

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- Developments in Syria topped the domestic political agenda in Türkiye this week.
- Türkiye is assuming a critical role in the second phase of the Gaza peace plan.
- The debate over Ankara's water crisis has become a striking example of how climate change is shaping domestic politics.

Syria's Rapid Developments Ignite Debate in Türkiye

The Syrian army's recent takeover of several critical cities previously held by the SDF has been closely monitored by public opinion in Türkiye. For months, analysts had warned that the SDF's reluctance to align with Damascus and its strategy of stalling the implementation of the March agreement were complicating the broader regional equation. Rather than translating the earlier accord into concrete steps, the SDF appeared to be buying time as a tactic that increasingly tested Ankara's patience and shaped domestic debates about security and diplomacy.

Many experts had long argued that the acceleration and eventual success of Türkiye's "Terror-Free Türkiye" process depended heavily on the stabilisation of Syria's political landscape. While a fragile ceasefire technically remained in place, this week may well go down as the moment when political consolidation in Syria began to take tangible form. After a year of SDF tergiversation, the militia's provocation in Northern Aleppo was the straw that broke the camel's back. Having received the green light from regional and international partners, the Syrian army made rapid advances in several areas west of the Euphrates. Then, SDF leader Mazlum Abdi decided to meet with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa in



(Muatz Hac Muhammed - Anadolu Agency)

Damascus. The first round of talks yielded no breakthrough as the PKK terror masterminds in Qandil showed no enthusiasm for the peace efforts. Then, after a new round of diplomacy and international pressure, the two sides announced that they had reached an understanding and would move forward with the previously agreed framework. However, the prospects for the accord's implementation remain slim because of the provocations Qandil continues to foment. Should these mutual commitments hold—a considerable assumption—Syria could transition more smoothly toward a preserved unitary state structure.

The turbulence across the border reverberated inside Türkiye. The DEM Party's decision to hold its parliamentary group meeting in the border district of Nusaybin, at a time when no agreement had yet been secured in Syria, was widely interpreted as a gesture of solidarity with the SDF and a critique of Ankara's political backing of the Syrian army. Images of the Turkish flag being lowered during a demonstration following the meeting sparked nationwide backlash. While some squarely blamed the DEM Party, others cautioned against possible provocations aimed at undermining the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative. The party itself condemned the disrespect shown toward the national flag, emphasising that it does not condone actions that offend shared societal values.

Attention is now shifting back to the parliament. The National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy Commission convened this week to finalise its report, which is expected to serve as the basis for a legislative proposal tied to the Terror-Free Türkiye process. Feti Yıldız, a prominent member of the commission from the MHP, indicated that broad consensus has largely been achieved and suggested that developments in Syria have, in fact, eased the domestic track. With weapons gradually receding from the forefront of the agenda, the space for political negotiation appears to be widening, suggesting the process could gather pace in the weeks ahead.

Türkiye Draws Attention in the Controversial Second Phase of Trump's Gaza Ceasefire Plan

Türkiye, which had previously emerged as one of the leading countries in facilitating ceasefire efforts in Gaza, now finds itself once again at the centre of a new diplomatic equation. Under US President Donald Trump's second-phase Gaza plan, governance of the enclave and oversight of the peace process are to be entrusted to a three-council structure. The inclusion of Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on the executive council has drawn particular attention, signalling Ankara's anticipated influence in shaping the post-conflict framework. In addition, Türkiye's Communications Directorate announced that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was invited to join the Peace Council, an invitation that has been formally accepted. The plan was officially launched with signatures in Davos on Thursday, marking a new chapter in international efforts to stabilise Gaza.

Israel has opposed Türkiye and Qatar assuming prominent roles within the mechanism. Some experts interpret the structure as a diplomatic setback for Israel, arguing that the multilateral format dilutes its leverage over Gaza's future.



(Turkish Foreign Ministry - Anadolu Agency)

At the same time, questions persist about the practicality of the three-council model and whether it can function effectively amid entrenched political divisions. Following the establishment of these councils, an international stabilisation force is expected to deploy in Gaza. Whether Turkish troops will be part of that force, however, remains an open question.

Water Scarcity in Ankara Fuels Political Debate Amid Drought Concerns



(İsmail Aslandağ - Anadolu Agency)

Ankara's deepening water crisis has quickly morphed into a fierce political dispute. With active reservoir occupancy rates reportedly plunging to as low as 1 per cent, the capital is facing one of its most severe shortages in recent years. In several districts, residents have endured water cuts lasting up to 12 hours, bringing daily life to a grinding halt. The controversy has placed CHP Mayor Mansur Yavaş squarely in the crosshairs. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and CHP

leader Özgür Özel have both weighed in on the debate, as the government accuses the municipality of mismanagement and of failing to take timely precautions. The municipality, for its part, points to drought as the primary driver of the crisis. The State Hydraulic Works (DSİ), which oversees the dams, has added another layer to the argument, emphasising that water transportation and storage measures fall under municipal responsibility.

Yet dwindling reservoir levels are neither a new phenomenon nor unique to Ankara. From İstanbul to other major cities, declining dam occupancy has become a recurring headline in recent years. Reduced snowfall, a critical source for replenishing reservoirs, prolonged dry spells, and other climate change-related pressures have reshaped Türkiye's water outlook. In that sense, the municipality's emphasis on drought reflects a tangible reality. However, experts also underline that adapting to these new climatic conditions requires proactive local governance, from infrastructure investment to long-term water management strategies. The criticism directed at Ankara's municipality ultimately hinges on whether it has moved decisively enough to confront the structural challenges imposed by a warming climate.

Highlights

- In its first monetary policy decision of the year, the Central Bank reduced the interest rate by 100 basis points to 37 per cent. The move signals the continuation of a gradual easing cycle, aligned with the ongoing downward trend in inflation.
- The Grand National Assembly of Türkiye approved a presidential motion extending the deployment of the Turkish Navy in the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Somalia, in the Arabian Sea, and surrounding waters for an additional year.
- The draft report of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Children's Rights has been finalised. Among its key recommendations are restricting internet access for minors during late-night hours and introducing a minimum age requirement of 15 for social media use.

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