



Think, think...

Freedom of Expression Weekly Bulletin

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What happened last week?

*** President Erdoğan continued to target and threaten the opposition with the “*judiciary*.” “*Taggings*” were served to media institutions on candidates of the opposition.

*** The ruling party established its local election strategy on “*survival*” and “*terrorism*”; announcing that even if candidates of the opposition would win, they would not let them execute. “*As soon as the elections are over, we will take the steps,*” Erdoğan said. “*I will suspend them at once,*” the Interior Minister said.

*** The status of Hagia Sophia has also been made an argument for the ruling party’s election campaign. Erdoğan made various statements on the matter during the week; his latest statement was that the museum could be turned into a mosque.

*** The hunger strike started by Leyla Güven on November 8th with a demand to end the isolation against PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan spread into all prisons. Five inmates ended their lives “*to protest the isolation.*” PKK made a call against individual protests.

*** Fluctuations in the currency exchange rate between the Turkish Lira and the US Dollar can not be prevented. Central Bank increased foreign exchange and TL swap sale limits from 20 to 30 percent. However, the fluctuations in the currency could not be prevented. Net reserves of the Central Bank experienced a meltdown of ten million within the past month and decreased to \$24.7 billion.

*** Erdoğan threatened the financial sector and stated that those taking “*provocative*” actions in order for the US Dollar and Euro to increase in exchange rate will pay a “*heavy price.*”

*** Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK) and Capital Markets Board (CMB) started an investigation against JP Morgan, the largest investment bank in the world, after their report predicting that the Turkish Lira will depreciate more in value.

*** Human Rights Watch stated that Erdoğan and the ruling party must end baseless accusations regarding the Gezi Park Case and demanded for all accusations, which consider the protests as a coup attempt, to be abated.

*** As the number of convicted “*Peace Academics*” reached 167, 1880 scientists, including world-renowned names, reprimanded the prosecutions against the academics and called the international society to end collaborations with institutions and universities deliberately targeting academic freedom in Turkey. For details; <https://goo.gl/JmM3sh>

*** Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) announced the unemployment rate for 2018 as 11 percent. The number has increased by 83 thousand compared to the year 2017 and reached 3 million 537 thousand.



“Peace Academics” on trial

Ten more “*Peace Petition*” signatory academics were convicted due to “making illegal organization propaganda.” The academics were sentenced to imprisonment from 1 year and three months to 2 years and six months; the sentences against three were not deferred. The announcements of other verdicts were deferred. Thus, the number of academics

convicted so far due to the petition has reached 167 and the sentences against 31 were not deferred. The appeal process against one sentence was also completed and the sentence was finalised. You may find the data compiled by the Academics for Peace Initiative on the prosecutions on <https://goo.gl/KGktHa>.



Journalist Kemal Özer sentenced to 6-year 3-month imprisonment

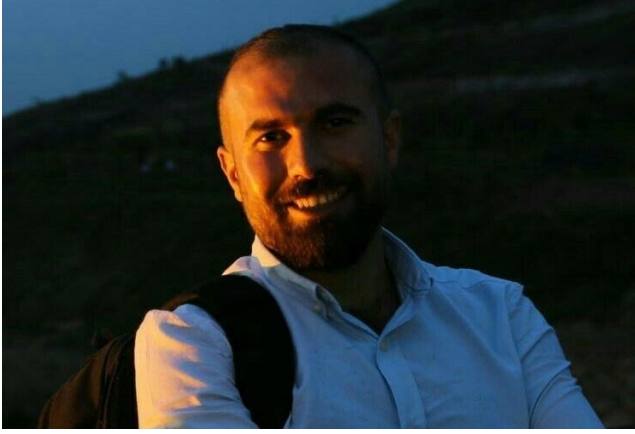
Journalist Kemal Özer, who was on trial at Tunceli 1st Assize Court with the allegation of “*illegal organization membership*” was sentenced to 6 years and three months of imprisonment. Özer had been arrested within the file on September 4, 2017; remaining in prison for 16 months.



Imprisonment sentence against journalist İshak Karakaş due to social media posts

Ten people, including journalist İshak Karakaş, were convicted due to “making illegal organization propaganda” through their social media posts criticising the Afrin operation. Istanbul 28th Assize Court sentenced the defendants to imprisonment from 1 year and three months up to 1 year, 6 months and 22

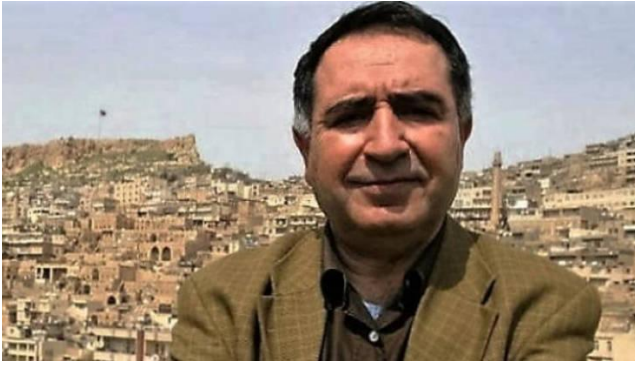
days; deferring the announcement of the verdicts.



Imprisonment sentence against journalist Lezgin Akdeniz due to “illegal organization propaganda”

Mezopotamya Agency (MA) reporter Lezgin Akdeniz was convicted in the first hearing of the lawsuit filed against him. Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court sentenced the journalist to 1 year and three months of imprisonment due to “*making illegal organization propaganda*” through his

social media “likes” and issued his acquittal of the charge of “*illegal organization membership.*” The announcement of the verdict was deferred.



Imprisonment sentence against author Bülent Tekin due to social media posts

Author Bülent Tekin, who was on trial due to his social media posts, was sentenced to 1 year and eight months of imprisonment. Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court deferred the announcement of the verdict.



Lawsuit against DISK Chair Arzu Çerkezoğlu

A lawsuit was filed against Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) Chair Arzu Çerkezoğlu due to “*public incitement towards resentment and hostility*” through her speech during the panel, “*Where Is Turkey Going?*” organized by Republican People’s Party (CHP) Sapanca District Organization in 2016. The first hearing of the case will be held on April 2, 2019 on Tuesday at

Sapanca Courthouse, starting at 09:45.



Investigation against CHP Group Deputy Chairman Engin Altay

An investigation was opened against Republican People's Party (CHP) Group Deputy Chairman and Istanbul MP Engin Altay with the allegations, “insulting the President,” “insulting a public officer due to his duty” and “threat” through his

speech during the show, “Political Agenda” broadcasted on Karadeniz TV on March 26th.



Lawsuit against news on “Paradise Papers” abated

The lawsuit filed against journalist Pelin Ünker, who was on trial at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance due to “slander through press” related to the news she reported on “Paradise Papers” was abated due to the lawsuit being filed later than the required four-month period in accordance with the Press Code.



LGBTI+ event banned at METU

Middle East Technical University (METU) Rectorate did not give permission for the discourse to be organized by Social Gender Studies Community under the title, “A Different Family is Possible,” due to the

“connection between rainbows and LGBTI.”



Opposition candidates shown guilty through government hand

Days before the local elections, candidates from parties of the opposition are continuously being targeted and threatened with the “judiciary” by government authorities, especially Erdoğan. Pro-government media

institutions further broadcasted news against the candidates, which could be considered “tagging.” Open names, photos and intelligence information recorded by the government of 325 people, who became candidates with no legal prevention, were reported by the media in their official form. Information on legal events and programmes participated in by candidates of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), Good (İYİ) Party, and Felicity Party; as well as names of relatives of the candidates were listed in an accusing manner. Information was revealed on each specific candidate on different activities like visiting a relative/friend who is arrested due to illegal organization membership, having a relative who is an illegal organization member, participating in legal party congresses and being association members.



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

- The second session of the fifteenth hearing of the lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Taraf Daily’s executives and reporter Mehmet Baransu due to “partial or complete destruction, stealing, secretly obtaining and revealing of documents on the security as well as the internal or foreign political benefits of state” was held at Istanbul 13th Assize court. The court issued for Mehmet Baransu to remain arrested and scheduled the next hearing to July 10-11, 2019 to start at 10:00.
- The sixth hearing of the lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter Ziya Ataman, who is arrested in remand within the case for about three years, was held at Şırnak 1st Assize Court. Ataman was not released and the next hearing was scheduled to May 28, 2019.
- The fourth hearing of the lawsuit filed against photo reporter Çağdaş Erdoğan, who was detained in September 2017 with the allegation that he took photographs of the social facilities belonging to the National Intelligence Agency, due to “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda” was held at Istanbul 33rd Assize Court. The next hearing was scheduled to May 7, 2019 at 13:30.
- The fifth hearing of the lawsuit filed against ten people, including Halkın Nabzı Daily owner and journalist Ishak Karataş, due to “making illegal organization propaganda” was held at Istanbul 28th Assize Court. The court sentenced two defendants to 1 year and three months of imprisonment due to “making illegal organization propaganda” and eight defendants, including Karakaş, to 1 year, 6 months and 22 days of imprisonment each due to “successive illegal organization propaganda.” The announcement of the verdicts were deferred.
- The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against Evrensel reporter Cansu Pişkin with the allegation of “targeting a public officer for terrorist organizations” was held at Istanbul 36th Assize Court. The lawyers requested extra time to prepare the defense statements, therefore the court scheduled the next hearing to May 7, 2019 at 16:00.
- The fourth hearing of the lawsuit filed against four people, including Etkin News Agency (ETHA) editor Semiha Şahin and reporter Pınar Gayip, due to “terrorist organization membership” and “making terrorist organization propaganda” was held at Istanbul 23rd Assize Court. All defendants were arrested in remand. The court issued for Gayip and Şahin to remain arrested and for the judicial measures against İmre and Pehlivan to remain, scheduling the next hearing to June 13, 2019 to start at 13:30.
- The fifth hearing of the lawsuit filed against journalists Sibel Hürtaş and Hayri Demir due to their social media posts and news on the Afrin operation was held at Ankara 15th Assize Court. The next hearing was scheduled to July 3, 2019 at 11:30.

- The seventh hearing of the lawsuit filed against Evrensel Daily's Dersim reporter Kemal Özer due to "terrorist organization membership" was held at Tunceli 1st Assize Court. The court sentenced Özer to 6 years and three months of imprisonment. The verdict will be appealed for correction.
- The twelfth hearing of the lawsuit filed against previously shut-down Özgür Gündem Daily workers and executives, Eren Keskin, Hüseyin Aykol, Reyhan Çapan, Filiz Koçali, Ayşe Berktaş, Nuray Özdoğan, Celalettin Can, Ayşe Batumlu, Reyhan Hacıoğlu due to "making terrorist organization propaganda" was held at Istanbul 14th Assize Court. The next hearing was scheduled to May 8, 2019.
- Prosecutions of Faruk Eren, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, İhsan Çaralan, Fehim Işık, Öncü Akgül, Celalettin Can, Hüseyin Aykol, Ömer Ağın, Veysel Kemer, Dilşah Karakaya and Yüksel Oğuz; who are on trial due to "making illegal organization propaganda" through participating in the Substitute Editing-In-Chief of Özgür Gündem Daily, continued at Istanbul 14th Assize Court. The next hearing was scheduled to April 3, 2019 to start at 09:30.
- The prosecution of previously shut-down Özgür Gündem Daily Editors-In-Chief Hüseyin Aykol, Zana Kaya, the newspaper's Managing Editor İnan Kızılkaya and Hatip Dicle; who are on trial due to "public denigration of the government, its judicial bodies and the security organization" as well as "public denigration of the Turkish Nation, the Republic of Turkey and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey" was held at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance. The next hearing was scheduled to May 16, 2019.
- Prosecution of former Cumhuriyet Daily editor Pelin Ünker continued at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance within the lawsuit filed against her by Energy Minister Berat Albayrak, his brother Serhat Albayrak and businessman Ahmet Çalık due to her news on "Paradise Papers." The court issued for the abatement of the case due to time limitation.
- The prosecution of previously shut-down Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter Gökhan Öner, who was on trial due to "terrorist organization membership" and "making terrorist organization propaganda" with an imprisonment claim for up to 20 years, continued at Denizli 2nd Assize Court. The next hearing was scheduled to April 15, 2019 as the Prosecutor did not prepare his opinion on the basis yet.
- The third hearing of the lawsuit filed against artist Ferhat Tunç due to "public incitement towards resentment and hostility" through a social media post on the results of the referendum was held at Istanbul Büyükçekmece 4th Criminal Court of First Instance. The court issued a warrant against Tunç to testify. The next hearing was scheduled to September 18, 2019 to start at 09:15.
- Prosecutions of the academics, who are on trial due to "making terrorist organization propaganda" through signing the "Peace Petition" of the Academics for Peace, continued this week as well. In hearings held at Istanbul 25th, 27th and 33rd Assize Court, six more academics were sentenced to 1 year and three months of imprisonment each and the announcement of the verdicts were deferred. In the hearings held at Istanbul 27th Assize Court, two academics were sentenced to 2 years and six months of imprisonment; the court deferred the announcement of one verdict and for the other sentence to be effective immediately. In the hearings held at Istanbul 25th and 33rd Assize Courts, one academic was sentenced to 2 years and one month of imprisonment, effective immediately; which was different from the general procedure of penalty. Another academic was sentenced to 1 year, 10 months and 15 days of imprisonment and the announcement of the verdict was deferred. Thus, ten more academics were sentenced to imprisonment this week.

HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

- The next hearing of the lawsuit filed against journalist Ertuğrul Mavioğlu and director of “Bakur: A Guerrilla Documentary” due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” will be held on April 3rd, Wednesday at Batman 2nd Assize Court.
- The sixth hearing of the lawsuit filed against Evrensel Daily columnist Yusuf Karataş, who was arrested on July 27, 2017 within the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) investigation due to the workshops, panels, press statements and events he participated in and was released on September 22, 2017 following the objection against his arrest, will be held on April 3rd, Wednesday at Diyarbakır 9th Assize Court with a claim of imprisonment from 15 years up to 22.5 years with the allegation of “establishing and managing an armed terrorist organization.”
- The hearings of the lawsuits filed against Faruk Eren, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, İhsan Çaralan, Fehim Işık, Öncü Akgül, Celalettin Can, Hüseyin Aykol, Ömer Ağın, Veysel Kemer, Dilşah Karakaya and Yüksel Oğuz due to “making illegal organization propaganda” through participating in the Substitute Editing-In-Chief campaign of Özgür Gündem Daily will be held on April 3rd, Wednesday at Istanbul 14th Assize Court, starting at 09:30.
- The next hearing of the lawsuit filed against Cumhuriyet Daily reporters Alican Uludağ and Duygu Güvenç due to the news on the crisis of Pastor Brunson, entitled, “US-type justice,” “As the hostage diplomacy falls” and “Is it the judiciary or the government who holds and releases,” due to “public denigration of judicial bodies of the government” will be held on April 4, Thursday at Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance.
- The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against Middle East Technical University (METU) students due to “insulting the President” through the banner they held during during the graduation ceremony organized last July will be held on April 4th, Thursday at Ankara 11th Criminal Court of First Instance.
- The third hearing of the lawsuit filed against journalist Sertaç Kayar with an imprisonment claim for up to 22.5 years due to the demonstrations, press statements and events he followed as a journalist between the years 2012 and 2014 will be held on April 5th, Friday at Diyarbakır 10th Assize Court.
- Prosecutions of Peace Academics, who are on trial due to “making terrorist organization propaganda” due to signing the “Peace Petition” of the Academics for Peace will continue next week at Istanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan and at other courthouses in provinces for academics residing outside of Istanbul.