

Breaking News from Turkiye

Crackdown Deepens Against Opposition Candidate İmamoğlu

The crackdown on Istanbul Mayor and main opposition CHP presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu, widely believed to be politically motivated, is escalating. On April 26, **52 municipal employees were arrested—18 of them later jailed**—just weeks after İmamoğlu and 50 others were imprisoned.

Authorities cite vague corruption and terrorism allegations, yet **no convincing evidence has been made public**. The investigation appears aimed at discrediting İmamoğlu and undermining the opposition's momentum ahead of the elections.

CHP has condemned the operation as a **judicial coup**, **accusing the government of weaponizing the legal system to suppress democratic dissent**.



Turkiye Charges Talent Manager in Gezi Park Crackdown

Turkish prosecutors have charged prominent talent manager Ayşe Barım with attempting to overthrow the government for her alleged role in the 2013 Gezi Park protests. **The indictment cites her support for actors who joined the protests and links to jailed philanthropist Osman Kavala—but provides no concrete evidence.**

Barım denies all allegations, saying both she and the artists acted on their own free will. Critics say **the charges are politically motivated and aimed at intimidating dissent, especially given the timing—just days before a major wave of arrests in the İmamoğlu investigation.**

The case highlights how the **government continues to weaponize the judiciary against civil society**, reviving decade-old protests to silence voices in the arts and opposition.



May Day in Turkiye: Thousands Gathered Despite a Sieged Taksim and Heavy Policing

In the days leading up to May 1st, Turkish authorities launched a sweeping **crackdown on labor and civil society groups, arresting over 100 people** in Istanbul and İzmir. Those arrested included activists, union members, students, and journalists **accused of supporting calls to gather in Taksim Square—a historic and symbolic site for May Day demonstrations.** Since the 1977 massacre, where dozens were killed during a labor rally, Taksim has become a space of remembrance and resistance for Turkiye's working class. Closed to mass protests since 2012, it now represents a battleground between state control and public expression.

On May Day, the repression reached its peak. **Nearly 50,000 police officers were deployed** across İstanbul, and Taksim was encircled with barricades, armored vehicles, and checkpoints. In Mecidiyeköy, demonstrators attempting to march toward the square were **violently blocked, and nearly 400 people were arrested**—including union leaders, students, and activists. The scale of force made it clear that the state aimed not just to prevent gatherings, but to silence dissent.

With access to Taksim effectively sealed off, unions and political parties had declared Kadıköy as the site for a central May Day gathering. Yet **the government made reaching Kadıköy extremely difficult by shutting down or rerouting major public transportation lines**, including metro lines and ferries. Despite these obstacles—and rain—tens of thousands of people still managed to gather, filling the square with chants for labor rights, democracy, and justice.

While Taksim was under siege, the state attempted to obstruct even those gatherings not directly confronting the ban. By disrupting transportation and deploying police across the city, authorities showed that their goal was not just to control locations, but to demoralize and fragment public mobilization.

May Day 2024 laid bare a troubling reality in Turkiye: where the government fears public assembly, it meets it with preemptive arrests, blockades, and brute force. **While the spirit of May Day endured—in the rain-soaked defiance of Kadıköy—it did so under siege.**



Kanal İstanbul: Erdoğan's Megaproject Back on the Table

Türkiye's government has renewed its push for Kanal İstanbul, a massive artificial waterway designed to link the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloğlu confirmed this week that the project will proceed once financing is secured, despite previous delays and widespread opposition.

The canal has been one of President Erdoğan's most ambitious and controversial infrastructure proposals. **Environmental groups and scientists have long warned that it could destroy freshwater resources, increase salinity levels in nearby lakes, and wreak havoc on local ecosystems. Many fear that building such a massive project near active fault lines would increase the city's vulnerability to earthquakes.**

Critics also point out that Kanal İstanbul would create an alternative to the Bosphorus Strait, effectively bypassing the Montreux Convention—a move that **could invite greater foreign military presence and raise geopolitical tensions.** Beyond its environmental and security risks, the project is seen by many as a **vehicle for speculative urban development, opening vast tracts of public land to private construction and luxury housing.**

For much of İstanbul's population, Kanal İstanbul has come to represent more than just a canal—it's **a symbol of political power ignoring public opposition and environmental responsibility in favor of profit and control.**



“Erdoğan's Statement on CHP Seen as Evidence of Authoritarian Rule

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stirred fresh controversy on April 30 with his remarks targeting the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). Referring to rising political ambitions within the party, Erdoğan said: **“Let's see how many more CHP politicians perish on their way to the presidency.”**

The comment was widely perceived as a **veiled threat** and has sparked backlash among critics who see it not merely as hostile rhetoric but as further evidence of Türkiye's slide into authoritarianism under Erdoğan's rule.

The statement has drawn widespread condemnation. Many commentators and social media users criticized Erdoğan's use of the word **“telef” — a term often associated with the loss of animals or wartime casualties — arguing that it dehumanizes political opponents.** The remark is seen by many as a dangerous escalation in political discourse and a reflection of the toxic and polarized political atmosphere in Türkiye.

Political analysts argue that such rhetoric is not just an isolated outburst but part of a broader pattern of democratic backsliding. While Erdoğan's supporters frame such remarks as political tough talk, critics contend they **demonstrate a leadership style that delegitimizes opposition and systematically silences dissent — hallmarks of authoritarian governance.**

CHP's İstanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, widely considered a key opposition figure and potential presidential contender, responded sharply to Erdoğan's words. He described the statement as **“perhaps the most horrifying confession ever made by a president in the history of the Republic.”. “This is not just a statement. It's a confession. It is the clearest expression of the mindset that sees politics as a battlefield, and rivals as disposable.”**



Türkiye's labor underutilization reaches pandemic level

Türkiye's labor underutilization **climbed to 28.8%**, its highest level since the pandemic peaks, leaving over **11.5 million people under-employed or out of work**, even as the narrow unemployment rate edged down to 7.9% and total employment grew. **Youth unemployment also ticked up to 15.1%.**

Fahrettin Altun’s ‘Instruction’ to politicians and commentators

A confidential memo from **Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun**—often dubbed “the Goebbels of the AKP regime” by critics—has surfaced, **detailing how pro-government lawmakers and media figures should spin five politically sensitive issues.**

The document was exposed by CHP leader Özgür Özel during a public rally, where he displayed screenshots of the memo.

The memo, originally reported by independent outlet TR724, offers **detailed instructions on how to shape public discourse** on controversial topics. Below are the issues and corresponding messaging directives translated into English:

- **Earthquake Accountability Debate:** *Frame it strictly as an urban transformation issue. Blame CHP for obstructing renewal projects.*
- **Cyprus “Falyali Tape” Scandal:** *Depict the leaked video as part of a FETÖ and foreign intelligence operation. If necessary, frame it as a mafia-opposition plot. Avoid prolonged discussion.*
- **Istanbul Corruption Allegations:** *Emphasize every detail. Keep “tape” allegations in the spotlight. Accuse the opposition of evasion. Assert judicial independence, and prepare counter-narratives against expected criticism of the courts.*



- **May Day / Taksim Protests:** *Highlight and criminalize supposed terrorist affiliations of groups insisting on marching to Taksim Square.*
- **Kurdish Peace Process Narrative:** *Promote the idea of a “Terror-Free Türkiye.” Emphasize that armed militants were forced to lay down arms without negotiations or concessions. Situate the initiative within a broader regional security context.*

The revelation has sparked widespread outrage among opposition figures, who **accuse the government of orchestrating a propaganda machine to distort public perception and undermine democratic debate.**

Altun later confirmed the authenticity of the document, describing it as “**guidance for accurate information,**” and asserted that his team would not be “intimidated” by the backlash.

Human Rights Violations in Marmara-Region Prisons, January – March 2025

- 4 – Threats to life (including suicide attempts & direct safety threats)
- 132+ – Denials or delays of medical care and other health-care violations
- 49+ – Inadequate food, water, hygiene or basic living conditions
- 500 – Incidents of torture, physical assault, degrading or humiliating treatment
- 140 – Isolation, communication bans and other contact-restriction violations
- 26 – Obstacles to accessing justice (petitions unanswered, filings blocked)
- 90 – Disciplinary or sentence-execution abuses undermining fair-trial rights
- 941 – Total violations reported directly by prisoners during the period
- 308 – Additional violations documented through media monitoring
- 1,249+ – Overall human-rights violations recorded in just three months



Prisoners in Türkiye’s Prisons, IHD Report (April 28 2025)

- 335 – Prisoners classed as severely ill; 230 cannot live independently and 105 need daily assistance
- 517 – Prisoners whose medical files are incomplete, leaving illness severity undetermined
- 122 – Cancer patients under treatment, post-surgery or investigation
- 295 – Prisoners diagnosed with heart diseases (arrhythmia, failure, coronary, valve disorders)
- 126 – Prisoners living with diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2)
- 173 – Prisoners suffering serious eye conditions (vision loss, glaucoma, other disorders)
- 153 – Ear-, hearing- or speech-impairment cases requiring medical follow-up
- 103 – Orthopedic injuries, amputations or infection cases generating mobility issues
- 100 – Prisoners with liver diseases (hepatitis, failure and related conditions)
- 94 – Prisoners with severe mental-health disorders (schizophrenia, depression, suicide attempts)
- 84 – Tuberculosis or COPD respiratory cases requiring long-term care
- 1,412+ – Prisoners with documented serious illnesses (161 women, 1,251 men)



Follow us on social media

Instagram: @direnamerika
 X: @direnamerika
 Bluesky: @direnamerika.bsky.social

