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<i>Title Titulo Titre:</i>	<i>The Political Persecution of Ekrem İmamoğlu and the Suspension of Democratic Will in Türkiye</i>
<i>Organization Organización Organisation:</i>	CHP Youth
<i>Country País Pays:</i>	Türkiye

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Since 19 March 2025, Türkiye has entered a new and extremely dangerous phase in which the principle of the democratic rule of law has been de facto suspended. Developments since that date have clearly demonstrated that the judiciary has been stripped of its independence and transformed into a direct instrument of the political executive to eliminate political opposition.

At the center of this process stands Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and presidential candidate of the Republican People’s Party (CHP). The measures taken against İmamoğlu do not constitute an ordinary judicial process directed at a politician; rather, they represent a systematic and deliberate political operation aimed at removing from political life a figure who embodies the democratic will of millions of voters.

On 19 March, proceedings were initiated against Ekrem İmamoğlu with a request for detention, based on unsubstantiated allegations such as corruption and espionage and without any concrete or credible evidence. The request was publicly used as a political threat, undermining the presumption of innocence and turning the judiciary into a tool of pre-emptive punishment.

Subsequently, the indictments against Ekrem İmamoğlu functioned less as legal instruments than as mechanisms of pressure. The approximately 4,000-page indictment, inflated through repetitive charges, artificial file divisions, and chained accusations, severely restricted the right to defense and transformed the judicial process itself into a form of punishment.

The penalties sought against Ekrem İmamoğlu have reached a level incompatible with the most basic principles of law. Prison sentences totaling up to 2,352 years, combined with long-term political bans, clearly demonstrate a complete abandonment of the principle of



27 proportionality in criminal law and reveal a process driven by political liquidation rather
28 than justice.

29 Alongside these proceedings, additional measures have been employed to exclude
30 İmamoğlu from political life. The annulment of his university diploma, carried out through
31 administrative means rather than a final judicial decision, constitutes a further attempt to
32 render him ineligible for office and exemplifies the instrumentalization of legal and
33 bureaucratic mechanisms for political ends.

34 This case further illustrates the systematic erosion of the right to defense (jus defensionis).
35 The prosecution of Ekrem İmamoğlu’s legal counsel through shifting and inconsistent
36 accusations shows that even the defense itself has been targeted, as higher judicial
37 authorities disregarded fundamental legal safeguards to legitimize unlawful actions
38 against opposition figures.

39 The process has expanded beyond targeting Ekrem İmamoğlu personally to systematically
40 encompass the institutional functioning of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Elected
41 district mayors, alongside senior municipal officials and bureaucrats, have been detained
42 and arrested together with İmamoğlu, demonstrating that the operation is not limited to an
43 individual but targets the democratic structure of local governance as a whole.

44 Simultaneous investigations, detentions, arrests, and administrative inquiries have
45 disrupted decision-making, undermined institutional memory, and eroded administrative
46 continuity. The resulting climate of uncertainty has produced widespread dysfunction,
47 effectively transforming the judicial process into a broad intervention intended to
48 incapacitate the democratically mandated municipal administration.

49 On the other hand, the Chair of the CHP Youth Branches was subjected to a request for
50 imprisonment and a travel ban based solely on a social media post concerning the
51 prosecutor in the İmamoğlu case, on charges of “insulting a public official due to the
52 performance of his duties” and “publicly targeting individuals involved in counterterrorism
53 efforts.”

54 In parallel, the Istanbul Provincial Headquarters of CHP was subjected to direct
55 intervention. Thousands of police officers forcibly entered the party building, despite the
56 absence of any court-appointed trustee, signaling an unprecedented use of security forces
57 to intimidate and suppress political organization.

58 Alongside the ongoing proceedings, new cases and convictions have been repeatedly
59 added to Ekrem İmamoğlu’s legal file, creating cumulative pressure through successive



60 prosecutions and sustaining public suspicion by perpetuating the impression that he has
61 not been cleared.

62 Crucially, these operations were carried out only days before the opposition’s primary
63 elections and were clearly designed to obstruct Ekrem İmamoğlu’s presidential candidacy,
64 directly interfering with the constitutional right to stand for election. The timing leaves no
65 doubt that judicial and administrative measures were deliberately synchronized to
66 preemptively eliminate a candidate through legal means rather than through democratic
67 competition.

68 Sentences imposed after 17 July have further placed even İmamoğlu’s declared
69 presidential candidacy in uncertainty. In this way, uncertainty itself is weaponized: public
70 doubt is kept alive, the opposition is exhausted by constant unpredictability, and the
71 judicial process functions less as an impartial pursuit of truth than as a mechanism of
72 punitive attrition.

73 In this context, on 21 September 2025, CHP was forced to convene 2 extraordinary
74 congress following an attempt to unlawfully invalidate its previous party congress, based
75 on allegations that the decisions of so-called delegates had been manipulated. As a result,
76 Özgür Özel was re-elected as Chair of the CHP.

77 In parallel with judicial proceedings, Ekrem İmamoğlu’s authority has been systematically
78 curtailed, and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality rendered dysfunctional through
79 constant inspections and administrative interventions. Simultaneously, intensive media
80 smear campaigns have constructed a public perception of guilt, politicizing the judicial
81 process from the outset.

82 Despite these pressures, broad segments of society reject the process as illegitimate.
83 Judicial attacks on Ekrem İmamoğlu have intensified calls for democratic change, as
84 millions view this not as a legal matter but as an assault on their right to vote and stand for
85 office.

86 This persecution indicates that elections are no longer considered sufficient for a transfer
87 of power in Türkiye. The judicial exclusion of candidates, obstruction of constitutional
88 eligibility, disproportionate sentences, and the use of detention as intimidation pose a
89 direct threat to democratic governance.

90 For these reasons, what is taking place is not merely an internal matter of Türkiye; it is a
91 shared responsibility for all who believe in democracy, the rule of law, and political
92 pluralism.



93 In this context, we as International Union of Socialist Youth;

94 1. Demand the immediate cessation of all politically motivated investigations and
95 trials against Ekrem İmamoğlu, the withdrawal of all detention requests, and
96 the full depoliticization of judicial processes.

97 2. Condemn the indictments spanning approximately 4,000 pages and the prison
98 sentence demands reaching a total of up to 2,352 years as clear instruments of
99 political pressure and intimidation that effectively abolish the right to defense.

100 3. Call on all international institutions, democratic movements, governments, and
101 political parties to closely monitor the judicial processes targeting Ekrem
102 İmamoğlu and the use of the judiciary to eliminate opposition in Türkiye, and to
103 adopt a clear, principled, and public stance against these developments.

104 4. Demand an end to the use of the judiciary as a tool for eliminating political
105 opposition and the full and unconditional application of the presumption of
106 innocence.

107 5. Reject all attempts to remove a democratically elected mayor, district mayors,
108 and a presidential candidate from political life through judicial and
109 administrative means.

110 6. Call for the re-establishment of judicial independence in Türkiye and for an end
111 to all forms of pressure and interference by the executive over the judiciary.

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