

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 29/21 - July 30, 2021)

What happened last week?(*)

(*). Our newsletter contains two-week data due to the national holiday.

- Turkey's policies on the management and security of the Kabul airport caused reactions. Erdoğan pointed to "closeness with the Taliban in terms of faith". However, the actual reason for the objections is the presumption that the Turkish soldiers will be faced with great risks in Afghanistan, as the United States and its allies continue to withdraw from the region. The reason for Erdoğan's decision to stay at the Kabul airport was not shared with the public.
- "Nationalism, xenophobia and hate speech" is being supported and encouraged by the ruling power and an important part of the opposition in Turkey. This situation feeds from social tension, helping it grow as well. There were racist attacks against the Kurds in three provinces last week. Hate speech against refugees continues to strengthen. New refugee groups started entering Turkey from its eastern border due to the Taliban siege in Afghanistan. European Union countries, especially Germany, appreciated Turkey's state as "buffer" for the passage of refugees. These remarks led to heavy reactions from the public and the opposition. The European Union is expected to announce a new support package for Turkey hosting Afghan refugees. NGOs and journalists, who have been conducting studies on migration, are being targeted due to being funded by foreign countries. Republican People's Party (CHP) member and Bolu Mayor Tanju Özcan announced that refugees will have to pay 10 times their water and waste bills. Sabancı Holding Executive Board member Arzu Sabancı supported the hate speech as well, saying, "I don't want refugees in my country!"
- The state of the COVID-19 pandemic remains worrying. The number of daily cases exceeded 22 thousand and there is a serious increase in the daily number of deaths announced. 22.5 million citizens still haven't had their first dose of vaccination and there are those who abstain from getting their second or third doses. Roots of distrust against the vaccines based on an mRNA technology go back to the time when the first batch of Chinese vaccinations arrived in Turkey. At that time, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca had mentioned worries against the mRNA vaccine technology. It was recorded that those who haven't been vaccinated or have been vaccinated with two doses of the Chinese vaccine are being hospitalised increasingly more.
- One of the founders of Justice and Development Party's (AKP) and former Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) Chairman Bülent Arınç, who sometimes causes tensions in the People's Alliance with his statements, announced his resignation from his membership at the Presidential High Advisory Board. In his statement, Arınç [said](#) that a reformation is needed, that he sees and supports President Erdoğan's will on the matter.

- The omnibus bill draft, which was prepared by the Justice and Development Party and involves an extension of State of Emergency applications, passed the Parliamentary General Assembly and was enacted as law. According to the bill, applications like public service dismissals, additional detainment periods were extended for another year. The first version of the draft, that was presented to the Parliament, demanded that the detainment periods be extended for three more years; and was later revised by the ruling power and was decreased to one year. The provision on the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund being appointed as a trustee in investigations and prosecutions against companies, which are owned by individuals “having connections with terrorist organisations”, will continue for three more years.
- An important incident has occurred in terms of the allegations of the “execution list” against Turkish journalists and politicians residing in Germany. German Federal Criminal Police approved the existence of the list and stated that the 55-people list face the risk of assassination. Journalist Erk Acarer had been attacked by three people in the garden of his home in Berlin on July 7, with fists and knives, afterwards being threatened with a written message left in his garden. An Instagram account, named, “jitemkurt,” launched a “death list” of 21 people residing in Europe.
- As the northeastern part of Turkey is under disasters of flood, the country’s southern and western shores faced forest fires. Turkey is still not a party to the Paris Climate Convention. On the other hand, Turkey doesn’t prepare for possible disasters and continues to allow the destruction of natural resources. The latest fires revealed that there were 8 planes in the Presidential inventory, whereas there is no single fire extinguishing plane or helicopter in the country.



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 video newsletters...



SİVİL TOPLUM İZLİYOR

Haziran 2021

“Cumhurbaşkanlığı İnsan Hakları Eylem Planı’nı izleme ve değerlendirme raporu”

We have started a new monthly video newsletter series, [The Civil Society Is Watching](#), in which we, as the Initiative for Freedom of Expression, evaluate the execution of the promises made through the Human Rights Action Plan announced by President

Erdoğan in March. [Please click here](#) for the first monitoring and evaluation report of the Presidential Human Rights Action Plan.



23 organisations react against social media regulation attempt

Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun targeted funds received from foreign resources and President Erdoğan commented, based on Altun's statements, that a new social media regulation may be enacted in October against "false news and foreign resources." This statement was evaluated by 23

international organisations with a joint declaration. The declaration indicated a worry on the "criminalisation of organisations receiving funds from foreign resources" and "the fight against false news and disinformation" being the new tools for silencing oppositional media. Signatory organisations called Turkey to consider the principles in the policy document previously launched by international organisations on press freedom and freedom of expression on "[freedom of expression against false news and disinformation](#)" in all regulations Turkey will make.



May-June Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom Agenda Report

The second Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom Agenda report was launched by Expression Interrupted. According to the report on the developments in May and June 2021, 109 journalists were prosecuted and four journalists were sentenced to 9 years and eight months of imprisonment in total, in the two-month period. Police violence and restrictions against journalists increased, at

least 5 journalists were physically attacked. The Radio and Television Supreme Council and the Press Ad Institute targeted oppositional organisations. Halk TV, KRT TV and FOX TV were sentenced to administrative fines by the Radio and Television Supreme Council. Evrensel Daily was penalised with a five-day ad ban by the Press Ad Institute. Thus, Evrensel's ad ban was extended to 103 days in total. The newspaper's right to publish official advertisements had been paused in September 2019. [Please click here](#) for the full report.



Seçilmiş bir milletvekilini ve iktidarı maşa ve sansürcü tanımlamaları ile ifade edecek kadar nefret öznesi bir zihin ancak ideolojik angajmanı kadar kadar düşünür ve anlam üretir. Siz akademisyen değil çürümüş ideolojinizin öfkeli bir militansınız.

 Ceren Sozeri @cerensozeri · 25 Tem

Sansürcünün ömrü maşası olduğu iktidar kadar; hesap verebilenlerin, destek ya da eleştirir, izleyici/okuyucusundan başka muhatabı yok. [evrensel.net/yazi/89162/bir](#) ...

... Mahir Ünal targets Evrensel Daily

Justice and Development Party (AKP) Group Deputy Chairman Mahir Ünal shared a cartoon by Evrensel Daily cartoonist Sefer Selvi, later an article by Ceren Sözeri and targeted the journalists, as well as the newspaper. Ünal replied to the cartoon by Selvi, which was on

the allegations that Turkey was a “superpower”, saying, “the lightning rod you supported has prevented the establishment of a terrorist state.” Commenting on the article he shared by Sözeri, he further said, “you are not an academic, you are a militant of a rotten, angry ideology.”



Hippocrates oath under hate target

Inönü University Rector Ahmet Kızılay joined the group of those being uncomfortable by the promise in the Hippocrates Oath, which is required for the profession of medical service, on “there shall be no discrimination of gender, ethnic identity and sexual orientation for medical service.” Prof. Kızılay announced that it will be brought to the agenda of the

university senate for the related section of the oath, which he described as “obscenity”, to be removed from the oath. The same attempt had been made by Sakarya University during the graduation ceremony of the Faculty of Medicine and the phrase “sexual orientation” had been removed from the oath.



Pro-government media targets Bar Associations

Yeni Şafak Daily targeted those signing the petition, “We reprimand racist attacks” which was signed by 15 provincial bar associations. The newspaper used the headline, “Qandil’s Bar’ons.” 15 provincial bar associations have made a joint declaration as a reaction against

the racist attacks targeting Kurdish citizens in different provinces, calling for an end to hate speech and discriminative language. 45 provincial bar associations made a joint declaration after the newspaper’s headline and indicated that they reprimand Yeni Şafak Daily.



Files of insulting the President

Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul Parliament Member Sezgin Tanrikulu indicated that there was a great increase in criminal complaints due to insulting the President, during the presidency of Erdoğan. Tanrikulu said, “There has been no other President in neither world history, nor the history of Turkey, who has complained of his own citizens and

prosecuted them this much.” According to the data shared by Tanrikulu, 45 thousand investigations started in 2020 due to insulting the President and lawsuits were filed against 9,773 people as a result of these investigations. 290 of those having faced prosecutions after the complaint of the President were below 18 years of age. 3,665 people, who were prosecuted due to insulting the President, were convicted and the announcements of the sentences against 3,736 people were deferred.



News by Evrensel made subject to “insult” charges

Labour Party member Nail Ulutaş shared different news articles published in Evrensel Daily in 2015 and 2019 on Facebook. Afterwards, he had to testify within the investigation started by Gaziantep Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office against him due to “insulting the President.” In his statement, Ulutaş stated that the account indeed belonged

to him and that him being charged due to the news he shared is a violation of freedom of expression.



Penalty against Bloomberg due to Altaylı

The Radio and Television Supreme Council evaluated the complaint made by the Turkish Soccer Federation against Fatih Altaylı three months later, issuing a 3% administrative fine against Bloomberg channel. Radio and Television Supreme Council member Ilhan Taşçı stated that the evaluation of the

application was intentional, as it happened after the Aid video of President Erdoğan as well as statements that opposed Altaylı and Communications Director Fahrettin Altun.



Lawsuit against anti-nuclear statement

A lawsuit was filed on the statement of the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) in March regarding the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant in Mersin. 17 of those having participated in the statement faced lawsuits due to “violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911.” The first hearing will be held on October 28 at Gülnar Criminal Court of First Instance.



Police intervention against Suruç commemorations

The police intervened against the group gathering in Kadıköy with the call of the Suruç Families Initiative in order to commemorate 33 people, who have died in the bomb attack in Suruç in 2015. Statements organised in Ankara, Izmir and Adana were intervened against as well, many people were detained.



Author Gökhan Yavuzel attacked

PEN member and author Gökhan Yavuzel, who resides in Wales, announced that he was attacked by four Turkish-speaking people. The author's name was in the 21-people "death list" shared by anonymous Turkish nationalist accounts, which previously led to the targeting of journalist Erk Acarer as well. Acarer has also recently been attacked in Germany.



Protest ban in Van extended once again in Van

The Van Governorate extended the ongoing protest and demonstration ban for 15 more days, starting on July 17. The protest ban in the province is ongoing for more than 1700 days due to the protection of "national security."



Access bans against websites

Access bans were issued against the websites of Kızıl Bayrak and Umut Daily twice in the last two weeks. The access ban decrees, issued by Diyarbakır 4th and 5th Criminal Judicatures of Peace, were based on the "protection of national security and public order."



CFWIJ starts petition campaign

The Coalition for Women in Journalism (CFWIJ) started a petition campaign on the police violence against female journalists, which has shown significant increase in the recent months. The campaign was announced with the statement, "At least 44 female journalists were exposed to police violence in Turkey since the beginning of 2021. Three

female journalists were detained with house raids due to their professional activities. At least 13 female journalists were detained as they were tracking news information in the field." Participations in the campaign continue...



Rights organisations together for “right to fair trial”

The Human Rights Association, Citizenship Association and EuroMed Rights announced that they have started a new study that aims at the monitoring of prosecutions to observe violations against the right to fair trial, documentation and recording of cases of harassment and intimidation through prosecution. The written declaration, signed by the three organisations, was launched with the title, “Solidarity for the Right to Fair Trial” and indicated that prosecutions, which focus on freedom of expression, organisation and peaceful meeting, will be studied.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Gezi Park Case

In the lawsuit filed against the Gezi Park protests, the case started to be retried after the acquittal decrees issued for Osman Kavala, Ayşe Mücella Yapıcı, Şerafettin Can Atalay, Tayfun Kahraman, Ali Hakan Altınay, Yiğit Aksakoğlu, Yiğit Ali Ekmekçi, Çiğdem Mater Utku and Mine Özerden were reversed by the appeal court. The file of businessman Osman Kavala, who has been under arrest for more than 1368 days with the charges of “attempting to overthrow the Constitutional order” and “espionage” was merged with this case file as well.

August 6, Friday at Istanbul 30th Assize Court