



Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in August 2018

*** In the crisis between U.S. and Turkey due to pastor Brunson not being released by Turkish authorities, the U.S. government announced sanctions against Interior Minister Süleyman Soyulu and Justice Minister Abdülhamit Gül. The two ministers were listed within financial sanctions. Trump administration in the U.S. imposed new tariffs against Turkey. Doubling tariffs on steel and aluminum from Turkey; President Trump approved the law that prevents the delivery of F-35s to Turkey. The White House announced that there is no progress on the release of pastor Brunson, and that the Washington administration will keep their strict attitude on this matter.

*** With the tensions between the U.S. and Turkey, the Turkish Lira lost 32 percent value against the U.S. Dollar within the first ten days of August. Exceeding 7.20 TL on the night of August 13th, the rates calmed following precautionary steps by the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK) and the Central Bank. Turkish Lira's fall continued against the U.S. Dollar and Euro, with 22 percent fall against the U.S. Dollar in one month and 40 percent fall since the beginning of the year.

*** President Erdoğan described the situation as an “*economic war*” and “*an attempt to exploit Turkey.*” Stating that the currency drop is being used as a tool, President Erdoğan said, “*This attack against our economy is no different than the attacks against our prayers and flag.*”

*** President Erdoğan called for all Turkish citizens to boycott electronic goods from the U.S. As a retaliation against the tariffs, additional tax rates were increased on imported goods from the U.S. The tax list didn't contain the products Erdoğan called to boycott.

*** Investigations were started against criticisms and news on the economic policies. “*There is economic terror on the social media,*” stated Erdoğan, “*The judiciary is doing what's necessary. This is treason.*”

*** The tax cuts from interests in Turkish Lira deposits were decreased with a Presidential decree, and it was reversely increased in foreign currency deposits.

*** “*The new economic model announced by the Turkish government lacks specific economical strategies,*” said S&P and dropped the foreign credit grade of Turkey from BB- to B+. The status of the grade was announced as “*stable.*” Moody's decreased the grades of 20 banks and financial institutions in Turkey. Immediately after, the Central Bank doubled the loan limits for nightly transactions of banks.

*** The “*Law of Permanent State of Emergency*” was enacted following the approval of President Erdoğan. Applications of State of Emergency were effectively extended for at least three more years. The period of “*super-authorized governors*” started, protests now have a condition “*not to make daily lives of citizens difficult.*”

*** According to the regulatory amendment published on the Official Gazette, governors are now representatives of the President and means of administrative execution in provinces; district governors similarly in districts.

*** A Presidential decree issued a regulation on one roof account in which all financial resources of public administrations will be gathered. The account will be managed by the Minister of Finance and Treasury. Local administrations were also included in the account's resources, even though it violates the principle of autonomy. Thus, the President will be able to take local administrations under control as well through financial means.

*** The 700th week demonstration of the Saturday Mothers was banned with an Interior Ministry decree. The police attacked the Saturday Mothers with tear gas and rubber bullets; MPs were also physically engaged with press members.

*** A group of artists and culture-art workers, rights advocates and businesspeople have gathered on the 300th day of Osman Kavala's arrest and opened a banner that stated, "*We miss [him],*" repeating their wish for Kavala to be released at once. The indictment is still not prepared against Kavala, who was taken into custody on October 18, 2017 and is kept in prison since November 1, 2017.

*** The investigation against Middle East Technical University (METU) students was completed following their arrest due to the cartoon, "*World of Tayyips.*" The students face imprisonment sentences for up to four years. IFEX called for freedom of expression advocates to share the cartoon on the social media to "*tell Turkey that satire is not a crime.*"

*** Amnesty International Turkey Chairman Taner Kılıç, who was arrested for more than a year within the 'Büyükkada Case', was released.

*** The application made by arrested MP Enis Berberoğlu due to obtaining Parliamentary immunity once again after his election as MP was denied by the Court of Appeals. Berberoğlu decided to protest the court verdict by not holding interviews, not using his right to defense during hearings and cutting all interaction with the outside world.

*** IFEX spoke against the legal amendment that allowed the conditions of the State of Emergency to continue in ordinary states as well, saying, "*A permanent state of emergency by any name is no substitute for respecting human rights.*"

*** Meetings of the Reform Action Group restarted after three years of break to prepare a calendar and strategies for the reformations to be made in Turkey on the way to EU membership. Four ministers made announcements following the meeting, making no concrete statements on the criticisms against the supremacy of law, press freedom and human rights. The Minister of Justice defended that Turkey has never made any concessions to the law, stating that applications to the European Court of Human Rights are at a fifteen-year low. However, it's important not to miss the fact that more than 100 thousand violations only during the State of Emergency are stuck in a hope of domestic remedy, following the commission established to resolve objections due to emergency decrees.



Saturday Mothers attacked by police

The 700th week demonstration of "*the Saturday Mothers*" was banned with an order from the Ministry of the Interior.

The Saturday Mothers have been organizing a sit-in protest in front of Galatasaray High School in Beyoğlu, Istanbul since the year 1995 to demand answers to questions on the fate of their relatives who disappeared in custody. The police attacked the Saturday Mothers with the excuse of “provocation”, using tear gas and rubber bullets. MPs were physically engaged with press members as well. 47 were taken into custody.

Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, who gave the attack order, defended the police violence and accused the mothers, who were looking for their children, of serving terrorism. “*We haven’t let them perform the demonstration, that is correct; should we have overlooked the fact that motherhood is being abused by a terrorist organization and made a cover for terrorism?*” Signaling a permanence of the demonstration ban, Soylu spoke on those disappeared in custody as well. “*Did they disappear while hanging out at Eminönü Square?*” asked Soylu. However, European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decrees reveal a totally different reality. According to the April 2017 data of Truth, Justice and Memory Center, Turkey’s responsibility was identified in 114 of the 129 forced disappearances in 61 of 72 applications.

According to the examination made on the legal files of 344 forced disappearances by the Center, the investigation on the disappearances of 218 people was stuck within domestic procedures. The files are seemingly still open, waiting without action. Investigations on 24 people were closed due to “*time limitation.*” In the investigation on 18 people, a verdict of non-prosecution was issued. Only two lawsuits filed on the matter concluded with conviction.

AKP: Saturday Mothers demonstrations no more permitted

Justice and Development Party (AKP) Spokesman Ömer Çelik spoke on the police attack against the 700th week demonstration of the Saturday Mothers. “*Demonstrations in places like the Istiklal Street will never be permitted,*” Çelik said. Accusing the mothers, who demand answers to questions on the fate of their children upon their disappearance in custody years ago, of “making terrorist propaganda,” Çelik claimed that the police attack was “*a measure taken against the Galatasaray Square being turned into a center for terrorist propaganda.*” The right to organize peaceful meeting and demonstration ‘without prior permission’ is protected by Article 34 of the Constitution, whereas Çelik stated that the demonstrations will only be permitted in locations specified by the Governorate.

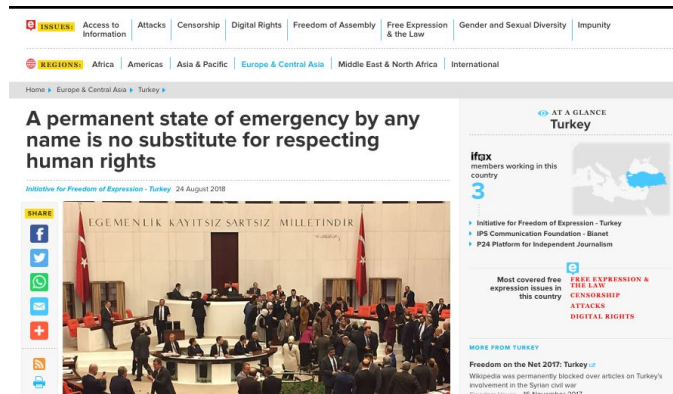
Restrictions on the right to meeting and demonstration

Following such statements from government officials, the Saturday Mothers have faced police prevention once again in their 701st week. All roads leading to the Galatasaray Square from Istiklal Street were blocked with barricades before the demonstration; with a significant part of the Taksim Square also taken under blockade by the police.

However, restrictions did not end there - weekly regular demonstrations organized in Diyarbakır and Batman by relatives of those disappeared in custody were indefinitely banned due to “public safety.” On the other hand, the “Conscience and Justice Watch” performed by families, who lost their relatives in work murders, in Galatasaray Square following the demonstration of the Saturday Mothers was banned with a District Governorate decree due to “national security, public order, prevention of crime, protection of general health, morality and the rights and freedoms of others.”

On the other hand, the “Rights march against savagery” started from Diyarbakır to Cizre by former Democracy Party (DEP) Şırnak MP Mahmut Alınak and Mazlum Çetinkaya to protest against the arrests, torture and rights violations of politicians due to their thoughts was also banned by Diyarbakır Governorate.

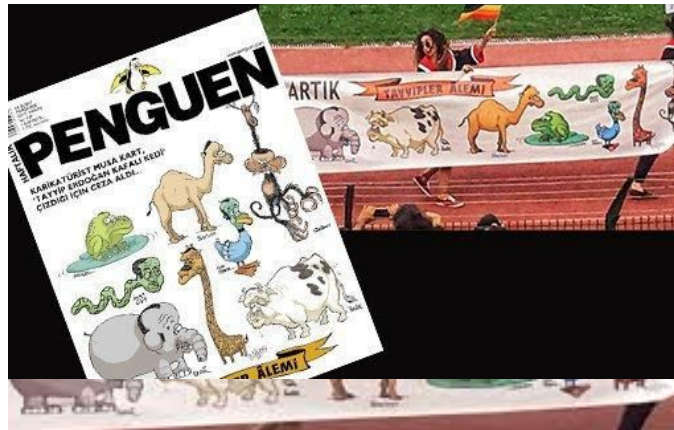
One particular point during these preventions was that some of the ban decrees involved a reference to the authorities assigned to Governors by the new amendment that effectively prolonged the application of the State of Emergency despite the official end of it.



IFEX: A permanent state of emergency by any name is no substitute for respecting human rights

A roof organization for international organizations for freedom of expression IFEX sent a call for their members and suggested a common text that explains

how the State of Emergency in Turkey did not end but rendered permanent through recent legal amendments. More than 40 NGOs signed the text, signaling that a permanent state of emergency by any name is no substitute for respecting human rights. For details; <https://goo.gl/MdKN8E>



Lawsuit against students over cartoon “World of Tayyips”

A lawsuit was filed against four students, who were arrested due to holding a banner depicting the cartoon, “World of Tayyips,” during the graduation ceremony at the Middle East Technical University (METU), as well as against the copy shop owner due to ‘insulting the

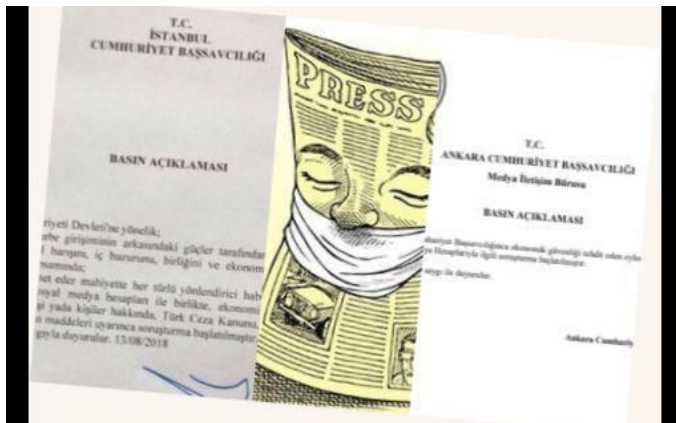
President.’

Accepting the indictment prepared by Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, Ankara 11th Criminal Court of First Instance issued the four students to remain arrested. The first hearing of the case will be held on September 30th. The indictment claimed imprisonment sentences against the students for up to four years each, topped with a one-sixth penalty increase due to the offense having been publicly committed.

IFEX launches campaign for cartoon “World of Tayyips”

A root organization for worldwide advocates of freedom of expression, International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) launched a campaign on the social media for the cartoon, “World of Tayyips”, which led to the arrest of four university students and investigations against Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader and MPs, with the hashtags #WorldofTayyips/#tayıpleralemi.

IFEX pointed out to cartoons being used by the Turkish government as a tool to declare criticism as a crime and invited all advocates of freedom of expression around the world to share the cartoon on the social media “to tell Turkey that satire is not a crime and for solidarity with those under judiciary threat.” In the campaign text, IFEX stated, “Satire aimed at political leaders is a fundamental expression right. We stand with those arrested for sharing the cartoon in Turkey.” Please [click here](#) to join the campaign.



“Currency” investigation against news and social media

Value loss of Turkish Lira continues to accelerate with multiplied sanctions imposed by the US against Turkey, together with the crisis on pastor Brunson and Turkey’s refusal to release him from house imprisonment after the

pastor’s arrest due to espionage. The Lira dropped by 32% in the first 10 days of August.

President Erdoğan described the situation as “an economic war” and “an attempt to exploit Turkey.” Immediately afterwards, Ankara and Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Offices announced an investigation on written and visual media due to “threatening economic security” and “serving economical attacks.” Ministry of the Interior announced investigations opened against 346 social media accounts due to “posting content that provokes the currency drop.”

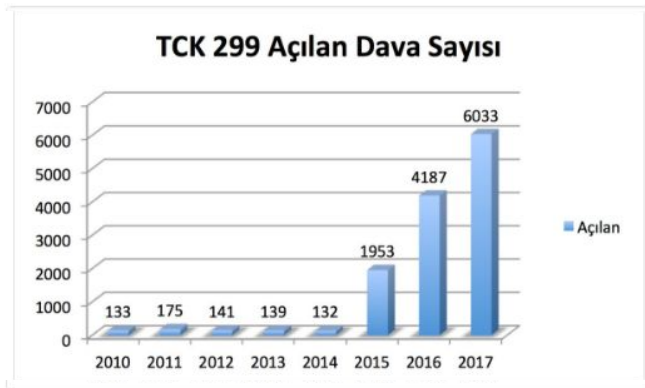
“There is economic terror in the social media,” stated Erdoğan, “The judiciary is doing what’s necessary. This is treason, and we will destroy their homes.” The confederation of progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) Press-Labour Chairman Faruk Eren and Turkish Journalists Association Chairman Gökhan Durmuş indicated that the investigations will not remove neither the damage on press freedom, nor the crisis. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Turkey Representative Erol Önderoğlu wrote on Twitter, indicating “the worry on the targeting of the legitimate role of critical journalism.”

On the other hand, Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) announced that examinations have started against those who report “manipulative news” on the economy; Capital Markets Board (SPK) announced those who “spread” the news that are defined as “wrong, incorrect and misleading” will be penalized.

People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli MP Dr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu carried the investigation on “those who threaten economic security” to the Parliament. The Parliamentary

Question posed by Gergerlioğlu, directed to Vice President Fuat Oktay, asked the legal basis for the crime of “*threatening economic security.*” Wanting to find out how many people the investigations were opened against, Gergerlioğlu stated, “*What did these people share on the social media to threaten economic security?*”

Reacting against the investigations, human rights and press organizations indicated that “*the true manipulation would be to keep news from the reader,*” and stated that the operation is conducted against those who criticize the economic policy of the government and those who express their opinion on the bad economic direction.



12 thousand lawsuits filed due to “insulting President” within seven years

Prof. Dr. Yaman Akdeniz announced 12893 lawsuits filed with the allegation of ‘insulting the President’ within the last seven years (2010-2017) and that 12305 of those cases were filed during the

Presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. According to the data shared by Akdeniz on Twitter, lawsuits were filed against 6033 people in accordance with Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code (Regulating the offense of Insulting the President of Republic) only in 2017; with 2099 files concluding with conviction, 1660 with deferment of the announcement of the verdict and 873 with acquittal.



Amnesty International Turkey Chairman Taner Kılıç released

Istanbul 35th Assize Court issued the release of Amnesty International Turkey Executive Board Chairman and lawyer Taner Kılıç, who was the only arrested defendant in the Büyükada Case.

A release verdict was issued for Kılıç, who was arrested for 431 days, on 31 January 2018; whereas Kılıç was arrested once again without even being able to leave prison following the objection of the Prosecutor. “*We were submitting petitions regularly for more than a year for Kılıç to be released. This time, the verdict was issued in the monthly routine examination,*” Kılıç’s lawyer Murat Dinçer stated.

The file of Kılıç, who was arrested in June 2017 together with 22 colleagues, was merged with the main file of the Büyükada Case in October 2017, with 10 human rights advocates standing trial as defendants. The rights advocates are charged with ‘armed terrorist organization

membership’ and ‘committing offenses on behalf of an illegal organization without being members’ within the case.



Media cases

Pressure against journalists continued in August. According to the August data of the Free Journalists Initiative, four journalists was arrested last month; eight journalists have stood trial within the lawsuits filed against them. Two of those journalists were sentenced to six months of imprisonment each. Here are some of

the headlines from this month:

6-month imprisonment against journalist due to TCK Article 301

Gevaş Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced journalist Hülya Emeç to imprisonment due to ‘public denigration of the security organization’ through her news article, entitled, “*His heart could not take gun pointed to him by the police during house raid.*”

In the lawsuit filed against the journalist related to the news on the death of 48-year-old Şefik Tunuç, who died after a heart-attack followed by police raiding his house in Gevaş district of Van for three times in 2014, Dicle News Agency (DIHA) reporter Emeç and the wife of Tunuç were sentenced to 6 months of imprisonment in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). The court deferred the announcement of the verdict. The agency’s Executive Board Chairman Zekeriya Güzüpek, Editor-In-Chief Dicle Müftüoğlu and Van Office Chief Ferhat Çelik were acquitted after standing trial within the same case.

6-month imprisonment sentence against journalist Oğuz Güven

Istanbul 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance sentenced journalist Oğuz Güven to six months of imprisonment due to ‘provoking the public to hatred and hostility’ through a cartoon he drew and was published on the website of Cumhuriyet Daily.

The newspaper’s columnists Ceyda Karan and Hikmet Çetinkaya have previously been sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment each due to ‘provoking the public to hatred and hostility’ after their inclusion of the Charlie Hebdo cartoon, depicting Mohammed the Prophet, on their columns. A lawsuit was then filed against Güven after publishing the same cartoon on the newspaper’s website while reporting the incidents in the courthouse during the prosecution of Karan and Çetin.

Lawsuit against arrested journalist Ece Sevim Öztürk due to ‘illegal organization propaganda’

The indictment prepared against arrested journalist Ece Sevim Öztürk due to ‘making illegal organization propaganda’ was accepted by Istanbul 37th Assize Court. The first hearing of the case will be held on November 1st.

The indictment claims that FETÖ illegal organization has “attempted to cast a shadow on legitimacy before and after the June 24 general elections,” and that Öztürk has “shared posts on the coup attempt and prosecutions to serve this purpose, under a journalism cover.” The journalist was taken into custody on June 8 following the documentary, “The Darkest day of the Marine Forces,” prepared after the coup attempt and remains arrested in prison since June 20.

Lawsuit against Afrika Daily

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office filed two separate lawsuits against Afrika Daily executives Şener Levent and Ali Osman Tabak. Journalist Levent announced that he received the notice on the lawsuit and refused to testify. “I don’t believe that we are guilty in these cases. We can’t be blamed. Since we are not guilty, I find it unnecessary to defend myself and refuse the charges in the case,” Levent said.

The lawsuits charge the journalists due to two news articles, one headline on the 21 January 2018 issue, “Another Invasion Act by Turkey,” and the news article, entitled, “Zorba the Cypriot.” Lawsuits have previously been filed in Cyprus against the news articles as well. The newspaper has been targeted by President Erdoğan following the headline on the Afrin Operation and was attacked.



Social media operations

According to the data announced by the Ministry of the Interior, investigations were opened against approximately 1200 citizens in August due to their social media posts. The Ministry statement indicated the social media users were charged with ‘making illegal organization propaganda,’ ‘insult,’

‘incitement towards resentment, hatred and hostility’ and ‘intending against the indivisible integrity of state.’



IHD launches 6-month right violations report

Human Rights Association (IHD) Diyarbakır Office launched the “2018 First 6-month East and Southeast Anatolian Region Human Rights Violations Report.”

The report’s data states 5891 rights violations in the six-month period; 1413 people were taken into custody with 44 of them children. 251 people were arrested, one of them children. At least 175 people were exposed to torture and mistreatment. 997 houses were raided. 3 issues of 11 newspapers were pulled off shelves. 1 publishing house and 1 newspaper office were raided. 7

access bans were brought on news websites. Investigations were started against 43 people in six files. Lawsuits were filed against 66 people within 16 case files. Various sentences of imprisonment were sentenced in 34 case files against 52 people, including politicians and journalists. 15 political party buildings were attacked or raided. 10 social demonstrations or open meetings were intervened by security forces. Meetings and demonstrations were banned indefinitely in some provinces and by being reissued each month in others. 16 ban issues were announced.

Furthermore, special security zones were declared 18 times in total in 593 regions within 15 districts and central districts of four provinces. 16 curfews were declared in 385 villages in 282 neighborhoods of 12 districts and central districts of four provinces.



Middlesex University launches State of Emergency report

Middlesex University in London reported the rights violations experienced during the two-year State of Emergency in Turkey.

The report involves a chronological overview on the events that happened from July 15, 2016 until June 13, 2018 together with legal processes, decrees issued by Turkish courts as well as the European Court of Human Rights, reports and information launched by national and international rights organizations, as well as legislations applied during the State of Emergency with an emphasis on the restrictive legislation that was transferred to the post-State of Emergency period as well.

The report involves results of the “*Turkish Human Rights Case Support Project*” conducted by Professor Philip Leach from Middlesex University Faculty of Law, Applied Human Rights Professor Helen Duffy from Leiden University and lawyers Ayşe Bingöl Demir, Saniye Karakaş and Senem Gürol. The project aims to encourage legal remedies against systematic and large-scale human rights violations that are ongoing in Turkey while providing sustainable support for people who were deprived from their basic rights as well as human rights groups aiming to help them.

Please click for the full report: <https://goo.gl/Hcoj1a>



3,076 hate speech identified in media within four-month period

Hrant Dink Foundation launched the “*Monitoring Hate Speech in Media*”

report focused on the January-April 2018 period.

According to the report, the first four months of the year has seen 2,265 columns and news articles targeting national, ethnic and religious groups. The report indicated that some texts involved hate speech against more than one group; with a total of 3,076 hate speech identified. Armenians were the target of most of the hate speech in the media. The numbers of expressions containing hate speech against Armenians during this period was identified to be 671, 427 against Jews, 320 against Greeks, 274 against Syrians and 226 against Greeks of Turkish Nationality (“Rum”). For details [click here](#).



TURKEY TODAY

We continue to share developments during the State of Emergency and the Presidential period with our Xtra bulletins. You may find the balance sheet we prepared on the amendments with Statutory Decrees issued within the two-year State of Emergency; the regulation made with the 17th Presidential decree, which revealed that nothing will change and details on the Presidential Decree No. 54, dated August 30, [on here](#).