

Think, think...

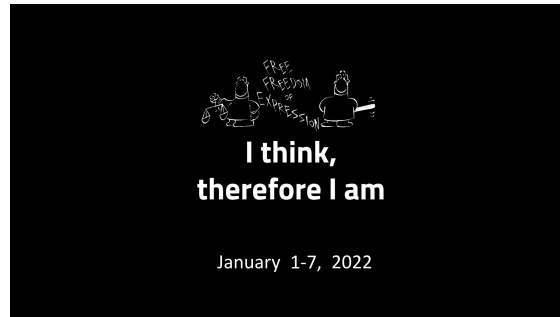


Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 1/22 - January 7, 2022)

What happened last week?

- The Turkish Statistical Institute determined the inflation rate in December as 13.58 percent. Thus, the annual inflation rose to 36.08 percent, reaching the highest level in the last 19 years.
- The Turkish Lira- US. Dollar exchange rate parity continues its upward trend in the new year as well. After the announcement of the Foreign Currency Indexed Deposit System as well as interventions from the Central Bank, the rate fell from 18 levels to 11 and closed 2021 around 12 Turkish Liras. However, the rate is around 14 Turkish Liras once again, in the first week of the new year.
- Meanwhile, the Central Bank's net foreign exchange reserves fell to \$8.3 billion, the lowest level in the last 20 years. When swaps are not taken into account, the actual amount is -54.6 Billion dollars.
- President Erdoğan, who does not hesitate to boast about his economic knowledge at every opportunity and claims that the economy is gaining momentum, has now started to threaten those who criticize his economic policies. Describing the bad course of the economy as an "unpleasant event" at the meeting of the Provincial Chairmen of his party, Erdoğan targeted the opposition and said, *"They say they will take to the streets without shame or hesitation. As the People's Alliance, we will put you all before us and chase you to your destination. We know how to speak the language they understand."*
- Muhammed Eren Sütçü, who attacked the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Bahçelievler District Organization with a knife and gun, was released by the Istanbul 3rd Criminal Court of Peace, to which he was transferred with a request for arrest. The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) reacted to his release with the words, *"This decision is an indication that the killers were patted on the back and the aggressors were encouraged."*
- A petition, entitled, "[A call from 1000 women for Freedom for Aysel Tuğluk](#)" was launched for the release of former Parliament Member Aysel Tuğluk, whose execution was not postponed despite the Kocaeli University report stating, "she cannot stay in prison", after she was diagnosed with dementia. The Ministry of Justice did not allow Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli Parliament member and medical doctor Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu to visit Tuğluk, after he brought up rights violations in prisons.
- It has been revealed that Arif Yıldırım, one of the inspectors assigned to the inspection initiated by the Interior Ministry regarding the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, is a candidate for parliamentary elections from the Justice and Development Party (AKP).

- The increase in the number of daily cases in the pandemic continued exponentially throughout the week. The daily number of patients reached 70 thousand, reaching the highest figures recorded during the pandemic. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced that the quarantine period for positive cases in Turkey has been reduced to 7 days.
- The recommendation of "pre-school religious education" was among the recommendations of the 20th National Education Council, which gathered after a 7-year hiatus. The recommendation caused controversy, and the government based its decision on providing religious education to children aged 4-6 on reasons of "national security". Justice and Development Party (AKP) Spokesperson Ömer Çelik defended the Quran courses for young children, saying, "Turkey's religious education is extremely strategic in terms of Turkey's national security."
- The protests initiated by Boğaziçi University academics and students demanding an "autonomous" and "democratic university" against the trustee rector appointed by President Erdoğan, have completed [their first year](#).
- According to the news compiled by [bianet](#) from local and national newspapers, news websites and agencies; men killed at least 34 women and 4 children and raped 7 women in December. According to the data of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, in Turkey, which withdrew from the Istanbul Convention last year with the decision of Erdoğan at midnight, 280 women were killed and 217 women were found suspiciously dead.
- On January 2, 2017, 11 Turkish Ground Services (TGS) employees who attempted to lynch fashion designer Barbaros Şansal on the Atatürk Airport apron were acquitted in the case at Bakırköy 26 Criminal Court of First Instance!



Our weekly video program, “[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...



47 journalists sentenced to 133-year imprisonment in 2021

According to the data shared by the Dicle Fırat Journalists Association, 61 journalists were detained and 6 journalists were arrested in 2021. In a one-year period, 54 journalists were investigated and 51 journalists were prosecuted.

In the concluded cases, 47 journalists were sentenced to a total of 133 years, 8 months and 21 days in prison and a fine of 72,206 Turkish Liras. In 2021, 55 journalists were attacked, 23 journalists faced torture and ill-treatment, 102 journalists were prevented from following news information. In addition, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) issued 59 fines against channels in a one-year period, 12 of which were broadcasting fines, the Press Advertisement Institute issued 4 newspapers a total of 115 days of advertising penalties and 112 broadcast bans, 64 websites were blocked, and access to 1460 news was banned. [Please click here](#) for details.



67 journalists face 1334-year imprisonment in December

According to the data of the December 2021 report prepared as part of the Cost of News project, carried out with the support of the Turkish Journalists' Association, 67 journalists stood trial in the one-month period. In 6 concluded cases, 8 journalists were sentenced

to 14 years, 8 months and 15 days in prison. The 9-month prison sentence issued to one journalist was commuted to a fine of 4,500 Turkish Liras. 25 of the journalists on trial were acquitted. While at least 11 journalists and media workers were detained, new cases were opened against 7 journalists and new investigations were opened against 3 journalists. [Please click here](#) for details.



Journalist detained twice in one day

Mesopotamia Agency Editor-In-Chief Ferhat Çelik was detained from his home in Şişli, Istanbul, due to the news shared on the agency's YouTube channel. The journalist was charged with "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" within the scope of an investigation initiated by the Antep Chief

Public Prosecutor's Office and was later released by the Criminal Judicature of Peace with a travel ban against him. Çelik, who left the courthouse, was soon detained once again, this time within the scope of another investigation opened against him at the request of the Ankara Security Directorate's Anti-Terror Unit. Again, the journalist was charged due to a news broadcast in the Mezopotamya Agency and was released from the Mecidiyeköy District Police Department after testifying.



Investigation against HDP MP Gergerlioğlu

An investigation has been launched against Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli Parliament Member Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu on allegations of "insulting the state and its bodies", "attempting to influence the lawsuit expert" and "praising the crime and the

criminal" following the post he shared on social media about Aysel Tuğluk. Gergerlioğlu called for the release of former Parliament Member Aysel Tuğluk after she was diagnosed with dementia and was not released despite a medical report from Kocaeli University stating that she "cannot stay in prison", and said, "We have a demand for justice for Aysel Tuğluk as soon as possible. Let the persecution end, and let justice take place. Aysel Tuğluk must be released!"



Lawsuit against actor İlyas Salman

A lawsuit was filed against actor İlyas Salman for "insulting the state" (in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code - TCK) due to a video he shared on social media. Making a statement to Yol TV in January 2021, Salman criticized the Presidential culture and arts awards and said, "If Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave me an award, even if it was the biggest

award in the world, and put mountains of money next to it, I would not go and get an award from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Because he already got the award with the votes of mindless people, but he misused that award." The actor faced an imprisonment sentence for up to 2 years because of the video in which he says these. Salman will stand trial at the Anatolian Criminal Court of First Instance in March.



Journalists prosecuted over news on torture

The final hearing of the lawsuit filed against journalists Adnan Bilen, Cemil Uğur, Şehriban Abi, Nazan Sala and Zeynep Durgut after they reported on the torture of two citizens in Van, who were detained by soldiers and thrown off a helicopter in Van, was held at the Van 5th Assize Court. As the journalists were acquitted

of the charge of "terrorist organization membership", the court sentenced Nazan Sala to 1 year and 3 months in prison for "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" and deferred the announcement of the verdict. Four of the journalists were arrested in October 2020, three days after they were detained in a raid against their home following the news; they were released at the first hearing on April 2.



Protesters of attack against HDP building detained

The police intervened in the statement that Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Parliament members, party members and administrators wanted to make in Şirinevler Square to protest the attack against the Bahçelievler District Organization building. Claiming that the protest was banned with a district governorate decree,

the police exerted violence against many party members and detained them.



Police attack against ill prisoner families over marching to Justice Ministry

The families of detainees came to Ankara to take initiatives for the treatment and release of their ill relatives in prison and wanted to march to the Ministry of Justice after attending the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) parliamentary group meeting, and they were attacked by the police as they were making a statement to the journalists at the exit of the

Parliament. Relatives of ill detainees were beaten and forced away from the Parliament building.



First immunity files of the year

40 more immunity files against 28 deputies, including Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Pervin Buldan, were submitted to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) with claims of revocation of their Parliamentary immunities. Among the deputies whose immunity is requested to be lifted are Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) members, as well as Turkish Workers' Party

(TİP) Hatay Parliament Member Barış Atay, Republican People's Party (CHP) Istanbul Parliament Member Sezgin Tanrikulu and Democratic Regions Party (DBP) Co-Chair and Diyarbakır Parliament Member Salihe Aydeniz.



Boğaziçi case

The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against 14 Boğaziçi University students, including Berke Gök and Perit Özen, who were arrested after being detained during the protests against appointed rector Prof. Naci İnci, was held at the Istanbul 22nd Criminal Court of First Instance on charges such as "participating in illegal meetings and demonstrations" and "resisting to prevent duty". The second hearing was

scheduled for March 21.



Investigation against students over organising forum on economic crisis

Akdeniz University Rectorate launched a disciplinary investigation against students who wanted to create a forum to draw attention to the economic crisis. The students were accused by the Rectorate of "performing an unauthorized sit-in protest"(!). Previously, the

students had gathered to organize a forum in the Akdeniz University campus on December 16, but were prevented from doing so by the private security and the police. Afterwards, the students held a sit-in protest against this arbitrary attitude.



Nol-pros for journalist Özgül

A verdict of non-prosecution was issued for Pir News Agency (PIRHA) Izmir reporter Ersin Özgül, who was accused of "terrorist organization membership" within the scope of the Diyarbakır-based Democratic Society Congress (DTK) investigation. The journalist has been detained in Izmir in May as part of the

investigation.



Case against cameraman Rojhat Doğru

The final hearing of the lawsuit filed against Geli Kurdistan TV ex-cameraman Rojhat Doğru for participating in the demonstrations he was following for news information, was held at Diyarbakır 8th Assize Court. The court unanimously sentenced the journalist to life imprisonment for "disrupting the unity and the

territorial integrity of the state", with an additional 10 years and 10 months of imprisonment for "attempting of deliberate homicide" as well as 1 year and 3 months of imprisonment for "making propaganda for a terrorist organization". The court deferred the imprisonment sentence issued against Doğru on the charge of "propaganda" and issued an arrest warrant against Doğru.



Cemil Kırbayır Case abated on statute of limitations

In the investigation conducted against Cemil Kırbayır, who disappeared on October 8, 1980 under custody right after the military coup of September 12, 1980, Kars Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued a verdict of

non-prosecution on the grounds of statute of limitations. Meeting with the Saturday Mothers, including Mother Berfo of Cemil Kırbayır on February 5, 2011, Prime Minister of the time Recep Tayyip Erdoğan promised the mothers to follow the fate of those who disappeared under custody. Mother Berfo died in 2013 before finding her son's body. The Ministry of Justice gave a defense to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the ongoing Cemil Kırbayır case and said, "The case should be dropped because his mother also died."



Administrative Court: "There is neglect in Ankara Train Station Massacre"

The Ankara 15th Administrative Court complied with the Constitutional Court decree based on the report of the civil inspectors, that the administration was at fault at the level of negligence in the October 10, 2015 Ankara Train Station Massacre and accepted the moral compensation request in the lawsuit filed by Abdül Kadir Ünlü, who was injured in the

massacre. The decision is the first administrative judicial decree to admit that the state was at fault in the Ankara Massacre.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

<u>Contemporary Lawyers Association Case</u>	<u>Caner Taşpınar Case</u>
<p>The lawsuit filed against 22 Contemporary Lawyers Association member lawyers, including Chairman Selçuk Kozağaçlı and member Barkın Timtik, on charges of "terrorist organization membership"...</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 18th Assize Court Verdict: Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) Chairman Selçuk Kozağaçlı and member Barkın Timtik have been under detainment for more than five years. Deciding for the arrest of the two lawyers to continue, the court adjourned the hearing to March 23.</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against OdaTV Editor Caner Taşpınar on charges of "insulting" the former Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey İsmail Kahraman and Justice and Development Party (AKP) Parliament Member Ali İhsan Arslan for his book, "The Bridegroom: The Father-in-laws of Fethullah Supporters"...</p> <p>Court: Istanbul 11th Criminal Court of First Instance Verdict: The case was adjourned to January 25.</p>

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

<u>Case Against Boğaziçi Protests</u>	<u>Yavuz Ekinci Case</u>
--	---------------------------------

<p>The lawsuit filed against 97 students, who were detained during the protests against the trustee rector appointed to Boğaziçi University on February 1, 2021, on charges of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations"...</p> <p>January 10, Monday at Istanbul 32nd Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against writer Yavuz Ekinci, who was accused of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" for his Newroz and Kobani themed messages he shared on his social media account...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Istanbul 34th Assize Court</p>
<p><u>MA Reporters Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against Mesopotamia Agency reporter journalists Sadiye Eser and Sadık Topaloğlu on charges of "terrorist organization membership"...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Istanbul 22nd Assize Court</p>	<p><u>Selman Keleş Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against Dicle News Agency reporter Selman Keleş on the charge of "terrorist organization membership" due to his journalistic activities presented as evidence in the case file...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Van 5th Assize Court</p>
<p><u>Zaman Daily Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against Mümtazer Türköne, Şahin Alpay, Ali Bulaç and Mehmet Özdemir, whose verdicts in the Zaman Daily Case were overturned by the Supreme Court of Appeals...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Istanbul 13th Assize Court</p>	<p><u>Rüstem Batum Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Rüstem Batum on the charge of "insulting the President"...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Istanbul 41st Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p><u>Iskender Kahraman Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Iskender Kahraman on charges of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" because of his articles on the Afrin operation published in Yüksekova Haber...</p> <p>January 11, Tuesday at Hakkari Assize Court</p>	<p><u>Ruken Demir Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against Mesopotamia Agency reporter Ruken Demir with the allegation of "terrorist organization membership" on the grounds of his interviews with news sources...</p> <p>January 12, Wednesday at Izmir 9th Assize Court</p>
<p><u>Izmir Boğaziçi Protests Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against 7 people, who were detained during the Boğaziçi University protests held in Izmir on February 5, on charges of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations" and "insulting a public official"...</p> <p>January 13, Thursday at Izmir 27th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>	<p><u>"Unauthorised" Case</u></p> <p>The lawsuit filed against street artist with the alias, "Unauthorised" on charges of "insulting the Turkish flag" and "insulting the President" due to their drawings and Twitter posts...</p> <p>January 13, Thursday at Istanbul 20th Criminal Court of First Instance</p>

Journalist Rojda Oğuz Case

The lawsuit filed against 55 people, including journalist Rojda Oğuz, was held at the Van 4th Assize Court on charges of "terrorist organization membership" and "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" due to their press statements, protests and social media posts...

January 13, Thursday at Van 4th Assize Court