

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- President Erdoğan delivered a historic speech at the annual Kızılcahamam gathering of the AK Party.
- Israel's Attacks on Syria Spark Outrage Across Türkiye
- The DEM Party's involvement in the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative is straining ties between the CHP and the DEM Party.

## Historical Unity Call from the President



(TCCB / Murat Kula - Anadolu Agency)

President Erdoğan delivered a historic speech at the opening of the AK Party's congregation in Kızılcahamam, just a day after the PKK held its first symbolic disarmament ceremony. He called this moment the start of a crucial new phase, stressing that the laying down of arms paves the way for a broader transformation. Erdoğan acknowledged the repressive practices of the past, which had been exploited by terrorist groups, and underlined that such state policies are no longer in place. This shift, he argued, removes the conditions that once fueled conflict, allowing for a more inclusive and peaceful national atmosphere.

While the speech centred on the vision of a Türkiye free from terrorism, Erdoğan situated this aspiration within a broader strategic outlook. He emphasised the importance of unity among Turks, Kurds, and Arabs, not only as a domestic reconciliation initiative, but also as part of a broader regional realignment. This emphasis reflects a deeper shift in Türkiye's approach: beyond internal peace, the country is seeking to reinforce its regional role by building solidarity across ethnic and national lines. The message suggested that Türkiye's future influence will depend not just on its military or economic strength, but on its ability to foster cooperation and shared identity in a volatile region.

Against this backdrop, the present juncture can be seen as more than a turning point in counterterrorism or internal cohesion. It also presents an opportunity for Türkiye to expand its strategic depth in the Middle East. Türkiye places significant importance on Syria's future and continues to support efforts toward a stable and functional neighbour. In that context, the ongoing process in Türkiye is expected to have positive ripple effects across the border as well. A sustained atmosphere of peace, both at home and in the region, could enhance Türkiye's diplomatic leverage and strengthen its long-term geopolitical standing.

## Türkiye Reacts Strongly to Israel's Attacks on Syria

Israel's recent strikes in Syria have drawn strong reactions from Türkiye, which sees stability in its southern neighbour as a core national interest. Speaking at the UN Security Council, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan accused Israel of deliberately undermining peace in the region. Türkiye has long maintained its support for Syria's territorial integrity, even throughout the years of civil war. For Ankara, escalating tensions and foreign interventions in Syria threaten not only regional security but also its own domestic goals, including the success of its "Terror-Free Türkiye" initiative.

Fidan's warning to the YPG, urging them not to exploit the current instability for unilateral moves, should also be seen through this lens. One dimension of Türkiye's internal peace process involves preventing any fragmentation of Syria that could lead to long-term ethnic or political divides, particularly between the Kurdish population and the central government in Damascus. The unity between Kurds and the Syrian state is seen by Ankara as a key factor in both preventing cross-border conflict and ensuring that extremist or separatist groups do not gain ground in the vacuum of chaos.

Türkiye's response has been both diplomatic and political. The Turkish Grand National Assembly issued a formal statement



(Selçuk Acar - Anadolu Agency)

condemning Israel's actions, while Fidan held talks with officials from Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan to coordinate regional efforts. Meanwhile, Syrian President Ahmed al-Shara credited mediation efforts by the U.S., Arab states, and Türkiye for preventing the situation from spiralling into deeper instability. As Türkiye monitors these developments closely, it continues to advocate for a stable, unified Syria as a pillar of its regional strategy.

## Rising Tensions Between CHP and DEM Party



(Halil Sağırkaya - Anadolu Agency)

In recent weeks, the pro-CHP media and wider opposition circles have intensified their criticism of the DEM Party, particularly over its perceived cooperation with the ruling bloc. The main point of contention lies in the DEM Party's participation in the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative and its project-based collaboration with the AK Party and the MHP. Although DEM had previously maintained a close, albeit unofficial, alignment with the CHP in recent years, this shift has sparked accusations that the party is becoming part of the ruling alliance. These reactions were further amplified when President Erdoğan declared, "On this path, we walk together as the AK Party, MHP, and DEM Party," a remark that many interpreted as formalising DEM's integration into the government bloc.

However, this interpretation appears to ignore the specific context of Erdoğan's speech, which was focused on the Terror-Free Türkiye process and the broader vision of national unity. Rather than framing an exclusive alliance, Erdoğan's tone and wording suggested an inclusive call, implicitly inviting other

parties to contribute to this national vision. Nevertheless, the main opposition party, CHP, continues to maintain a confrontational stance toward the ruling People's Alliance. The DEM Party's engagement in a shared initiative with the government has, in turn, created friction between the DEM and the CHP, especially among the CHP grassroots, where anti-Kurdish and nationalist sentiments appear to be gaining ground, despite the party leadership's relatively cautious rhetoric.

This growing tension was further highlighted by a recent speech from CHP leader Özgür Özel in Adıyaman, a Kurdish-majority city, where he stated that he did not need the DEM Party to engage with Kurdish voters. The remark was widely interpreted as a sign that the previous era of informal alliance between the two opposition parties was no longer valid. Özel's positioning signals a recalibration within the CHP, suggesting a move toward a more independent, but potentially more fragmented, electoral strategy.

Looking ahead, the CHP faces two key dilemmas. The first concerns whether it will respond to Erdoğan's call and become part of the new national vision, particularly the Terror-Free Türkiye process. The clearest test of this will be the party's stance on the drafting of a new constitution. An expected new constitution process could either intensify political polarisation or offer an opportunity for the CHP to re-enter a framework of national consensus. The second challenge lies in the party's effort to appeal to increasingly diverse constituencies. Balancing the rising secular nationalist sentiment within its base while also attempting to reach Kurdish voters presents a significant political test that will require more than rhetorical finesse to navigate effectively.

## Highlights

- During Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Ankara, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates signed key agreements on trade, defence, tourism, and polar research.
- On the 9th anniversary of the July 15 failed coup attempt, Türkiye honoured the martyrs who lost their lives with ceremonies held across the country. Democracy and National Unity Day also serves as a tribute to the resilience of the Turkish people, who stood firm against the putsch and defended their democratic rights.
- Western Türkiye's Tekirdağ and Balıkesir continued to fight wildfires, with authorities ordering the evacuation of more than 1,000 people.

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