınar and Gezen acquitted of 'insulting Erdoğan'

The lawsuit filed against actors Müjdat Gezen and Metin Akpınar at Istanbul Anatolian 8th Criminal Court of First Instance due to "insulting the President" through their speeches on a TV show they participated in as guests two years ago, was concluded with acquittal.



Journalist Fatih Portakal acquitted

Fox TV's former news anchor Fatih Portakal was acquitted of the charges of "insulting the President" and "violating the Law of Banking" in the lawsuit filed against him at Istanbul 46th Criminal Court of First Instance due to his social media posts.



Journalist Candemir acquitted

Journalist Oktay Candemir was acquitted in the lawsuit filed against him at Van 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance due to "insulting Erdoğan" through a social media post on the trustee operations against municipalities.



Investigation against journalist Alican Uludağ

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office started an investigation against journalist Alican Uludağ with the allegation of "insulting

judicial officers” after he criticised the arrest evaluation of journalists Barış Pehlivan, Barış Terkoğlu, Murat Ağirel and Hülya Kılınç having been done outside their information and calling it an “unlawfulness” on social media.



Neighborhood of Batman on February 28, on social media.



withdrawn from shelves. 15 books published by Avesta Publishing were banned in the last three years.



days later, this time the agency’s website was banned by Osmaniye 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace. Thus, the agency’s website was banned for the 29th time.



province is categorised among the “low-risk” provinces in Turkey.

Investigation against HDP Provincial Organisation executives

An investigation was started against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Batman Provincial Organisation executives due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” after they shared visuals of an armoured police vehicle being driven towards a child in Bağlar

Another book banned

The book written by Sheri Laizer with the title, “Martyrs, Traitors and Patriots: Kurdistan after the Gulf War” was banned. The publisher of the book, Avesta Publishing, was informed of the ban decree that was issued on November 29, 2017 three and a half years later, on March 2, 2021. After the ban decree, the book was

Second censorship against Mesopotamia Agency in one week

A second censorship decree was issued against Mesopotamia Agency’s websites in one week. Kayseri 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace had issued an access ban against the agency’s website on February 23 due to the protection of “national security and public order”. Seven

Protest and demonstration ban extended in Hakkari

Hakkari Governorate announced that the ban against protests and demonstrations to be organised across the province within the Law No. 2911 was extended for another 15 days, starting on March 2nd. The extension was based on the pandemic, even though the



Protest bans in Batman

The Batman Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations within the Law No. 2911 for 15 days, starting on the night of March 7. The ban was based on the protection of “national security and public order.”



Press statement by HDP member women prevented

The press statement organized by the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Istanbul Women’s Assembly in Bakırköy, Istanbul within the “Justice for Women” campaign was prevented with an order from the Governorate, based on the pandemic. The women were surrounded by

the police and asked the police, “Is there no (AKP) congresses and there is for women?”



Boğaziçi and LGBTI prevention against March 8 rally

The Adana Governorate banned all banners, posters and flags on the Boğaziçi University protests and on the LGBTIs during the rally organised by Adana Women’s Platform on March 8. The verbal announcement on the ban, which has no legal basis, was made by the Security Directorate and stated that the LGBTIs

are “against the general morality of society” and stated that the appointed rector to Boğaziçi University “has nothing to do with March 8.”



Access ban against Etkin News Agency

Diyarbakır 5th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the website of Etkin News Agency due to the protection of “national security” and “public order.”



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Ferhat Tunc Case

The lawsuit filed against artist Ferhat Tunç due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through his social media posts...

Court: Istanbul Büyükçekmece 14th Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: It was revealed that the German Prosecutor's Office denied the court claim for Ferhat Tunç to testify in Germany due to the fact that the right to freedom of expression is an indispensable right in accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The next hearing was scheduled for September 22...

Sadiye Eser Case

The lawsuit filed against 34 people, including journalist Sadiye Eser, due to "illegal organisation membership," "making illegal organisation propaganda" and "damaging property"...

Court: Istanbul 6th Assize Court

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for June 18.

Nurcan Yalçın Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Nurcan Yalçın due to "illegal organisation membership" and "making illegal organisation propaganda" within the investigation conducted against Rosa Women's Association...

Court: Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for June 9.

Journalist Arif Aslan Case

The lawsuit filed against the journalist, who was detained in 2017 in Van as he was reporting news with the allegation of "illegal organisation membership"...

Court: Van 5th Assize Court

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for March 18.

Özgür Gündem Case

The lawsuit filed against journalists Hüseyin Aykol, İnan Kızılkaya, Zana Bilir Kaya and politician Hatip Dicle in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code due to a series of news articles published in previously shut-down Özgür Gündem Daily...

Court: Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for July 13.

Sibel Hürtaş and Hayri Demir Case

The lawsuit filed against journalists Sibel Hürtaş and Hayri Demir due to "public incitement towards resentment and hostility" and "making terrorist organisation propaganda" through their news and social media posts on the operation of Turkey against Afrin...

Court: Ankara 15th Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued for the stay of prosecution for the journalists. A permission will be waited from the Ministry of Justice for Hürtaş and Demir to be prosecuted in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code.

Hayko Bağdat Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Hayko Bağdat due to "making illegal organisation propaganda" through nine social media posts he made in 2017 and 2018...

Court: Istanbul 28th Assize Court

Verdict: The defendant lawyers were excused from the hearing and the hearing was therefore held on the file only. The next hearing was scheduled for a later date.

Rojhat Doğru Case

The lawsuit filed against former cameraman of Gelî Kurdistan TV Rojhat Doğru due to "disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of the state," "illegal organisation membership" and "making illegal organisation propaganda"...

Court: Diyarbakır 8th Assize Court
Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for May 4.

Özgür Gündem Substitute Editors-In-Chief Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Can Dündar and Özgür Gündem Daily's former Managing Editor İnan Kızılkaya, who both participated in the Substitute Editing-In-Chief campaign for Özgür Gündem Daily, due to "insulting a public officer"...

Court: Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance
Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for July 13.

Taraf Daily Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Taraf Daily's reporter Mehmet Baransu and executives Ahmet Altan, Yasemin Çongar and Yıldırım Oğur due to "illegal organisation membership" and "disclosing confidential information on the state" based on a document published in the newspaper with the title, "Dominant action plan"...

Court: Istanbul 13th Assize Court
Verdict: The court decided for Mehmet Baransu, who is the only arrested defendant of the case, to remain arrested and scheduled the next hearing for June 2.

Abdullah Kaya Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Dicle News Agency (DIHA) Ağrı reporter Abdullah Kaya due to "illegal organisation membership" and "making illegal organisation propaganda" through his journalistic activities and social media posts...

Court: Ağrı 2nd Assize Court
Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for July 1.

KCK Press Case

The lawsuit filed in 2012 against 46 journalists and media workers due to "illegal organisation membership"...

Court: Istanbul 3rd Assize Court
Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for June 22.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

Müeyesser Yıldız and İsmail Dükel Case

The lawsuit filed against Oda TV Ankara News Director Müeyesser Yıldız and TE1 Ankara Representative İsmail Dükel due to "disclosing confidential information related to the security of the state"...

March 8, Monday at Ankara 26th Assize Court

Hakan Aygün Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Hakan Aygün due to "denigrating religious values adopted by a part of society" based on a tweet...

March 9, Tuesday at Bodrum 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance

Mustafa Sönmez Case

The lawsuit filed against economist-writer Mustafa Sönmez due to "insulting the President" based on three tweets he posted in 2015 and 2016...

March 9, Tuesday at Istanbul Anatolian 26th Criminal Court of First Instance

Kibriye Evren Case

The lawsuit filed against JinNews reporter Kibriye Evren with a claim of imprisonment for up to 20 years due to “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda”...

March 9, Tuesday at Diyarbakır 5th Assize Court

Selda Manduz Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Selda Manduz, who was detained in the operation against Kars Municipality and HDP in October, due to “illegal organisation membership”...

March 9, Tuesday at Kars 2nd Assize Court

Case Against Posts on Afrin

The lawsuit filed against 6 people, including Mücadele Birliği Daily Editor-In-Chief Süleyman Acar, Önsöz Magazine Editor-In-Chief Songül Yücel and Atılım Daily reporter Serpil Ünal, due to “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda” through their social media posts on the Afrin operation...

March 9, Tuesday at Istanbul 36th Assize Court

Sadiye Eser and Sadık Topaloğlu Case

The lawsuit filed against journalists Sadiye Eser and Sadık Topaloğlu, who were arrested in December 2019 based on the lawsuits previously filed against them as well as their trips abroad and were released in March 2020 at the first hearing of the lawsuit filed against them due to “illegal organisation membership”...

March 9, Tuesday at Istanbul 22nd Assize Court

Hakan Dirik and Erk Acarer Case

The lawsuit filed against Cumhuriyet Daily’s Izmir reporter Hakan Dirik and BirGün Daily writer Erk Acarer, who were charged with “slandering” former Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ through reporting the allegation of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) MPs on Turkey transporting sarin gas for ISIS on a press meeting they organised on October 21, 2015...

March 9, Tuesday at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance

Ali Ekber Barmağıc Case

The lawsuit filed against environmental rights activist and Munzur Environment, Culture and Solidarity Association Chairman Ali Ekber Barmağıc due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” based on his social media posts and the publications found in his home...

March 9, Tuesday at Tekirdağ 2nd Assize Court

Lawsuit Against Support March for Leyla Güven

The lawsuit filed against 5 women, including Health and Social Service Workers Union Diyarbakır Branch’s former Co-Chair Gönül Adıbelli and Hazro Co-Mayor Gülistan Ekti (who was replaced with a trustee), due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911” and “illegal organisation membership” by participating in the march organised to support Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Co-Chair Leyla Güven, who started a hunger strike on November 8, 2018 with the demand for the solitary confinement against PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan to be revoked...

March 10, Wednesday at Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court

Nagehan Alçı Case

The lawsuit filed against Nagehan Alçı due to insulting Istanbul 37th Criminal Court of First Instance judge Hakan Yalçınkaya on a column she wrote that was published in HaberTürk on June 15, 2018...

March 10, Wednesday at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance

Seyhan Avşar and Necdet Önemli Case

The lawsuit filed against Cumhuriyet Daily reporter Seyhan Avşar and Sözcü Daily's Managing Editor Necdet Önemli due to "targeting a public officer taking part in the fight against terrorism" through a news article...

March 11, Thursday at Istanbul 29th Assize Court

Hakkı Boltan Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Hakkı Boltan due to "insulting the President" and "insulting a public officer because of his duty" through a statement he made in 2016 on journalist Rohat Aktaş, who was killed during a curfew...

March 11, Thursday at Diyarbakır 12th Criminal Court of First Instance

Serife Oruç Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter Şerife Oruç due to "illegal organisation membership"...

March 11, Thursday at Batman 2nd Assize Court