



Think, think...

Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin

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What happened last week?

*** Trump administration in the U.S. imposed new tariffs against Turkey following the crisis emerged with the arrest of pastor Brunson. The Washington administration doubled the tariffs on steel and aluminum from Turkey; President Trump approved the law that prevents the delivery of F-35s to Turkey. The White House announced that there is no progress on the release of pastor Brunson, and that the Washington administration will keep their strict attitude on this matter.

*** President Erdoğan called for all Turkish citizens to boycott electronic goods from the U.S. As a retaliation against the tariffs, additional tax rates were increased on imported goods from the U.S. The tax list didn't contain the products Erdoğan called to boycott.

*** With the tensions between the U.S. and Turkey, the Turkish Lira lost 32 percent value against the U.S. Dollar within the first ten days of August. Exceeding 7.20 TL on the night of August 13th, the rates calmed following precautionary steps by the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK) and the Central Bank. Going below the 6 TL limit, the U.S. Dollar started increasing once again following the announcement of Trump, who said, "*We are decreasing our relations with Turkey.*"

*** President Erdoğan described the situation as an "*economic war*" and "*an attempt to exploit Turkey.*" Demanding for all foreign currencies "*kept under pillows*" to be turned into the Turkish Lira, Erdoğan threatened industrialists by saying, "*Don't buy foreign currencies, otherwise I will have to apply plan B and C.*"

*** Investigations were started against criticisms and news on the economic policies. "*There is economic terror on the social media,*" stated Erdoğan, "*The judiciary is doing what's necessary. This is treason.*" (**Details below...**)

*** Minister of Finance and Treasury Berat Albayrak stated that the U.S. Dollar has lost its credibility by "*turning into a tool for political punishment.*" Indicating that they will continue to take steps within the rules of free market, Albayrak promised that the Turkish Lira will strengthen.

*** A Presidential decree issued a regulation on one roof account in which all financial resources of public administrations will be gathered. The account will be managed by the Minister of Finance and Treasury. Local administrations were also included in the account's resources, even though it violates the principle of autonomy. Thus, the President will be able to take local administrations under control as well through financial means.

*** Receiving the entire 881 valid votes of the 2nd Extraordinary Meeting of İYİ (Good) Party, Meral Akşener was elected once again as Party Chairwoman. Following the failure of the petition campaign for an extraordinary meeting, the atmosphere at the Republican

People's Party (CHP) was reversed following the Central Executive Council (MYK) chande of Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

*** Four Middle East Technical University (METU) students, who were arrested due to holding a banner depicting the cartoon, “*World of Tayyips*” during the graduation ceremony at the university, were released. (*Details below...*)

*** Amnesty International Turkey Chairman Taner Kılıç, who was arrested for more than a year within the ‘Büyükada Case’, was released. (*Details below...*)



Four METU students released after arrest due to cartoon “World of Tayyips”

Four Middle East Technical University (METU) students, who were arrested due to carrying a banner that depicted the cartoon, “*World of Tayyips*,” during the graduation ceremony at the university, were released.

Arrested due to ‘insulting Erdoğan’ and kept under arrest for a month, the students have faced a claim of imprisonment for up to four years with the indictment prepared against them. Accepting the indictment, Ankara 11th Assize Court issued for the students to remain arrested. Later accepting the objection against the verdict, the assize court issued the students’ release.

A roof organization for global freedom of expression advocate organizations, IFEX started a campaign on the social media to support the cartoon, “*World of Tayyips*,” and called everyone to share the cartoon on the social media “to show Turkey that satire is not a crime.”

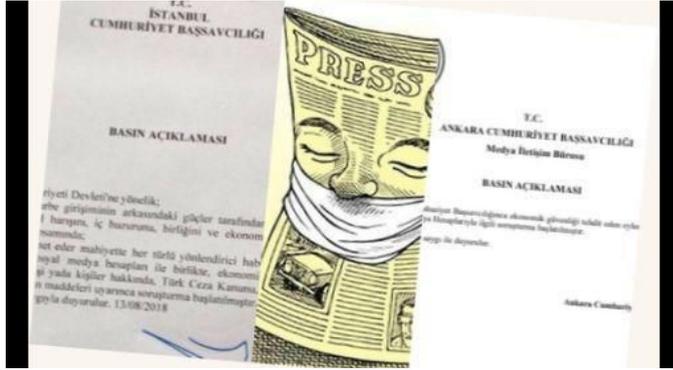


Amnesty International Turkey Chairman Taner Kılıç released

Istanbul 35th Assize Court issued the release of Amnesty International Turkey Executive Board Chairman and lawyer Taner Kılıç, who was the only arrested defendant in the Büyükada Case.

A release verdict was issued for Kılıç, who was arrested for 431 days, on 31 January 2018; whereas Kılıç was arrested once again without even being able to leave prison following the objection of the Prosecutor. “*We were submitting petitions regularly for more than a year for Kılıç to be released. This time, the verdict was issued in the monthly routine examination,*” Kılıç’s lawyer Murat Dinçer stated.

The file of Kılıç, who was arrested in June 2017 together with 22 colleagues, was merged with the main file of the Büyükada Case in October 2017, with 10 human rights advocates standing trial as defendants. The rights advocates are charged with ‘armed terrorist organization membership’ and ‘committing offenses on behalf of an illegal organization without being members’ within the case.



“Currency” investigation against news and social media

Value loss of Turkish Lira continues to accelerate with multiplied sanctions imposed by the US against Turkey, together with the crisis on pastor Brunson and Turkey’s refusal to release

him from house imprisonment after the pastor’s arrest due to espionage. The Lira dropped by 32% in the first 10 days of August.

President Erdoğan described the situation as “an economic war” and “an attempt to exploit Turkey.” Immediately afterwards, Ankara and Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Offices announced an investigation on written and visual media due to “threatening economic security” and “serving economical attacks.” Ministry of the Interior announced investigations opened against 346 social media accounts due to “posting content that provokes the currency drop.”

“There is economic terror in the social media,” stated Erdoğan, “The judiciary is doing what’s necessary. This is treason, and we will destroy their homes.” The confederation of progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) Press-Labour Chairman Faruk Eren and Turkish Journalists Association Chairman Gökhan Durmuş indicated that the investigations will not remove neither the damage on press freedom, nor the crisis. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Turkey Representative Erol Önderoğlu wrote on Twitter, indicating “the worry on the targeting of the legitimate role of critical journalism.”

On the other hand, Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) announced that examinations have started against those who report “manipulative news” on the economy; Capital Markets Board (SPK) announced those who “spread” the news that are defined as “wrong, incorrect and misleading” will be penalized.

People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli MP Dr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu carried the investigation on “those who threaten economic security” to the Parliament. The Parliamentary Question posed by Gergerlioğlu, directed to Vice President Fuat Oktay, asked the legal basis for the crime of “threatening economic security.” Wanting to find out how many people the investigations were opened against, Gergerlioğlu stated, “What did these people share on the social media to threaten economic security?”

Reacting against the investigations, human rights and press organizations indicated that *“the true manipulation would be to keep news from the reader,”* and stated that the operation is conducted against those who criticize the economic policy of the government and those who express their opinion on the bad economic direction.



Social media operations in three provinces

13 people were taken into custody with the operations conducted in Kayseri, Gaziantep and Konya within the investigations opened against them due to their social media posts.

In the announcement made by Gaziantep Governorate on the matter, six people were indicated to have been taken into custody after the evaluation that *“they could cause provocative actions with social media posts that make terrorist organization propaganda as well as would create an environment of chaos and indignation that would incite people towards resentment and hostility.”* Five people were taken into custody in the simultaneous operations against nine different addresses in Konya, followed up with an announcement that work is ongoing for the other suspects, who could not be found at their home addresses, to be taken into custody. Those taken into custody were charged with *“making PKK/KCK propaganda.”* One university student in Kayseri was taken into custody with one other due to *“making propaganda of three different terrorist organizations on the social media.”*



Nine released after arrest due to ‘insulting Erdoğan’

9 of the 11 people, who were arrested for 60 days due to insulting the President during a rally organized by Republican People’s Party (CHP)’s Presidential candidate Muharrem İnce in Izmir prior to the June 24 elections, were released.

Izmir Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office had started an investigation against those allegedly have insulted Erdoğan at an entertainment venue after their visuals at the rally were shared on the social media; then the suspects were taken into custody and were later arrested.

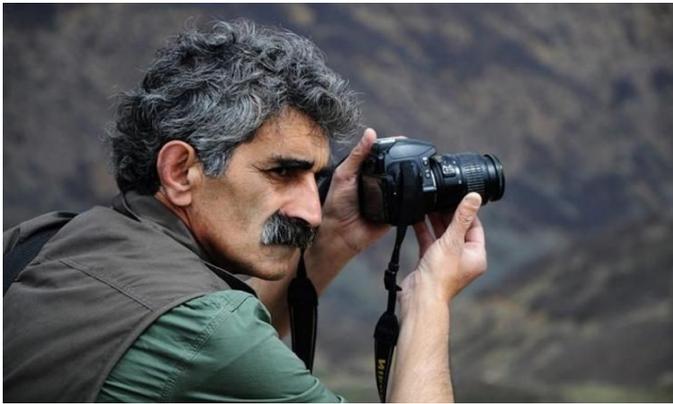
Izmir 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace issued the release of nine suspects with judicial measures following the objection against their arrest, denying the release claim for the other two defendants due to ‘the state of evidence, the importance of the offense and the insufficiency of the condition of judicial measure.’



Prosecution of arrested journalist-writer Mehmet Gündem starts

The first hearing of the case filed against journalist-writer Mehmet Gündem with the allegation of ‘FETÖ’ membership was held at Istanbul 35th Assize Court.

Gündem and his lawyers claimed for his release and acquittal, stating that there is no concrete evidence in the indictment supporting the charge, as well as the lack of proof that he installed ByLock application on his phone. The court issued für Gündem to remain arrested, scheduling the next hearing to 30 October 2018. Gündem had been taken into custody and arrested on 1 November 2018 within the operation against the Journalists and Writers Foundation. Having worked at various press organizations like Zaman, Tercüman, Yeni Şafak, TRT News and Milliyet, Gündem is widely known with the many biographies he wrote.



Journalist Kemal Özer not released in second hearing after 11 months under arrest

Arrested since September last year, Evrensel Daily’s Tunceli Reporter Kemal Özer was not released in the second hearing of the case he is on trial due to ‘illegal organization

membership.’ Tunceli 1st Assize Court denied Özer’s release claim due to “*heavy crime suspect*” and “*insufficient arrest period for release with judicial measure.*” The next hearing of the case will be held on 24 October 2018.



Emergency decree victim teachers banned from approaching demonstration area

Educators Nursel tanrıverdi and Selvi Polat were taken into custody once again after protesting at Bakırköy Square to “*get back their jobs.*”

Bakırköy 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace has previously banned Tanrıverdi and Polat from approaching Bakırköy Square, where they used to perform a sit-in protest, for more than 200 meters. This time, the two names have to submit regular signatures (a form of supervised release) and banned from travelling abroad. Bakırköy 6th Criminal Judicature of Peace, where the educators were transferred with a claim of arrest, issued for Tanrıverdi and Polat to submit

signatures at a police station every Saturday and for their release with a ban on travelling abroad.



HDP executive released after arrest due to Newroz speech

People's Democratic Party (HDP) Central Executive Council (MYK) member Gülsüm Ağaoğlu was released in the first hearing of the case filed against her after being taken into custody due to her speech during the Newroz celebrations in Ergene district of Tekirdağ. the indictment against Ağaoğlu, accepted by Tekirdağ 3rd Assize Court, charges her with 'making illegal organization propaganda' with her speech.



Investigations against 261 social media users in one week

Ministry of the Interior announced investigations opened against 292 people due to their social media posts following examinations on 402 social media accounts between the dates 6-13 August, 2018. According to the Ministry's announcement, the social media users were charged with 'making illegal organization propaganda,' 'insult,' 'incitement towards resentment, hatred and hostility' and 'intending against the indivisible integrity of the state.'



Letter from journalist after 21 months under arrest: "Books banned, letters seized"

2016 and Dicle News Agency has previously been shut down with an emergency decree.

Dicle News Agency reporter Mehmet Güleş explained the rights violations experienced in prison with a letter he sent. Güleş is arrested since December

Arrested at Elazığ High Security Prison No.1, Güleş indicated 30 people are kept in solitary confinement outside of their own will, that Kurdish books are not given to them and that letters written in Kurdish are being seized. The journalist had been taken into custody due to a "search warrant against him" while tracking news information on 5 December 2016 and was later arrested due to the news he reporter, his Facebook posts and his meetings with news sources.



Supervised “conviction” against 456 thousand citizens

According to the data announced by the Ministry of Justice, 456,157 people are on release with supervision by July 2018. Of those people, 389,497 citizens are bound to the provisions of “judicial measure,” a type of supervised release. 14,293 citizens who are bound to judicial measure are children.

The most widespread application of provisions of judicial measure is to submit regular signatures to a police station. Judicial measure can also be applied in the form of “*ban on travel against outside the city*” or “*approaching close to a demonstration area.*” In some cases, the citizens must submit signatures to the police station either everyday or every week. Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) Chairwoman Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı stated that hundreds of thousands are undergoing processes of custody and that there is allegations of torture on almost all custody processes and prisons. Indicating that the application of judicial measure means to force people into traumatic environments with judicial verdicts when this picture is considered, Fincancı said, “*People are constantly facing an environment of torture... Precautions need to be taken in order for the application of judicial measure itself to not turn into a torture.*”



Journalist attacked in Antalya

Journalist Koray Geçgel was beaten by an unidentified person on his way to the local channel he hosts a sports show. The journalist was taken to the hospital, where it was diagnosed that his right collarbone and his nose were broken. Geçgel stated that the attack was made due to his criticisms, whereas indicated that he doesn’t know who performed the attack.

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Stating that he has recently been receiving reactions from a group of people due to his criticisms against the Antalyaspor administration, Geçgel expressed that he faced accusations from Antalyaspor Club Chairman Cihan Bulut as well. “*There is intolerance against criticisms. I was attacked due to these criticisms, but it’s unclear where this attack is coming from. Someone obviously laid an ambush,*” Geçgel said.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- There is no development on the cases we’re tracking due to judiciary recess.

