

In this week’s Türkiye in Focus, we covered the following topics:

- 2025 has been declared the Year of the Family in Türkiye.
- President Erdoğan made key statements on the process initiated by Devlet Bahçeli concerning the Kurdish question and the PKK’s disarmament.
- Three right-wing parties have united under a single umbrella party.
- A major corruption investigation has been launched, resulting in the detention of the Beşiktaş Mayor.

2025 Declared as the Year of the Family

The Presidency has declared 2025 the Year of the Family. As part of this initiative, the Ministry of Family and Social Services has launched the Family Institute and the Population Policies Council. In his address at the Year of the Family Introduction Program, President Erdoğan announced that newly married young couples would be eligible for an interest-free loan of 150,000 Turkish lira, with a two-year grace period. He also stated that payments made to mothers with children would be increased.

The decline in birth rates has been on Türkiye’s agenda for some time. The President highlighted three key issues in this context:

1. The declining birth rate, noting inadequate population planning.
2. The increasing age of marriage and rising divorce rates. In this context, the President criticised how popular culture sets unrealistic expectations for marriage and how certain traditional practices make it more difficult.
3. Thirdly, the President targeted global policies peddling gender neutrality and LGBT propaganda. He expressed frustration over the systematic suppression of criticism towards LGBT discourse in a manner he described as fascist.

“We are one of the few countries and leaders who boldly oppose this increasingly oppressive climate, even at platforms like the United Nations General Assembly. In the upcoming period, we will further solidify this stance. We will resolutely continue

to oppose gender-neutral policies that corrupt individuals, families, and society one by one,” Erdoğan stated.

The President has been raising this subject for some time. He also brought it up at the last two UN General Assemblies as part of international diplomacy.

With the growing global attention to this topic, the Turkish government has made its opposition to these policies a subject of both domestic and foreign policy. Türkiye will likely voice its position on this issue more strongly in the coming period. Considering the ideological differences between the main opposition party and the government, this topic is also expected to gain prominence in domestic politics.



Strong Statements from Erdoğan Regarding the Process Initiated by Bahçeli

Last weekend, the President was in southeastern Türkiye to attend his party’s provincial congresses. Attention was focused on his speeches in Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa, regions with significant Kurdish populations. Erdoğan stayed consistent with his previous statements, emphasising that the process initiated



by Bahçeli aimed to eliminate terrorism and asserting that steps addressing the Kurdish dossier had already been taken during the AK Party’s tenure.

However, during his speech in parliament on Wednesday, the President, for the first time, stated that he had “instructed the process to be carried out carefully and with a multifaceted approach.” He also expressed a positive view of the DEM Party delegation’s meetings in the same speech. It was the first time Erdoğan had so openly supported the process.

Meanwhile, MHP leader Bahçeli expressed an expectation for the PKK to lay down arms following a second meeting to be held in İmralı. The DEM Party delegation has not yet submitted a request for the second meeting. The delegation is expected to release a written statement on Friday, January 17, and apply for a second visit to İmralı shortly. After this second meeting, more concrete steps could be expected.

A New Umbrella Party Has Been Established

The Future (Gelecek) Party, DEVA Party, and Felicity (Saadet) Party have united under an umbrella party to form a parliamentary group. The new party’s name became the New Path (Yeni Yol) Party. Each of the three parties has fewer than 20 deputies, the minimum number required to establish a group in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye. By merging, they reached the necessary threshold.

The Felicity Party, founded 23 years ago, was led Necmettin Erbakan after the Welfare (Refah) Party was closed. While the traditionalist wing formed the Felicity Party, the reformist faction within that party morphed into a broader alliance that subsequently established the AK Party. The Future and DEVA Parties were consecutively founded in 2019 and 2020 by prominent former members of the AK Party. In other words, despite differences in their programs, all three parties try to woo the conservative voters who predominantly support the AK Party nowadays.

However, these parties opted to support the Opposition in the 2023 presidential elections as part of the CHP-led alliance. Following Erdoğan’s and the AK Party’s victory in those elections, these parties’ popularity began to drop rapidly.

Some deputies resigned from their respective parties. The merger of these parties in the parliament, which share similar backgrounds, can be seen as an attempt to halt this downward trend.

However, the presidential system inherently strengthens large parties. Conservative voters still appear to predominantly support the ruling AK Party–MHP alliance. Under these circumstances, it is highly questionable whether the umbrella party will provide an enduring fix for the three parties mentioned.



Investigation Launched Against 47 People, Including Beşiktaş Mayor, as part of a Corruption Probe



Beşiktaş is one of the most central districts of Istanbul and a stronghold for the CHP in elections. The district’s mayor has been detained in a large-scale corruption investigation. The probe targets an organised crime network accused of bribing municipalities and rigging tenders.

Some CHP officials argue that the operation is politically motivated and aimed at harming their party. Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu stated that the true target is, in fact, himself.

Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç, however, emphasised that no one is above the law. Among those detained in the investigation is the brother of a deputy interior minister. Due to a confidentiality order regarding the investigation, further details about the case, which also targets senior figures in municipalities, have not yet been disclosed to the public.

Highlights

- Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani met with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Hakan Fidan in Ankara. Al-Shaibani, who completed his master’s degree in political science and international relations at Sabahattin Zaim University in Istanbul, was appointed foreign minister following the collapse of the Ba’ath regime.
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has announced a record €2.6 billion (\$2.67 billion) investment in Türkiye for 2024, marking its largest financial commitment to any country.
- Türkiye neutralised 3,226 terrorists in northern Syria, Iraq since January 2024.

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