

This week, Türkiye in Focus covers incidents of violence against migrants in several Turkish cities, Erdoğan-Putin talks in Astana and Türkiye’s removal from the FATF grey list.

Incidents of Violence Against Migrants in Several Cities

On Sunday night in Kayseri, a [riot](#) erupted against Syrians following allegations of harassment of a child. Police struggled to control the unrest, which resulted in damage to numerous houses and workplaces, and injuries to several people. Similar incidents occurred in various provinces throughout the week, including the death of a 17-year-old Syrian teenager in Antalya. The interior minister reported that many individuals were detained, including 285 with prior [criminal records](#) for offences such as migrant smuggling, drugs, and sexual harassment. Additionally, some Syrian groups attacked Turkish vehicles and flags in northern Syria the following day.

While localised violence against migrants has occurred before, the spread of these incidents to Anatolian cities, along with the events in Syria, raises concerns about the underlying causes. In this context, President Erdoğan described the unrest as a “[conspiracy](#) to spread chaos” in his speech defending Türkiye’s track record and support for migrants.

The situation in northern Syria, involving numerous international actors, must be understood within related dynamics. Türkiye’s openness to talks with the Assad regime may have provoked some armed groups susceptible to manipulation. It is clear that the timing of such unrest cannot be coincidental and that some forces are coordinating these events to at least destabilise the Turkish presence in northern Syria. Currently, the Turkish Armed Forces and the Syrian National Army appear to have restored control and order in the area.

Türkiye is navigating a challenging period with several complicating factors. The significant Syrian population, particularly in working-class neighbourhoods, coupled with labour market competition, has long fuelled tensions. Additionally, the politicisation of this issue by some far-right politicians in the past couple of years has exacerbated existing conflicts.

Anti-immigrant sentiment is not confined to far-right parties. The main opposition party, the CHP, has also heightened populist and anti-immigration sentiments, attempting to attract an-

ti-immigrant votes without alienating left-wing supporters. For instance, while party leader Özgür Özel made [moderate](#) statements on migrants last week, the CHP youth branch’s [response](#) to the Kayseri events was inflammatory. Thus, anti-immigrant rhetoric is increasingly entering mainstream politics.

Another concern is the government’s migration planning and integration policies, which have been often subpar given the scale of migration to Türkiye. This inadequacy complicates the lives of migrants and perpetuates social tensions.

The relationship between the MHP and the AK Party, representing the right and centre-right electorate, significantly impacts the current situation. If the ties between the MHP and the AK Party were at their best levels, the ultranationalist party would have been able to prevent the riots from spreading. However, the MHP seems to have adopted a « laissez faire » approach. In fact, any shift in the MHP’s nationalist base away from the government or changes in AK Party-MHP relations could further escalate tensions.

In short, migration-related issues are likely to remain a significant part of Türkiye’s agenda for years to come.



(Müzahim Zahid Tüzün - Anadolu Agency)

Erdoğan and Putin Met in Astana

Relations between Türkiye and Russia are crucial for both nations, particularly concerning Ukraine, Syria, and economic ties. Researcher Hüseyin Özdemir provides insights into this week’s meeting between the two leaders:



(TUR Presidency/Murat Kula - Anadolu Agency)

“At a recent summit during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana, Turkish President Erdogan formally invited Russian President Putin to visit Türkiye, highlighting plans to boost trade between their countries to \$100 billion. The meeting emphasised the strengthening economic ties and cooperation in strategic projects such as nuclear power plants. The leaders discussed important international issues, including the conflict in Ukraine, with Erdogan reiterating Türkiye’s commitment to facilitating peace efforts between Russia and Ukraine. In Syria, Erdogan expressed Türkiye’s readiness to collaborate on ending instability and combating terrorism, suggesting a potential role for Putin as a mediator in Syria-Türkiye relations, although it is still too early for concrete outcomes. Additionally, the leaders addressed the increasing violence in Gaza and threats to Lebanon, calling for international action to curb Israel’s aggressive actions.”

Türkiye Removed from FATF Grey List

Last week, Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek celebrated a significant development with a post on his X account: “We made it.” Researcher Şeymanur Yönt provides insights into Türkiye’s removal from the FATF grey list:

“Established in 1989 to combat money laundering, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has removed Türkiye from its ‘grey list’ of countries requiring special monitoring. This decision was

made due to Türkiye’s improvements in anti-money laundering measures, efforts to combat the financing of terrorism, and steps taken to address issues related to the illicit financing of UN-sanctioned groups, which initially led to its inclusion on the grey list in 2021. Being removed from the grey list enhances Türkiye’s credibility and reputation, increases investments, boosts economic growth, and strengthens trade relations.”

Highlights

- **Sinan Ateş Murder Case:** The trial for the Sinan Ateş murder case, one of the most significant political debates recently, began on Monday, July 1st. Political parties are closely monitoring the case. There are claims that individuals associated with the MHP were involved in Ateş’s assassination for political reasons, which the MHP denies.
- **Turkish Men’s National Football Team:** The team defeated Austria 2-1 in Euro 2024, advancing to the quarterfinals. After the victory, Merih Demiral, who scored both goals, made a grey wolf sign associated with the MHP. This prompted UEFA to launch an investigation against Demiral, which the Turkish Foreign Ministry [condemned](#). This incident has sparked a significant public debate in Türkiye, with some viewing Merih’s gesture as a normal celebration and others criticising its political implications.
- **Somalian-Ethiopian Talks:** Ankara is hosting and mediating discussions between top officials from Somalia and Ethiopia, who were recently on the brink of armed conflict. The second round of talks is scheduled to take place in Türkiye in September.

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