



# Annual Report 2015



For a  
Free  
Society



## Annual Report

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### Freedom Research Association

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**Liber+**

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# FOREWORD

## **Dear Friend of Liberty,**

It has past 16 months since Freedom Research Association has been established on August 15, 2014. 2015 was first of the long years ahead of us.

FRA was founded by a group of “intellectual entrepreneurs” - academics, journalists and business people - to achieve FRA’s foremost vision of “free and a prosperous” Turkey. FRA is committed to providing ideas which will help create the right policies in Turkey.

Sadly, 2015 witnessed a series of events which proved the need for an intellectual organization such as FRA to exist. Liberties at one scale and the security politics in the other, the balance has shifted mostly in defiance of individual liberties, particularly after Gezi Park protests on June 2013. After June 7th elections last year, the Turkish-Kurdish peace process has been broken down and the sides have wasted no time to go back to the battlefield. Escalating aggression and chaos have quickly led many previously liberal politicians, journalists and scholars to be wrapped with raison d’etat politics.

Deterioration of liberties has been noted by several international indexes. Turkey has been ranked 80th in the Rule of Law indexes, a worrying fall from 59th in 2014. In Economic Freedom of the World Index, Turkey ranked down from 73rd to 82nd place, mostly due to the deterioration of the rule of law. RSF(Reporters Without Borders) ranked Turkey 149th out of 180 countries. It is possible to mention other credited international studies, but this must suffice to present the country’s recent deterioration in different grounds.

Dear Friend of Liberty,

In FRA, we are determined to keep working to defend liberties in Turkey to the utmost of our ability in 2016. We need your support to keep up the flag of liberty in our country. We can't lift the load of liberty alone. As Canadian fiction writer Guy Gavriel Kaves has once written: "A hand fought best when it made a fist". I sincerely hope you to join us in our good fight to defend liberties in Turkey and wish you a great 2016.

Warmest regards & In liberty,

**Bican Şahin**  
Freedom Research Association  
President





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# **RULE OF LAW & TURKEY**

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October 15th 2015, Istanbul



As the literature on democracy suggests a strong breakdown of democracies in the 21st century, a similar trend was taking hold in Turkey in recent years.

The country saw an unprecedented number of legislative changes in the structure of the law mechanism, i.e in installations and/or judicial police legislation. This stream of change has caused a lot of controversies and Turkey was condemned for its ever-worsening justice system and impaired individual liberties. Different indices around the world scored down the country for impartiality of the courts, deterioration of individual liberties and rule of law

Freedom Research Association, in a 6 months research, examined the nature of the democratic setback with a specific focus on the legislative changes took place between 2010 and 2015.

FRA research team was led by Prof. Mustafa Erdogan, then the dean of law faculty in Istanbul Trade University and Ali Rıza Çoban, reporter to the Turkish Constitutional Court.

Many prominent legal experts contributed to the research including academics, lawyers, prosecutors, presidents of bar associations, journalists and representatives from civil society.

We'd like to pay our tributes to one of them, Mr. Tahir Elçi, late president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, who was shot dead later in an unsolved murder during a peaceful protest in Diyar-





bakır. We dedicate our work to his memory, in the hope of eradicating such doubtful cases to never come back.

In an international conference, we announced the findings of the research to the outer public, which attracted significant media attention. The conference was hosted such internationally renowned speakers as Prof. Martin Laughlin from LSE, former chief justice of the Turkish Constitutional Court Mr. Haşim Kılıç, Mustafa Akyol and Prof. Ergun Özbudun from Venice Commission. Joel

Martinez from World Justice Project was also present to explain the Rule of Law Index, Turkey's significant fall in 2014.





# **28 FEB 1997: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF LIBERTY IN TURKEY**

February 28th 2015



Following a meeting of the National Security Council, Turkish military gave an ultimatum to the government on February 28, 1997. The Islamist-led coalition could only survive 4 months. This event has been coined as a “post-modern coup” to the history of Turkish Democracy and was referred so, since then.

FRA held a conference for the 18th anniversary of the incident with Prof. Mustafa Erdoğan. The seminar focused on the threats to individual liberty and democracy in Turkey since February 28, 1997.





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# PROMOTING TOLERANCE **LGBT IN TURKEY**

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September 8th 2015, Ankara

In cooperation with Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation, FRA launched an initiative to strengthen the tolerance and respect towards LGBT individuals and promote cooperation between the LGBT organizations in Sweden and Turkey. In a roundtable conference, representatives from Turkish and Swedish LGBT organizations from both countries came together as well as members of Swedish Parliament. Journalists were also present. A joint report prepared by JHS and FRA presented to the Swedish Parliament and the general Turkish audience. The extent of the cooperation on the subject matter grows and an even wider project is due on 2016.





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# REGULATORY INSTITUTIONS & RULE OF LAW

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November 16th, 24th & 26th 2015, Istanbul





Economic Freedom Center of FRA launched an in-depth research on the institutional quality of the regulatory environment in Turkey. Certain sectors are still strictly regulated and FRA's research centered around 3 biggest "independent" regulatory authorities:

1. Turkish Competition Authority
2. Energy Market Regulatory Authority
3. Communications and Information Technologies Authority





Our project methodology has a 3-phase approach: Before we start our research, we invite all stakeholders to a roundtable discussion. Depending on the subject, these stakeholders include academics, civil society actors, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, journalists and other senior staff. Then we proceed with the research, generally in the field and at times, we conduct one-on-one interviews with parties we couldn't reach for the roundtable. Finally, we organize a public event(conference, press meeting, seminar etc) to announce and share the main findings of the report with the audience.

Within the framework of this project, we held 3 roundtable meetings and invited stakeholders from the 3 regulatory institutions. These included former board members, presidents of the authorities, bureaucrats, businessmen and academics.

The report is on track and we're now organizing a conference to announce the reports in April.





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# POLITICAL ECONOMY SEMINAR

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October 26th 2015, Ankara

The seminar explored a number of pertinent questions, such as “What enables the growth?” and will have specific reference to Turkey’s economy in the AK Party era. Conference was in English and had taken place in one of the most prominent private universities in Turkey. FRA hosted Dan J. Mitchell from CATO Institute and Mustafa Kutlay from TOBB University.

The debate had centered around what policy steps Turkey should take in order to overcome the middle income trap. Conference had attracted 150+ students and scholars.



**Liberal Perspektif  
Rapor**

Sayı 3 • Ekim 2018



**TÜRKİYE'DE BASIN ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜ**

Burak Bilgehan Özpik  
Başak Yavçan

**Liberal Perspektif  
Analiz**

Sayı 1 • Mayıs 2018



**BAŞKANLIK SİSTEMİ VE TÜRKİYE**

Ergun Özbudun

**Liberal Perspektif  
Yorum**

Sayı 2 • Ağustos 2018



**YUNANİSTAN KRİZİ**

TİPİK BİR HASTA EKONOMİ

Aykut Kılıç



# PUBLICATIONS

As a public policy research institute, we regularly produce policy papers on various policy issues. Our general theme is called “Liberal Perspective”. Although our publications vary in terms of content and size, we group them into 3 different categories.

### 1. Liberal Perspective: Commentary

Generally 3 to 5 pgs long, our commentaries provide fresh insights from FRA experts, on daily policy issues.

#### Economic Policy Promises of Political Parties

This commentary by Prof. Erdal Türkkan provided an analysis of the positions of 4 main political parties in the run-up to elections. What were the main policy positions of the political parties in their election bulletins? Türkkan reviewed them from a free-market perspective with a regard to structural problems of the Turkish economy.



#### Greece Debt Crisis: A Typical Ailing Economy

FRA's Aykut Ekinli wrote about the Greece default and the bail-out process. The paper centered around what can Turkey learn about Greek example and how neighbors can foster cooperation and learn from best practices in economic policy.

Ekinli is the director of FRA's Economic Freedom Center and a graduate of F.A Hayek Program for Advanced Study in Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

## 2. Liberal Perspective: Analysis

Our analyses provide in-depth knowledge about a public policy issue. These are generally 20-30 pages long, from a renowned expert on the topic at hand and based on a careful study of the issue.

### Presidential System and Turkey

Prof. Ergun Özbudun penned our first analysis of whether or not a presidential system is suitable for Turkey's political culture. This has been a major contribution to the ongoing presidential system debate. The analysis centered around how a strong checks and balances system can be established within the presidential system in a non-federal, unitary country. It carefully examines the existing presidential system from a comparative perspective and provide a ground for a healthy discussion by taking Turkey's unique political culture into account.

Prof. Özbudun is a long-time member of the Venice Commission.





### 3. Liberal Perspective: Report

Our most comprehensive publication, based on empirical research and theoretical background. Generally 50+ pages, our reports bring solid policy proposals for the problems they address.

Election Systems and their effect on Elections: Policy Proposals from a Perspective of Political Liberties

Election systems play a key role in ensuring electoral justice. Several different electoral systems were put in place since 1950 and they all had a significant impact on the level of representation. Beginning from the 10 % threshold, this paper criticizes the current electoral system in a comparative perspective and promotes an electoral system which ensures maximum representative justice.



#### Rule of Law in Turkey

In this comprehensive report, a team of scholars shed light on the current crisis of the legal system which caused Turkey to drop gravely in several major indices. The report has a specific focus on the legislative changes in the last five years and brings critical policy recommendations to restore the trust in the judicial system. Also available in English.



## Freedom of Press in Turkey

Freedom House reports witnessed a decline in the freedom of press in Turkey. Our report explores the relationship between public corporations and media outlets. According to Nielsen company data, corporations such as Turkish Airlines, ZiraatBank or HalkBank are among the largest advertisers. Our research looks into the advertisement distribution numbers and analyzes whether or not the advertisements of these public institutions are distributed to the TVs and newspapers according to ratings/circulation. It also touches upon different issues, such as arrested journalists and President's personal insult cases. The report has been co-authored by Başak Yavcan and Burak Bilgehan Özpek and is available in English.



## The Problem of Stability in the Party System: Mobility, Flexibility and Party Support Variable - A Provincial Analysis

This paper by Tanju Tosun, Gülgün Tosun and Yusuf Can Gökmen examines report examines 4 general elections between 2002 - 2015 on a provincial basis and sheds light on why parties couldn't institutionalize in recent history.



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# FREEDOMTALKS

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FreedomTalks is the name of FRA's bi-weekly meetings. Every two weeks, FRA invites followers to an in-depth discussion of a public policy topic. An expert is invited to make the introduction and facilitate the discussion. These take place in the meeting hall of FRA office.



**Here's a list of 2015's FreedomTalks:**

20 Feb 2015 - Liberalism and Democracy in Turkey on the run-up to June 2015 Elections

Bican Şahin (President of FRA)

18 Mar 2015 - Peace Process in the Light of Elections - Ayhan Bilgen(People's Democratic Party Deputy Chair)

Mini Series: Party Promises in the Election Process

In our 4-week event series, FRA experts analyzed the election bulletins of the 4 main parties, whether or not their policy proposals serve to the expansion of liberties. We compare the promises of parties in 4 main areas:

08 May 2015 - Economy

15 May 2015 - Foreign Policy

22 May 2015 - Law

29 May 2015 - Politics



12 June 2015 - An Evaluation of the Outcomes of the June 7th Elections - Orhan Kemal Cengiz (FRA Advisory Board Member, Daily Zaman Columnist)

07 Nov 2015 - An Evaluation of the Outcomes of the Nov 1st Elections - Tanju Tosun

27 Nov 2015 - On the Future of Turkish Democracy - Tanel Demirel (FRA Advisory Board Member)

04 Dec 2015 - On the Future of Turkish Democracy Aykut Ekinçi (Director, Economic Freedom Center, FRA)

12 Dec 2015 - On the Future of Liberties in Turkey - Mustafa Erdoğan (FRA Advisory Board Member)





# TRAININGS





In cooperation with Network for a Free Society, FRA conducted a 2-day intensive training with undergrad students. Training provided them a selection of introductory theories of classical liberalism in an interactive format. Students from different universities have been introduced to classical liberal ideas. Some of them later became constant participants of our Freedom-Talks. Training hosted presentations, case-studies and different kind of interactive engagements both from FRA and participants.





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# FRA TEAM ABROAD

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As part of an international network of more than 480 classical liberal think-tanks all around the world, FRA has a global perspective and sense of cooperation with its peer organizations. One of our key targets is to become a competent research institute with considerable human and physical capital. For that reason, FRA team attends numerous events all around the globe, as participants, speakers or contributors, to increase the Institute's capacity. Here's a quick snapshot:

### **Public Policy Research School @Kerala - India, Jun 2015**

Center for Public Policy is one the leading research institutes in India. This training program designed in partnership with Atlas Network. The aim was to provide in-depth know-how and bring best practices of research design, fieldwork, effective reporting and publication. 11 researchers from 9 countries attended the intensive 15-day training including our Executive Director Mendeni Sungur.



### **Asia Liberty Forum @Kathmandu - Nepal, Jan 2015**

Our president Bican Şahin spoke at the biggest gathering of liberal minds in Asia. This year, Asia Liberty Forum took place in Nepal with the participation of more than 250 participants from 30 countries.



**Atlas Leadership Academy Think-tank MBA @Virginia, USA, Nov 2015**

Bican Şahin attended an executive training program designed specifically for think-tank executives all around the world. TTMBA intends to equip think-tank leaders with key skills to build-up and sustain successful think-tanks. Strategic Management, Fundraising, Operation Management, Event Planning are among the modules of the program. Best experts provided in-depth know-how and mentors observed each participant. Şahin graduated from the Academy and had a chance to take part in the Elevator Pitch Contest as an ALA Graduate.



**Liberty Forum @ NY - USA, Nov 2015**

Liberty Forum is known as the biggest gathering of the libertarian minds. Bican Şahin represented FRA. FRA had a stand and showcased it's work(publications) in the Forum.





## **ESLF Conference 2015 “Open Borders” @Berlin - Germany, April 2015**

ESLF Conference is the biggest gathering of libertarian students in Europe. Şiva Çağdaş and Ömer Faruk Şen from FRA team attended the conference and represented FRA in the event.



## **Walter Scheel Colloquium and Prize Ceremony**

**@Bonn - Germany, November 2015**

In memory of late Walter Scheel, Friedrich Naumann Foundation organized a 3-day event to discuss the global challenges, threats and liberal policy proposal. Director of our Economic Freedom Center Aykut Ekinci attended the conference on behalf of FRA and made presentation on the “Liberal Growth Models”



## **Think-tank Start-up Training @Vilnius - Lithuania, May 2015**

In cooperation with Atlas Network, Lithuanian Free Market Institute, a leading think-tank of Lithuania launched a training for start-up think-tank affiliates throughout Europe. Nisa Bahçeli, FRA’s fundraising and communications officer, successfully

completed the training. Key themes were strategic planning, communications and fundraising.



### **Public Choice Training @Georgia, August 2015**

New Economic School of Georgia organized a scholarly conference on Public Choice Theory. FRA's project manager Ömer Faruk Şen attended the conference along with prominent scholars from the region.







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# **LEONARD LIGGIO MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

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# For a Free Society

FRA started to build-up the largest library of liberty in original resources. A generous contribution from Liberty Fund, FRA received the first stock of 330+ original books. These include a vast range of thinkers, from Adam Smith to Milton Friedman almost all giants of liberty.

Library is currently open to the public. We occasionally send invitations to scholars and students.





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# INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

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FRA is an official partner of International Property Rights Index, Economic Freedom of the World Index and FNF's Index.

International Property Rights Index.....

FRA scholars contribute to IPRI's work and promotes IPRI in Turkish media. Scholars

EFW created one of the most prestigious economic freedom ranking mechanism all over the world. Since 1980, EFW ranks countries according to their level of economic freedoms. FRA contributes to EFW's work and provides feedback before the publication of the study each year.

### **Freedom Barometer**

Freedom Barometer is an international index focused on Mid-east, Central Asia, Europe and Caucasus. The index ranks 28 countries based on political and economic freedoms and rule of law. FRA was a working partner in the creation of the index and FRA experts contributed to the ranking process of Turkey.

Within 3 main topics, index explored a variety of indicators from different indexes and scholarly works from all around world; including free and fair elections, press freedom, independence of judiciary, corruption, size of government, protection of HR and property rights, size of government, regulation etc.



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**IN THE NEWS!**

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We have been quite successful in making it to the headlines in our first year. IN 2015, FRA's events and publications have been covered for more than 250 times. Some of the mainstream media outlets like Hürriyet, Radikal, CNN Turk, NTV, Bugun TV, Bugun, Zaman etc. Here's a sample list of coverage:







**Taha Akyol**  
takyol@hurriyet.com.tr

Kategoriler 3 Takip Edilen 34 Takipçi 262952 Fotoğraflar 0 Tüm Yazıları Takip Et +

178 PAYLAŞIM

### Hukuk ve iktidar

17.10.2015 Cumartesi

ESKİ Anayasa Mahkemesi Başkanı Hâşim Kılıç'ın dün Özgürlük Araştırmaları Derneği toplantısında yaptığı konuşma Türkiye'de hukukun ve yargının nasıl vahim bir duruma düştüğünü göstermek bakımından son derecede önemlidir.

Evvela bu dernekten bahsetmeliyim. Hatırlayacaksınız, Başbakan Tayyip Erdoğan, Haziran 2007'de anayasa profesörü Ergun Özbudun'dan bir taslak hazırlamasını istemiş. Özbudun da bir ekip oluşturarak yaklaşık üç ayda hazırladığı taslağı 29 Ağustos'ta takdim etmişti. Taslak parlamenter sisteme, kuvvetler ayrılığı ve hukukun üstünlüğü ilkelerine dayanıyordu. Taslağı hazırlayanlardan Prof. Ergun Özbudun, Prof. Levent Köker ve Doç. Dr. Serap Yazıcı şimdi bu derneğin üyeleri ya da çalışmalarına destek veriyorlar. Liberal düşüncenin önde gelen isimlerinden Prof. Mustafa Erdoğan ve Prof. İhsan Dağı gibi isimler de bu dernekte...

**Yazar Arşivi**  
Arşivden Yazar Seçiniz  
Ay Yıl Ara

**Oral Çetioğlu** 09.10  
"Oral barışın neresinde?"

**Kenan Başaran** 09.10  
"Ey Türk Hocaları! Futbola siz ne veriniz"

**Yalçın Bayer** 09.10  
TRT-TÜRK Atıcılık'e dahi saygılı olmaz

**Yazılarım**

## Türkiye, yargı bağımsızlığında 129 ülke arasından 90. sıraya geriledi



For a  
**Free**  
Society

# NOTES

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