



By: TA | AP Brief

Turkish court rules to remove head of the main opposition party



A Turkish court issued a ruling that effectively removed the head of the country's main opposition party by annulling a 2023 congress that elected him.

The move deals a serious blow to the beleaguered Republican People's Party, or CHP, as it struggles under **waves of legal cases** targeting its members and elected officials.

An appeals court in Turkey's capital Ankara declared the CHP congress that picked **Ozgur Ozel** as chairman to be null, ordering that he should be replaced by his predecessor, Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

Last year, a lower court ruled against claims of irregularities and misconduct surrounding Ozel's election but Thursday's decision overturned the original verdict.

The ruling led to frantic meetings at the CHP's Ankara headquarters, further threatening the opposition's chances of unseating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan after more than two decades in office. Large crowds gathered outside the office block and police erected barriers.

The next presidential election is due in 2028 but Erdogan can call for an early vote.

His main challenger, the CHP mayor of Istanbul **Ekrem Imamoglu**, has been imprisoned since March last year and is currently on trial on corruption charges.

The appeals court's decision suspends Ozel and members of the party's executive board from their duties.

They will be "provisionally" replaced by Kilicdaroglu and those who held office before the November 2023 congress.

Ozel attempted to rally supporters

In comments to broadcaster TV100, Kilicdaroglu called for party members to

remain calm.

"Our party is a very large party and it will solve its own problems internally," he said. The 77-year-old was removed following a 13-year tenure as leader, during which the CHP failed to win any national elections.

Ozel, meanwhile, attempted to rally supporters.

"I am not promising you a path to power through a rose garden," he posted on X following the ruling. "I am promising you the ability to endure suffering but never surrender. I am promising you honor, dignity, courage and struggle!"

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The CHP is expected to challenge Thursday's ruling in the Supreme Court in the coming days.

Justice Minister Akin Gurlek, who oversaw several cases against the CHP in his former role as Istanbul's chief prosecutor, described the court's ruling as one that "reinforces our citizens' trust in democracy."

Many observers have said that the legal cases against the CHP — mostly centered on corruption allegations — are politically motivated and aimed at neutralizing the party ahead of the next election.

The government, however, insists that Turkey's courts are impartial and act independently of political pressure.

Erdogan has ruled Turkey, first as prime minister and then as president, since 2003. His electoral record suffered a serious blow in 2019 when the CHP seized control of several major cities in local elections.

In Istanbul, Imamoglu emerged as a popular and charismatic figure that many felt could successfully topple Erdogan.