

Breaking News from Türkiye

İBB Women Detainees Face Exile and Torture as Crackdown Widens

Dr. İpek Elif Atayman, detained since March 19, reports physical and psychological torture

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İmamoğlu's Expert-Witness Trial Postponed

İmamoğlu did not attend the hearing protesting the relocation of the hearing on short notice.

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Zafer Party Leader Ümit Özdağ to Remain in Prison

Zafer Party leader Ümit Özdağ will remain jailed as he faces trial in Türkiye for allegedly inciting public hatred, a case he claims is politically motivated due to his criticism of the government and PKK leadership talks.

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Turkish Mayor's Shocking Death Raises Fears of Foul Play

Troubled with the barred attendance of imprisoned Mayor İmamoğlu, has intensified concerns over political foul play and deepened Türkiye's growing political divide.

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Council Coup: AKP Flips Gaziosmanpaşa

İstanbul's Gaziosmanpaşa council installed an AKP member as acting mayor after the opposition CHP mayor was jailed

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Eurocities Honours İmamoğlu with Special Recognition Award

At the 2025 Eurocities Conference, Europe's city network honored jailed İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu with a Special Recognition Award

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Left to right: Dilek İmamoğlu, Kadriye Kasapoğlu, Elif Atayman

Child Labor Deaths in Türkiye

Hundreds of children in Türkiye are forced into dangerous work, with dozens dying each year. A new report exposes the deepening crisis of child labor and the state's role in making it invisible.

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Ministry Accused of Targeting Pro-İmamoğlu and Pro-LGBTI+ Performers

Türkiye's government is cancelling concerts by artists who support jailed İstanbul Mayor İmamoğlu or LGBTI+ rights, using venue bans to silence dissent in the cultural sphere.

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Türkiye overall:

14.1 million of
61.0 million voters
(23.3%) are not

governed by the mayor they voted for
→ approximately 1 in 4 voters



İstanbul:

1.8 million
11.4 million

(16.2%) are not governed
by district mayor they voted for
→ approximately 1 in 6 voters



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İBB Women Detainees Face Exile and Torture as Crackdown Widens



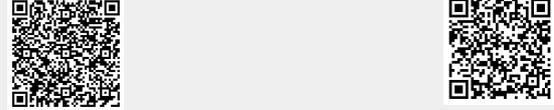
Photo: Bianet.org

Türkiye's escalating crackdown on Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) staff and opposition figures is drawing sharp human-rights condemnation. On 7 June 2025, **Dilek Kaya İmamoğlu**, wife of jailed Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, sent an **open letter to First Lady Emine Erdoğan**, denouncing the **group transfer of women political prisoners** from Silivri and Bakırköy to distant jails. She argued that uprooting mothers **hundreds of kilometres away** during the state-declared "Year of the Family" shatters family unity and urged Mrs. Erdoğan to intervene.

Her plea echoes the ordeal of **Dr İpek Elif Atayman**, former head of İBB's media company. Detained since March 19 on opaque corruption charges, Atayman was moved on June 5th from Silivri to Afyonkarahisar Prison, **420 km away, in a one-square-metre armored cage after a 7.5-hour trip** in shackles. She reports Atayman has been in solitary confinement for 72 days, sleeping on a **bare concrete floor, with ten-minute visit permits**, and bruised wrists from prolonged cuffing; **"physical and psychological torture,"** Mrs. Imamoğlu says. Atayman says that her prison cells are changed repeatedly.

At least 14 other İBB detainees, including **the mayor's private secretary, Kadriye Kasapoğlu**, were likewise sent to remote prisons just before Eid al-Adha, the religious holiday. Mayor İmamoğlu, held in Silivri prison, called the policy **"enemy criminal law"** aimed at breaking resistance. Rights groups warn that forced transfers, overcrowding, and degrading conditions are becoming routine instruments of political repression across Türkiye.

İmamoğlu's Expert-Witness Trial Postponed Amid Procedural Criticism



Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor **Ekrem İmamoğlu** faced a hearing on June 12 to address charges of "attempting to influence a judicial expert or witness" and "attempting to influence a fair trial", but the court postponed the trial until September 26.

The session was held inside Silivri Prison's Marmara Facility. İmamoğlu or his legal team didn't attend the hearing. They **protested the relocation of the hearing**, given only 23 hours' notice, to a prison **110 km outside İstanbul**. They argued that this move is unlawful.

The indictment stems from remarks made by İmamoğlu at a January 27 Saraçhane press conference titled "The bigger issue." He had accused a court-appointed expert of being biased. The said expert is allegedly involved in multiple investigations **against opposition-run municipalities**. "The prosecutors must surely be aware of this," he said.

Following those comments, İstanbul's Chief Public Prosecutor launched an investigation. The same week, **Halk TV executive Suat Toktaş** was arrested for broadcasting a phone conversation with the same expert and faces charges related to influencing a witness or revealing private communications. This case is **one of six ongoing investigations against İmamoğlu**, four of which have already resulted in formal trials. In a social media post, İmamoğlu criticized the process as procedurally flawed and said, **"I refuse to be part of such a process."**



Photo: Instagram / @Chp.Youth



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Zafer Party Leader Ümit Özdağ to Remain in Prison Pending Trial



Photo: Başka Gazete

Ümit Özdağ, leader of the Zafer Party, will remain in pre-trial detention after a court ruled against his release this week. Özdağ is facing charges of “**inciting public hatred and hostility**”, with prosecutors seeking a prison sentence of **1.5 to 4.5 years**.

The charges stem from social media posts and public statements, though Özdağ argues the actual reason for his arrest is political. In court, he stated that his detention was retaliation for criticizing alleged government negotiations with the outlawed PKK leadership, a highly sensitive subject in Türkiye.

“I have spent **142 days in solitary confinement**, this is a punishment reserved for an enemy,” Özdağ told the court, which convened at the Marmara Prison complex in Silivri. The hearing was marked by a heavy police presence and a tense atmosphere, with supporters from opposition parties, including **CHP and İYİ Party**, attending to show solidarity.

Human rights groups and political observers view the case as part of an ongoing crackdown on dissent in Türkiye, where **politically motivated prosecutions are increasingly used against opposition figures**. The next hearing is scheduled for **June 17**.

Until then, **Özdağ remains behind bars**, his case adding to the growing list of high-profile detentions that highlight the **shrinking space for political expression** in Türkiye.



Turkish Mayor's Shocking Death Raises Fears of Foul Play



Thousands gathered in **Manisa** this week to **mourn the sudden death of Ferdi Zeyrek, the city's Metropolitan Mayor**. He was fatally electrocuted at home when he tried to turn on the pool's electrical controls. The emotional funeral drew massive crowds and underscored political tensions already gripping Türkiye.

Zeyrek's daughter, Nehir, revealed troubling details: her father had expressed concerns about **faulty wiring the night before the incident, only to be reassured by a technician**. When he returned to restart the pool pump, without a flashlight or phone, he was electrocuted through his leg. Disturbingly, Nehir said he was still being electrocuted when found. Possibly implying that a residual-current device was either **missing or deliberately disabled**.

A subsequent **inspection** by the Chamber of Electrical Engineers uncovered multiple technical faults. Rumors persist that voltage may have been **intentionally increased** to bypass the circuit breaker, a move Nehir condemned as “disregarding human life” if proven. While authorities have **yet to confirm sabotage**, the possibility of deliberate murder now overshadows the case.

Meanwhile, the **Justice Ministry denied** jailed Istanbul Mayor **Ekrem İmamoğlu's request** for temporary release to attend Zeyrek's funeral, highlighting the country's deepening political divides. The tragedy has left Manisa and Türkiye searching for answers.



Photo: Turkish Minute



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Türkiye's Ruling AKP Seizes Gaziosmanpaşa in İstanbul After Mayor's Arrest



Credit: BBC Türkçe

"On June 11th, during a local council vote, Türkiye's ruling party seized control of a key İstanbul district, Gaziosmanpaşa, after the **opposition mayor Hakan Bahçetepe was arrested**.

AKP member Eray Karadeniz was selected as **interim mayor**, replacing rightfully elected Hakan Bahçetepe, who was jailed on allegations the week before.

The takeover follows a blitz of detentions that has already **removed 8 of the city's 40 CHP mayors** and put metropolitan mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu behind bars since March. Five district mayors, including Bahçetepe and his counterparts in Avclar and Büyükçekmece, were ordered to pre-trial detention on June 4th as part of the fifth wave of a sweeping "corruption probe" targeting İstanbul Municipality officials.

Rights outlet Bianet reports that **11 CHP mayors** nationwide are now **in prison**, most of whom are from İstanbul. CHP maintains a majority of the votes of council members in all ten municipalities. Gaziosmanpaşa is the first district where the council handed the city over to the AKP. Observers compare the strategy to Ankara's long-used "**government-imposed caretaker**" policy against pro-Kurdish DEM municipalities. They warn that AKP aims to **reclaim İstanbul's lucrative local budgets** before the 2026 parliamentary election. Global Voices notes that the crackdown accelerated after İmamoğlu signaled a presidential bid and openly opposed the government's **Kanal İstanbul** mega-project.

CHP president Özgür Özel says President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is "**unlawfully seizing control of municipalities which he lost at the ballot box**". Özel is promising weekly "democracy vigils" until every detained mayor is freed and municipal authority is returned to rightfully elected officials.

Eurocities Honors Jailed İstanbul Mayor with Special Recognition Award



At the **Eurocities Conference 2025** in Braga on June 10, Europe's largest network of cities presented a **Special Recognition Award** to representatives of **Ekrem İmamoğlu, the imprisoned Mayor of İstanbul**. Accepting on his behalf, Muğla Mayor Ahmet Aras told more than 400 delegates that the prize "sends a clear message of solidarity from Europe. It stands for justice and democratic values in our country."

İmamoğlu has been detained since March on made-up charges he calls politically motivated. He addressed the hall via a prerecorded video from Silivri Prison: "I speak to you from behind prison walls, not because I committed any crime, but because I dared to pursue a vision: **a city that is inclusive, creative, green and just**," he said. The mayor urged European counterparts to "remain united" in defending democratic principles and human dignity.

Newly elected Eurocities President **Mathias De Clercq**, the Mayor of Ghent, Belgium, reinforced that message, declaring that the network "must continue to call for the release of Mayor İmamoğlu" as part of its broader commitment to human-rights advocacy.

The award comes amid a broad **crackdown on opposition mayors** in Türkiye: at least **a dozen CHP leaders have been jailed or suspended** since last year, and İstanbul's municipal council chambers are under sustained political pressure. By spotlighting İmamoğlu's case, Eurocities signals that European municipalities view the **detention of elected local leaders** as a direct challenge to democratic norms and intend to keep the issue on the international agenda until İmamoğlu is free to resume his mandate.



Photo: eurocities.eu



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Child Labor in Türkiye: Invisible Deaths, Silent Cries



Photo: bianet.org

At least **770 children—including 261 aged 5 to 14—have died in workplace accidents** in Türkiye over the past 12 years, according to a new report by Health and Safety Labor Watch (İSiG). Released on **World Day Against Child Labor (June 12)**, the report warns that child labor is deepening due to AKP's neoliberal economic policies and lack of oversight. İSiG estimates that 60 to 70 child workers die annually, while thousands more suffer injuries and lasting harm.

Although official data downplays the problem, İSiG states that child labor is widespread and often made invisible. Their figures show a consistent toll: **71 child deaths in 2024**, with 28 deaths already recorded in the first five months of 2025. Over **34%** of all deaths involve children **aged 5–14**, with **53 victims as young as 5 to 9**.

Children under 14, legally banned from working, are still employed in hazardous, unregulated sectors. The youngest typically work in seasonal agriculture, street vending, textiles, and construction. Older children (15–17) increasingly enter urban industry and services through state programs like MESEM and Türkiye's expanding organized industrial zones.

Most **child workers are unregistered, uninsured, and without union protections**. Migrant children, especially Syrian, are disproportionately affected. İSiG calls for a total ban on child labor, reform of vocational education, and free public education that supports children's physical and mental development, urging a system rooted in science and principles based on human rights.



Ministry Targeting Pro- İmamoğlu and Pro- LGBTQIA+ Performers



Türkiye's Culture & Tourism Ministry has quietly barred a string of A-list pop stars from its summer **"Ancient Theatre" concert series after they voiced support for jailed İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu** and, in some cases, **LGBTQIA+ rights**. Investigative journalist Timur Soykan reports that officials telephoned promoters to warn that historic venues, such as Ephesus and Aspendos, would be off-limits unless specific names were dropped. The reported blacklist includes Yalın, Sertab Erener, Melek Mosso, Mabel Matiz, Cem Adrian, Melike Şahin, Gülşen, and Hadise; all had posted solidarity messages after İmamoğlu's arrest on 19 March on corruption charges.

Kaos GL, Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Assc., in Türkiye, notes that pro-government daily **Yeni Akit** celebrated the cancellations, **calling the artists "immoral"** because several have waved rainbow flags or spoken up for queer communities. The outlet concludes that homophobia, as well as political retaliation, lies behind the ministry's move. The ministry has issued no public explanation.

Critics say the tactic weaponises venue licences to punish dissent, attacking free expression just as opposition figures, like İmamoğlu, face prosecution or prison. Industry insiders warn that audiences will lose headline performers and that event organisers may self-censor to keep access to government-run venues. With nationwide attention already fixed on İmamoğlu's imprisonment, the **concert bans** deepen concerns that cultural life is becoming another front in Türkiye's **widening crackdown on opposition voices**.



Photo: sixt.com.tr



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