

This week on Türkiye in Focus, we delve into the following topics:

- Stray dog management emerges as a contentious issue in Türkiye, sparking debates on public safety, politics, and ethics.
- Türkiye and China have sealed a significant deal in the energy transition. Hear from researcher Burak Elmalı in this edition.
- The Ministry of Interior grabs attention once again with its latest crackdown on an international criminal organisation.
- Following increasing public pressure, Zorlu Holding announced that it has decided to terminate its activities in Israel.

Stray Dog Management Tops the Political Agenda in Türkiye

For centuries, from Mark Twain to François-René de Chateaubriand, foreign visitors have been struck by the unique sight of people and stray animals coexisting on the streets of Türkiye. This symbiotic relationship is a hallmark of Turkish culture.

However, rapid urbanisation makes it necessary to find novel approaches that address this relationship. For some time now, the proliferation of stray dogs has cascaded out of control, and the inability of sterilisations to handle the very high rate of reproduction has shown the limits of the system currently in place. Consequently, stray dogs started presenting safety issues when they roam in packs, causing traffic accidents, attacking residents and spreading disease. This has become an acute problem, especially in the peripheral areas.

The AK Party recently proposed collecting and euthanizing stray dogs if they are not adopted within 30 days, sparking intense debates across Türkiye. Interestingly, while the New Welfare Party (YRP) leadership used this issue in a populist way and opposed euthanasia, some senior YRP officials expressed support for the AK Party's draft, revealing a paradox in their stance on the issue.

In contrast, the CHP leadership highlights the socio-economic

aspect of the issue, emphasising its significance in lower-income neighbourhoods. However, they refrain from endorsing the euthanasia proposal.

There is a divergence within the current stance of the CHP, which appears incongruous with its traditionally staunch opposition to euthanasia. This discord is particularly evident among the urbanised, secular segment constituting the core of the CHP's voter base. Similarly, media outlets aligned with the opposition often provide harshly critical coverage of the issue.

In this context, the matter of stray dogs holds significant sway in political discourse, with divergent opinions prevailing even within parties. Opposition parties, notably the CHP, have the chance to enact their stance on this issue through their local administrations, given that the CHP won control over 35 provincial municipalities in the 2024 local elections. However, the CHP has yet to introduce a notable initiative or proposal on this front.

Conversely, the governing AK Party seeks a prompt resolution to this issue, aiming to garner public acceptance for the proposed method. It is important to note that discussions are ongoing, and the final decision on the method to be employed has yet to be finalised.

China and Türkiye Signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Transition

China, Türkiye ink 'energy transition' deal during Bayraktar's visit. The agreement was signed as part of the Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar's visit to China. Researcher Burak Elmalı shares his insights:

"During a meeting in Beijing on Tuesday, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar and the head of China's National Energy Administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on cooperation in energy transition. Additionally, Minister Bayraktar held discussions with representatives from the State Power Investment Corporation, one of China's top five power generators. "We discussed our projects in nuclear and renewable energy and established our road map," he reported following the Monday meeting.

This new collaboration in energy transition is a significant step towards Türkiye's goals of achieving net zero emissions by 2053 and transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy. China, a global leader in research and development, production, capacity, and export in the energy sector, plays a crucial role, especially in solar energy and electric vehicle production.

Türkiye's prioritisation of energy transition is driven by a commitment to global climate change targets and a strategic



Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar (R) shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart Wang Guanghua (L) in Beijing, China on May 21, 2024. Following the talks, a memorandum of understanding on 'Energy Transformation' signed between Türkiye and China.

goal to reduce dependence on energy imports. This bilateral cooperation in energy transition is expected to be soon formalised within an intergovernmental framework."

Operations Against Organised Crime Continue

While discussions on the Ayhan Bora Kaplan case continue, another important police operation was carried out against a crime syndicate last week. Barış Boyun, the leader of the group known in the public as the Daltons, was captured in Viterbo, Italy, in a joint operation conducted by Italian and Turkish police forces. In this operation, 19 people, 2 Italian and 17 Turkish, were captured. In recent operations against the same criminal organisation, 317 suspects were captured. 175 of them are under arrest.

It is worth mentioning that this operation followed certain public debates surrounding the strategies implemented by Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya. The Barış Boyun operation, one of the most significant under his tenure, suggests Yerlikaya's persistence in pursuing his agenda.

Yerlikaya's determination aligns with the agenda of ministers who assumed office alongside him last year, notably Mehmet Şimşek, the Minister of Treasury and Finance. The inclination towards mainstream liberal economic policies to combat inflation, along with crackdowns on criminal organisations impacting bureaucracy, can be seen as efforts to address lingering issues from the state restructuring post-2016 coup attempt. Similarly, discussions surrounding a new constitution and dialogue between the AK Party and the CHP suggest Ankara's eagerness for a fresh political environment, moving beyond the post-coup era.

Zorlu Holding Terminates Operations in Israel After Growing Public Pressure

Zorlu Enerji, a subsidiary of Zorlu Holding, one of Türkiye's largest conglomerates, announced that it has ceased its operations in Israel. It is understood that Zorlu Enerji had stakes in plants that provided nearly 7 per cent of Israel's electricity. In November 2023, the BDS movement placed Zorlu Holding on its boycott list for its investments in Israel. Subsequently, Turkish activist groups, such as One Thousand Youth for Palestine and the Resistance Tent, called for a halt to trade and an increase in sanctions against Israel. These groups have been organising

boycott calls and protests against Zorlu Holding for some time. As a result, Zorlu Holding decided to halt its activities in Israel.

The Turkish public has been very vocal in recent local election campaigns, aiming to increase Türkiye's pressure on the Jewish State. As Israel's genocidal actions in Rafah intensified lately, protests are being held all over Türkiye. There is also an active boycott movement in the country that has led to a significant decline in the sales of pro-Israel products on the boycott list.

Highlights

- President Erdoğan is expected to attend the G-7 summit in Italy on June 13-15.
- International banks and financial institutions, including Citi Bank, Bank of America, BofA Securities, J.P. Morgan, and Goldman Sachs, are now offering highly favourable assessments of the Turkish economy. Just a year ago, Türkiye was deemed an unattractive investment destination.
- Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi at a joint conference and said they discussed how to better cooperate with the EU on irregular migration. The foreign minister also said that they are also in talks about the visa problems Turkish citizens face with European countries.
- As Israel continues its genocidal war on Gaza, demonstrations of solidarity with Palestine continue to be organised across Türkiye. President Erdoğan lashed out at Benjamin Netanyahu in this week's parliamentary group meeting.
- This week marked the annual EFES military exercise, the largest joint military drill in the region, with participation from 49 allied countries and nearly 11,000 military personnel. Aimed at fostering international cooperation and military coordination, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) conducted tests on 33 different weapons, vehicles, and systems during this year's exercise.

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