



Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in April 2019

*** President Erdoğan announced the mayoral elections in Istanbul on March 31st as “irregular.” The ruling party’s non acceptance of election results until it won has revealed existing political dynamics in Turkey. Another example of this has happened before during the June 7th elections, which means that the “survival issue” frequently used by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as an election slogan actually corresponded to the survival of the ruling power. [Please click here](#) for the Xtra Bulletin we prepared on the local elections.



*** Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kılıçdaroğlu was attacked during a soldier funeral he attended in Ankara. CHP said the attack was “planned, organized;” one of nine people detained was arrested. The arrested attacker said, “*I was influenced by the statements that claimed Kılıçdaroğlu is a PKK-supporter,*” and was released not even 24 hours after having been arrested. The lynch attempt was a consequence of the polarising and discriminative speech used throughout the elections, whereas was protected by the ruling party, who said that it was “*the people’s reaction.*”

*** The inflation rate has become 19.50 percent in April. The US Dollar exchange rate has seen its highest value since October 2018. The Central Bank did not change the high interest rates and left the political interest rate at a stable 24 percent. Fluctuations in the currency rate continues. Central Bank increased the unexpired swap sales limit one more time to 40 percent.



*** As the world’s largest journalist prison, Turkey has entered May 3rd, World Press Freedom Day under dark once again. 17 new lawsuits and two new investigations were opened against journalists in April; 10 journalists with concluded verdicts against them were sentenced to a total of 14 years and seven months of imprisonment. Turkey was ranked 157th among 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, launched

annually by Reporters Without Borders. ([Please click here for details](#)). Wikipedia is banned in Turkey for two years now, as an example revealing the dimensions of internet and media censorship in the country. ([Please click here for details](#)) The Constitutional Court has issued decrees of violation for only three journalists among ten, evaluating the individual applications

on their arrests years after the initial application Former Cumhuriyet Daily writers and executives, whose sentences were finalised with appeal court decrees, were re-imprisoned. ([Please click here for details](#)) Hearings of Özgür Gündem Substitute Editors-In-Chief and Human Rights Foundation of Turkey Chairwoman Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, RSF Turkey Representative Erol Önderoğlu and writer Ahmet Nesin were scheduled to July 17th; whereas nine defendants were convicted in another Substitute-Editing-In-Chief Case. ([Please click here for details](#))

*** The application of Teacher Ayşe, whose execution of imprisonment was postponed thrice so far, was not concluded by the Constitutional Court and Ayşe Çelik was imprisoned again. ([Please click here for details](#)) The campaign started on change.org to free Teacher Ayşe was signed by more than 50 thousand people. The unlawfulness is currently at the Constitutional Court, remaining silent for two years as the last stage before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). ([Please click here for details](#))



*** 21 more “Peace Academics” were convicted. You may find the data on the lawsuits on <https://goo.gl/KGktHa>. A lawsuit was filed against 17 people, who denounced themselves as a civil disobedience act to support the academics. ([Please click here for details](#))

*** Central executives of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), making a statement that “War is an Issue of Public Health” on the Afrin Operation, were sentenced to imprisonment.

*** Freedom of Musical Expression (Freemuse) reported the pressure and restrictions against musicians around the world under the title, “*The State of Artistic Freedom 2019.*” The report includes 673 incidents in 80 countries during the year 2018, with great emphasis on Turkey. ([Please click here for details](#)) A new lawsuit was filed against artist Ferhat Tunç, who was sentenced to approximately 12 years of imprisonment so far in the lawsuits filed against him due to his social media posts. ([Please click here for details](#))

*** Ministry of Justice did not announce the 2018 statistics. Despite this, according to the data shared by the Ministry until the year 2017 has revealed an increase in the total number of defendants and convictions in lawsuits of “insulting the President” within the first three years of Erdoğan’s duty by 13. ([Please click here for details](#)) According to the report of BiaNet, 16 journalists have become



defendants/suspects of Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code in the first quarter of 2019. [\(Please click here for details\)](#)

*** Human Rights Watch has examined the lawsuits filed against 168 lawyers in Turkey within the last three years and launched a report, entitled, “*Lawyers and Right to Defense Under Attack in Turkey*.” The report reveals that judicial authorities made connections between the lawyers and the offenses of their clients; targeting them through criminal investigations, prosecutions as well as arbitrary detentions and arrests. [\(Please click here for details\)](#). The reasoned decree of the imprisonment sentence for a total of 159 years, 1 month and 30 days, issued against 18 Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) member lawyers, was announced as “*providing legal service*.” [\(Please click here for details\)](#)

*** Human Rights Association (IHD) announced the 2018 Turkey Human Rights Violations Report. According to the report, the rights to life of 673 people, including 32 children, were violated within one year. A total of 2719 people were exposed to torture - 356 under custody, 246 outside custody and 2598 during demonstrations intervened by security forces. 849 interventions were made in total against peaceful demonstrations. [\(Please click here for details\)](#) The Administrative Court has revoked the two-year LGBTI event ban, initially declared by Ankara Governorate based on the Law of State of Emergency. [\(Please click here for details\)](#) Taksim Square was also banned for May 1st celebrations this year; [\(Please click here for details\)](#)

*** The arrest of Osman Kavala reached 18 months and of Yiğit Aksakoğlu to six months within the Gezi Park protests investigations. [\(Please click here for details\)](#) Another example of arrest becoming a method of penalization in Turkey was revealed with university student Berkay Ustabas, who was prosecuted due to participating in the funeral of Berkin Elvan. Ustabas remained under arrest for one year within the file and was sentenced to five months of imprisonment. [\(Please click here for details\)](#)

*** A total of 70,406 applications were finalised by the State of Emergency (OHAL) Applications Monitoring Committee, with 65,156 denied and 5,250 accepted. 56 thousand more applications await evaluation by the Committee.

*** The verdict of acquittal issued for nine suspects, who were on trial regarding the killing of two police officers in Ceylanpınar four year ago, was approved. The incident had been made an excuse by the ruling party to end the Resolution Process.

*** 83 summaries were sent to the Parliament against 43 MPs including People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chairs Pervin Buldan and Sezai Temelli as well as Republican People’s Party (CHP) Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The summaries are based on various statements and declarations. [\(Please click here for details\)](#) People’s Democratic Party (HDP)’s previous session Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş, who is arrested at Edirne Prison since November 2016, will remain arrested. His next hearing was scheduled to June 18-19, 2019. [\(Please click here for details\)](#)

*** The only defendant of the lawsuit filed for the villagers, who were detained and tortured in 2017 in Gevaş district of Van, was acquitted. Following the letter sent by the Grand National Assembly of



Turkey (GNAT) Human Rights Monitoring Committee Directorate to Gevaş Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, an investigation had been started on the incident. Issuing the verdict of acquittal, Gevaş Criminal Court of First Instance claimed that the faces not being clearly identified due to the low quality of visual recordings. ([Please click here for details](#))

*** Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) launched data on “military expenses” in 2018. Turkey increased military expenses by 24 percent, compared to the year 2017.

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