**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TURKEY**

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**To:** EEAS MD Angelina EICHHORST, Acting COM NEAR DG Maciej POPOWSKI

**Subject: Turkey: Weekly update, 12-17 June 2022**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

* ***In a relatively calm week, the political agenda reverted to the difficult economic situation, as the newly appointed head of TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialist Association) criticised the Government’s unorthodox economic policy and was attacked by the President for doing so.***

**ASSESSMENT**

In the absence of foreign policy issues to divert the political agenda, the Government and the President were forced on the defensive by the new head of TUSIAD who directly criticised the unorthodox policy for fuelling inflation. The President’s attack against TUSIAD’s new chief brought the public’s attention to the dire economic situation.

Away from headlines, work in Parliament to approve the ‘Disinformation Law’ continued, notably with the adoption of Article 29, which will introduce a very vague crime of ‘fake news’, and will likely further curb space for criticism and dissent.

**DETAIL**

**EU-Turkey relations**

**Greece.** While tensions between Greece and Turkey remained high, the Greek and Turkish Defence ministers met in the margins of the NATO ministerial summit in Brussels on 16/06, and agreed to reduce tension and keep communication channels open. President Erdogan’s recent threatening statements over the Greek islands have triggered reactions from the US department and the German MFA. The Turkish MFA reacted to the German spokesperson declaration calling on Germany “not to take side in disputes between the two Allies”.

**Ireland.** IE FM Coveney and his Norwegian counterpart visited Turkey on 14-15 June. They visited the UN’s cross border aid operation between Turkey and North West Syria, at Bab al-Hawa, and met their counterpart FM Cavusoglu in Ankara, in view of negotiations on the renewal of UNSC Resolution 2585. With FM Cavusoglu, they addressed the situation in Ukraine, and Turkey’s efforts to negotiate safe passage for grain stuck in Black Sea ports.

**Eastern Mediterranean**

Nothing to report.

**Domestic Politics**

The Court of Cassation revoked the party membership of CHP İstanbul Chair Kaftancıoğlu on 14/06. Kaftancıoğlu was sentenced on 12/5 to 4 years and 11 months imprisonment (sentence suspended) and a political ban. Kaftancıoğlu's CHP İstanbul Provincial Presidency will drop when the process is completed.

President Erdoğan and pro-government papers put pressure on CHP Chair Kılıçdaroğlu to announce his presidential bid.

President Erdogan attacked TUSIAD’s newly-appointed head, who criticised the government’s veto on SE and FI’s NATO accession and unorthodox financial policies.

After İYİ Party MP İbrahim Halil Oral publicly opposed the presidential candidacy of CHP Chair Kılıçdaroğlu on the grounds of his being Alevi (Oral was sent to the disciplinary committee of his party), President Erdoğan publicly defended Mr Kılıçdaroğlu, stating that AKP has guaranteed equal citizenship of everyone (even though the President has attacked Alevism many times in the past). MHP leader Bahçeli also defended Alevi identity, but stating that “we are like day and night (with Alevis)”.

**Freedom of expression**

The 40-article draft law, titled “amendments to the Press Law and Various Others Laws” submitted to the Parliament with the joint signatures of the AK Party and MHP MPs was adopted by the TGNA Justice Committee with no major changes.

**Human Rights Defenders - HRDs arrested.** After the 03/06 raid against the Migration Monitoring Association (GÖÇİZ-DER) in which 22 HRDs were detained for “*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*”, on 11/6 sixteen defendants were remanded in detention and 6 were released under judicial control. The association works on forced displacement of Kurds.

On 15/06Human Rights Association (HRA) Ankara Branch executive Adile Erkan was detained in Ankara. Erkan was taken to Balıkesir for investigation, which was launched on the grounds of corresponding with and sending money to the prisoners.

**Judiciary/On-going Court cases**

**Killing of former Diyarbakır Bar president Lawyer Tahir Elçi.** The Diyarbakır Heavy Penal court accepted two of the demands of intervening lawyers for the first time in five sessions.  In the next session on 23 November, the court will invite then-PM Davutoğlu as a witness. Davutoğlu said in past occasions that Elçi’s murder was a political assassination. The court also accepted to receive the additional folders of the MoI inspection report and rejected the witness hearing of the intelligence officers and other demands.

**Killing/disappearance of the Chaldean Christian Diril couple in Şırnak’s village.** The court accepted the new evidence by family’s intervening lawyers, continued arrest of the defendant and adjourned the case to 29/09.

**Solidarity with the closed down Özgür Gündem newspaper.** The case against Erol Önderoğlu (RSF representative) and Şebnem Korur Fincancı (TMA chairwomen) was adjourned to 19 October, as the court is still awaiting a deposition from Ahmet Nesin, who now resides in France, and a witness testimony from Mr Inan Kizilkaya, whose residence cannot be determined.

**Freedom of media**

On 16/6, after 8 days of detention, of the 20 Kurdish journalists and 2 staff detained, 16 of the journalists[[1]](#endnote-1)[i] were arrested pending trial, and the rest of the journalists and staff were released with judicial control. There was restriction of access on the investigation file..

**LGBTIQ**

After the banning of Pride Parade organized by METU LGBTIQAA+ Solidarity by the rector, 38 students were detained (with disproportionate force used by the police) on 10/06. On 11/06, all of them were released in groups after their health controls.

**Kurdish issue**

The HDP and other political components of the party organised some marches at the beginning of June to protest isolation of PKK leader Öcalan in prison. In this framewoek, the 12/06 marches and press statements in Gemlik and other provinces were prevented by police. In Istanbul around 100 persons were detained. In Bursa two journalists covering the news were detained and released on the same day. Two of the detained (HDP Kadıköy district co-chair Koray Türkay and İsmail Temel) were arrested by court on 13/06, while others were released.

**Military operations – PKK attacks**

The Ministry of National Defence announced that 4 Turkish soldiers died and 4 were wounded in an attack during the Claw-Lock operation in Northern Iraq on 11/06.

**Disinformation**

The ‘Disinformation Bill” submitted to the Parliament by AKP-MHP was adopted by the Parliamentary Justice Committee on 16/6 (separate report issued).

**Foreign policy**

**US:** The Deputy Treasury Secretary Adeyemo is due to visit TR next week and likely meet with the Central Bank Governor Kavcioglu and the Treasury and Finance Minister Nebati, to discuss among others Turkish compliance with RU sanctions. The Chair of US House Armed Services Committee, Adam Smith, said that is unlikely that TR will be allowed to return to the F-35 jet program not only because of the purchase of the S-400 but also for blocking SE and FIN NATO applications. Regarding the S-400, he explained that the problem is not the purchase as such but rather that S-400 are in the same place as the F-35, which rises the risk for potential loss of critical information. The US Embassy in Ankara expressed its condolences on “killing of the Turkish soldiers during counter-terrorism operations on 11-12 June”.

**Syria:** TR, RU and IRN held the 18th round of the Astana talks in Nur Sultan, dealing with topics such as the Constitutional Committee and confidence building measures.  At the eve of the talks, a prison exchange took place between the SNA and SY regime forces in eastern Aleppo countryside, with five prisoners from both sides. RU’s SY Special Envoy Lavrentiev delivered some comments considering a possible TR operation as unwise as it could escalate and destabilize the situation.  At the same time, he condemned attacks against TR in Syria.

**RU-UA:** TR President Erdogan received Russian Deputy PM Alexei Overchuk in Ankara this week. President Erdogan mentioned that he would discuss the issue of a grain export corridor with RU President Putin and UA President Zelenskyy. TR Defense Minister Akar held a phone call with UA Defense Minister Reznikov and met in person with his UK and UA counterparts at a tripartite meeting in Brussels on the issue of grain shipments.

**Libya:** A presidential motion to extend by 18 months permission to send troops to Libya was submitted to parliament, emphasizing TR’s support for the protection of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Libya.

**Israel:** Israeli FM Lapid urged citizens in TR to leave “as soon as possible” over threats that Iranian operatives are actively planning attacks on Israelis in Istanbul. TR FM Cavusoglu held a telephone conversation with his Israeli counterpart on the matter.

**Western Balkans**: On 16 June, FM Cavusoglu paid an official visit to Serbia. He held bilateral meetings with his counterpart, FM Selakovic, to discuss among other issues cooperation in the fields of energy and tourism. During the joint press conference, Cavusoglu said that the economic and commercial relations of the two countries are progressing rapidly and concrete steps are taken to reach the target of 5B USD in trade volume during 2022. An increase of 31% has been noted in the first quarter of 2022. Cavusoglu also met with President Vucic, PM Brnabic, and Speaker Dacic, and discussed bilateral relations and regional issues in particular UA and BiH. During his visit, the two countries signed an agreement on the Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Cultural properties. FM also announced that TR would soon open a Consulate in Nis.

FM Cavusoglu then travelled to North Macedonia, met with the representatives of the Turkish Community, and attended 2nd Prespa Dialogue Forum in Ohrid. In the margin of the Forum, he had bilateral meetings with Austrian FM Schallenberg of Austria, with whom he discussed bilateral relations and regional issues (notably UA and SYR), and with Croatian President Milanović with whom he discussed bilateral relations, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina. During his visit, FM Cavusoglu also met with senior officials from North Macedonia, including the President of the Constitutional Court, Salih Murat and the Head of the North Macedonia-Turkey Chamber of Commerce Ademoski.

**North Macedonia:** President Erdogan met with North Macedonia’s PM Kovacevski in a closed door meeting with the presence of MoD Akar, MoI Soylu and MoT Mus.

**Azerbaijan:** AKP Deputy Chair Yildirim visited AZ and met with President Aliyev on the occasion of the 1st anniversary of the Shusha declaration. The parties reaffirmed the fraternal and friendly relations between the two countries.

**VISA: S FANTARONI**

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

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)