

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- Investigations into drug trafficking, sexual abuse, and money laundering are multiplying by the day, increasingly reaching well-known figures from the media world.
- Researcher Hüseyin Özdemir offered an assessment of the effects of the Ukraine–Russia war in Türkiye's north, particularly in the Black Sea region.
- As part of the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process, political parties are submitting their commission reports to the Speaker of Parliament.

Drug Operations Reaching the Media Spark Widespread Public Debate

Türkiye has been roiled for some time by a series of judicial operations that have increasingly extended beyond the underworld and into the sphere of public life. What began as crackdowns on organised crime has, at intervals, reached well-known figures, signalling a broader scope. These cases have fuelled public debate, not only about criminal accountability but also about the shifting boundaries between legality, influence, and visibility in Türkiye's media, business, and cultural spheres.



(İsa Terli - Anadolu Agency)

The most recent flashpoint has been an operation targeting a group alleged to have secured sectoral advantages through drug use and sexual abuse, with Habertürk television at the centre of the investigation. High-profile names, including the channel's editor-in-chief, are being tried while in detention. Taken on its own, the case is striking; placed alongside previous operations, it appears consistent with a wider clean-up effort that has gradually expanded from organised crime into the media, business, and even sports sectors.

That expansion gained momentum in 2023, following the appointment of Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya, when back-to-back operations against organised crime networks were launched and continue to this day. More recently, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has drawn attention with investigations targeting media and business circles, a trend some experts interpret as a comprehensive purge backed by political will. This week alone brought another drug operation involving social media influencers and singers, as well as an investigation into the local digital platform GAIN Media over alleged money laundering, with trustees appointed to seven affiliated companies. With inquiries still ongoing, it would be unsurprising if new networks and connections were to surface as the process unfolds.

The Effects of the Ukraine–Russia War Have Been Observed for Some Time in Türkiye's North

The repercussions of the Ukraine–Russia war, previously felt in Türkiye's Exclusive Economic Zone in the Black Sea, have now reached Turkish airspace after a drone violation. We asked researcher Hüseyin Özdemir for his assessment of the incident.

The recent surge in maritime hostilities within the Black Sea highlights a precarious shift from conventional warfare to a persistent "grey zone" conflict, directly threatening international trade routes. A particularly grave dimension of this escalation is the recent series of strikes occurring within Türkiye's own Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In late November and early December 2025, the tankers KAIROS and VIRAT were targeted by unmanned surface vessels just 28 and 35 miles off the Turkish coast, followed by an attack on the MIDVOLGA-2 roughly 80 miles off Sinop. These incidents, occurring within waters under Turkish jurisdiction, represent a direct challenge to regional sovereignty and maritime safety. Furthermore, in mid-December, coordinated strikes on the ports of Odesa and Chornomorsk damaged several Turkish-owned vessels, including the Cenk-T, while the cargo ship VIVA, carrying a Turkish crew, was struck by a drone in open waters. The emergence of "stray" loitering munitions further complicates this; notably, a non-responsive drone was intercepted and downed by Turkish F-16s near Çankırı on 15 December, mirroring a wider European trend where unidentified drones have paralysed critical infrastructure in Denmark and Germany.

Within this volatile environment, Türkiye's strategic posture remains the primary bulwark against a broader regional conflagration. The recent strikes inside the Turkish EEZ have been condemned by Ankara as "unacceptable," signalling that the war's expansion into neutral economic zones risks drawing NATO members deeper into the fray. As a littoral state that has strictly enforced the Montreux Convention, Türkiye's role transcends mere neutrality; it serves as the indispensable arbiter of Black Sea stability. Given the shared economic and security interests at stake, it is increasingly evident that the sustainability of regional peace depends upon the continued engagement of both warring parties with Türkiye. Ankara's capacity to facilitate limited agreements, specifically regarding the safety of commercial navigation and the protection of energy infrastructure, remains the most viable path toward preventing the Black Sea from becoming an unnavigable zone of perpetual conflict.



(Veysel Altun - Anadolu Agency)

Parties Prepare Commission Reports in the "Terror-Free Türkiye" Process

As the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process approaches a critical juncture, commission deliberations are drawing to a close, and political parties have begun submitting their individual reports to the Speaker of Parliament. At this stage, each party is formally placing on record its own reading of the process, reflecting distinct historical, sociological, and political interpretations. The divergence in tone and framing is striking, most notably between the DEM Party and the MHP. While the DEM Party grounds its assessment in diagnoses of the

Kurdish question, the MHP approaches the issue through the lens of combating terrorism. However, the more consequential detail lies beyond these contrasts: even parties positioned at opposite ends of the political spectrum converge on the necessity of resolving the problem and securing lasting social peace. The MHP's acknowledgment that "the success of the fight against terrorism cannot be measured solely by the elimination of organisations, but also by trust in citizen–state relations" points to a broad and meaningful consensus around rebuilding that trust.

This coexistence of ideological divergence and shared resolve arguably captures the distinctive spirit of Türkiye's approach to conflict resolution, one in which competing narratives persist but the will to find a solution overlaps. For now, Parliament's agenda remains dominated by budget negotiations, pushing the process somewhat into the background. Still, expectations are that a final commission report, likely to include concrete legislative proposals, will be submitted after the new year. When that happens, the focus will shift from diagnosis to implementation, testing whether this rare convergence on social peace can be translated into durable legal and political reforms.



(İsmail Aslandağ - Anadolu Agency)

Highlights

- Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated that Türkiye is insisting on the commencement of the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire amid intensifying violations.
- Under a deal concluded between Türkiye's OYAK and Somalia's Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy, Turkish fishing companies will gain rights to operate in Somali waters, an area known for some of the world's most abundant fish stocks.
- On Tuesday, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met in Ankara with US Ambassador to Türkiye and Syria Special Envoy Tom Barrack, according to Turkish diplomatic officials, who offered no further details on the meeting's content.

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No Edition for the Next Two Weeks

Please be informed that there won't be an edition of *Türkiye in Focus* next week, as we take a short break. We'll be back afterward with fresh perspectives and updates on the latest developments in Türkiye. Thank you for your continued support and understanding.