

# Think, think...



## Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 31/21 - August 13, 2021)

### What happened last week?

- As President Erdoğan was answering the questions of journalists on live broadcast, he used a prompter. As Erdoğan was answering with an eye on the prompter, hints being whispered to Erdoğan were audible during the broadcast as well. [Please click here](#) for details.
- Erdoğan spoke on social media and said, *"I do not regard social media positively at all. I believe that there's work to be done with the new legislative session. We have to make them pay the price of this."*
- The Artists Initiative made a declaration and stated, "Issues that emerged as a result of the one-man administration, called the Turkish-type Presidential system as well, continue to increase." Erdoğan replied to the criticisms and said, *"I hear but do not listen. They talk about early elections, the Presidential system... Leave it alone, that's our job. You wouldn't understand this business. Keep out of it."* [Please click here](#) for details.
- There was a fight in Battalgazi neighborhood of Altındağ district in Ankara, where many Syrian refugees reside, between two groups and one person died during the fight. After the fight, the refugees' homes and workplaces were attacked in the neighborhood. Some stores and cars were damaged. The Human Rights Association reprimanded the hate attack against the Syrians and said, *"We are in the worry that there will be more mass attacks against refugees as a result of the increasing anti-refugee opinions."*
- The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry announced that all big wildfires that were being fought against since July 28, ended. According to the Ministry data, 299 fires in 54 provinces were taken under control. As the country is battling fires in the Aegean and the Mediterranean regions, massive downpour in the Western Black Sea region caused flooding. 27 people died in the flood in Kastamonu, Sinop and Bartın. There is worry that the number of deaths might increase.
- Criminal organisation leader Sedat Peker continued to make allegations on former Justice and Development Party (AKP) MP and Chief Presidential Advisor Burhan Kuzu, who died last year. Peker had claimed that Kuzu helped the release of Iranian drug baron Naji Sharifi Zindashti, who was prosecuted due to drug trafficking and murder. Former advisor of Kuzu, Sinan Çiftçi, stated, "Kuzu was following business with serious amounts of money. He mostly used Berat Albayrak [President Erdoğan's son-in-law] for it. He also made Fuat Oktay and Mustafa Şentop resolve a lot of matters as well." Çiftçi further stated that Kuzu received around 100 million dollars from Iranian drug baron Zindashti for his release, and that he found Kuzu's death suspicious.
- Erdoğan made a statement last week on the inflation and said, "It isn't possible for the inflation to go up from now on. We are decreasing interest rates as well, there will not

be high interest rates. Nevertheless, the Central Bank left the political interest rate stable at 19 percent in accordance with the market sentiment. The announcement stated that the interest rates will be kept at a level that is above the inflation.

- The ruling power didn't allow the establishment of Parliamentary Research committees, which were the only option for the Parliament to be monitored after it having been rendered completely useless with the transition to the Presidential system. 826 research proposals were motioned by oppositional parties regarding various matters on the Parliamentary agenda; only 30 of them were processed and only three research committees were established. Preparing research proposals on many matters keeping the Parliamentary agenda busy for a long time, the opposition couldn't receive a reply to many of those proposals. Lately, the proposal for hundreds of wildfires across the country to be researched with an extraordinary meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) was left unanswered as well.



*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...*

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



### **8-month 22-day imprisonment against journalist Hikmet Tunç**

JinNews Van reporter Hikmet Tunç, who has been prosecuted due to reporting a news article with the headline, ‘They performed the destruction, then went missing,’ was sentenced to 8 months and 22 days of imprisonment with the allegation of “insulting” the trustee that was appointed to Muradiye Municipality in Van.

The Muradiye Criminal Court of First Instance decided for the announcement of the verdict to be deferred. JinNews indicated that the hearing was not held due to the court decree on a “simple prosecution procedure” and the journalist didn’t even testify before the court decree was issued. The news article in question was about trustee Erkan Savar having issued a tender that was worth 4 million and 500 thousand Turkish Liras to companies for the landscaping and recreation of Muradiye Falls, and that the companies had disappeared before they even completed the project.



### **Minister prevents BirGün reporter from recording visuals**

BirGün Daily reporter Sarya Toprak has been following the schedule of Minister of Environment and Urbanisation Murat Kurum, who was visiting the villagers having been affected by the wildfires. As Toprak was recording visuals, she was prevented by the

police from doing so. The police told Toprak to “turn off her camera.” After Toprak didn’t turn off her camera, she was then prevented by the minister from recording visuals. Minister Kurum said, “Turn it off, even though you’re a journalist, you can’t record visuals.” After the words of the minister, the police tried to forcefully turn off Toprak’s camera and the journalist was forced out of the area.



### **‘Thread’ investigation against Ekşi Sözlük**

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office started an investigation against social media platform Ekşi Sözlük, where only registered writers can open threads about any topic with all writers being anonymous, due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” as

well as “incitement towards committing crimes.” The statement made by the Prosecutor’s Office indicated an official investigation had been started against Ekşi Sözlük due to the thread, “What more has to happen for the people to riot?” based on the opinion that expressions carrying criminal elements were involved both within and under the thread in question.



### **“Father abusing child” complains against journalist**

BiaNet editor Evrim Kepenek testified following the criminal complaint made by Refik Y., who has been arrested due to abusing his six-year-old child and was later released on the condition of judicial measures. Refik Y. filed a criminal complaint against the journalist

due to “insult” and “violation of privacy”. The journalist has reported the related news article with the headlines, “Father arrested over ‘abusing’ child” and “Father ‘abusing’ child released with judicial measures.”



### **Intervention against resistance in Akbelen Forest**

LIMAK Holding is the first in the ranking of companies receiving the most number of public tenders in their country of activity, according to the World Bank data. The company now wants

to cut down trees from the Akbelen Forest in order to provide more coal to the thermal plant and to extend its mining area. The gendarmerie intervened against the villagers and environmentalists, who have been keeping watch at Akbelen Forest for 26 days, in the middle of the night. The gendarmerie dragged people out of the resistance area by force.



### **Penalty fine against Şenyaşar Family over demanding justice**

The “Justice Watch” of Emine Şenyaşar, who lost her husband and two sons as a result of an attack by the guards and relatives of Justice and Development Party (AKP) Parliament Member İbrahim Halil Yıldız, as well as her surviving son Ferit Şenyaşar, is ongoing for more than five months in front of the Urfa Courthouse.

Demanding for those responsible to be arrested, the Şenyaşar Family’s watch for justice has been intervened against and the mother and son were detained many times. This time, a penalty fine was issued against the family in accordance with the Law of Misdemeanor due to a banner hung by the family around the protest area.



### **RTÜK issues wildfire penalty against TV channels**

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has sent a warning letter to TV channels reporting the news of massive wildfires happening all across the country last week, demanding the wildfires not be broadcasted. The Council gave consecutive penalties against the TV channels not abiding

by its previous demand. Six different TV channels were penalised from 17 files based on their news on the wildfires as well as the council’s letter on censorship.



### **32nd access ban against JinNews**

Diyarbakır 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against JinNews website. The news website started its publications on September 25, 2017 with women editors and reporters, making a women-focused reporting of news, and has thus been banned from access for the 32nd time.



### **Apple removes Hornet from AppStore Turkey**

After Ankara 8th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against gay meeting and partnership network Hornet’s website on August 6, 2020; Hornet was removed from



AppStore Turkey as well. In the message Hornet sent to Apple users, it was stated that the application was removed by Apple “as a result of the decrees issued by Turkish courts.”



### **Farmers intervened against over protesting electric cuts**

Farmers gathering in Çobanderesi area of Haliliye district in Urfa protested the electric cuts made by Dicle Electric Distribution Inc. [Incorporated], blocking the highway between Urfa and Mardin with their tractors. The water

being used by the farmers were provided with wells that work with a pumping system requiring electricity, therefore the farmers complained that they were no longer able to water their crops and have been therefore victimised. The gendarmerie intervened against the protesting farmers and detained some of them. Farmers have previously organised protests in Siverek, Hilvan and Viranşehir against the cuts of the same company.



### **Journalist Beritan Canözer detained**

JinNews reporter Beritan Canözer was detained with a house raid in Diyarbakır within an investigation opened against her. Canözer was taken to Diyarbakır Provincial Security Directorate after her house was searched. The journalist had been detained in April and was released four days later.



### **Nol-pros for death threat against journalist**

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office issued a verdict of non-prosecution in the criminal complaint made by the death threat against journalist Hayri Demir on social media by a user named “Codename: GREEN”. The decree claimed that the identification of the owner of the account making the related threats was

impossible. Journalists, including Demir, have been threatened by the social media user, “Codename: GREEN” last October.

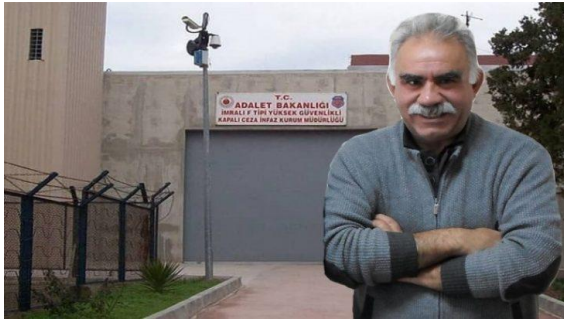


### **Source of rights violations against Kurdish artists: Discrimination**

The report, “Monitoring Study on Rights Violations Against Kurdish Artists with a Focus on Musicians and Actors” prepared by the İsmail Beşikçi Foundation was shared with the public. The report indicates that the ideology that considers the Kurdish language as

a matter of security and thus prevents the use of the language with arbitrary bans create

consequences like discrimination, self-censorship and personal financial issues - making it more difficult to create art in Kurdish as well. According to the report, a majority of the rights violations against Kurdish artists stem from applications violating the discrimination ban. Discriminatory attitudes that start from the legislative process as the cultural politics are being determined, reveal themselves in different levels, such as not assigning stages to Kurdish plays in public theaters, not providing financial support for the production of Kurdish artwork as well as the attitude of the police forces, arbitrarily preventing the practice of artwork in Kurdish. [Please click here](#) for details.



### **Lawsuit against Öcalan's lawyers**

A lawsuit was filed against PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's lawyers Rezan Sarıca, Ali Maden, Baran Doğan, Cengiz Yürekli, İnan Akmeşe, Mahmut Taşçı and Mehmet Selim Okçuoğlu with the allegation of "illegal organisation membership." The indictment of the case based the charges on the lawyers' meetings with Öcalan at Imralı Type-F High

Security Prison as well as their phone calls with the relatives of those arrested. The indictment further considered certain expressions used by the lawyers as they spoke to the press, such as, "Öcalan is being held under solitary confinement" and "His lawyers are not able to see him for 300 days", as criminal evidence. The first hearing of the lawsuit will be held in September at Istanbul 33rd Assize Court.



### **AYM: "Commenting on news on the Internet is freedom of expression"**

The Constitutional Court (AYM) decided that the imprisonment sentence issued against Oğuz Demirkaya in 2014 over commenting under an online news article was a violation of freedom of expression. The high court stated that the

imprisonment sentence issued against Demirkaya was "disproportionate" and issued 13,500 Turkish Liras of moral compensation to be paid to Demirkaya, and for the file to be sent to Sivas 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance for re-prosecution and for the consequences of the violation to be eliminated. Demirkaya was a departmental manager at Sivas Cumhuriyet University and had commented on the news of Egemen Daily by forming a relation between the news and the surname of the university rector's communication advisor. During the prosecution, Demirkaya had indicated that he was sharing humorous content under the online news in order to draw readers' attention to the news content. However, he had been sentenced to 1 year, 2 months and 17 days of imprisonment and had been banned from public service for life.



### **DÜŞÜNCE SUÇU DURUŞMALARI**

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