

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 33/20 - August 14, 2020)

What happened last week?

- The number of Coronavirus cases exceeded 20 million over the world. It took only six months after the first case to reach the 10 million band. However, only six weeks was enough to double that number. The loss of life has increased from 490,000 to 750,000 in these six weeks. Despite all the optimism of the authorities, the number of daily patients detected in Turkey continues to rise.
- The number of daily cases in Turkey continue to increase over a thousand. The information from the field continues to not match the data shared by the ministry. According to experts, we are further behind the situation we are in today than in May, as a result of the timeless initiation of normalization without adequate precautions. And the strict measures are back on the agenda...
- The Ministry of Health recently removed the number of patients in the intensive care unit and those intubated from the daily Coronavirus table and has now changed the patient algorithm on those followed at home and those hospitalized. Although the health minister denied allegations of density in hospitals, the increase in Covid-19 cases continued and patients were treated at home after there were no empty beds in hospitals. Respiratory distress, shortness of breath, difficulty in nutrition were brought as standards in order for a person to be hospitalized.
- Official data on unemployment is pushing the boundaries of maths again. According to the data announced by the Turkish Statistical Institute, unemployment in May, when the pandemic was densely experienced, decreased by 331,000. Meanwhile, employment opportunities decreased as well by 2 million 411 thousand; with the number of employment decreasing to 25 million 858 thousand. Turkey is probably the only country in the world that reduces both employment and unemployment...
- Gold and foreign currency, which both broke records last week, seem to have partly calmed down this week, with a choppy course. Erdoğan claims that Turkey is on its way upwards, continuing to defy economic data, social realities and the science of economy. President Erdoğan stated that the economy is going better despite the peaking foreign currencies and gold prices. *“Let no one try to fool our people. Turkey is flying off... We are stronger today than yesterday,”* he said. Erdoğan related the level of sovereignty to fridge sales. Sharing various numbers to reveal the people’s level of sovereignty, Erdoğan tried to draw a positive picture again. *“Fridge sales increased from 2 million 88 thousand 18 years ago to 2.5 million today. The number of sales of washing machines and dishwashers also increased. Why am I telling you these? These numbers are related to the level of sovereignty in our country,”* Erdoğan said.

- Erdoğan's son-in-law and Minister of Treasury and Finance Berat Albayrak claimed that Turkey is continuing its way without steering away from its target to go up the high league. The new commentary of Albayrak on the fluctuation in the currency was, "The currency goes up and down. What's essential for Turkey is to manage these fluctuations in a controlled way." The "Turkey Economic Watch" report by the World Bank indicated that the decrease in capital outflows as well as the reserves increase foreign finance pressure. The report indicated that the World Bank reserves were \$105 billion at the beginning of the year and it fell down to \$85 billion in April. "In case the reserves weren't used, the value of the Turkish Lira could decrease even further," the report stated.
- Turkey didn't recognise the convention between Greece and Egypt on the restriction of marine authorization. After Turkey assigned ship "Oruç Kaptan" for seismic research, tensions have risen in the Eastern Mediterranean once again. Greece urgently called the European Union (EU) for a meeting to discuss the drilling crisis. The EU described the developments as "extremely worrying." President Erdoğan said, "We will not bow to being imprisoned to shores." Even though this issue seems to be about foreign politics, it shouldn't be forgotten that every dispute between the two countries actually benefit the ruling parties.



Press In Arrest launches 7-month "Press Freedom" report

Press In Arrest launched the "Press Freedom in Turkey in the First 7 Months of 2020" report. According to the report, at least 152 journalists were prosecuted in 89 press cases in 11 provinces since January. 8 of those journalists were acquitted, 8 of them were imprisoned and one of them was sentenced to judicial fine. Prosecutions of 133 journalists are ongoing. According to the report, which indicated that the pressure against journalists continued to multiply even in the Coronavirus lockdown; 61 journalists were either summoned to testify, or detained or faced criminal complaints during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lawsuits were filed against 18 journalists; 92 journalists who were prosecuted within 59 cases in 9 provinces faced 5 heavy life imprisonment claims, 1 life imprisonment claim and at least 587 years and three months of imprisonment up to 1513 years and 15 days of imprisonment.



638 raids, 132 arrests in six months

Human Rights Association (IHD) Diyarbakir Branch launched the "Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian Region 2020 Year First 6 Months Human Rights Violations Report." According to the report, 638 houses and offices were raided in the six-month period; 132 of the 769 detained, 16 of whom are children, were arrested including two children. 17 investigations were opened against 33 people and 7 lawsuits were filed against 71 people due to their thoughts. Various sentences of imprisonment and fines were issued against 121 people within 11 lawsuits, including politicians, journalists and public workers.

Meetings and demonstrations were banned indefinitely in some provinces and in others, being renewed every 15 days or every month. 28 ban decrees were issued in the last six months.



404 citizens support “101 Grey-Haired Elders”

101 politicians, academics, writers and artists from different political backgrounds made a call for the ruling power and the opposition with their video, “Grey-Haired Elders are calling” and the call for democracy was supported by “404 citizens.” Famous names from various professional groups, such as politicians,

journalists, lawyers, engineers and teachers including Hikmet Çetin, Zeynep Altıok, Mehmet Tezkan, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Semra Somersan, Ümit Kıvanç, Cahit Berkay, Menderes Samancılar called the ruling power and the opposition for democracy. Here is the common statement of the 404 names, expressing that they agree with the evaluation and the call of “101 Grey-Haired Elders.” [Please click here](#) for the full declaration.



Istanbul Convention lets women live

26 non-governmental organizations, including our Initiative, launched a common declaration for Istanbul Convention, which is currently targeted by the ruling power. Here is the full statement: “Istanbul Convention lets women live.” In case Istanbul Convention was duly executed, 163 women since January 2020 and 32 women in July

2020 may not have been killed by the men closest to them. The police violence applied against the women, who express their reactions within the frame of their Constitutional rights, is to involve the government in the crime. Search for ways to properly execute the convention, not to withdraw from it.”



“Malehood” kills, “Istanbul Convention” lets women live

Another reaction against Turkey’s withdrawal from the convention came from men. 345 men from various professional field launched a statement and said, “Men kill - Istanbul Convention lets women live.” [Please click here](#) for the full statement.



Police violence against women defending Istanbul Convention

The statement organized by Ankara Women's Platform on the Istanbul Convention was prevented by the police; 33 women, including Mesopotamia Agency reporter Eylem Akdağ, were beaten and detained.



Police intervention against Grup Yorum concert

The concert area was taken under blockade by the police before the 9th Independent Turkey Concert organized by Grup Yorum on August 9, Sunday in Yanıkapı. The area was banned from entrances and exits; band members have opened a banner that said, "Grup Yorum is people, it can't be silenced." The police intervened against the band members; 25 people were detained. The police further prevented the journalists from recording visuals of what happened, seized cameras and deleted recordings.



Investigation against young person over distributing May 1 leaflet

An investigation was opened against Labour Youth member Yusuf Akın with the allegation of "making illegal organization propaganda" over distributing leaflets in Dersim in 2019, calling people to protest on May 1st for "Labour, Education and Freedom."

Education and Freedom."



Access ban against news on tender

Istanbul Anatolian 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace banned access to the news on the tender won by President Erdoğan's son's friend. 57 news and social media posts that were banned include news by Cumhuriyet, Oda TV, soL News Portal, BirGün, AnkaHaber and KRT as well as Ekşi Sözlük threads.



Access ban against Hornet

Ankara 8th Criminal Judicature of Peace brought an access ban against Hornet, which is a social platform for homosexuals. The social network was banned from access following the application of Ankara Provincial Gendarmerie Command due to “violation of personal rights.” Previously, gay

dating app Grindr was banned from access.



Access ban against news on ArtıGerçek

Batman 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace brought an access ban against the news published on ArtıGerçek Daily regarding Tempo Call Center workers, who were fired due to fake customer satisfaction surveys.



Prevention against event by Suruç Families Initiative

The “Dream Travellers Justice Awards” ceremony to be organized by Suruç Families Initiative on the fifth anniversary of the Suruç Massacre was banned by Beyoğlu District Governorate.



Call for UN: Urgent measures needed for LGBTI+ rights

Human Rights Advocates Solidarity Network components sent a letter to the United Nations (UN) officials and pointed to the increasing threats and applications in Turkey against the LGBTI+

rights. The letter requested the urgent intervention of United States officials. The letter further underlined that the Turkish government is bound to act in accordance with its national and international responsibilities; making a call for urgent action to be taken for the protection of LGBTI+s against targeting, discriminatory hate speech.



Tanrıku announces “July 2020 Rights Violations Report”

Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul MP and Human Rights Monitoring Committee Deputy Chairman Sezgin Tanrıku launched the “July 2020 Rights Violations Report in Turkey.”

According to the report, at least 4 people were detained and one person was arrested due to their speeches or writings. Lawsuits were filed against at least three people, investigations were opened against two people and at least one person was convicted. Access from at least 175 Internet content was banned. At least 12 people were detained and three people were arrested due to their social media posts; investigations were opened against at least one person. At least 110 demonstrations were intervened by the police. At least 316 people were detained in interventions. At least 10 events, press statements, meetings, demonstrations, festivals, theater staging or movie screenings were prevented, banned by Governorates and District Governorates. All protests and demonstrations were banned in 16 provinces. At least 62 people were convicted in lawsuits filed due to meetings and demonstrations.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

*** There are currently no developments in the cases we're tracking due to the judicial recess.