

ISSUE 45



# LAST WEEK IN TÜRKİYE

BY

**MARCH 19 PLATFORM**

**MARCH 21, 2026**



MARCH 21, 2026

# ECTHR CONDEMNS TÜRKİYE OVER “WOMAN IN RED” CASE

*COURT RULES EXCESSIVE POLICE FORCE AND  
LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY VIOLATED HUMAN  
RIGHTS DURING GEZI PROTESTS*



BIANET.ROG

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Türkiye violated the ban on ill-treatment by using excessive force against Ceyda Sungur during the 2013 Gezi protests, and found a lack of accountability due to the officer's lenient punishment. It ordered Türkiye to pay Sungur €6,500 in non-pecuniary damages and €5,400 in legal costs.



MARCH 21, 2026

# THOUSANDS RALLY IN ISTANBUL ONE YEAR AFTER İMAMOĞLU'S ARREST

*PROTESTERS DEMAND HIS RELEASE, CITING  
DEMOCRATIC CONCERNS IN TÜRKİYE*



CHP

Thousands of supporters of jailed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu gathered in Istanbul to mark the first anniversary of his arrest, protesting what they see as a politically motivated crackdown on the opposition.

The rally, organized by the CHP, highlighted growing concerns over democracy and the rule of law, with demonstrators calling for justice and İmamoğlu's release.



MARCH 21, 2026

# WEALTH ALLEGATIONS TARGET JUSTICE MINISTER

*ÖZEL CLAIMS \$10M IN UNEXPLAINED ASSETS;  
GÜRLEK DENIES AND THREATENS  
LEGAL ACTION*



CHP

CHP leader Özgür Özel accused Justice Minister Akın Gürlek of amassing unexplained wealth worth about 452 million liras (\$10 million) through property dealings, while Gürlek denied the allegations, claimed he owns only four properties, and threatened legal action. Authorities also reportedly moved against officials who accessed records related to the claims.



MARCH 21, 2026

# JAILED CHP MAYOR FACES NEW CHARGES IN TÜRKİYE

*RE-ELECTED WITH 52.9% OF THE VOTE,  
HE COULD FACE UP TO 3 YEARS, AS PRESSURE GROWS  
ON OPPOSITION MAYORS, WITH 16 NOW BEHIND BARS*



TURKISH MINUTE

Prosecutors in Türkiye are seeking up to three years in prison for jailed Bolu Mayor Tanju Özcan on blackmail charges involving a municipal employee, which he denies. The case is part of broader legal proceedings against the opposition mayor, who is already in jail over a separate extortion investigation, with the trial expected to begin soon.



MARCH 21, 2026

# COURT LIFTS HOUSE ARREST OF MAHIR POLAT

*HOUSE ARREST ENDS AFTER A YEAR, TRAVEL BAN STAYS*



PA.TURKEY

A Turkish court lifted the house arrest of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality official Mahir Polat after nearly a year, replacing it with less restrictive measures, including a travel ban, while his trial continues. Polat had been detained in 2025 over alleged links to a political cooperation strategy, with his case drawing attention due to serious health issues and broader tensions around investigations targeting opposition-linked figures.

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MARCH 21, 2026

# KUŞADASI MAYOR ARRESTED IN BRIBERY PROBE

*INVESTIGATION WIDENS TO CHP-LINKED  
MUNICIPALITIES AS POLITICAL TENSIONS RISE IN  
TÜRKİYE*



TURKISH MINUTE

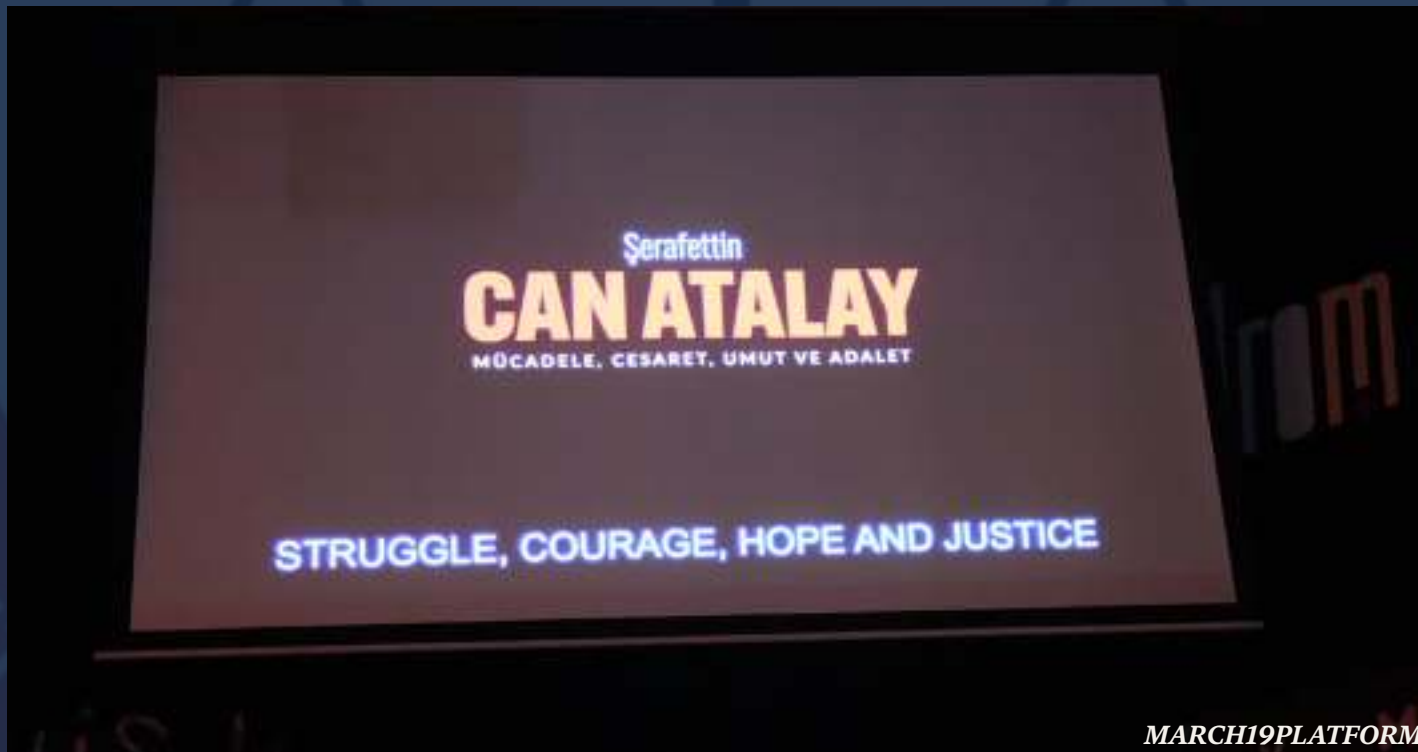
Ömer Günel, the CHP mayor of Kuşadası, was arrested with four others on bribery and extortion charges in an investigation by the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, part of a broader probe that has also implicated Aydın Metropolitan Mayor Özlem Çerçioğlu.



MARCH 21, 2026

# FIRST INTERNATIONAL SCREENING OF CAN ATALAY DOCUMENTARY HELD IN THE U.S.

*NEW YORK AND DUKE UNIVERSITY EVENTS SPOTLIGHT  
JAILED MP AND GROWING RULE-OF-LAW CONCERNS IN  
TÜRKİYE*



Last week, we held the first-ever international screening of the Can Atalay documentary in New York City, followed by a second showing at Duke University.

Can Atalay is a lawyer and elected MP who remains imprisoned despite Constitutional Court rulings calling for his release, making his case a symbol of the rule-of-law crisis in Türkiye.



MARCH 21, 2026

# FREEDOM HOUSE: TÜRKİYE RATED “NOT FREE”



[HTTPS://FREEDOMHOUSE.ORG/](https://freedomhouse.org/)

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2026 report classifies Türkiye as “Not Free,” giving it a score of **32/100**, reflecting serious concerns about political rights and civil liberties.

The report highlights issues such as restrictions on protests, arrests of demonstrators, censorship of media and social platforms, and legal pressure on opposition figures, pointing to a continued decline in democratic standards and rule of law.






MARCH 21, 2026

# TÜRKİYE FALLS IN CORRUPTION INDEX

*2025 REPORT RANKS COUNTRY 124TH, CITING WEAKENED INSTITUTIONS AND DECLINING ACCOUNTABILITY*

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

## TURKEY

Share how your country is doing   


Score

**31/100** [What does the CPI score mean?](#)

Rank

**124/182**

Score change

 **-3** since 2024



[HTTPS://WWW.TRANSPARENCY.ORG/](https://www.transparency.org/)

Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Türkiye **124th** with a score of **31/100**, reflecting a continued decline in perceived public-sector integrity.

The report points to weakened institutions, limited accountability, and growing concerns over transparency and the rule of law.



MARCH 21, 2026

**BREAKING NEWS**

# JOURNALIST İSMAIL ARI ARRESTED AMID PRESS CRACKDOWN

*CASE HIGHLIGHTS RISING PRESSURE ON MEDIA IN  
TÜRKİYE*



BIRGUN GAZETESİ

Journalist and writer İsmail Arı revealed that he had received death threats linked to his reporting on the Menzil community, but authorities took no action on his complaints. In June and September 2024, he then faced two separate investigations over his book *Menzil Kasası*, which examines the group's financial and social structure.

On March 21, 2026, he was arrested while visiting his family in Tokat for Eid.

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# OUR NEXT PANEL WITH BERKAY GEZGİN

*LIVESTREAMED ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL  
AT 1:00 PM EST ON MARCH 22, 2026*

March 19 Platform  
**BERKAY GEZGİN'İN KATILIMIYLA**

**22** Mart 2026 Pazar

10:00 AM PDT  
 1:00 PM EDT  
20:00 TSİ

**Youtube Canlı Yayını**

[www.youtube.com/@March19Platform](http://www.youtube.com/@March19Platform)

**Berkay Gezgin**  
2025 CHP Parti Meclisi Üyesi

**Onur Morkan**  
Moderatör

**Ceren Garner**  
Moderatör

On March 22, join our panel featuring Berkay Gezgin, a young activist known for coining the iconic slogan “Her şey çok güzel olacak” during the 2019 Istanbul elections. Now a CHP Party Assembly member, Gezgin will speak about youth political participation and democratic engagement in Türkiye.

# RESOURCES

- <https://bianet.org/haber/ecthr-rules-against-turkey-in-woman-in-red-case-317823>
- <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-thousands-of-imamoglu-supporters-rally-in-istanbul/a-76422495>
- <https://www.turkishminute.com/2026/03/18/opposition-files-criminal-complaint-against-justice-minister-over-alleged-unexplained-wealth/>
- <https://www.turkishminute.com/2026/03/17/jailed-bolu-mayor-faces-up-to-3-years-in-prison-on-blackmail-charges/>
- <https://www.paturkey.com/news/2026/mahir-polat-house-arrest-lifted-28904/>
- <https://www.turkishminute.com/2026/03/17/opposition-district-mayor-among-5-arrested-in-bribery-investigation-in-turkey/>
- <https://www.march19platform.com/highlights/can-atalay/>
- <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey>
- <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025/index/tur>
- <http://pen.org/writer-at-risk/ismail-ari/>
- <https://www.birgun.net/haber/muhabirimiz-ismail-ari-gozaltina-alindi-700716>