

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- This week, Parliament held the swearing-in ceremony for two new ministers. However, the event was disrupted when opposition MPs triggered a physical altercation.
- The resignation of the Keçiören mayor from the CHP suggests that the party's election strategies have not developed into a sustainable political policy.
- Both the public and the President expressed solidarity with the Mayor of Mihalgazi following remarks widely regarded as discriminatory.

Fight Breaks Out During Swearing-In Ceremony of New Ministers

The swearing-in ceremony of Türkiye's new ministers in Parliament, ordinarily a procedural milestone, instead became a scene of confrontation that exposed deep divisions within the political arena. By presidential decree, İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor Akın Gürlek was appointed Minister of Justice, while Erzurum Governor Mustafa Çiftçi assumed the post of Interior Minister. Both appointments immediately drew criticism from the opposition, but it was Gürlek who became the focal point of the storm. The CHP's strong reaction stemmed largely from Gürlek's role as prosecutor in high-profile corruption investigations, including cases involving İstanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. Tensions that had been building in political rhetoric spilled over into physical altercations during the oath-taking ceremony, resulting in fistfights on the parliamentary floor and scenes many observers described as damaging to parliamentary decorum.

Beyond the clashes, however, the appointments may signal a broader structural preference within the executive branch. Both new ministers come directly from bureaucratic posts rather than party politics, reinforcing what some interpret as a technocratic consolidation in governance. Like his



(EvrİM Aydın - Anadolu Agency)

predecessor appointed in 2023, the new Interior Minister, Çiftçi, moved from a governorship to the ministry—a path that contrasts with earlier periods when the post was more commonly filled by career politicians. Similarly, Gürlek's transition from İstanbul's chief prosecutor's office to the Justice Ministry marks a departure from his predecessor, Yılmaz Tunç, who came from political ranks.

Resignation of Keçiören Mayor Shakes the CHP



(Harun Özalp - Anadolu Agency)

The resignation of Keçiören Mayor Mesut Özarslan from Türkiye's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) would ordinarily have been a local political footnote. Instead, it became a national controversy. The issue was not merely the resignation itself, but the extraordinary clash between Özarslan and CHP leader Özgür Özel. In a televised interview, Özarslan alleged that Özel had sent him a series of insulting messages. When those messages were later leaked to the press and appeared to confirm the use of harsh and demeaning language, the issue quickly transcended party boundaries. While some dismissed the exchange as the rough and tumble of politics, many others saw it as yet another troubling example of the toxic tone corroding Türkiye's political discourse.

Yet the episode points to deeper structural strains within the CHP. Since the March 2024 local elections, the party has faced a series of defections, with some mayors crossing over to the ruling AK Party. Although Özarslan has not formally joined the AK Party, speculation to that effect swirled as the crisis unfolded. The recent high-profile switch of the Aydın metropolitan mayor from the CHP to the AK Party similarly ignited internal debate and exposed vulnerabilities. These transitions are not merely individual choices; they indicate unease within a party attempting to balance ideological coherence with electoral pragmatism.

At the heart of the matter lies CHP's strategic outreach to nationalist-conservative figures who do not organically emerge from its traditional base. The party leadership has pursued such alliances to broaden its appeal and secure electoral victories, particularly in competitive urban districts. Ankara's popular mayor, Mansur Yavaş, is often cited as a successful example of this strategy, and Özarslan was reportedly backed by Yavaş himself. But as the Keçiören case illustrates, integrating these figures into the party's institutional culture remains fraught. The resignation not only risks denting Yavaş's popularity but also underscores CHP's ongoing struggle to reconcile expansion with internal cohesion. This challenge may define the party's trajectory in the years ahead.

Broad Support from Society and Politics for Mayor Targeted by Discriminatory Attack

The latest controversy surrounding Mihalgazi Mayor Zeynep Güneş once again demonstrates how identity politics continues to shape public debate in Türkiye. As one of many locally elected figures from diverse political and cultural backgrounds, Güneş represents a strand of grassroots leadership that blends public service with visible personal tradition. Choosing to perform her duties in traditional attire, she has become both a symbol of representation for some and, evidently, a target for others. Last week, Good Party (İYİ) founding member Mehmet Emin Korkmaz launched a social media attack against Güneş, using derogatory language to belittle her headscarf and traditional outfit. The remarks were widely condemned as discriminatory and demeaning.

The backlash was swift and far-reaching. Public anger was not only about a personal insult directed at one mayor, but also about what many perceived as the resurfacing of a painful historical memory: the long-standing restrictions once imposed on women wearing headscarves in Türkiye's public sphere. For a significant segment of society, the episode echoed past exclusionary practices that left deep scars in



(Utku Uçrak - Anadolu Agency)

the country's political and social life. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan responded by inviting Güneş to Ankara and hosting her at Wednesday's AK Party parliamentary group meeting in a visible show of support. Meanwhile, Korkmaz was expelled from the İYİ Party, emphasising how politically and socially costly such rhetoric has become in today's Türkiye.

Highlights

- In a coordinated operation involving the National Intelligence Organisation, the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, and İstanbul police, two suspected Mossad intelligence operatives, allegedly involved in monitoring Palestinian activists and linked to an assassination in Tunisia, were apprehended.
- Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited Ankara. As part of the visit, various agreements were signed between Türkiye and Greece covering investment, maritime trade, economic cooperation, earthquakes, culture, science, and technology.
- Newly released data for 2025 shows that Türkiye's population has exceeded 86 million, up 427,000 from the previous year.

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