



## **Fahrenheit 5651: The Scorching Effect of Censorship**

### **EngelliWeb 2020**

**Analysis Report** on blocked websites and blocked and removed news articles,  
social media accounts and social media content from Turkey

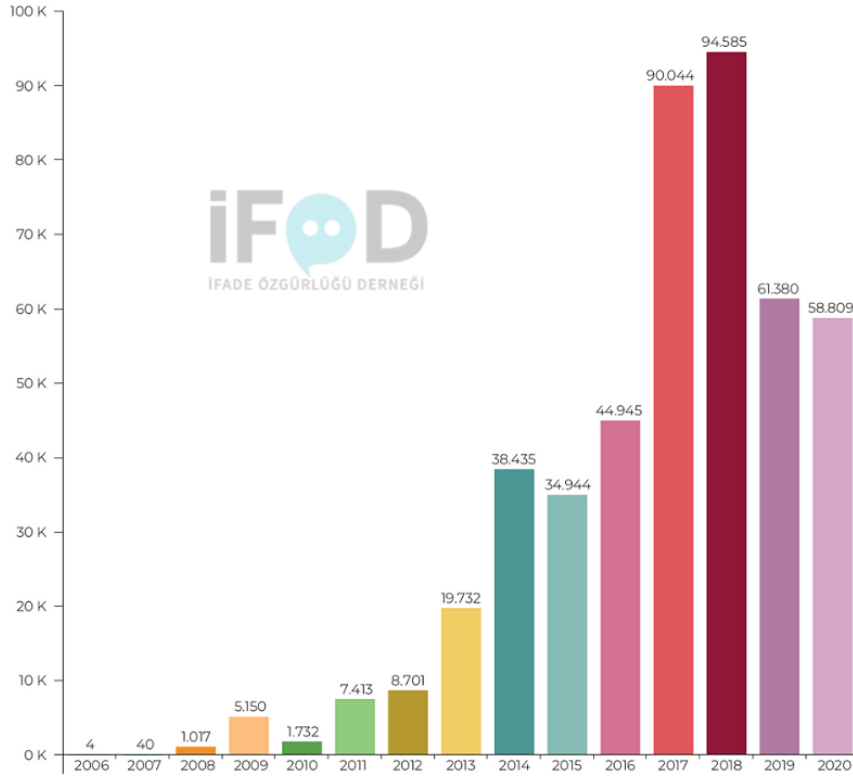
#### **Press Release**

**19 October, 2021**

#### **EngelliWeb 2020 Report of İFÖD has been published in English**

The **2020 EngelliWeb Report** of the Freedom of Expression Association (“İFÖD”) written by **Yaman Akdeniz and Ozan Güven** is a continuation of the EngelliWeb 2018 and 2019 reports and is named ***Fahrenheit 5651: The Scorching Effect of Censorship***, referring to Ray Bradbury’s famous novel *Fahrenheit 451*, which was published in 1951, describing an oppressive, authoritarian, and dystopian society in which books are burned. This report ([https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb\\_2020\\_Eng.pdf](https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb_2020_Eng.pdf)) focuses on the burning and destructive effect of the amendments made to the Law No. 5651 as a result of increasing pressure especially in 2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic and Internet censorship practices, which have been increasing gradually along with these amendments. Our purpose is to ensure that the burning effect and damage of censorship are not completely erased from the collective memory and to document the extent of censorship, as in previous reports.

According to the 2020 Report, **access to 467.011 websites was blocked from Turkey by the end of 2020** with a total of **408.808** separate orders issued by **764** separate institutions including criminal judgements of peace and other authorised public institutions. Furthermore, the report highlights that **150.000** URLs, **7.500** Twitter accounts, **50.000** tweets, **12.000** YouTube videos, **8.000** Facebook content items, and **6.800** Instagram content items were blocked subject to Law No. 5651 and other legal provisions by the end of 2020.



So far as 2020 is concerned, access to a total of **58.809 websites and domain names** was blocked in 2020. The vast majority of the blocking orders, orders regarding **52.185 domain names (89%)**, were issued by the President of the Information Technologies and Communication Board subject to article 8 of Law No. 5651. It is determined that **3.025** domain names were blocked with orders issued by the criminal judgements of peace, public prosecutors' offices, and by the courts, **1.615** domain names were blocked by the Capital Markets Board, **1.428** domain names were blocked by the Ministry of Health and the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency, **234** domain names were blocked by the Directorate of Spor Toto Organization, **128** domain names were blocked by the Directorate General of National Lottery Administration, **96** domain names were blocked by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, **88** domain names were blocked by the Directorate of Tobacco and Alcohol, **4** domain names were blocked by the Association of Access Providers, **3** domain names were blocked by execution offices, **2** domain names were blocked by the Jockey Club of Turkey ("TJK") and **1** domain name was blocked by the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency ("BDDK").

### **Total Statistics of Blocked and Removed News Articles (URL) – 2020**

The personal rights violations related URL-based access blocking measure came into force in February 2014 with the amendment of article 9 of Law No. 5651. As of 31 December 2020, it was determined as part of the EngelliWeb project that a total of **22.554 news articles** (URL-based) were blocked in accordance with article 9 by **5.136 separate orders** issued by **468** separate criminal judgements of peace. The number of URLs blocked was **519** in 2014, **1.260** in 2015, **1.991** in 2016, **2.553** in 2017, **4.886** in 2018, and **5.700** in 2019 and **5.645** in 2020. It was also found that **15.832** of **22.554** blocked URLs were deleted or removed by content providers.

During 2020, it was found that **5.645 news articles** (URL) were blocked subject to a total of **819 separate decisions** issued by **236 separate criminal judgeships of peace** subject to article 9 of the Law No. 5651. **4.620** of those **5.645** articles (81%) were **removed from publication** by content providers (news websites) after they were blocked.

In 2020, the top 4 **news websites with the highest number of blocked news articles** remained the same as in 2019, and daily newspaper **Hürriyet** ranked first in this category with **384 news articles**. **Hürriyet** removed **382 (99%)** of those blocked news articles from its website. **Hürriyet** was followed by the news website **Haberler.com** with **267 blocked news articles**. **Haberler.com** removed **265 (99%)** of the **267** blocked news articles from its website. Daily newspaper **Sabah** ranked **third** with **248 blocked news articles**. **Sabah** removed **231 (93%)** of those blocked news articles from its website. The website of daily newspaper **Milliyet** ranked fourth with **220 blocked news articles**. **Milliyet** removed **216 (98%)** of those blocked news articles from its website. In this category, the fifth rank was occupied by the news website **Sondakika.com** with **163 blocked news articles**. **Sondakika.com** removed **162 (99%)** of those blocked news articles from its website. While the number of blocked news articles on news websites such as **OdaTV**, **T24**, **Cumhuriyet**, **Yeni Akit**, and **Birgün** decreased compared to 2019; the website **Tarımdan Haber**, which was not included on the list in 2019, made the list in 2020, ranking tenth with **136 blocked news articles**. The website removed all the blocked news articles from its website (**100%**).

The content removal rate increased following the amendments made to the Law No. 5651 in July 2020, and the **average content removal rate, which was around 76% in 2019, increased to 81% in 2020**. This rate is expected to increase further in 2021.

#### **Total Statistics of Blocked and Deleted News Articles (URL-based) 2014-2020**

Since the URL-based access blocking measure due to personal rights violations came into force in February 2014 with the amendment of article 9 of the Law No. 5651, it was determined that as of end of 2020, a total of **22.554 news articles** (URL-based) were blocked and **15.832 news articles (URL)** were deleted or removed. These URLs were blocked subject to **5.136 separate orders** issued by **468 separate criminal judgeships of peace**. While 2019 ranked first with a total of **5.700** blocked news articles, 2020 was the year when the highest number of news articles (**4.620** news articles) were deleted or removed. Overall, **70%** of the blocked news articles were removed.

By the end of 2020, **Hürriyet** ranked first in the category of “**news websites with the highest number of blocked news articles (URLs)**” with **2.251 blocked news articles**, and **Hürriyet** was followed by **Sabah** with **1.376 blocked news articles**. While **Cumhuriyet** ranked third with **986 blocked news articles**, **Sözcü** ranked fourth with **918 blocked news articles**, and **T24** ranked fifth with **915 blocked news articles**.

Moreover, by the end of 2020, **Hürriyet** came out on top also in the category of “**removed and deleted news articles**” by removing or deleting **1.936 (86%)** of its **2.251** blocked news articles. **Hürriyet** was followed by **Sabah**, which removed or deleted **934 (68%)** of its **1.376** blocked news articles, and **T24**, which removed or deleted **884 (97%)** of its **915** blocked news articles. **Takvim**, which removed or deleted **577 (79%)** of its **728** blocked news articles, ranked fourth, while **OdaTV**, which removed or deleted **549 (98%)** of its **560** blocked news articles, ranked fifth.

**Haberler.com**, which was in the top five until the end of 2019, ranked sixth by removing **546** (96%) of its **568** blocked news articles in 2020.

The 2020 EngelliWeb Report also includes assessment of Turkey through the transparency reports published by Twitter, Facebook, Google, WordPress, Reddit, TikTok and LinkedIn. The Report also includes statistical information on investigations into social media accounts as well as legal action taken in relation to such accounts during 2020.

In brief, in the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Law No. 5651, the complex **Internet Censorship Mechanism** of the state is alive and kicking and evolving actively and vigorously as never before. In 2020, RTUK started to exercise its authority regarding the Internet. During the COVID-19 outbreak, steps were taken to “**turn the crisis into an opportunity**” and to take better control of social media by ensuring that social media platforms have legal representatives in Turkey. While a detailed evaluation of the steps taken in 2020 will be assessed in detail in our 2021 report, the burning and destructive effect of the reinforced censorship and control mechanism will continue in the coming years.

### **Information About the Press Release**

**Fahrenheit 5651: The Scorching Effect of Censorship** report was prepared by Professor **Yaman Akdeniz** (Faculty of Law, İstanbul Bilgi University) and Expert Researcher **Ozan Güven**.

**Web Address of the Report:** [https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb\\_2020\\_Eng.pdf](https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb_2020_Eng.pdf)

İFÖD Web Address: <https://ifade.org.tr>

İFÖD Twitter Address: @ifadeorgtr

EngelliWeb Twitter Address: @engelliweb

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**İfade Özgürlüğü Derneği (İFÖD – Freedom of Expression Association)** has been set up formally in August 2017 protect and foster the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The Association envisions a society in which everyone enjoys freedom of opinion and expression and the right to access and disseminate information and knowledge.