

# Breaking News from Turkiye: Democracy is Under Attack

## 1 Month Since Presidential Candidate İmamoğlu's Arrest

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the **twice-elected mayor of Istanbul** and **President Erdoğan's strongest rival** in the upcoming elections, was **arrested** on March 19. His detention is a troubling sign for Turkiye's justice and democracy. Imprisoning a popular, democratically elected leader **on questionable charges** appears to be an **attempt to sideline political opposition**. Attacks on İmamoğlu's education and character aim to weaken his public image, but his achievements and dedication to Istanbul are undeniable. Since his arrest, **millions have been rallying across Turkiye and around the world**, demanding justice, democracy, and change.



Photo: Evrensel

## "Hak Hukuk Adalet" Exhibition

On **May 3–4**, Hak Hukuk Adalet (Rights, Law, Justice) opens at the Brewery Arts Complex in **Los Angeles**, as part of the annual **Brewery Artwalk**. The exhibition documents **worldwide protests** sparked by the **arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu**. Curated by Arzu Arda Kosar, Burak Çatlı, and Aydın Tuna Palabıyıkoğlu, the show brings together over 50 photos and videos from **32 cities** across Turkiye the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia. Set in one of the world's largest artist colonies, the exhibition captures a remarkable global outpouring, as people spontaneously organized simultaneous protests across continents, united by a shared demand for democracy in Turkiye.



Photo: Habername

## Students Are Still Under Custody

Students in Turkiye continue to face **arrests for exercising their constitutional rights**, particularly for participating in **protests or voicing dissent**. One such case is that of **Esila Ayik**, who was arrested for holding a "Dictator Erdoğan" banner at a peaceful protest. She is a college student in Belgium, but her arrest has forced her to pause her education. She suffers from **serious kidney and heart issues**, and her condition has worsened in detention. This week, her blood pressure spiked, causing her to **lose consciousness**. Emergency responders transferred her to the hospital by ambulance. Students like Esila deserve protection, not punishment, for standing up for their rights.



Photo: HakHukukAdalet.weebly.com



Photo: Birgun

## Torture in Protests and Under Custody

In Türkiye torture and abuse during protests and in custody have become widespread concerns. Many **protestors have been teargassed, beaten, and hit with plastic bullets**. Eren Üner, a student arrested for documenting police violence on X, **alleges severe torture, including beatings and threats**. Yesterday, in Ankara, a woman detained during a demonstration was **harshly handled, with her body exposed while police carried her away**.

Additionally, there are reports of sexual harassment in custody. One woman, arrested without resistance, recounted being **dragged by her hair**. In her statement, she mentioned that a **male officer, touched her breasts**. Overcome by fear, she **urinated on herself**, and had to continue wearing clothes soaked in urine. There are also **allegations of strip searches**. These incidents highlight a pattern of abuse and underscore the urgent need for accountability and reforms to protect the rights and dignity of all individuals in Türkiye.

## Istanbul Earthquake

On April 23, 2025, a **6.2-magnitude** earthquake hit Istanbul. **Mobile networks collapsed**, leaving people unable to check on loved ones. In the aftermath, many are **questioning the allocation of donations collected after the 2022 earthquake** that resulted in the deaths of over 53,000 people. Concerns are also growing about **individuals working to make Istanbul safer for future earthquakes such as Imamoglu being in jail**, highlighting the suppression of efforts aimed at improving the city's preparedness and public safety.



Photo: BBC

## New Wave of Arrests Targets Istanbul Municipality

Turkish authorities launched a **second wave of arrests** today, detaining **47 officials** from Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), including İSKİ's General Manager, Deputy, and IMM Deputy Secretaries General. The arrests follow **İSKİ's demolition order against illegal constructions along the Kanal Istanbul project route**, with officials who enforced the halt detained. IMM's Zoning and Inspection Chiefs, **who were attacked while dismantling illegal cafés along coastlines**, were also arrested. Notably, even the wife of former IMM spokesperson Murat Ongun was taken into custody. These actions **threaten basic services** and appear to be an **attempt to undermine the elected city leadership through judicial means**.



Photo: TurkishMinute