



Think... think...

What happened in Turkey in March 2019

*** Candidates from the main opposition party won five of the six largest provinces in Turkey, including Istanbul and Ankara, in the local elections on March 31st. The latest local elections was the fourth one with the ruling party asking for votes through a campaign around “*survival-security.*”

*** Justice and Development Party (AKP) - Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) alliance used the expression, “*In case we lose, the survival of Turkey would be endangered.*” President Erdoğan continued to target the main opposition and threaten them with “the judiciary” during the election campaigns. The ruling party declared that they will not let candidates of the opposition execute their duty even if they win the elections. Media institutions “tagged” certain opposition candidates.

*** Council of Europe’s Monitoring Board indicated that the participation rate for the local elections in Turkey was an indicator for a healthy democratic interest. However, the board stated, “*We are not convinced that there is an independent and fair environment for the elections.*”

*** European Parliament approved the report that called for the suspension of membership negotiations between Turkey and the EU. The EU-Turkey Partnership Council meeting was held after four years of break. The Council indicated that there is serious worry regarding human rights violations in Turkey; but that they prefer to continue the dialogue with Ankara.

*** State of Emergency Applications Monitoring Committee evaluated 63,100 applications from the total 126,000. The Committee accepted 4,750 applications and rejected 58,350.

*** Central Bank decided to continue their application on high interest rates. Foreign exchange and TL swap sale limits were increased. 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.

*** 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.

Gezi Park Case: Indictment accepted, first hearing on June 24

The indictment prepared against 16 people, including businessman Osman Kavala (who is arrested for 15 months), rights advocate Yiğit Aksakoğlu (who is arrested for three months), journalist Can Dündar, actor Mehmet Ali Alabora and Taksim Solidarity members on the Gezi Park protests was accepted by Istanbul 30th Assize Court. The first hearing of the case will be held on June 24th. The indictment describes the protests as an attempt; whereas there is no evidence related to the charges, neither a connection between the presented evidence and the

suspects. The evidence for the Prosecutor's Office claims consist of statements like, "It was understood..." and "They must have met in..." According to the indictment, it is also an offence to be involved in "nonviolent activities." [Please click here](#) for details. We will be publishing a detailed report on the case by the end of this week.

Opposition candidates shown guilty with the hand of government

Before the local elections on March 31st, candidates of the opposition parties were continuously targeted and threatened with the "judiciary" by government authorities, especially by 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. [Please click here](#) for details.

Journalists on trial...

According to the information shared by Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Utku Çakırözer, 19 journalists had to defend their news in prosecutions with imprisonment claims for a total of more than 500 years. Here are some of the prominent news from the past month:

- * Karşı Daily Editor-In-Chief and former CHP MP Eren Erdem was sentenced to 4 years and two months of imprisonment with the allegation that he has served the voice recordings revealed during the corruption operations on December 17-25. [Please click here](#) for details.
- * 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.
- * Gün Printing workers were convicted due to printing Özgürlükçü Demokrasi Daily, about 100 publications printed by the company having been pulled off shelves as well as ongoing lawsuits against the authors of those publications. [Please click here](#) for details.
- * An investigation was opened against Cumhuriyet reporter Seyhan Avşar due to the news she reported with the title, "Ex-Con Sözcü Prosecutor."
- * Former Managing Editor of Evrensel Daily, who was on trial due to the news on "Paradise Papers," was acquitted.
- * Esra Solin Dal, who was charged with "performing anti-government journalism," was acquitted.

Insulting the President...

- * Journalist-writer Ahmet Altan, who was on trial due to his article published on May 8, 2016 with the title, "The New Ergenekon," was sentenced to 11 months and 20 days of imprisonment.
- * Writer Perihan Mağden was sentenced to 7000 TL judicial fine due to an article she wrote for Nokta Magazine in April 2016. .
- * A lawsuit was filed against German Friedrich Naumann Foundation Project Manager Aret Demirci due to his social media posts.

"Peace Academics"...

- * The number of academics, who are on trial due to "making illegal organization propaganda" through signing the "Peace Petition," with finalised verdicts and convictions reached 167. [Please click here](#) for the data compiled by the Academics for Peace Initiative on the lawsuits.

* The first appeal court verdict was announced within the academic prosecutions. The imprisonment sentence against Prof. Dr. Zübeyde Füsün Üstel for 1 year and three months due to the Peace Petition was finalised. [Please click here](#) for details.

Connections with terrorism...

* 18 Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) member lawyers were sentenced to a total of 159 years, 1 month and 30 days of imprisonment. ÇHD has previously been shut down with an emergency decree.

* A lawsuit was filed against Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) Artvin Provincial Chairman Sercan Dede due to the speech he gave during the funeral of İsrail Meydan, who spent his life in exile after the September 12 coup.

Pressure against HDP

* An investigation was started against People's Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Sezai Temelli due to the speech he gave during the candidate introduction meeting of his party in Tunceli.

* HDP Urfa MP Ayşe Sürücü was sentenced to 1 year, 8 months and 15 days of imprisonment due to "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911."

* Former HDP Şırnak MP Aycan İrmiz was sentenced to 1 year and six months of imprisonment in the lawsuit she was on trial due to some of the statements she made in Silopi during the curfews in the region. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Former Siirt Co-Mayor and Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Council Board member Selim Sadak was arrested due to the speech he gave during the election rally organized by HDP in Viranşehir district of Urfa. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Hanging a poster of Demirtaş has been a reason for arrest. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Posters of HDP in Siirt with the writing, "Azadî bixwerevebirinê dest pê dike [Freedom starts with self-administration]" were taken down. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Posters of HDP in Urfa with the writing, "Li Dijî Şer Aşitî [Peace against war]" were taken down. [Please click here](#) for details.

Right to meeting and demonstration...

* The "Feminist Night Walk" to be organized at Istiklal Street for March 8, International Women's Day, was attacked by the police. President Erdoğan targeted the women, who protested the police attack by whistling. "We will fight against those enemies of the prayer and the flag until the end," Erdoğan said. [Please click here](#) for details.

* A lawsuit was filed against the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) Chair Arzu Çerkezoğlu due to a speech she gave during a panel she participated in in 2016.

* Ankara Governorate did not give permission for the rally to be organized by the Turkish Warfare Labour Union against the privatisation of Tank Tread Factory in Sakarya. [Please click here](#) for details.

Social media posts...

* 10 people, including journalist İshak Karataş, were convicted due to their social media posts criticising the Afrin Operation.

* Journalist Yasin Kobulan, who was on trial due to his social media posts on heavy human rights violations during curfews, was sentenced to 1 year, 6 months and 22 days of

imprisonment. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Mezopotamya Agency reporter Lezgin Akdeniz was convicted in the first hearing of the lawsuit filed against him.

* Writer Bülent Tekin, who was on trial due to his social media posts, was sentenced to 1 year and eight months of imprisonment.

* A lawsuit was filed against theologian-writer Cemil Kılıç due to his social media posts criticising Islamism. [Please click here](#) for details.

Bans and censorship...

* Yeni Yaşam Daily was pulled off shelves due to the news reported on People's Democratic Party (HDP) MPs marching to support hunger-striker Leyla Güven. [Please click here](#) for details.

* An access ban was brought against the news published on Cumhuriyet Daily regarding the Prosecutor preparing the indictment against Sözcü Daily. [Please click here](#) for details.

* Website of Bakırköy Daily was banned to access after reporting the news of the debates inside the Justice and Development Party (AKP). [Please click here](#) for details.

* Siirt Criminal Judicature of Peace issued for the HDP report, recording municipal activities under trustee administration, to be pulled off shelves.

* Middle East Technical University did not give permission for the discourse to be organized by Social Gender Studies Community under the title, "A Different Family Is Possible."

* Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University did not give permission for the screening of the documentary, "Lemon Coffee" due to its "content." [Please click here](#) for details.

* Marmara University banned the screening of the movie, "Journey Towards the Sun." [Please click here](#) for details.

Unbelievable developments...

* Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) issued a penalty of "relocation" against judge Aydın Başar, who issued the acquittal of the defendant on trial due to "insulting the President." According to the HSK Code, relocation is the second heaviest penalty after dismissal from profession. [Please click here](#) for details.

Good things happened as well...

* A member judge put an opposition annotation to the verdict of conviction issued against Peace Petition signatory academic Assoc. Prof. Candan Badem and indicated that the academic's action was within freedom of expression. The judge further indicated that this right is one of the basic rights that is intervened and restricted the most within the fight against terrorism.

* Reversing the sentence against social media post initially issued due to "illegal organization propaganda," the appeal court stated, "*freedom of expression and press freedom is applied not only for 'thoughts' that are welcomed or deemed harmless, but also for thoughts and news that are against the government and may sometimes be disturbing.*"

Judging the Judiciary...

We continue to judge the judiciary, which could never be completely “independent” and “unbiased” but has now become completely “unlawful.” Three new files were added to our page, “Judging the Judiciary”: “Ferhat Tepe Case and Access Bans,” “Bülent Şık Case” and “Academic-Writer Fikret Başkaya Case”... [Please click here](#) for details.

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