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Press Statement by Ünal Çeviköz, CHP Deputy Chair on the US Withdrawal from the Treaty on Open Skies

30 May 2020







The US decision to withdraw for six months from the Open Skies Treaty on grounds that Russia does not fully honour the accord is an alarming development for security and stability.

Opened for signature in 1992, the Treaty on Open Skies has since been signed by 35 states including Turkey and has been fully effective since 2002. The treaty is a mechanism that contributes to trust-building and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, improves predictability in international relations and reduces conflict risk by boosting transparency between countries. This mechanism, whereby the parties can have unarmed aerial surveillance flights over each other's territory on agreed routes, also contributes to international disarmament efforts and verifications thereof.

One or more of the signatory states implementing the treaty selectively, in contrast to its spirit, prejudices confidence and stability on a global scale. Diminishing trust and transparency between the countries jeopardizes security.

As CHP, we support the preservation and fulfillment of the requirements of the Treaty on Open Skies under any circumstances and reiterate that this accord benefits the interests of Turkey. With this in mind, we welcome the positions of those countries which have stated that they would continue to implement the treaty

despite the US withdrawal. We hope that Russia ceases its restricted implementation of the accord and that the US revises its decision and reverts to the treaty.



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Coronavirus in Turkey: Opposition steals a march on Erdogan in lockdown

[Hannah Lucinda Smith](#)

[The Times, June 8 2020, 5:00pm](#)

In the First Wave series, Times and Sunday Times foreign correspondents investigate responses around the world to the Covid-19 threat. Today, Hannah Lucinda Smith and Burhan Yuksekkas report on Turkey

When a stranger paid Burcu Ferman's utility bills last month, she was on the brink of destitution. It was not the first time that had been the case. Ms Ferman, 34, a mother of three, was kicked out of her home by her conservative Anatolian family when she divorced her husband a decade ago. She spent two years living in a women's refuge in Istanbul and then found a job as a caretaker in a nursery. She was paid the minimum wage, £350 a month, which was enough to start piecing her life back together.

Then Covid-19 hit. Turkey confirmed its first case on March 11 and its first death three days later. Clusters of infections developed around pilgrims who had returned from Saudi Arabia, but the epicentre of the outbreak was [Istanbul](#), which had 60 per cent of the country's confirmed cases. In light of the country's risks — Turkey's border with Iran, which had a severe outbreak, its major air travel hubs and densely populated cities — a strict lockdown was [imposed almost](#)

[immediately](#). On March 16, Turkish schools were closed and Ms Ferman lost all of her income.

President Erdogan announced a £12 billion aid package to help redundant workers but the money has been slow to arrive. This has left a void not just in the pockets but in the loyalties of voters such as Ms Ferman, once a diehard supporter of Mr Erdogan, which the opposition has been quick to fill. While most Turks agree that the government handled the health aspects of the pandemic well, the economic fallout may yet turn people against the once unshakeable Mr Erdogan.

“We couldn’t get our salaries from the company. None. Even if we got a part of it, we could manage to go on, but we couldn’t get anything. For three months, zero income,” Ms Ferman told The Times. “Of course, the state might not have the money. But if they can’t provide, they shouldn’t talk big. Thousands of people died, and the poor were ignored.”

It was the opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) that threw her a lifeline. As she waited for the state’s promised help to come, Ms Ferman’s sister suggested she add her bills to a scheme started by Istanbul’s CHP-run city council. The council runs a financial scheme that allows companies and individuals to donate money that is used to help the needy. The practice, called askida fatura, has become popular in Turkish bakeries over the past decade, where wealthier shoppers buy themselves bread and pay for another loaf to be given to someone who cannot afford food. The council scheme allows anyone to cover the bills of someone who is struggling.

Within days of launching a website for the scheme in early May, so many people had participated that it became difficult for donors to find bills that still needed paying. Other CHP-run cities have adopted their own schemes, and askida fatura has become a small safety net for tens of thousands of Turks like Ms Ferman. According to recent polling by Istanbul Economic Research, a private company, a third of people have struggled to pay their household bills during the lockdown and 60 per cent say they have had to restrict their spending.

To Mr Erdogan, though, such programmes represent a political affront, and a threat to his 17-year [dominance of Turkish politics](#). Since losing Istanbul, Ankara, and a series of other major cities to the CHP in last year’s local elections, he has been denied one of the crucial means by which his party secures votes — welfare

handouts to the urban poor. While central government is responsible for unemployment and pension payments, city councils offer countless opportunities to court support through targeted welfare and development schemes in impoverished areas.

Mr Erdogan first rose to national prominence as mayor of Istanbul, a position he won in 1994. There, he brought transport links and services to the outlying shanty districts, inhabited by migrants from Anatolia. Many had not even been connected to mains water supplies. To the people of those districts he became a hero, and they have helped to keep him and his AK Party in national power since 2002.

“It is a model mastered by the Islamist movement, with Erdogan as its leader — a combination of targeted partisan welfare through the municipalities and foundations,” said Berk Esen, a political scientist at Bilkent University in Ankara. “The Turkish welfare state is not as generous as the West’s, so this fills in the holes. If a neighbourhood’s votes [for AKP] go down, so do the resources. But even before Covid-19 there was not enough money to go round. The loss of the municipalities in last year’s elections has really hurt his machine.”

Mr Erdogan, 66, spent the lockdown in the ornate Huber mansion on the banks of the Bosphorus, where he repeatedly attacked the CHP, accusing it of acting as a “state within a state” and of plotting a coup against him. Several of the opposition’s Covid-19 projects have been stymied by central government, including a 1,000-bed field hospital in Adana, which was sealed off by the health ministry after it alleged it was not fit for purpose.

Largely blocked from Turkish media, the CHP has had few opportunities to answer back, but they claim that their efforts are paying off. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the CHP’s leader, told The Times: “During the local elections last year, Erdogan told voters, ‘If you vote for CHP and they win, the municipalities run by CHP will cut social programmes and aid, don’t vote for them!’

“The Covid-19 pandemic has shown this to be not true. Our municipalities have responded by providing aid and social programmes to all those in need. This bothers Erdogan because now his base has seen that he has not been telling the truth.”

“Erdogan pursues a politics of polarisation to consolidate his base and sees CHP as the biggest obstacle in his way,” he said.

Whether the CHP can sway the vote of a constituency so loyal to Mr Erdogan is a complex question, however, and one that is growing increasingly salient amid speculation that Mr Erdogan or his parliamentary allies may call early elections; they had been scheduled for 2023.

The poorer voters who make up the core of Mr Erdogan’s base [tend to be more religious](#) and harbour distrust for the traditionally secularist CHP. At the other end of the electoral spectrum, big businesses have reaped huge profits from the AKP’s patronage. By video-link, Mr Erdogan has opened two “mega-hospitals” since the start of the pandemic, both built under a private finance model that has been used to funnel billions of pounds to his allies over the past decade.

Even his opponents concede that these new and high-quality hospitals, in which all beds are fitted as intensive care units, may have helped Turkey to keep its Covid-19 death rates low; so far there have been 170,132 confirmed cases, but only 4,692 deaths.

The corruption, however, is undeniable. Conglomerates have been awarded lucrative state contracts on the condition that they praise Mr Erdogan through their media outlets and donate large sums to the religious foundations which undertake some of the welfare handouts to the AKP’s voter base.

Mr Erdogan’s grip on the media means he has been able to present Turkey’s relatively light escape from the coronavirus as a personal triumph.

“Overall, the government did well on the health side of the crisis, and this is also the perception. Consistently, more than 50 per cent of people think it was handled well,” said Can Selcuki, general manager of Istanbul Economic Research. “At this point the government is Erdogan, so if it is successful, he is successful. But now that the health side is over, everything will be about how well he can cope with the economic fallout. And through the municipalities, the opposition has for the first time connected with an electorate which has never voted for them.”

Coronavirus has presented the CHP with its first opportunity in a generation to prove that it can provide Turks’ basic needs, and do so more effectively than the AKP. Mr Kilicdaroglu insists that his party is ready for early elections, and that Mr

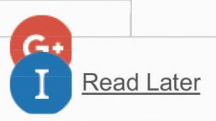
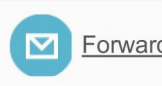
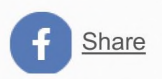
Erdogan's defeat is "inevitable". "The wasteful use of resources, lack of consistent planning, irresponsible borrowing has left us with very serious economic problems. Our citizens have no idea how and where the taxpayer money is spent," he said. "What history shows us is that dictators are not permanent."

Polls show that Mr Erdogan is still by far the most popular political figure in Turkey, but that his support has shrunk back to the crucial midway line. In parliament, the AKP can now only form a government in coalition with the nationalist MHP, and even combined, their support is in danger of dipping below 50 per cent. At these narrow margins, a swing of a few percentage points could spell disaster for Mr Erdogan. In the post-Covid era, that swing may come from voters like Ms Ferman.

"They say 'Tayyip [Erdogan] gave aid to AK Party people'," she said. "Well, I'm an AK Party voter too. It might be that they shared everything with their relatives and their inner circle, forgetting the people in need. I used to say that if there was an election, I would vote for [Erdogan]. But I can't say that right now."

Source: The Times

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/coronavirus-in-turkey-opposition-steals-a-march-on-erdogan-in-lockdown-87zsxcv37>





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ISTANBUL'S SYRIAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

by **Ekrem Imamoglu**, *Mayor of Istanbul*

Since the beginning of Syria's civil war, millions of people have been killed and displaced from their homes. Fleeing from their burnt-down country, the majority of Syrians seeking refuge have settled in Syria's neighboring countries. Among these

countries, Turkey has received the highest number of Syrians. In fact, Istanbul currently hosts the largest Syrian refugee community in the world. However, the ongoing lack of an effective and coherent migration policy by the national government has impeded Syrians' integration process and has had a negative impact on their social well-being. This is why local governments play a critical role in this context. In its new term, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) is dedicated to alleviate, if not eliminate, migration-related problems, with specific attention paid to the well-being of the children and youth within the Syrian community.

The number of Syrians under temporary protection status has reached 3,576,344 in January 2020. This figure represents the highest number of refugees in any country and one of the highest cross-border mobility in the history of humanity. Yet, in contrast with its refugee-welcoming political discourse, the Turkish government has not been able to adapt the domestic legal framework to the enormous population influx. Turkey's approval of the Geneva Convention under the condition of "geographical boundaries" prevents the country from accepting non-European refugees. Instead, the status of Syrians has been determined as under "Temporary Protection" (TP), which is defined according to the Temporary Protection Regulation issued in 2014. Temporary protection status offers different rights than refuge or asylum-seeking status and obliges refugee-seeking individuals to initially settle in Temporary Accommodation Centers (TACs). The government has however enabled access to municipal services and allowed persons under temporary protection to settle in certain provinces.

A smaller portion of the Syrian population settled in the TACs are relatively better off than their counterparts outside since their basic needs are met by the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD) and through TAC resources. Syrians residing outside of the centers are in a constant struggle to supply their basic needs. Every passing year, TACs are being shut down or downsized in capacity due to changing migration policies, provoking the residing Syrians to escape the centers. As a result, Syrians who aspire to have better living conditions, instead of living at the level of subsistence, are opting out of TACs and trying to use their rights endowed by their TP status.

Under the TP status, Syrians can participate in the labor market, benefit from public healthcare and education, and receive social assistance. Yet, the legal entitlement and exercise of their rights are in contradiction, and do not benefit the

ones living outside of the TACs. Syrians who seek jobs in urban areas experience hardship in securing decent living conditions, despite being provided with free accommodation in TACs located outside urban areas. In other words, services and policies are insufficient under this temporality, and are known only partially by the majority of Syrians living outside the camps. The legal regulations, practices, policies, and services addressing the needs of Syrian refugees are inconsistent, resulting in precarious living conditions for Syrians living outside the camps. Syrians living outside the TACs are predominantly deprived of the right to decent housing and live in suboptimal conditions in poor urban areas. Moreover, according to various academic studies, the main difficulties that Syrians face are financial constraints, suboptimal housing, and the inability to secure satisfying jobs. The lack of adequate language knowledge further prevents them from receiving information from the appropriate bureaucratic bodies.

This ambiguous atmosphere also has a profound effect on Syrian children. The dangers highlighted in the Human Rights Watch report from five years ago continue for Syrian children today. Academic researchers shine a light on the problem of healthcare access for Syrian residents. The free, yet limited healthcare service for Syrians is conditional upon the proof of one living in their place of registration. Syrians who are traveling or seeking for a job in provinces other than their place of registration cannot benefit from healthcare except for emergency and basic services. Yet, the lack of inclusive healthcare policies, consequential language, and information barriers deprive Syrians of these services too.

Syrians Under Temporary Protection in Istanbul

98 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey have settled in urban areas while the rest live in temporary accommodation camps. The Turkish government's lack of an effective and coherent policy position concerning refugees living in urban centers reinforces the cycle of poverty within the lives of refugees. In this context, local governments—especially in urban areas—are the governmental units that are affected the most by mismanagement of the migration process. The legal framework and administrative practices, which allow local governments to only serve citizens, are far from creating an environment conducive to taking the necessary actions regarding migrant communities. Unsurprisingly, the city's urban infrastructure, resources, service capacity, and resilience fall short in accommodating the huge population influx.

The mass migration of Syrians forced Turkish local authorities to take a critical role in social protection and cohesion efforts to close the gaps in services of the central government and NGOs. However, municipalities still face the absence of authority, financial sources, and standardized services in relation to their activities. Although the National Strategy Document and National Action Plan is an officially approved document of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), which refers to important roles and responsibilities for municipalities, the effective implementation is still missing.

Istanbul, the biggest metropolis of Turkey with a population of 15,519,267, now hosts 482,483 refugees. This number only indicates the number of Syrians legally registered in the Istanbul Municipality and is well below the real number of Syrians who actually reside in the city. Although the number of Syrians living in Istanbul is higher than the provinces close to the Syrian border, the percentage of Syrians living in Kilis, Hatay, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa is significantly higher when compared to the overall population of these provinces. In other words, the figures correspond to 3.2 percent of the population of Istanbul while it reaches up to 27 percent in mid-sized border cities. The uneven distribution of Syrians, as well as resources across the country, underscore the necessity of local policy-making for each individual city.

In Istanbul, Syrian refugees are settled in each of the 39 districts but are clustered across the city for various reasons, leading to a higher concentration in some of the districts. Syrian refugees mostly prefer Istanbul because of employment opportunities. They seemingly prefer to live and work in the peripheries of the European coast where the rent prices are lower and the number of unregistered jobs is higher. Although the needs in these districts have changed in accordance with the refugee populations living there, society still collectively experiences basic problems with housing, employment, health, and language.

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is now speedily working to support the actors of the solution, principally the district municipalities. As such, IMM is currently establishing its very first migration unit and preparing an action plan for the next five years. Prior to this initiative, IMM also conducted a few research meetings and a workshop with stakeholders in the city in order to create a participatory approach in the planning and implementation process of the action plan. In line with the “Inclusive City for All” strategy, IMM’s plan aims to promote inclusive services for the benefit of all members of society. Thus, the basic municipal services in

education, health, child care, licensing, and security in Istanbul will transform so as to provide equal services for the most marginalized. In order for migrant and refugee communities to have better access to social and economic opportunities, IMM needs to foster more inclusive services and policies.

Syrian Children and Youth in Turkey

Undoubtedly, the biggest victims of the Syrian war are the children who are deprived of decent living conditions, education, and a healthy life — which are all essential rights. Removing the barriers before the education of children, preventing child labor, and fighting to end exploitation and violence against children are the responsibilities of not only the central government but also of local authorities. We should particularly consider child labor, exploitation, and child marriage as the primary focus for future policies.

Children and youth are key target groups to invest in to create cohesion among people living in Istanbul. The target group is growing, as 465 Syrian babies are born in Turkey per day. In addition, the low median age of the Syrian community in Turkey faces a major schooling problem. In Human Rights Watch's report, the barriers to Syrian children's education are listed, describing gaps in practice and underlining the cost of the lack of educational support. According to international law, the government of Turkey should give free and compulsory education to all children in Turkey, and should enable access to secondary education.

Education Reform Initiative's (ERG) report emphasizes the importance of ensuring refugee children have access to quality education, and highlights the importance of an inclusive education system for all students in Turkey. According to the report, as of December 2018, 1,047,536 school-age children in Turkey are under temporary protection and only 580,877 are enrolled in school. In other words, about half of Syrian children cannot receive an education. To provide peaceful integration, it is critical to increase access to quality education for these children. Public policies for Syrians in Turkey should not only concentrate on the integration of Syrians into our society, but should also focus on our citizens' perceptions towards Syrians. This requires a collective view of peace and coexistence, an integrated approach covering different sectors and institutions, and an effective coordination of public, private, and civil institutions, as well as related individuals.

On the other hand, the difficulty to get involved in the formal employment system is not so easy for Syrian youth and adults. The inability to utilize their existing Syrian diplomas and vocational achievements creates a significant gap. Difficulty in receiving working permits, high employment fees for employers, and the previous 10 percent ratio implementation are some of the barriers before registered employment — not to mention the unemployment rate of 13.6 percent—which add another layer to the already existing barriers. As a result, child labor becomes an inevitable reality. It is observed that children have increasingly been included in the labor market in the last period. Child workers face abuse and serious health problems. Not only are they deprived of the right to education, but are burdened with the responsibility of supporting their family budget.

Uncertainties in legal regulations and increased informality in the labor market prevent Syrian children from receiving education. Children are forced to give up their education due to economic difficulties and share their families' struggle for survival. Children have become the breadwinner of the family due to the increasing difficulty of resolving working permit problems for family elders. These children are the sector's invisible victims. They are doomed to work long hours at small industrial enterprises for very low wages. Children consequently become exposed to chemicals and more prone to contracting occupational diseases.

The economic distress of Syrian families is related both to the prevalence of informal employment and the inadequacy of in-cash assistance. On the one side, even though the regulation on work permits for Syrian refugees was issued in 2016, Syrians still mostly engage in informal sectors with harsh working conditions and low wages due to the long-lasting and complicated bureaucratic process. On the other side, an EU-funded unconditional cash transfer program, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), provides social assistance with a monthly allowance of 120 TRY to eligible families through the ESSN card. Even if ESSN is provided the scope of the economic challenges is still harsh. Although the purpose of the assistance is to meet the vital needs of Syrian families in desperate conditions, in this case, it forces Syrian families to encourage their children to find employment.

However, the threat of child labor cannot be explained only through the economic difficulties experienced by families. Working children are disproportionately affected by poor working conditions, long and unrested working hours, discrimination in the workplace, and unfair payments, all while being excluded from the education system. Many Syrian minor girls are forced to marry and thus, lose

their access to educational, social, and economic opportunities. The age and gender-related dimensions of the overlapping problems prove the urgent need for a diversity-sensitive and integrated approach to address Syrians' problems.

As such, various policies should be produced for Syrian child workers to continue their educational life and to end child labor. Starting from the relationship between child labor and poverty, it is important to facilitate Syrian adults' access to the labor market and ensure their wages be proportional to the labor force. As a signatory, Turkey must uphold the standards set by the UN Convention on Rights of the Child. In this regard, public authorities should work to prevent child labor both in legislation and employment, and invest in the physical and mental well-being of the children.

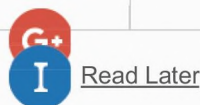
(The Future of) Syrian Children and Youth in Istanbul

In this context, Syrian children and youth emerge as social categories to be prioritized in Istanbul, and whose problems in education and employment need to be addressed by local policy-makers. In this vein, IMM has projected 150 new child care centers that will be accessible for migrant and refugee communities. These inclusive child care centers will enable children to have access to pre-school education while facilitating migrant and refugee women's participation in the workforce. However, IMM's project would not completely eliminate the need for partnerships between civil society, central and local governments on social integration programs, and other initiatives that teach children to become respectful and peaceful members of their communities.

In its new term, IMM aspires to open up more space for young migrants in society as it enhances the inclusiveness of existing services while creating new ones. Vocational training, language education, as well as recreational and sports activities are the foremost municipal services targeting the integration and well-being of migrant youth along with other policies and services covered in IMM's Migration Action Plan. Furthermore, risk eradication for refugee communities, enabling access to basic rights and needs, and raising awareness in diversity is compatible with the local government's jurisdiction. Campaigns and activities to prevent gender-based violence, child marriages, and child labor are achievable through the local governments' means.

Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is interested in achieving these targets through participatory mechanisms, stimulation of public deliberation, and partnerships. Inclusion in services and policies, for IMM, can only be achieved through inclusive methods. For this purpose, the prospective Migration Unit has become the focal point of IMM's strategic planning regarding migration management. Following roundtable meetings with local and national non-governmental organizations and international organizations, the search conference for migration paired the district municipalities in Istanbul with international donor organizations. The Workshop Migration and Cohesion Strategies and Action Plan on 11 December 2019 included many stakeholders from academia, INGOs, representatives of the national government, local NGOs, district municipalities, and local migrant organizations to shape IMM's strategy on migration management. As a result of these search sessions, IMM is on the eve of preparing its first migration unit and action plan in a participatory approach. IMM expects to meet expectations via coordination, capacity building, and social cohesion activities in order to break collective prejudices. Moreover, IMM would like to support local authorities in Istanbul by encouraging standardized activities, trainings, and research to realize the harmonious integration of Syrian youth into society.

<http://turkishpolicy.com/article/1002/istanbuls-syrian-children-and-youth>





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Turkish opposition mayors outshine Erdogan with 'kindness' campaigns

Leaders in Istanbul and Ankara win plaudits for their efforts to relieve Covid-19 hardship

Birol Suzer thought he had been the target of a practical joke when two men came into his grocery shop and said they wanted to pay off some of his customers' debts.

But the offer was serious. They were taking part in campaign launched two months

ago by the mayor of Ankara, the Turkish capital, aimed at easing the pain of the coronavirus crisis for the city's poor. "We called the customers from my shop and explained the situation," said Mr Suzer. "They could not believe it either."

The initiative, dubbed "kindness is contagious", helps explain why mayor Mansur Yavas has high approval ratings just over a year after wresting control of the city from the ruling party of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Along with other mayors from the opposition Republican People's party (CHP), he is seeking to show that he can rival Mr Erdogan's record of service provision and welfare support — a key tactic the ruling party has used to shore up political support.

"Their efforts on the local level are challenging the core message of the ruling party — that the CHP cannot govern," said Seren Selvin Korkmaz, executive director of the Istanbul-based think-tank IstanPol. "If CHP local government is successful, it's a big threat for Erdogan."

Turkey witnessed a political earthquake in the spring of last year when — after 25 years of rule by Mr Erdogan's Justice and Development party (AKP) and its political forebears — the country's most important cities voted for the opposition, punishing the ruling party for an economic downturn.

One year on, the opposition mayors are rivalling the Turkish president in their approval ratings. While Mr Erdogan enjoyed a bounce in the first months of the pandemic, so too did both Mr Yavas and Ekrem Imamoglu, the high-profile opposition mayor of Istanbul, according to surveys by the pollster Metropoll.

Mr Yavas, in particular, has emerged as a surprise star of the new opposition cadre. Asked by pollster Area Research to rate the response of the Ankara municipality to the coronavirus crisis, 65 per cent of respondents — including half of all AKP voters — said it was a success.

Within weeks of the coronavirus outbreak reaching Turkey, the Ankara mayor announced plans to support the cleaners, taxi drivers, hairdressers and others who had suddenly been deprived of an income. Goldman Sachs predicts the pandemic will cause the Turkish economy to contract by 5 per cent in 2020.

Mr Yavas sought online public donations and invited those in need to apply to the

municipality for help. Mr Erdogan declared this campaign and similar initiatives in opposition-held cities illegal, froze the money and started his own national fundraiser.

In response, the municipality started its grocery store campaign. The initiative bypassed the government ban by inviting Ankara residents to visit shops across the city and offer to pay the tabs accrued by hard-up customers. In Mr Suzer's case, the TL2,000 (\$292) donation from the two well-wishers erased three local families' debts.

Mr Yavas also created an online system enabling donors to pay utility bills, buy bus tickets and even transfer cash to those who were struggling, with the municipality acting as an intermediary.

The initiative, which ended last week, raised a total of TL28m — not including the grocery campaign or the TL3.5m of frozen donations.

"It touched upon citizens' feeling of wanting to help," said Mustafa Unsal, director of support services for Ankara municipality. "They trust our mayor. And people such as sociologists say that it was also a reaction to the efforts by the central government to block some of the donations."

The fundraising ban was not the first obstacle for Mr Yavas since taking office in April 2019. He inherited a municipality that was deep in debt. The city council, which is controlled by Mr Erdogan's party, has blocked some of his proposals. Pro-government media has sought to tar him with allegations of corruption.

But such accusations have failed to dent his popularity in the city of 5.5m. Instead, Mr Yavas's non-partisan demeanour has helped him to win over sceptics.

While Istanbul mayor Mr Imamoglu frequently attacks Mr Erdogan's government, Mr Yavas — who declined a request for interview — has opted for a lower profile.

He has also adopted a policy of ultra-transparency to fix the municipality's reputation for corruption. Tenders are broadcast live on social media. The drawing of lots to determine the street-selling locations for vendors of sesame bread rings this year attracted more than 44,000 views on the live-streaming platform

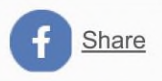
Periscope.

Mr Yavas's early successes have prompted debate within the CHP about whether the 65-year-old could one day challenge the Turkish president in a national election. Most analysts believe that would be difficult, notably because the crucial Kurdish minority would find it hard to vote for a Turkish nationalist.

Mr Erdogan remains Turkey's most popular politician and a shrewd operator who has dominated national politics for almost 18 years. But opposition mayors such as Mr Yavas have created a new headache for the president, analysts say.

Mr Suzer, whose store is in Ankara's working-class neighbourhood of Kecioren, is both a supporter of Mr Erdogan's ruling alliance and delighted by the opposition mayor. His customers, he said, are mostly AKP supporters, but "people in this neighbourhood are generally happy with Mansur Yavas".

<https://www.ft.com/content/28d16e9a-538e-44a9-a810-407568851d46>



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Opposition deputies jailed after losing parliamentary seats

Turkish authorities early on June 5 arrested three opposition deputies after they were stripped of their parliamentary status. The legislators are Enis Berberođlu of the main opposition CHP who went on trial on espionage charges and Leyla Güven and Musa Farisođulları of the pro-Kurdish HDP who were convicted of terrorism charges.

<https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/06/05/opposition-deputies-jailed-after-losing-parliamentary-seats/>

Turkish authorities have arrested three opposition deputies after the parliament stripped them of their parliamentary status on June 4.

The prosecutor's office in southeastern province of Diyarbakır late on June 4 ordered the arrest of Leyla Güven and Musa Farisoğulları from the pro-Kurdish People's Party (HDP) following the decision for the lawmakers.

Shortly after the arrest warrant, Farisoğulları announced on Twitter that he was taken into police custody in Diyarbakır while on his way to the capital Ankara to visit the HDP headquarters.

About an hour after Farisoğulları's post, Güven also announced on Twitter that she was detained by the police at her residence.

The HDP slammed the authorities' move in a Twitter post and released a video that showed Güven while being detained.

"DTK [Democratic Society Congress] Co-chair and our Hakkari MP Leyla Güven, who has been stripped of her parliamentary status with the [Presidential] Palace Coup, has been also detained. This is what a coup is. It is undertaking a police raid against the house of a politician who is the representative of the voters' will. It is vengefulness. You will not be able to intimidate those who say Berxwedan Jiyan," the HDP wrote, referring to the Kurdish phrase of "Resistance is Life. State-run Anadolu Agency said early on June 5 that both Güven and Farisoğulları were referred to the Diyarbakır courthouse and were formally arrested by a court order.

The third deputy to be taken in police custody was Enis Berberoğlu from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP).

Berberoğlu's detention was made public by CHP deputy chair Tuncay Özkan. "Enis Berberoğlu is now under detention in Istanbul. He is being taken to the police station on Vatan Avenue. Why? Why so much cruelty? Why such cruelty to someone who was himself going to the prosecutor's office tomorrow?" Özkan wrote on Twitter.

Berberoğlu had earlier announced that he would hand himself to authorities early on June 5 for his remaining sentence, which is 18 months in jail. Anadolu Agency later reported that Berberoğlu was arrested by a court order and sent to prison.

Berberoğlu was sentenced to five years and 10 months in jail in the case into a story on National Intelligence Agency (MİT) trucks filled with weapons bound for Syria in early 2014. He was accused of providing footage of the trucks to journalist Can Dündar and was arrested.

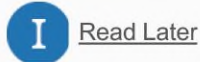
Turkey's Court of Cassation approved the conviction of Berberoğlu in 2018, while postponing the execution of the five-year jail sentence due to his status as a member of parliament.

While the final court rulings were issued way earlier, no steps were taken by the government to strip them of their statuses until June 4.

Güven and Farisoğulları were tried in the main Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) case and were handed six and nine years in prison, respectively.

HDP deputies are often accused of having links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). A number of its deputies were stripped of their statuses in the past and scores of HDP members, including former lawmakers, are currently imprisoned.





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[Soner Cagaptay](#) and [Deniz Yuksel](#)

June 4, 2020

President Erdogan's ever-tightening circle of policy influencers has lagged behind on proposing innovative solutions to the pandemic, giving other politicians an opening to become the main drivers of national change.

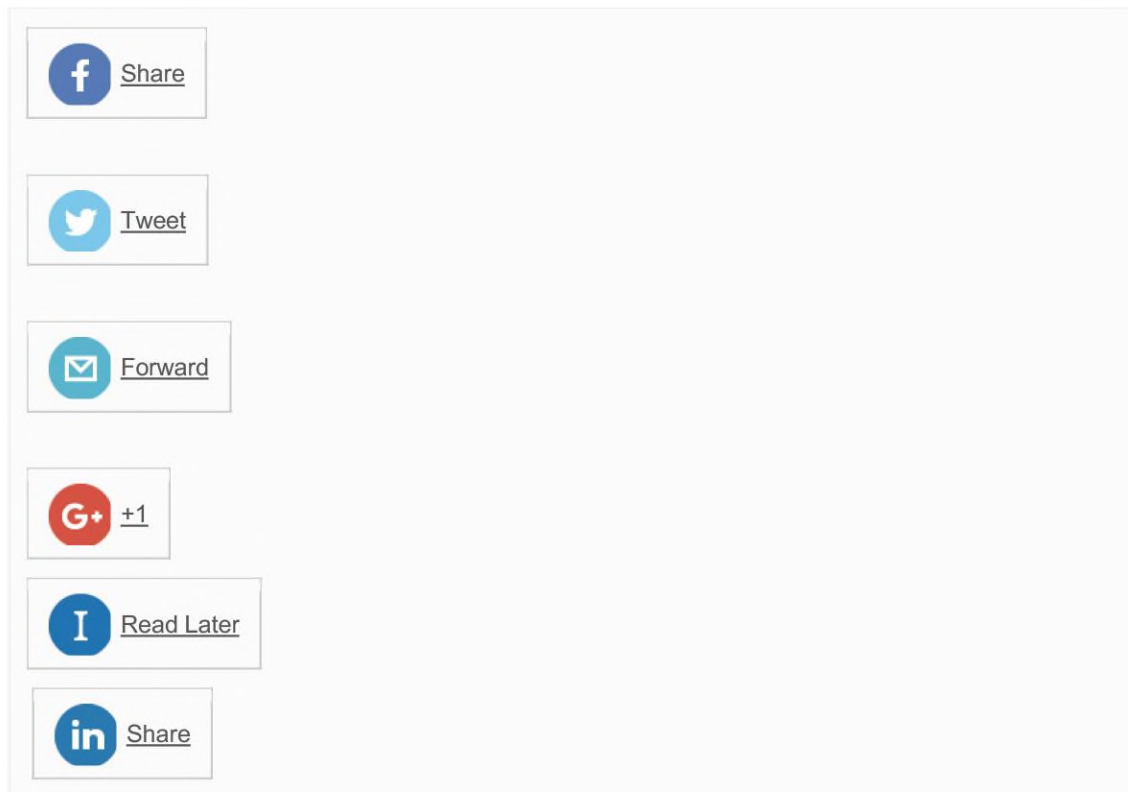
The outbreak has given rising politicians, such as Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and Ankara mayor Mansur Yavas—both members of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP)—the opportunity to take the lead. Istanbul, Ankara, and other municipalities run by the CHP, such as Izmir and Eskisehir, have spearheaded social efforts to battle the pandemic, launching fundraising campaigns, encouraging citizens to wear masks in public, as well as calling for a nationwide curfew.

In each of these cases, Erdogan's palace first refused to adopt the measures, only to co-opt them later on. Specifically regarding the fundraising campaigns launched by Imamoglu and Yavas on March 30, the palace banned these campaigns, only to introduce its own fundraising initiative later that day.

For a long time, Erdogan represented the fresh face of progress in Turkey, always coming up with ideas embraced by others. Not anymore—his palace has lagged behind in reacting to COVID-19, simply following opposition initiatives, from fundraising campaigns to supporting healthcare workers. The outbreak of COVID-19 has shown that Erdogan is no longer the main driver of change in Turkey.

Opposition CHP mayors, especially Imamoglu and Yavas, are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, almost daily proposing effective and popular solutions that are later adopted by the Saray. Although these politicians rarely have access to platforms on mainstream media, through successful outreach on social media, they have come to own the narrative surrounding coronavirus. Imamoglu and Yavas accordingly appear to have emerged as winners of the Turkish response to the pandemic.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkeys-covid-19-response>



A collection of social media sharing buttons arranged vertically. From top to bottom: a Facebook 'Share' button with a blue 'f' icon; a Twitter 'Tweet' button with a blue bird icon; an email 'Forward' button with a blue envelope icon; a Google+ '+1' button with a red 'G+' icon; a 'Read Later' button with a blue 'I' icon; and a LinkedIn 'Share' button with a blue 'in' icon.

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