

This week in Türkiye in Focus, we explore three important topics:

- The murder of 8-year-old Narin Güran has sparked nationwide controversy.
- The New Welfare Party faces continued setbacks as the mayor of Şanlıurfa resigns.
- The killing of Turkish-American activist Ayşenur Ezgi Eygi by Israeli forces has resonated globally, with US officials’ responses deemed inadequate.

Narin Güran’s Murder Grips National Attention

The tragic murder of Narin Güran has been a central topic of discussion in Türkiye for some time. On September 8, the body of the 8-year-old girl was discovered in a bag near a stream by her village, prompting an expanded investigation. Several individuals, including her older brother and uncle, have been detained in connection with the crime.

The widespread coverage of Narin’s murder stems not only from the horror of the crime but also due to deeper societal issues it has raised. One key discussion revolves around claims that the murder took place within a patriarchal tribal structure, still prevalent in parts of rural Türkiye. These tribes wield significant territorial, economic, and social power, often functioning as closed social systems where women and children, in particular, face isolation and oppression.

The Güran family is part of a prominent and well-known family in Diyarbakır. However, it may be an overstatement to label them as strictly adhering to a traditional tribal structure. The village where the murder occurred is not far from the city centre, and its proximity to modern life complicates assumptions about its social dynamics. While it remains unclear to what extent this crime can be attributed to patriarchal or tribal structures, two key points arise from this heinous act.

First, patriarchal violence, a global issue, continues to be a serious problem in Türkiye. This violence takes on various forms, and the murder of a young girl highlights the urgent need to confront it. Unfortunately, such tragic events are not uncommon.

Second, this murder has been exploited by certain political ideologies to reinforce the “civilising mission” narrative. Chief among these is the Kemalist ideology, which has framed the incident in the context of the importance of its top-down modernisation efforts. Similarly, the pro-Kurdish DEM party has used the event to promote its secular and modernisation



(Cihan Demirci - Anadolu Agency)

agenda while criticising its Kurdish rival, Hûda-Par, known for its religious discourse and congregational base. The DEM party even organised a demonstration in Diyarbakır, targeting Hûda-Par in the context of Narin’s murder.

The political dynamics surrounding the case are complex. Hûda-Par, while associated with religious discourse, holds minimal influence in the village where the murder occurred, which traditionally leans toward right-wing parties. In the elections held on June 7, 2015, the DEM party’s predecessor, the HDP, received the most votes in this area, challenging the assumption that the murder is tied to Hûda-Par’s ideological influence.

It is important to note that powerful family structures in Türkiye can form political alliances with both right-wing and left-wing parties, leveraging their voting power for influence. The fact that Narin’s murder was concealed by family members raises legitimate concerns about how patriarchal power operates within such family networks. This tragedy exposes deep-rooted issues related to both political and social structures in Türkiye.

What Lies Ahead for the New Welfare Party?

The New Welfare Party (YRP), led by Fatih Erbakan, son of Necmettin Erbakan—the founder of the influential National Vision movement—was once among Türkiye’s most notable political parties. Their peak achievements include securing 6% of the vote in local elections and winning 65 municipalities. In the parliamentary elections a year ago, the YRP earned four parliamentary seats.

However, the party’s popularity has recently diminished. One of their four MPs defected to the AK Party, and last month, on the party’s anniversary, nine of the 13 local administrators who switched to the AK Party were YRP-elected mayors. Most notably, Kasım Gülpınar, who won the Şanlıurfa municipality, resigned from the party. While Gülpınar remains an independent mayor, he hinted on a television program that he might eventually [join](#) the AK Party.



(Ali Balıkcı - Anadolu Agency)

The YRP supported President Erdoğan in the 2023 general elections as part of the People’s Alliance. But as the 2024 local elections approach, the party’s relationship with the alliance has deteriorated. The YRP initially attracted votes from disenchanted AK Party supporters who wanted to express dissatisfaction with the government without abandoning Erdoğan. However, the YRP’s recent split from the alliance seems to have stalled its momentum.

The party’s appeal was not only to voters but also to former AK Party figures, many of whom joined the YRP after being sidelined by the AK Party. Now, as the YRP’s rise slows, some of these figures are returning to the AK Party, marking the first clear sign of decline for the YRP.

Given these developments, the future of the YRP seems uncertain. Fatih Erbakan lacks the recognition and leadership stature of his father, and the party is struggling to maintain a strong, agenda-setting narrative. If it loses its position as a viable alternative for right-wing voters—something the recent setbacks suggest—the party’s prospects look bleak. The YRP may end up competing primarily with the Felicity (Saadet) Party, another party rooted in the National Vision tradition, for a small pool of voters.

One way forward for Erbakan and his team could be to explore new alliance strategies, much like they have in the past. In a presidential system, it is challenging for a party to remain relevant and attract voters without being part of one of the two main political blocs. New alliances might provide a path for the YRP to regain prominence in the near future.

Turkish-American Pro-Palestine Activist Ayşenur Ezgi Eygi Murdered by Israeli Forces

Turkish-American pro-Palestinian activist Ayşenur Ezgi Eygi was shot dead by Israeli forces during a demonstration against Israeli settlement policy in the West Bank. Eygi belonged to the International Solidarity Movement, the same movement as Rachel Corrie, who was crushed by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003. She was involved in student protests and encampments for Palestine in the US. Ayşenur’s murder received widespread attention both in Türkiye and internationally.

However, the reactions, especially from the United States, were mainly in defence of Israel, not its own citizen. President Joe Biden repeated Israeli claims that the incident was an accident. Harris described it as a horrific tragedy. [Eygi’s family recalled](#)

the president’s statement after a drone attack on a military base in Jordan on February 2: “If you harm an American, we will respond.”

The US also previously accepted Israeli claims to cover up the assassinations of its own citizens. The last memorable case was the murder of American journalist [Shirin Abu Aklah](#) in Jenin on May 11, 2022. Another incident was the murder of Furkan Doğan, an American national of Turkish origin, on the night of May 31, 2010, along with 9 other passengers on board the Mavi Marmara ship, which was on its way to deliver aid to Gaza, when Israeli forces raided the ship. The [lack of response](#) from the US Administration in this incident also drew criticism.

Highlights

- The Turkish foreign ministry criticised the defence agreement between the US and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, [emphasising](#) that this move complicates efforts to resolve the Cyprus issue.
- Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan [attended](#) the Arab League summit in Cairo.
- President Erdoğan addressed the recent actions of newly graduated lieutenants outside the army’s discipline, stating, “We will not allow our army to be damaged again.” Meanwhile, the CHP continues to support the lieutenants’ political slogans. Last week, after the graduation ceremony, a group of lieutenants chanted, “We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal” and recited an oath that is no longer officially used.

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