

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- The AK Party has stepped up its efforts to improve its relationship with young citizens.
- The Global Sumud Flotilla activists have returned to Türkiye following their abduction and mistreatment by Israel.
- The former leader of the CHP has targeted the current party management with a newly released video message.

AK Party's Youth Offensive

The AK Party's recent intensification of its youth-oriented initiatives appears aimed at bridging a widening generational divide. President Erdoğan's recent gathering with young people and national athletes during the 19 May celebrations exemplifies his outreach efforts. However, the unusually large scale of recent events indicates increased urgency behind these efforts. The massive youth festival in Kocaeli, attended by senior party leaders and a diverse group of young citizens, illustrates a clear attempt to foster inclusivity. By displaying various lifestyles together, party leaders are directly challenging media claims of a fractured youth demographic.

This burst of activity is no coincidence; it is a direct response to a persistent critique that the AK Party has struggled to resonate with the values of a newer generation. Recognising that political survival hinges on capturing first-time voters, the party is making a conscious push to recalibrate both its rhetoric and public image. The strategic focus here is less about rigid ideological persuasion and more about emotional



(TCCB / Murat Çetinhüürdar - Anadolu Agency)

closing, an attempt to reduce the perceived distance between an ageing leadership and a modern, multifaceted youth. Given the sheer energy of these recent rallies and the party's proven ability to adapt, could this well-timed charm offensive be the very catalyst that successfully secures the loyalty of the next generation? Only time will tell.

Global Sumud Flotilla Activists, Including 78 Turkish Citizens, Arrive in Türkiye



(Hakan Akgün - Anadolu Agency)

The recent interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla by the Israeli Military in international waters marks a perilous escalation in the ongoing struggle over the blockade of Gaza. The mission, intended as a peaceful, multinational civilian effort to deliver vital humanitarian aid, instead provoked

international outrage due to the activists' unlawful detention. The crisis intensified when leaked footage revealed an Israeli minister committing inhumane and degrading acts against the captured volunteers. For Ankara, this incident directly impacted national interests: seventy-eight Turkish citizens were among those abducted. The resulting wave of domestic solidarity prompted mass demonstrations across several provinces and mobilised families, who launched emotional campaigns on social media demanding international intervention.

Due to strong diplomatic efforts, the activists were brought back from Israel to Türkiye on Thursday. While their return is a relief, the images of the raid and reported mistreatment have had a lasting effect on public opinion. Turkish officials have clearly condemned Israel's actions. Although the immediate safety of the volunteers is now ensured, the anger these events caused may continue to shape relations for a long time.

Nullity Verdict Reignites CHP's Leadership Struggle as Kılıçdaroğlu Returns

For weeks, arguments surrounding the absolute nullity of CHP's leadership had been growing louder, revealing deep divisions within the party between supporters of Özgür Özel and those allied with former leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The situation became critical last week when two mayors handed prosecutors serious allegations involving Özel's leadership, closely tying the unfolding political scandal to the looming legal battle. In this tense environment and ahead of the verdict, Kılıçdaroğlu released a video message calling for a "purification" of the party—a move many saw as a clear sign that he was ready to return and that factional competition was intensifying. When the court delivered its definitive nullity ruling on Thursday, Kılıçdaroğlu wasted no time. Declaring that he would steer the party out of this crisis, the veteran politician formally accepted the leadership once more, highlighting the ongoing internal struggle over the CHP's direction.

While some speculate about the formation of a new political party, the immediate response from the main CHP figures has been measured. Party leader Özgür Özel has stated that



(Güven Yılmaz - Anadolu Agency)

leaving CHP is not an option. Meanwhile, Ankara's mayor, Mansur Yavaş, has suggested that an extraordinary congress be organised soon to manage the transition. The two camps—those close to Özel and those aligned with Kılıçdaroğlu—are currently using cautious language, but tensions may rise. CHP may soon enter another period of internal debate and self-examination.

Highlights

- Erdoğan and Trump have spoken by phone. During the call, the Turkish president stated that the ongoing ceasefire with Iran is a positive development and that they continue to support Syria's stability.
- As part of a plan to strengthen NATO's southern flank, Germany is scheduled to send a Patriot air defence unit to Türkiye in the coming weeks.
- The UEFA Europa League Final has been played in Istanbul, with the city hosting both Freiburg and Aston Villa fans.

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No Edition Next Week

Due to Türkiye's official Eid al-Adha holidays next week, Türkiye in Focus will be unavailable. We'll return the following week with fresh perspectives and updates. Thank you for your support and understanding!

-The *Türkiye in Focus* Team