



Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in February 2019

*** *“March 31st is not only a date for local elections but for survival... The consolidation we require is still not obtained yet,”* Erdoğan said, continuing to target all political parties outside of the Public Alliance. *“HDP equals PKK, equals YPG/PYD”* Erdoğan said, threatening other parties of the opposition due to having contact with HDP.

*** Leaders of Turkey, Russia and Iran came together in the summit organized in Sochi concerning the future of Syria. In a common declaration, Putin and Rouhani stated, *“Eastern Euphrates must be left to the Syrian government.”* Hence, the possibility for Turkey to make a military move without a coordination with Damascus weakened. As a potential military operation against the Kurds in Syria losing attention in the government agenda, the President targeted People’s Democratic Party (HDP) municipalities again and threatened them with trustees. *“The trustees would be assigned immediately, at an unexpected time, by us, again,”* Erdoğan said.

*** The government found the solution to the problem of high prices for food in the sale of food by municipalities to regulate the prices. As municipalities started to sell fruits and vegetables, President Erdoğan claims that the new game that’s played on Turkey is the *“food terror.”* Referring to the Afrin Operation, Erdoğan said, *“They are talking about the price of a tomato, eggplant, green pepper. Think about it, what is the price of a bullet?”*

*** Erdoğan shared a visual on Twitter with the title, *“Today, two alliances stand against each other in Turkey.”* The President, who accuses every citizen not supporting him with relations to terrorist organizations and shows all political opposition as the “enemy”, has almost divided the country into two with this post.

*** In the report by the Council of Europe, “Democracy Under Risk: threats and attacks against media freedom in Europe,” it is stated that 110 of the 130 journalists imprisoned in Europe are in Turkish prisons. The Council’s evaluation: *“Turkey is the biggest prison in the world for journalists.”* [Please click here](#) for details.

*** Turkey was categorized once again among the “not free” countries in the 2019 Report of Freedom House. [Please click here](#) for details.

*** International Press Institute (IPI) prepared a report on press freedom in Turkey and stated, *“There is no progress in press freedom after the end of the State of Emergency.”* [Please click here](#) for details.

*** Research agency bound to the University of London, Forensic Architecture prepared a report on the murder of Diyarbakır Bar Association Chairman Tahir Elçi. The report described the police officers in the crime scene as ‘strong criminal suspects’. [Please click here](#) for details on the report.

Judiciary attempts to create new offenses: Gezi Park Case

An indictment was prepared against 16 people, including businessman and rights advocate Osman Kavala, who is arrested for 478 within the investigation on Gezi Park protests, as well as Yiğit Aksakoğlu, who was detained and arrested on November 16, 2018. The indictment charges the 16 defendants with “*attempting to overthrow the government.*”

The 657-page indictment, sent to Istanbul 30th Assize Court, claims heavy life imprisonment sentences against Kavala and Aksakoğlu together with Ali Hakan Altınay, Ayşe Mücella Yapıcı, Ayşe Pınar Alabora, Can Dündar, Çiğdem Mater Utku, Gökçe Yılmaz, Handan Meltem Arıkan, Hanzade Hikmet Germiyanoglu, İnanç Ekmekçi, Mehmet Ali Alabora, Mine Özerden, Şerafettin Can Atalay, Tayfun Kahraman and Yiğit Ali Ekmekçi.

The Prosecutor’s Office accused the defendants of making preparations for the Gezi Park protests since 2011 and that these 16 people are the “*executives*” of the protests, while describing the demonstrations as “*an attempt to riot*” and claiming that the rights advocates provided financial support for and the coordination of the demonstrations and incidents. Some of the accusations posed against the defendants in the indictment are as following: “*attempting to overthrow the government of the Republic of Turkey and to prevent it from performing its duty,*” “*damage to property, major damage to property,*” “*damaging worship places and cemeteries,*” “*major loot*” and “*major injury.*”

Rights organisations: “We Stand Together Against the Attempt to Vanish Civil Society”

Human rights associations organized a common press meeting on the indictments and allegations against Osman Kavala and 15 NGO representatives. The common press statement called for an end to criminalize the civil society as well as increasing pressure on the civil society against baseless allegations such as the ‘attempt to overthrow the government.’ The press declaration stated that the rights advocates will be supported against all attacks they face.

Journalists on trial...

According to the data we compiled from press, one journalist was arrested in February; four journalists were detained. 46 journalists stood trial within the lawsuits they were on trial and four were sentenced to a total of 6 years, 8 months and 15 days of imprisonment. Three journalists were threatened, one journalist was attacked. Here are some examples of what happened last month:

- Imprisonment sentences against Cumhuriyet Daily executives and six employees [were finalised](#) with appeal court decrees. As the file is carried to the Court of Cassation, the high court requested that those receiving imprisonment sentences under five years to have the right to appeal. [A lawsuit was claimed to be filed](#) at the Constitutional Court for the annulment of the law article that prevents the possibility of an appeal for those names.

- Journalist [Salih Turan](#) was arrested for “making illegal organization propaganda” due to the news he shared on his social media account.
- Journalist and painter [Zehra Doğan](#) was released from Tarsus Women’s Closed Prison after serving more than two years in prison for “making terrorist organization propaganda.”
- Singer [Atilla Tas](#), who was sentenced to 3 years, 1 month and 15 days of imprisonment due to taking part in the media structuring of “FETÖ” was released with judicial measures.
- A release verdict was issued for journalist [Ismnaz Temel](#), who was on trial with allegations of “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda.”
- TV10 cameraman [Kemal Demir](#), who was arrested for more than a year, was released with judicial measures and travel ban. TV10 was previously shut down with an emergency decree.
- Journalist [Özgür Paksoy](#) was sentenced to 3 years, 1 month and 15 days of imprisonment due to “making illegal organization propaganda” with his social media posts.
- Journalists [Alican Uludağ](#) and [Barış Yarkadaş](#) were sentenced to 10 months of imprisonment each in the lawsuits they were on trial due to “violation of privacy.”
- An indictment was prepared against journalist [Çağdaş Kaplan](#) with the allegation of “making illegal organization propaganda” due to his social media posts.
- Former Evrensel Daily Managing Editor [Ismail Cem Şimşek](#) was acquitted in the first hearing of the lawsuit filed against him due to “slander” related to three different news published on the newspaper on rights violations at Tarsus Prison.

Insulting the President...

- Former People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair [Figen Yüksekdağ](#) was sentenced to 1 year and six months of imprisonment due to “insulting the President.”
- A lawsuit was filed against lawyer [Özgür Urfa](#), who appealed for correction against the verdict issued against his clients due to “insulting the President”, with the same charge.
- One citizen in Eskişehir was sentenced to [14 months of imprisonment](#) due to “insulting President Erdoğan” due to his social media posts.
- 10 people, who protested the Ankara Train Station Massacre in Bursa [were convicted](#) of “insulting the President.” The Massacre led to the deaths of 103 people.
- Labour Party (EMEP) member [Adnan Karataş](#), who was on trial due to his social media posts during the Gezi Park protests, was sentenced to 5800 TL judicial fine due to “insulting Erdoğan.”
- A lawsuit was filed against Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Center (PSAKD) Diyarbakır Chairman Atty. [Cafer Koluman](#) due to “insulting the President” through reacting against the October 10 Ankara Massacre on the social media.
- The lawsuit filed against Cinema Labourers Union Chairman Zafer Ayden and Beyoğlu Urban Defense member Deniz Özgür due to the protest against October 10 Ankara Train Station Massacre organized at Galatasaray Square in 2015 [concluded with acquittal](#)

“Peace Academics”...

48 more academics were convicted in the prosecutions due to “making illegal organization propaganda” through signing the petition, “We will not partake in this crime.” The academic prosecutions are ongoing for about one and a half years and for the first time, a member judge put an annotation for acquittal in the verdict of conviction. On the other hand, the first appeal process in academic prosecutions concluded; the 1-year 3-month imprisonment sentence against Prof. Dr. Zübeyde Füsün Üstel was finalised with the verdict of 3rd Criminal Chamber of Istanbul Regional Court. According to the data we compiled, the number of convicted scientists reached 137 and the total length of imprisonment sentences issued reached 205 years and six months; with the sentences against 28 academics (53 years and eight months of imprisonment in total) not deferred. You may find the data shared by the Academics for Peace Initiative on the matter on <https://goo.gl/KGktHa>.

Relations with terrorism...

- Diyarbakır Co-Mayor Gültan Kışanak, who was arrested in October 2016 and replaced with a trustee, was sentenced to [14 years and three months of imprisonment](#) due to “terrorist organization membership” and “making terrorist organization propaganda.”
- Director Veysi Altay of documentary “Nû Jîn” and the former manager of the hall, where the documentary was screened, Dicle Anter [were convicted](#) of “making illegal organization propaganda.”
- A claim of imprisonment was made against artist [Ferhat Tunc](#) for up to 20 years due to “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda.”
- A lawsuit was filed against writer [Fikret Başkaya](#) due to “making illegal organization propaganda” through his article, “The Actual Terrorism is Government Terrorism.”

Pressure against HDP

- The hunger strike started by People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MP Leyla Güven exceeded 100 days. Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu spoke on the march organized by HDP from 15 provinces towards Diyarbakır to support Güven and said, “[Who lets you march is not a man](#).” Demonstrations were banned in many provinces. Marches were not allowed and MPs were beaten by the police.
- Two separate investigations were started against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair [Sezai Temelli](#) due to “propaganda” and one in accordance with Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code through the speech he gave in the “People’s Gathering” organized in Van on December 19, 2018.
- [A summary was prepared](#) against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu due to “making illegal organization propaganda” through “not reacting against” the speeches made at a conference organized in 2018 in Diyarbakır as well as due to “attending the conference to support it.”
- People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Diyarbakır MP İmam Taşçier and Tunceli MP Alican Önlü were sentenced to [5 years and four months of imprisonment](#) in total in separate lawsuits filed against them.

Right to protest...

- An [indictment was prepared](#) against former Republican People's Party (CHP) MPs İlhan Cihaner, Hilmi Yarayıcı and Barış Yarkadaş due to supporting those protesting against the prevention of audience in the hearing room during the hearing of the "MIT Trucks" case on April 1, 2016.
- Educators Nursel Tanrıverdi and Selvi Polat [were arrested](#) by Bakırköy 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace due to "organizing illegal meeting and demonstration" after being dismissed from public service with an emergency decree and demonstrating for 2 years demanding reemployment.
- A lawsuit was filed against six people, who were detained during the [2018 Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride March](#).

Social media posts...

- Peace petition signatory academic and lawyer [Hanifi Barış](#) was sentenced to 1 year and eight months of imprisonment due to his social media posts.
- Theater and cinema actress [Berna Laçın](#) was acquitted of "public denigration of religious values adopted by a part of society" due to her social media post.
- Diyarbakır 11th Assize Court sentenced [Aziz Turay](#) to 1 year and seven months of imprisonment due to "making terrorist organization propaganda" through liking two photos on Facebook, one four and another five years ago.
- A summary was prepared against Republican People's Party (CHP) Istanbul MP [Mehmet Bekaroğlu](#) due to "insulting a public officer due to his duty" through his reaction against the Ministry of the Interior. The Interior Minister had said, "The cause of the incidents in Suruç is Muharrem İnce," on the armed clashes leading to the deaths of four people in Suruç.
- Istanbul 27th Assize Court sentenced [Sedat K.](#), who was on trial due to his Facebook posts, to 3 years, 1 month and 15 days of imprisonment due to "making illegal organization propaganda and to 2 years, 5 months and 5 days of imprisonment due to "insulting the President."
- An indictment was prepared against [retired teacher Ü.N.](#) with the charge of "insulting the President" due to seven different Facebook posts including comics, photos and comments. The Prosecutor's Office further opened two separate investigations against the teacher due to "public denigration," "public denigration of religious values adopted by a part of society" and "insulting public officers working as a council due to their duty."

Bans and censorship...

- The [Kurdish Theater Days](#), organized by People's Democratic Party (HDP) Adana Provincial Organization, was banned by the Governorate due to threatening public security.
- Istanbul Anatolian 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace brought an access ban against the news article written by Cumhuriyet Daily reporter Alican Uludağ with the title, "[Erdoğan wants such judiciary](#)."
- [Media blackouts](#) were issued against news on four different incidents of sexual abuse in Bingöl, Antalya, Izmir and Kırşehir as well as on the murder of nine-year-old Sedanur Güzel, whose corpse was found seven days after she was lost in Kars.
- The press statement to be made on the International Mother Language Day [was prevented](#) by the police due to the Governorate ban against events in public spaces.
- A relative of Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu was asserted to have received low points on the Academic Personnel and Graduate Degree Entrance as well as foreign language exams and was accepted to a graduate degree nevertheless. Following the allegations, all exam results [were banned to access](#).
- [Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Mehmet Cahit Turhan](#) didn't announce the statistics on the access bans against websites. Turhan claimed that in case the numbers are announced, they would create an "unjust perception and misinformation" against the country on the international platform.

Unbelievable developments...

- Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu defended the police on the sexual harassment against a young woman, who was detained during a protest in Kızılay district of Ankara. Soylu [threatened those reacting against the incident](#).
- The trustee administrator [was acquitted](#) based on an emergency decree on the work murder at a construction seized by TMSF.
- A [verdict of non-prosecution was issued](#) for the police officers breaking the arm of Gülsüm Elvan while detaining her. The Prosecutor's Office claimed that Elvan could have broken her arm due to a twist during the detainment.

You may find details and more on <http://www.dusun-think.net/?dil=en> and read our weekly bulletins on <http://www.dusun-think.net/?s=bulten>