

Breaking News from Türkiye

Volunteer Roles in Forest Fire Response: Is It Enough?

Rising wildfire deaths in Türkiye expose critical shortages in trained personnel, equipment, and volunteer preparedness.

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Delayed Gear, Deadly Consequences: Seyitgazi Fire Reveals Budget Failures

Budget cuts delayed protective gear, contributing to 10 deaths in Seyitgazi wildfire and exposing deeper failures in wildfire preparedness.

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İmamoğlu's Criticism of the Government Over Forest Fires

İmamoğlu criticizes the government's wildfire response, urging transparency, depoliticized appointments, and investment in firefighting resources over political agendas.

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Forestry Union Warns of Strike as Staffing Crisis Deepens During Fire Season

Union leader Settar Aslan urges swift contract talks and 15,000 new hires, warning of a strike amid deadly wildfires and government inaction.

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Planes for Sale While Forests Burn

Eight firefighting planes remain grounded amid wildfire season due to THK's debt and government inaction, exposing deeper failures in emergency preparedness.

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Supreme Court Rules Berkin Elvan Not a 'Child'

The Supreme Court upheld a reduced sentence for officer Fatih Dalgali in the killing of 14-year-old Berkin Elvan, igniting backlash over impunity in protest-related deaths.

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CHP Joins Commission Requiring Qualified Majority

CHP joins the new "Terror-Free Türkiye" commission, urging broader democratic goals as other parties remain divided.

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Public Workers: Summary of 23 Years: Hunger, Poverty, Misery

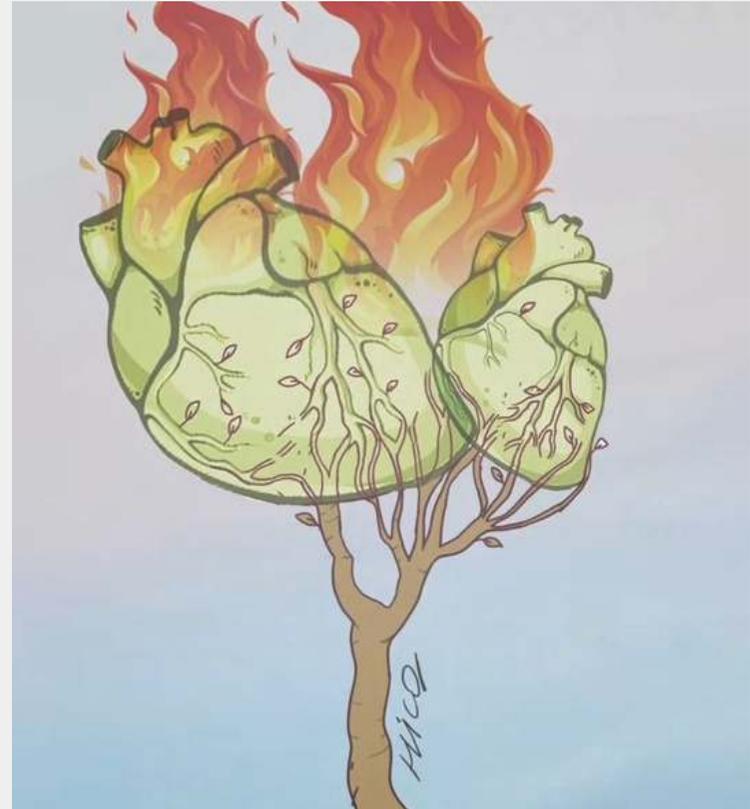
As labor talks stall, unions protest and announce strikes, demanding fair wages, job security, and dignity for millions of public workers and retirees.

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Türkiye's Idle Workforce Hits 33% Amid Rising Gender Gaps

Broad unemployment in Türkiye rose to 32.9% in June, with 11.6 million idle workers and deepening gender and youth disparities in the labor market.

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Top Court: Gezi Trial Violated Fair Trial Rights

The Constitutional Court ruled Tayfun Kahraman was denied a fair trial in the Gezi case, exposing the political misuse of Türkiye's judiciary to silence dissent.

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Erdoğan Halts Miners' Strike, Citing 'Security'

Erdoğan halted a miners' strike at Eti Maden citing "national security," drawing criticism for violating constitutional rights and suppressing organized labor.

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March 19 Platform Panel with Boğaziçi Students Detained After İmamoğlu Operation

ETwo Boğaziçi students spoke at a panel on the March 19 protests, highlighting youth discontent, political repression, and the call for real change beyond party lines.

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March 19 Platform Continues: Democracy Watch Panels Conversations for a Democratic Future

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Judicial Targeting and Democratic Backsliding: A Panel with CHP's Utku Çakırözer & Dr. Ceyhan İrgil
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What role do volunteers play in forest fire response and is there enough personnel to meet the demand?

In the past month, 16 people—including firefighters and volunteers—died battling wildfires in Türkiye, with four deaths in Bursa and 10 in Eskişehir and İzmir. These losses have reignited concerns about wildfire preparedness.

Experts cite a shortage of trained personnel, noting that while 13,000 forest workers are active, legal shift limits mean only part of them can work at once. They argue this number should be doubled to ensure proper coverage during emergencies.

Although protective gear is reportedly distributed annually, it is inconsistently used. Media reports and experts, including former forestry official Vehbi Tutmaz, warn that with better protection and training, many of these deaths could be avoided.

Wildfires have surged, with 3,797 recorded in 2024, destroying over 27,000 hectares and spreading into central regions like Eskişehir and Afyonkarahisar.

The closure of the İzmir Buca Fire Training Center in 2019 left a major training gap. Volunteers, allowed since a 2018 law change, often lack proper training and equipment. Experts stress that effective wildfire response depends on well-equipped and trained ground crews.

Protective Gear Arrives Too Late: Seyitgazi Deaths Expose Budget Failures

İsmail Saymaz details that Türkiye's fire-resistant uniforms for the year were only distributed after ten people — five forest workers and five AKUT volunteers — died in the Seyitgazi wildfire. As a result, new staff received old uniforms and many suppliers had still not delivered gear to the field. He emphasizes that the delay was tied to budget cuts and austerity, where the 2025 budget left no funds for issuing proper protective equipment to new seasonal workers.

Saymaz highlights that the Ministry of Treasury and Finance withheld staff recruitment funds, replacing retired experienced workers with meager seasonal hires lacking gear. Additionally, he points out that forest maintenance programs like silviculture and internal road construction were suspended due to lack of funds, weakening preparedness and emergency response capacity. The article underscores that fiscal restrictions led to reactive, unsafe practices directly impacting human lives.

İmamoğlu's Criticism of the Government Over Forest Fires: Do not Hide the Truth

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the imprisoned presidential candidate of CHP and Mayor of İstanbul, criticized the government over ongoing forest fires in Türkiye. Speaking through his Presidential Campaign Office, İmamoğlu accused the government of failing to grasp the severity of climate change and of responding to fires with empty, repetitive claims such as "We are the most prepared country for wildfires." He questioned why, if that were true, Türkiye continues to experience devastating wildfires every summer, destroying villages, nature, and wildlife.

He urged the government to be transparent and to stop hiding the truth, so shortcomings can be addressed together. He called for an end to political favoritism, demanding that qualified professionals familiar with local regions be appointed, not politically endorsed individuals.

İmamoğlu also emphasized the need to reallocate resources such as those used to undermine democracy towards firefighting aircraft and equipment. He urged the revitalization of the Turkish Aeronautical Association and encouraged cooperation with local governments regardless of political affiliation. "We can extinguish these fires together," he said, "but only if political bias and negligence end."



orduyenidonem.com.tr

The President of Öz Orman-İş Union Settar Aslan: We need to make a strike decision

Settar Aslan, President of the Öz Orman-İş Union, announced that unless negotiations on the Public Collective Labor Agreement Framework Protocol are concluded within 15–20 days, the union will be forced to make a strike decision. Speaking at a press conference at the union headquarters, Aslan also commemorated workers who died while fighting forest fires in Türkiye.

He highlighted that one-third of Türkiye is covered by forests, emphasizing the vital need to protect them for the sake of oxygen, biodiversity, and ecological balance. Aslan criticized the government's slow response to staffing needs and called on the Treasury and Finance Minister to urgently approve the General Directorate of Forestry's request for 15,000 new workers.

Aslan stressed that ground crews, not aircraft, are the most effective force in extinguishing fires and should be strengthened. He warned that failure to make a strike decision would mean losing union authority and restarting the entire collective bargaining process, affecting the rights of roughly 600,000 public sector workers.

He responded to concerns about striking during fire season by stating that procedural deadlines must be met. "If we don't make a decision, we lose our mandate," he said, calling for urgent completion of contract negotiations at the bargaining table.

Planes for Sale While Forests Burn

Murat Ağirel reveals that eight CL-215 amphibious firefighting planes owned by the Turkish Aeronautical Association (THK) were put up for sale through a court order, just as Türkiye entered wildfire season. These aircraft, previously vital to aerial firefighting, were seized due to THK's debts and listed for auction by Gökçen Aviation, a THK subsidiary. Estimated prices range from \$6 to \$6.6 million per plane, totaling over 1.4 billion TL.

Despite two auction attempts, no buyers came forward, leaving the planes grounded while fires rage across the country. Ağirel criticizes the government for allowing these critical assets to remain idle rather than restoring or integrating them into state firefighting fleets. He also questions the over-reliance on leased aircraft from abroad, often at high cost.

The situation reflects a broader institutional failure, where budgetary mismanagement and unresolved legal disputes have paralyzed firefighting capacity. Ağirel urges the government to prioritize public interest over privatization and legal inertia, warning that without action, the country's forests will continue to burn while its firefighting tools sit unused.



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Birgun

The Supreme Court has ruled that Berkin Elvan is not considered a 'Child'

In the case of police officer Fatih Dalgali, the Supreme Court of Türkiye upheld a 16-year, 8-month prison sentence for the killing of 14-year-old Berkin Elvan during the 2013 Gezi protests. The court ruled the act did not meet the criteria for "qualified intentional killing of a child" under Article 82/1-e of the Turkish Penal Code. It argued that Dalgali could not have known there was a child in the crowd, and thus should be sentenced as if he had killed an adult, under "probable intent" rather than premeditated murder. Two judges dissented, insisting Elvan's age should have elevated the charge to aggravated murder, requiring a life sentence.

Elvan was hit in the head by a tear gas canister fired from close range during a protest. Although the court acknowledged this, it concluded there was no intent to kill a child. Dalgali remained free and active in the police during the trial. The ruling sparked renewed outrage, seen as emblematic of impunity and lack of accountability in protest related deaths in Türkiye.

CHP Joins Commission Requiring Qualified Majority



BBC.com

CHP leader Özgür Özel announced that his party will join the new parliamentary commission in Türkiye's Grand National Assembly, which requires a three-fifths majority for decisions. Proposed by MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, the "Terror-Free Türkiye" commission will address major security and political issues.

The 51-member body will include 21 AKP, 10 CHP, four MHP, and four DEM Party members. Smaller parties will have one seat each. İYİ Party declined to join, claiming it could legitimize PKK and Öcalan's agenda.

Özel said CHP debated internally before deciding and will participate assertively. He argued the public should worry more about a commission without CHP. The party suggested renaming it to "Commission for Social Peace, Justice, and Democratic Consensus."

Set to begin work in early August, the commission was described by President Erdoğan as a national project beyond party politics. Parties such as EMEP, DSP, and HÜDA PAR confirmed their participation, while others remain undecided.

Public Workers: Summary of 23 Years: Hunger, Poverty, Misery

Labor and Social Security Minister Vedat Işıkhan's overseas trip. The negotiations will determine wage increases and employment rights for nearly 4 million civil servants and 2.5 million retirees. Representatives from Memur-Sen, Türkiye Kamu-Sen, and Birleşik Kamu-İş confederations participated. Birleşik Kamu-İş President Orhan Yıldırım criticized the last 23 years of governance, highlighting "hunger, poverty, and misery," and vowed not to leave workers' rights unaddressed at the table.

KESK, excluded from the talks, held a protest outside the ministry. Co-Chair Ayfer Koçak demanded wages above the poverty line, tax justice, and secure employment for public workers.

At Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ), public employees announced a strike starting August 7 after stalled negotiations. Tez-Koop-İş rejected the government's offer. YOL-İŞ also posted strike notices at key institutions, including the Highways Directorate. TÜRK-İŞ declared the first strike would begin at Eti Maden. The message is clear: not charity, but fair contracts and dignified lives.



Diken.com

One-third of Türkiye's Workforce is Idle, as Official Data has Revealed

In June, Türkiye's broad unemployment rate rose to 32.9%, with 11.6 million people classified as unemployed, underemployed, or available to work but not actively job-seeking, according to TurkStat. While the official unemployment rate stood at 8.6% (3.05 million people), the broader figure includes part-time workers seeking full-time jobs and those not actively seeking employment. The idle labor force increased by 1.8 percentage points from the previous month, marking the highest level this year. Youth and women remain disproportionately affected. The unemployment rate among those aged 15-24 rose to 16.2%, with a significant gender gap: 23.7% for young women versus 12.3% for young men. Labor force participation remained at 53.5% (35.5 million), but with notable disparities—71.3% for men and only 36% for women. Total employment fell by 18,000 to 32.45 million, with the overall employment rate declining to 48.9%. Men's employment stood at 66.2%, while women's was just 31.9%, underscoring persistent gender inequality in the labor market.



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Top Court: Gezi Trial Violated Fair Trial Rights



Bianet.org

The Constitutional Court has ruled that Tayfun Kahraman, an urban planner sentenced to 18 years in the Gezi Park trial, was denied his right to a fair trial and must be retried. The court found that lower courts failed to evaluate his key objections or prove a legal link between his actions and the charges.

This decision highlights how the government continues to use the judiciary as a tool to suppress dissent and cling to power. The 2013 Gezi protests, which drew millions into the streets, have been retroactively framed as a coup attempt, allowing authorities to imprison peaceful demonstrators and civil society figures.

Kahraman was convicted of aiding an attempt to overthrow the government, alongside others like architect Mücella Yapıcı and philanthropist Osman Kavala, who received a life sentence. Despite the Constitutional Court's rare admission of injustice, Kahraman remains behind bars, underscoring how political trials are used not to serve justice, but to silence opposition and criminalize public resistance.

Erdoğan Halts Miners' Strike, Citing 'Security'



TurkishMinute

President Erdoğan has postponed a strike by over 2,000 miners at the state-owned Eti Maden company, using the pretext of "national security" to override constitutional rights. The strike, organized by the Turkish Mine Workers Union (Maden-İş), was to protest meager wage offers amid soaring inflation and growing poverty. Critics say Erdoğan's move is not a postponement but a de facto ban, part of a broader strategy to silence dissent and suppress labor movements using the judiciary and executive decrees as blunt instruments.

The Constitutional Court had previously ruled that strikes cannot be delayed without concrete justification. Yet Erdoğan's government has blocked at least 22 strikes since 2002, often with vague or unfounded claims. Union leaders and legal experts argue that this latest intervention violates Articles 51 and 54 of the Turkish Constitution, which protect union activity and the right to strike. As living costs skyrocket, the government's systematic repression of organized labor reveals its fear, not of economic disruption, but of organized resistance from below.

March 19 Platform Panel with Boğaziçi University Students who were detained following the İmamoğlu operation

On March 19, protests erupted across Türkiye after Istanbul University annulled Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's diploma on alleged procedural grounds. The next morning, İmamoğlu was detained on accusations including corruption and links to criminal networks. Police intervened in protests nationwide, detaining 1,900 people many of them students not affiliated with any party.

Two Boğaziçi University students later participated in an online panel with Turkish Americans, representing the "March 19 Platform," which aims to raise international awareness. These students, Hüseyin Arif Sarıyaşar and Melih Can, voiced frustrations beyond İmamoğlu: rising tuition, economic stress, and political disillusionment drove them to protest.

They distanced themselves from both the main opposition CHP and other parties like İP, criticizing superficial political gestures and lack of real engagement with youth. They seek to transform Türkiye's political culture, not blindly support any figure.

The panel emphasized that today's youth are politically conscious, willing to take risks, and demand genuine change placing ethics above party loyalty amid concerns over judicial independence and political repression.



March 19 Platform

March 19 Platform Continues: Democracy Watch Panels

Conversations for a Democratic Future

The March 19 Platform is bringing people together to inform the public and creating spaces for open dialogue during this critical juncture in Turkey's political trajectory. Join us as we explore the threats facing opposition voices, press freedom, and democracy in Türkiye through bold conversations with journalists, elected officials, and experts on the frontlines.

August 24: Judicial Targeting and Democratic Backsliding: A Panel with CHP's Utku Çakırözer & Dr. Ceyhun İrgil

In our panel featuring our esteemed CHP Members of Parliament Utku Çakırözer and Dr. Ceyhun İrgil, we will discuss the legal proceedings targeting CHP and the operations against municipalities, examining the short- and long-term scenarios that may await Turkey in light of these developments.

September 14: March 19 Platform for Media Freedom: A Conversation with Ismail Saymaz

Investigative journalist Ismail Saymaz joins the March 19 Platform to discuss truth-telling under repression and the fight for accountability in Türkiye.



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