



# Think, think...

## Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin

(Issue 26/19, 5 July 2019)

### What happened last week?

\*\*\* The meeting between Erdoğan and Trump at the G-20 summit decreased the level of tension for the S-400 crisis. President Erdoğan stated that Trump supported Turkey, both for S-400s and for F-35s. *"We haven't heard of sanctions so far,"* Erdoğan stated, indicating that the delivery of S-400s will be made within ten days.

\*\*\* In the announcements made from Washington, sanctions against Turkey were indicated to still be on debate. *"The payment of F-35s was made on time, it would be stealing not to deliver them now,"* Erdoğan said. In the meantime, Turkey's search for a formula to avoid US sanctions continue. Presidential Director for Defense stated, *"We're taking out precautions for the sanctions."*

\*\*\* A "FETÖ" investigation was opened against former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, who is currently preparing to open a new political party. Reacting against oppositional views inside the party, Erdoğan said, *"They will topple like empty sacks."*

\*\*\* The inflation increase in June regressed compared to the previous month, being 15.72 percent. Minister of Treasury and Finance Berat Albayrak claimed that an economical recovery period has started. Seven price increases were announced within the last twelve days, including tea, sugar and the electric utility.

\*\*\* Moody's indicated that the banking system in Turkey continues to steer negatively and that there is increasing risk for an activation of radical financial measures, such as access restrictions against currency deposits.

\*\*\* The EU Delegation made a statement on the state of human rights in Turkey. The government's attitude in the Gezi Park case was criticised; an application of the Judicial Reform Strategy with concrete steps was indicated to be necessary in order for the promises to bring clear and perceivable consequences.

\*\*\* The State of Emergency Applications Monitoring Commission announced that 61 percent of applications were concluded. 71,900 applications were denied; 6000 applications were accepted. Evaluations of 48,300 applications continue.

\*\*\* Investigations were opened against 20 journalists and lawsuits were filed against eight journalists within the first six months of the year. 41 journalists were sentenced to a total of 119 years and three months of imprisonment. *(Details below...)*

\*\*\* By the end of 2018, 245.825 websites were banned to access in Turkey. 54.903 of those websites were banned to access within the year 2018. *(Details below...)*

\*\*\* Three more academics were convicted after signing the *"Peace Petition."* *(Details*

*below...)*

\*\*\* According to data by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), at least 369 curfews were declared within the last four years, affecting 1 million 809 thousand people in at least 11 provinces and 51 districts.

\*\*\* One out of every six applications made in 2018 in accordance with the Law of Information was replied with deficiencies, or was not replied to at all.



### **“Peace Academics” on trial**

Three more academics, who signed the “Peace Petition” of the Academics for Peace, were convicted due to “making illegal organization propaganda.” The academics were sentenced to 1 year and three months of imprisonment each, with the announcement of verdicts deferred. According to the data by the initiative, there are 203 academics with concluded

convictions against them so far. For details; [goo.gl/KGktHa](https://goo.gl/KGktHa)



### **Freedom of Expression Association launches EngelliWeb 2018 Report**

Freedom of Expression Association launched the [EngelliWeb 2018](#) report on websites, news articles and social media accounts banned to access. According to the report, there were 245825 websites banned to access in Turkey by the end of 2018. More than three thousand news

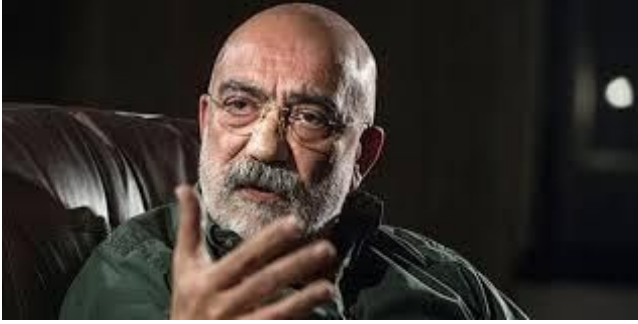
were banned to access within one year; it was further detected that self-censorship increased together with the access bans against news websites.



### **287 journalists stand trial, 11 arrested within first six months of 2019**

According to the data by the Free Journalists Initiative, 34 journalists were detained within the first six months of 2019 and lawsuits were filed against eight journalists. 287 journalists stood trial within the lawsuits filed against them; a total of 119 years and three

months of imprisonment was sentenced against 41 journalists.



### **Imprisonment sentence against Ahmet Altan due to article criticising CHP**

Journalist-writer Ahmet Altan was on trial due to his column on the Republican People's Party (CHP), published in 2010 on Taraf Daily. The journalist was sentenced to one year and six months of imprisonment due to "public insult against the memory of Atatürk;" Istanbul

Anatolian 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance deferred the sentence.



### **1-year 6-month imprisonment against Cumhuriyet writer Özgentürk**

Journalist-writer Işıl Özgentürk was on trial due to her column published on the January 13, 2019 issue of Cumhuriyet Daily with the title, "New-age scarved women." Özgentürk was sentenced to 1 year and six months of imprisonment due to "public denigration and incitement towards resentment and hostility."



### **Sentence against news on economy due to "damaging bank reputation"**

Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced Yurt Daily reporter Cengiz Erdinç to a deferred imprisonment sentence for ten months as well as a judicial fine of 16,600 TL with the allegation that he has "damaged the reputation of" Ziraat Bank in his news

article, "Financial Black Holes," dated March 27, 2016.



### **Binali Yıldırım files lawsuit against Evrensel Daily**

Binali Yıldırım filed a lawsuit against Evrensel Daily due to the news published with the title, "Reaction against AKP on social media." The case will be prosecuted at Istanbul Anatolian 12th Civil Court of First Instance. Yıldırım asserted that his personal rights were violated and that he experienced moral

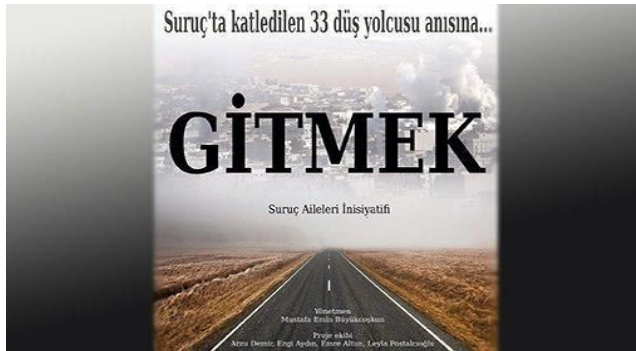
damages, claiming 25 thousand TL compensation.





### **Lawsuit against humourist due to “insulting Erdoğan”**

A lawsuit was filed against humourist Cihan Demirci due to “insulting the President” through his social media posts. The first hearing of Demirci will be held on October 10th, at 11:10 at Istanbul Anatolian 26th Criminal Court of First Instance.



### **Screening of documentary on Suruç massacre banned**

The screening of documentary, “Gitmek” [“Going”], on Suruç massacre with 33 people losing their lives, was banned in Istanbul. Şişli District Governorate banned the screening with the allegation that the documentary, directed by Mustafa Emin Büyükcoşkun, makes “terrorist organization propaganda.”



### **Pride March banned in Istanbul for five years**

The police took Taksim Square under blockade with riot vehicles and barricades before the press statement on Istanbul Pride March, which was banned by the Governorate. The participants gathered at Mis Street and read the press statement on the banned Pride March. After the statement, the police attacked the protesters with tear gas and shields.



### **Religious Affairs Director targets LGBTI+s**

Director of Religious Affairs, Prof. Dr. Ali Erbaş targeted the Pride March and LGBTI+s, stating, “It’s an obscenity against nature and creation.” “This propaganda damages families and disregards humane and moral values completely; it is a perception operation and deception based on notions like freedom and honour,” Erbaş stated.



## Lynch attempt against refugees in İkitelli

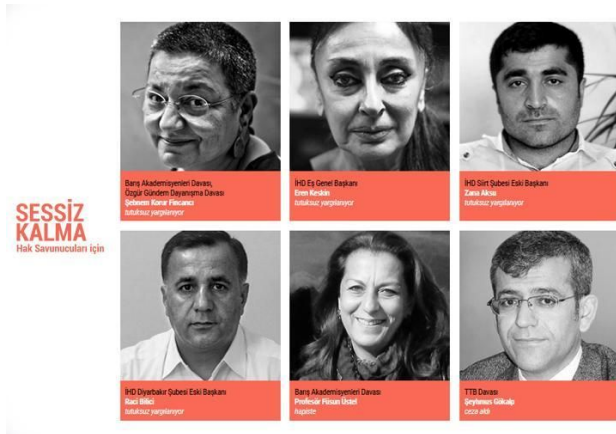
A group in İkitelli, Istanbul attempted to lynch Syrian refugees residing in the neighborhood. Syrians and their workplaces were damaged during the incident with lootings. MAZLUMDER pointed out the increase in hate speech and violence against Syrian refugees, saying, “Provocative statements made by

*the authorities provoke an increase in such events with pressure and lynch attempts.”*



## Let's end hate against migrants!

A petition campaign was started against the hate wave and lynch attempt that especially increased recently against refugees. The campaign, entitled, [We're All Migrants - Say No To Racism](#), states that the hate speech spread on the social media turns into physical attacks supported by more hate speech by the media and politicians; with impunity for attacks encouraging such attackers.



## For rights advocates under risk: “Don’t stay silent”

The website [sessizkalma.org](http://sessizkalma.org) was launched, you can track here the violations and threats against rights defenders. The website aims to draw attention to the state of rights defenders under risk, facing judicial and administrative harassment by becoming a target due to their work. It also makes it easy to track developments on certain lawsuits criminalising civil society.



## TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

**WHO:** Şirin Kabakçı

**CASE:** The sixth hearing of the lawsuit filed against former Konya representative of Zaman Daily, Şirin Kabakçı, was held with the charge of “illegal organization membership.”

**COURT:** Istanbul 35th Assize Court

**VERDICT:** The court decided for necessary action to be taken in order to identify the statement of Burhan Kaya, presented as witness by Konya Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office. The next hearing was scheduled to October 15, 2019 to start at 10:40.

**WHO:** Özgür Gündem Daily Main Case

**CASE:** The twelfth hearing of the lawsuit, known as the Main Case of Özgür Gündem Daily after its shut-down with an emergency decree, was held with the newspaper writers and editorial board members on trial. Defendants, including Filiz Koçali, Aslı Erdoğan, Necmiye Alpay, Ragıp Zarakolu, Zana Bilir Kaya, İnan Kızılkaya, Eren Keskin, Kemal Sancılı and Bilge Aykut are charged with “disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of state,” “making an armed illegal organization propaganda” and “establishing an illegal organization in order to commit crimes.”

**COURT:** Istanbul 23rd Assize Court

**VERDICT:** The prosecutor claimed extra time in order to prepare his opinion on the basis. The court accepted the Prosecutor’s request and scheduled the next hearing for November 28, 2019 to start at 10:30.

**WHO:** Sibel Hürtaş and Hayri Demir

**CASE:** The lawsuit with journalist Sibel Hürtaş and Hayri Demir are on trial due to their social media posts on the Afrin attack of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) was held. The defendants are on trial due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” and “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through their social media posts.

**COURT:** Ankara 15th Assize Court

**VERDICT:** The court decided to wait for the reply to the letter sent to the Ministry of Justice; scheduling the next hearing for December 3, 2019 to start at 09:15.

**WHO:** Ziya Ataman

**CASE:** The eighth hearing of the lawsuit filed against a total of 19 people, nine of whom arrested in remand, was held with the charge of “disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of the state.” Arrested defendants include Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter Ziya Ataman, who is arrested since April 11, 2016.

**COURT:** Şırnak 1st Assize Court

**VERDICT:** Ataman was not released; the next hearing was scheduled for September 24, 2019.



**WHO:** Peace Academics

**CASE:** Prosecutions of the academics, who are on trial due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” through signing the Peace Petition of the Academics for Peace Initiative, continued this week.

**COURT:** Istanbul 37th Assize Court

**VERDICT:** In the hearings held this week at Istanbul 37th Assize Court, three more Peace Academics were sentenced to 1 year and three months of imprisonment; the announcements of the verdicts were deferred.

### **HEARINGS NEXT WEEK**

**WHO:** Journalist Çiğdem Toker

**CASE:** The second hearing of the 1.5 million TL lawsuit of compensation filed against journalist Çiğdem Toker following the complaint of Şenbay Mining Inc. will be held. Toker had written an article on Cumhuriyet Daily’s October 27, 2017 issue with the title, “If you’re looking for savings, look at subway tenders.”

**COURT:** Ankara 13th Civil Court of First Instance

**DATE:** July 9, 2019, Tuesday

**WHO:** Author Temel Demirel

**CASE:** The second hearing of the lawsuit filed against author Temel Demirel will be held with the charge of “praising the offense and the offender” through his speech during the commemoration organized on July 20, 2017 in order to remember those losing their lives in the ISIS attack against Süruç in 2015.

**COURT:** Istanbul Anatolian 22rd Criminal Court of First Instance

**DATE:** July 9, 2019, Tuesday

**WHO:** Mehmet Baransu

**CASE:** The second session of the fifteenth hearing of the lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Taraf Daily executives and reporter Mehmet Baransu will continue. The defendants are on trial due to the news on the “Sledgehammer coup plan” with the charges of “destruction, removal, stealing and revelation of documents and records on the domestic or foreign political interests and security of the state, partially or completely.”

**COURT:** Istanbul 13th Assize Court

**DATE:** July 10, 2019, Wednesday

**WHO:** Journalist Necla Demir

**CASE:** The second hearing of the lawsuit filed against Gazete Karınca’s former owner Necla Demir due to “making successive illegal organization propaganda” through news on Afrin will be held.

**COURT:** Istanbul 33rd Assize Court

**DATE:** July 11, 2019, Thursday at 15:00

**WHO:** Suruç Massacre Case

**CASE:** The fourth hearing of the lawsuit filed against the former intelligence and TEM office commanders related to responsibilities on the Suruç Massacre will be held.

**COURT:** Suruç Criminal Court of First Instance

**DATE:** July 12, 2019, Friday at 10:00

**WHO:** Peace Academics

**CASE:** Prosecutions of the academics, who are on trial due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” after signing the Peace Petition of the Academics for Peace Initiative, will continue next week.

**COURT:** Istanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan and various courts across Turkey with files of academics residing outside Istanbul