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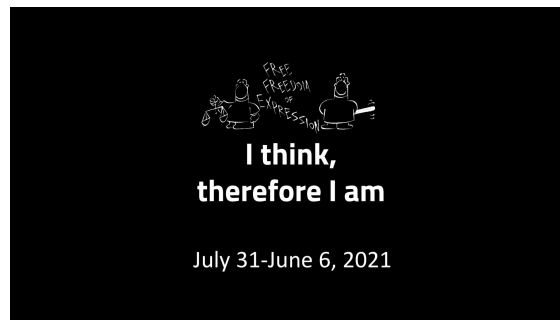
Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 30/21 - August 6, 2021)

What happened last week?

- Turkey is battling fires. The wildfire that started in Manavgat on July 28 was followed by consecutive fires in many other provinces. After 10 days, the wildfires are still not under control. 13 wildfires in 6 provinces could not be put out. President Erdoğan visited disaster region Marmaris with a large convoy and heavy security measures, throwing tea packs at citizens. Those criticising the ruling power's failure in its fight against the wildfires were targeted. It was further claimed that those criticising the government attempted to create chaos and turmoil.
- A group attacked the live broadcast of Halk TV from İçmeler district of Marmaris, reporting the wildfires. The Turkish Journalists Association and the Press Council held the government responsible for the attack. Halk TV made a statement, saying, "Verbal attacks, administrative penalties that are required to be based on legitimate reasons, and two physical attacks in a short period of time not only target Halk TV but press freedom. We will continue taking the responsibility of enlightening the people and informing them of the truth against all tyrannies."
- The law was enacted with the signature of Erdoğan and was published in the Official Gazette, authorizing the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of all construction to be made in the forest regions, especially around the coasts. According to the law, Erdoğan will directly determine which regions the law will be effective in.
- The daily number of Coronavirus cases in Turkey is around 25 thousand. The Turkish Medical Association pointed out that one of the most important tools to end the pandemic is vaccination, requesting additional measures against those who haven't yet been vaccinated during mass public events and closed areas.
- A Kurdish family residing in Hasanköy Neighborhood of Meram district in Konya was murdered with an attack against their house. The attacker shot seven people, including four women, set the house on fire and ran away. The Dedeoğulları Family lost their lives in the attack. Last month, the family had been attacked by a 60-people group with sticks, stones and knives, and had been heavily injured.
- Erdoğan appointed Marmara University Rector Prof. Dr. Erol Özvar as Chairman of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Özvar was not a YÖK member prior to being appointed, thus with the same decision, he was selected as a YÖK member as well. Prof. Dr. Yekta Saraç, whose duty period as the YÖK Chair has been fulfilled, was appointed as the Chief Advisor of the Presidency.
- The annual inflation showed a peak of the last 26 months in July, with 18.95 percent. The data revealed that the inflation rate of this year's July was the highest inflation rate of the month of July in any year since 2003.
- Minister of National Education Ziya Selçuk has resigned, which was announced in the Official Gazette on August 6, 2021. The decision on the gazette stated that Selçuk "requested to be excused from his position" and was replaced with Mahmut Özer.

Özer is also on the Board of Trustees of the Foundation for Education, therefore he is a bureaucrat with “double salary”.

- Five ministers left the initial cabinet determined on July 10, 2018 by the Presidential Government System, being replaced with six ministers.
- The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention, celebrated its seventh anniversary. Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention in March with a decree signed by Erdoğan and the convention was officially repealed last month. As women continue to defend the Istanbul Convention, unfortunately, femicides continue to increase. According to the data compiled by BiaNet, men killed at least 24 women in July and raped 7 women. On the other hand, 11 women’s deaths were found suspicious.
- Four academics from Galatasaray University couldn’t fulfill the new requirement to know Turkish brought by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) for French academics. Four academics have left Galatasaray University, and two academics will try to receive a B2 level Turkish language document until September.



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...

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Constitutional Court issues rights violation decree

The Constitutional Court (AYM) decided that the crime of “committing a crime on behalf of an illegal organisation without membership” regulated with Article 220/6 of the Turkish Criminal Code, which is frequently used against oppositional views in Turkey, does not carry the principle of legality. The court

indicated that the law creates a strong deterrent effect against basic rights like the right to freedom of expression, the right to organise meetings and demonstrations, the right to organisation or the freedom of faith and conscience due to the vague interpretation of the notion of “committing a crime on behalf of an illegal organisation.” Issuing a decree of violation, the Constitutional Court further issued that the decree is a “pilot decree.” Thus, a decree of rights violation will be issued in all applications made related to this crime. Those prosecuted and penalised due to this crime will also be able to object against the decrees

issued, based on the Constitutional Court decree. Prosecutor's Offices and courts will have to take action according to this decree. In order to revoke the rights violation decree, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey has to re-issue the related criminal law.



TIHV data reveals 5,498 organisation freedom violations in five years

The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) launched a report with the title, “Criminalising Politics: Violations Against the Right to Freedom of Organisation” and evaluated the ruling power’s grade report on human rights. The report was prepared by scanning the daily human rights reports issued by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey Documentation Center and by examining

violations against the right to freedom of organisation between the years 2015 and 2019. The report identified 5,498 incidents, in which freedom of organisation was violated in the last five years. During this five-year period, 1614 associations, 132 foundations, 23 confederations and 19 trade unions were shut down; almost all of which were made through Statutory Decrees issued within the State of Emergency. 127 mayors were dismissed and were replaced with trustees. 11 Parliament Members have lost their seats at the Parliament. 120 mayors and 17 Parliament members were arrested. 1954 police operations were organised against the offices of non-governmental and political organisations, as well as against the houses of the members and executives of such organisations. 495 events were prevented through bans, police interventions and by other means. During this time, 15 thousand 70 people were detained and 2 thousand 709 people were arrested as a result of violations against the right to organisation; 551 people were sentenced to 32 thousand 523 months of imprisonment in total. [Please click here](#) for the full report.



July press freedom report: Violence against journalists increases

Republican People’s Party (CHP) Parliament member and former journalist Utku Çakırözer reported press freedom violations in July. Pointing out to the increase in the violence against journalists, Çakırözer stated, “At least 18 journalists were exposed to violence during news reporting in July.” According to the data

shared by the Women’s Coalition in Journalism, 61 female journalists were exposed to violence, threats or harassment in July. The top three countries with the highest number of such cases were Turkey, Georgia and Belarus. According to “The Price of News: July 2021” report prepared by the Journalists Association on monthly data regarding journalist prosecutions, 49 journalists were prosecuted in 17 separate lawsuits last month. One of the prosecuted journalists was sentenced to 11 months and 20 days of imprisonment due to “insulting the President.” The report further pointed out that new lawsuits were filed in the same period as well. It was recorded that a moral compensation lawsuit that was worth 1 million Turkish Liras, was filed against a newspaper following a complaint, due to the news

and articles published in the newspaper. Two journalists were detained in July. One journalist was summoned to testify within an investigation opened against them in July as well.



Çarşı and Gezi Park Cases merged

After the Court of Cassation reversed the acquittal decrees, the Çarşı Case and the Gezi Park Case were merged. The decrees of acquittal issued in the Gezi Park Resistance Case were reversed by the Court of Cassation. Afterwards, the Chief Judge of Istanbul 30th Assize Court, where the 17-defendant case is

being heard (including arrested businessman Osman Kavala) was temporarily appointed to Istanbul 13th Assize Court, where the Çarşı Case was being held and did not so far agree on the cases be merged. Therefore now, the Chief Judge will agree with and approve the merging request of himself, and the two cases will be tried on the same file. After the decree on merging, arrested businessman Kavala's scheduled hearing on August 6 was cancelled as well.



Lawsuit against journalist Ahmet Kanbal

A lawsuit was filed against journalist Ahmet Kanbal after the Gendarmerie Deputy General Command and Lieutenant General Musa Çitil filed a criminal complaint against Kanbal due to sharing a news article about him on social media. In the indictment prepared by Aydın Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, the journalist was charged with "targeting those battling

terrorism" and with "insulting" due to sharing a section of an interview made with Human Rights Association Co-Chair Eren Keskin, that was related to Musa Çitil. The indictment was accepted by Aydın 3rd Assize Court and Kanbal's prosecution will start in December. On the other hand, the investigation opened against Keskin and Artı Gerçek reporter Yağmur Kaya, who made the interview, is ongoing.



Investigation against journalist over criticising racist attack in Konya

An investigation was started against Adıyaman Gerger Fırat Daily News Director Özgür Boğatekin due to a social media post he made on the killing of seven family members in Konya with a racist attack. The journalist has expressed that the brutally murdered family had been victimised by the government and that they hadn't been able to benefit from the opportunities of protection. Therefore, the

journalist is charged with "public incitement towards resentment and hostility." Boğatekin had previously been summoned to testify last year, again due to sharing a racist attack against

seasonal agricultural workers in Sakarya on Facebook. The investigation against him had concluded with non-prosecution.



Attack against Konya Massacre protests

The killing of seven family members with a racist attack in Konya was protested in many provinces. The police intervened against the statement organised by political parties and non-governmental organisations in Van with tear gas and pressurized water; nine people were detained. A group gathered in Şişhane district of Istanbul for a protest and after the group was dispersed, the group members were

attacked by another group in the narrow streets of Kasımpaşa with iron and wooden sticks. The attackers beat journalists Taylan Öztaş, Hayri Tunç, Enes Sezgin and Rojin Altay as well, as they were following the protest. Two journalists were detained after going to the hospital.



RTÜK threatens news channels over reporting news on “wildfires”

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) sent an order to news channels and threatened them over the wildfires. The Council demanded that only the fires, which were taken under control, were to be broadcasted. In case only the burning places were broadcasted, the Council announced that

the heaviest penalty will be issued against the channel. The Radio and Television Supreme Council claimed that the continuous broadcasting of ongoing wildfires is a style of broadcasting that is in line with the views of “circles expecting chaos”. After the RTÜK initiative on censorship, an “accreditation” system started to be applied against journalists following the wildfires in the field. The Press Council reacted against the situation and said, “This is an arbitrary application used by those having public power, that can never be seen in any other democratic country.”



“HelpTurkey” paylaşımlarına soruşturma

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office started an investigation against the social media posts made with the hashtag “Help Turkey.” In the statement made by the Prosecutor’s Office, it was claimed that “a denigration of the government was attempted.” Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu announced that 3,246 content were identified in operations against the social

media posts made on the wildfires, and that legal actions were taken against 172 social media users so far.



for details.

Access bans against 141 news articles by BiaNet

Access bans were issued against 141 news articles of Independent Communication Network, BiaNet. The censored news articles include those on male violence, journalist prosecutions, December 14-25 Operations as well as the lands purchased by Berat Albayrak on the route of Canal Istanbul. [Please click here](#)



Journalist detained due to “recording without permission”

BirGün Daily’s News Director Uğur Şahin was detained by the police as he wanted to record visuals of a male violence against a woman in Şişli district of Istanbul. The journalist was released after testifying at the police station. The reason for the journalist’s detainment is the Security General Directorate ban against the recording of visuals and voices during social

and forensic incidents, through a circular issued on April 27.



Police violence against women over protesting femicides in Ankara

The police intervened against the protest of the women, who gathered to protest the recent killings of Azra Gülendamlar Haytaoğlu and Emine Gökkuş following the call of Istanbul Convention Ankara Campaign Group. The women said, “We do not give up on the Istanbul Convention” and “We demand the execution of Law No. 6284.” The police took

the women under blockade with barricades and detained 11 women with physical violence.



Investigation against tobacco producers over participation in protests

Investigations were opened against at least 30 tobacco producers over participating in the protest demonstrations organised in Malatya on July 2-4 against the “authorisation license” required for tobacco trading, which could be issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and naturally restricts tobacco trading.



State of Emergency continues in Hakkari: Protest ban extended for 15 more days

The protest and demonstration ban that has been ongoing in Hakkari since 2016 was extended once again. The ban, which is ongoing for 1893 days, will last until August 15, due to the protection of the indivisible integrity of the state and nation, the protection

of national security, public order as well as the prevention of the Coronavirus outbreak.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- There were no hearings due to the judicial recess period.