

# Breaking News from Türkiye

## Turkish Opposition Leader Özgür Özel Attacked by Man Convicted of Killing His Own Children

Özgür Özel, the leader of Türkiye's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), was physically assaulted on May 4, 2025, after attending a memorial service for the late MP Sırrı Süreyya Önder at Istanbul's Atatürk Cultural Center. The assaulter, 66-year-old Selçuk Tengioğlu, struck Özel in the face in front of cameras and bystanders before being quickly apprehended by security forces.

**Tengioğlu is a convicted murderer who served 16 years in prison for killing two of his own children. He was released on parole in 2020 as part of a Covid-19 amnesty backed by the ruling AKP-MHP coalition.** The release included murderers like Tengioğlu; however, it excluded political prisoners.

Further investigation revealed that Tengioğlu previously shared a prison cell with Ogün Samast, the ultra-nationalist convicted of murdering prominent Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in 2007. This revelation has intensified concerns over the attacker's connections and motives.

While Tengioğlu claimed the assault was a personal act tied to alleged grievances, opposition officials rejected his narrative. According to CHP representatives, he had been receiving municipal aid for the past eight months and was never denied assistance. They suggest his statements and the timing of the attack raise suspicions of political provocation.

"This was not just a slap, it was a calculated message," said one CHP official, noting that Tengioğlu had waited near the VIP exit for an extended period before the incident. **The attack, widely condemned across political lines, has drawn attention to the government's parole policies and the possible political manipulation of convicted criminals.**

The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating the incident, including whether there was a lapse in security or deeper political motivations behind the assault.

**As Türkiye continues to grapple with deepening political polarization, the assault on a prominent opposition leader by a convicted child killer with ties to one of the country's most politically charged assassinations has sent shockwaves through the public and press alike.**



Halkin Medyasi (Instagram)

## European Parliament Freezes Türkiye's EU Accession Talks Over Democratic Decline

On May 7, 2025, the European Parliament voted to permanently freeze Türkiye's EU accession process, citing severe democratic backsliding, erosion of the rule of law, and suppression of fundamental rights. The resolution, passed with 367 votes, underscores that Türkiye's geopolitical importance cannot compensate for its departure from democratic norms.

The Parliament expressed deep concern over the Turkish government's disproportionate crackdowns on peaceful protests, rapid trials lacking evidence, and increasing pressure on critical voices. Notably, **political attacks on Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu were highlighted as attempts to prevent legitimate opposition participation in elections.**

This decision reflects the EU's stance that Türkiye's current trajectory under President Erdoğan's administration is incompatible with the bloc's democratic values, effectively halting the accession process that began in 1999.



## Musk's X Suspends Erdoğan's Rival's Account

*Where is freedom of speech, Elon?*

X's compliance with Türkiye court orders has escalated: since March, the platform has **"withheld" hundreds of protest-related profiles**—many visible abroad but invisible inside Türkiye—including, on 8 May, the 10-million-follower account of jailed Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. The unprecedented takedown of a sitting elected official triggered an immediate backlash: **thousands of people switched their profile photos to his silenced avatar** and accused owner Elon Musk of aiding political censorship.

X posted the court order and said it is challenging the ban but must obey for now or risk a nationwide shutdown; such appeals could take years. **Transparency filings show the company now honors roughly 86 percent of Turkish takedown requests, up from 68 percent before Elon Musk's takeover.**

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya claims **326 "incitement" accounts have been identified, leading to 54 arrests**, while police detained 343 people in one night of protests. **Activists told Politico that many handles vanished once individual tweets crossed the multi-million-view mark**, fueling accusations that the **platform now complies with nearly every Turkish takedown demand despite Musk's "free-speech absolutist" claims.**

In protest, Turkish journalists, artists, and youth groups are decamping to Bluesky, the decentralized micro-blogging service built on Jack Dorsey's AT Protocol. Bluesky, which added three million users after Brazil briefly banned X last year and now counts more than 27 million accounts worldwide, promises algorithmic transparency and harder-to-enforce court blocks. **However, it's been reported that Bluesky has withheld multiple accounts and posts. These have sparked discussions about freedom of speech on social media.**



X: @ekrem\_imamoglu



birgun.net

## Esila Ayık's Detention Continues Despite Health Concerns

On May 8, 2025, a Turkish court decided to continue the detention of university student **Esila Ayık, who was arrested on April 8 for holding a sign reading "Dictator Erdoğan"** during a protest in Kadıköy. **Despite medical reports indicating that Ayık is unfit for incarceration due to health issues**, including a statement from the Istanbul Medical Chamber, **the court maintained her detention.** Her lawyer, Göksun Canberk Uluğ, highlighted that Ayık has been **held for a month without formal charges, as the case file is still pending approval from the Ministry of Justice.** This decision has sparked criticism from human rights advocates, who argue that Ayık's continued detention without formal charges and despite medical advice violates her rights and underscores concerns about freedom of expression in Türkiye.

Ayık's classmates and professors at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KASK) in Ghent, Belgium, have also rallied for her freedom, emphasizing the urgency of her medical needs and her right to continue her education. They have organized awareness campaigns and reached out to human rights organizations to amplify her plight. They also started an Instagram account under the handle **@JusticeforEsila.** This account serves as a hub for updates on Ayık's condition, legal proceedings, and international support efforts.

**This international support underscores the growing concern over Ayık's detention and the broader implications for human rights and freedom of expression in Türkiye.**

## “Justice for All” Exhibit in Los Angeles: 2,000 Visitors, Protest Photos from 33 Cities

Photos from 33 cities across three continents—from Istanbul to Sydney, Amsterdam to New York—were presented. Visitors engaged actively through projected interviews with protestors and interactive elements such as a “wishing tree” where they could leave messages.



Held on **May 3–4** as part of Los Angeles’ largest open studio event, the **Brewery Artwalk**, the **Justice for All photo exhibition** attracted nearly 2,000 visitors over two days. The show spotlighted the global wave of protests that followed the **March 2025 arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu**, featuring 72 photographs and a video collage capturing both the events and the international solidarity they sparked.



Curator Aydın Tuna Palabıyıkoglu emphasized that the exhibit was created to support and amplify the voices of youth and protestors in Turkey.

Throughout the event, **volunteers in Pikachu costumes** distributed the Resistance Gazette, a zine summarizing the chain of events from the diploma scandal to İmamoğlu’s ongoing imprisonment. The costumes drew significant attention from attendees—**99% of whom were either American or immigrants living in the U.S.** Some recognized the reference to the viral video of a Pikachu-costumed protestor fleeing police in Turkey, while others said this was their first time learning about İmamoğlu or the protest wave that began in March. **Many noted striking parallels between authoritarian trends in Turkey and those emerging in their own countries.**

For more information visit <https://hakhukukadaletsergi.com/>



## Youth Manifesto At Beyazıt: We Will Not Abandon The Streets Until The Problems Are Solved

At the 8 May 2025 CHP rally in Istanbul’s Beyazıt Square, thousands of university students read a “**Youth Manifesto.**” They begin by addressing “all the people of Turkey,” saying they have grown up under President Erdoğan’s rule, struggled with poverty, lost friends to workplace accidents, and learned to fight for a dignified and free future from campus barricades to city squares.. Their 11 demands are:

- **Release all political prisoners, starting with Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu;**
- **Return trustee-run municipalities to their elected mayors;**
- **Dismiss police officers and governors responsible for blocking peaceful protests or committing abuse;**
- **Free everyone detained solely for non-violent demonstrations and eliminate all obstacles to the right of assembly;**
- **Lift de facto bans and police blockades on squares such as Taksim, Saraçhane, ODTÜ, Kızılay and Çaglayan;**
- **End political pressure on education: cancel Istanbul University’s diploma annulments, curb YÖK’s control, recognise demands for free and autonomous universities, halt harassment of high schools, and reinstate exiled teachers;**
- **Re-implement the Istanbul Convention and halt discriminatory policies against women and LGBTI+ people;**
- **Return land to Samandağ earthquake victims and investigate the injustices they suffered;**
- **Abandon the Kanal Istanbul megaproject;**
- **Free jailed city-planning experts and Istanbul Metropolitan staff so the city can prepare for earthquakes;**
- **Have every official who took or enforced unlawful decisions resign immediately and face a fair trial.**

They declare that until these issues are resolved and those responsible are held to account, they “will not abandon the streets, the campuses or the squares.” Concluding that the **present political-judicial order has lost legitimacy**, they urge President Erdoğan and his ministers to resign and call for early parliamentary elections, vowing to continue raising their voices for an honourable future.



en.haberler.com

## Court Upholds Controversial Stray Dog Law Amid Public Outcry

On May 7, 2025, Türkiye's Constitutional Court upheld a contentious law **mandating the removal of stray dogs from public spaces**. Enacted in 2024, the legislation requires municipalities to capture, shelter, vaccinate, and neuter stray dogs, making them available for adoption. Dogs deemed terminally ill or dangerous may be euthanized. The main opposition party, CHP, challenged the law, arguing **it violated animal rights and the right to life**. However, the court dismissed the petition, allowing the law to remain in effect.

Animal rights activists have expressed concerns that **the law could lead to mass killings, especially given the lack of adequate shelter facilities**. Protests erupted outside the court, with demonstrators holding signs like "Annul the law, let animals live."

**Reports have emerged of stray dogs being killed in some parts of Türkiye following the law's enactment**. Activists claim that, due to insufficient shelter capacity and funding, **some municipalities have resorted to euthanizing dogs under the pretext of illness or danger**.

With an estimated **4 million stray dogs** in Türkiye, the implementation of this law places significant pressure on municipalities to act, raising questions about animal welfare and public safety.



Bianet.org

## Political Intimidation Spreads to CHP Leader's Family

On May 6, 2025, Turkish authorities arrested a 23-year-old man, identified as M.A., in the Of district of Trabzon. M.A. had **shared the home address of Ipek Özel, daughter of CHP Chairman Özgür Özel, on social media, accompanied by threatening messages**. The suspect was charged with "threat" and "inciting hatred and enmity among the public" and was arrested following court proceedings.

The threats emerged **shortly after Özgür Özel was physically attacked** at the funeral ceremony of Sırrı Süreyya Önder, a former deputy speaker of the Turkish parliament. In response to these incidents, **Özgür Özel stated that his party had received threats prior to the attack and emphasized their commitment to standing firm against intimidation**.



AP Photo/Francisco Seco, file

## "Not Safe Inside": Queer Activist Faces Harassment and Medical Neglect in Custody

On May 2, 2025, LGBTI+ activist Asya Gökalp was arrested in İzmir over social media posts and charged with "inciting hatred and enmity." Her lawyer, Deniz Can Aydın, contends that the arrest is legally unfounded, arguing that her comments did not pose a real and present threat capable of inciting crime.

Since her detention, **Gökalp has reportedly faced harassment from prison staff and fellow inmates due to her gender identity**. She has been placed in an overcrowded temporary cell with 16 people in a space designed for 10, leading to unsanitary conditions. Shortly after her arrival, **Gökalp suffered a seizure attributed to the lack of access to her epilepsy medication and the poor environment**. She was hospitalized, received IV treatment, and her prescriptions were renewed. However, the incident underscores the **severity of her health condition and the inadequate care provided in custody**.

Aydın emphasizes that the charge does not warrant pre-trial detention and calls for Gökalp's immediate release, citing serious health concerns and claims of harassment in prison due to her gender identity.

## Osman Kavala Awarded the Goethe Medal

Osman Kavala, a Turkish businessman and human rights advocate currently imprisoned in Türkiye, has been named one of the recipients of Germany's prestigious Goethe Medal for 2025. The Goethe Medal is one of Germany's highest honors, awarded annually by the Goethe-Institut to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to international cultural exchange.

Kavala, who has been incarcerated since 2017 and was sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment in connection with the Gezi Park protests, is among three laureates selected for the 70th edition of the award. The other recipients are Chinese linguist Li Yuan and Belgian author David Van Reybrouck.

The award ceremony is scheduled to take place on August 28, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's birthday, during the Kunstfest Weimar festival. The medals will be presented by Goethe-Institut President Gesche Joost in a public event celebrating the laureates' contributions to cultural dialogue.

In announcing the awardees, Joost emphasized the importance of individuals who foster cultural understanding, especially during times when democratic values are under pressure globally. She described Kavala as "a tireless intellectual and pioneering figure" who, despite his imprisonment, continues to contribute significantly to peace and societal reconciliation. Joost highlighted Kavala's dedication to creating cultural spaces and strengthening civil society networks in the region.



<https://stockholmcf.org/>

## Human Rights Violations Against Journalists in April

36 — Journalists in prison as of 30 Apr 2025

8 — Journalists arrested

1 — Journalist assaulted while working

1 — Journalist threatened by police

47 — Journalists who stood trial in April

6 — Journalists sentenced (total 9y 6m 4d prison)

5 — New investigations opened

13 — Ongoing investigations that became indictments

172 — Social-media accounts blocked

4 — Whole websites censored



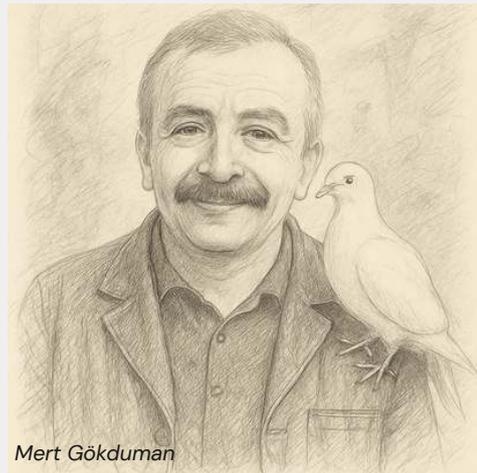
Photo via Üsküdar Municipality

## AKP Council Member Resigns Amid Crackdown on Istanbul Municipality

Ekrem Baki, a city council member from Istanbul's Üsküdar district, has resigned from President Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). He protested the government's intensifying and politically motivated crackdown on the opposition-led Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB). His resignation is notable as one of the first public acts of dissent from within AKP ranks during this campaign.

Baki's departure highlights growing unease within the ruling party over using state power to suppress democratic opposition. Critics argue that the investigations targeting İBB officials are part of a broader authoritarian shift aimed at dismantling local democratic governance in Turkey's largest city.

## Sırrı Süreyya Önder (1962-2025)



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