

# Europe Monitoring

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## Turkey

### Prison sentences for “fake news”

Turkey's parliament this month approved a controversial law providing jail terms for spreading “false or misleading news”. Courts can use it to sentence accredited journalists and ordinary social media users to one to three years in prison. Eight months before the parliamentary elections, the government is intensifying its already tough crackdown on the media.

In addition to newspapers, radio and television, the new law is primarily aimed at online networks and online media. They are encouraged to denounce users who are accused of spreading “fake news” and passing on their data.



„The truth cannot be hidden”, HDP-MP und lawyer Züleyha Gülüm; photo: Adem Altan

The deliberations on the law began in early October. There had been numerous amendments to the 40 articles of the “press law” passed by the opposition, which had spoken of a “censorship

law”. The applications were rejected.

Article 29 provides for prison sentences of between one and three years for “spreading false or misleading information about the country's internal and external security”, as well as for news “damaging public health, disturbing public order, fear or panic in the population”. population could spread”.

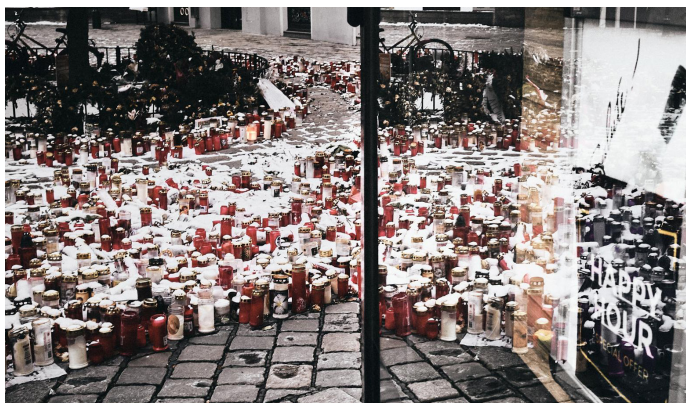
NGOs regularly denounce the erosion of press freedom in Turkey. Turkey currently ranks 149th out of 180 in the Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

## Austria

### New terror trial in Vienna

The trial against six alleged supporters of the assassin, who killed four passers-by and injured 23 people in the Austrian capital on November 2, 2020, has begun in Vienna.

According to the findings, K.F., who was born in Austria with Macedonian-Albanian roots and was shot by the police, committed the attacks alone. However, the six defendants, most of whom, like KF, were already known to be supporters of the terrorist organization IS, are accused of having supported him by procuring weapons and ammunition as well as ideological reinforcement. This is how a Chechen that K.F. knew from prison, handled the purchase of the weapons. He is also said to be together with another accused K.F. helped in his apartment to prepare the weapons. According to the public prosecutor's office in the opening statement, the six men between the ages



Remembering the victims in Vienna city centre; photo: Michael Laubsch

of 22 and 32 had “causally contributed to the execution of the crime” and thus “aimed at attacking public peace”. They are accused of, among other things, participation in terrorist offenses with murder, terrorist association and criminal organization. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment. The lawyers of the accused denied that their clients were at fault, saying they were not specifically involved in the attack. A verdict is not expected before spring 2023.

### Foreign Ministry confronts Turkish authorities with Causa GÜNGÖR and secret arrest warrants

In the case of the secret Turkish arrest warrants against the integration expert Kenan GÜNGÖR, the Foreign Ministry got involved insofar as this cause was not only discussed with the Turkish ambassador in Austria, but also in Turkey. This emerges from the answer to a parliamentary question from Neos party to Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg (ÖVP) on October 21.

The answer to the question about any “steps taken against the Turkish government or embassy” is that the Foreign Ministry “raised such a case both in Vienna and in Ankara in August and September 2022 with the Turkish authorities” and the Turkish Ambassador in Vienna: “The Austrian concern was in particular to find out more detailed information about the status of the proceedings in Turkey.”

The Foreign Ministry - GÜNGÖR, who lives in Vien-



Alexander Schallenberg; photo: EPA

na, is a German citizen - had also informed the German authorities in Turkey and the German Embassy in Vienna about this case. With regard to the Turkish spy app and in general to “foreign political activities that restrict fundamental rights towards communities living in Austria”, Minister Schallenberg emphasizes the “clear line” of his department in the response to the inquiry, according to which “attempts by other states, communities living in Austria to exercise their rights and to restrict obligations will not be accepted”. Apart from that, he, Schallenberg, would “regularly address difficult issues” to the Turkish side and would continue to do so with “all the necessary clarity”.

### Government traveling to the Gulf: Need for energy

It is the fear of the next cold winter that prompted Chancellor Karl Nehammer (ÖVP) to visit Abu Dhabi. The trip to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which Nehammer made together with Energy Minister Leonore Gewessler (Greens) and Finance Minister Magnus Brunner (ÖVP), was intended to reduce Austria’s dependence on Russian natural gas. Whether the government in the long run will succeed is questionable - after all, numerous other states are also courting the favor of the sheikhs. But Austria has one advantage: the country already has close ties with the Gulf state.



Karl Nehammer and Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan; photo: EPA

OMV boss Alfred Stern was also part of the delegation – the UAE holds 24.9 percent of the mineral company, which was founded by the Soviet Union, through its Mubadala holding. After the talks, Austria will receive a shipload of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Abu Dhabi for the 2023/24 heating season – OMV has agreed this with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC). The amount of gas “means the supply of 65,000 households for one year,” said Federal Chancellor Karl Nehammer. The amount of ener-

gy from one terawatt hour corresponds to a little more than one percent of Austria's total demand for natural gas.

## European Union

### Commission wants more important role for border guards

In the fight against unwanted migration across the Balkans, the EU border protection force, Frontex, is to play a greater role, according to the EU Commission. The Brussels authorities recommended last week to negotiate with Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also approved financial aid of 39.2 million euros for border management in the region. This should mainly be used to purchase special equipment such as surveillance systems, drones and biometric devices.

The decision as to whether to start negotiations on an expanded Frontex mandate is now made by the EU states. Frontex officers are already deployed at the EU borders with Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, but not with Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, a new legal framework provides that they can be used both at the EU border and at the borders with third countries and are also given more powers.

Migration via the Western Balkans to the EU had recently increased significantly. EU Home Affairs

Commissioner Ylva Johansson said this year there have been three times as many arrivals and attempts to enter the EU via the Western Balkans route as in previous years. "We really must and can do more in this area," said Johansson. Frontex announced that around 228,240 people tried to enter the EU illegally in the first nine



*Ylva Johansson; Foto: imago*

months of 2022. That was 70 percent more than in the same period last year. It is also the highest reading for the first three quarters of a year since 2016.

War refugees from Ukraine who enter the EU are not included in these statistics, as Frontex emphasized. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen wants to travel to the Balkan region for several days this week.

