

In this edition of *Türkiye in Focus*:

- President Erdoğan’s first meeting with the DEM Party delegation could signal important developments in the near future.
- The CHP has concluded its extraordinary congress, marking a potential turning point in the party’s internal dynamics.
- The U.S. President’s widely discussed remarks about Türkiye offer clues about the current state of bilateral relations.

President Erdoğan Met with the DEM Party Delegation

Following the country’s growing focus on the İmamoğlu trial and the heated political climate that ensued, questions began to arise about the future of the “Terror-free Türkiye” initiative. Some even suggested that the process had come to a halt.

Two key reasons caused this misperception. Firstly, the initial positive signals from the PKK following Öcalan’s call to lay down arms and dissolve the organisation were not sustained. More recently, the PKK has adopted a noticeably more hesitant tone in its statements. Secondly, figures close to the main opposition party, the CHP, have become increasingly critical of the DEM Party, particularly its involvement in a joint process with the government. In recent years, the DEM Party has formed various cooperative ties with the CHP. A potential loss of the DEM Party’s social and parliamentary support is seen as a major setback for the CHP. Notably, after İmamoğlu’s detention, the DEM Party offered only limited support to the CHP.

Meanwhile, a notable aspect has been MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli’s persistent calls for the PKK to disarm, alongside his continued, optimistic involvement in the process. In an article published in *Türkgün* newspaper, Bahçeli [stated](#) that the process, if it leads to disarmament, would also pave the way for “a strengthening of democracy” and “the construction of a new societal life” in Türkiye. His remarks were widely interpreted as a top-level endorsement of the process.



(Murat Şengül - Anadolu Agency)

Another significant development took place on Thursday, April 10. President Erdoğan met with the DEM Party delegation for the first time. The meeting was also attended by National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) chief İbrahim Kalın and Deputy Chairman of the AK Party Efkân Ala, a key figure in the process.

This meeting could be viewed as a key step in addressing claims that the president has been more cautious about the process compared to the MHP leader. Beyond symbolism, the presence of the MİT chief and Ala suggests that the process may be entering a more mature phase, possibly paving the way for new initiatives. Prior to the meeting, Ala had hinted that significant developments regarding PKK disarmament could emerge by the end of April.

CHP Held an Extraordinary Congress

For some time now, internal strife within the Republican People’s Party (CHP) has been among the most debated topics in domestic politics. These tensions intensified after the party congress in which Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu handed over the chairmanship to Özgür Özel. The latter’s perceived passivity as party leader, along with the ongoing power struggle between Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş for influence within the party, occasionally surfaced from behind closed doors. At the heart of this rivalry lay a single pressing question: Who would be the party’s presidential candidate? Chairman Özel had repeatedly stated that he would not run and that either Yavaş or İmamoğlu would take on that responsibility.

However, the balance within the party seems to have shifted following İmamoğlu’s detention. As one of the party’s most in-



(Evrin Aydın - Anadolu Agency)

fluent figures and initially the most likely presidential nominee, İmamoğlu’s situation has introduced a sense of uncertainty. Although no finalised court ruling currently prevents him from running, his influence within the CHP has undoubtedly diminished.

Under these circumstances, Özgür Özel announced that the party would convene an extraordinary congress. This congress was held last Sunday. With two potential challengers failing to gather the required number of internal endorsements, Özel ran unopposed and was re-elected as party leader, receiving 1,171 of the 1,276 votes cast.

This marks an important step for both Özel and the CHP. For now, it appears that internal conflict has given way to a sense of unity. The tensions between İmamoğlu and Yavaş have been temporarily paused, and the influence of former chairman Kılıçdaroğlu within the party has waned. However, two lingering issues continue to pose risks to party cohesion. First is the growing discussion of Özgür Özel himself as a potential presidential candidate. In this context, it remains unclear how figures close to İmamoğlu will react or how Yavaş—still considered the more popular candidate—will respond. The second issue, albeit less prominent, concerns questions about whether MPs aligned with Kılıçdaroğlu might, at some point, draw closer to Özel in the future.

While Özel has certainly benefited from the congress and its outcome, new challenges from both within and outside the party are likely to emerge in the coming period.

US President Trump’s Statements on Türkiye

This week witnessed two noteworthy developments in the context of Türkiye–United States relations. The first came with the announcement of a new list of U.S. import tariffs. Türkiye appeared among the economies facing the lowest rate of tariffs—set at 10%. Many experts interpret this decision both in terms of the balance between the Turkish and the US economies and in light of the broader political and strategic partnership between the two countries.

The second development took place during a White House meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In response to a question from an Israeli journalist, Trump praised President Erdoğan and expressed positive sentiments towards the Turkish leader. He also noted that ongoing disputes in Syria could be resolved if Israel were to adopt a “reasonable” approach.

Since the fall of the Assad regime, Israel has continued military operations aimed at destabilising Syria. Its repeated strikes on Syria’s security infrastructure pose a threat to a country still

struggling to rebuild. Most recently, Israel targeted several bases in the city of Hama, which, according to reports, Türkiye had been considering as potential locations for its military presence.

In a statement released by the Ministry of National Defence, Türkiye strongly condemned the attacks: “Israel must immediately halt its provocations, which aim to damage Syria’s territorial integrity and undermine its security and stability.” The same statement also noted that the first technical-level meeting between Türkiye and Israel on the Syrian issue took place on April 9 in Azerbaijan.

Türkiye–U.S. relations, however, are not limited to the Israel issue. Remarks from both the U.S. President and its new ambassador to Türkiye, Tom Barrack, point to a much broader strategic partnership. In his Senate address, Barrack [emphasised](#) Türkiye’s geostrategic importance and its value as a NATO ally. This partnership extends beyond the Middle East, drawing attention to Türkiye’s active role in regions such as Ukraine and Africa.

Highlights

- U.S. and Russian delegations met in Istanbul for the second time. The talks were reported to focus on the mutual diplomatic activities of the two countries’ embassies.
- Syrian leader Ahmad al-Shara is expected to attend the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye.
- Türkiye and Somalia have strengthened their energy partnership by signing an agreement for onshore hydrocarbon exploration and production. The deal enables Turkish Petroleum (TPAO) to initiate oil and gas exploration in three land blocks spanning around 16,000 square kilometers in Somalia.

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