

Breaking News from Türkiye

Prosecutors Target Opposition Leader Özgür Özel

Criminal probe was opened against Özgür Özel for "threatening" and "insulting" İstanbul's chief prosecutor after mass detentions.

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Five CHP Mayors Suspended and Jailed

The Interior Ministry jailed five more CHP mayors, bringing the post-election total to 11 jailed CHP majors.

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Persistent gender-based violence

Bianet logged 26 femicides, 68 assaults, and rising forced prostitution in May 2025, highlighting Türkiye's failure to curb violence against women after exiting the Istanbul Convention.

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Erdogan Blames Women and LGBTQ+ for Low Birthrates

Critics point to economic hardship, poor childcare support, and political instability as the real causes.

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Grup Yorum Turns Censorship on its Head by Giving Away its Music

After hundreds of videos were blocked, Grup Yorum posted all 21 albums online, turning censorship into resistance

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Indictment Approved in Disputed CHP Congress Case

Ankara court accepted an indictment seeking prison & political bans for 12 senior CHP figures the opposition calls "judicial engineering."

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Gezi memorial: 95 detained

On the 12th anniversary of the Gezi Protests, hundreds defied police blockades in Taksim to demand justice, leading to 95 arrests after heavy-handed intervention.

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The five opposition mayors arrested in the latest wave of detentions: Hasan Akgün (Büyükcçekmece), Utku Caner Çaykara (Avcılar), Hakan Bahçetepe (Gaziosmanpaşa), Kadir Aydar (Ceyhan), Oya Tekin (Seyhan)

Photo Credit: Ekonomim

İmamoğlu's Accusers Face Corruption and Fraud Probes

İmamoğlu diploma critics face fraud probes, exposing academic double standards

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EU Türkiye Rapporteur: 'İmamoğlu case entirely fabricated'

EU rapporteur Nacho Sánchez Amor visited jailed İstanbul mayor İmamoğlu, condemning the corruption case as "completely fabricated" and evidence of Türkiye's politicised judiciary.

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OP-ED



Opinion | The Economic Fallout of March 19: The Price of Authoritarianism

The arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu sparked a financial shock, draining reserves and shaking investor confidence. More than short-term damage, it marks a deeper break from rule of law, at the cost of economic stability.

Commentary | Why CHP Cities Are Quitting the TDBB?

CHP municipalities are leaving the Union of Turkish World Municipalities, citing cost, but also rejecting Erdoğan's use of it as a nationalist showcase. Their exits show how quickly civilizational slogans collapse without democratic legitimacy.

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Prosecutors Move Against Main Opposition Leader Özel



Photo: Medyascope

Istanbul's Chief Prosecutor's Office announced on June 5 that it had opened a criminal investigation into Republican People's Party (CHP) chair Özgür Özel for allegedly “**threatening** a public official to obstruct a judicial duty” (TCK 106) and “**publicly insulting** a public official” (TCK 125) after he castigated Chief Prosecutor Akin Gürlek during a rally in the Gaziosmanpaşa district the previous evening. Özel had denounced recent mass detentions of CHP officials, warning Gürlek to “pull yourself together” and vowing to “tear it all apart” if the raids continue.

Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç rushed to defend the judiciary, calling Özel's language “an open attack on the rule of law” and insisting that “no one can direct judges and prosecutors through threats.” Pro-government media echoed Tunç, while CHP spokesperson Deniz Yücel dismissed the probe as “**a textbook case of judicial harassment**” aimed at silencing criticism of politically charged investigations.

The case deepens tensions ignited by the 19 March jailing of Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's most prominent rival. Since that arrest, eleven CHP mayors have been removed from office, and dozens of municipal employees are behind bars. Ankara continues using prosecution against dissident voices. The nation continues **demanding judicial independence and İmamoğlu's release.**

Fifth Wave of Suspensions Targets Five More CHP Mayors in What Critics Call a Coordinated Crackdown



On June 5, Türkiye's Interior Ministry suspended five more opposition mayors—Utku Caner Çaykara (Avcılar), Hasan Akgün (Büyükdere), Hakan Bahçetepe (Gaziosmanpaşa), Kadir Aydar (Ceyhan), and Oya Tekin (Seyhan)—citing ongoing corruption investigations linked to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB). One day earlier, an Istanbul criminal court had ordered the release of all five detainees, along with 17 other suspects, in what prosecutors describe as the “fifth wave” of operations targeting an alleged kickback network run by contractor **Aziz İhsan Aktaş.**

Interior Ministry officials invoked Article 127 of the Constitution and Article 47 of the Municipal Law, which allow the minister to remove elected local officials under investigation. These suspensions come in addition to the **arrests of 22 İBB-linked individuals** this week, bringing the total to **eleven CHP mayors** who have been **imprisoned** since the March 31, 2024, local elections, which put most of Türkiye's major cities under opposition control. Replacement trustees are expected to be appointed within days.

CHP officials have condemned the detentions as “**political hostage-taking,**” aimed at dismantling their urban power base and intimidating other municipalities that support the imprisoned Istanbul Mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu. Rights groups point out that the arrests coincide with a new investigation into CHP leader Özgür Özel, reinforcing concerns about a coordinated campaign to criminalize dissent, one that mirrors earlier purges of Kurdish-led councils.



Photo: Stockholmcf

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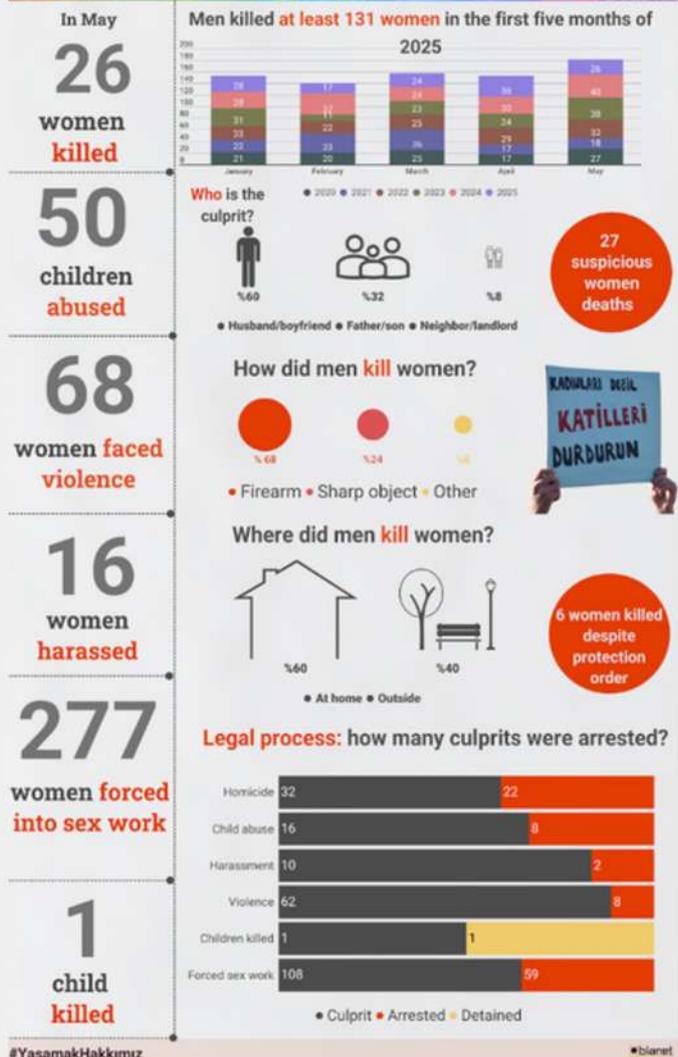
Persistent Gender-Based Violence Laid Bare by May's Femicide Tally

Bianet's **May 2025 Male-Violence Monitoring Report** confirms that at least **26 women and one girl were murdered by men last month**, while a further **68 women suffered non-fatal assaults and 50 children were sexually abused**. The watchdog collates cases from local newspapers, news agencies, and court records; its figures are widely used because Türkiye no longer publishes an official femicide database.

Key patterns remain depressingly familiar. **Six victims had active protection orders**, underscoring chronic enforcement failures. Partners or ex-partners accounted for 16 killings and male relatives for seven. Most murders (16) were committed inside the victim's home; firearms were used in 17 cases, and knives in seven. Twelve women were killed for trying to leave or refusing reconciliation, while the motive was unreported in half the cases.

Geographically, the violence spanned 15 provinces, with Istanbul (3) and Adana (3) topping the list. The report also logged **277 women forced into prostitution**—a near-tenfold jump from May 2024, plus 27 "suspicious" female deaths still under investigation.

Cumulatively, the first five months of 2025 show **131 femicides**, only marginally below last year's pace of 159. Advocates argue that the government's focus on public-order crackdowns, coupled with its 2021 withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, is hindering efforts to prevent violence. With parliament debating a new judicial reform package that largely ignores gender-based crimes, rights groups warn that Türkiye is drifting further from its international obligations to protect women and children from violence.



As Birthrates Fall, Erdoğan Blames Women and LGBTQ+ Individuals

President Erdoğan has declared 2026 the start of Türkiye's "Decade of the Family," following 2025's designation as the "Year of the Family," **urging women to have at least three children**. Despite financial incentives for newlyweds, Türkiye's birth rate has dropped to 1.48, below the replacement level and lower than many Western countries, including France, Britain, and the United States.

Erdoğan blames women and LGBTQ+ individuals for the decline, calling the trend "a disaster." Critics argue that economic hardship, political instability, lack of childcare support, and soaring education costs are the real drivers. Feminist voices warn that scapegoating marginalized groups ignores policy failures fueling the country's demographic crisis.

Türkiye faces **high inflation, soaring education costs, and youth unemployment—officially at 15% but estimated as high as 37.5%**—the government is focusing on reducing Caesarean births rather than addressing economic hardship. A new ban on elective C-sections aims to boost birth rates, but critics say it infringes on women's rights. Doctors cite safety and efficiency, while others highlight a lack of sexual education and bodily autonomy.

Feminists argue policies are turning women into "**birthing machines**," ignoring urgent issues like gender-based violence and limited access to abortion. **Activists call for real reform that prioritizes women's health, safety, and freedom of choice.**



Grup Yorum Turns Censorship on its Head by Giving Away its Music



Photo: Politikyol

Grup Yorum, Türkiye's four-decade-old protest folk collective, has answered the latest wave of online bans by putting its **entire catalog** on the open web. On May 31, the band posted a Drive link to **all 21 albums** and urged listeners to mirror the files under the hashtag **#GrupYorumBenim** ("Grup Yorum is me"). The move follows a decision by the Information and Communications Authority to block **454 of the group's YouTube uploads, 56 channels totaling 205 million views**, and the quiet removal of its tracks from Spotify, where it still counted **407,000 monthly listeners**.

"**Censorship cannot silence us; it multiplies our songs**," the band wrote on X, calling for "**collective resistance against the bans**." The solidarity campaign quickly gained momentum across Turkish social media, drawing support from musicians' unions and digital rights groups.

Formed in Istanbul in 1985, Grup Yorum has weathered systematic repression: **over 400 lawsuits, the jailing of 15 members**, and the death of two musicians during hunger strikes protesting their treatment. Yet its mass appeal endures free "Fully Independent Türkiye" concerts in 2010-11 drew **crowds of up to 250,000**.

By giving away its music, the collective aims to turn "a tool of erasure into a bridge of solidarity."

Prosecutors Seek Up to Three Years for 12 CHP Figures, Including İmamoğlu



Ankara's 26th Criminal Court has accepted a **controversial indictment against 12 senior CHP figures**—including jailed **Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu** and **İzmir Mayor Cemil Tugay**—accusing them of "manipulating" the party's leadership vote in November 2023.

Prosecutors claim delegates were offered municipal jobs, candidacies, cash, and shopping cards to support Özgür Özel's candidacy. The 52-page indictment, based on vague witness statements and state-sourced documents, **seeks up to 3 years in prison and political bans** under Türkiye's Political Parties Law and Penal Code.

The accused include Beşiktaş's former mayor, **Rıza Akpolat**, **Istanbul CHP Chair Özgür Çelik**, and other key regional leaders. **Former CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is listed as a "victim"** despite not testifying.

CHP officials strongly deny the charges, calling them "**judicial engineering**" to **undermine the party's congress and weaken** Özel's leadership. İmamoğlu dismissed the allegations as "political fiction." A trial date will follow the court's preliminary review, with defense lawyers set to challenge the evidence and the venue.

This case is seen as part of the ruling party's broader strategy of delegitimizing and dismantling the opposition through politicized prosecutions.



Photo: sonkaleizmir



Gezi Commemoration Met with Heavy Police Crackdown: 95 Detained

On the anniversary of the Gezi Park protests, demonstrators in İstanbul defied heavy police presence and street closures to commemorate those killed, chanting slogans and honoring late MP Sırrı Süreyya Önder. Police cracked down on the march, detaining 95 people.



Photo: Evrim Kepenek/bianet



They Revoked İmamoğlu's Diploma—Now They're the Ones Under Fraud and Corruption Probes

On 18 March 2025, Istanbul University's board, acting on a report from **Turkiye's Council of Higher Education (YÖK, Yükseköğretim Kurulu)**, retroactively voided **Ekrem İmamoğlu's 1994 business-administration diploma**, a technical manoeuvre that barred the popular Istanbul mayor from entering the CHP's presidential primary and later underpinned his pre-trial detention. The two academics who pushed the ruling are now embroiled in their own ethics scandals. Prof. **Metin Dağdeviren**, an engineer sitting on YÖK's Oversight Board and the first signatory of the annulment report, had a 2021 article **retracted** on 17 April 2025 by the Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems for **citation manipulation, incoherent AI-generated passages, and secret author-reviewer collusion**, the very kind of "deception" he accused İmamoğlu of committing. Meanwhile, **Prof. Osman Bülent Zülfikar**, the **rector of Istanbul University**, whose seal finalized the revocation, is under investigation by YÖK, which was opened on 3 June 2025, into ten allegations ranging from the private use of university vehicles to inflated payments for outsourced media services and defiance of court orders regarding illegal staff appointments. In short, the move that derailed İmamoğlu's presidential prospects rests on signatures from officials now themselves **accused of research fraud, nepotism, and misuse of public funds**, underscoring how Türkiye's higher-education bureaucracy can be weaponised to sideline democratic challengers while its gatekeepers flout the very ethical standards they claim to protect.



Photo: X@Ekrem Imamoglu



Photo: Euro News

EU Türkiye Rapporteur: 'The Case Against İmamoğlu Is Entirely Fabricated'



Nacho Sanchez Amor, the European Parliament's Standing Rapporteur on Türkiye, **visited Ekrem İmamoğlu**, presidential candidate of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and suspended Mayor of Istanbul, at Marmara Prison in Silivri on Friday.

Following the visit, Amor made strong statements to the press, **criticizing the ongoing corruption investigation** against İmamoğlu as "completely fabricated." He described the case as part of a broader pattern by the ruling AKP government **to eliminate political rivals through judicial means**.

"The Turkish government's strategy of removing opponents via politically motivated court cases is one of the **biggest obstacles to the country's EU accession process**," Amor stated.

İmamoğlu was arrested on March 23, just one day after his university diploma was controversially annulled. He was detained as part of a corruption probe widely seen as baseless and politically motivated.

Amor also recalled that İmamoğlu had defeated AKP candidates Binali Yıldırım and Murat Kurum in both the 2019 and 2024 local elections. "**What Yıldırım and Kurum could not achieve at the ballot box**, the AKP is now attempting to accomplish through backdoor tactics, this time using the politically directed Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office," he said.

MARCH 19 PLATFORM

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