**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY**

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**Subject: Turkey: Weekly update, 5-10 June 2022**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

* ***President Erdogan declared his candidacy for June 2023 Presidential elections, while announcing that elections would be held in June next year.***
* ***President Erdogan made very harsh statements against Greece, while Turkey was holding military drills simulating conquest of islands.***

**ASSESSMENT**

As the President declared his candidature for the Presidential elections, he continued to ratchet up tensions both domestically (attacking the opposition) and internationally (with increasingly harsh rhetoric against Greece). Even though he publicly stated that elections will be held in June 2023, the increasingly hardened rhetoric continues to point to the possibility of early elections.

As the structural problems of the economy continue to pile up (the recent devaluation of the Lira will increase the cost to guarantee deposits, Credit Default Swaps on Turkey reached 800 bps), a window of opportunity may open up, as the summer season has started well and foreign currency is coming in (also thanks to foreign real estate purchases).

**DETAIL**

**EU-Turkey relations**

On 6/06, the European Parliament adopted the latest country report on Turkey drafted by MEP Sanchez Amor, which was immediately criticised by the Turkish MFA. MFA’s statement “rejected the biased and unrealistic assessments in the report”. The report notably concluded that the current Turkish Government ”has deliberately demolished any aspirations of reopening the EU accession process” and encouraged “both sides to review the current state of their relationship […] and to explore complementary ways in parallel to the accession process, in order to re-engage in a revamped, balanced and reciprocal partnership that is strongly conditional on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms”. The MFA reiterated well-known lines, arguing that the report reflects “one or two EU members’ narrow-minded efforts to serve their own interests” and concluded this year again that Turkey considers the European Parliament conclusions null and void.

**Greece.** President Erdogan continued his attacks against Greece over the last days, demanding Greece to stop militarising the Greek islands and threatening to “use the powers granted to it by international agreements on the armament of the islands when necessary”. “I am not joking. I am serious” he said. In parallel, Turkey conducted military its Efes-2022 military drills simulating the occupation of an island.

**Netherlands.** Dutch Foreign Minister visited Ankara for the ninth Turkish-Dutch Bilateral Conference and discussed with his counterpart bilateral relations, Turkey-EU relations and regional developments, including Ukraine and Russia. Five working groups, namely “Turkey-EU Relations", “Turkish-Dutch Community”, “Counter-terrorism”, “Energy” and “Climate” were also held in the context of this conference. The trade volume between the countries has increased to around EUR 10.4 billion and both ministers reaffirmed their countries’ willingness to further increase it.

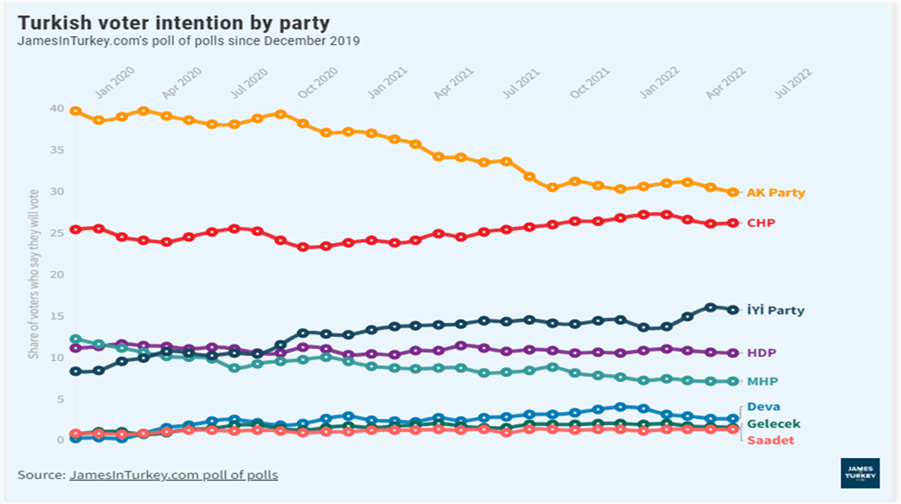
**Eastern Mediterranean**

Nothing to report.

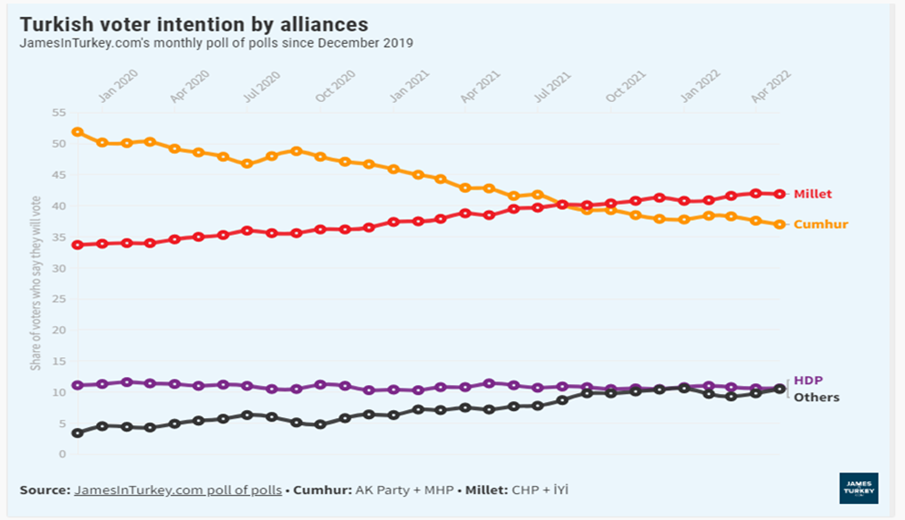
**Domestic Politics**

**Erdogan announced his candidacy for Presidency.** The President declared that he would run in next year’s presidential vote, and that elections would be held in June 2023, with him as the People’s Alliance candidate. Erdogan also challenged CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu to: “Declare either your candidate or your candidacy”.

**Latest poll tracker (aggregation of reliable surveys):** Although the AKP continues to be the largest party, the trend clearly shows that the party consistently loses support.



The polling data shows that the opposition parties (combined) have the majority of the votes against the ruling People’s Alliance of AKP and MHP.



**Judiciary and Fundamental Rights**

On 8/06, the Law Amending the Law on Lawyers, proposed by AKP MPs, was adopted by the Plenary of the Parliament. With the changes introduced, the employment of an intern lawyer as an insured employee will not *de facto* prevent his/her lawyer internship. This will be useful as due to the economic crisis intern lawyers seek employment. With the amendment, in provinces where there is more than one bar association, it will be possible for each bar to establish a legal aid office, provided they have independent administrations and functioning. The amendments were seen as a move to financially support the *multiple bar associations,* established two years ago despite the opposition of the Union of Bar Associations of Turkey (TBB).In the meantime, at the biannual evaluation Board meeting of the TBB, it was decided to gradually put into effect the action plans should obstacles in front of attorneyship activities not be removed and the demands for the elimination of the current economic constraints of lawyers not be met.

On 7/06, the Council of State, heard the case filed by 15 organizations against the country's **withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention** and theprosecutor again demanded the annulment of the Presidential Decision that decided on the withdrawal. Some 200 cases have been filed against the Presidential Decision. The verdict is expected in the coming days.

**Gezi/Kavala case.** On 7/06, the Istanbul 13th Heavy penal Court published its reasoning of the Gezi case judgment given on 25/04. The 610-page decision contains mostly statements of the defendants and lawyers made at the hearings. The court, which did not accept the illegal wiretaps during the “FETO” era as evidence, still included the tapes in its reasoned decision.The court argued that Kavala and the other defendants organized these actions, mostly based on the abstract statements in the wiretaps. It also argued thatKavala made an effort to deepen the Gezi protests and spread them to Anatolia, and that the Open Society Foundation and George Soros supported the protests. Kavala’s criminal acts were: his contacts with the other defendants; his organising forums and meetings with Can Dündar for the establishment of a new media outlet, meeting with co-defendants Atalay and Kahraman to create an electoral bloc, opening a Gezi exhibition in Brussels, holding meetings to prepare a report for the EU Commission and the ECtHR, to provide funds, etc.

A message sent from the prosecutor’s office to the judges and prosecutors revealed that Quran courses will be opened in the Ankara court house for the judges, prosecutors, staff of the courthouse and their children.

**Journalists detained in Diyarbakır**. On 08/06, in Diyarbakır, police raided the homes of many journalists. Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG) Co-chairperson Serdar Altan, JINNEWS Director Safiye Alagaş, JINNEWS editor Gülşen Koçuk, Mesopotamia Agency (MA) editor Aziz Oruç and several journalists were taken into custody.

**Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) detained in Van.** On 07/06former Van Human Rights Association Branch Chairperson Ömer IŞIK, Mazlum-Der Former Branch head Yakup ASLAN, SES trade union Former Branch Chairperson Yılmaz BERKİ and 9 other NGO representatives were detained for their monitoring activities during the Kurdish peace process in 2013.

**Prisons.** The Van Bar Association, the Van Branch of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom, and Van Tuhayder conducted interviews with prisoners in differentprisons in Erzurum, prisons (in Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, Bayburt and Bafra) and reported violations of rights. The violations reported were: access to health facilities prevented; prisoners sent to hospitals handcuffed during examinations and subject to naked searches; Kurdish language letters and publications not given to prisoners; food inadequate; prisoners given arbitrary disciplinary fines; bans on social activities; prisoners whose conditional release has come punished for various reasons and refused conditional release.

**Raid on EU/UN-funded NGO.** On 03/06 there were police raids in five provinces in an investigation against the Migration Monitoring Association (GÖÇİZ-DER). Göçizder’s two co-chairs and 17 other executives including one Human Rights Foundation of Turkey’s employee were detained. The Anadolu Agency and pro-government media underlined GÖÇİZDER’s “*using of EU and UN funds to conduct research and develop projects on social migration movements in line with the aims and objectives of the PKK terrorist organization*”.

**LGBTIQ rights**

**Middle East Technical University (METU/ODTÜ) banned the Pride Parade on 10/06.** The METU rector banned the Pride Parade organized by METU LGBTIQAA+ Solidarity to be held on the campus in Ankara on 10/06. The rectorate’s written statement on 07/06 said "*A certain group is trying to present the campus of our university as a place where they can make their illegal march*” adding that “*all kinds of security measures will be undertaken”* if there will be students participating in the march. Some students defied the ban and marched; around 38 of them were detained by the Police.

**Cultural rights**

**Banned plays/concerts. C**oncerts, artistic events and Kurdish plays continued to be cancelled by governors or municipalities this week. Diyarbakır` City Theatre’s Kurdish adaptation of Moliere's "Tartuffe" play, was banned by the Adana and Mersin Governor's Offices on the grounds that it was "not deemed appropriate".Erinç Sağkan, the chair of the TBB stated that these bans were "totally arbitrary," adding that the TBB has put the bans on its agenda and would soon take legal action against them.

**Minorities**

**Syriac Christian family attacked in Mardin.** On 06/06, the Syriac Christian Yılmaz family was attacked by a Kurdish family living in the same village of the Kızıltepe district in Mardin, with stones and weapons, while they were attending the first sermon in the village in 100 years. It was reported that the field belonging to the Syriac family was also burned during the attack, where no one was killed or injured.

**Disinformation**

The Parliamentary Justice Commission has started the deliberations of the Press Law, which includes regulations on social media and internet journalism known as 'disinformation regulation'. One of the undersigning MPs, MHP Deputy Chairman Feti Yıldız said that “social media needs a moral renewal.” During the discussions, the representatives of the professional organization of the press also expressed their views and demanded that article 29, which constitutes the crime and penalty of "publicly spreading misleading information to the public", be removed from the text of the proposal.

**Foreign policy**

**US:** DFM Onal had a telephone conversation with the US Undersecretary of State for Polical Affairs Nuland and discussed current developments and the humanitarian situation in UA and other regional issues. The newly issued report by the US State Department entitled “2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Turkey” criticises the Turkish government over the treatment of the religious minority groups. The report claims that the government continued to limit the rights of non-Muslim religious minorities, especially those not recognized under the government’s interpretation of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, which includes only Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Greek Orthodox Christians, The report also touched upon several incidents of vandalism targeting places of worship and cemeteries in the country.

**NATO:** DFM Onal and Presidential spokesperson Kalin had a meeting with the NATO SG’s Cabinet Director Jenssen and discussed Sweden and Finland’s bits for accession, RU—UA war, and TR’s contributions to the alliance. NATO personnel arrived in TR for the Adaptation and Preparation Exercise Ramstein Dust II-2022 (RADU II-22). The drill will take place between 20-28 June and will be carried out in connection with the International Anatolian Eagle 2022 Training held at the 3rd Main Jet Base Command in Konya.

**RU war against UA:** TR FM Cavusoglu and RU FM Lavrov held discussions in Ankara on 8/06, focusing on UA and SY. TR FM Cavusoglu painted a positive picture mentioning that Ankara sees a UN plan, including efforts of UA, RU and TR, to establish a food corridor out of Ukraine as “*reasonable and feasible*”.  RU FM Lavrov put the blame on UA President Zelinsky’s refusal to demine the UA Black Sea ports. UA Ambassador in Ankara at the time underlined that there is no agreement at this stage, and that negotiations should be made with the participation of all interested parties and should take into account UA interests. According to Cavusoglu, a “*new will between RU and UA is to be seen to return to negotiations*” and emphasized TR’s facilitating role to bring the parties together in Istanbul when conditions are ripe. FM Cavusolgu spoke this week also with UN Secretary-General Guterres on UA and SY.TR Defense Minister Akar spoke with RU Defense Minister Soygu on UA and SY and separately with UA Defense Minister Reznikov on safe transportation of TR commercial ships and A400M aircraft from UA.

**TR policy on Western sanctions against RU:**

* TR FM Cavusoglu called RU’s demands for the removal of sanctions to help with UA grain and sunflower exports as “*very legitimate*”. He mentioned furthermore that steps should be taken to facilitate banking and insurance matters on food and fertilizer sectors.
* RU online platform and delivery company Ozon opened an office in TR. According to its Global Director the aim is to replace foreign brands that left RU due to the sanctions with TR exporters.
* TR Agriculture and Forestry Minister Kirisci said that they are close to an agreement with RU, UA, and the UN on the grain corridor, and that there is a 25% discount on grain products to be purchased from Ukraine.
* UA Ambassador to TR mentioned that TR buyers are among those receiving grain that Russia stole from Ukraine, and that UA seeks Turkey's help to identify and capture individuals responsible for the shipments.
* Reportedly, the yacht of RU oligarch Leonid Mihelson, arrived in the TR port of Marmaris after leaving the Bahamas earlier.

**Syria:** TR President Erdogan reiterated once more that TR is gradually implementing its efforts to protect its southern border with SY with a 30 kilometre safe zone and is “*expecting TR’s allies and friends to understand and respects its legitimate concerns on the issue*”. In the same vein, TR Defense Minister Akar mentioned that TR forces are ready to do what is necessary regarding the possible TR military incursion in parts of northern SY and stated that no one should stand in the way. FM Cavusoglu mentioned in the press conference with FM Lavrov that TR expects RU and US to fulfil their commitments to clear YPG from the border areas.  Lavrov however, squarely put the blame on the US, which he accuses of “*illegitimately funding various terrorist groups in that region*”. According to Lavrov, further discussions will follow in the framework of the Astana format (Nur Sultan in July). Intense clashes continue to take place in northern Syria, with TR Ministry of Defence claiming to have “neutralized” around three dozen YPG militants. Separately, a TR drone attack killed another local YPG commander. In TR controlled Afrin, local population, discontent about the surge of electricity prices, attacked and torched the local electricity company building of STE energy, as well as the city council building.

**Venezuela:** TR President Erdogan hosted this week his Venezuelan counterpart Maduro in Ankara. Erdogan pledged continued TR support and mentioned Ankara’s opposition against unilateral sanctions on Venezuela. Erdogan stressed that more bilateral cooperation is possible in trade, energy, mining, construction, health and tourism. The bilateral trade volume increased to $850 million in 2021 and aimed to boost it to $3 billion. As part of continuing efforts to improve bilateral ties, Erdogan said a Turkish government delegation would be heading to Venezuela next month.  The two leaders also oversaw the signing of three tourism, agriculture, and economic agreements.

**Azerbaijan:** TR and AZ celebrated 30 years of diplomatic relations. On the occasion, Azeri FM Bayramov visited TR and met with FM Cavusoglu. The two sides confirmed their current bilateral relations are based on the "will of people and the brotherly ties" between the two states. "The alliance between AZ and TR has great political and economic potential and serves for further strengthening of peace and development in the region," The Trans-Caspian East-West Middle Corridor Initiative is of strategic importance, Cavusoglu said, noting that the foreign and transportation ministers of TR, AZ and KAZ would meet in Baku on 27 June. TR MoD Akar met with his Azeri counterpart Hasanov who paid a visit in the margins of the EFES-2022 Combined Joint Actual Fire Field Exercise. They exchanged views on bilateral and regional defence issues, security and military training cooperation, and the defence industry.

**Armenia:** RU FM Lavrov on 8/6, while in TR, said that RU welcomes the normalisation of relations between TR and ARM and is ready to support the process of the signature of a peace agreement between AZ and ARM. During his meeting with the Patriarch of the Armenians of Turkey Mashalyan and the the Vatical Representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church Barsamyan, FM Cavusoglu stressed that the Armenian community is an integral part of TR and that the dialogue and contacts with representatives of the Armenian community will continue.

**UAE:** Reportedly, UAE’s government has asked the Dubai based Turkish mobster Sedat Peker to stop posting from an alternate Twitter account “Deli Cavus” that he created after he was ordered by the Emirati authorities last year to stop broadcasting videos. This week Mr Peker claimed that “Turkish government wouldn’t leave power even if it fails to win the elections next June”. He also said that, despite the pressure, he would reveal his ultimate allegations before the elections.

**Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan**: TR will convene in the upcoming days convene a trilateral meeting with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to discuss emerging energy issues

**India:** AKP spokesperson Celik in a statement condemned the “insulting statements” against Prophet Muhammad made by a politician from India’s ruling party (BJP) and welcomed his dismissal.

**VISA: S FANTARONI**

**SIGN-OFF: N. MEYER-LANDRUT, HoD**