

# Codes are being deciphered in Diyarbakır



Diyarbakır is one issue that makes the upcoming local elections unlike ordinary local elections. Everyone will be waiting to see the election results in Diyarbakır on the evening of March 29. The prime minister, who had gone on a tense tour of the province last October, was back in the region last weekend. The biggest difference between these two visits was the silence and peace that prevailed this time around. The prime minister had a noticeably soft and mysterious tone. Similarly, the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) was very temperate, and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terror organization did not hold any violent protests.

What had changed since the previous visit? Was it the progress in the Ergenekon case, an investigation into a clandestine terrorist organization charged with attempting to foment chaos and undermine stability to provoke a coup d'état, government investment, the PKK's loss of public support or the government's attempts to cleanse itself? Or was it the launch of Kurdish-language programming on TRT 6? The answer, based on discussions with politicians, bureaucrats and journalists is that "codes" in Diyarbakır are finally being deciphered.

The fact that people in Diyarbakır have started to decipher the codes has played an important role in changing the stance of the DTP, which sees Diyarbakır as its fortress and wants to win it over by sparking tension. Voters disturbed by this tension have admonished the party, saying: "We must realize the difference between the Turkey of today and Turkey in the early days of the PKK terrorist organization. Back then our basic rights were being denied to us. We could not speak our native language and we were subjected to violence. But today Turkey's governors and bureaucrats are working for us, too. The government-owned television corporation is broadcasting in our language."

This appeal has influenced the DTP's policies. Prime Minister Erdoğan made an impressive ap-



PHOTO: A.A.

peal to the crowd in Diyarbakır, where the turnout was much higher than expected. He said there were many things he wanted to share with them, but could not. President Abdullah Gül had said the same things during a recent meeting with a delegation from Hakkari, where he said there were many things he wanted to share with them, but that it was not the right time to mention them.

The residents of Diyarbakır spent the last week discussing what it is the prime minister wanted to share with them. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has tried to express these heretofore neglected truths to the public.

Alluding to the Ergenekon case, DTP leader Ahmet Türk said, "The washing machines you have

distributed will not clean your hands." But Kurdish voters in Turkey, particularly those in Diyarbakır, say: "It is not today's government that has dirt on its hands. On the contrary, they are trying to rid the state of those who have dirty hands. The AK Party is not our enemy. On the contrary, they are victims like us. Their party was on the brink of being disbanded, as well. Belittling government assistance to the public by accusing the social state is wrong."

The AK Party's mayoral candidate for Diyarbakır, Kutbettin Arzu, said he has been leading in the polls ever since Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to the province. Certainly this assessment is influenced by Arzu's expectations. But independent resources have said the point gap be-

## Erdoğan's message to the Southeast

One Kurdish political pundit highlighted the hidden messages that Prime Minister Erdoğan tried to convey in his speech, saying: "The prime minister usually speaks very openly at rallies, but in Diyarbakır he was careful with his words and continuously looked at the text of his speech. Now the implicit messages being analyzed in the Southeast will determine the fate of every vote in the region." Asked what these implicit messages were, the pundit said the first message was hidden in these words: "My Diyarbakır brother, there are many things that need to be said, but I cannot say them." The second message was the AK Party's emphasis on Diyarbakır's city walls and its doors opening to the world against the DTP's propaganda that Diyarbakır is their fortress.

The third message was "Let us face our past, show the courage to redeem ourselves and unite as one force against Ergenekon." The fourth message was the call to create a modern future in peace and tranquility instead of violence and ideological polarization. The fifth and most important message was "Does the DTP want to become the CHP of the region? The CHP only has 20 percent support in Turkey because it does not listen to its constituents. A status quo-concerned DTP will win at most 20 percent if it continues its single-party psychology and does not heed the requests of the Kurds."

tween the AK Party and the DTP is narrowing and the two parties will be going head-to-head.

There are still four weeks left until the elections.

Both parties are exerting serious efforts to win the race. The DTP is seeking to maintain its current constituents, and the AK Party is acting to win. One AK Party executive summed up the situation by saying: "We never said we absolutely want to win in Diyarbakır. Yes, Diyarbakır has a symbolic meaning and winning would be good, but we never insisted on this to the extent that it created tension. This is our advantage. Unlike our rival candidate, who is competing with the fear of losing, we are competing with the excitement of doing what is necessary to win."

## 'Saying yes to the IMF's double standards will be a betrayal of the nation'

Noting that Turkey has advanced to a level where it does not need to accept impositions from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an AK Party economic advisor says: "We oppose the IMF's double standards. We do not accept that it offers developing countries different advice than it offers developed countries. Today we can object to any policy we don't agree with despite the biggest global crisis of the century. To support the IMF's double standards after the elections would be a betrayal to the public."

Stressing that the conditions set out by the IMF are not consistent with the conditions of the global crisis, the economic advisor says previous IMF goals are no longer appropriate for stimulating the market and minimizing the negative effects of the crisis.

A political economist who is close to Prime Minister Erdoğan said: "Turkey's current account deficit is dropping rapidly. The IMF's most important function is to maintain exchange rate stability and eliminate problems in the balance of payments. But under this mask lies the real objective of the IMF: to ensure a current account deficit in developing countries, or at least to keep a blind eye on it. Why? Because their current account deficit is created by imports. And where do these countries import from? Developed countries! We aren't saying this explicitly, but that is their main objective. TÜSIAD [the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association], the IMF, other groups and outsiders are in union telling the government to make an agreement with the IMF. Some of the comments we make are like insults when translated into diplomatic language. But, despite that, they are insistent on making an agreement."

It is certain that the government will continue negotiating with the IMF after the elections.

## Nearly 500 civil servants probed over torture claims spanning two years

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Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin has stated that 497 civil servants have faced investigation for claims of torturing individuals between 2006 and 2008, once again placing respect for human rights in Turkey under the spotlight. Speaking on Saturday, the justice minister also said that "135 of these have faced lawsuits resulting from claims [of torture]." Şahin's remarks came as a response to a parliamentary inquiry recently submitted by pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) deputy from Diyarbakır Aysel Tuğluk. Şahin also said 318 other investigations are pending. "In the 135 lawsuits filed, 67 civil servants have so far been acquitted of charges," he added.

The Turkish government has made progress in recent years in stamping out torture and abuse of detainees within the scope of its ongoing EU reforms. It also adopted a "zero tolerance for torture" policy, but after changes to a law in June 1997 that gave police broad powers to use lethal force and encouraged arbitrary searches, the use of violence by security forces increased.

Turkey became the focus of harsh criticism last year following the death of Engin Çeber, an activist who was allegedly beaten to death in Istanbul's Metris Prison after he was taken into custody during a demonstration.

Ceber and three of his friends -- Özgür Akkaya, Cihan Gün and Aysu Baykal - were detained in Istanbul in early October for reportedly selling the leftist magazine Yürütüs. They were later arrested and sent to Metris Prison. The four inmates were allegedly sub-

jected to torture and disproportionate use of force by policemen and prison guards. Çeber was taken to a hospital and was pronounced dead after suffering a brain hemorrhage as a result of head trauma.

Human rights violations and torture of individuals made it into the latest annual report put out by Human Rights Watch (HRW), which said in late December that reported cases of torture and police violence have risen in EU-candidate Turkey since 2007. The same report stressed that there was also an increase in the disproportionate use of police force against demonstrators, including a readiness to fire at demonstrators and excessive force during identity checks. "Incidents of police torture or ill-treatment are now often reported as happening outside places of detention, such as the street, during apprehension, in police cars or out of the sight of cameras or witnesses," read the report.

Justice Minister Şahin also said a project that aims to train judges to take torture cases seriously, prosecutors to prosecute such cases and doctors to be on the lookout for signs of torture is expected to be completed before the end of 2009. A total of 1,500 judges and prosecutors and around 4,000 doctors will be trained as part of the project.

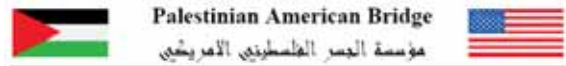
"We've allocated 2.7 million euros for the project. We plan to complete the project by November of this year. Our objective is to raise consciousness among prosecutors, judges and doctors to contribute to our fight against torture," Şahin remarked. Şahin also noted that the EU fiscally supports projects to stamp out ill-treatment of individuals.

## Bahçeli accuses Erdoğan of using state means for campaigning

Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli has accused Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of using state resources to power his ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) local elections campaign. Speaking at his party's first election rally, in the southern province of Mersin, Bahçeli said: "The esteemed prime minister has been saying we [opposition leaders] were late in starting our election campaigns, and were avoiding meeting citizens. He's right, we may be late in starting the contest, but we don't have the state's planes or helicopters at our service like he does."

Bahçeli also said he was very happy about holding his party's first election rally in Mersin. He told the public

that they would not just be electing mayors, municipal council members and village heads in the local elections, but also their future. "I wish that this democracy race bring benefits to our country, our nation and democracy, and I wish success to all the political parties and their distinguished candidates," Bahçeli said. In further remarks, he said: "The country is yours, the decision is yours. When you go to cast your vote, you will be left alone with your free will, clean conscience and high morals. Without heeding any threats or political bribes, saying, 'Enough' to all the corruption and poverty, you will cast your vote. I sincerely believe in this. I have full confidence in the residents of Mersin." *Istanbul Today's Zaman with wires*



The Palestinian American Bridge organization based in Houston, Texas, USA, thanks and extends its deep appreciation to Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the people of Turkey for their brave stand for justice and humanity, and for their support to the Palestinian people during and after the latest Israeli war on Gaza.

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