

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 6/24, February 09, 2024)

What happened last week?

- Speaking in Hatay on the anniversary of the February 6 earthquakes, Erdoğan said, "If the central government and the local government do not join hands, if they are not in solidarity, nothing will come to that city. Did it come to Hatay? Right now, Hatay is left strange and sad." Erdoğan's remarks drew reaction from politics and public opinion. However, the interest in the region on the anniversary of the earthquakes once again showed that it was not only Hatay but the entire earthquake region that was "left stranded".
 - On the anniversary of the Maraş earthquakes, commemorations and protests were organized in many parts of the country. In Hatay, the current mayor and CHP Hatay Municipality candidate Lütfü Savaş and Minister of Health Fahrettin Koca were protested by earthquake victims.
 - President of the Constitutional Court Zühtü Arslan [spoke](#) at the swearing-in ceremony of new members attended by President Erdoğan: ""The final authority is vested in the Constitutional Court and there is no legal basis for not complying with its decisions," he said, reacting to the non-implementation of Constitutional Court decisions.
 - An armed attack was organized against the security point in front of Gate C of Istanbul Çağlayan Courthouse. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced that both attackers were members of the illegal leftist organization DHKP/C. One of the 4 civilians wounded in the attack lost his life. It is [learned](#) that six wounded including 3 police officers are not in life-threatening condition.
 - The head of the Central Bank has changed again! After Hafize Gaye Erkan "resigned", deputy governor Fatih Karahan was appointed. Karahan is the nephew of former US Ambassador and AKP MP Murat Mercan. Mercan's son-in-law Alparslan Bayraktar is also serving as the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.
 - According to [Free Web Turkey](#) data, at least 1,401 URLs were blocked in January. While most of the blocked news stories were about alleged corruption and irregularities, the subjects of these news stories continued to be individuals and/or organizations close to the AKP and public officials.
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Three activists detained in earthquake zone

Selen Reyhan, Antakya Representative of "We Will Return", Barış Kaya, Representative of "Power of Labor" and Cemal Kara were detained at the Serinyol earthquake relief and distribution center.



Intervention against earthquake commemoration in Istanbul

On the anniversary of the February 6 earthquakes, the police attacked the citizens who dispersed after the commemoration program held in Beşiktaş. The police blockaded Beşiktaş ferry pier and detained many people.



Malatya Governorate bans protests and events

On the anniversary of the February 6 earthquakes, Malatya Governorate banned all demonstrations and events across the province for 3 days on the grounds of "public security". Despite the ban, political parties and civil society organizations staged a "silent march" in Malatya.



July 15 veterans detained

On July 15, 2016, citizens who were wounded in the coup attempt and granted the title of veteran gathered in front of AKP Headquarters to make a press statement on the grounds that they did not receive their salaries. The police intervened and detained many of the protesters.



Detention and protest ban for workers

While the protests of workers of Özak Tekstil, which operates in Urfa Organized Industrial Zone (OSB), against the pressure to change unions and dismissals continued on November 27, 27 workers were detained when they wanted to hold a demonstration in front of a branch of Levi's department store in Istanbul. The district governor's office in Zeytinburnu

district, where the company's headquarters is located, issued a 7-day ban on protests and events.



Trial of 87 TİP members begins

87 members and executives of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), who were beaten and detained during a demonstration after it was revealed that the Red Crescent was selling tents in the days following the February 6 earthquakes, went on trial at Istanbul Anadolu 44th Criminal Court of First Instance. The court rejected the acquittal request of the party members charged with "violating the Law on

Meetings and Demonstrations" and set September 11 for the next hearing.



Trial of Veli Saçılık begins

In the days following the February 6 earthquakes, Veli Saçılık, DEM Party Bolu Mayor Candidate Veli Saçılık, who shared the words "They left people to die by not allowing any institution other than AFAD" on his social media account, appeared before the judge. The next hearing of the case, which will continue at Ankara 10th Criminal Court of First Instance on the charge of publicly disseminating misleading information (TCK/217A), will be held on May 28.



No prosecution against Ruşen Fırat

The prosecutor's office issued a decision of "non-prosecution" in the investigation against Ruşen Fırat, who was detained in Hınıs, Erzurum on December 26 on charges of "making terrorist organization propaganda" through his social media posts. Hınıs Criminal Judicature of Peace had issued a 30-day ban on

Firat, the grandson of Sheikh Sait, from sharing the "Turkish flag" on all his social media accounts.



Police raid on People's Law Office

Following the attack on Çağlayan Courthouse, the office of the People's Law Office in Mecidiyeköy, Istanbul was raided by the police. Lawyers Betül Kozağaçlı, Berrak Çağlar, Didem Ünsal, Seda Şaraldı were detained. Within the same operation, Idil Cultural Center in Okmeydan district of Istanbul was also raided and 3 people were detained.



Önder Algedik acquitted

Energy expert Önder Algedik was acquitted in the trial he was charged with "opposing the law on disinformation" (TCK 217/A) for his posts on the activities of the Ministry of Interior's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency after the February 6 earthquakes.



Two journalists detained

Journalist Selamet Turan and journalist Kibriye Evren were detained in raids at their homes in Cizre district of Şırnak and Tuzla district of Istanbul respectively. The reason for the detentions of the journalists was not made public.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

<p><u>Journalist Fırat Bulut Trial</u></p> <p>On February 6, the lawsuit filed against journalist Fırat Bulut due to "publicly disseminating misleading information" for his social media posts about the earthquakes.</p> <p>Court: Elbistan 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance Hearing Outcome: The trial will continue on February 22nd.</p>	<p><u>Hayko Bağdat Trial</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Hayko Bağdat due to "making illegal organization propaganda".</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 28th High Criminal Court Hearing Outcome: The case was adjourned to a later date.</p>
<p><u>Mehmet Şah Oruç Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Mehmet Şah Oruç, who was detained and arrested on April 25 as part of an investigation conducted by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, due to "membership in an illegal organization".</p> <p>Court: Bitlis 2nd High Criminal Court Hearing Outcome:</p>	<p><u>Ferhat Tunç Trial</u></p> <p>The 2017 trial of artist Ferhat Tunç, who was charged with "inciting the public to hatred and hostility" due to his social media posts criticizing the referendum...</p> <p>Court; Istanbul Büyükçekmece 4th Criminal Court of First Instance Hearing Outcome: No hearing information was available.</p>
<p><u>Insult Case Against HSK Member</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Barış Pehlivan and former Cumhuriyet Editorial Coordinator Mustafa Büyüksipahi due to "insulting a public official" through their news reports on Hamit Kocabey, a member of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors.</p> <p>Court: Ankara 19th Criminal Court of First Instance Hearing Outcome: The trial will continue on June 4th.</p>	<p><u>Pınar Gayıp & Mehmet Acettin Case</u></p> <p>Lawyer Sezgin Keleş filed a criminal complaint against ETHA news agency for "making propaganda for a terrorist organization under the guise of journalism" about news articles published by the news agency but not about him.</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance Hearing Outcome: The trial will continue on March 28.</p>
<p><u>Case Against Bosphorus University Protests</u></p> <p>The trial of the case against 13 people who were detained in the protest in Ankara on January 8, 2021, about trustee rector appointed to Boğaziçi</p>	<p><u>Emrah Erdoğan and Rojin Akın Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalists Emrah Erdoğan and Rojin Akın due to "illegal</p>

<p>University, on the charge of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No 2911".</p> <p>Court: Ankara 74th Criminal Court of First Instance</p> <p>Hearing Outcome: The trial will continue on March 5th.</p>	<p>organization membership" for their interviews and photographs taken in Rojava region in 2015.</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 23rd High Criminal Court</p> <p>Hearing Outcome: The trial will continue on April 3rd.</p>
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HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

<p><u>Özgürlükçü Demokrasi Trial</u></p> <p>The retrial of journalists İhsan Yaşar, İshak Yasul, Mehmet Ali Çelebi, Mizgin Fendik, Pınar Tarlak, Reyhan Hacıoğlu and Hicran Urun on charges of "illegal organization membership", "printing or publishing the publications of terrorist organizations", "inciting the public to hatred and hostility", "making illegal organization propaganda" and "praising the crime and the criminal"...</p> <p>Monday, February 12; Istanbul 23rd High Criminal Court</p>	<p><u>Case Against Eskişehir Pride March</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against 8 people who were beaten and detained during the 2022 Eskişehir Pride March due to "violating Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations"...</p> <p>Wednesday, February 14; Eskişehir 4th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p><u>Ramazan Ölçen Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against Ramazan Ölçen, the owner of Azadiya Welat newspaper, which was shut down by a state of emergency decree, due to "being an illegal organization member"...</p> <p>Wednesday, February 14; Diyarbakır 11th High Criminal Court</p>	<p><u>Bülent Kılıç Case</u></p> <p>In 2021, the lawsuit filed against AgenceFrance-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>Thursday, February 15; Istanbul 19th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p><u>Metin Cihan Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Metin Cihan and his news source accused of "unlawfully obtaining and disseminating personal data" for sharing documents showing the corruption of TÜGVA...</p> <p>Friday, February 16; Istanbul 22nd Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	

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