



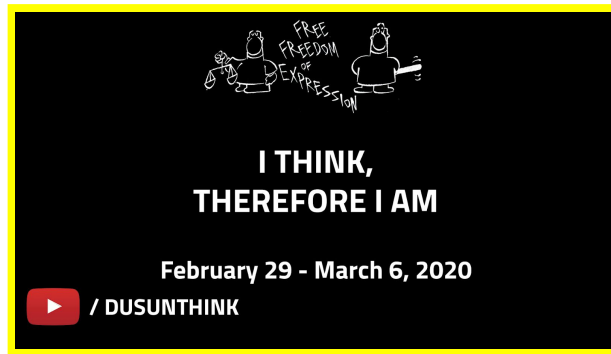
Think, think...

Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin

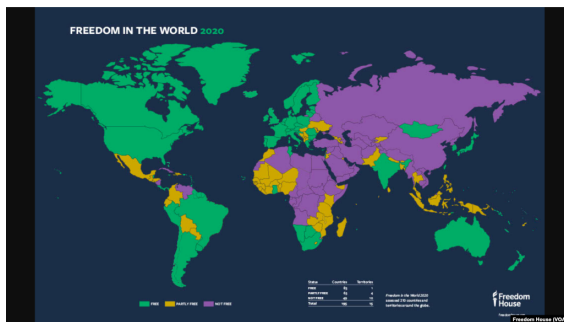
(Issue 10/20, 6 March 2020)

What happened last week?

- Turkey started a comprehensive retaliation after 36 Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) members have lost their lives in the airstrike organised by the Syrian army in Idlib. Close to entering war with the Assad regime, Erdoğan's threat against Europe to "open the border gates" came true as well. Turkey announced that its European borders are now open. Other soldier funerals arrived in Turkey in the following days.
 - Thousands of refugees proceeded to border regions in Edirne, Çanakkale and Izmir from all around Turkey, in order to reach Europe. As Turkey pushed the refugees to the other side of the border, Greece is pushing them back in Turkey. The refugees are stuck between the borders of the two countries. The crisis of humanity experienced by the refugees, who have become a tool for political blackmail, multiplied.
 - Describing those criticising him as those "without honor, character" and "traitors," President Erdoğan stated, "*The number of our martyrs increase in Syria. The hill of martyrs will not remain empty.*"
 - Visiting Moscow a week after the attack, Erdoğan agreed with Putin on a ceasefire. The arms went silent now, but the agreement only means that the issues were temporarily suspended.
 - The Greek police attacked refugees with tear gas and real bullets. In the Turkish media, however, the refugees passing to Greece with inflated boats turned almost into a show on live broadcast. Greece has opened fire against the refugees due to arriving in the country, whereas the refugees became targets of racist attacks in Turkey because of not being able to leave. Three refugees have lost their lives in the interventions.
 - 20 journalists, most of them international media representatives, were detained while monitoring developments on refugees at the borderline. The journalists were kept under custody for days. ***Details in the bulletin...***
 - Operations against social media have started, together with the cross-border operation in Syria, named "Spring Shield." Investigations were opened against social media users criticising the operation, protests were banned. ***Details in the bulletin...***
 - Three more journalists were imprisoned this week. ***Details in the bulletin...***
 - Turkey was placed among the "Not-Free" category this year as well in the Freedom House report for 2020. ***Details in the bulletin...***
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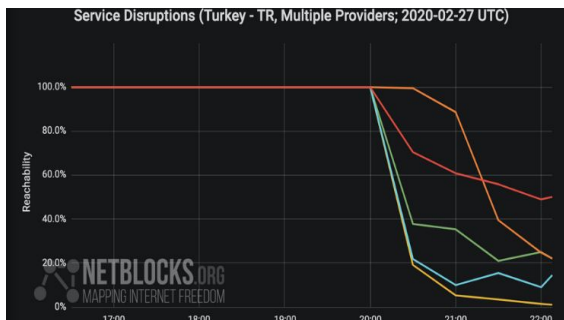
[Please click here](#) to watch our weekly video program “COGITO ERGO SUM” in which we track developments in Turkey on freedom of expression and thought. “COGITO ERGO SUM” is on our [YouTube channel](#) every week...



Freedom House 2020 Report: Turkey in “Not-Free” category this year as well

Washington-based Freedom House launched its “Freedom in the World 2020” Report. According to the report, entitled, “A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy,” the year 2019 became the 14th year that freedom in the world regressed continuously. Turkey was placed among the “Not-Free Countries” this year as

well, becoming the second country in the world, in which freedoms have regressed the most in the last ten years. Turkey has regressed for 31 points in ten years and the only country that regressed more than Turkey is Mid-African country Burundi, with 32 points lost. Turkey is among the ten countries to be closely monitored in the year 2020. The report indicated that restrictions against basic human rights continue in Turkey and that those raising their voices against the government operation in Northern Syria are being oppressed. [Please click here](#) for the full report.



Social media restrictions after attack in Idlib

Following the airstrike against Idlib, there were serious restrictions on some websites and social media platforms in Turkey. Being the most significant access restriction of the last three years, the blackout lasted for about 16 hours. Access to Twitter, Facebook and Instagram was banned completely and to Whatsapp and

YouTube partially. Immediately afterwards, official statements were made by the authorities and social media users were threatened.



Journalist Alptekin Dursunoğlu arrested

Journalist-writer Alptekin Dursunoğlu was arrested after tracking the developments in Syria. Yakın Doğu News Website's Editor-In-Chief Dursunoğlu is charged with "public incitement towards resentment and hostility" and "denigration" due to his social media posts on the war around Idlib. The indictment prepared with jet speed against Dursunoğlu was accepted by the court.

Dursunoğlu will stand trial on March 16 at Istanbul 49th Criminal Court of First Instance.



Journalists detained at borderline

20 journalists, most of whom were international media representatives, were detained while monitoring developments on refugees after they went to Edirne to reach Europe. Of those detained, Mezopotamya Agency reporter Idris Sayılğan and Rûdaw reporter Rawin Sterk were arrested. Sayılğan was later released after his lawyer's objection.

Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu made an announcement at the Greece border and scolded a Tele 1 reporter following the reporter's question on why numbers of passages from the border are not being able to be confirmed by the Governorate. Soylu accused the reporter of "serving the Greek side."



Sputnik journalists under detainment

Three journalists, working for Russian News Agency Sputnik's Turkey Branch, as well as Sputnik Turkey's Editor-In-Chief Mahir Boztepe were detained due to the news published on Sputnik International with the headline, "The 'Stolen Province': Why Turkey Was Given A Corner Of Syria By France 80 Years Ago." The journalists, charged with

"denigrating the Turkish government" (in accordance with Turkish Criminal Code Article 301) and "disrupting the unity and the territorial integrity of the state" (in accordance with Turkish Criminal Code Article 302) were released after testifying. [Please click here](#) for the rest of the news.



Journalists Barış Terkoğlu and Hülya Kılınç arrested, access to OdaTV banned

OdaTV news director Barış Terkoğlu and reporter Hülya Kılınç were arrested due to the news on the funeral of a Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT) member, who lost his life in Libya. The journalists are charged with “obtaining and revealing confidential information and documents on intelligence agency activities” through the news they reported on the funeral of the anonymous intelligence officer, organised in Turkey after his death in Libya. Website of OdaTV news portal was banned from access after news director Barış Terkoğlu and reporter Hülya Kılınç were arrested due to “violating the Turkish National Intelligence Article 27.” Istanbul Prosecutor’s Office summoned the website’s Editor-In-Chief Barış Pehlivan to testify as well.



Prosecuted journalists

Journalist Aziz Oruç was sentenced to 2 years and one month of imprisonment due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through 12 social media posts he made in the year 2016, including those with the news he published himself. Yeni Yaşam Daily’s Van reporter Ferdi Sertkal was sentenced to 1 year, 6 months and 22 days of imprisonment due to “making terrorist organisation propaganda”

through his social media posts. Cumhuriyet Daily writer Işıl Özgentürk was acquitted in the lawsuit she was on trial at Istanbul 28th Assize Court due to her social media posts. Özgentürk was charged with “making terrorist organisation propaganda” through two tweets she shared in the year 2015. Ankara 35th Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced OdaTV Ankara News Director Müyesser Yıldız to 7080 TL judicial fine due to insulting Hulusi Akar. The court deferred the announcement of the verdict. As the bulletin was being prepared, four more journalists were testifying at the courthouse within the investigations opened against them. ***You may find information on this week’s hearings at the end of the bulletin.***



Prosecuted after losing loved ones!

The police had intervened the press statement organised on June 12, 2019 in front of the Constitutional Court by the relatives of those losing their lives in the Çorlu Train Massacre and the victim families were detained due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations.” The defendants have stood trial for the first time at Ankara 50th Criminal

Court of First Instance. The next hearing was scheduled for April 13.



Protest bans

Istanbul Governorate banned all protests and events criticising the military operation in Syria. According to the Governorate, being anti-war is against national values, threatening domestic peace. Immediately afterwards, protest bans were declared in Gaziantep, Kırklareli, Adana, Aydın, Trabzon, Muğla and

Kilis as well. Anti-war declarations were banned in Hopa district of Artvin and Dikili district of Izmir.



Imprisonment claim against “Las Tesis” demonstration

A lawsuit was filed against the women, who performed the “Las Tesis” dance protest in Kadıköy, Istanbul on December 8, 2019, due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No.2911.” The “Las Tesis” dance protest had originated in Chile to protest violence against women, spreading globally in

a short period of time. The indictment prepared by Istanbul Anatolian Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office claims imprisonment sentences against six women from six months up to three years.



HDP’s March 8 event banned

Allegedly not having been detected in Turkey so far, the Coronavirus became a basis for the banning of an event organised by the People’s Democratic Party in Ceyhan district of Adana for March 8. The District Governorate added to the usual basis for every ban decision issued so

far, which is, “the protection of general security and public order,” to “the pandemic in surrounding countries.”



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Aziz Oruç Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Aziz Oruç due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through 12 tweets posted in 2016...

Court: Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court

Verdict: The journalist was sentenced to 2 years and one month of imprisonment. The sentence was not deferred.

Ferdi Sertkal Case

The lawsuit filed against Yeni Yaşam Daily reporter Ferdi Sertkal due to “making terrorist organisation propaganda” through five posts he made on Twitter and Facebook in 2014 and 2019...

Court: Van 4th Assize Court

Verdict: The journalist was sentenced to 1 year, 6 months and 22 days of imprisonment. The announcement of the sentence was deferred.

Mehmet Dursun Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Mehmet Dursun, who was arrested in 2018 and was released eight months later, due to “illegal organisation membership” based on his phone calls with news resources...

Court: Van 4th Assize Court

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for April 21, 2020.

Compensation Case Against Cumhuriyet Daily

The lawsuit of compensation filed against Cumhuriyet Daily reporter Hazal Ocak and Cumhuriyet Foundation Chair Alev Coşkun due to the news article published in the newspaper with the headline, “Luxury annex overlooking Bosphorus”...

Court: Istanbul Anatolian 14th Civil Court of First Instance

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for June 17, 2020.

Sultangazi Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi Case

The lawsuit filed against Istanbul Sultangazi Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi Chairman Zeynal Odabaş due to constructing a cemevi “without permission”...

Court: Istanbul Gaziosmapaşa 2nd Criminal Court of Peace

Verdict: The 20th hearing of the case was scheduled for May 21, 2020.

Case Against Those Losing Relatives in Çorlu Train Disaster

The lawsuit filed against seven people, three of them lawyers, due to “violating the Law No. 2911” on the justice watch protest in front of the Constitutional Court (AYM) organised by the families of those losing their lives in the train accident in Çorlu district of Tekirdağ, with 25 casualties including seven children...

Court: Ankara 50th Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The second hearing of the case was scheduled for April 13, 2020.

Case Against KESK Executives Due To Statements on Afrin

The lawsuit filed against seven executives of the Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions (KESK) due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” and “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” after making a statement against the Afrin Operation with the title, “An Attack Against Afrin Deepens Chaos”...

Court: Ankara 4th Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued the acquittal of all defendants.

Case Against BirGün Daily Executives

The lawsuit filed against former BirGün Daily executives İbrahim Aydın, Barış İnce, Can Uğur and Bülent Yılmaz due to “aiding an illegal organisation” through the news published in the newspaper on the tweets of account with alias “Fuat Avni” between the years 2014 and 2016...

Court: Istanbul 32nd Assize Court

Verdict: The court announced that another case filed against Barış İnce due to “illegal organisation membership” was decided to be merged with this case. The next hearing was scheduled for April 14, 2020.

Müyesser Yıldız Case

The lawsuit was filed against OdaTV Ankara News Director Müyesser Yıldız due to “slander” through reporting the news on a secret witness with codename “Abdullah” against former Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar...

Court: Ankara 35th Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: Yıldız was sentenced to 7080 TL judicial fine. The court deferred the announcement of the verdict.

Işıl Özgentürk Case

The lawsuit filed against Cumhuriyet Daily writer and movie director Işıl Özgentürk due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through her social media posts...

Court: Istanbul 28th Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued the acquittal of Özgentürk.

Kenan Kırkaya Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Kenan Kırkaya with the allegation of “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the news he shared on social media...

Court: Ankara 32nd Assize Court

Verdict: The next hearing was scheduled for June 4, 2020 to start at 10:00.

Ruken Demir Case

The lawsuit filed against Mezopotamya Agency (MA) reporter Ruken Demir, who was detained in November and was later arrested due to the news he reported on hunger strikes as well as the protests for Ida Mountains, due to “illegal organisation membership”...

Court: Izmir 19th Assize Court

Verdict: The court issued for the release of the journalist. The next hearing was scheduled for April 28, 2020.

Academics for Peace Case

The lawsuit filed against “Peace Petition” signatory academic Mevlüt Yaprak, who was previously dismissed from public service with an emergency decree, due to “making illegal organisation propaganda”...

Court: Edirne 3rd Assize Court

Verdict: The academic was acquitted.

Case Against Femicide Protest

The lawsuit filed against 27 women, who are charged with “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911” due to the protest organized in Ankara against the death of university student Özgecan Aslan, who was raped and brutally murdered in Tarsus district of Mersin...

Court: Ankara 5th Criminal Court of First Instance

Verdict: The lawsuit concluded with acquittal.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı Case

The lawsuit filed against Diyarbakır Mayor Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı, who was dismissed with an Interior Ministry decree, replaced with a trustee and is arrested since October 22, due to “illegal organisation membership”...

Date: March 9, Monday; Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court

Arzu Çerkezoğlu Case

The lawsuit filed against DISK Chairwoman Arzu Çerkezoğlu due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through her criticisms against the government in a panel she participated in, organized in Sapanca...

Date: March 9, Monday; Sapanca Criminal Court of First Instance

Case Against 7 People Distributing Leaflets for November 25

The lawsuit filed against seven people, six of them women, due to “making illegal organisation propaganda,” after they were detained and arrested while distributing leaflets on November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in Esenyurt, Istanbul...

Date: March 10, Tuesday; Istanbul 36th Assize Court

Kibriye Evren Case

The lawsuit filed against JinNews reporter Kibriye Evren due to “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda”...

Date: March 10, Tuesday at 09:20; Diyarbakır 5th Assize Court

Yusuf Karataş Case

The lawsuit filed against Evrensel Daily columnist Yusuf Karataş within the investigation against the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) due to “establishing and managing an armed illegal organisation” through the workshops, panels, press statements and events he participated in...

Date: March 11, Wednesday at 10:00; Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court

Mehmet Çakmakçı Case

The lawsuit filed against journalist Mehmet Çakmakçı with the allegation of “illegal organisation membership” due to the photos he took as he was collecting news information as well as his interviews with news resources being considered criminal evidence...

Date: March 11, Wednesday at 09:00; Diyarbakır 10th Assize Court

ETHA - İsmnaz Temel / Havva Cuştan Case

The lawsuit filed against 23 people, including Etkin News Agency (ETHA) reporters İsmnaz Temel, Havva Cuştan and the Legal Bureau of the Oppressed (EHB) due to “illegal organisation membership” and “making illegal organisation propaganda”...

Date: March 13, Friday 10:00; Istanbul 27th Assize Court