

# Think, think...



## Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 41/23 - October 20, 2023)

### What happened last week?

- Istanbul Anatolian Chief Public Prosecutor İsmail Uçar wrote a letter about the bribery ring in the courthouse and sent it to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors. News reports on the issue were censored at high speed and an investigation was launched into the bribery allegations.
- The Presidency submitted the 12th Development Plan, which includes Turkey's five-year targets, to the Parliament. In the plan, the inflation target for the end of 2028 was announced as 4.7 percent. According to TURKSTAT data, inflation is 61.53 percent, while the Central Bank's 2023 year-end inflation forecast is 58 percent.
- "We need at least a year to see the results of the economic program," said Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek.
- Turkey, where food prices have been rising steadily for 36 months, has the fourth highest real food inflation rate at 15 percent, according to a World Bank report. Turkey is also fourth in the world in nominal food inflation with 74 percent.
- While the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) pointed out in a statement on the Day for the Struggle against Poverty that nearly 60 percent of the people in Turkey live below the hunger limit, President Erdoğan, whose expenditures at the Presidential Palace are frequently on the agenda, said, "Let's put an end to food waste." While Erdoğan was making a statement on waste, the Parliament opened a tender to rent 113 vehicles, 57 of which were luxury passenger cars.
- According to the 2024 budget submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, President Erdoğan's monthly gross salary increased from 140,000 liras to 183,000 liras. In the budget proposal, the Diyanet budget, which was 36.1 billion liras this year, was increased to 91.8 billion liras for 2024. It was determined that the Diyanet spent 95 percent of this year's budget.
- At the Green Left Party congress, the party was renamed the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (HEDEP). Tülay Hatimoğulları and Tuncer Bakırhan became the new co-chairs of the party.
- MHP leader Bahçeli, the junior partner of the government, targeted the Constitutional Court by reminding the case demanding the closure of HDP and said, "HDP and all parties founded after it should be closed immediately. I declare to the world that we will file a lawsuit against the Constitutional Court and we will take our rights to the hilt."
- The Presidential decree extending the Turkish Armed Forces' mandate in Syria and Iraq for another two years was approved by 357 votes in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. 164 deputies voted 'No' for the resolution.
- According to the 11-year data of the Constitutional Court, approximately 552 thousand people made individual applications. The Supreme Court, which received more than 80 thousand applications in 2023 alone, ruled that at least one right was

violated in 70,364 applications and that there was no violation of rights in 1,225 applications. The top three places in violation decisions are the right to be tried within a reasonable time, the right to a fair trial and freedom of expression...

- Ebubekir Şahin was elected as the President of the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) for the third time.
- The Ministry of National Education amends the regulations on pre-school and primary education. Accordingly, it became compulsory to open masjids in kindergartens and primary schools.
- It was revealed that President Erdoğan granted a special permit for the Women and Democracy Foundation (KADEM Foundation), of which his daughter Sümeyye Erdoğan is the founder and Chair of the Board of Trustees. KADEM was granted the right to collect money without permission, which 50 associations and foundations in the country (48 of which were granted during the AKP period) have.



### Access ban on news on bribery ring at the courthouse

BirGün writer Timur Soykan, who revealed the complaint made by the Istanbul Anatolian Chief Public Prosecutor to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors about judicial officials issuing eviction and access blocking orders in exchange for money with his article titled "The

Chief Public Prosecutor's cry of bribery: We are rotting", 77 online content, including an article by BirGün newspaper writer Timur Soykan, was blocked by the Istanbul 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace. However, the wave of censorship was not limited to this. Shortly afterwards, the Istanbul 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace blocked access to another 171 content, this time consisting of news reports on the investigation into the bribery allegations.



### Saturday Mothers detained again

The ban imposed by the district governor's office on Saturday Mothers' 28-year-long demonstration to ask the fate of their relatives who disappeared in detention and to bring the perpetrators to trial has been in effect for 27 weeks, despite the Constitutional Court's ruling on the violation of the law. The police attacked

the protest this week and detained 25 rights defenders under beatings, while journalists covering the protest were also subjected to police violence. On the other hand, the Van Governorate did not let this week go by idle, again declaring a protest ban before the protest to be organized in the city in solidarity with the Saturday Mothers.



### **The case against journalist Ahmet Kanbal**

The first hearing of Mezopotamya Agency reporter Ahmet Kanbal, who was charged with "publicly disseminating misleading information" for his social media post about the disappearance of a ballot box in Mardin during the general elections in May, was held at Mardin 1st Criminal Court of First Instance.

The journalist's trial will continue on December 13.



### **Lawsuit against lawyer Tugay Bek**

A lawsuit was filed against lawyer Tugay Bek for his social media post on Gendarmerie General Commander Arif Çetin, who was photographed with people associated with criminal organizations, in which he said, "Keep your distance from criminal organizations." In the indictment accepted by Ankara 44th Criminal Court of First Instance, lawyer Bek is

charged with "insult".



### **March 8 marchers acquitted**

The case against 40 women, who were beaten and detained during the March 8 march organized by the Antalya Women's Platform in 2022, on charges of "opposing the Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations" at Antalya 8th Criminal Court of First Instance ended in acquittal.



### **Police intervention against protests in support of Palestine**

The police intervened the protests organized in front of the Israeli Consulates in Istanbul and Ankara and in front of the US Consulate in Adana to protest the Israeli attacks on Gaza. While 5 people were detained during the protest in Istanbul, the police prevented the protest organized in Van.



## **Gendarmerie General Commander had tweets about him censored**

Ankara 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace blocked access to 17 social media posts about Gendarmerie General Commander Arif Çetin, whose photos with people associated with criminal organizations, upon Çetin's request.



## **Governorate bans Octoberfest**

Eskişehir Governorate banned Octoberfest, which was targeted by groups close to the government, on the grounds of "public order and security".



## **Protest ban in Tunceli**

Tunceli Governorate imposed a 5-day period for all kinds of demonstrations, press statements and events across the city. "Ensuring public security" was cited as the reason.



## **Intervention against protest**

The police intervened a demonstration in Mardin's Nusaybin district to protest the Turkish Armed Forces' airstrikes against Northern and Eastern Syria and detained 7 people including 3 children.



## **Access ban on news on corruption allegations in municipalities**

News on a corruption operation in the AKP-affiliated Erzurum Horasan Municipality and that Mayor Abdülkadir Aydın's son was among those detained in the operation was blocked by the Horasan Criminal Judicature of Peace. Niğde 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace blocked access to the news on the allegations of

corruption in the MHP-affiliated Manisa Metropolitan Municipality and the alleged misconduct of some executives, upon which Manisa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation.



## Access ban on news about prosecutor

News reports on the allegation that Mehmet Sait D., a public prosecutor in Mardin's Midyat district, beat Dr. Gözde Bağcı, the director of the Forensic Medicine Branch in the district, were banned from access by the decision of the Midyat (Mardin) Criminal Judicature of Peace.



## Access ban on news about the rector

News articles and columns about the irregularities revealed about Konya Selçuk University and its rector Metin Aksoy were blocked from access by the 4th and 5th Criminal Judgeships of Peace in Konya.



## TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

<p>The lawsuit filed in 2015 against then HDP Co-Chair Figen Yüksekdağ, Group Deputy Chairpersons İdris Baluken and Çağlar Demirel, and MPs Altan Tan, Ahmet Yıldırım, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Mehmet Ali Aslan and Saadet Becerikli due to "resisting to prevent the execution of duty", "insulting a public officer" and "insulting the President" for their statements in Silvan district of Diyarbakır after the curfew...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Silvan (Diyarbakır) Criminal Court of First Instance</p> <p><b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on February 22nd.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against journalists İzel Sezer and Batuhan Batan due to "insult" accusation due to the news published on the website İleri Haber about President Erdoğan's former lawyer Mustafa Doğan İnal, who allegedly negotiated bribes, and the lawsuit filed against journalists İzel Sezer and Batuhan Batan due to the same accusation...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 25th Criminal Court of First Instance</p> <p><b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on March 5.</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Deniz Yücel, accused of "publicly degrading the Turkish nation and the State of the Republic of Turkey" and "insulting the President" due to his articles published in Die Welt newspaper...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance</p> <p><b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing is scheduled for February 27.</p>	<p>In 2020, the lawsuit filed against Gazete Kadıköy Managing Editor Semra Çelebi, who shared a rainbow flag on her social media account during LGBTI+ Pride Week with the note "It is the faggots who make flags flags flags!", due to "publicly insulting the signs of sovereignty of the state"...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul Anatolian 10th Criminal Court of First Instance</p> <p><b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on November</p>

<p>The lawsuit filed in 2015 and 2018 against journalists Haluk Kalafat and Elif Akgül, who were charged with "publicly degrading the Turkish nation" (Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code) due to their news articles published on bianet about research books on the Armenian Genocide...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on February 20.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Rüstem Batum, who was charged with "insulting the President" for 5 separate social media posts....</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 12th Criminal Court of First Instance <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on March 7.</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against writer-poet Gökhan Yavuzel due to "making propaganda for a terrorist organization"</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Şanlıurfa 5th High Criminal Court <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on November 16.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against Cihan Kolivar, President of the Bread Producers' Union, due to "insulting the President", "publicly humiliating a section of the public" and "publicly humiliating the Turkish nation" for his remarks on the hikes in the price of bread...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 17th Criminal Court of First Instance <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on December 27.</p>

## HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

<p>The trial of the case against 13 people who were detained during the protest in Ankara on January 8, 2021, about the appointment of a trustee rector to Boğaziçi University, on the charge of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No 2911"...</p> <p><b>Tuesday, October 24, Ankara 74th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against BirGün newspaper reporter İsmail Arı, who was charged with "insulting a public official" for reporting on the state tender awarded to the cousin of Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank...</p> <p><b>Tuesday, October 24, Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against JinNews reporter Beritan Canözer, who was charged with "being a member of an illegal organization" by citing her news reports and journalistic activities as "evidence of a crime"...</p> <p><b>Wednesday, October 25, Diyarbakır 10th High Criminal Court</b></p>	<p>The retrial of journalist Hayri Demir, who was sentenced to 2 years, 9 months and 22 days in prison for "making illegal organization propaganda" due to a song and a documentary he shared on his social media account...</p> <p><b>Wednesday, October 25, Ankara 15th High Criminal Court</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Adalet Kaya, President of Rosa Women's Association, due to her alleged delegation to the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), her participation in a statement of the association she heads and her</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Can Dündar and former Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper İnan Kızılkaya for "insulting a public officer" for participating in the Özgür Gündem Editor-in-Chief on Watch campaign...</p>

<p>social media posts....</p> <p><b>Wednesday, October 25, Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court</b></p>	<p><b>October 26, Thursday, Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>
<p>In 2021, the lawsuit filed against Agence France-Presse (AFP) photojournalist Bülent Kılıç, who was detained under torture while covering the Istanbul Pride March, due to "resisting to prevent the execution of his duty" and "insulting a public officer for his duty"...</p> <p><b>October 26, Thursday, Istanbul 19th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>In 2015, the lawsuit filed against journalist Cihan Ölmez, who was in the city during the curfew imposed in Cizre and was charged with "making illegal organization propaganda" for sharing her statements to various media outlets on social media...</p> <p><b>October 26, Thursday, Diyarbakır 5th High Criminal Court</b></p>
<p>The retrial of "Bakur" film directors Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioglu, who were sentenced to 4 years and 6 months in prison for "terrorist organization propaganda" after the Court of Appeal decision...</p> <p><b>October 26, Thursday, Batman 2nd Assize Court</b></p>	<p>The retrial of journalist Hakkı Boltan, who was convicted of "insulting the President" and "insulting a public official for his duty" due to a statement he made in 2016 about the murdered journalist Rohat Aktaş...</p> <p><b>October 26, Thursday, Diyarbakır 12th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against 12 journalists, 10 of them arrested, working for Mezopotamya News Agency and JinNews, due to "membership in a terrorist organization"...</p> <p><b>October 26, Thursday, Ankara 4th High Criminal Court</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Burhan Ekinci on charges of "making illegal organization propaganda" based on his Twitter posts...</p> <p><b>Friday, October 27, Istanbul 30th High Criminal Court</b></p>

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