



End of news: Internet censorship in Turkey

This report was published as part of the Free Web Turkey project carried out by the Media and Law Studies Association between November 2019 and October 2020.

<http://www.freewebturkey.com> | <http://www.mlsaturkey.com>

About MLSA and Free Web Turkey

The Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) was founded in 2017 and its main field of activity is offering legal protection to journalists and people tried in freedom of expression cases. As the MLSA, we aim to provide guidance to websites, media organizations and all content producers facing censorship in digital media on methods of coping with censorship, offering them legal consultancy, tools to avoid censorship and a set of internet services that would ease their efforts within the scope of the Free Web Turkey project, which we have been conducting in the field of internet freedom for a year. Besides, we bring together groups working in the field of digital freedoms and freedom of expression to organize panels, roundtable discussions, publish articles, and conduct training programs for content producers to raise awareness against censorship. Another goal of our project is to organize the network of communication and solidarity between institutions, which is one of the most essential components in combating digital censorship. To this end, we try to keep an up-to-date list of blocked URLs and create a database so that we can run a joint and more powerful campaign against censorship. While doing all these, we aim to protect the freedom of expression in the law, the Constitution and international conventions, and to exercise this right effectively.

Social media has become one of the leading areas to exercise freedom of expression, particularly the freedom of political expression in Turkey, where dozens of newspapers and television channels are shut down. It can be said that this is the main reason why political parties want to control and monitor social media and adopt laws and new regulations to this end.

FREE
WEB
TURKEY



Kingdom of the Netherlands

MLSA

Media and Law Studies Association
Medya ve Hukuk Çalışmaları Derneği

END OF NEWS: INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN TURKEY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
A. LEGISLATION REGARDING INTERNET FREEDOMS	2
A.1. Basic regulations and amendments on the internet environment.....	2
A.2. Additional studies for regulation of internet broadcasts.....	3
A.3. Recent changes regarding the internet environment.....	4
B. PRACTICES OF INTERNET FREEDOM IN TURKEY AND THE WORLD	5
B.1. Social network provider’s obligation to appoint representative and sharing of user data.....	5
B.2. Content removal and the right to be forgotten.....	5
B.3. Access blockings and censorship of censored content.....	7
C. FINDINGS OF FREE WEB TURKEY PLATFORM	9
C.1. Censorship in practice: Leading themes.....	11
C.2. Positive judicial decisions of access blocking in Turkey.....	13
C.3. Applications to social media platforms for content removal.....	13
C.4. Turkey in transparency reports of Facebook, Reddit, WordPress, Twitter and TikTok.....	14
C.5. Internet censorship around the world.....	15
C.6. COVID-19 impact on censorship in the world.....	16
C.7. Internet slowdown or interruption.....	16
D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	17
ANNEX 1: Information on blocked URLs, the authority that made the decision to block access, and the date and number of the relevant decision.....	19

INTRODUCTION

Along with a big increase in human rights violations, Turkey is going through a time of frequent practices that restrict freedom of expression and the press. As of the preparation of this report, 86 journalists are being held in prison¹ because of their articles or reports; hundreds of journalists, writers, bloggers and social media users continue to be prosecuted for their news, posts, opinions, and posts they like.

The extraordinary pressure that intensified in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt not only targeted journalists but also affected many online and offline media outlets. Since the mid-2000s, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) started to transfer the mainstream media organizations in the country to companies close to it through the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF).

Consequently, a number of media organizations acquired by companies close to the government and openly support government policies added to Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (TRT), the public broadcaster directly linked to the government. According to statements and reports by many organizations², journalists and researchers that study and report on the pressure on journalists and media organizations in Turkey, the government control on printed media outlets circulated nationwide has increased to 95 percent.

As a result of this, independent or opposition journalists have started to convey their news reports to the readers mainly on the internet, using social media platforms instead of traditional press organizations.

Social media platforms have gained great importance for many social segments that are not allowed to appear on the television channels owned by the government and cannot make their voices heard, along with activists working in the fields of human rights.

Despite its “echo chamber” structure, social media has turned into a public space in Turkey, where many social segments meet, different voices can be heard and journalists can share news, becoming a lifeline for news flow.

In such an environment where 178 media organizations were closed³ during the state of emergency rule and almost all of the existing media institutions are directly or indirectly under the control of the government, internet, the sole channel to share different opinions, is also being targeted by the government. The trial of thousands of people for their posts on the internet, access ban to websites, and content removals constitute a large portion of the rule of law crisis in Turkey. The nature of the access blocking decisions that target news reports leads to growing censorship. As a result of both legislative and practical developments as part of the government’s efforts to monopolize information, international social media platforms stand as important partners in the fight against internet censorship.

The Free Web Turkey Platform was founded in 2019 to contribute to the fight against censorship and raise awareness. Its November 2019-October 2020 report investigates such pressure on internet freedoms in Turkey and steps toward monitoring of users by using open sources and with a thematic approach.

The first chapter of this report focuses on legislative changes regarding internet freedom, the second chapter examines practices regarding these freedoms in Turkey and the world, and the third chapter discusses the findings obtained in the light of this information and presents suggestions.

1 According to the MLSA’s list of arrested and convicted journalists and media workers in prison MLSA. <https://www.mlsaturkey.com/tr/cezaevindeki-gazeteciler-ve-medya-calisanlari/> (Access date: 11.12.2020)

2 For examples, see Report on the December 2018 International Press Institute (IPI) Press Freedom Mission To Turkey, January 2019, p. 4 https://freeturkeyjournalists.ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Turkey-Mission-Report-Dec-2018_FINAL_PAGE-1-16-merged.pdf; “The Desertification in Turkish Media as Turkey Goes Authoritarian”, The Science Board of the CHP, March 2019, Issue: 37, <https://chp.azureedge.net/4e54401749ee4f9a9696541ccaf119d1.pdf>; “We reject to celebrate Press Day” <https://tgs.org.tr/24-temmuz-basin-bayramini-kutlamiyoruz/>; “Unemployment in press, cases against journalists reach record high due to gov’t pressure” <https://www.tgc.org.tr/18-slider/2384-10-ocak-2020.html> (Access date to links: 11.12.2020).

3 “Shut down Press, Publishing, Radio, Television and News Agency Companies,” <https://bianet.org/bianet/medya/182458-kapatilan-basin-yayin-radyo-televizyon-ve-haber-ajanslari> (Access date: 11.12.2020)

A. LEGISLATION REGARDING INTERNET FREEDOMS

The first internet connection in Turkey, was established on April 12, 1993. However, internet access started to become widespread in the second half of the 1990s like many countries. Since the first connection, the main purpose of internet censorship in Turkey has been blocking “harmful” political content and obscenity.⁴

The initial regulation for the internet was made in 2001 with Law Amending the Radio and Television Law, Press Law, Income Tax Law and the Corporate Tax Law (No. 4676). With this law, two regulations regarding the internet were introduced in Law on the Establishment of Radio and Television and Broadcasting (No. 3984) and Press Law (No. 5680). According to Özgür Uçkan, one of the prominent advocates of the free internet, although everyone tends to consider 2007 as a milestone on internet censorship in Turkey, its actual rise is between 2001 and 2006. Many websites were blocked between 2000 and 2007. Many access ban decisions made by relevant courts based on the provisions of the relevant articles of the Turkish Penal Code, along with the regulations such as the Civil Law, Intellectual and Artistic Works Law, were directly implemented by internet service providers.⁵

While there were no specific regulations for internet freedoms, the censorship mechanism started to be operated through other related legislations. However, efforts for a regulation specifically for the internet started in 2007, the year that many people consider as the start of censorship.

A.1. Basic regulations and amendments on the internet environment

The first law regarding the environment of publishing on the internet was Law No. 5651 on the Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed by means of Such Publication (Law No. 5651), which entered into force on May 23, 2007.

Law No. 5651 is justified with a need to introduce a law that would enable an efficient and right structure to struggle against crimes committed through the opportunities provided by the internet in line with the developments in the world. The purpose and scope of the law is stated as determining the obligations and responsibilities of content providers, hosting providers, access providers and mass use providers, and regulating the principles and procedures regarding the measures for the content constituting the material element of certain crimes committed on the internet.

The regulation obliges internet service providers keep logs, to record IP address information, MAC addresses and similar data of connected computers within their own networks on a daily basis, and store all files created in the past year. Law No. 5651, which regulates the obligations of the content providers, hosting providers and access providers, also projects measures such as blocking access and removing content. The significant features of the law include defining internet-related actors, determining responsibilities and regulating measures.

Within the scope of Law No. 5651, the institutions authorized to take the prescribed measures regarding crimes committed on the internet are the judicial authorities. In addition, the Association of Access Providers (“ESB”) can also decide on administrative measures to block access to websites. Incidents that require access

⁴ Akgül, M., & Kırıldoğ, M. (2015). “Internet Censorship in Turkey”. *Internet Policy Review*, Volume 4, Issue 2, p. 12. <https://doi.org/10.14763/2015.2.366>

⁵ “Short History of Internet Censorship in Turkey... And its Possible Future,” <https://ozguruckan.alternatifbilisim.org/kategori/politika/22241/turkiye-de-internet-sansurunun-kisa-tarihi-ve-mumkun-gelecegi.html> (Access date: 11.12.2020).

ban regarding crimes committed on the internet are specified in the 1st paragraph of the th article of Law No. 5651.⁶ These crimes are not specific to the Law No. 5651, which was introduced for crimes in the internet environment. These are “catalogue crimes” defined in the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237. Catalog crimes are all types of crimes that require more specific conditions in implementing security measures. Regarding crimes committed over the internet, a cautionary access blocking can be imposed on sites containing content that is defined as a catalogue crime, and content that violates personal rights can be removed from the internet.

In the following years, Law No. 5651 was amended several times to give the state and institutions under government control even more opportunities of surveillance and censorship. One of these amendments was the Law No. 6527 on Amendment of Certain Laws and the Law No. 6552 on the Amendment of the Labor Code and Certain Laws and Decree Laws and the Restructuring of Certain Receivables.

With these regulations, it became possible to block access to contents without any restriction and only with stratification by the President of the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TİB), which was closed after the transition to presidential system in 2018 from the former parliamentary system. However, the Constitutional Court (AYM) canceled the article by determining that these amendments grant a wide range of intervention opportunities to the government and violate the Constitution.⁷

A.2. Additional studies for regulation of internet broadcasts

Although the procedures and principles regarding internet broadcasting are regulated by Law No.5651, the fact that media service providers such as radio and television started to offer their broadcasting services via the internet, as well as traditional broadcasting methods, brought a new regulation to the agenda in this field. In this context, on March 21, 2018, Law No. 7103 Amending Tax Laws and Some Laws and Decree Laws was introduced.

Thus, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) was given the authority to supervise media service providers that offer their broadcasting services on the internet. Subsequently, with the Regulation on the Presentation of Radio, Television and On-Demand Broadcasts on the Internet (“Regulation”), which entered into force on Aug. 1, 2019, the procedures and principles regarding the provision and transmission of radio, television and on-demand broadcasting services on the internet; granting of broadcast license to media service providers, broadcast transmission authorization to platform operators and supervision of such broadcast are determined.

It has become a controversial issue that RTÜK, which is an institution responsible for regulating and supervising the field of radio and television, supervises media service providers that provide broadcast services on the internet. Media service providers faced many questions with the regulation. The regulation introduced financial liabilities such as making the broadcasts on the internet subject to license purchases charged up to 100.000 Turkish Liras, and vague definitions such as “on-demand broadcasting” and similar concepts. Although this regulation was brought to the agenda of the public with some changes affecting the television platforms broadcasting streaming in the public, it contains many provisions that are against the freedom of press, journalism, freedom of expression, and the right to information.⁸

⁶ (1) It shall be decided to remove the content and/or to block access to publications that are made on the internet medium and that has adequate reason for suspicion that the content constitutes the following crimes: a) The crimes under the Turkish Criminal Code dated 26/9/2004 and numbered 5237; 1) Encouragement of suicide (Article 84), 2) Sexual abuse of children (Article 103, first paragraph), 3) Facilitate the use of drugs or stimulants (Article 190), 4) Hazardous substance for health (Article 194), 5) Obscenity (Article 226), 6) Prostitution (Article 227), 7) Providing space and facilities for gambling (Article 228). b) Crimes in the Law Concerning Crimes Committed Against Atatürk dated 25/7/1951 and numbered 5816. c) the crimes regulated under the Law on Regulation of Betting and Games of Chance in Football and Other Sports Competitions dated 29/4/1959 and numbered 7258.

⁷ Constitutional Court, E. 2014/149 K. 2014/151 T. 02/10/2014, Official Gazette. Date-Issue: 01/01/2015-29223

⁸ The MLSA, one of the components of Free Web Turkey, filed a lawsuit with the Council of State for the cancellation of this regulation on Aug. 9, 2019. The RTÜK submitted its responses against the case to the file and the case was pending at the Council of State while the report was prepared for publication. <https://www.mlstatrkiye.com/tr/mlsa-rtuk-yonetmeliginin-iptali-icin-danistaya-dava-acti/> (Access date: 11.12.2020)

A.3. Recent changes regarding the internet environment

The latest amendment to internet broadcasts was The Law No. 7253 Amending the Law on the Regulation of Internet Broadcasts and the Prevention of Crimes Committed Through Such Broadcasts (Law No. 7253) which partly entered into force on July 20 2020, when it was published in the Official Gazette dated 30 July 2020, and partly as of Oct. 1, 2020.

Companies that own online platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, where journalism activities are actively carried out, are defined as social network providers, introducing a series of liabilities and sanctions for these social media companies with millions of users. One of these liabilities is the obligation to open a representative office in Turkey for social network providers with more than one million access a day. Such social network providers gradually face fines, advertising ban and ultimately bandwidth restrictions if they fail to announce a local representative. This situation also bears the risk of making access to social network providers from Turkey impossible.

According to Law No. 7253, social network providers are also obliged to archive the data of their users from Turkey inside the country. The storage of personal data allows these data to be requested by judicial and administrative authorities, expanding the tools of the censorship mechanism. In addition, the social network providers are obliged to respond to applications for content removal, access ban or cases of personal rights or right to privacy violations that might require access blocking in 48 hours. This obligation leads to the conclusion that the right to be forgotten and similar rights will be prioritized.

This regulation, which non-governmental organizations, professional associations, journalists and human rights defenders called the “Censorship Law,” takes the existing censorship to even a more suffocative level, and bears the potential to create very dangerous consequences for citizens by completely removing data security.

B. PRACTICES OF INTERNET FREEDOM IN TURKEY AND THE WORLD

Shortly after the adoption of the Censorship Law, Hornet, a meeting and dating application was closed on Aug. 6, 2020 by Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace, and Gabile, another dating application, was closed on Sept. 10, 2020, by Ankara 7th Criminal Court of Peace. It is not sure if the regulators of the new law had closing dating sites in mind but there are dating sites that exceed 1 million accesses daily in Turkey. According to a research, the number of Tinder users in Turkey stood at 1,078,000 as of the end of 2019.⁹

B.1. Social network provider's obligation to appoint representative and sharing of user data

The obligation of appointing a local representative for overseas-based social network providers with more than 1 million daily access, according to Law No. 7253, was not fulfilled by any international social media platforms other than the Russia-based VKontakte as of Nov. 2, 2020, the deadline for appointing and submitting a representative. The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) fined foreign network providers without local representatives to 10 million Turkish Liras on Nov. 4, 2020.¹⁰ The fines were imposed on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok. The companies that did not fulfill the requirement to appoint a representative in additional time were once again fined, this time to 30 million liras.¹¹ If the obligation is not fulfilled in 30 days after the second administrative fine, then the real or legal person taxpayers resident in Turkey will be barred from advertising on these social media companies. The BTK is authorized to narrow the internet traffic bandwidth of these social network providers if they do not fulfill the obligations within three months starting from the start of the advertising ban.

Law No. 7253 poses yet another potential danger. If social network providers appoint representatives, then they are required to store the data of users and submit them to government bodies if requested. All social platforms obtain data from their users about their age, height, weight, different tendencies, thoughts, behaviors desired to be hidden from society, health conditions, tastes and various other elements that make up a person's personality. By law, it becomes legal to provide such personal data to the state. This raises the possibility that government officials may use personal data against users for humiliating their political opponents, manipulating election results and use the information against the social network users for similar purposes. Therefore, it is of great importance for these platforms to not appoint representatives in Turkey.

B.2. Content removal and the right to be forgotten

Following the adoption of Law Number 7235, the right to be forgotten came to the agenda when Korkuteli Criminal Court of Peace ruled on a ban on access to many online news reports –including those on the websites of dailies Hürriyet, Posta, Yeni Şafak, Takvim and Sabah– about Recep Çakır's arrest and sentence for rape.¹² The concept of “right to be forgotten”, which expresses the right to extract personal data from internet search engines and other online archives under certain conditions, has been discussed and applied in the European Union since 2006.

A legal process regarding this issue was discussed in the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (Grand Chamber) dated May 13, 2014. In 1998, the property of Spanish citizen Mario Costeja González

⁹ “Report: 1.1 pepole use Tinder in Turkey; 80 of users are men” <http://www.diken.com.tr/rapor-tinderi-turkiyede-1-1-milyon-kisi-kullaniyor-yuzde-80i-erkek/>

¹⁰ “Social media companies fined to 10 million liras” <https://www.dw.com/tr/sosyal-medya-%C5%9Firketlerine-10-milyon-tl-ceza/a-55495474>

¹¹ “Social media companies fined to 30 million liras each” <https://www.dw.com/tr/sosyal-medya-%C5%9Firketlerine-30ar-milyon-lira-ceza/a-55901906>

¹² “Recep Çakır: Is right to be forgotten possible for Turkish international wrestler convicted of sexual assault” <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-53852467>

was put up for sale in return for an unpaid debt. According to Spanish law, the sale advertisement was published in La Vanguardia newspaper. A few years later, when Costeja looked at the newspaper's internet archive, he saw that his name was associated with advertisements by the Google search engine and requested that it be removed. After Google Inc. refused to remove the content from the search engine, Costeja applied to the Spanish Data Protection Agency. The request for the removal of the content from the newspaper's website was rejected by the Spanish Data Protection Agency on the grounds that the content in question was published due to a legal requirement, but Google Spain and Google Inc. company were decided to remove search results related to the person and restrict future access. Google filed a lawsuit for the annulment of this decision, and the Spanish court handling the case took the matter to the European Court of Justice.¹³

The Google Spain decision includes important points regarding the processing of personal data, internet search engines, processing of data on websites, search and storage of these data, and the protection of individuals regarding the responsibility of the search engine manager. According to this decision based on the protection recognized in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Directive 95/46/CE of the European Parliament dated Oct. 24, 1995, individuals have the right to request the removal of links containing personal information from search engines under certain conditions. It should be added that this process applies conditions when the information is insufficient, irrelevant or no longer relevant or excessive for data processing purposes. In addition, the intervention made by the search engine includes removing pages from search results only in response to questions about the person's name, not removing the content from the internet completely.

In light of these developments, it becomes very important that the right to be forgotten is not abused by politicians or public officials who want to hide their corruption. Looking at the access restrictions thematically analyzed below, it can be guessed how the ruling power in Turkey tends to use such rights. For example, in April 2020, an access blocking was imposed on the news about the land by the Bosphorus which was rented by Fahrettin Altun, the Communications Director of the Presidency.¹⁴ Another example of news subject to access blocking was about F. N., a religious cult leader in Sakarya, abusing a child.¹⁵

Therefore, it can be clearly foreseen that the content removal measure will cause an increase in the pressure and censorship on freedom of expression and press. As can be seen in the recent blocking of Wikipedia, it is observed that in practice decisions to block access are not implemented on particular content that is deemed to constitute element of crime, but access to the entire website on which the content offered. Since there is the possibility of removing the content, it seems that problems such as legitimate aim and disproportion will arise more frequently in interventions against rights and freedoms that are part of freedom of expressions, such as the right to announce news and the right to information. This necessitates the consideration of public concern, the best interest of the public and up-to-dateness in the request to remove particular content, such as news about public officials regarding corruption incidents, from search engines.

At the same time, the right to be forgotten of those who committed crimes such as rape, animal murder and sexual crimes poses danger to other members of the society. Decisions on the right to be forgotten should be made by independent courts on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the balance between the public interest, freedom of the press and privacy and private life. In this respect, it is of great importance to use precedents of national and international courts in a guiding manner.

¹³ Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), *Google Spain SL and Google Inc. v Agencia Española de Protección de Datos (AEPD) and Mario Costeja González*, Case C-131/12, 13 May 2014. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:62012CJ0131&from=EN>, parag. 93

¹⁴ "Access blocked to reports on Bosphorus land rent by Fahrettin Altun" <https://www.birgun.net/haber/fahrettin-altun-un-bogazda-kiraladigi-arazinin-haberine-erisim-engeli-297372>

¹⁵ "Access blocked to Odatv news on F. N." <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/230251-odatv-nin-fatih-nurullah-haberine-erisim-engeli>

B.3. Access blockings and censorship of censored content

The public institutions in Turkey do not share the number of sites that received access bans. The BTK last published the number of blocked sites in 2008, and since then, the Access Providers Association (ESB), which has given the opportunity to manually check the sites known to be blocked, responds to demands for information on this issue with pie charts that show the percentage of justifications for blocking access to sites and internet addresses. In recent years, parliamentary questions submitted by lawmakers to obtain information about the number of sites blocked to access were left unanswered on the grounds that the announcement of the answer might hinder the “fight against crime”.¹⁶

T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Merkezi (CİMER)'ne 13.11.2019 tarihinde yapmış olduğunuz 1902657765 sayılı başvurunuz 18.11.2019 tarihinde BİLGİ TEKNOLOJİLERİ VE İLETİŞİM KURUMU BAŞKANLIĞI (BTK) tarafından cevaplanmıştır:

Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Merkezi'ne (CİMER) yapmış olduğunuz Bilgi Edinme Başvurunuz ilgisi nedeniyle Kurumumuza yönlendirilmiş olup, başvurunuz ile ilgili olarak Kurumumuzun ihtisas birim(ler)inden alınan bilgi "09/10/2003 tarihli ve 4982 sayılı Bilgi Edinme Hakkı Kanun'un 7'nci maddesinin ikinci fıkrası, "Kurum ve kuruluşlar, ayrı veya özel bir çalışma, araştırma, inceleme ya da analiz neticesinde oluşturulabilecek türden bir bilgi veya belge için yapılacak başvurulara olumsuz cevap verebilirler." hükmünü havidir.

Bununla birlikte 04/05/2007 tarihli ve 5651 sayılı İnternet Ortamında Yapılan Yayınların Düzenlenmesi ve Bu Yayınlar Yoluyla İşlenen Suçlarla Mücadele Edilmesi Hakkında Kanun kapsamında yapılan işlemlere ilişkin olarak <http://internet2.btk.gov.tr/sitesorgu/> adresinden sorgu yapılabilmektedir. Ayrıca 5651 sayılı Kanun'un 8'inci maddesi kapsamında, erişimin engellenmesi kararlarının oransal dağılımı, <http://www.guvenliweb.org.tr/dosya/brEi5.pdf> internet adresimizde güncel ve detaylı olarak yer almaktadır." şeklindedir.

**Bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.
Bilgi Teknolojileri ve İletişim Kurumu
Tüketici ile İlişkiler Müdürlüğü**

Above is a standard response given by the BTK to an application for information about the number of blocked sites and their URLs.

According to the rates provided by the ESB as of October 2020, 99.73% of the access ban decisions are about Sexual Abuse of Children, Prostitution, Obscenity, Illegal Betting and Gambling crimes. Due to the lack of transparency of the government and the depreciation of independence of the judiciary, these data cannot be verified. In addition, there is no category to include decisions known to be implemented with political motives and that are justified with reasons such as “violating personal rights.”

However, there is a comprehensive study conducted to reveal the number of banned sites. According to the EngelliWeb 2019: An Iceberg of Unseen Internet Censorship in Turkey¹⁷ report by Professor Yaman Akdeniz (Istanbul Bilgi University, Faculty of Law) and Expert Researcher Ozan Güven, 408,494 domain names and websites were blocked as of the end of 2019. As far as marked within the scope of the same study, the number of domain names and websites blocked in 2019 was 61,049.

¹⁶ <https://www.birgun.net/haber/erisime-engelli-site-sayisi-da-erisime-engelli-248258>

¹⁷ EngelliWeb: AN Iceberg of Unseen Internet Censorship in Turkey, https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb_2019_Eng.pdf

Although the ESB data are not reliable, and the fact that the great majority of the sites listed by EngelliWeb until itself was blocked in 2017 were adult sites, it is seen that sites with sexual content are de facto censored in Turkey, where pornography is not illegal.

“Ban on access to obscene sites” should have been lifted, according to a Feb 7, 2018 ruling published in the Official Gazette, but these restrictions remain to be active. In other words, as Turkey moves away from rule of law, the fact that local courts and/or administrators do not take the Constitutional Court decisions seriously is also reflected in internet censorship.

Percentage of ex officio active access ban decisions according to ESB (as of October 2020)¹⁸

Type	Percentage (%)
Obscenity	53,65 %
Prostitution	25,39 %
Providing an environment or the means for gambling	18,75 %
Sexual abuse of children	1,80 %
Illegal betting	0,14 %
Narcotics or psychotropic substances	0,12 %
Supply of substances dangerous to health	0,08 %
Crimes against Atatürk	0,04 %
Encouraging suicide	0,03 %

However, the efficiency of blocking user access to websites is controversial. According to statistics by VPN (Virtual Private Network) provider companies, which are used to by-pass access bans, in 2019 Turkey is the third country where the VPN is most commonly used by 32%, to follow Indonesia (38%) and India (38%).¹⁹ In November 2016, the BTK sent operators an instruction to shut down VPN services commonly used in Turkey such as Tor Project, VPN Master, Private Internet Access VPN, Express VPN, in accordance with Law no. 5651

Use of VPN is not a crime in Turkey, but VPN providers often confirm that they are aggressively restricted in practice. Most recently, in July 2020, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) deputy chair Feti Yıldız said “New and fundamental measures should be taken to prevent access to restricted platforms and banned sites via VPN and international cooperation should be developed.”²⁰

According to statements by officials, social media accounts in Turkey had already been strictly monitored even before the the law. According to data by the Interior Ministry, judicial processes were launched for 6,743 social media account users about their posts between Jan. 1, 2020 and Aug. 14, 2020.

¹⁸ <https://www.guvenliweb.org.tr/dosya/brEi5.pdf> (as of October 2020)

¹⁹ “Turkey ranked third in 2019 in VPN use”, July 1, 2019 Euronews, <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/07/01/turkiye-yasak-dinlemedi-dunyada-en-cok-vpn-kullanan-3-ulke-oldu-internet-erisim>

²⁰ “MHP wants blocking of VPN access” <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2020/07/27/mhp-vpn-erisiminin-de-engellenmesini-istedi>

C. FINDINGS OF FREE WEB TURKEY PLATFORM

As a result of the news and reports on open sources, Free Web Turkey Platform was able to determine that courts in Turkey imposed access blockings on at least 1910 URLs, domain names and social media posts in 12 months from Nov. 1, 2019 to Oct. 31, 2020. A total of 870 of these bans were ruled for news URLs. Likewise, a total of 26 news sites were blocked, some of them multiple times, during this period. During this period, court decisions about ban on 42 posts or social media accounts that contain political views, comments or news appeared in news reports. Although it was not possible to examine the URL of each blocked site as reflected in the media and the relevant court decision, the sources used in this data set said 909 access ban decisions were made for betting sites, adult sites, financial sites that offer leveraged transactions, fraudulent sites and phishing sites.

Distribution of the method of ban

Type of blocking	Number of examined decisions	Known number of affected URLs
Domain name blocking	45	1036
URL blocking	101	870
Local bans	3	3
Throttling	1	1
Total	150	1910

* The data and categorization pertaining to these tables can be found in ANNEX 1.

When the blocked URLs of news content are examined, it is observed that there is great consistency in these decisions in a thematic sense.

In this period, the majority of the news reports that are known to have been given blocked to access by the Courts of Peace were those that contained public interest and information about public persons and events. It can be said that access bans have been consistently imposed on the news about Justice and Development Party (AKP) provincial and district chairs, municipalities or mayors, family members of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and religious orders or other formations close to the AKP. Likewise, it is seen that the blocked opposition news sites are predominantly Kurdish news sites. During this period, consistency was also observed in the continuity of the decisions ensuring the protection of persons who committed crimes against women and children.

Basic distribution of domain name blocking

General theme of access block	Number of examined decisions	Known number of affected URLs
Gambling and adult content	6	633
Unauthorized financial transactions/Fraud	13	276
Non-news website ban	2	72
Critical news websites	18	26
Bans in response to foreign countries	2	21
Websites of the Armenian government	1	5
Dating websites	2	2
International services	1	1
Total	45	1036

The findings of the report confirm the impression that attempts to suppress the internet are aimed at preventing debates on the policies of the government. During the period covered by the report, 150 access block decisions that affected at least 1910 URLs were spotted.²¹ 22 of these decisions are about blocking access to news sites (26 domains) or URLs of the published news (870 news URLs). A total of 368 of the publications decided to be blocked are directly related to the administration of the president and the head of the AKP, the municipalities and administrators from this party or family members of President Erdoğan. As can be seen from the decisions in the press, these constitute the highest number of URLs affected by access bans.

Thematic distribution of the examined access block decisions

General theme of access block	Number of examined decisions	Known number of affected URLs
Gambling and adult websites	6	633
News regarding the government or the Erdogan family	56	368
Unauthorized financial transactions/Fraud	13	276
News regarding agriculture	4	165
News regarding crimes against women and children	13	154
Other news blocking	16	79
Non-news website ban	2	72
COVID-19	6	56
News regarding the Directorate of Religious Affairs	2	40
Critical news websites	18	26
Bans in response to foreign countries	2	21
News regarding business corporations	3	8
Websites of the Armenian government	1	5
News regarding violence against animals	2	2
Dating websites	2	2
Internet throttling	1	1
Internation services	1	1
Local bans	1	1
News channel on Youtube	1	0
Total	150	1910

The blocking of oppositional websites follows this category with 22 decisions that blocked at least 26 domain names. Considering that 101 of the 150 examined decisions (without counting the closed domain names) directly block access to news reports, it is striking how severely the government and the Courts of Peace censor contents critical of the country's administration. This landscape is, of course, in line with the many ongoing lawsuits against journalists in many courthouses.

During this period, it is also possible to encounter access restriction decisions allegedly taken in favor of women, children or disadvantaged people, but aimed at protecting the perpetrators. There were 13 decisions regarding femicides or sexual crimes committed by cult leaders against children, and these decisions affected at least 154 contents. During this period, there were six decisions that brought censorship to reports on the government's COVID-19 policies and affected at least 56 URLs. The general issues targeted by access bans during this period can be seen in the table below.

²¹ See the chart in Annex I for detailed information on blocked URLs.

Distribution of the themes of URL-based blocking

General theme of access block	Number of examined decisions	Known number of affected URLs
News regarding the government or the Erdogan family	56	368
Agriculture	4	165
News regarding crimes against women and children	13	154
Other news blocking	14	77
COVID-19	6	56
News regarding the Directorate of Religious Affairs	2	40
News regarding business corporations	3	8
Violence against animals	2	2
News channel on Youtube	1	0
Total	95	814

C.1. Censorship in practice: Leading themes

One of the most common themes is blocking access to news reports about the government or the AKP, and an example of that is the ban on report about the AKP's Manisa provincial chair forcing a jobseeker woman into sex work in November 2019. Still in November 2019, Tolga Şardan's report on T24 news website about a formation known as the Menzil Cult was blocked by decision number 2019/8485 of the Ankara 2nd Criminal Court of Peace.

In February 2020, the Istanbul Anadolu 6th Criminal Court of Peace imposed a ban on access to the news about First Lady Emine Erdoğan's purse worth \$50.000. On Feb. 12, the Istanbul Anadolu 7th Criminal Court of Peace imposed an access ban on news reports that said Berat Albayrak, the Treasury and Finance minister of the time, acquired assets around the planned Kanal Istanbul, a mega project to build an artificial water line to connect Black Sea and Marmara Sea north of Istanbul. On Feb. 21, Istanbul Anadolu 8th Criminal Court of Peace ruled on an access ban on further reports on access ban on these reports.

In February, access to the Jin News site was blocked by a ninth time and access to the KHK TV broadcasting channel on YouTube was banned. Still in February, a countrywide slow down on social media access, a practice without a court order, was imposed while news reports over the killing of Turkish soldier's in Syria's Idlib were circulating.

Access ban on the news have also often resulted in investigation, detention and arrest of the journalist who produced the related reports. In March, after the arrest of OdaTV News Director Barış Terkoğlu and journalist Hülya Kılınç for their news about a member of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) who died in Libya, access to the OdaTV news website was blocked.

In April, access to social media posts of journalist Fatih Portakal, who criticized the AKP's management of the COVID-19 pandemic, was blocked, and an indictment was prepared against these posts. Similarly, a lawsuit was filed against Cumhuriyet Newspaper reporter Hazal Ocak in March for the news that Berat Albayrak bought land on the Kanal Istanbul route, a report that was banned from access.

Also in April, 18 news websites, including Independent Turkish, SPA, Al Riyadh and Al Hayat, were blocked in retaliation against Saudi Arabia's access block to Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency. Still in April, as part of bans on access to news about government members, at least 273 URLs were blocked due to ban on reports about a plot rented by Communications Director of Turkish Presidency, Fahrettin Altun, in Kuzguncuk, a Bosphorus neighborhood. In April, with the initiative of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), access to at least 40 posts about the agency's chair, Ali Erbaş, were blocked.

In May, Ozguruz19.org, the domain name of Özgürüz, news site that was founded by journalist Can Dünder and reporting from abroad, was blocked. In June, the judges blocked news about the government's fi-

nancial relations. In June 2020, access was banned to news reports about “Tevfik Göksu from the AKP will give a mosque in return for municipal debt,” Ankara’s natural gas grid Başkentgaz donating to TÜRGEV (a foundation co-founded by Erdoğan’s son Bilal Erdoğan), religious cult Menzil shifting the name of its Semerkand Science and Civilization University into “Istanbul Health and Technology University.” During this period, an access ban was imposed on the headline “Explaining something like explaining it to Bilal” on ekşi sözlük, a social dictionary. The domain name Ozguruz20.org of journalist Dündar’s news site Ozguruz20.org was also blocked once again in June.

In July, among the news that was blocked from access, there were people and institutions known for their closeness to the government. An access ban was imposed by the Criminal Court of Peace in Gaziantep on the investigation into charges of “forgery of documents” and “abuse of power” by former Gaziantep University Rector Ali Gür. However, this ban was lifted by the Gaziantep 6th Criminal Court of Peace on Nov. 6.²² The corruption news about Denizli Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Osman Zolan, the news about Fatma Altınmakas, who was killed after her request for protection was rejected, and the posts on Twitter with the tag #FatmaAltınmakasaSesOl were blocked.

In August, access to Jin News site was blocked for the 10th time, and news about the government and its close circle continued to be blocked.

Among these were the news about Bilal Erdoğan’s friend Aykut Emrah Polat from the religious high school winning the tender held by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Turkey (TMSF) for 280 million Turkish Liras and the news about Defense Minister Hulusi Akar’s visit to the tomb of Salih Mirzabeyoğlu, a convicted Turkish-Islamic organization leader, praying in Hagia Sophia after it was reopened to prayer as a mosque. Also in August, came the decision to block access to Republican People’s Party (CHP) Deputy Chairman Veli Ağbaba’s post about Religious Affairs head Ali Erbaş on his Twitter account came.

The access ban on 28 news reports about the conviction of wrestler Recep Çakır of sexual assaults was an example of the decisions to protect the perpetrators of crimes committed against women and children. In August, access to the gay men’s socialization site Hornet was also blocked.

In September, the news about the abuse of a child by F. N., the leader of the Uşşaki religious cult, and the tweets of a criminal lawyer and related headlines on ekşi sözlük about the murder of Aleyna Çakır were banned from access, to be included in the category of crimes protecting persons who commit crimes against women and children. Among the news about Erdoğan’s family or government members that saw access ban were Reza Zarrab case’s ties to Minister Albayrak and Aktif Bank; news that the use of land in the Üsküdar district of Istanbul, which was donated on condition that it would be the plot for a school building, as the parking lot of a Medipol Hospital branch, a hospitals chain founded by Health Minister Fahrattin Koca; news about the purse of First Lady Emine Erdoğan; in addition to the access ban on the headline “Explaining something like explaining it to Bilal” on ekşi sözlük.

Following the blocking of Hornet, access to LGBTI+ friendship and dating site gabile.co, one of Turkey’s oldest dating site, was blocked in September upon the decision of the Ankara 7th Criminal Court of Peace. Still in September, access blockings were imposed on Sendika.org, New Life, Mesopotamia Agency and New Democracy websites.

In October, blocking of news sites continued. In this period, access to websites of Rudaw Türkçe, Nupel. Net and Zonguldak province local broadcaster Kanal Z was blocked. Also in September, access to the official websites of the Armenian government, which was in conflict with Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, was blocked, but the mechanism of the ban was not understood. The news of Birgün newspaper headlined “Criminal complaint against Medipol and Turkish State Railways,” news about the former head of the AKP’s Urfa province youth branch, and news about the tax exemption of Kalyon Construction, a company close to the government, were among the other news reports that concerned the public and were blocked from access.

In October, access blockings were once again imposed on the web addresses of Etkin News Agency (ETHA), JinNews and Yeni Demokrasi Newspaper. In October, access blockings were imposed on the news reports about what is known as FinCEN documents and indicate that Turkish banks were involved in 538 suspicious transactions.

22 <https://bianet.org/bianet/print/233764-4-saatte-getirilen-erisim-engeli-95-gunde-kaldirildi>

C.2. Positive judicial decisions of access blocking in Turkey

The Turkish Constitutional Court can sometimes reach positive decisions that can be precedent in other cases. However, such decisions can be delayed due to the structure of the judicial system in the country and can result in the continuation of violation of rights for a long time.

To apply to the high court in Turkey, all domestic remedies should be exhausted and all objections to local and lower courts should have been placed in prescribed times. This means waiting for and following all the procedural details to be exhausted. For example, Wikipedia applied to the European Court of Human Rights on April 24, 2017, for the annulment of the ban on access to its entire website but failed to get results since the domestic remedies in Turkey were not exhausted. The Wikimedia Foundation then applied to domestic courts in the country and could take the issue to the Constitutional Court. About two years later, on Dec. 29, 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled that the block on Wikipedia was a violation of rights.

After the AYM's Wikipedia decision, access to the social media site Imgur, which had been blocked since 2015, was restored. Photographs of the prosecutor Mehmet Selim Kiraz, who was murdered in Istanbul on March 31, 2015, were uploaded to the Imgur website, and the access of the site was blocked by the decision of the Istanbul 1st Criminal Court of Peace. Although the photos that caused the block to access were removed from the site, the access ban continued, and after the Constitutional Court's Wikipedia decision, the block was removed.

The Sendika.org website, which has faced dozens of access bans since the day it was launched, brought the case to the Constitutional Court in 2015, right after the applications made to domestic legal processes exhausted. About five years later, the Constitutional Court gave a violation decision and ordered the site to be paid 6,000 Turkish Liras of fine for non-pecuniary damages. However, a local court, the Gölbaşı Criminal Court of Peace, did not implement this decision of the Constitutional Court for a long time.

Access blocking decision was ruled on news reports about Hacı Lokman Birlik, who was killed by soldiers in 2015, and whose body was tied to the back of an armored vehicle and dragged, on the grounds of "praising the terrorist organization." Multiple courts blocked access to 111 news reports by various news agencies about the incident. Birgün newspaper, one of the press organizations that faced an access block on the report about the incident, objected to the decision of the Gölbaşı Criminal Court of Peace, but was rejected. Upon this, the newspaper brought the case to the Constitutional Court. Four years after the blocking of access, in 2019, the Constitutional Court ruled that the newspaper's freedom of press and expression was violated.

The AYM is criticized for being idle in cases of violation of freedoms of press and expression and for extending its decisions over time. Non-governmental organizations and human rights activists argue that until the Court's decision of violation is issued, issues that highly concern the society drop from the agenda and that the public interest and the society's right to access information become idle, too.

C.3. Applications to social media platforms for content removal

Social media platforms publish "Transparency Reports," explaining various statistics regarding user data, registrations or requests for content removal. These reports give users the opportunity to learn how much data their governments are asking for from these institutions. The Transparency Report practice, which was initiated by Google for the first time in 2010, is an important tool in understanding the scale of surveillance practices implemented by governments, according to digital activities.²³ There is criticism that Transparency Report were not transparent enough in recent years, and efforts to protect personal data by the platforms cannot be understood by looking at these data.²⁴ Still, Turkey's ranking on these reports according to data and content removal requests by the governments is offering users a background about surveillance and censorship

State institutions in Turkey usually top these lists by companies that rank user data and content removal requests. For example, in 2019, Turkey ranked the 6th state on the list of requests from Facebook and Instag-

²³ Transparency Reporting, James Losey ve Grady Johnson, Global Information Society Watch 2012 Internet ve Yolsuzluk, <https://www.giswatch.org/en/information-and-democracy/transparency-reporting>

²⁴ Report titled "Who has your back," <https://www.eff.org/wp/who-has-your-back-2019>

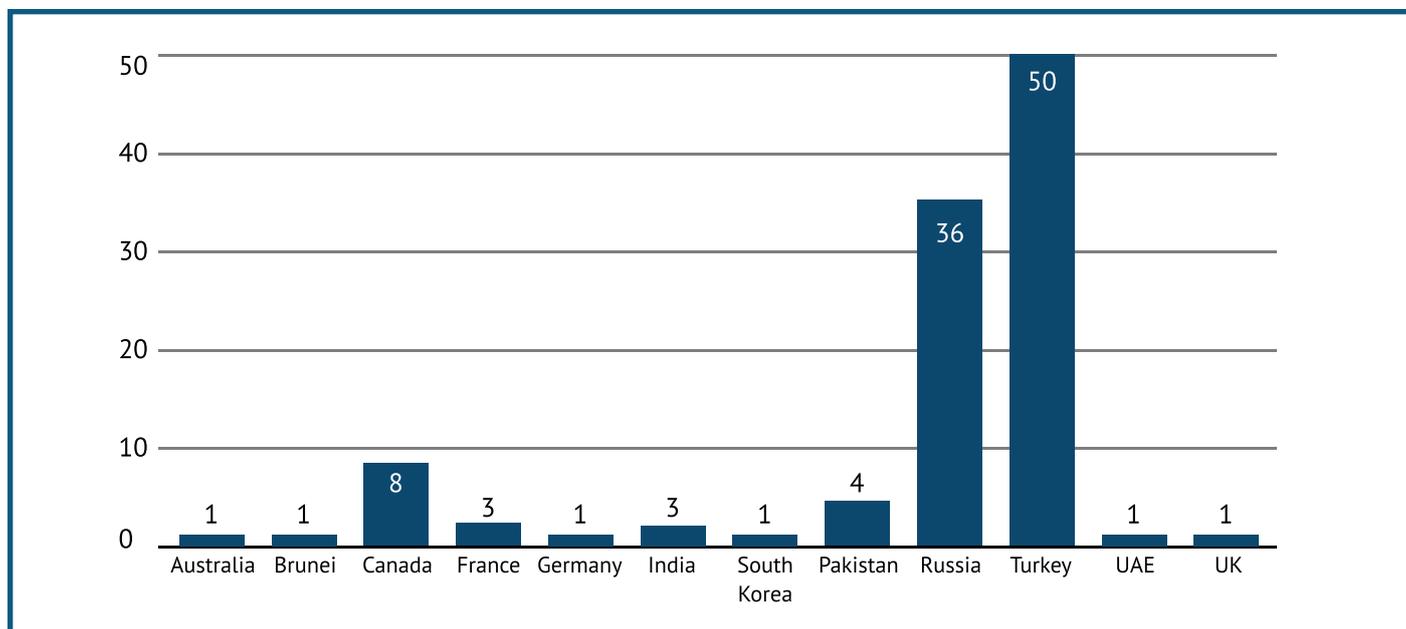
ram. According to Reddit, a group considered by digital rights organizations as producing one of the most transparent Transparency Reports, Turkey was on top in 2019 in terms of content removal or access blocking requests by state authorities.

C.4. Turkey in transparency reports of Facebook, Reddit, WordPress, Twitter and TikTok

According to the Facebook report for the first half 2020,²⁵ Turkey applied for 6,171 user information out of 138,032 requests from the company between January and June 2020, ranking seventh in 145 countries in this category. A total 821 content removal requests out of 2,212 came from Turkish state institutions. Turkey ranks ninth among 60 countries that requested content removal.

According to the data shared by the platform last year, a total of 17,807 contents were removed from Facebook and Instagram in the first six months of 2019. The platform fulfilled 599 requests by Turkey out of 2060 removal requests and 2537 requests for blocking access to account. Turkey ranked sixth in this overall category. In the second half of the year, a total of 15,826 contents were removed from Facebook and Instagram upon the request of the state authorities. Turkey ranked 10th on the list of content removal seekers with 536 removed contents. According to Facebook data, Turkey sought 4306 blockings on access to content and requested information about 5481 accounts. A total of 1,135 contents from Turkey were removed in 2019 by Facebook in 2019. Turkey ranked eight on the list of content removals overall in 2019.

According to the Reddit 2019 Transparency Report²⁶, the Reddit Platform received 110 content removal or access blocking requests from 12 governmental authorities throughout 2019. The platform met 41 of these requests, as it did not take action on 69 of them. A total of 50 of 110 content removal or restriction request were made by Turkey. Russia followed Turkey with 36 request. The number of content blocking requests by other countries ranges from one to eight. According to the report, Turkey did not place any user ID data requests in 2019.



Retrieved from the Reddit 2019 Transparency Report

According to transparency data shared by Google²⁷, Turkey placed 4,362 content removal requests in the first half of 2019. Some 31% of these requests were made for “defamation”, 30% for “national security”, and 20% for “privacy and security”. Of the 4,362 items in question, Google removed 1,148 items for legal reasons and 182

25 Facebook, all transparency reports, <https://transparency.facebook.com/>

26 Reddit 2019 Transparency Report <https://www.redditinc.com/policies/transparency-report-2019>

27 Google Transparency Data <https://transparencyreport.google.com/government-removals/by-country/TR>

as part of company policy. In the second half of 2019, Turkey asked for the removal of a total of 2,602 items. Of these, 850 were removed for legal reasons and 110 for policy reasons by Google. The 47% of these requests were made for “defamation”, 23% for “privacy and security”, and 15% for “national security”. According to data for the first half of 2020, removal requests were made for a total of 3,559 items. Some 48% of these requests were made for “defamation”, 15% for “privacy and security”, and 11% for “national security”. Of the 3,559 items requested to be removed, 913 were removed by Google for legal reasons and 113 for company policy reasons.

According to transparency data released by Twitter²⁸, in the first half of 2019, a total of 6,073 removal requests came from Turkey, and another 5,195 requests in the second half. In accordance, none of the requests made in the first half of 2019 were accepted by Twitter, as 31.2% of the requests made in the second half were concluded and these contents were removed. Another data set provided by Twitter in the Transparency Report is about the information requests regarding user accounts. Accordingly, 350 requests for information were made from Turkey in the first half of 2019, and 449 in the second half, with none of them being concluded positively. According to the data shared by Twitter, the 41.451 legal requests to remove content from Turkey accounted for 41% of the 100.945 legal requests worldwide.

According to transparency data by Wordpress²⁹, removal requests were submitted for 72 websites in Turkey with 45 court orders. Some 31% of these requests were accepted on the grounds that they violated the company policy, and some 60% were accepted only by considering the request. In the second half of 2019³⁰, in addition to the 27 court orders about 38 websites from Turkey, 27 removal requests came from the government and law enforcement. Some 44% of the requests were accepted on the grounds that they violated the company policy, and 52% were accepted only by considering the request. In 2019, Turkey was among the top three countries that made the most requests for the removal of websites, along with Russia and Pakistan. In the first half of 2020, Russia, topped the list of removal requests with 69 items, as Sweden followed with 10, and Turkey and India with nine requests each. In this period, 13 removal requests were made from Turkey with a total of 9 court orders and 44% of them were accepted for violating the company’s policy, while 44% were accepted only by considering the request. At this point, it should be highlighted that Wordpress uses a method named “geoblock” for requests from Russia, Pakistan and Turkey, blocking the access to mentioned content only for IP addresses from the country that made the request. The company justifies this approach by arguing that it aims at preventing total blocking of access to Wordpress.com, adding that this is not a theoretical concern, since it was previously experienced in Russia and Turkey.

According to TikTok’s Transparency Report for the first six months of 2020³¹, the company received a total of 1,561 user data requests between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2020, with 1,187 of them coming from India. Turkey ranked 16th among 42 countries that requested user data with four incidents. For requests for content removal, Turkey made the nine of a total of 135 requests, ranking sixth among 15 countries.

C.5. Internet censorship around the world

Restrictions on internet censorship continue to increase in many parts of the world. There are also many laws and practices aimed at controlling and restricting online freedom of expression in countries that are considered democratically developed.

One of the most important of these is the German Network Act³², known as NetzDG, which passed in Jan. 2018 against hate crimes committed on the internet. According to this law, expressions that are considered as hate or insulting speech under the German Penal Code must be blocked or removed by social media companies. Social media companies that do not abide by law faces millions of euros of fines. According to Diana Lee³³ of Yale Law School’s Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic (MFIA), with this method,

28 Twitter Transparency Report <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/reports/countries/tr.html>

29 Wordpress 2019 1st Half Transparency Report <https://transparency.automattic.com/takedown-demands/takedown-demands-2019-jan-1-jun-30>

30 Wordpress 2019 2nd Half Transparency Report <https://transparency.automattic.com/takedown-demands/takedown-demands-2019-jul-1-dec-31>

31 TikTok 2nd Half Transparency Report <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/resources/transparency-report>

32 About Germany’s NetzDG law <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-projects/the-impact-of-the-german-netzdg-law/>

33 Germany’s NetzDG and Threat on Online Free Speech, Yale Law School’s website <https://law.yale.edu/mfia/case-disclosed/germanys-netzdg-and-threat-online-free-speech>

Germany has included social media companies in the public service system as content editors.

The law has been criticized for inspiring many countries, including Turkey, by delegating the private companies for practicing censorship³⁴. The Danish think-tank Justicia warned in a report published in 2019 that “This raises the question of whether Europe’s most influential democracy has contributed to the further erosion of global Internet freedom by developing and legitimizing a prototype of online censorship by proxy that can readily be adapted to serve the ends of authoritarian states.”³⁵

Likewise, there are discussions in the U.K. regarding the Online Harms law, similar to the one in Germany.³⁶

C.6. COVID-19 impact on censorship in the world

At the time this report was prepared for publication, more than 40 million people around the world were infected with COVID-19 and more than 1 million people died due to the virus. In addition to the global economic and political problems brought about by the pandemic, one of the biggest impacts was on internet freedoms and freedom of expression. Many studies published in 2020 show that most countries of the world are using the pandemic to increase their surveillance power and restrict freedom of expression on the internet.

The Pandemic’s Digital Shadow report published by Freedom House in October examines censorship laws, net neutrality protections, access blocks, restriction of internet access practices in 65 countries, accounting for 87% of the world’s internet users, between June 2019 and May 2020³⁷. According to the report, at least 45 countries have detained and arrested activists and journalists for their online news and statements about the pandemic. Laws restricting freedom of expression were adopted in at least 20 countries, and the pandemic was pointed at to justify them. In at least 28 of the countries studied, governments have imposed access blocking to websites and social media posts containing articles or comments on health data, allegations of corruption in processes related to the pandemic and COVID-19 management processes.

Of course, the spread of internet censorship around the world is based on COVID-19. For example, technologies that transfer citizens’ data to the government in China’s Xinjiang province have started to be used in many parts of the country. China has been ranked last in Freedom House’s report on internet freedoms for six years in a row. Another concern about the spread of Internet freedom is the spread of contact tracking technologies that use GPS data, just like the “Hayat Eve Sığar - House Is Enough for Life” application in Turkey. For example, the application used in Russia asks people in quarantine to upload selfies intermittently. Aarogya Setu contact tracking app in India has over 50 million users. The data of these people are sent to government servers.

C.7. Internet slowdown or interruption

In the past year, reduction of bandwidth or the shutdown of the internet by the state through other methods came to the agenda at least in 13 countries. For example, during the presidential elections in Belarus in August 2020, citizens could not access the internet for three days³⁸. Similarly, after 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in the northeastern Syrian town of Idlib in February 2020, access to the internet was interrupted for 12 hours in Turkey.³⁹ Internet interruptions can have consequences that might amount to violations of the right to life: For example, it was revealed that law enforcement officers killed at least 304 people, including children, when internet access was blocked in Iran during the four-day protests against fuel hikes in November 2019⁴⁰.

³⁴ German Style Internet Censorship Catches On Around the World, Reason.com report, October 2020 <https://reason.com/2020/10/12/german-style-internet-censorship-catches-on-around-the-world/> “Germany’s Online Crackdowns Inspired the World’s Dictators”, Foreign Policy article, Kasim 2019 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/06/germany-online-crackdowns-inspired-the-worlds-dictators-russia-venezuela-india/>

³⁵ Justicia’s 2019 report

³⁶ Speeches and letters from the UK parliament on a more comprehensive internet monitoring <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefingshttps://global-freedomofexpression.columbia.edu/publications/the-digital-berlin-wall-how-germany-accidentally-created-a-prototype-for-global-online-censorship/cdp-2020-0093/>

³⁷ Freedom House report <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2020/pandemics-digital-shadow>

³⁸ News about internet cut in Belarus <https://www.dw.com/tr/belarus-interneti-kesti-psiphon-a-%C3%A7t%C4%B1/a-54559327>

³⁹ News about internet access problems after the attack in Idlib <https://t24.com.tr/haber/idlib-deki-saldirinin-ardindan-yasanan-internete-erisim-sorunu-sabah-saatlerinde-de-devam-ediyor,863690>

⁴⁰ Amnesty International’s November 2020 report about killings in Iranian protests <https://iran-shutdown.amnesty.org/>

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turkey is among countries where access to the internet is difficult and access blocking decisions are easily made. Such “easiness” is rather utilized for local and domestic news websites, it can also target large international websites. Wikipedia and Youtube, which remained banned for years, are among the striking examples of this. Social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook were mostly restricted by relatively smaller interventions and in most cases of such restrictions. No court orders were sought. On Nov. 4, 2016, when Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş and many MPs were detained, access to the social media website Twitter was restricted. The restriction did not come with a court order but the technique of “throttling.” Access to social media websites from Turkey was also restricted by the use of the same technique, without a court order, at times of Turkish military operations in Syria, as well as the arrest of lawmakers. Access to these restricted websites was restored once such topics were off the agenda.

Social media is used intensely by people close to the government. The AKP, headed by President Erdoğan, is among the parties that use social media most effectively. There are 13.6 million Twitter users in Turkey, according to Global Statshot data. President Erdoğan has 17.1 million followers. The AKP is the most followed political party in Turkey, with 2.5 million followers. Nationalist MHP, the main opposition CHP, the third-largest party in the parliament, HDP, and the Good Party (İYİ Parti) that succeeded in making it to the parliament with the last election follow respectively.

The opposition criticizes the practice that the policies of the ruling party are instantly responded to, especially on Twitter, and these are the issues that climb on the trend topic list frequently. Opposition parties accuse the government of using “troll” and “bot” accounts.

The opposition bases its claims on thousands of similar tweets, almost with identical words, often with similar grammatical errors, posted by accounts supporting the policies and discourse of the ruling party. Politicians who left the ruling party or expelled from it for various reasons also make the same claims. Ali Babacan, Ahmet Davutoğlu, and Bülent Arınç, who were among the founders of the AKP and served as ministers or prime minister at various times, stated that they were targeted by the “troll army” at various times, implying that the ruling party tries to direct social media with a secret virtual group.

The government has left the criticism unanswered and enacted the “Social Media Regulation” that it has been speaking of for a long time in July. The regulation projects that foreign-based social networking providers with more than 1 million daily access in Turkey should determine at least one representative in Turkey, introducing various measures to companies that fail to fulfill the requirement. Until now, social media companies have not made a public statement on how to proceed in this regard. Pakistan recently adopted a law similar to the Turkish code in terms of censoring content in social media, locally restoring data, appointing local representatives of social media companies, imposing big fines in cases of content censoring is avoided. On Nov. 20⁴¹, many platforms including Facebook, Google and Twitter made a statement to announce that they would not continue their activities in Pakistan as long as this law is in effect. Such a statement for Turkey has not been made for Turkey yet but information so far strengthens the impression that social media companies will not appoint representatives to Turkey.

Social media companies’ decision not to appoint representatives to Turkey would be crucial in terms of protecting freedom of expression. In other words, the fate of internet users in Turkey and freedom of expres-

⁴¹ News about social media companies’ threat to walk out of Pakistan, Tech Crunch, Nov. 20, 2020, <https://techcrunch.com/2020/11/20/google-facebook-and-twitter-threaten-to-leave-pakistan-over-censorship-law/>

sion has been left in the hands of companies whose priority is to make higher profits. Nevertheless, it may be beneficial if NGOs and activists working to protect the news flow and freedom of expression call for these companies not to appoint representatives.

In the past Wikipedia, YouTube and Twitter, the websites that are widely used in Turkey learned several methods to overcome the access blocks to general users. Digital literacy training programs to be offered by NGOs to both journalists and average citizens would raise awareness of censorship and surveillance and reduce the impact of such practices, ensuring news flow in the future.

Finally, restrictions on internet freedoms, another aspect of freedom of expression and press, must be regulated within the framework of international principles. In this sense, it should be remembered that the restrictions on internet freedoms and the right to information should be stipulated by law, and the related law provisions should be clear and predictable. Regulations such as the Social Media Law must be in strict accordance with the principle of limiting restrictions on rights.

The “Social Media Regulation”, which was enacted last July, was prepared with these motives. Previously, URL addresses could be examined and blocked separately. However, this was not fast and instantaneous, requiring a certain amount of time. This was because the addressee of a complaint about content items could only be the person or account that created that content. After the regulation, social network providers, that is, the social media organizations themselves have also become the addressees of the complaints. Complaints are no longer just for content, but for the general posts containing that content. The addressee of a complaint or lawsuit may also be the platform that provides the content, along with the person posting it.

Human rights violations in Turkey are usually voiced through “hashtag” campaigns and made visible. In practice, some of the tweets posted under these hashtags have been selected, reviewed and blocked. Perhaps one of the most anti-democratic practices introduced by the new regulation is that entire hashtags can be blocked regardless of their content. In such a case, social media sites may resist blocking decisions and not implement them. Only then will the complainant person or institution file a lawsuit against the site that does not implement the decision, and the courts will be able to rule on fines due to the access blocking decisions, regardless of the content of the hashtag or posts. This can have quite important consequences for social media sites. Because social media sites may be condemned to pay fines on behalf of their users.

However, although it may seem like a pessimistic picture, the maneuvering room of social media sites is not completely exhausted. The procedure and method of collecting the charge if these sites are fined are not clear. The law suggests that bandwidth narrowing will be imposed on sites that do not appoint representatives in Turkey. However, there is no such sanction if the blocking decisions on contents are not implemented. Thus, social media sites can now accept the status and responsibility that they are no longer “social media” but “media” in Turkey, and can continue their activities despite all the obstacles.

It is evaluated that the pressure on social media companies to appoint representatives has political motives and aims to increase control and surveillance. The government has been criticized for aiming to reach the addresses and identity information of social media users faster in this way. Having local representatives will contradict the independence and global policies of social media sites, forcing them to act in line with the government’s wishes, according to a recently common analysis. The MLSA advocates that social media websites should not give up upon their policies that prioritize freedom of expression even under such conditions and this is possible.

The obligation of appointing representatives is not in harmony with both the global policy of social media sites and the current political structure in Turkey. Whether the steps taken by the government will prompt social media sites to have representatives is not yet clear. However, it is possible for these sites to avoid complying with government policies even in case they appoint representatives. A separate regulation has not been made for potential representatives. Therefore, social media sites may prefer to protect their own policies and structures. In doing so, we think that the role these social media network providers undertake for freedom of expression in Turkey would be encouraging for them, along with their libertarian policies.

ANNEX 1: Information on blocked URLs, the authority that made the decision to block access, and the date and number of the relevant decision.

Date of blocking	Subject	Theme	Number of URLs effected	Decision	General category	Authority to decide on blocking access
12.09.2019	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
15.10.2019	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 7th Criminal Court of Peace
01.12.2019	News about Court of Cassation member Aydınır being probed as a "crime gang member"	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Bakırköy 4. Criminal Court of Peace
01.12.2019	Access ban on illegal forex websites	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	54	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
03.12.2019	Content under the A. H. headline	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	Ankara 7th Criminal Court of Peace
13.12.2019	Ekşi Sözlük headline reading "Comment by Düzce Director of Education on Ceren Özdemir"	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Düzce Criminal Court of Peace
22.12.2019	Access block for Uber website	International services	1	1	Domain name block	İstanbul 10th Commercial Court of First Instance
01.01.2020	Access ban on websites making unauthorized transactions on the internet	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	26	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
06.01.2020	The fact that travelers cannot access to newspapers such as BirGün, Cumhuriyet, Sözcü ve soL on the Wi-Fi of the high-speed train	Local block	1	1	Local block	--

21.01.2020	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 4th Criminal Court of Peace
10.02.2020	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 6th Criminal Court of Peace
10.02.2020	News report about dismissal of a teacher removed upon request by Maya private schools from internet page of Evrensel newspaper	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
21.02.2020	Jinnews website (Ninth ban)	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
21.02.2020	News about Berat Albayrak buying land on Kanal İstanbul route	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 8th Criminal Court of Peace
27.02.2020	Youtube channel of KHK TV	YouTube news channel	1	1	URL block	--
28.02.2020	General internet slowdown during reports on soldiers killed in Syria's Idlib	Internet throttling	1	1	Throttling or slowing	--
07.03.2020	Odatv.com	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 4th Criminal Court of Peace
08.03.2020	odatv.net	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
01.04.2020	News about Berat Albayrak buying land on Kanal İstanbul route	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 7th Criminal Court of Peace
01.04.2020	Galafx, an application not expected in Turkish forex markets	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle markets	1	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
08.04.2020	Journalist Fatih Portakal's critical social media post regarding COVID-19 precautions	COVID-19	1	1	URL block	İstanbul 5th Criminal Court of Peace
10.04.2020	Emre G.'s stand-up show about poet Rumî	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	Ankara 2nd Criminal Court of Peace

17.04.2020	News about Fahrettin Altun's construction on state land he rent in Kuzguncuk	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	273	1	URL block	8th Criminal Court of Peace
19.04.2020	Access block to SPA, Al Riyadh, Al Hayat and some other Saudi Arabian websites	Blocking in retaliation to foreign countries	18	1	Domain name block	Ankara 7th Criminal Court of Peace
23.04.2020	Restriction on Facebook page of Health and Safety Labour Watch / Turkey	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	--
27.04.2020	Social media postings about Ali Erbaş, initiated by Religious Affairs	News about Religious Affairs	40	1	URL block	Ankara 4th Criminal Court of Peace
01.05.2020	An episode of TV show "Designated Survivor" that is about Turkey	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	RTÜK
01.05.2020	Websites about Furkan Foundation	Non-news website blocking	4	1	Domain name block	--
01.05.2020	Websites carrying out leveraged transactions	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	25	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
01.05.2020	Websites carrying out leveraged transactions	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	20	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
02.05.2020	Blocking of the new URL of OdaTV	News website	1	1	Domain name block	--
03.05.2020	Independent Türkçe third domain name indy-turkish.com	Blocking in retaliation to foreign countries	3	1	Domain name block	Ankara 1th Criminal Court of Peace
04.05.2020	News reports on claim that a farmer from Malatya was swindled by Bilal Erdoğan and his circle	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 4th Criminal Court of Peace
16.05.2020	News report that "AKP's Tevfik Göksu will give mosque in return to municipality's unpaid debt	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Bakırköy 6th Criminal Court of Peace
27.05.2020	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 4th Criminal Court of Peace
01.06.2020	News reports that claim Serik mayor from the AKP is involved in fraud	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	--

01.06.2020	Websites carrying out leveraged transactions	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	38	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
03.06.2020	News about Başkentgaz donating money to TÜR-GEV co-founded by Bilal Erdoğan	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	6	1	URL block	--
08.06.2020	Serpil Yılmaz' "\$200 million dollar bill from Covid-19 support truck" report no daily Sözcü. ((Credentials record amnesty for Zülfikarlar Holding)	Company news	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 6th Criminal Court of Peace
11.06.2020	Access block to news report Covid-19 cases in pasta producer Oba's facility	COVID-19	48	1	URL block	Gaziantep 1st Criminal Court of Peace
16.06.2020	Ozguruz20.org	News website	1	1	Domain name block	RTÜK
17.06.2020	News report on tender fraud at Şehitkamil municipality from AKP	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	Gaziantep 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
18.06.2020	"\$200 million dollar bill from Covid-19 support truck" report on t24.com.tr, medyaradar.com dokuz8haber.net (Credentials record amnesty for Zülfikarlar Holding)	Company news	3	1	URL block	Access Providers Association
19.06.2020	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse and the "Explaining something like explaining it to Bilal" headline on Ekşi Sözlük	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	6	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 8th Criminal Court of Peace
22.06.2020	News about detention of a teacher for rejecting overtime and protests about the incident on Nov. 5 in Manisa.	Other news blocks	46	1	URL block	Turgutlu Criminal Court of Peace
24.06.2020	Halk Tv broadcast on academic's lecture notes blaming the victimized child in domestic abuse, at least one content item on Ekşi Sözlük	News reports on crimes against children and women	2	1	URL block	Erzurum 2nd Criminal Court of Peace

25.06.2020	News reports on religious Menzil cult shifting the name of its Semerkand Science and Civilization University into İstanbul Health and Technology University	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	5	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 7th Sulh Ceza
25.06.2020	News report on Sol Haber news portal about Samsun municipality, headlined "Did not pay salaries of its workers, but paid hundreds of thousands of liras for AKP meeting"	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Samsun 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
26.06.2020	News about Gökhan Yağmur who documented and placed complaint about fraud at Bala municipality in Ankara	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Bala 1st Criminal Court of Peace
01.07.2020	News about Kırklareli Governor Orhan Çiftçi's violence on a woman	News reports on crimes against children and women	124	1	URL block	Kocaeli 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
01.07.2020	Access ban on 27 websites that carry out forex transactions without SPK authorization	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	27	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
02.07.2020	Claim that Netflix is blocked to access in parliament building	Other news blocks	1	1	Local block	--
06.07.2020	News about claims of former TRT employees about the broadcaster	Other news blocks	2	1	URL block	İstanbul 11th Criminal Court of Peace
06.07.2020	News about Harran district governor calling on private doctor, related Ekşi Sözlük headline	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	Harran Criminal Court of Peace
07.07.2020	Agriculture report by Milli Gazete	Agriculture	19	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
09.07.2020	News reports on lawsuits launched against a group of soldiers in Mardin for insulting the president	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	Mardin 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
12.07.2020	Urfa AKP youth branch chair insulting people in a hot tub	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Şanlıurfa 3rd Criminal Court of Peace

14.07.2020	News that the Treasury ran out of resources.	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	5	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
16.07.2020	News reports about torturing of a cat	Violence against animals	1	1	URL block	Sakarya 1st Criminal Court of Peace
16.07.2020	News about fraud by Denizli Mayor Osman Zolan	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Denizli 1st Criminal Court of Peace
16.07.2020	65 news reports on Tarımdan Haberler upon application by Agricultural Credit Cooperatives' central union	Agriculture	65	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
17.07.2020	Urfa AKP youth branch chair insulting people in a hot tub	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Şanlıurfa 4th Criminal Court of Peace
23.07.2020	Articles penned by two people about journalist Ziya Türk	Other news blocks	14	1	URL block	Van 1st Criminal Court of Peace
23.07.2020	Case into Kingston brothers caught en route to Turkey after \$511 million fraud in the US	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	4	1	URL block	Bakırköy 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
24.07.2020	Blocking access to killing of Fatma Altınmakas by man she was married to	News reports on crimes against children and women	19	1	URL block	Malazgirt Criminal Court of Peace
24.07.2020	News about Berat Albayrak not responding to parliamentary questions	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	5	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
29.07.2020	Response to parliamentary question: Restrictions to entertainment websites in parliament building	Other news blocks	1	1	Local block	--
30.07.2020	News reports about Rector Ali Gür on YurtHaber and İlhavadis newspapers	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	Gaziantep 6th Criminal Court of Peace

31.07.2020	News headlined “Sex scandal at Bolu Municipality”	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan’s family members	1	1	URL block	Bolu Criminal Court of Peace
01.08.2020	Ban by SPK for websites that carry out leveraged transactions	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	46	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
01.08.2020	News about suspicious death of Harun Zengin who worked at Cezayir Demir Çelik steel plant owned by Tosyalı Holding	Company news	4	1	URL block	İskenderun 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
06.08.2020	Access block for socializing application Hornet	Dating site	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
11.08.2020	News about Aykut Emrah Polat, Bilal Erdoğan’s friend from high school winning \$280 million TMSF tender	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan’s family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
11.08.2020	Shutdown of swindle website	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	1	1	Domain name block	--
13.08.2020	ozguruz21.org: The domain name for Özgürüz Radyo, the radio channel founded by journalist Can Dündar	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 5th Criminal Court of Peace
14.08.2020	Jinnews website (10th ban)	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 5th Criminal Court of Peace
17.08.2020	Twitter posting of CHP deputy chair Veli Ağbaba about Religious Affairs chair Ali Erbaş	News about Religious Affairs	1	1	URL block	Ankara 4th Criminal Court of Peace
20.08.2020	The unfair seizure of 565 billion lira loan that Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality got from abroad for a subway project – which is immune to levy - by construction firm et-Gün to cover debts from the previous municipal administration		1	1	URL block	İstanbul 3rd Criminal Court of Peace

20.08.2020	News reports about a land in Üsküdar that was donated on condition to be plot for a school construction but used as a parking lot by the Medipol Hospital branch founded by Health Minister Fahrettin Koca	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul 5th Criminal Court of Peace
26.08.2020	News report on BirGün about the AKP's Süleyman Memişoğlu winning the food tender by Bahçelievler municipality	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Küçükçekmece 1st Criminal Court of Peace
28.08.2020	News report on Covid-19 cases at Vestel plant	COVID-19	3	1	URL block	Manisa 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
28.08.2020	Atlantik Halı headline on Ekşi Sözlük upon rug company Atlantik İplik ve Halı	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Gaziantep 4th Criminal Court of Peace
01.09.2020	"Bileç Kaplan's murderer son" headline on Ekşi Sözlük upon rug company Atlantik İplik ve Halı owner Bileç Kaplan's son	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Gaziantep 5th Criminal Court of Peace
01.09.2020	News reports about street vendor setting himself ablaze. Sendika.org, BirGün, Milli Gazete, Cumhuriyet and Ekşi Sözlük	Other news blocks	5	1	URL block	Erzincan Criminal Court of Peace
02.09.2020	News about forcing of Afyonkarahisar municipality culture desk chief to weed tackling	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Afyonkarahisar 1st Criminal Court of Peace
02.09.2020	News about access blocks (Access block was for news about Aykut Emrah Polat, Bilal Erdoğan's friend from high school winning \$280 million TMSF tender)	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 7th Criminal Court of Peace
03.09.2020	News about Uşşaki religious cult leader F.N sexually abusing a minor	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Akyazı Criminal Court of Peace
04.09.2020	Three Ekşi Sözlük entries about Duygu Delen	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Gaziantep 1st Criminal Court of Peace

04.09.2020	News reports about a person killing neighbor's dog	Violence against animals	1	1	URL block	Beykoz Criminal Court of Peace
07.09.2020	News about irregularity and fraud at Merkezefendi Municipality	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Denizli 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
09.09.2020	News about Emine Erdoğan's purse and the "Explaining something like explaining it to Bilal" headline on Ekşi Sözlük	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	2	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 8th Criminal Court of Peace
10.09.2020	Access block to Gabile website	Dating sites	1	1	Domain name block	Ankara 7th Criminal Court of Peace
11.09.2020	Egyptian business person claiming to have been swindled by a former AKP lawmaker	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	4	1	URL block	Access Providers Association
13.09.2020	News about rape convict Recep Çakır	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Korkuteli Criminal Court of Peace
14.09.2020	26 news reports by Milli Gazete about Agricultural Credit Cooperatives	Agriculture	26	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
14.09.2020	55 more Tarımdan Haber reports, following the blocking of access to 65 others previously	Agriculture	55	1	URL block	Ankara 8th Criminal Court of Peace
15.09.2020	Illegally operating betting websites	Betting and adult	68	1	Domain name block	--
15.09.2020	Reports that said owner of RTA Labs, the provider of PCR test kits for State Supply Office is an AKP member	COVID-19	1	1	URL block	--
17.09.2020	News report on shift of a university campus in Erzincan to health facility due to increase in Covid-19 cases	COVID-19	2	1	URL block	Erzincan Criminal Court of Peace
18.09.2020	Kanal Z, a local broadcaster in Zonguldak	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	Zonguldak Criminal Court of Peace

18.09.2020	News about Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visiting tomb of convicted cult leader Salih Mirzabeyoğlu after prayer at Hagia Sophia	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 4. Criminal Court of Peace
23.09.2020	News report on investigation into private hospitals in Samsun for hiking fees during pandemic	COVID-19	1	1	URL block	Samsun 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
23.09.2020	Tweets and Ekşi Sözlük headline over Aleyna Çakır's murder	News reports on crimes against children and women	97	1	URL block	Ankara 1st Criminal Court of Peace
23.09.2020	Ties of Reza Zarrab case to Minister Albayrak ad Aktif Bank,	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	3	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 8th Criminal Court of Peace
23.09.2020	News about luxury car rent by Şeyh Edebali University rector	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	3	1	URL block	Ankara 1st Criminal Court of Peace
24.09.2020	News about favourism in employment in Trabzon	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Trabzon 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
25.09.2020	News about wife of a prosecutor replacing a prison doctor who was probed by her husband	Other news blocks	2	1	URL block	Bakırköy 6th Criminal Court of Peace
25.09.2020	siyasihaber4.org , yeniyasamgazetesi1.com	News website	2	1	Domain name block	Hatay 1st Criminal Court of Peace
27.09.2020	kizilbayrak45.net	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Bursa 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
29.09.2020	FinCen documents, Reza Zarrab case links to Minister Albayrak and Aktif Bank	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	3	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 1st Criminal Court of Peace
30.09.2020	8 obscenity and 38 illegal betting	Betting and adult	46	1	Domain name block	--
30.09.2020	Two columns on alevi.net	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	İstanbul 3rd Criminal Court of Peace

30.09.2020	nuceciwan53.com , yenidemokrasi7.net , gazetepatika11.com , avrupahaber6.org , mezo-potamyajansi22.com , sendika63.org	News website	6	5	Domain name block	Gaziantep 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
30.09.2020	Sendika.org, Mezopotamya Ajansı and Yeni Demokrasi	News website	3	1	Domain name block	Gaziantep 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
30.09.2020	sendika63.org domain name	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Gaziantep 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
30.09.2020	Fraud by two district governors in Antalya	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Tunceli Criminal Court of Peace
01.10.2020	Rape allegations about Didim Mayor Ahmet Deniz Atabay	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Didim Criminal Court of Peace
01.10.2020	News that claimed that Berat Albayrat mediated for Zülfiyar Holding that flow cash to abroad, and problems of the company are solved through the National Solidarity Campaign launched by the Turkish Presidency	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul 8th Criminal Court of Peace
01.10.2020	Block of access to cryptocurrency platform Overbite	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	1	1	Domain name block	Capital Markets Board (SPK) initiative
01.10.2020	Access ban on illegal forex websites	Unauthorized financial transactions /swindle	36	1	Domain name block	SPK initiative
02.10.2020	17 adult website, 147 illegal betting websites	Betting and adult	154	1	Domain name block	--
02.10.2020	alevinet.com	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Diyarbakır 1st Criminal Court of Peace
02.10.2020	nuceciwan54.org	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Hatay 1st Criminal Court of Peace
02.10.2020	FinCen documents that link Berat Albayrak to Reza Zarrab	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 1st Criminal Court of Peace

05.10.2020	Criminal complaint about Didim Mayor Ahmet Deniz Atabay over rape allegations	Çocuk veya kadınlara yönelik suçlarla ilgili haberler	1	1	URL block	Didim Criminal Court of Peace
06.10.2020	Suspicious death of Şeyda Yılmaz	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 6th Criminal Court of Peace
06.10.2020	Article on Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 7th Criminal Court of Peace
06.10.2020	Nupel.Net	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Diyarbakır 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
06.10.2020	Rudaw Türkçe Haber (Rudaw News in Turkish)	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Balıkesir 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
07.10.2020	Criminal complaint about Didim Mayor A. D. A. over rape allegations and mayor's having a statue of her girlfriend made	News reports on crimes against children and women	1	1	URL block	Didim Criminal Court of Peace
13.10.2020	Websites linked to Armenian government	Websites linked to Armenian government	5	1	Domain name block	--
13.10.2020	FETÖ case suspect's remarks about President Erdoğan's lawyer	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul 5th Criminal Court of Peace
13.10.2020	A swindler being hosted by a mayor and a prosecutor	Unauthorized financial transactions/swindle	1	1	Domain name block	Access Providers Association
14.10.2020	The AKP's Urfa youth branch chief resuming another task after his insult for the people while bathing in a hot tub emerged	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Şanlıurfa 1st Criminal Court of Peace
14.10.2020	Tax exemption for Kalyon Construction	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Beykoz Criminal Court of Peace
14.10.2020	Agriculture Ministry irregularly granting contract to Emine Erdoğan's cousin	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Ankara 4th Criminal Court of Peace

16.10.2020	Illegally operating betting websites	Betting and adult	6	1	Domain name block	--
16.10.2020	News about the fact that the prosecutor who launched probe into news about a person thrown off a military helicopter is the same person who investigates the law enforcement members engaged in the incident.	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	Van 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
17.10.2020	Illegally operating betting websites	Betting and adult	73	1	Domain name block	--
18.10.2020	286 illegal betting and obscenity and 68	Betting and adult	286	1	Domain name block	--
18.10.2020	286 illegal betting and obscenity, 68 PKK/KCK/YGP/YPS terrorist organization propaganda content	Non-news website blocking	68	1	Domain name block	--
21.10.2020	Damage done to Fethiye mayor with his guard to the car of a citizen he argued with in traffic	Other news blocks	1	1	URL block	Fethiye Criminal Court of Peace
22.10.2020	etha15.com , jinnews8.xyz , politez.com , yenidemokrasi8.net	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Van 3rd Criminal Court of Peace
22.10.2020	Remarks of a local AKP executive who said he was framed	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Afyonkarahisar 1st Criminal Court of Peace
22.10.2020	A 200 million Turkish Lira fraud via a Ponzi scheme	Unauthorized financial transactions/swindle	1	1	Domain name block	Cizre Criminal Court of Peace
27.10.2020	Destruction of a document showing businessperson Ahmet Taçyıldız as a FETÖ member by Istanbul Police Department Intelligence Office Chief Özgür Taşdemir in exchange for a flat with Bosphorus view	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Bakırköy 1st Criminal Court of Peace
28.10.2020	etha16.com , jinnews10.xyz , yenidemokrasi9.net	News website	1	1	Domain name block	Van 3rd Criminal Court of Peace

28.10.2020	Ekşi Sözlük headline about Education Ministry general manager appointing his sister-in-law as a branch director and later as a district director	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	İstanbul Anadolu 2nd Criminal Court of Peace
01.11.2020	News about jobseeker woman forced into sex-work by AKP Manisa Provincial Office	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Manisa 1st Criminal Court of Peace
03.11.2020	Tolga Şardan's news about Menzil cult organization inside the police department	Negative or criticizing news reports about people close to the government or Erdoğan's family members	1	1	URL block	Ankara 2nd Criminal Court of Peace