

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 19/21 - May 14, 2021)

What happened last week?

- Turkey did not participate in the event organised by the Council of Europe in Berlin for the 10th anniversary of the acceptance of the Istanbul Convention. Women continue their protest against Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention with a Presidential decree.
 - Shopping restrictions continue with circulars issued by the Interior Ministry during the full lockdown. After the alcohol sales ban, female hygiene products were included in the products list that were banned from sale. The government literally expects women to regulate their "periods" during the full lockdown.
 - According to the data of the Ministry of Health, the effects of the pandemic in Turkey continue to decrease dramatically. The daily case numbers, which were around 30 thousand before the full lockdown, are being shown to have regressed to 10 thousands and the number of intensive care patients are exhibited to have decreased greatly. The number of deaths in Turkey related to the Coronavirus is shown to be less than half of the world average. On the other hand, trust issues persist against the data announced by the Ministry. The F1 Istanbul section to be held in June was cancelled, and the UEFA Champions League final games were transferred from Istanbul to Lisbon.
 - Allegations of criminal organisation leader Sedat Peker, who, until very recently was known with his close relations with the ruling power and was targeting the opposition, were the highlight of the week. Peker launched videos on social media, making allegations against the ruling power, which brought the relations between mafia, government and the politics on the agenda once again. At this point, the country has become a battleground between mafia leaders and those prosecuted due to deep state structures in the 90s. The recent developments exhibit that [many things continue as they were since the Susurluk scandal](#).
 - Clashes heated up after the attack of Israel against the Al-Aqsa Mosque. More than 100 Palestinians, including children, died in Gaza under the heavy bombardment of Israel. The United Nations warned that Israel and Palestine are heading towards a "full-on war". Five parties in the Turkish Parliament reprimanded the attacks of Israel with a common declaration, calling the International Criminal Court to take action.
 - The Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced that the financial liabilities of the touristic institutes on public land will be postponed and that this work has "only been shared with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Group." Thus, it was once again officially announced that the country is being governed with a "party government" administration.
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Our weekly video programme, “[COGITO ERGO SUM](#),” in which we track Turkey’s freedom of expression and thought agenda, is on our [YouTube channel](#) every Friday...

[Please click here](#) for all our video newsletters...



We continue to record violations of freedom of expression in the country with monthly video conferences we organise together with the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV). [Please click here](#) for our “[What’s Goin’ On April 2021](#)” report...



Constitutional Court launches statistics on individual applications

The Constitutional Court announced data on individual applications made at the court starting in 2012, the year individual applications started. 236,662 of the 265,300 applications (80%) were found unacceptable. At least one rights violation was determined in 14,204 applications (5.4%). 5,658 of all applications with rights violation decrees (40%) were made in 2020. Violations against

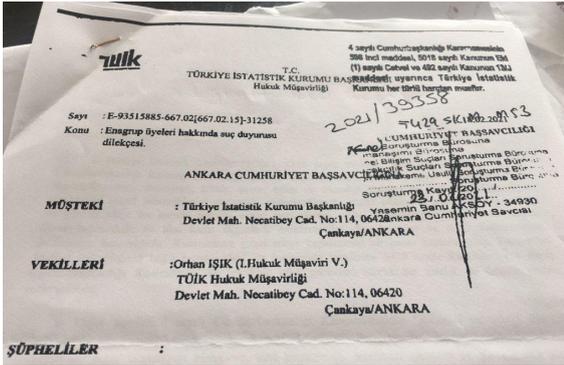
the right to fair trial tops the list with 9103 decrees; followed by violations of freedom of expression in 611 applications and violations of the right to meeting and demonstration in 127 applications. [Please click here](#) for the full statistics.



Cemil Kırbayır's file closed due to time limitation

Cemil Kırbayır had been detained one day after the military coup on September 12, 1980 in Okçu village of Ardahan. Kırbayır has disappeared under detainment. The warrant of investigation issued in 2014 for his disappearance was reversed. The Court of Cassation reversed the investigation warrant issued by Ardahan Assize Court and closed the

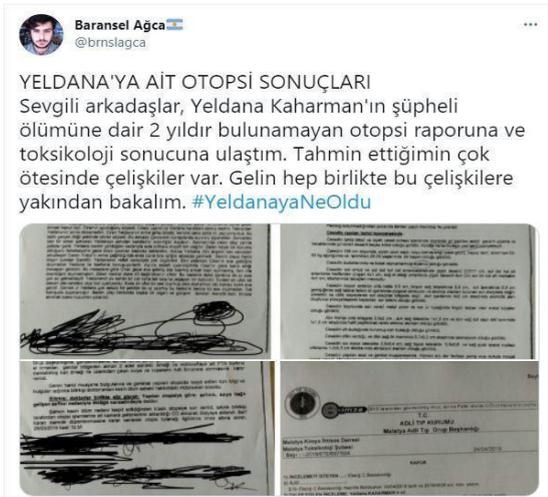
file due to the fulfillment of the time limitation. The Court of Cassation claimed that the Constitutional amendment made in 2004 on public officers not being bound to time limitation in charges of homicide as well as the revocation of the interim Article 15 of the Turkish Constitution that allowed immunity for the crimes committed during the September 12 period did not pose an obstacle against the time limitation on the file. Thus, the 41-year search for justice was concluded with impunity, and the promise made by Erdoğan during the time of his Prime Ministry to Kırbayır's mother, Berfo Kırbayır, was not fulfilled.



Criminal complaint against Inflation Research Group

Minister of Finance and Treasury Lütfi Elvan stated that the Turkish Statistical Institute has filed a criminal complaint against the Inflation Research Group, whose executive board involves economist Veysel Ulusoy as well, based on a violation of the Law on the Turkish Statistical Institute. The Inflation Research Group testified at Istanbul Anatolian Public

Prosecutor's Office and indicated that the research results are being announced to the public together with the research's scope, method, volume, data compilation method and the application time, just like it is stated in the law.



Investigation against journalist Baransel Ağca

An investigation was opened against journalist Baransel Ağca. Announcing the investigation on his twitter account, the journalist wrote, "The Prosecutor's Office started another investigation against me... It's probably about a tweet that is shown as a criminal element in the file but instead it is charging the act of journalism." Ağca has recently revealed the autopsy reports of journalist Yeldana Kaharman, who died suspiciously and was alleged to have been killed by the Justice and

Development Party (AKP) Elazığ MP Tolga Ađar.



Lawsuit against journalist Deniz Yücel

The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office filed another lawsuit against Die Welt’s former Turkey representative Deniz Yücel. The journalist was charged with “denigration of the government of the Republic of Turkey, its judicial bodies and the security organisation of the state” in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCK) through two articles he wrote, published on Die Welt’s

October 2016 issue. Two years of imprisonment was claimed against Yücel, and his prosecution will start on July 1st at Istanbul Criminal Court of First Instance.



Administrative investigation against Murat Erdoğan

The Turkish-German University announced that an administrative investigation was started against Prof. Murat Erdoğan due to his expressions on the change in Turkey’s policies on Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which he shared on social media. In the message launched by the university, it was announced that freedom of expression is not a permission to “insult” the President and the Turkish government.

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Avlaremos editor becomes target of antisemitist attacks on social media

As the attack of Israel against the Al-Aqsa Mosque continues to incite reactions, there is significant increase in social media posts full of hate speech. Avlaremos website editor Nesi Altaras was exposed to racist and antisemitist attacks on Twitter. Continuously harassed to make a statement on the policies of Israel, Altaras finally spoke out on Twitter. This time,

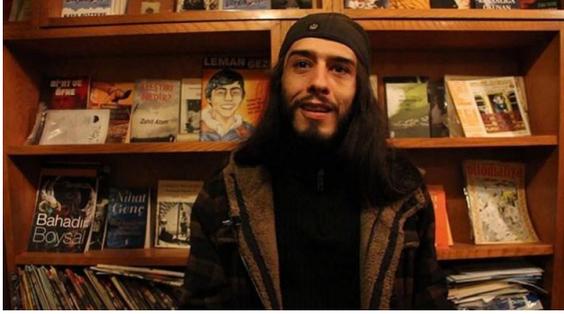
Altaras became a target of posts full of hate speech and violence. Altaras has previously been a target of racist attacks in Turkey after social media posts on the Armenian Genocide as well.



Soylu targets Cumhuriyet Daily

Reporting the news on the videos of Sedat Peker with the headline, “Deep Relations,” Cumhuriyet Daily became a target of Interior Minister Soyly on social media. Soyly described the past of Cumhuriyet Daily as

“dark” and claimed that Turkey now is not the Turkey that has been. “We will ask for an account,” Soylu said.



Taylan Kulaçoğlu arrested once again

Detained twice and served time in prison within the “investigation against those unnamed”, Taylan Kulaçoğlu was detained once again due to his social media posts. Charged with “insulting the President,” Kulaçoğlu was arrested by the court he was transferred to after his interrogation at the Prosecutor’s Office.



March-April 2021 Conscientious Objection Newsletter launched

The third issue of the Conscientious Objection Newsletter, prepared by the Conscientious Objection Association periodically, was launched. The newsletter compiles updated data on the rights violations exposed by conscientious objectors in March and April.

[Please click here](#) for details.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

*** Prosecutions are paused due to the full lockdown measures against the pandemic.