

# Think, think...



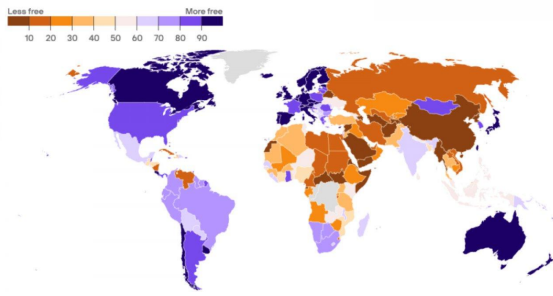
## Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 39/23 - October 6, 2023)

### What happened last week?

- A bomb attack was organized around 09:30 in front of the entrance gate of the Turkish National Police Headquarters. It was announced that one of the 2 attackers detonated the explosive on his body and the other attacker was killed by the police teams. 2 police officers were wounded in the incident. Ankara Criminal Judicature of Peace on Duty issued an access ban and publication ban on news reports about the attack. PKK's armed force People's Protection Center (HPG) claimed responsibility for the attack.
- Following the attack, detention operations were launched against HDP. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said, "All infrastructure, superstructure facilities and energy facilities belonging to the PKK and YPG, especially in Iraq and Syria, are now the legitimate targets of our security forces, armed forces and intelligence elements. I advise third parties to stay away from PKK/YPG facilities and individuals."
- Turkish Armed Forces have increased airstrikes on areas controlled by the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that at least 10 people were killed in airstrikes on various locations in Hasakah province.
- In his speech at the opening ceremony of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT), President Erdoğan said "I invite all parties and their MPs, all social segments, all those who have words and proposals on this issue to join our call for a new constitution with a constructive understanding".
- It was announced that the 60th Golden Orange Film Festival, which was at the center of censorship debates, was canceled.
- The Büyük Aile Platform, which organizes hate rallies, submitted a petition to the Parliament asking for the "closure of LGBT organizations" to be discussed in the Constitutional amendment negotiations. The Homeland Party also prepared a law proposal that envisages criminal sanctions against those who target LGBTI+ people.
- In September, inflation increased by 61.53 percent according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) and 130.13 percent according to the Inflation Research Group (ENAG).
- The average cost of living for a family of four in Istanbul increased by 4.62% in September compared to the previous month and by 79.42% compared to the same month of the previous year to 44,561 liras, according to the Istanbul Planning Agency (IPA), affiliated to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.
- President Erdoğan's Protection Department spent 693 million 420 thousand 840 liras in the first eight months of the year. Erdoğan's daily protection cost was 2.8 million liras, equivalent to 245 minimum wages.
- The parliamentary proceedings to lift the immunity of eight deputies, including CHP's Sezgin Tanrikulu, reached the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

- Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said, "Covid-19 is a disease that will be fought just like how the flu is now being fought. Measures such as a mass vaccination campaign or closure will never be implemented."
- Lawyer Eren Baskın, the son of Mecit Baskın, announced that the statute of limitations on the murder of his father expired as of September 30, 2023.
- METU Alumni Association announced that its chairman Baki Arslan was banned from entering the school campus until 2090. During the orientation days at Boğaziçi University, student clubs and societies were subjected to pressure and intervention by the school administration and security units.

Freedom in the World index, 2023



"countries where the internet is not free", ranked behind countries such as Rwanda, Sudan, Iraq and Libya. According to the report, 2023 was Turkey's worst year ever in terms of internet freedoms.

### Freedom House releases 2022 Internet Freedom report

The US-based think tank Freedom House published the ["Freedom on the Net 2023"](#) report, which evaluates internet freedom around the world. The report noted that the global internet freedom index has been declining uninterruptedly for 13 years, and this year Turkey, which is in the category of



### Journalist Ayşenur Arslan detained

An investigation was launched against journalist Ayşenur Arslan for "terrorist organization propaganda" and "praising the crime and the criminal" after she expressed suspicions about the attack on the Ankara Security Headquarters in her show on Halk TV. The journalist, who was targeted for her statements in the program, was detained and Halk TV terminated Arslan's program Medya

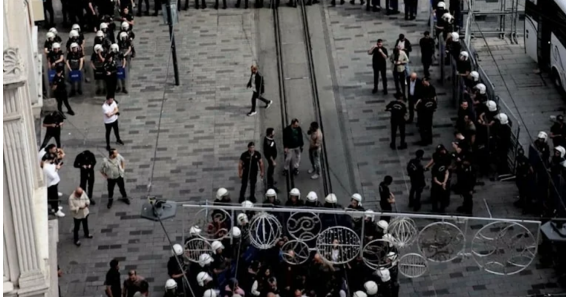
Mahallesi. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed an administrative fine and five program suspensions on the channel.



### Journalist Merdan Yanardağ sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in prison

The trial of the channel's Editor-in-Chief Merdan Yanardağ, who was arrested due to his statements about the isolation of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in the program "4 Questions 4 Answers" broadcast on TELE1 channel, started at Istanbul 30th High Criminal Court on charges of "making illegal organization

propaganda" and "praising crime and criminal". The journalist, who had been under arrest for 101 days, was sentenced to 2 years and 6 months in prison and released.



### **Saturday Mothers detained again**

Despite the Constitutional Court's decision on the violation of the Constitutional Court's ruling, the ban imposed by the district governor's office on the protests of the Saturday Mothers, which they have been organizing for 28 years to ask for the fate of their relatives who disappeared in detention and for the perpetrators to be tried, continues.

The police attacked the protest this week as well, beating and detaining 26 rights defenders. On the other hand, the Governorate of Van did not let this week pass by idle, again declaring a protest ban before the protest to be organized in the city in solidarity with the Saturday Mothers.



### **Journalists on trial for gendarmerie entering the frame acquitted**

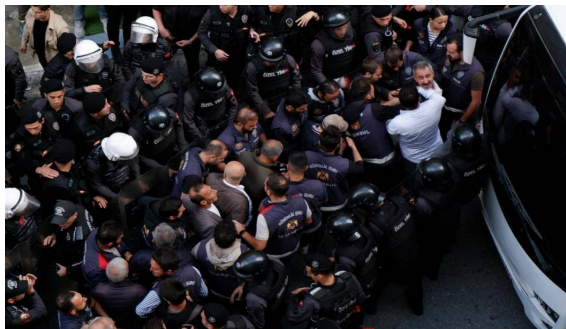
The lawsuit filed against journalists Firat Can Arslan and Dilan Babat, who were detained while covering the funeral of slain journalist and writer Nagihan Akarsel, due to "targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism" at Konya 4th High Criminal Court concluded with an acquittal.



### **Party executives on trial over poster acquitted**

The case against Labour Party (EMEP) Rize Provincial Chairman Hasan Zorlucan and Fındıklı District Executive Kamil Çavuşoğlu, who were charged with "publicly disseminating misleading information to the public" for posters criticizing the government for the measures not taken during the earthquake, was

concluded with an acquittal at Pazar (Rize) 1st Criminal Court of First Instance.



### **Protesters detained for protesting detention operation**

The police prevented the mass gathered in front of the party's provincial office in Beyoğlu, Istanbul to protest the detention of Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) executives in house raids from making a press statement and attacked the crowd, detaining 10 people.



### Students detained for protesting hikes

Eight students were beaten and detained after protesting against the tripling of food prices at Dokuz Eylül University cafeteria.



### ECHR rules on freedom of expression violations

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that the convictions of two people who called Erdoğan a "thief" and said "Long live Öcalan" in social media posts violated Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.



## TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The lawsuit filed against 8 union executives, including Health and Social Service Workers' Union (SES) Co-Chair Selma Atabey and former Co-Chair Gönül Erden, due to "illegal organization membership" and "making illegal organization propaganda"...

**Court:** Ankara 22nd High Criminal Court  
**Verdict:** The next hearing will be held on December 20.

The lawsuit filed against Ramazan Ölçen, the concessionaire of the shuttered Azadiya Welat newspaper, due to "being an illegal organization member"...

**Court:** Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court  
**Verdict:** The next hearing will be held on February 14.

The lawsuit filed against documentary director Sibel Tekin due to "illegal organization membership" after she was reported and arrested while shooting for her documentary "Life Starting in Darkness" about the permanent daylight saving time...

**Court:** Ankara 26th High Criminal Court  
**Verdict:** The next hearing will be held on December 5th.

The retrial of Ayşegül Doğan, the Program Coordinator of İMC TV and the presenter of the program "Gündem Müzakere" (Gündem Müzakere), who was convicted of "illegal organization membership" due to her interviews with the executives of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) and the events she participated in as a journalist, after the Court of Appeal's reversal...

**Court:** Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court



	<b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on December 11th.
<p>The lawsuit filed against 15 people including Democratic Modernity magazine editor Haydar Ergül, journalist Ahmet Birsin, Jineoloji magazine employee Şeyma Kantarcı, Democratic Modernity magazine editor Haydar Ergül, journalist Ahmet Birsin, Jineoloji magazine employee Şeyma Kantarcı and HDP members and executives who were detained during house raids in İstanbul on 28 July 2017...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 22nd High Criminal Court <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on December 19.</p>	<p>"Non-existence lawsuit" filed against Tarlabası Community Center Association by the Governorship of Istanbul on the grounds that "it has become impossible for the association to fulfill its purpose"...</p> <p><b>Court:</b> Istanbul 8th Civil Court of Peace <b>Verdict:</b> The next hearing will be held on May 14.</p>

### HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

<p>Since 2006, Tarlabası Community Center has been working to solve the social and economic problems of Tarlabası residents and has been the target of smear campaigns that include ethnic discrimination and homophobic hatred...</p> <p><b>Monday, October 9, Istanbul 18th Civil Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against Sözcü daily columnist İsmail Saymaz, who was charged with "insulting" and "targeting people involved in the fight against terrorism" for his articles titled "The wife of the AK Party judge in the Gezi Trial was a FETÖ confessor" and "The wife of the Gezi Park judge turned out to be a FETÖ suspect"...</p> <p><b>Tuesday, October 10, Istanbul 24th High Criminal Court</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Bianet editor Evrim Kepenek, who was charged with "insult" for her news reports on Refik Y., who was arrested for abusing his 6-year-old child and later released on judicial control conditions...</p> <p><b>Tuesday, October 10, Izmir Selçuk Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 11 members of the party's Central Executive Committee at the time due to "insulting the state" for HDP's April 24, 2021 statement titled "Face the shame of the Armenian Genocide!"...</p> <p><b>October 11, Wednesday, Ankara 48th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against 100 people, including journalist Zilan Azad, who were detained during the demonstration organized in Kadıköy, Istanbul on September 1, World Peace Day in 2022, due to "violating Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations"...</p> <p><b>October 11, Wednesday, Istanbul Anadolu 17th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 6 people including rights defender Aytül Uçar, who were detained during the protest organized in Izmir on February 3, 2021, against the appointment of a trustee rector to Boğaziçi University, on the charges of "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No 2911", "insult" and "resisting to prevent duty"...</p> <p><b>October 11, Wednesday, Izmir 49th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>

<p>The lawsuit filed against the members and executives of the Migration Monitoring Association (GÖÇİZDER), who are accused of "membership of an illegal organization" due to the activities of the association, statements made and reports prepared...</p> <p><b>October 12, Thursday, Istanbul 26th High Criminal Court</b></p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 3 women, including Labor Party Istanbul Provincial Chair Sema Barbaros, for attending a forum in Beşiktaş on the Istanbul Convention...</p> <p><b>Thursday, October 12, Istanbul 47th Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Hayko Bağdat due to "insulting the President" on the grounds of the statements he made on Bugün TV broadcast in 2015...</p> <p><b>October 12, Thursday, Istanbul 51st Criminal Court of First Instance</b></p>	<p>The retrial of Özgür Gündem Editors-in-Chief on Duty Şebnem Korur Fincancı, Erol Önderoğlu and Ahmet Nesin, whose acquittals were overturned by the Court of Appeal...</p> <p><b>October 12, Thursday, Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court</b></p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Eylül Deniz Yaşar, who was charged with "making illegal organization propaganda" for a protest she followed as a journalist...</p> <p><b>Thursday, October 12, Ankara 4th High Criminal Court</b></p>	