

This past week in Türkiye has been one of the most eventful in recent years, with unexpected developments unfolding rapidly.

In this edition of Türkiye in Focus, we explore the following topics:

- In his speech to the MHP parliamentary group, Bahçeli made surprising statements that impacted all sectors of society and shook the political landscape.
- Ankara was rocked by a terrorist attack targeting the Turkish defence industry, resulting in the deaths of 5 citizens.
- CHP leader visited Selahattin Demirtaş in prison before holding talks in Diyarbakır.
- Nationalist opposition parties voiced strong opposition to Bahçeli's remarks regarding Öcalan.
- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan travelled to Russia for the BRICS meeting. Researcher Hüseyin Özdemir provides an analysis of this visit.
- FETO leader dies in the US.

Bahçeli's Striking Öcalan Remarks

On 22 October 2024, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli's speech in parliament stunned the public. For the past two weeks, Bahçeli has been making gestures and delivering speeches aimed at fostering a climate for negotiations on the Kurdish issue. However, this week's speech took an unexpectedly radical turn when he suggested that Abdullah Öcalan, the founding leader of the terrorist group PKK, should address a DEM Party group meeting in parliament. He even hinted at the possibility of Öcalan's release in exchange for the PKK disarming. In addition to his call to Öcalan, Bahçeli's following [words](#) were also noteworthy:

"As wrong as it is to show that the society submits to arms and violence, it is equally wrong to refrain from taking democratic steps to improve the environment that creates terrorism."

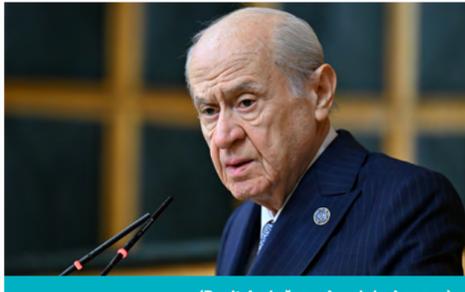
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been taking steps to reduce domestic political tensions since the local elections in March. "We hope that the historic window of opportunity opened by the People's Alliance will not be sacrificed to personal calculations," he said in a statement following Bahçeli's remarks.

In line with Devlet Bahçeli, DEM Party co-chairperson Tülay Hatimoğulları also pointed to parliament and Abdullah Öcalan as the right address for peace. Moreover, Selahattin Demirtaş, another prominent figure in Kurdish politics who is currently imprisoned, said on X that he would be behind the steps Öcalan would take.

The DEM Party, Abdullah Öcalan, Selahattin Demirtaş, and the PKK terrorist headquarters in the Qandil mountain (northern Iraq), seem to be the four key factors in this equation. Demirtaş and the DEM Party have emphasised the significance of Öcalan's leadership, but there has been no concrete response from Qandil yet. A statement from Öcalan could provide clarity on Qandil's stance. As a first step, on 23 October, for the first time in 43 months, Abdullah Öcalan met with DEM Party deputy and his nephew Ömer Öcalan. According to Ömer Öcalan, during this meeting his uncle [announced](#) that he would contribute to the process if the conditions are right.

Several points about this new process need to be underlined.

It is important to remember that steps toward addressing the Kurdish issue were previously taken in 1999, 2009, and 2013. While each of these can be analysed individually, there are key differences that set the current situation apart from the past. The common thread between the earlier efforts was that they primarily focused on halting the PKK's activities inside Türkiye.



(Raşit Aydoğan - Anadolu Agency)

Therefore, officials nowadays have repeatedly stressed that there is no new "peace process" underway. This serves two purposes: to avoid invoking memories of past traumatic experiences among the public, and to highlight a significant change. Currently, there are lesser terrorist attacks within Türkiye's borders, and the PKK appears to have been largely neutralised within the country.

On the other hand, while sporadic and residual terrorist activities still occur, the primary concern today revolves around maintaining Türkiye's internal peace and addressing security challenges in Iraq and Syria. Israel's aggressive and expansionist designs in the Middle East and the instability they could cause raise concerns about the collapse of certain states, like Syria, potentially leaving a power vacuum that could be exploited by PKK-affiliated groups such as the YPG/PYD. The current focus is not only on bolstering peace within Türkiye but also on strengthening Ankara's position amidst the turbulence in the Middle East.

For instance, recent talks in the Turkish public sphere about reconciliation efforts with the Assad regime stem from the spillover effects of the Syrian civil war. One of the main justifications for this presence is the presence of PKK-affiliated terror groups in Northeast Syria. How this issue unfolds will play a crucial role in Türkiye-Syria relations, particularly as the potential for a U.S. withdrawal from Syria also factors into the equation. While significant steps are being taken domestically, there is still limited information and explanation regarding the developments occurring behind closed doors.

One thing is certain, however: the terrorist attack on Turkish Aerospace Industries in Ankara appears to signal a reaction from the PKK's international backers. In essence, they appear displeased with the growing momentum toward internal harmony in Türkiye.

Terrorist Attack on Turkish Aerospace Industries in Ankara



(İsmail Kaplan - Anadolu Agency)

Just 24 hours after Devlet Bahçeli's statements, Türkiye was shaken by a shocking terrorist attack. Two terrorists attacked TAI, one of the most important addresses of Türkiye's defence industry, with automatic weapons and a bomb. According to the numbers so far, 5 people lost their lives and 13 people were injured in the attack. The attackers have been identified as PKK members.

MHP attributed the attack to those who were disturbed by Devlet Bahçeli's statements and said that they stand behind the commitment of Bahçeli.

CHP's Position on the New Process

CHP leader Özgür Özel offered his support to the process accelerated by Devlet Bahçeli. On Monday, Özel visited Selahattin Demirtaş. He then travelled to Diyarbakır and held talks with representatives from the political and civil society sectors. Özgür Özel's statements during this visit were in line with the strategy of the People's Alliance.



(CHP - Anadolu Agency)

In contrast, differing perspectives within the CHP can be heard during this process. Some CHP mayors, particularly the mayor of Ankara, have voiced nationalist-leaning opposition to Bahçeli's statements. Opposition to the People's Alliance and nationalist sentiments are strong among the CHP's voter base. However, CHP leader Özgür Özel has so far taken steps that align with the AK Party and MHP.

By maintaining this cooperative approach, it can be assumed that the CHP is enhancing the People's Alliance's flexibility, especially regarding relations with the DEM Party and Selahattin Demirtaş. While the People's Alliance has recently adopted a more conciliatory tone towards the DEM Party, the CHP's ties with this party remain warmer.

In this context, and if favourable conditions persist, it can be said that the process for achieving internal harmony could advance through a tacit alliance of the AK Party, MHP, CHP, and DEM Party, as their combined vote share represents a significant portion of Turkish society.

Can the Nationalist Opposition Prevent Developments?

In response to Bahçeli's statements suggesting Öcalan as a possible interlocutor, the Good (iyi) Party and the Victory (Zafer) Party, both led by former MHP members, have issued strongly worded objections, arguing that any official engagement with Öcalan is unacceptable.

Bahçeli's remarks have also caused surprise among his own supporters. This presents a potential opportunity for nationalist opposition parties and figures, such as Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş of the CHP, to rally nationalist sentiment against such

proposals. These parties may seek to capitalise on the discontent within nationalist circles.

However, it will not be easy for this opposition to make a significant impact in a process driven by state rationality and long-term objectives. The active involvement of both CHP and MHP leadership in this process further complicates the opposition's efforts to gain traction, making it difficult for these parties to expand their influence beyond the established dominance of the CHP and MHP.

President Erdoğan Attends BRICS Summit in Russia

Researcher Hüseyin Özdemir evaluates President Erdoğan's participation in the BRICS summit.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan participated in the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 24, 2024, continuing his engagement from the previous day. This summit presented an important opportunity for Türkiye to improve its relations with BRICS and to strengthen Ankara's multi-vector foreign policy. In his remarks before the summit, Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's intention to enhance cooperation with BRICS and expressed his belief that this meeting would provide an opportunity to achieve this goal.

The main agenda items of the summit included the expansion of BRICS, de-dollarization of trade, and regional conflicts. In addition, Erdoğan discussed energy cooperation and increasing bilateral trade during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Strengthening economic relations between the two countries emerged as a key focus during the talks between Erdoğan and Putin. The two leaders talked about Türkiye's role in the field of natural gas and the initiative to establish an in-



(TCCB / Mustafa Kamacı - Anadolu Agency)

ternational natural gas hub. In this context, they also addressed Türkiye's efforts to enhance its reliability as an energy supplier.

The BRICS summit reinforced Türkiye's desire to have a greater voice in the international arena and aligned with Erdoğan's strategy to deepen relations with various global power blocs. The outcome of the summit set the stage for further dialogue on Türkiye's involvement with BRICS moving forward.

FETO Leader Fetullah Gülen Dies in the US

On October 20, Fetullah Gülen, the leader of the Fetullah Terrorist Organisation, who had been in the US since 1999, died in the US. For many years, Fetullah Gülen's organisation had infiltrated the state and built a strong following. FETO has consistently focused on infiltrating strategic institutions as part of its strategy. This terrorist network has stolen exam questions through these channels, wiretapped the phones of key individuals, and manipulated legal proceedings by fabricating documents and creating false evidence. It also made sure to remove any official standing in its way by concocting fabricated cases.

One of the factors behind the success of this clandestine set-up was the exclusionary understanding of secularism in Türkiye, which prevented religious people from taking important positions in the state. Exploiting this situation, FETO placed thousands of people in secret networks. It brainwashed them under

the guise of pseudo sacred values and then turned them into a machine that betrays their own homeland.

After trying to build a state within the state, this terror network engaged in more blatant subversive activities. After the failed coup attempt in 2016, it lost all public support, and a significant number of its members fled abroad or were sentenced in Türkiye.

In a statement targeting FETO members abroad after the death of Fetullah Gülen, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan [said](#):

"This path is not a good path. The end of this path is not a good end. Our nation and state will continue to fight against all terrorist organisations, including this one. They should know to turn back while there is still time."

Highlights

- World leaders have issued statements condemning the terrorist attack targeting the Turkish Aerospace Industries in Ankara.
- The Turkish Festival, showcasing various aspects of Turkish culture, took place in Washington DC on October 20.



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