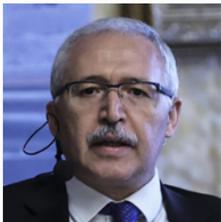


This week in Türkiye in Focus we are covering the following topics:

- The Ayhan Bora Kaplan case has stirred significant public debate recently, fueled by sensational allegations. Abdülkadir Selvi, a journalist well-versed in the matter, offers his comprehensive insights on the subject.
- What progress has been made in the détente process between the AK Party and CHP? Recent developments on this front are worth noting.
- Researcher Şeymanur Yönt evaluated the statements of the Israeli Finance Minister regarding the relations between Türkiye and Israel.

The Ayhan Bora Kaplan Case and "Komplo" Allegations: Interview with Abdülkadir Selvi



Abdülkadir Selvi,
Columnist for
Hürriyet Newspaper

Abdülkadir Selvi, a seasoned journalist renowned for his coverage of Ankara politics.

"The Ayhan Bora Kaplan operation stands as a significant stride in combating organized crime. Yet, like any operation, it exhibits both strengths and weaknesses. Certain parties seek to exploit it for their own agendas, possibly leading to further actions.

Based on information I received from security sources, 497 local, regional, and international criminal groups have been dismantled since June 1, 2023. The Ayhan Bora Kaplan operation stands out as one of the largest, if not the largest, operations against these criminal syndicates. Fighting against gangs would be incomplete without targeting Kaplan and his criminal organization, known to be among the top three in Türkiye. Missing it would mean missing the most important link in the chain. This is the first success of this operation. Secondly, Ayhan Bora Kaplan is a leader of a crime syndicate with connections in the police, judiciary and bureaucracy. Capturing him was crucial before he could flee abroad. In such operations, if you capture the leader, you strike an important blow. If you lose the leader, no matter how many people you take around him, it won't be as effective. Thirdly, initiating the trial process this week marks another significant milestone in this operation.

However, there are also things that are wrong, things that harm the operation. During the contact established with the secret witness Serdar Sertçelik in Cyprus, the police chief who talked with him to bring him to Türkiye went beyond his authority. This is the first mistake. Secondly, after he arrived in Türkiye, he violated his house arrest despite wearing electronic ankle monitors 9 times. He was protected when he should normally be arrested. This is another mistake. Finally, he cooperated with some officials during his escape from Türkiye.

The question is: Are these oversights indicative of operational shortcomings, an instance of overreach, or the existence of unsavory connections? A new maneuver is being carried out through this operation. What does this additional operation entail?

The most disturbing allegation is the following. After fleeing abroad, the secret witness named Serdar Sertçelik made a broadcast with a person named Erk Acarer, who confessed his relationship with German intelligence and had some shady relations. He said that some police officers had asked him to

plant in the testimony the names of some AK Party politicians such as Bekir Bozdağ, health minister Fahrettin Koca, former justice minister Abdülhamit Gül, MP Mücahit Aslan. The most important among the names mentioned is Hasan Doğan, the president's chief of staff.

This is highly significant because we've witnessed similar instances in the past, notably in the 1990s. Alaattin Çakıcı, a prominent figure in organized crime, sought refuge in Canada, launching smear campaigns against the Refah-Yol government and targeting certain politicians. Sedat Peker, who recently fled to Dubai, attempted a similar maneuver. Sertçelik's recent remarks echo these historical events. If a faction within the police is pressuring a secret witness to implicate politicians, it could indicate a conspiracy against the government. FETO employed similar tactics during the events of December 17-25. Some politicians and journalists, including MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, endorsed this assertion. If substantiated, those involved should face trial for attempted coup.

I advocate for a more measured approach in assessing this situation. The President's statement indicates that they are monitoring developments, but the possibility of a coup was not explicitly mentioned. Information is gathered from multiple sources, ensuring a comprehensive grasp of the situation. While I don't dismiss this allegation, if substantiated, it would indeed be a serious matter. Conversations between these police chiefs and Serdar Sertçelik were recorded, and their electronic devices are being scrutinized. Thus far, no evidence supporting the mentioned scenario has been found. However, if such evidence emerges, appropriate legal action should be taken for coup-related offenses.

If such offenses cannot be verified and no evidence is found, another scenario emerges. It involves a mafia member who fled abroad attempting to orchestrate an operation against the government by unilaterally claiming that he was instructed to include politicians' names in the file along with the FETO figures he was in contact with. This situation is highly dangerous, akin to a double-edged sword. Currently, this possibility appears somewhat more plausible.

There are seven police chiefs arrested. But they were not arrested on coup charges. They were arrested because of the flaws in the operation, and it was the right decision. No evidence of coup plotting has been detected in the digital materials so far.

Having experienced the 90s as a parliamentary reporter, I recall an operation conducted against the elected government through Çakıcı. In the Sedat Peker operation, thanks to the presence of a strong leader like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the government remained intact but received a significant blow. The involvement of a country's intelligence service contacting a mafia member who fled abroad, along with German intelligence - which I perceive as the German counterpart of the CIA-, FETO affiliates, and the mafia, suggests a coordinated operation, as indicated by the President's statement. That's where I stand."

Latest developments on the détente process between the AK Party and CHP

Last week, President Erdoğan issued a decree pardoning several generals imprisoned on coup charges during the events of February 28, 1997. While the justification cited was the age and illness of the generals, discussions about this matter reportedly occurred during a meeting between CHP leader Özgür Özel and President Erdoğan, who is also the chairman of the AK Party. This gesture may be interpreted as a step in the ongoing détente process.

However, recent weeks have seen mounting tensions between the CHP and the MHP. Özel and Bahçeli, the leaders of the two parties, exchanged sharp criticisms last week. While the CHP appears to be engaging in détente with the AK Party, its critique of the government through its coalition partner the MHP could be viewed as a divide-and-conquer move. Conversely, MHP leader Bahçeli often expresses reservations about this appeasement process, albeit without direct opposition. Consequently, tensions between these two parties may escalate in the near future.

Israel to scrap free trade deal with Türkiye in retaliation

The latest round of tensions between Israel and Türkiye is the Israeli finance minister's announcement to halt the free trade agreement with Türkiye. Researcher Şeymanur Yönt offers her insights:

In response to Türkiye's decision to halt exports to Israel, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced plans to revoke the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Türkiye and impose a 100% tariff on Turkish imports. First, the 1997 FTA allows Israel to take measures if it believes Türkiye has violated its obligations, however, these actions must be proportionate and

least disruptive, as per FTA Article 29/2. Imposing such high tariffs, therefore, would exceed what is permitted under the FTA.

Second, if Israel terminates the FTA, which would become effective in three months at the earliest, it would no longer be bound by its provisions, and therefore its actions would not need to be proportionate and least disruptive as per the FTA. However, both Türkiye and Israel being parties to the WTO, such imposition of tariffs would still be contrary to law as it violates WTO rules. In that case, Türkiye may initiate dispute settlement proceedings within the WTO framework.

Highlights

■ Turkish UAV Akıncı has joined the search for the wreckage of the helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Reisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdullahiyan, and their delegation, following their tragic crash. Researcher Mehmet Kılıç offered his analysis on the matter: "The rapid sighting of Iranian leader Reisi's helicopter wreckage by the Turkish UAV Akıncı A5, even in challenging weather conditions was witnessed live by millions of people. This episode highlights Türkiye's remarkable UAV capabilities and is expected to enhance Türkiye's position in the global UAV market."

■ More than 100 migrants have been [rescued](#) by the Turkish coast guard.

■ NEXT, the youth edition of TRT World Forum, took place in Istanbul on 18 May. The event featured 9 panels, 1 talk and 4 workshops, where over 1,000 participants engaged with 30 young pioneers to explore the latest trends in various sectors, including arts, education, travel, health, business and sports. Follow their social media accounts for the latest news and developments: [f](#) [X](#) [@](#) [@trtworldforum](#)

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