

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- The Terror-Free Türkiye initiative is entering its most concrete phase, with a symbolic disarmament ceremony expected soon, during which members of the terrorist group will formally lay down their arms.
- Can the CHP move beyond a political agenda narrowed by the İmamoğlu trial?
- Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek emphasised that both national and regional developments are expected to have a positive impact on the Turkish economy.

Türkiye's Critical Step Toward a Terror-Free Future: Key Developments



(TUR Presidency/Murat Cetinmuhurdar - Anadolu Agency)

Türkiye has entered a critical phase in its long and complex journey toward stopping terrorism. The recent developments have added remarkable momentum to what is now widely referred to as the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process. This week, Abdullah Öcalan, from his prison on İmralı Island, released a rare video message reiterating his call for an end to the era of armed struggle and urging a political solution to long-standing issues. The message, seen as a symbolic yet significant gesture, coincided with a meeting between the DEM Party delegation and the President, indicating that the dialogue has now extended to the highest political levels.

In another noteworthy move, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli publicly declared that the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative

is a matter of state policy, emphasising that it must take precedence over short-term political interests. Despite ongoing political tension, even the main opposition leader, Özgür Özel, has maintained his support for the process, signalling a rare moment of national consensus. This cross-party alignment reflects the historical weight of the issue, as well as the shared understanding that missteps could lead to irreversible consequences.

The most consequential step so far took place this Friday, July 11, when the PKK held a symbolic disarmament ceremony in the presence of both national and international observers. A portion of the weapons was publicly dismantled in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, marking a potential turning point in the conflict. Still, the President has warned that any delay in completing the disarmament process could expose it to provocations. Given the deep emotional and political sensitivities involved, the public communication strategy is being handled with extreme caution. However, as anticipation grows for President Erdoğan's announcement on Saturday, July 12, AK Party spokesperson Ömer Çelik addressed the matter, saying, "There is always hope for good news. It will be a historic speech. We will all listen as we reflect on the developments that have unfolded."

CHP's Political Leadership Embroiled with the İmamoğlu Trial

The arrest of Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu in March, unofficially regarded as the CHP's presidential candidate, has sent shockwaves through the party, paralysing its political focus. Party leader Özgür Özel has centred the CHP's energy entirely on what he claims is a politically motivated corruption case. Rallies are being held, the issue dominates media appearances, and İmamoğlu's detention has become the party's rallying cry. However, this singular focus has drawn criticism from former party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who accuses Özel of neglecting other national priorities. While some interpret Kılıçdaroğlu's comments as part of a personal political comeback effort, he is not alone; many political commentators argue that Özel is allowing critical national debates to pass the party by.

Adding to the pressure, new corruption investigations targeting several other CHP-held municipalities, such as Antalya, Manavgat, Adana, and Adıyaman, surfaced this week. The most sensational allegation involved a box of baklava in the Manavgat mayor's office that allegedly contained more than €100,000 in bribes, sparking public outrage. While Özel stated that they launched an internal investigation, the scandals have only complicated the CHP's already fragile standing. In the first days of the İmamoğlu's arrest, Özel demanded that İmamoğlu's trial be broadcast live on national television via TRT, an unprecedented request in Turkish legal history. Surprisingly, this week, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli voiced support for the idea, and President Erdoğan appeared receptive when asked about it. Whether the legal and bureaucratic steps to enable such a broadcast will be taken, however, remains uncertain.

At the heart of the issue lies a deeper leadership dilemma within the CHP. Özgür Özel, still relatively new to the chairmanship, now finds himself leading a party whose most charismatic figure is behind bars. While this crisis presents an opportunity for Özel to assert his leadership, his current strategy hinges heavily on mobilising the base around İmamoğlu's case. If İmamoğlu is not cleared of the charges, Özel could still emerge as the accepted leader and a viable



(Cemal Yurttaş - Anadolu Agency)

presidential candidate by demonstrating his resolve during this turbulent period. Yet, this endeavour risks sidelining the party from broader national conversations, weakening its influence in a rapidly evolving political landscape. So far, Özel's handling of the tension between loyalty to İmamoğlu and the need for a broader political vision has been far from convincing.

Meanwhile, the CHP's cautious support for the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative introduces another layer of strategic complexity. Özel has backed the process, which could realign the CHP with the country's most pressing national agenda and renew its relevance in the political mainstream. This comes at a time when former allies, such as the DEM Party, are managing to both support the process and maintain a critical stance toward the government. However, the CHP faces its own internal contradiction: its voter base tends to carry strong nationalist sentiments and remains sceptical of such peace efforts. In this sense, the party headquarters faces a fork in the road: either use the Terror-Free Türkiye momentum to reestablish its role in national politics or retreat from the process to preserve internal cohesion. Both paths come with risks, and navigating this terrain will be a crucial test of Özel's political acumen.

Mehmet Şimşek Highlights Economic Gains from Positive Political Developments



(Raşid Necati Aslım - Anadolu Agency)

Türkiye's economy is showing clear signs of recovery under the leadership of Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek. One of the most notable developments came in June, when inflation fell to 35%, sparking speculation about a potential interest rate

cut from the Central Bank, whose current policy rate stands at 46%. Markets are now closely watching the final week of July, when a decision is expected. Investor confidence is gradually returning, and Şimşek's emphasis on fiscal discipline has been key to stabilising expectations.

At the same time, both national and regional political dynamics are playing a critical role in shaping economic prospects. Speaking at the UK-Türkiye Islamic Finance Forum this week, Şimşek highlighted that the disarmament of the PKK could unlock significant economic benefits, especially by fostering long-term stability in the region. He underscored that peace would not only serve humanitarian goals but also pave the way for sustained investment and growth. In fact, Türkiye has already begun to discover substantial oil reserves in areas where residual terrorism has subsided in recent years, offering a glimpse into the potential economic benefits of peace.

Highlights

- Twelve out of nineteen soldiers were martyred after being exposed to methane gas in a cave in a military operation region in northern Iraq.
- The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence visited Pakistan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan, announced that an agreement had been reached for Turkish companies to explore for oil off the coast of Pakistan. This will represent another instance of Türkiye conducting oil exploration beyond its borders, in addition to its drilling operations in Somalia.
- Deputy Foreign Minister Burhanettin Duran has succeeded Fahrettin Altun as Türkiye's Director of Communications. Altun, who had held the post since 2018, has been appointed President of the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution.

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