

Fragmented opposition: can the New Party shape the future of Turkish politics?

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On 24 July, a new political party, the New Party (*Yeni Parti*, YP), was officially launched in Ankara. It was formed following a split in the Republican People's Party (CHP), previously Turkey's largest opposition force, and is led by the CHP's former chairman, Özgür Özel. The Supreme Court of Appeals registered the party on the day of its launch. With 91 MPs, YP has become the largest opposition group in parliament. It remains unclear how many CHP mayors and local councillors will join the new party. Politicians who have defected to YP are urging CHP members to leave the party and join the new organisation. YP defines itself as a social democratic party and adopts a firmly oppositional stance towards the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Its founders say their goal is to win power in the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for 2028.

The emergence of YP is reshaping Turkey's political landscape. Opinion polls published before the party's official launch suggested that it could attract much of the CHP's electorate, win support from undecided voters and even overtake the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). However, the party faces significant challenges, including the lack of local organisational structures and the absence of state funding. Its electoral prospects are further constrained by the government's repressive approach towards the opposition, including the threat of Özel's arrest.

Commentary

- **The New Party was formed after a faction favouring a more conciliatory approach towards the government took control of the CHP.** On 24 May, a politicised court removed Özgür Özel as CHP chairman and reinstated his predecessor, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (see '[Hostile takeover – court removes leader of Turkey's opposition party](#)'). The ruling effectively neutralised the party politically and marked the end of the confrontational stance it had pursued under Özel's leadership. In the following months, Özel unsuccessfully sought to regain control of the CHP. He ultimately decided, together with his supporters, to establish a separate political party.
- **The emergence of the New Party marks a fundamental realignment of Turkey's political landscape.** With 91 MPs, YP has become the second-largest party in the 600-seat parliament and the largest opposition force. The CHP now holds 44 seats, making it the fifth-largest party in the legislature, while YP expects further defections. More local politicians continue to join the new party. By 29 July, 10 provincial mayors had declared

their support, out of the 30 provinces previously governed by the CHP. YP has also secured the endorsement of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, who is currently in prison. Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş, a popular politician closely associated with Özel and previously considered a potential CHP presidential candidate, has yet to declare his position. Opinion polls suggest strong support for YP, with some surveys placing it at 35%, ahead of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) on 30%. The same polls indicate that support for the CHP has fallen to 5%, leaving it far behind the new party.

- **Özel's party faces major organisational and political challenges.** YP has yet to establish a substantial local presence in terms of staffing and office infrastructure. It will also not receive state funding, which will remain with the CHP despite the transfer of MPs. Instead, the party says it intends to finance its activities through donations from supporters. One way of expanding its access to resources would be to persuade as many CHP-controlled local governments as possible to join the new party. YP's electoral success will depend on whether it can broaden its appeal beyond disaffected CHP supporters and establish itself as a nationwide protest party. To that end, it has been cautious in setting out its political platform, seeking to avoid alienating any of Turkey's major voter groups, including Kurds and nationalists.
- **The New Party is likely to face sustained pressure from the government, which is determined to prevent its electoral success.** The authorities are expected to seek Özel's removal from political life, potentially through his arrest. He is currently the subject of several investigations, including allegations of insulting the president and resisting the police. Parliament is also considering lifting his parliamentary immunity. YP is likely to face broader pressure from the state apparatus as well. Further investigations targeting senior party figures and efforts to restrict the party's activities through politicised administrative decisions appear probable. These could include refusing to register its candidate lists for parliamentary elections on procedural grounds. In the most extreme scenario, the party could face legal proceedings aimed at its dissolution.