

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 35/23 - September 8, 2023)

What happened last week?

- At the opening ceremony of the Judicial Year, President Erdoğan accused those who criticised judicial decisions that did not satisfy the public conscience of establishing "social media courts", "threatening judges and prosecutors" and being in "spoilt delusions", and attributed the gradual increase in distrust in justice in recent years to "manipulative perception campaigns". He attributed the recent troubles to the "negative legacy inherited from the past" and the "disaster of the century" caused by the earthquakes of 6 February (!)
- After the cabinet meeting, Erdoğan repeated his recent statements; he talked about the success awards he had given and the groundbreaking ceremonies he had attended. While he talked about how "successful" he was in terms of growth and export figures, he did not take responsibility for inflation and the cost of living, claiming that "the problem is not economic but psychological".
- According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), inflation increased by 9.09% on a monthly basis in August, while annual inflation reached 58.94%, the highest level of the year. Thus, the Central Bank's year-end inflation forecast of 58% was surpassed in August. Inflation Research Group announced that it calculated annual inflation as 128.05 per cent.
- Ministry of Treasury and Finance announced a new Medium Term Programme covering the next 3 years. Accordingly, the growth forecast for 2023 was reduced from 5 per cent to 4.4 per cent. The year-end inflation forecast was revised to 65%. While the Women's National Volleyball Team won the European championship for the first time in its history, national volleyball player Ebrar Karakurt was targeted by pro-government figures and media with hate speech. Erdoğan, on the other hand, said that the fields of culture, art and sports were being tried to be turned into "corruption" and added that "our struggle against social deviance will continue forever."
- The promotion of the rally titled "LGBT propaganda should be banned" to be organised in Istanbul will be broadcast as a 'public service announcement' on television with the decision of the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). Last year, the promotion of the anti-LGBTI+ rally called 'Büyük Aile Buluşması' (Big Family Meeting) was also broadcast on television channels as a 'public service announcement'.
- According to the data compiled by Bianet, men killed at least 31 women in August, and the deaths of at least 20 women were reported in the press as "suspicious". [Details...](#)
- KaosGL compiled [violations of rights against LGBTI+s](#) and [homophobic hate speech in the media](#) during August.

- While hundreds of sick political prisoners were left to die in prisons, Hayrettin Gül, one of the perpetrators of the Madımak massacre, was pardoned by Erdoğan on the grounds of illness. Three years ago, Erdoğan had used the same authorisation for Ahmet Turan Kılıç, who was sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment in the case.



Saturday Mothers detained again

Despite the Constitutional Court's ruling on the violation of the Constitutional Court's decision, the ban imposed by the district governor's office on the protests of the Saturday Mothers, which they have been organising for 28 years to ask the fate of their relatives who disappeared under custody and to bring the perpetrators to trial, continues. The police

attacked the demonstration again this week and detained 32 rights defenders under beatings. The police also used violence against journalist Hayri Tunç who was following the news. The protest to be organised in Van in solidarity with the Saturday Mothers was also prevented this week on the grounds of the protest ban announced by the governorate.



Lawsuit against rights defenders

A lawsuit was filed against Human Rights Association (IHD) Co-Chair Eren Keskin and IHD Commission Against Racism and Discrimination member Güllistan Yarkin on charges of "insulting the state" (Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code) for the commemoration organised by the IHD on the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2021.

The trial of the two rights defenders will start on 27 February.



Painting exhibition under investigation

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into the exhibition "Starting from the Middle" opened by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on the charge of "inciting or insulting the public to hatred and hostility". The exhibition was targeted through media organs close to the government and social media; it was attacked on the grounds

that it contained "insults to national and spiritual values", LGBTI propaganda and sexually explicit paintings.



Access ban on our news on convicted journalist

Our news article titled "Journalist Karafazlı was sentenced to 2 years in prison", which was published on our website about journalist Genççağ Karafazlı being sued and convicted for a news report he made, was blocked from access by the decision of Rize Criminal Judicature of Peace. With the decision, a total of 34 online news content was censored.



Dicle Fırat Journalists Association August report

Dicle Fırat Journalists Association published the '[August 2023 Violations of Rights Violations against Journalists Report](#)'. According to the report, 3 journalists were arrested in a one-month period; 5 journalists were subjected to new investigations and 19

journalists were subjected to new lawsuits. 157 news articles were banned from access.



Journalist Ruşen Takva acquitted

The case against journalist Ruşen Takva, who was charged with "publicly disseminating misleading information" for sharing the news about the shooting incident involving Hakkari Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) provincial chair Fatih Özbek, concluded with acquittal at Hakkari 1st Criminal Court of First Instance.



Defendant on trial for rape complains about news coverage of the trial

Mehmet Ardiçoğlu, who was on trial in Ankara for allegedly raping 18-year-old Eda Nur Kaplan and was acquitted after Kaplan's suicide, filed a complaint against the news published in Gazete Karınca news portal about the case. Pelin Özkaptan, the editor-in-chief of the news portal, which ceased publication in

June, testified within the scope of the investigation opened on the charge of "insult".



Investigation against students unfurling the LGBTI+ flag

Middle East Technical University (METU) Rectorate initiated disciplinary proceedings against students carrying the LGBTI+ flag during the graduation ceremony held at METU Stadium on 26 July.



Rectorate declares a protest ban

Middle East Technical University (METU) administration has decided to "ban" all press statements in the vicinity of the Rectorate building. The Rectorate has declared that any action or activity without permission is a "criminal offence".



Protest ban in Bursa

Bursa Governorate declared a 6-day protest ban across the province on the pretext of "protecting national security and public order", citing the protest organised by the Association of Assistance and Solidarity for the Families of Prisoners and Convicts (TAYAD).



Police attacked the statement for the festival

The police attacked the statement which was planned to be held in Istanbul within the programme of the festival for the foundation of 1 Mayıs Neighbourhood. At least 27 persons were beaten and detained.



Access ban on news about Ministry bureaucrats

Erzurum 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace blocked access to journalist İsmail Arı's news article titled "The manager who defrauded the state was promoted" published in Birgün newspaper on the corruption scandal involving bureaucrats of the Ministry of Family and Social Services in Erzurum.



ESP Co-Chair Gümüştaş and lawyer Uçar detained

Law Office of the Oppressed lawyer Sezin Uçar and Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) Co-Chair lawyer Özlem Gümüştaş were detained at the courthouse where they went to testify in connection with an investigation against them.



Artist Kadir Çat detained after concert

Artist Kadir Çat, who performed at a concert organised by the Yeşil Sol Parti (Green Left Party) in Urfa against war policies, was detained after the event on the allegation of "making illegal organisation propaganda" with the songs he sang.



TAYAD members detained

The march of the members of the Prisoners' Families Assistance and Solidarity Association (TAYAD) from Istanbul to Ankara in order to react against S, Y and R type prisons was prevented by the police and 12 people were detained.



Police raid on Idil Cultural Centre

The Idil Cultural Centre in Istanbul, where Grup Yorum conducts its activities, was raided by the police. Artists at the cultural centre released a video saying that the raid was carried out before the September 26 hearing of five Grup Yorum members, who were detained in an operation in September last year and have been in prison for a year.



İŞKUR director censors 209 more items

Elazığ 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace imposed an access ban on 209 more content related to Gıyas Güven, former Provincial Director of Ağrı Labour and Employment Agency (İŞKUR), who allegedly had sexual intercourse with women who came to find a job by tricking them with the promise of a job, and who had previously censored 422 online content on the subject.



Reward-like sentence for the police officer who killed Cihan Can

The court ruled in the case against police officer Hakan Avcı, who ran over Cihan Can with an armoured police bus in Diyarbakır. Diyarbakır 11th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced the defendant police officer to 3 years in prison for "negligently causing death". Afterwards, a 'good behaviour' discount was applied to the police officer's sentence and

the sentence was converted into a fine of 21,200 TL. The lawyer of the Can family said that the defendant police officer had not seen the court even once despite all the demands. According to the data of the Human Rights Association, 82 crashes involving armoured vehicles and vehicles under the control of law enforcement officers occurred in the last 15 years. In these incidents, 44 people, including 21 children, lost their lives and 94 people, including 23 children, were injured.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Hayko Bağdat due to "making illegal organisation propaganda"...</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 28th Assize Court Verdict: The next hearing will be held on 6 February.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against Mansur Çelik, Managing Editor of ANKA News Agency, due to "targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism" upon Akın Gürlek's complaint...</p> <p>Court: Ankara 22nd High Criminal Court Verdict: The next hearing will be held on 9 November.</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against more than 30 people, including Human Rights Association executive Fırat Akdeniz, due to "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations" in Diyarbakır in 2017 due to a demonstration to protest the dismissals in public sector by state of emergency decrees...</p> <p>Court: Diyarbakır 10th Criminal Court of First Instance Verdict: The next hearing will be held on 29 September.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 35 members of Beşiktaş fan group Çarşı due to "attempting to overthrow the government", "opposing the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations" and "organisation membership" on the grounds of Gezi Park protests...</p> <p>Court: Hakkari 1st Criminal Court of First Instance Verdict: The next hearing will be held on 1 February.</p>

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

<p>The lawsuit filed against the mother and father of 16-year-old Berkin Elvan, who was killed by the police during the Gezi Park protests, due to "insulting the President" because of the statements they made in front of the courthouse after the trial on the death of their child...</p> <p>12 September Tuesday, Istanbul 43rd Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against writer Gökhan Yavuzel, who was charged with "insulting the President" due to his post about Deniz Poyraz, who was murdered in the attack on HDP building...</p> <p>12 September Tuesday, Şanlıurfa 4th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Evrensel newspaper's Managing Editor Görkem Kınacı and Publisher Kürşat Yılmaz on charges of "insult" and "slander" due to the news and articles on bribery and corruption allegations that came to the agenda with the revelations of mafia leader Sedat Peker...</p> <p>12 September Tuesday, Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 31 people, including Jiyan News Editor-in-Chief Sonya Bayık, who were detained during a press statement organised in 2019 to protest the flooding of Hasankeyf by the dam waters, due to "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations"...</p> <p>12 September Tuesday, Batman 1st Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against artist Ferhat Tunç due to "insulting the President" through his social media posts...</p> <p>12 September Tuesday, Istanbul Büyükşehirmece 14th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	<p>The closure lawsuit filed against the Platform to Stop Femicide Platform Association on the grounds of "conducting immoral activities"...</p> <p>13 September Wednesday, Istanbul 13th Civil Court of First Instance</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Rabia Çetin, who was charged with "targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism" and "insulting a public officer" for sharing a tweet announcing that the father of Deniz Poyraz, who was murdered in the attack on HDP's Izmir office, was sued...</p> <p>13 September Wednesday, Istanbul 23rd High Criminal Court</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against Yeniçağ Daily's Editor-in-Chief Erdem Avcı, who was accused of "insult" and "slander" due to the news article about the allegations against Serhat Albayrak, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of Turkuvaz Media Group, which is known to be close to the government, brought up by mafia leader Sedat Peker...</p> <p>14 September Thursday, Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against the executives Reyhan Çapan and Hüseyin Aykol and writers Hasan Başak and Kemal Yakut due to "making illegal organisation propaganda" and "praising crime and criminal" for the news published in the shut-down Özgür Gündem newspaper...</p> <p>14 September Thursday, Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against Mezopotamya Agency reporter Mehmet Şah Oruç, who was arrested in April, due to "illegal organisation membership" and "making propaganda for an illegal organisation" by citing his news reports and social media posts as "criminal evidence"...</p> <p>14 September Thursday, Bitlis 2nd Assize Court</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Mezopotamya Agency editor Abdurrahman Gök, who was arrested in April, on charges of "illegal organisation</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 8 health workers, who were beaten and detained while trying to make a press statement in Van within the scope of the</p>

membership" and "making illegal organisation propaganda" by citing his news reports and journalistic activities as "criminal evidence"...

**14 September Thursday, Diyarbakır 5th
Assize Court**

"White Strike" action of health professional organisations across the country, due to "opposition to the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations"...

**15 September Friday, Van 1st Criminal
Court of First Instance**