

Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in January 2018

*** Turkey started a transfrontier operation against the Afrin Canton under the Democratic Union Party (PYD). *"This operation will continue until the last organization member is neutralized,"* said President Erdoğan; announcing the start of the Manbij operation after Afrin.

*** Operations started against social media posts and anti-war protests together with Afrin Operation. Erdoğan threatened the people who want to go on the streets, by saying *"they will pay the price of it."* Investigations were opened against four MPs. At least 47 were arrested, 300 are taken into custody. The number of custodies increases. Protests in some provinces were bound to permission by regional administration.

*** Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım came together with representatives of press institutions, providing them with a list of "suggestions" on how the Afrin Operation must be seen in the media. Yıldırım further warned the press members to "look out for national interests." Reporters Without Borders (RSF) evaluated the situation as an attempt to make *"the Turkish media at the service of the government and war targets."*

*** More than 170 intellectuals called for the end of the Afrin operation. An investigation was started against Turkish Medical Union (TTB) executives publishing a statement with the title, *"War is a Public Disease."* 11 doctors were taken into custody. The government and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) targeted the intellectuals. Erdoğan said those who called for peace are "terrorist-lovers."

*** State of Emergency was extended for another three months. Thus, the State of Emergency was extended for the sixth time since its declaration following the coup attempt. A new Statutory Decree was announced within the State of Emergency; a total of 262 people (60 academics) were dismissed from public service, one TV channel and one radio channel were shut down. The debate that started with the latest emergency decrees reached the inside of AKP as well. President Erdoğan reacted to the criticism of former President Abdullah Gül on the arbitrariness in the decree. *"Weird campaigns are starting, even those who were among us have participated in this campaign. Of course we are sad,"* said Erdoğan.

*** Government Spokesman Bekir Bozdağ stated that 110,778 people were dismissed from public service within the State of Emergency and 3,604 of those were reassigned their jobs. Announcing an application of 105,151 people to the State of Emergency Commission, Bozdağ stated, *"The Commission decided on 1,562 people; 41 of those were 'accepted' and the others were 'denied.'"*

*** Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Bahçeli announced that they will support Erdoğan in the upcoming Presidential elections in 2019; stating that Justice and Development Party (AKP) and MHP are currently in a successful collaboration. Erdoğan invited Bahçeli to the Presidency Social Complex. A commission was established for alliance negotiations between the two parties.

*** Halkbank's former Deputy Chairman Hakan Atilla was found guilty by the jury in the U.S., in the case he was arrested in remand with Reza Zarrab testifying as witness. His sentence will be issued in April. Ankara announced that the case is an intervention to Turkey's internal affairs and a plot to complicate the internal politics in Turkey.

*** The Constitutional Court decided for rights violation in the application of arrested journalists Şahin Alpay and Mehmet Altan. Despite the court decree, the two journalists were not released. Government authorities accuse the Constitutional Court with 'exceeding boundaries of authority' and local courts do not apply the binding Supreme Court decree.

*** People's Democratic Party (HDP) Ağrı MP Leyla Zana has lost her seat at the Parliament due to "non attendance." Zana became the sixth HDP member who lost a seat at the legislative power.

*** Presenting opinion at the application made by journalist Deniz Yücel to the Constitutional Court, the Ministry of Justice asserted that the journalist has made "*armed terrorist organization propaganda*" and that there is doubt concerning an "*incitement of people towards hatred and hostility*" with tangible evidence supporting these. Yücel is arrested for more than 10 months and there is still no indictment prepared against him.

*** A verdict of release was issued for Amnesty International Turkey Chairman Taner Kılıç, who was arrested pending trial in the "Büyükada Case." However, Kılıç was arrested once again following an objection of the Prosecutor's Office, before he could even leave prison.

*** State of Emergency Commission denied the claim of Nuriye Gülmen and Semih Özakça, who are on a hunger strike for 324 days, to go back to work. Gülmen announced the end of their hunger strike.

*** Ministry of Internal Affairs dismissed Republican People's Party (CHP) member Beşiktaş Mayor Murat Haznedar from duty due to the investigations against him on corruption and FETÖ membership.

*** Freedom House launched the 2018 Freedom in the World 2018 report, which handles political rights and freedoms all around the world. Turkey has regraded from "Partly Free" to "Not Free" category. Human Rights Watch launched the '2018 World Report' in which human rights applications in more than 90 countries were analysed. The 643-page report, launched for the 28th time by the organization, states: "*The new presidential system [in Turkey], which consolidates the incumbent's hold on power, is a setback for human rights and the rule of law. It lacks sufficient checks and balances against abuse of executive power, greatly diminishing the powers of parliament, and consolidating presidential control over most judicial appointments.*"

*** According to BiaNet's "October-December 2017 BIA Media Monitoring Report", 122 journalists and media workers entered the new year in prison and 520 face imprisonment sentences. At least four journalists were arrested in January.



At least 300 taken into custody due to anti-war protests, 47 arrested

Following the operation in Afrin by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), President Erdoğan made a statement, threatening those protesting the operation: *“Those who will go on the streets to protest will*

pay the price of it heavily. We will crush whoever goes against us during this national fight. No compromises, not a single bit of flexibility in this.” Following the statement, protests and social media posts face restrictions and investigations.

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office started an investigation against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Deputy Co-Chair Nadir Yıldırım, Party Spokesman Ayhan Bilgen and Tunceli MP Alican Önlü due to the tweets they posted on the Afrin Operation. Yıldırım and Bilgen are charged with “inciting people towards hatred, hostility and crimes.” Önlü is charged with “denigrating the Turkish Nation, the government of the Republic of Turkey, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the government of the Republic of Turkey and the institutions of state.”

Protests in many provinces were prevented by the police. 11 of the 13 people taken into custody during the protest in Kadıköy, Istanbul were arrested due to “participating in meeting and demonstration without permission.” 36 citizens were arrested due to “inciting people towards hatred and hostility; making terrorist organization propaganda” through their social media posts on the Afrin operation. At least 150 people were taken into custody in the operations in 31 provinces. This number continues to increase.

Every day, new people are added to those taken into custody and arrested due to their social media posts on the Afrin operation. According to the information we compiled from the press, at least 36 people were arrested within 13 days due to their social media posts. The Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that 311 people were taken into custody between the dates 22 and 29 December 2017 due to their social media posts, charged with “illegal organization propaganda.”

Letter for Afrin from more than 170 intellectuals, Erdoğan announces intellectuals against military operation ‘traitors’

More than 170 names, including former ministers, MPs, authors, intellectuals, directors, actors, screenwriters, journalists, NGO and women’s organization representatives, sent the letter they signed for the end of the operation started by the Turkish Armed Forces against Afrin. The letter was sent to all MPs at the Parliament.

Intellectuals, including Zülfü Livaneli, Rakel Dink, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Gençay Gürsoy, Levent Tüzel, Ece Temelkuran, Şanar Yurdatapan, Deniz Türkali, Ertuğrul Günay, Esra Arsan and Necmiye Alpay, wrote: *“We want peace and calm in our country and our region, not war. We believe the best way to protect our borders and to not have issues of survival is to strengthen connections of friendship and good neighborhood. We know that it is possible*

to provide our security with mutual negotiation and collaboration, instead of billions-worth armament with the cost of the lives of young citizens, with a war that would leave tens of thousands of families without home and shelter.”

Government Spokesman and Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ targeted the intellectuals by saying, *“These are all familiar faces. They are the voluntary praisers, supporters of terrorist organizations... I complain against them to our nation, once again. Let no such intellectuals be.”* Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Group Deputy Chairman Erkan Akçay targeted the intellectuals as well. *“Some so-called intellectuals, whose value is self-proclaimed, signed under another letter of treason. They are the heads of a boil in every period; crypto-racist PKK-lovers disguised as artists, politicians, intellectuals and lawyers.”* Many messages were shared on the social media against the letter and the signatories, with threat and insults.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced more than 170 names “traitors,” including former ministers, MPs, writers, intellectuals, directors, actors, screenwriters, journalists and NGO representatives. *“They say, they do not want war. They did not feel any shame in signing under such a thing. What lack of conscience! Does being a professor, an artist, a doctor give you an extra value? They say they don’t want war, but rather want peace. Peace cannot be provided with blood. If you are as peace loving as you claim, why did you remain silent while separatist terrorist organizations killed our martyr police? Know that their blood will be venged for. You are so-called artists,”* said Erdoğan.

Erdoğan; “Those who say no to war are terrorist-lovers”

President Tayyip Erdoğan targeted the statement launched by the Turkish Medical Union (TTB) Central Council on the military operation started by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) against Afrin, titled, *“War Is a National Health Problem.”* *“A group, so-called the Turkish Medical Union, attempt to conduct an anti-war campaign. We have never heard these terrorist-lovers saying yes to peace... These gentlemen have never been local and national until today, never were concerned with the issues of this country,”* said Erdoğan.

Turkish Medical Union raided after headline “War is Public Disease,” doctors taken into custody

An investigation was opened against Turkish Medical Union (TTB) executives, who were targeted by President Erdoğan as “terrorist praisers” due to making a call for ‘peace’ against the operation in Afrin and against whom a criminal complaint was made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

In the investigation started by Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, doctors made a statement with the headline, *“War is a Public Disease.”* The defendants were charged with denigrating the Turkish nation and the Republic of Turkey; 11 TTB central executives were taken into custody with house raids, including TTB Chairman Prof. Dr. Raşit Tükel. There is an order of confidentiality on the investigation file.

On the other hand, Istanbul University dismissed TTB Chairman Prof. Dr. Raşit Tükel, who is currently in custody, and TTB executive Prof. Dr. Taner Gören from their duties for

three months. When the bulletin was being prepared, the doctors were being transferred to the courthouse to testify at the Prosecutor's Office.

Afrika Newspaper attacked after targeting of Erdoğan

Afrika Newspaper, published and distributed in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC), was attacked after the targeting of President Erdoğan following the headline published on the newspaper regarding the Afrin operation. The newspaper's Editor-In-Chief Şener Lenet stated that they are experiencing the mood of Madımak in Northern Cyprus, that there was no reaction against them before Erdoğan's expressions and that the fuse was lit by Erdoğan's words.

The newspaper was published with the headline, *"Peace Operation in Cyprus, Olive Branch Operation in Syria... Another Invasive Operation from Turkey."* President Erdoğan then targeted the newspaper, saying, *"A newspaper in Northern Cyprus published an insolent headline... My brothers in Northern Cyprus must reply to this."*

Ankara Governorate bans all protests during Afrin Operation

All public/private meetings, press statements, hunger strikes, sit-in protests, concerts, celebrations and activities alike were bound to permission by the local administration in Ankara during the Afrin Operation. The Governorate announced that the protests to be organized were banned across the province and that no protests can be made without permission until the operation ends. Protests in Kocaeli and Mardin were bound to permission by the local authority as well.

Operation against Furkan Foundation

An operation was organized against Furkan Education and Service Foundation, known with its Islamic identity in opposition to the ideology of the political power, within the investigation conducted by Adana Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

The headquarters of the foundation and the houses of its executives were raided within the operation due to "conduct of activities to disrupt public order and establishing a criminal organization." 25 were taken into custody during the raids, including the foundation's Founder Chairman Alparslan Kuytul. Kuytul had an oppositional attitude against the political power and described the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as *"Development with Tyranny Party."* He was recently posting on the social media, criticizing the Afrin Operation.



Şahin Alp and Mehmet Altan not released despite Constitutional Court decree

The Constitutional Court (AYM) decided, in the application of arrested journalists Şahin Alp and Mehmet

Altan, that the two journalists' "right to personal freedom and safety" and "freedoms of expression and press" were violated. The court issued the release of the two journalists, who are arrested in remand due to FETÖ membership.

However, Istanbul 13th and 26th High Criminal Courts did not release Altan and Alpay despite the Constitutional Court decree. Both courts stated that the AYM decree was not published on the Official Gazette and that the reasoned decree did not reach the courts. The High Court then announced that the decree was announced on the official website. Verdicts issued by the Constitutional Court are binding for every institution and individual, since the court is the highest judicial authority according to the Constitution.

On the other hand, the government answered reactions on arrested journalists, coming from the opposition as well as abroad. *"There is judicial independence,"* stated the government; whereas this time themselves reacted to the AYM after their dislike of the "independent judiciary" decree. Deputy Prime Minister and Government Spokesman Bekir Bozdağ claimed that *"AYM has exceeded its boundaries of authority."* Bozdağ admitted that the Constitutional Court is an important judicial safety in regards to personal rights and freedoms; whereas defended that the high court can not perform an evaluation of situation and evidence, hence cannot evaluate the constitution of crime or evidence.

A similar situation occurred previously in the verdict of release issued for journalists Can Dündar and Erdem Gül, who were arrested in remand in the "National Intelligence Trucks" case. President Erdoğan then announced that he "does not respect" the AYM decree.

Following the reasoned decision, Altan's lawyers applied to the local court once again for release. However, the court stated that "the constitutional Court exceeded its authority." Not recognizing the Constitutional Court decree, Istanbul 26th High Criminal Court asserted that it is not within the scope of individual application evaluation for the Constitutional Court to make evidence and expediency evaluation by replacing the local court. The court claimed that the arrest was "proportionate" and "reasonable" despite the decree of violation. The objection made was denied by the higher court, Istanbul 27th High Criminal Court as well. In the reasoned decision, it was asserted that there is no legal regulation that makes the binding effect of the Constitutional Court decree obligatory.

Thus, a breaking point was experienced in the history of the Turkish law: For the first time, a Constitutional Court decree, which is the highest judicial institution, was not applied despite all binding legal norms. Hence, Turkey has become a country in which court decrees are not applied, leaving no legal guarantee for any Turkish citizen.



Cases of 'insulting President'

New lawsuits are added to the ones against citizens, from NGO representatives to social media users, within the Article 299 of the Turkish

Penal Code (TCK). We have compiled some of the prominent examples of those filed due to “insulting Erdoğan”:

HDP leader Demirtaş sentenced to judicial fine due to ‘insulting President’

25th Legal Department of Ankara Regional Court sentenced People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş to 15 thousand TL indemnity due to “insulting the President.”

A lawsuit of indemnity was filed against Demirtaş following the complaint of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan due to the speech he gave in Mersin on 27 February 2016. However, the local court decided that the speech was “*within the limits of freedom of expression.*” Erdoğan’s lawyers objected to the decision and carried the matter to the Court of Appeals. The court evaluated the expressions as “*shaking the opinions of the society, when considered the society is Muslim.*” The court then concluded that the speech “*violated the social value of the President and attacked his personal rights.*”

HDP MP Leyla Birlik sentenced to imprisonment due to ‘insulting President’

Şırnak Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Şırnak MP Leyla Birlik to 1 year and nine months of imprisonment due to “*insulting the President*” during a press statement made in 2015. The court did not defer the sentence, deciding that “*there is no reason for an abatement in the sentence when the past state of the defendant, her social situation and the possible effects of the sentence on the defendant’s future are evaluated as a whole...*”

Journalist Ayşenur Arslan sentenced to imprisonment due to ‘insulting President’

Ankara 12th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced Ayşenur Arslan to 1 year and two months of imprisonment due to the allegation that she has insulted president Erdoğan. The sentence was abated to 1 months and 20 days and was deferred. Arslan is charged because of criticizing Nokta Magazine being withdrawn from shelves on the “Media Neighborhood” show on Halk TV broadcasted on 14 September 2015. A citizen from Konya then made a denouncement against her and an investigation was started.

Ahmet Altan sentenced to judicial fine due to ‘insulting President’

Journalist-writer Ahmet Altan was sentenced to 7 thousand TL judicial fine due to “insulting the President.” Altan was arrested shortly after the coup attempt and is on trial with a life imprisonment claim. He was on trial at Istanbul 21st Criminal Court of First Instance due to his interview published on grihat.com.tr on 13 April 2016.

News on ‘Erdoğan’s censorship requests’ censored

Istanbul 9th Criminal Judicature of Peace decided for the news on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan requesting Twitter to censor comics of Brazilian artist Carlos Latuff to be banned to access. Judge İsmail Taş brought access bans on 15 different URLs, deciding for a violation of personal rights. Taş claimed that the news “*included expressions and*

descriptions that would create a false and negative perception on Erdoğan to denigrate his profession, honour and reputation.”



Penalized HDP MPs

People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MP İdris Baluken, who is arrested in remand for 14 months, was sentenced to 16 years and eight months of imprisonment. Diyarbakır 8th High Criminal Court issued for Baluken to be sentenced to 7 years and six months of imprisonment due to “armed terrorist organization membership,” 4 years and seven months of imprisonment due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” for four times, and 4 years and seven months of imprisonment due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations” for four times. The court further issued that Baluken will remain arrested. Baluken was acquitted of the crime of “disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of state.”

Arrested People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Hakkari MP Selma Irmak was sentenced to 1 year of imprisonment in the case she was on trial at Diyarbakır 9th Criminal Court of First Instance due to “public denigration of the government of the Republic of Turkey.” A lawsuit has been filed against Irmak due to accusing the government of the Republic of Turkey with “atrocities” in a speech she gave at a TV show in November 2015 via phone call.

People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Aysel Tuğluk was sentenced to 1 year and six months of imprisonment in the case she was on trial at Kandıra Criminal Court of First Instance due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations.” Tuğluk was taken into custody in Ankara on 26 December 2016 and was arrested at Kocaeli Type-F Prison due to “armed terrorist organization membership.” Before her arrest in the case that concluded with conviction, she was on trial due to her participation in the protests organized in front of Kocaeli Type-F Prison.



Seven journalists arrested in January

According to the data we compiled from the press, 20 journalists were taken into custody in the first month of 2018; seven of them were arrested. The journalists are charged with “making illegal organization propaganda” and “illegal organization membership.” Custodies, arrests and proceedings continue against journalists with full speed. You may find some of the developments in January related to the issue:

Five Özgür Gündem Chief Editors sentenced to 9 year 9 months imprisonment

Journalists Ayşe Düzkan and Ragıp Duran as well as writers Mehmet Ali Çelebi and Hüseyin Bektaş were convicted together with former Özgür Gündem Co-Editor-In-Chief Hüseyin Akyol due to “illegal organization propaganda.” The journalists were convicted due to participating in the Substitute Editing-In-Chief campaign for Özgür Gündem Daily, which was previously shut down with the Statutory Decree No. 675 within the State of Emergency.

Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court increased the 2-year imprisonment sentence against Akyol to 3 years and nine months of imprisonment due to the crime having been committed consequently, through press. The court increased the 1-year imprisonment sentences against the other four journalists to 1 year and six months of imprisonment due to the crime having been committed through press. The five defendants were sentenced to a total of 9 years and nine months of imprisonment. The sentences were not abated or deferred due to “their attitude during the hearings and their insufficient exhibition of regret.”

‘Espionage’ case against Nazlı Ilıcak

A lawsuit was filed against journalist Nazlı Ilıcak with a claim of life imprisonment due to “announcing confidential information on the security of state with the purpose of espionage.” The indictment, prepared by Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office and sent to Ankara 15th High Criminal Court, accuses Ilıcak due to her column, entitled, “*Military Intelligence and Tahşiye members*” published on 2 January 2015 on Bugün Newspaper, which was shut down after the coup attempt.

Accepting the indictment, Ankara 15th High Criminal Court sent the file to Istanbul High Criminal Court due to rejection of venue. The court decree indicated that the headquarters of the newspaper, which was shut down, was in Istanbul and that the Article 12/3 of the Law of Criminal Procedure states “*the crime belongs to the local court of the publication center in case the crime is committed through a publication.*”

Another case filed against arrested journalist Ahmet Şık

Another lawsuit was filed against Cumhuriyet reporter Ahmet Şık, who is arrested for 370 days. The lawsuit concerns his Tweets, which are also included in the Cumhuriyet Case, within which he is arrested in remand. In the indictment accepted by Istanbul 17th Criminal Court of First Instance, social media posts regarding the killing of former Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Tahir Elçi, the investigation against teacher Ayşe Çelik due to saying “don’t let children die” and other posts on the Academics for Peace were shown as crime elements. Şık faces an imprisonment sentence up to two years due to “*denigrating the Turkish Nation, the government of the Republic of Turkey and the institutions of state.*”

The lawsuit was filed following the denouncement made by Anadolu Agency reporter Kerem Kocalar at Prime Ministry Communication Center (BIMER). It was recently revealed that Istanbul Public Prosecutor Asım Ekren prepared a second indictment

following the filing of the case due to tweets of Şık concerning the denouncement, and this second indictment was combined with the case file. The second indictment prepared by the same Prosecutor based on the same denouncement on the same tweets, an increase in Şık's penalty was claimed within the Article 43 of the Turkish Penal Code, regulating "successive offences." The next hearing was scheduled for 22 May 2018.

Same defense from Ministry: "They are not arrested due to journalism"

Ministry of Justice presented their opinion on the individual applications at the Constitutional Court for the writers and executives of Cumhuriyet Newspaper. The Ministry collected nine different applications in one file, whereas made a separate statement of opinion on Ahmet Şık. In both opinions, the defense that "the journalists are not arrested due to journalism," as stated many times before.

The Ministry claimed that there was a "call for the July 15th coup attempt" in the related publications and they "encouraged people for force and violence;" asserting that news published after the coup attempt were also for terrorist organization benefit. Claiming a "subliminal message" in the writing of Kadri Gürsel, the Ministry described the title of Aydın Engin's article a crime as well. The Ministry asserted that the encouragement of this title to force and violence was understood better after July 15. Twitter posts, news and interviews were listed as reasons for the arrest of journalist Ahmet Şık. *"Such writings and posts may not be explained by freedom of expression or press,"* stated the Ministry.

The Ministry indicated that the applicants have surely been involved in activities on behalf of "FETÖ/PDY" and "PKK/KCK," recording that this situation must not be considered an intervention to freedom of expression. It was further claimed that the arrests *"aimed at legitimate purposes like the protection of national security and public safety, as well as to provide public order and prevent crimes."*

Four access bans against JinNews within one week

Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) brought an access ban on the website of JinNews for four times since 24 January 2018. The first access ban decision was based on the news published on the executives of the Turkish National Intelligence. The website of the agency was later censored for three more consecutive times due to news regarding Afrin.



Prosecutor's Office 'orders' Council of Higher Education: "Do what's necessary concerning academics"

The proceedings against the signatories of the Peace Petition by the 'Academics for Peace' continued this week; with 13 academics standing

trial. Thus, the first hearings of 102 scientists were held within the petition. Claims of acquittal and merging of individual files were denied once again; hearings were postponed.

On the other hand, Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office sent the indictment against academics to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) with the inscription, *"for the evaluation of administrative investigations to be conducted by the Council."* In the letter prepared by Prosecutor Ismet Bozkurt from Istanbul Terror and Organized Crimes Bureau, PKK was asserted to have announced self-governance, the organization executives made a call for 'intellectuals and democratic circles to protect the self-governance' and that the academics prepared the Peace Petition following this call. Bozkurt accused the scientists of *"making propaganda by encouraging to take part in methods of the terrorist organization, which include violence or threat; and making such methods seem legitimate."*



Ankara Governorate bans theater play "Only Dictator"

Ankara Governorate banned the one-man show of Barış Atay, named "Only Dictator." The Governorate further announced an indefinite ban on all events "with social sensitivities" like theaters, panels, movie screenings and

exhibitions to be organized by "various institutions" besides Barış Atay.

Lawyer Efkân Balaç indicated that the Governorate, who banned Atay to travel to Ankara, has discovered a new ban and put it into action. *"According to this order, Atay is even banned from drinking a tea or coffee in Ankara,"* said Balaç. Asst. Prof. Dr. Kerem Altıparmak pointed out vague expressions in the Governorate decision, sharing the statement on the social media. Altıparmak reacted to the Governorate opinion on the theater play to "provoke a certain part of society with different qualities of social class, race, religion, sect or region towards hatred and hostility against another part," saying, *"Which part against which one? The ones who like theater against those who don't? Those who like dictatorship against those who don't?"* The play is banned and prevented in many other provinces. On the other hand, the screenplay text was read in many theater stages in Turkey and abroad after the call of Kadıköy Theaters Platform members against restrictions, oppression and censorship.



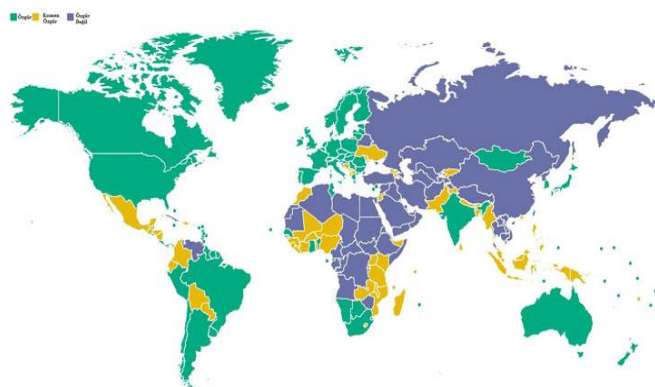
ECtHR announces 2017 in numbers: Turkey the country violating freedom of expression most

According to the 2017 statistics of the European Court of Human Rights

(ECtHR), there are a total of 56,250 case applications in ECtHR agenda from a total of 47 Council of Europe member countries by 1 January 2018. Turkey has been the third country with the most number of applications against it with 7,518 applications. According to the announced data, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine constitute more than 50 percent of the total workload of the court. Applications from Turkey make up 13.3 percent of the total number of applications.

Turkey completed the year 2016 ranked second after Ukraine with 12,600 case applications against it. This number increased to 93,200 in mid-2017, whereas a big part of those complaints were denied due to the State of Emergency Monitoring Commission being accepted as a “domestic remedy.”

Furthermore, 116 of the 1068 cases finalized in 2017 belong to Turkey. 99 of these decisions issued a violation of at least one article of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Most of the violation decrees were issued on “the right to safety and security,” “the right to fair trial” and “freedom of expression.” Just like in previous years, Turkey has also been “*the country violating freedom of expression the most.*” 44 verdicts of violation were issued within this scope and 16 of them belong to cases against Turkey.



Reports...

Freedom House: Turkey regrades from ‘partly free’ to ‘not free’ category

Freedom House launched the 2018 Freedom in the World 2018 report, which handles political rights and freedoms all around the world. The

report states that democracy is being attacked worldwide. Turkey has regraded from “Partly Free” to “Not Free” category. In the 18-year history of the report, Turkey was categorized under “Not Free” for the first time.

The report graded Turkey 6 points less than last year. Turkey has also been the country with the highest decline of points with 34 points within the last 10 years. The reason for the regression was explained as “*the serious consequences of the environment of heavy pressure applied by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against oppositional groups following the failed coup attempt in 2016.*” For the full report; <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>

HRW 2018 World Report: “Media, activists and oppositional views targeted in Turkey”

Human Rights Watch launched the ‘2018 World Report’ in which human rights applications in more than 90 countries were analysed.

The 643-page report, launched for the 28th time by the organization, states: “The new presidential system [in Turkey], which consolidates the incumbent’s hold on power, is a setback for human rights and the rule of law. It lacks sufficient checks and balances

against abuse of executive power, greatly diminishing the powers of parliament, and consolidating presidential control over most judicial appointments.” The Turkey section of the report, which indicates an increase on restrictions against the media, oppositional views and human rights advocates, involves the topics, “torture and ill-treatment in custody, resumption of conflict and crackdown on Kurdish opposition, the role of Turkey as a key international factor due to hosting many refugees” as well as “the role of human rights in the relationship between Turkey and the EU.” For the full report; <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/turkey>

520 journalists face 237 heavy life imprisonment and 3,762 years imprisonment in total

According to Bianet’s “October-December 2017 BIA Media Monitoring Report”, 122 journalists and media workers entered the new year in prison. 66 of the 122 journalists in prisons are pending trial, 31 of them are being investigated, 21 of them are convicts and four of them are awaiting a conclusion for their objection against their sentence.

Facing charges such as “organizing coup,” “attempting to overthrow the Constitutional order” and “aiding or collaborating with terrorist organizations,” the journalists in prison are on trial with claims of a total of 237 heavy life imprisonment sentences and imprisonment sentences for 3,672 years and six months due to the Anti-Terror Law (TMK) and the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). The journalists, who are on trial within the “coup” and illegal organization cases during the State of Emergency, which was recently extended for the fifth time, are being forced to wear uniforms in prison. In the three-month period, five journalists were sentenced to a total of deferred 1 year, 11 months and 10 days of imprisonment as well as 42 thousand TL of judicial fine in accordance with Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code due to “insulting the President” with their articles, opinions and criticisms. One journalist was acquitted. New lawsuits were filed against six journalists due to “insulting the President” and the proceedings of 14 continue.

Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code has started to be applied in August 2014, when Erdoğan was elected as the President of the Republic of Turkey, against all criticisms and complaints against Erdoğan. Since August 2014 until 1 January 2018, the article became the basis for a total of 35 people, 34 of them journalists, being sentenced to imprisonment sentences for a total of 42 years, 5 months and two days (with 18 years and 20 days deferred) as well as to 188,500 TL judicial fine. On the other hand, news and articles on 36 websites, eight caricatures, six books and three newspapers were censored. For the full report; <http://bianet.org/english/politics/194098-bia-media-monitoring-report-2017-one-year-of-journalists-media>

‘Ordinarized State of Emergency’: “More than 1000 articles amended”

According to the report, “*Ordinarized State of Emergency/The Effect of Emergency Decrees on Legal Legislations*” prepared by Heinrich Böll Stiftung Association Turkey Representative, more than 1000 Articles in total were amended with 30 Statutory Decrees issued within the State of Emergency.

In the 120-page report prepared by Ismet Akça, Süreyya Algül, Hülya Dinçer, Erhan Keleşoğlu and Barış Alp Özden, the micro and macro level changes aimed to be realized

with emergency decrees on Turkey's political, social and financial structures and relations were analyzed. The report states with such amendments, the political power used the emergency regime procedure to restructure political/legal/social institutions on various fields from national defense and domestic security to judicial personnel, from economic and social security to the administrative structure, as well as education and health. For the full report; https://tr.boell.org/sites/default/files/ohal_rapor_web.pdf

Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Muiznieks: *"Human rights crisis deepened in Turkey"*

Announcing the 2017 report, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Muiznieks evaluated Turkey as a place where *"the human rights crisis continues."* Muiznieks expressed that pressure on critical voices and rights advocates increased and journalists are on trial due to their journalism activities. <https://goo.gl/BaKrCX>

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