

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- The 11th judicial package was published in the Official Gazette.
- An ISIS attack took place in Yalova.
- We asked researcher Ferhat Polat about developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Over 50,000 Inmates Begin to Be Released Under Türkiye's 11th Judicial Package

The entry into force of Türkiye's 11th Judicial Package, following its publication in the Official Gazette, has led to the release of more than 50,000 inmates, with the number expected to exceed 115,000 in the coming months through a phased process. The regulation is widely understood as an expansion of the "Covid leave" measures introduced in 2020 to ease prison overcrowding during the pandemic. At the time, inmates in open prisons or those with five years or less remaining under probation were temporarily released due to public health risks. However, individuals whose convictions became final after 31 July 2023 were excluded, a cut-off that triggered sustained criticism over unequal treatment before the law.



(İsa Terli - Anadolu Agency)

The new arrangement seeks to remedy this disparity while maintaining clear red lines. Serious crimes, including domestic and gender-based intentional homicide, sexual offenses, terrorism-related crimes, and offenses linked to building collapses during earthquakes, remain explicitly excluded. In this sense, the package simultaneously addresses the legacy of pandemic-era inequality and the chronic issue of overcrowded prisons, without extending leniency to crimes that carry a high degree of social harm. Authorities emphasise that the measure is not an amnesty, but a corrective step aimed at restoring consistency within the execution of sentences.

However, the debate is far from settled. With a 12th Judicial Package expected to reach the agenda within months, senior figures from the ruling AK Party, including former justice minister and MP Abdülhamit Gül, have openly called for a comprehensive reform of the execution regime. Shortening trial and pre-trial detention periods while adopting stricter detention policies for crimes, such as violence against women, are expected to feature prominently. Meanwhile, some political actors have attempted to exploit the releases through populist rhetoric, fostering a climate of fear. Officials counter that the current regulation was an unavoidable consequence of restoring equality after Covid-19 measures and that Türkiye ultimately needs not piecemeal adjustments but a holistic, durable reform of its penal system.

Türkiye Launches Security Operations After ISIS/Daesh Attack Kills Three Officers

Monday's nationwide counterterrorism operation highlighted the continued security challenge posed by ISIS (Daesh) networks in Türkiye. Turkish security forces carried out coordinated raids at 108 addresses across 15 provinces, following long-term intelligence work. The operation turned deadly in Yalova, where terrorists opened fire on police teams, killing three officers in the line of duty. The clash escalated over several hours, during which six terrorists were neutralised. Women and children inside the residence had been evacuated before the confrontation intensified, preventing further civilian casualties. The incident brought renewed public attention to the issue of terrorism after a prolonged period without major ISIS-linked violence inside the country.

Türkiye has maintained sustained pressure on ISIS through intelligence-led operations and coordinated security measures. Although the organisation has sought to exploit religious sentiments to recruit supporters and sustain its activities, its operational capacity inside the country has been significantly constrained in recent years. The armed



(Mersin İl Emniyet Müdürlüğü - Anadolu Agency)

response to the police operation reflected the high-risk nature of counterterrorism efforts rather than a broader resurgence. Officials have underlined that such incidents do not indicate a shift in the overall security environment. Instead, they reinforce the importance of continued vigilance and disciplined law enforcement. The emphasis, authorities say, remains on prevention, intelligence coordination, and minimising both security risks and civilian harm.

Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean Security Architecture

Researcher Ferhat Polat weighed in on developments shaping the security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The 10th trilateral meeting between Greece, the Greek Cypriot administration, and Israel, reinforced by the signing of a new military planning agreement, has intensified Ankara's perception of an emerging exclusionary security and energy architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean. From Türkiye's standpoint, this framework signals a deliberate effort to institutionalise cooperation that marginalises Ankara and disregards the region's political and legal complexities.

Within this evolving architecture, the Israeli factor is a perennial irritant in the regional security equation. As Türkiye-Israel tensions extend beyond tactical frictions in Syria into the Eastern Mediterranean, competing security priorities are becoming more visible and structural. Israel's expansionist strategy clashes with Türkiye's emphasis on border security, regional stability, and balanced deterrence, rendering the rivalry both broader in scope and more potentially destabilising.

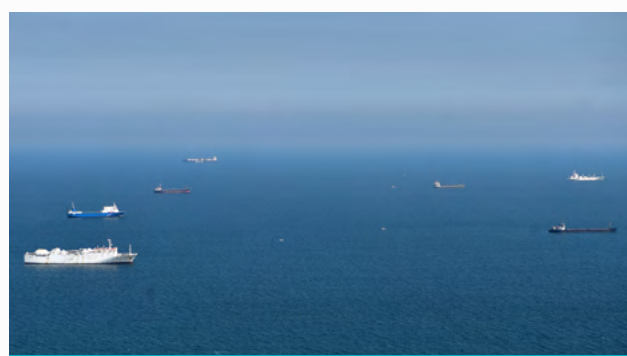
Against this backdrop, the trilateral meeting and its accompanying military-planning agreement further reinforce Ankara's assessment that an assertive posture in the Eastern Mediterranean is not only necessary but strategically prescient. As a guarantor power of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Türkiye has consistently demonstrated its determination to prevent the emergence of security arrangements that ignore the island's political realities or undermine regional stability.

The intensifying competition over hydrocarbon resources has further exposed how energy initiatives, most notably exclusionary projects such as the EastMed pipeline, have been instrumentalised to sideline Türkiye and Turkish Cypriots from regional energy governance. These initiatives

have transformed energy cooperation into a geopolitical tool, deepening fault lines rather than fostering inclusive frameworks.

In response, Ankara has recalibrated the regional balance through a robust legal and geopolitical strategy, most prominently the 2019 maritime delimitation agreement with Libya. This agreement reinforced Türkiye's continental shelf claims and disrupted efforts to impose unilateral maritime boundaries across the Eastern Mediterranean. Beyond protecting Ankara's sovereign rights, the Türkiye-Libya framework introduced a more equitable and realistic basis for regional cooperation, directly challenging maximalist claims and preventing the monopolisation of Eastern Mediterranean energy routes.

As a result, Türkiye's decisive engagement, spanning diplomacy, energy policy, and security cooperation, has consolidated its position as an indispensable regional actor. Through this multidimensional approach, Ankara has sought to safeguard stability, defend legitimate maritime rights, and counter exclusionary alliances across both the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa.



(Sezgin Pancar - Anadolu Agency)

Highlights

- The aircraft carrying Libyan Chief of the General Staff General Mohamed Ali Al-Haddad and an accompanying military delegation crashed shortly after taking off from Ankara. An investigation into the case is ongoing.
- The Ministry of National Defence criticised the SDF, which controls northern Syria, for failing to contribute to Syria's territorial integrity, and stated that it stands ready to support any steps Damascus takes toward preserving the country's unity.
- On New Year's morning, more than 500,000 demonstrators took part in a pro-Palestinian march in Istanbul.

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