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NEWS AGENCY TAKES POWER THROUGH INDEPENDENCE!

WEEKLY

NEWSLETTER

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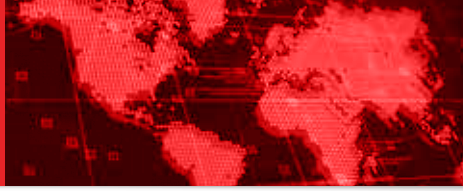
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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

DOMESTIC POLITICS



GOVERNMENT STEPS BACK FROM IMPOSING CURFEW FOR CHILD WORKERS

Turkey, the first country to impose a curfew on elderly citizens over 65 to curb the spread of Covid-19, has expanded the regulation to include citizens younger than 20. Following harsh criticism of the fact that this would leave more than 2 million youths unemployed, the government [step backed](#) from its decision. The Interior Ministry issued a new decree stating the workers younger than 20 will be exempted from the curfew. The number of registered child workers in Turkey is 720 000.

With its recent measures, Turkey has made cloth face coverings in public areas compulsory and banned vehicles from leaving or entering 31 cities for the next 15 days. Police and gendarmerie teams started implementing measures at entrances and exits to cities, as well as checking the body temperature of travelers. Only commercial vehicles carrying basic goods or medical supplies will be allowed to travel.

FIGHT FOR DONATION CAMPAIGN

The chair of the main opposition party CHP, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, breaking his vow of silence, said the problem of Covid-19 has evolved from the "Stay at home" to the "Keep at home" phase and called for a lockdown, a general quarantine covering everyone. Then the mayor of Istanbul, Imamoglu, urged the government to impose a city-wide curfew. Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir mayors, elected from the CHP, simultaneously launched a donation campaign, sharing the bank accounts of their municipalities to assist citizens in need, as well as taking measures like decreasing the payment required for municipal services. However, the Minister of the Interior [issued](#) a circular blocking the bank accounts of these municipalities, and Minister Suleyman Soylu [alleged](#) that the donation campaigns show intentions similar to PKK, who fight against the unity of the state.

ERDOGAN LAUNCHES HIS CAMPAIGN

Initially, CHP kept silent about the blockade of the bank accounts. And on the same day, President Erdogan addressed the nation and [launched](#) a donation campaign named, "We are enough for each other, Turkey," sharing the IBANs for the bank accounts. He initiated the campaign by donating seven months of salary, approx. 81 000 Euro. Later, CHP municipalities [applied](#) to the Council of State and the Administrative Court for annulment of the circular, stating that it goes against municipal law. The mayors of Ankara and Istanbul continued announcing their own aid and cash support and started distributing free masks, though they are banned from campaigning.

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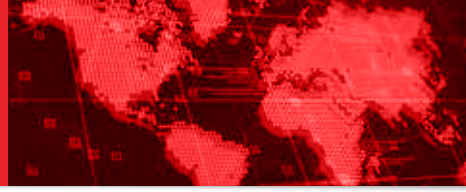
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CAMPAIGNING IS ALLOWED FOR RELIGIOUS CULTS

While the government thwarts CHP municipalities from collecting donations, a religious cult, Ismailaga, was [collecting](#) donations and sharing its bank account. Moreover, it has been noted that Gaziantep and Konya Municipalities, under the AKP administration, have already launched a similar campaign to help those who have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus crises. Later on, these municipalities have to [transfer](#) the amount raised to the national campaign launched by Erdogan.

LIMITED TRANSPARENCY ON DONATIONS

Erdogan's donation campaign reached more than 1 billion in 6 days, and for the first time, the presidency started to [share](#) the amounts given by the big donors, which brought partial transparency. The government was aiming to encourage others by sharing the numbers. But the other reason for sharing the information was the corruption files previously [revealed](#) by the CHP's Kilicdaroglu. Soon after the Elazig earthquake, Kilicdaroglu criticized the AKP for asking for donations since the government has been collecting earthquake bills for the last 18 years.

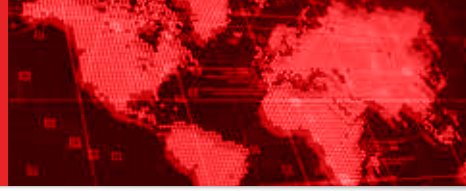
CONFLICT OVER CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES

Opposition alleges the number of deaths announced by the government does not match the exact number of deaths due to the coronavirus in Turkey. CHP Lawmaker Veli Agbaba [shared](#) documents showing the difference between the number of fatalities announced by the Minister of Health and the number of people buried in cemeteries due to the coronavirus. Minister Koca said 16 people died of the coronavirus in Turkey on March 29th, but Agbaba shared files showing that 20 people were buried in Istanbul alone on account of the coronavirus. Subsequently, access to cause of death was removed from the online state system.

TURKISH HEALTH WORKERS SUFFER FROM COVID-19

As coronavirus infections and deaths raised last week, Turkey started to suffer from the death of health workers. Prof. Taşoğlu, an internal medicine doctor, became the first doctor to [lose his life](#) to Covid-19. He cured Turkey's first confirmed coronavirus patient. Afterward, Prof. Oz, doyenne pathologist, [died](#) of the coronavirus. Minister of Health, Koca [said](#) 601 health workers had been infected by the virus. A pharmacist in Istanbul was among the first deaths in Turkey due to the novel coronavirus. The Union of Pharmacists has started limiting the working hours of pharmacies. Additionally, some members of the Science Council have been [infected](#) by the novel coronavirus.





DOMESTIC POLITICS

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WHAT DO THE NUMBERS SHOW ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL STATISTICS?

The government [shared](#) the first geographical statistics of Covid-19 around Turkey twenty days after the outbreak of the first coronavirus case. But it no longer shares daily statistics. Minister Koca said 60 percent of the cases are in Istanbul, followed by Izmir. The statistics on cases of infection and death underlines the importance of taking strong measures against the spread of the virus. Many videos show that the citizens of Izmir, rather than staying at home, are enjoying the sunny weather and the sea since the state issues no penalty for walking around. Kocaeli, the city with the third-highest number of fatalities, shows the importance of imposing a lockdown that includes a guarantee for workers, given that many factories are located in the city. Konya has the fourth-highest number of infected people, and some pilgrims have been quarantined there. The rate of infection is also high in Isparta, which has been hosting quarantined pilgrims as well (though some have tried to escape. Relative to its population, cases of infection and death are lower in Ankara, where the number of educated people is higher in comparison to the Turkish population as a whole.

BASHING THE MAYOR OF ISTANBUL FOR CROWDED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In spite of orders from the Interior Ministry to decrease the number of passengers by 50 percent, the Istanbul municipality is accused of not taking precautionary measures with regard to public transportation, according to videos on social media. The spokesman of the Istanbul Municipality [blamed](#) the government for plotting to pack large numbers of passengers on buses at the same stop on March 29th, sharing its statistics from previous weeks. Ongun refrained from directly blaming the government and instead called the action the work of a "troll organization."

FUTURE AND REMEDY PARTIES GAVE SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION ON THE CAMPAIGN

The newborn Future and Remedy Parties, who abstained from taking the side of the opposition bloc in their earlier statements, gave support to the donation campaigns launched by CHP municipalities to help those suffering from the Covid-19 crisis.

Ahmet Davutoglu, the Chair of the Future Party, [gave a call](#) to Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas and conveyed their support. The party sent 500 boxes full of food for the Ankara municipality to deliver. Deputy Chair of the Remedy Party Mehmet Emin Ekmen [criticized](#) the government for banning the donation campaigns launched by the opposition. Ekmen said, "Local governments are not states within the state but part of the state. Modern states are the ones who are proud of the power of local governors".





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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SOUNDLESS CALL FROM THE PRESIDENT OF CoE TO ERDOGAN

President of the European Council Charles Michel and Erdogan [talked](#) on the phone recently. According to information shared by the presidency, the two leaders discussed Turkey-EU relations and regional issues, and especially cooperation in the fight against the Coronavirus. No information is shared by Michel with respect to their conversation.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) rapporteur has [called](#) on Spain and Turkey to include imprisoned politicians in early releases prompted by the threat posed by the Coronavirus in overcrowded prisons.

TURKEY AUTHORIZED THE TRANSFER OF VENTILATORS TO SPAIN

Refusing Spain's accusations that Turkey confiscated medical products, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu said Turkey had [authorized](#) the transfer of ventilators to Spain amid the Covid-19 outbreak. A Spanish company, Castilla-La Mancha, bought 114 ventilators from China but couldn't transfer them due to a regulation banning the export of medical equipment issued on March 26th.

QUARREL BETWEEN GREEK AND TURKISH MINISTERS DURING THE NATO COUNCIL

Foreign Minister Cavusoglu [accused](#) Greece of blocking the reinforcement of Turkey's deterrence by the alliance, after the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting. Cavusoglu blamed Greece for trying to establish a linkage between the Turkey-EU refugee deal and Turkey's demands from NATO, stressing that Turkey will implement the agreement if fully implemented by the EU. According to Greek media, tensions [erupted](#) between Cavusoglu and Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias due to fake news, blaming Greek soldiers for killing immigrants on the border.

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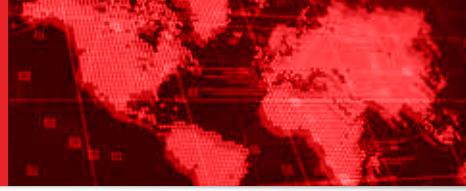
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ECONOMICS



STATE INSTITUTIONS DONATE FOR THE STATE

By donating 100 million Turkish Lira (\$15 million), the Central Bank leads the donors, followed by the state-owned Ziraat, Halk, and Vakıflar Banks. The fundraising campaign is being criticized since government institutions are the main donors. Furthermore, government institutions have started asking for donations from public servants. First, a message [sent](#) by the President of the Court of Cessation to members of the judiciary started circulating in social media. The President asked the judges and prosecutors to donate a minimum of 1000 lira, while the ordinary staff was asked to pay a minimum of 100 lira. Similar reports have been shared that governors, district governors, and public servants in various institutions were urged to donate to the campaign.

TURKISH INFLATION COOLS AS CHEAPER OIL OUTWEIGNS LIRA LOSSES

Turkish inflation [slowed](#) for the first time since October, as oil's worst quarter on record offset some of the price increases that a depreciating lira would have spurred and economic activity dipped during the coronavirus pandemic. Consumer prices grew an annual 11.9% in March, down from 12.4% in February, according to data released on Friday.

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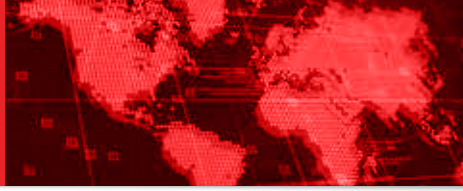
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CULTURE, MEDIA AND INTERNET



NOTORIOUS PROFESSOR APPOINTED LEAD WRITER

Celebrity doctor Prof. Osman Muftuoglu, who has been [criticized](#) for his homophobic statements, has been appointed "lead writer" of Turkey's flagship newspaper, the Hurriyet Daily. Muftuoglu came to fame by providing weight-loss programs to singers and actors, then started writing diet programs in Hurriyet. In the Turkish press, each newspaper has a "lead writer" (chief of columnists) who writes columns every day and who is seen as the dean of all writers within the daily.

DISSIDENT JOURNALIST ARRESTED FOR INSULTING ISLAM

Hakan Aygun, a dissident journalist, has been [arrested](#) for sharing a satiric tweet belittling believers for worshiping money. He wrote, "Hey, the ones praying for IBAN" and implied money is the first rule for believers of Islam; this occurred soon after Erdogan had launched a national donation campaign to aid those financially struggling due to the coronavirus crises.

Aygun denied the accusations, stating that he didn't write such a message, but that it was sent to his account through a retweet. Aygun has been arrested on charges of publicly [provoking](#) hatred or hostility in one segment of society against another.

RECENT NUMBER OF TRIALS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

According to a report [shared](#) by Press in Arrest in March, 30 journalists attended hearings; 3 of them face charges carrying the sentence of three aggravated life imprisonments, and 1 with the sentence of life imprisonment. The trial of 26 journalists was postponed after the hearings, while the trial of 10 journalists was postponed due to the coronavirus. 9 journalists were arrested. 6 journalists were released.

ARRESTMENT AGAINST POPULAR TROLLS

Two popular twitter trolls famous for sharing inside information about the AKP were surprisingly [arrested](#). Since the arrest of the owners of unnamed twitter accounts for sharing corruption files on December 17th and 25th, 2013, the twitter accounts of "Türkiye Gerçekleri and Ankara Kusu" have been ignored, although they were critical of the AKP. Deputy Chair of the Future Party, Ozdag, opposed the arguments that he has any relation to "Ankara Kusu"

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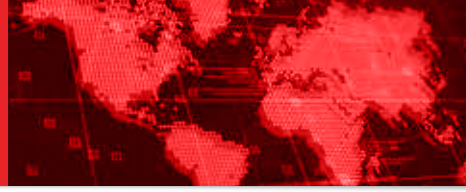
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POLICE USE FORCE DURING THE FUNERAL OF A SINGER ON HUNGER STRIKE

A member of the protest folk music group, Helin Bolek, died on the 288th day of a hunger strike. Demanding the release of group members, Bolek, Ibrahim Gokcek, and Mustafa Kocak turned their hunger strike into a death fast. The police didn't accept her family's request to visit Cem House (a place of worship for Allewites) before going to the cemetery. Dozens were [detained](#) for protesting the police.

SOYLU BLAMES CHP FOR OBEYING THE ORDERS OF A TERRORIST ORGANISATION

The funeral of Bolek [triggered](#) a discussion between CHP Group Deputy Chair Ozgur Ozel and Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu. Ozel said it's time to act to keep the other members of the group alive. Soylu accused the CHP of obeying the orders of DHKP-C, designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, and not allowing her to be hospitalized. In reply, Ozel accused Soylu of ingratiating himself with the organization, profiting from it, and using it in campaigns.

TRT INTERRUPTED A DOCTOR WHO CLAIMS THE NUMBER OF INFECTED ARE MORE THAN 600 000 IN TURKEY

An infectious disease doctor who argues that the number of infected from the coronavirus is between 600,000 and 900,000 was [silenced](#) during a live broadcast on TRT. The program's presenter cut off her mic after the doctor stated that only 15-20 of the cases have been tested.





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ANKA DEEP

WHAT IS MISSING IN THE PAROLE BILL

The ruling coalition parties, AKP and MHP, swiftly proposed a draft bill to release up to 100,000 prisoners (excluding political inmates) to provide a considerable reduction of Turkey's overcrowded prison population, fearing the spread of Covid-19 might result in a catastrophe.

Thousands of judicial prisoners are expected to be released, while journalists, political prisoners, lawyers, human rights defenders, and other dissidents will continue to serve their sentences. Allegations and some videos of riots in a number of prisons have started to be shared on social media.

Despite calls to reexamine the matter, the AKP and the MHP insisted on excluding political prisoners from the parole bill during the discussions in the Justice Commission. The draft bill was discussed in the commission until 5 A.M. on Friday and will be amended in the parliament this week. Here are some of the shortcomings if the draft is amended without any change:

-The text excludes thousands sentenced or on trial for "terrorism offenses" and "crimes against the state."

-The text contradicts the principle of equal treatment given that criminals convicted for sexual abuse, terrorism, drug trafficking, and deliberate murder are excluded.

-If the draft bill is amended without changes in the parliament, then the journalists and citizens convicted for using their right to freedom of expression will continue to be imprisoned on top of being convicted. According to current law, political prisoners sentenced for 18 months or less are not to be imprisoned. But if the bill is adopted, they will be **imprisoned** for 40 percent of their sentences. Lawyer Ugur Poyraz stressed that this regulation would be applied to everyone.

-According to current law, judicial prisoners are to remain in jail for two-thirds of their sentences, while political prisoners are to be incarcerated for three-quarters of their sentences.

-The bill also excludes thousands of inmates sentenced for terrorism or non-violent terror charges.

-Presumption of innocence is **neglected** in the text, although this presumption undergirds the established standard of international human rights law of release pending trial. The violation of the core judicial principle of the presumption of innocence is particularly egregious in the cases of detainees charged with terror-related crimes against whom no evidence of violence has been produced.

-The bill does not clear criminal records. For example, the penalties for those convicted for 20 years will receive a 10-year deduction but will have criminal records similar to those sentenced for 1 year. The draft bill does not allow the clearance of judicial and criminal records.

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