

Think, think...



Freedom of Expression Weekly Newsletter (Issue 34/23 - September 1, 2023)

What happened last week?

- Akın Gürlek, who was known for his judgements in many controversial cases during his time as a judge and who did not implement the Constitutional Court's ruling on violation of rights, and who was then made Deputy Minister of Justice by President Erdoğan, was appointed Deputy Minister in charge of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors and became a natural member of the Council.
- In 2022, the number of applicants to the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey on the grounds of torture and ill-treatment increased by 22 per cent compared to the previous year. Of the 1,201 citizens who applied to the foundation, the youngest is 3 years old and the oldest is 76 years old. 91,6 per cent of those who applied for 'torture' stated that they were detained due to their political thoughts, identity or actions.
- CHP Group Deputy Chairman Ali Mahir Başarır stated that the presidential budget was increased by 100 per cent to 10 billion 877 million liras with additional appropriations; "The palace spends 18 thousand per minute, that is 2,5 pension salaries, 110 thousand per hour, 28 million per day, 845 million liras per month," he said.
- The Governorate of Istanbul issued a circular banning drinking in public areas 'except for establishments licensed to sell and consume alcohol'. While legal experts emphasized that the decision was against the law and that the consumption of alcoholic beverages in open areas was not a crime, the governorship backed down after the reactions; Governor Davut Gül claimed that they did not impose a ban and reminded the existing laws.
- Istanbul Governorate did not give permission for an investigation against the police officers in the criminal complaint filed against the police violence against the Saturday Mothers, who were detained every week in disregard of the Constitutional Court decision, and the file resulted in non-prosecution.
- According to the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (TÜRK-İŞ) data, the hunger limit rose to 12,198 TL and the poverty line to 39,733 TL in August.
- A press worker was killed in Turkey's "armed unmanned aerial vehicle" attack on JIN TV's vehicle in Northern Syria. Another journalist was seriously injured.
- 193 artists, intellectuals and journalists, including PEN International President Burhan Sönmez, Nobel Prize-winning writer Orhan Pamuk and our initiative's spokesperson Şanar Yurdatapan, reacted to the unlawfulness in the Kobani trial, stating that they are following the trial process with concern and that constitutional rights are being violated.
- Minister of Justice Yılmaz Tunç said that family law would be completely changed and claimed that issues such as alimony, compensation and divorce could be resolved through the 'mediation' system.



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 the fate of their relatives who disappeared in detention and to

bring the perpetrators to trial, continues. The police attacked the demonstration again this week, beating and detaining 25 rights defenders. The protest to be organised in Van in solidarity with the Saturday Mothers was also prevented on the grounds of the protest ban announced by the governorate.



Arrested journalist sued for 'your name appeared in the news'

A lawsuit was filed against Ömer Çelik, one of the 16 journalists arrested in Diyarbakır in June 2022, on the grounds of news reports on his arrest. Çelik was charged with "membership in an illegal organisation" and his file was merged with the case against 22 people, including 20 journalists, at Diyarbakır 4th Assize Court.



The case against journalists Eren and Karabay

A lawsuit was filed against Furkan Karabay, the reporter of the news website Gerçek Gündem, and Faruk Eren, the editor-in-chief of the news website, due to a news article published on the news website Gerçek Gündem about Constitutional Court Member İrfan Fidan. The journalists will stand trial at Ankara 22nd High Criminal Court on the charge of

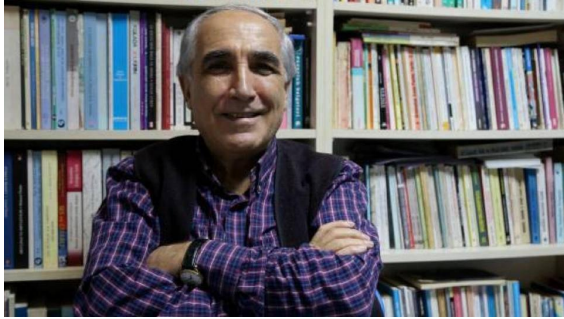
"targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism".



Lawsuit against Aktar, former president of Diyarbakır Bar Association

A lawsuit was filed against rights defender and former president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association Mehmet Emin Aktar, who, as a lawyer, accompanied the search of his colleague Resul Temur's office during the operation in which 216 people, including journalists and lawyers, were detained in

Diyarbakır in April, and recorded the unlawful behaviour in a report. Aktar, who shared the report on social media, was accused of "targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism" on the grounds that the prosecutor's name was included in the report. The first hearing of the case will be held on 14 December at Diyarbakır 5th Assize Court.



Celalettin Can sentenced for solidarity with Özgür Gündem

Writer Celalettin Can, who was sentenced to 1 year and 3 months in prison for participating in the Editor-in-Chief on Watch campaign launched in solidarity with Özgür Gündem Newspaper, entered prison for the execution of the sentence.



Citizen who responded to Bülent Turan is convicted

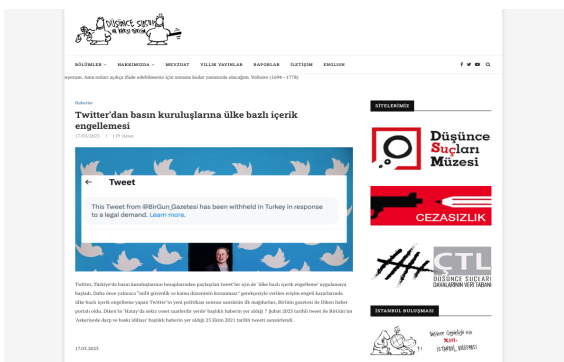
Hüseyin Savaş, who responded to Deputy Interior Minister Bülent Turan, who targeted the opposition and called them "idiots" when he was AKP Group Deputy Chairman, by saying "You are the real idiots" on social media, was sentenced to 354 days of judicial fine by Çanakkale Lapseki Criminal Court of

First Instance on the charge of "insulting a public official".



Teachers detained for demanding their rights

The police prevented the members of the Private Sector Teachers' Union from organising a demonstration in Istanbul to draw attention to the low wages they were paid and detained about 30 educators, including the union's president Eren Edebalı and union executives.



Access block on access blocked news

News about Twitter's country-based content blocking for media outlets in Turkey was blocked from access by Samsun 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace upon the application of a citizen named Samet Kurt. With the decision, 13 content, including a news article published on our website that did not even mention Kurt's name, was censored on the grounds of "violation of personal rights".



Voice of America blocked upon RTÜK request

The website of Voice of America (VOA) was blocked by the Ankara 9th Criminal Judgeship of Peace upon the request of the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK).



Journalist Gökhan Özbek detained

23 Derece news website owner journalist Gökhan Özbek was detained due to his social media posts.



District Governorate bans neighbourhood festival

Istanbul Ataşehir District Governorate banned the festival, which was organised for the 21st time this year to mark the founding anniversary of the 1 Mayıs neighbourhood.



Journalist beaten and threatened in Viranşehir

Journalist Mehmet Karakeçeli was beaten by the bodyguard of Urfa Viranşehir Mayor Salih Ekinci. Karakeçeli said that the bodyguard who beat him said "If you write anything about the municipality from now on, you will die".



Blocked news

- Cumhuriyet columnist Murat Ağirel's article titled "Million irregularities hidden by the Court of Accounts" and 37 related content, mostly news articles, were banned from access by Istanbul Anatolia 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace.

- Istanbul 3rd Criminal Judicature of Peace

blocked access to 22 content, mostly news articles and columns, related to allegations regarding the activities of Azerbaijan state-owned oil and natural gas company SOCAR in Turkey.

- The news article published in Afyon Newspaper on the allegation that 73 thousand square meters of land on Afyon-Ankara road was transferred to Kadir Sayın, the President of

Afyonkarahisar Industrialists and Businessmen Association, using forged signatures was blocked from access by the decision of Afyonkarahisar 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace.

- News about the arrest of the father and uncle who allegedly tortured a 15-year-old boy in Şanlıurfa were blocked from access by the Şanlıurfa 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace upon the request of the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

- The Ministry of Family and Social Services blocked access to news reports on the death of 17-year-old Yasemin Cemre İçlikan, who did not return after leaving the state dormitory in Bursa where she was under protection and whose body was found four days later.



Academics face disciplinary proceedings

Appointed rector of Boğaziçi University initiated disciplinary proceedings against faculty members who participated in the academics' 32-month-long vigil. It was claimed that the actions of the scientists, who have been protesting the practices that undermine the

autonomous, free and democratic structure of the university by turning their backs to the rectorate every day with their robes, were "unlawful" and "disruptive to the functioning of the university".



TRIALS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Hayko Bağdat due to "making illegal organisation propaganda"...</p> <p>5 September Tuesday, Istanbul 28th Assize Court</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Ruşen Takva, who was charged with "publicly disseminating misleading information" for sharing news...</p> <p>6 September Wednesday, Hakkari 1st Criminal Court of First Instance</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against Mansur Çelik, Managing Editor of ANKA News Agency, due to "targeting people who took part in the fight against terrorism" upon Akın Gürlek's complaint...</p> <p>7 September Thursday, Ankara 22nd High Criminal Court</p>	<p>The lawsuit filed against 35 members of Beşiktaş fan group Çarşı due to "attempting to overthrow the government", "opposing the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations" and "organisation membership" on the grounds of Gezi Park protests...</p> <p>7 September Thursday, Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court</p>
<p>The lawsuit filed against journalist Ziya Çiçekçi, who was charged with "making illegal organisation propaganda" based on posts on Yeni Özgür Politika newspaper's social media account...</p> <p>Friday 8 September, Istanbul 33rd High Criminal Court</p>	