

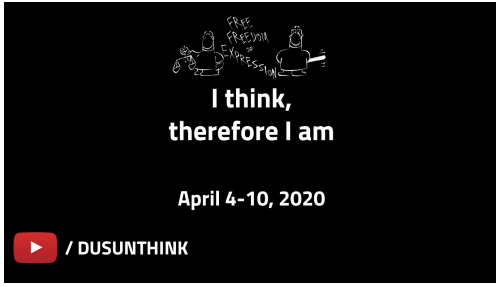
# Think, think...



## Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin (Issue 15/20, 10 April 2020)

### What happened last week?

- The Coronavirus' spread rate in Turkey reached scary dimensions. The number of cases exceeded 40 thousand in four weeks, with almost 1000 dead. More than 40 provinces and 100 residential areas were isolated in Turkey in the last two weeks. With additional measures announced this week, entrances to and exits from 30 metropolitans and Zonguldak were banned.
  - A curfew was declared for people under the age 20 and wearing masks became obligatory in public areas. After the curfew was extended, the government was expected to bring economical measures for young workers. However, an Interior Ministry circular letter exempted those between the ages 18 and 20 from the curfew.
  - The government is currently preparing a new omnibus bill draft. The regulation was recently on debate with the allegation that dismissals from work were to be banned for three months, but instead, the draft paves the way for workers to be forced to have unpaid leaves. Workers will be forced to survive with the 39 Turkish liras to be paid from the unemployment fund. With regulations on social network providers, the omnibus bill paves the way for more restrictions and censorship in the internet and social media.
  - With the highest spread rate in the world, Turkey's death rate is relatively low. However, the Turkish Medical Association indicates that the Ministry of Health is not using the codes suggested by the World Health Organization while reporting deaths due to the Coronavirus, which makes the number of deaths seem lower than they actually are.
  - Erdoğan continues to relate everything to the "National Solidarity Campaign." Despite criticisms against the campaign, Erdoğan said that the campaign is like the "National Tax" application declared by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk before the Battle of Sakarya.
  - The Parliament continues to work on the law draft on penitentiary execution amendments, prepared due to the Coronavirus. The draft predicts the release of thousands of convicts despite all objections of the opposition, excluding those declared "terror criminals" due to expressing their opinions. Journalists, political convicts, lawyers, human rights advocates and writers are being left behind bars, facing the threat of the virus.
  - The Ministry of the Interior announced that 3,576 social media accounts were examined with the allegation of having made "provocative Coronavirus" posts in the last three weeks. 229 of the 616 identified social media users were detained and legal actions against the other suspects are ongoing.
-



[Please click here](#) to watch our weekly video programme, “*COGITO ERGO SUM*” in which we track developments on freedom of expression and thought in Turkey. “*COGITO ERGO SUM*” is on [our YouTube channel](#) every Friday and on Can TV every Saturday at 22:00...

[Here you may also find](#) the 6th video conference, “*What’s Goin’ On?*” we organize in collaboration with the Human Rights Association and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey to report monthly freedom of expression violations as well as violations against the right to meeting and demonstration in Turkey.



### Investigation against Coronavirus report by Urfa Medical Chamber

An investigation was opened against the report prepared by Urfa Medical Chamber on the Coronavirus outbreak in the province, due to “public incitement towards fear and panic.” Chamber Chairman Ömer Melik testified at the Prosecutor’s Office within the investigation.



### Erdoğan files criminal complaint against Portakal

Erdoğan filed a criminal complaint against Fatih Portakal, who criticized Erdoğan’s statements on the “National Solidarity Campaign” on social media. The Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BRSA) has also filed a criminal complaint against Portakal and claimed that the related tweet damaged the reputation of the Turkish banking

sector.



### Three journalists in Rize summoned to testify due to news on Coronavirus

Contemporary Journalists Association Rize Chairman and rizenabiz.com news website owner Genççağ Karafazlı and reporter Doğan

Can İltek were summoned to testify due to the news published on the website with the headline, “Coronavirus alarm in Çaykur.” On the other hand, flash53.com owner Hasan Fehmi Demir was summoned to testify based on the case map published on the website representing incorrect numbers.



### **Intern lawyer detained due to tweets on “Not Paying”**

Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) member intern lawyer Yağız Timoçin was detained due to his tweets within the Twitter campaign that started with the hashtag, “#Ödeme Yapmıyoruz [#WeAren'tPaying]” in order to protest economic difficulties workers are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak. Timoçin is charged with “public incitement

towards disobeying the law” through his tweet, “*Capitalism is more dangerous than Coronavirus! #WeAren'tPaying.*”



### **Pressure against healthcare workers during outbreak**

General Health-Labour Union representative Ali Kemal Akgül was exiled after he stated that the protective equipment provided by the hospital he was working in was insufficient, in a statement for a newspaper in Izmir. In Izmit, an investigation was filed against family

practitioner Sibel Gören due to thanking the Republican People’s Party (CHP) municipality on social media for sending masks to family healthcare centers.

### **Virtual events banned as well**

The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Foundations General Directorate informed all foundations that all virtual meetings and events were banned as well within the COVID-19 measures until July 1, 2020.

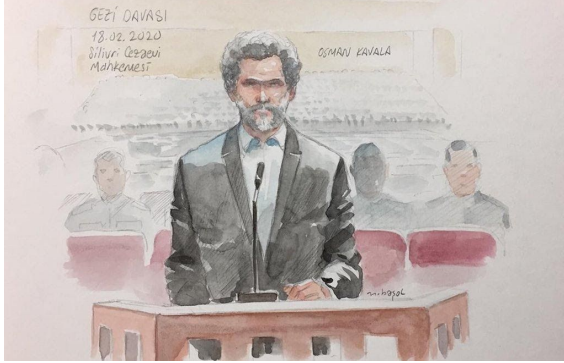


### **Another lawsuit against Mızraklı due to illegal organisation propaganda**

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office started an investigation against Diyarbakır Co-Mayor Dr Selçuk Mızraklı, who was previously convicted due to illegal organisation



membership, this time due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through party activities he attended as he was the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MP. The indictment prepared was accepted by Ankara 28th Assize Court.



### **Prosecutor carries “Gezi Park Case” for appeal**

Istanbul Public Prosecutor Edip Şahiner carried the Gezi Park Case, which concluded with the acquittal of 16 defendants of the charge of “attempting to overthrow the government of the Republic of Turkey,” to the Court of Appeals. The Prosecutor claimed that Osman Kavala, who is already in prison, has a “risk of escaping,” claiming for his re-arrest and for the

acquittal decree for him to be reversed.



### **Detainment over social media post**

Aydın Metropolitan Journalists Association Chairman Cem Ulucan was detained in Nazilli due to the statement he wrote on social media: “Those who sleep drunk when their neighbor is sober, are not from us.” Ulucan is charged with “public incitement towards resentment and hostility.”



### **Journalist Mustafa Hoş summoned to testify**

Mustafa Hoş was summoned to testify following the complaint of Bayraktar Holding after he expressed, during his interview with assassinated Mawlud Mawludi, that he was working for “Bayraktar Holding.” The holding attorneys claim that Hoş “serves for the enemies of Turkey through the holding, which is an important part of the Turkish defense

industry.”



**FATİH  
ALTAYLI**

**HABER  
TÜRK**

### **RTÜK penalties on Covid-19**

Habertürk Daily writer Fatih Altaylı stated, in his column, that Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) penalized HaberTürk TV channel on the information they gave about the number of infected patients with experts. It was also expressed by another expert on a show on

TRT channel that the total number of infected cases announced by the Ministry is less than half of the actual number.



### **Police prevention against Bölek's burial**

The ceremony planned in Okmeydanı Cemevi for Grup Yorum member Helin Bölek, who lost her life on the 288th day of her hunger strike, was prevented by the police. Bölek's funeral was buried at Feriköy Cemetery with the participation of a few people, without even being let washed. Many people were detained

in the incidents at the funeral ceremony.



### **ECHR decrees not executed**

Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, following the execution of the European Court of Human Rights decrees, launched its 2019 report. With 184 decrees awaiting execution, Turkey is ranked second after Russia, which keeps 244 decrees not executed.



### **TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

- All hearings across the country were postponed except "urgent matters" within measures against Covid-19. Therefore, no hearings will be held next week.