

Think, think...

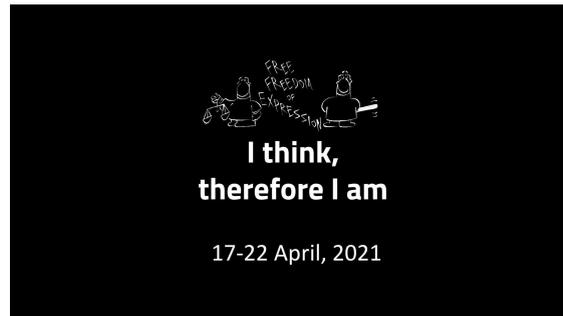


Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 16/21 - April 22, 2021)

What happened last week?

- With another late-night decree issued by Erdoğan, Minister of Commerce Ruhsar Pekcan was dismissed and was replaced with former Justice and Development Party (AKP) MP Mehmet Muş. The company owned by Pekcan having sold disinfectants to ministry institutions have caused reactions. With the same decree, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Security was divided into two ministries, like it happened before.
- As the answer to the question of where the \$128-billion Central Bank reserve is and was sold to, from how much TL, is left unanswered; the campaign posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP) on the matter continue to be prevented by local administrations across the country. One of the new targets of the ruling power in its war against the posters and the questions, is the posters hung by People's Democratic Party (HDP) organisations on their Provincial and district buildings regarding the "withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention" and "male violence"...
- In the 2021 Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Turkey ranked up from 154th to the 153rd place - with Belarus taking its place with its latest move. Details in our news...
- People's Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Mithat Sancar shared a document forgotten by the Prosecutor's Office in the file of the Kobane Case. In the file prepared by the Anti-Terror Directorate on October 26, 2018 and was sent to the Prosecutor's Office, it was indicated that a criminal case was filed against former Parliament members Selahattin Demirtaş, Figen Yüksekdağ, Ayhan Bilgen, Meral Daniş Beştaş, Altan Tan, Hüda Kaya and Gürsel Yıldırım after their Parliamentary immunities were taken off, but that no investigation was conducted and no lawsuit was gilded against them. It further indicates that in case an indictment is prepared, the party could be shut down.
- Turkey is dragged towards despair against the pandemic. As the vaccine reserves are still not enough, the numbers of death and daily cases continue to break records. The numbers announced by the ministry never sound reliable and it is expressed that the ICUs across the country are at full capacity and that doctors may have to make choices between patients who are heavily ill. However, there is still no announcement from the government on whether a full lockdown will be declared or not.
- The pandemic continues to be an excuse for the government to prevent the slightest voice against it. Expressing opinions on the street is being criminalised; as women, workers, students who want to express their opinions despite everything are either prevented or being beaten and detained by the police force across the country, through protest bans issued by Governorates. The approaching Worker's Day on May 1st has already become a topic of prevention across the country.

- The appointed rector of Boğaziçi University and the names he appointed to work with him, continue to share all positions at the university. Appointed as rector by Erdoğan, Melih Bulu has become an interim dean for the Faculty of Communication, which was established with a Presidential Decree after Bulu's appointment. Bulu now has three different positions at the university. He and three names he appointed possess 42 seats at the university in total.
- The Constitutional Court denied the application made for the prosecution of those committing crimes in the operation conducted in Cizre in 2015 during the curfews, which resulted in the deaths of 288 people.



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 week...

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



RSF launches 2021 Press Freedom Index

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) launched the 2021 Press Freedom Index with the title, “Journalism, A Vaccine for Disinformation.” In the study on 180 countries, Turkey was ranked 153th with the evaluations on “heavy issues regarding judicial independence, arbitrary arrests of journalists, heavy interventions against online journalism, administrative sanctions targeting critical journalism and

increase in the violence against journalists.”



Metin Lokumcu Case starts

The lawsuit on the death of Metin Lokumcu, who died due to a tear gas shell shot by the police during the protests in Hopa district of Artvin on May 31, 2011 as Erdoğan was visiting the region as a Prime Minister of the time, has started in Trabzon ten years after his death. Eight defendants are on trial in the lawsuit, including Artvin Provincial Security

Director Muhsin Armağan and the Hopa District Security Director. Lokumcu Family's claim for the lawsuit to be held at an Assize Court was denied and the next hearing was scheduled for June 28. It was later understood that the entire tear gas stock in the inventory of Artvin and Trabzon Security Stations were exhausted the day retired teacher Lokumcu was killed. The next hearing was scheduled for June 28.



Investigation started against CHP MP Engin Altay

Republican People's Party (CHP) Group Deputy Chairman Engin Altay was threatened by the Interior Ministry and an investigation was started against him due to "threat" following the complaint of Erdoğan after his criticism against the Justice and Development Party and Erdoğan, giving examples from

Adnan Menderes and the Democrat Party, on a TV show he participated in. The Radio and Television supreme Council (RTÜK) started an investigation against KRT TV, the channel on which the show was broadcasted.



Another lawsuit against protests at Boğaziçi University

Another lawsuit was filed against the protests organised against the trustee rector appointed to Boğaziçi University by President Erdoğan. The indictment prepared against 97 of the 108 students, who were detained around Boğaziçi University campus on February 1, 2021, was accepted by Istanbul 32nd Criminal Court of First Instance. The indictment involved the

flags, banners and leaflets carried by the students as evidence to the crimes.



Intervention against press statement by workers

The police intervened against the group, who wanted to make a call statement for May 1st on Bakırköy Republic Square, including workers of Bakırköy and Bayrampaşa Municipalities as well as Sinbo, SML Tagging and Tour Assist. 40 people were detained in the police intervention; journalists were beaten and

prevented from recording visuals of the intervention.



Turkey to pay compensation for Kılıçdaroğlu

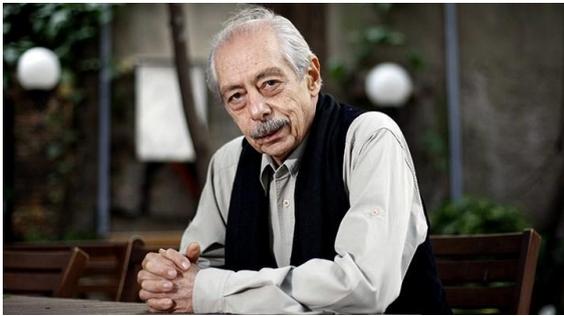
The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights evaluated the conviction of Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu due to his words, addressing former Prime Minister Erdoğan during the group meetings of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey between January 31 and February 7, 2012, regarding the Lighthouse

Case. The court decided that Kılıçdaroğlu's conviction was a violation of freedom of expression and sentenced Turkey to pay 11,385 Euros of compensation. Therefore Turkey will pay Kılıçdaroğlu 11,285 Euros after having sentenced him to pay 10 thousand TL compensation to Erdoğan.



Inci Aydın acquitted

Yeni Yaşam Daily's Managing Editor Inci Aydın was acquitted in the lawsuit filed against her at Istanbul 26th Assize Court due to "making illegal organisation propaganda" through the news published in the newspaper's July 17, 2020 issue with the headline, "Is a New Attack Around the Corner?"



Genco Erkal testifies due to "insulting President"

Theater actor Genco Erkal testified at Istanbul Çağlayan Courthouse within the investigation started against him due to "insulting the President." Speaking to the press as he left the courthouse, Erkal indicated that he was summoned to testify due to seven social media posts he made and that there was no such thing

as "insulting the President" in his posts.



May 1 ban in Istanbul due to pandemic

Istanbul was added to the provinces, in which May 1 bans were declared with the excuse of the pandemic. All meetings and demonstrations across the province were banned until May 17. Kocaeli Governorate, Aydın Governorate and Denizli Governorate have recently declared protest bans which included May 1st as well.



CHP posters banned due to pandemic

Local administrations all across the country continue to prevent the posters of the Republican People's Party (CHP), asking where the 128 billion dollars are, Edirne Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations across the province for 14 days due to the pandemic, as well as issued a ban against posters and banners.



Access bans against news websites

The website of Mesopotamia Agency (MA), which was censored 30 times before, was banned from access once again with a decree issued by Diyarbakır 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace. On the other hand, websites of JinNews, Umut Daily, New Democracy and Kızılbayrak were also censored with the decrees issued by Diyarbakır 2nd, 3rd and 5th Criminal

Judicatures of Peace.



Protest ban in Trabzon before Metin Lokumcu Case

The lawsuit on the death of teacher Metin Lokumcu, who died due to the tear gas shell shot by the police on May 31, 2011 in Hopa district of Artvin, will begin in Trabzon on April 21, Wednesday, 9 years and 11 months after the incident. Even though the lawsuit was

initially filed in Artvin, it was transferred to Trabzon due to reasons on "public security". Before the hearing, Trabzon Governorate banned all meetings, demonstrations and press statements across the province for seven days, between April 19 and 25, based on the protection of "national security, public order" and as well as the pandemic...



Summaries in Parliament

22 new summaries arrived in the Parliament against 20 Republican People's Party and People's Democratic Party members. The summaries were prepared due to "insulting the President," "public incitement towards resentment and hostility and denigration," "slander" and "insult through verbal, written or

visual means." 12 summaries are against People's Democratic Party (HDP) member and 10 are against the Republican People's Party (CHP) members



TESUD
TÜRKİYE EMELİ SUBAYLAR
DERNEĞİ

TESUD administration dismissed

The Interior Ministry claimed that the Turkish Retired Military Officers Association (TESUD) supported the petition of 104 retired admirals and that their statement carried similarities with the petition; dismissing the Executive Board Chairman and other Executive Board members.



Protests banned in Van for years

Van Governorate extended the protest and demonstration ban in the province, which has been ongoing for more than four years, for the period between April 19 and May 3 as well. The ban was initially declared on November 21, 2016 and is ongoing for more than 1600 days, without break.



Protest ban in Kırklareli

Kırklareli Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations until May 17 due to the "pandemic." Thus, Kırklareli was added to the list of provinces, in which May 1st demonstrations are banned.



Police attack against Sinbo workers

Sinbo workers, who were initially suspended due to their union work and then were dismissed with Code 29, wanted to protest the Istanbul Governorate decree against May 1st in front of the company's factory in Haramidere, Istanbul. The police prevented the workers

from making a statement based on the pandemic and detained one Sinbo worker, one union representative and three journalists.



Imprisonment sentence against Erol Mütercimler

Erol Mütercimler was sentenced to ten months of imprisonment in the lawsuit filed against him due to "denigrating a part of society" through his words on the alumni of religious vocational high schools on a TV show he participated in.



Imprisonment sentence in Gezi Park Cases in Antalya

Antalya 18th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced 40 protesters to imprisonment due to the Gezi Park Protests in Antalya, 1.5 months before the time limitation period. 14 protesters were sentenced to 10 months of imprisonment due to “damaging public property,” 23 protesters were sentenced to 8 months and ten

days of imprisonment due to “resisting to prevent duty,” and three protesters were sentenced to 1 year and eight months of imprisonment due to “damaging public property through arson.”



Celebrating birthdays of Mahir Çayan and Deniz Gezmiş considered crime elements

An investigation was started against Left Party Samsun Provincial Chairman Coşkun Konca due to sharing visuals prepared by his party on the birthdays of Mahir Çayan and Deniz Gezmiş, the 1968 generation’s youth leaders. Konca was charged with making terrorist organisation propaganda.



RTÜK penalties from upper limit

Radio and Television Supreme Council issued an administrative fine from the upper limit against KRT TV with the claim that the words of Republican People’s Party (CHP) Group Deputy Chairman Engin Özkoç exceeded the limits of criticism on the show, “Şimdiki Zaman.” Özkoç had stated, referring to

Erdoğan, “whatever happened to all dictators will happen to him as well. The only salvation for Turkey is for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan falling from power.” Afşin Hatipoğlu sentenced Halk TV to an administrative fine due to Afşin Hatipoğlu’s words on the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) carrying the quality of “slander” on the show, “News Desk.”



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Özgür Boğatekin Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Özgür Boğatekin due to “insult” through the news article published in Gerger Fırat Daily with the headline, “Chairman Defending Harassment” on the incident of sexual harassment at a religious vocational high school in Adıyaman...

Court: Adiyaman 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for May.

TV 10 Workers Case

The lawsuit filed against previously shut-down TV10 cameraman Kemal Demir and worker Kemal Karagöz due to “illegal organisation membership”...

Court: Istanbul 28th Assize Court

Verdict: It was decided for witness Şükrü Yıldız to be summoned to the next hearing to testify. The next hearing was scheduled for September 9.

Özgür Gündem Case

The lawsuit filed against 22 people, including 17 journalists, who were beaten and detained during the police raid organised against previously shut-down Özgür Gündem Daily building on August 16, 2016 due to “insulting a public officer” and “preventing a public officer from performing their duty”...

Court: Istanbul 5th Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The court decided for the files of four journalists, the warrants against whom were not executed, and for the file to be sent to the Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office for an opinion to be prepared on the basis. The next hearing was scheduled for July 1.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

Durket Süren Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Durket Süren due to “willfully aiding and abetting an illegal organisation” and “making illegal organisation propaganda”...

April 26, Monday at Diyarbakır 11th Criminal Court of First Instance

Kobani Case

The lawsuit filed against 108 people, including former HDP Co-Chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, as well as other former HDP MPs, with claims of 38 times heavy life imprisonment...

April 26, Monday at Ankara 22nd Assize Court (Sincan Prison hearing room)

Gezi Park Case

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

April 28, Wednesday at Istanbul 30th Assize Court

Vedat Dağ Case

The lawsuit filed against HDP Diyarbakır Provincial Organisation’s Press Consultant Vedat Dağ due to “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda” through him participating in HDP events, sharing the events on his social media account as well as secret witness statements against him...

April 28, Wednesday at Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court

Case Against Las Tesis Protests

The lawsuit filed against 24 women due to “violating Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCK) as well as the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911” based on the demonstration organised in Izmir on December 15, 2019 within the “Las Tesis” demonstrations, which started in Chile to protest violence against women and was soon spread around the world...

April 29, Thursday at Izmir 7th Criminal Court of First Instance

Newspaper Distributors Case

The lawsuit filed against Azadiya Welat and Özgürlükçü Demokrasi Daily distributors Mikail Tunç Demir and Ferhat Duman due to “aiding an illegal organisation” and “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the news published in the newspapers in 2018...

April 29, Thursday at Van 5th Assize Court

METU Pride March Case

The lawsuit filed against 18 students and one academic, who were detained with police violence during the METU LGBTQ+ Pride March organised on May 10, 2019, due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911” and “insulting a public officer”...

April 30, Friday at Ankara 39th Criminal Court of First Instance