

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- Public backlash in Türkiye against the U.S.–Israeli war on Iran is intensifying.
- Turkish intelligence captured a fugitive spy in a successful operation on the Syrian-Lebanese border.
- Türkiye's participation in the World Cup after years is now at the top of the national agenda, as it marks a major achievement in the country's football history and has generated widespread national excitement.

Thousands Gather in İstanbul to Protest U.S. and Israeli Attacks



(Arife Karakum - Anadolu Agency)

Public reaction in Türkiye continues to intensify against Israeli and U.S. military action in the Middle East. Citizens in various provinces have staged demonstrations, most recently in İstanbul. Thousands joined a march as several non-governmental organisations held the event under the title "We Do Not Want Israeli and U.S. Occupation in Our Region." The event highlighted the urgent need to stop bloodshed in

Islamic regions, with a special focus on attacks on Iran and Palestine.

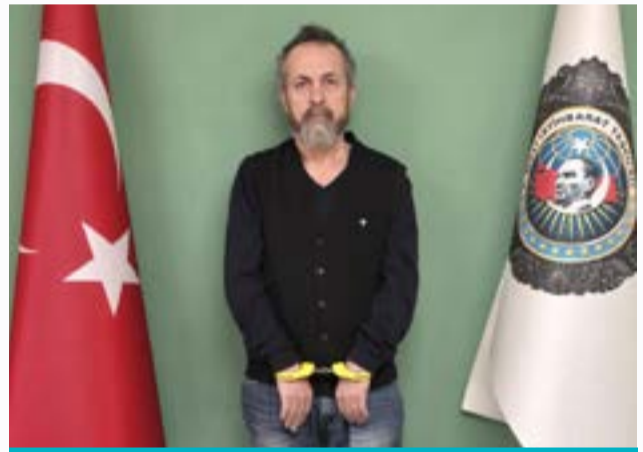
A key message of the protest was the need for caution against sectarian strife, stressing that these conflicts must not turn into wars between Muslims. This stance against internal division is a sensitive point for the Turkish state, frequently highlighted by official voices, most notably President Erdoğan. The rhetoric at the march echoed this official concern, suggesting that avoiding intercommunal conflict is a priority for both the public and the government amid external military pressure.

Furthermore, İbrahim Kalın, the Director of the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT), recently stated that Türkiye's objective is to end the war and keep the country out of the fighting. As the attacks against Iran continue, a clear anti-war language and a growing dissatisfaction with the aggression toward the region are becoming increasingly evident within both Turkish society and the state apparatus. This unified position reflects a firm opposition to the ongoing military operations led by the U.S. and Israel in the vicinity.

MİT's Long Reach: Key Fugitive Captured After 15 Years

The recent apprehension of former intelligence officer Önder Sığircıkloğlu along the Syrian-Lebanese border marks a significant development in Türkiye's ongoing security operations. Sığircıkloğlu was responsible for the 2011 abduction and handover of Free Syrian Army commanders Hussein Harmush and Mustafa Kassum to the Assad regime. He had previously escaped custody with FETÖ-linked help. His capture, achieved through Turkish and Syrian intelligence cooperation, addresses a long-standing case that experts believe delayed and complicated the revolutionary process in Syria.

This operation serves as a prominent example of the National Intelligence Organisation's (MİT) expanding international reach and its continued pursuit of high-profile targets. Beyond individual cases, Türkiye's security forces have maintained a consistent presence on the global stage, collaborating with international agencies such as Europol and Interpol to dismantle organised crime networks and repatriate fugitives. These efforts are part of a broader, multifaceted strategy that includes the systematic tracking and apprehension of dozens of individuals linked to FETÖ and various other espionage and terrorist networks across several continents.



(MİT - Anadolu Agency)

An event from fifteen years ago remains a top priority for intelligence services, showing institutional discipline and long-term strategic planning. The successful tracking and retrieval of Sığircıkloğlu after his escape highlights the technical and operational evolution of Turkish intelligence. This development clearly illustrates the country's security institutions' persistent, methodical approach over the years.

Türkiye Qualifies for the World Cup After a 24-Year Hiatus



(Hakan Akgün - Anadolu Agency)

The Türkiye National Football Team's qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup following their decisive away victory over Kosovo marks a significant milestone in the country's sporting history. By securing a place in the tournament hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States, the team ends a 24-year hiatus from the world's biggest stage. This achievement

is not an isolated success but rather the continuation of a steady upward trajectory, building on the momentum of their quarter-final appearance at Euro 2024. For a squad that has consistently improved its tactical discipline and international standing, this qualification serves as a formal validation of its recent progress.

However, in Türkiye, football functions as much more than a competitive sport; it acts as a primary pillar of national identity and social cohesion. The players, affectionately known as "Bizim Çocuklar" (Our Boys), carry a weight of expectation that transcends the pitch, often uniting a diverse populace under a singular banner of pride. The significance of this event is best illustrated by the recent announcement from Minister of National Education Yusuf Tekin, who indicated that the ministry is considering rescheduling the national High School Entrance Exams (LGS) to avoid a clash with Türkiye's World Cup fixture against Australia. Such a measure underscores how deeply entrenched the national team's journey is within the country's daily life and administrative priorities.

Highlights

- The corruption probe in Bursa Metropolitan Municipality is significant, with the detention of 57 individuals—including Mayor Mustafa Bozbey and his family—highlighting the government's efforts to address high-level corruption in local administration.
- Türkiye, along with seven other Muslim-majority countries, condemned the Israeli parliament for passing a bill that makes the execution of Palestinian prisoners possible.
- Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held talks in Islamabad with his counterparts from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, focusing on regional developments, particularly the war in Iran.



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