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Başak Gürbüz Dilara Hasanova

GÜN + PARTNERS
AVUKATLIK BÜROSU

ELECTORAL ADVERTISING IN TURKEY: HOW WAS THE RECENT TURKISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ADVERTISED?

Authors: Başak Gürbüz & Dilara Hasanova, Gün & Partners

Electoral advertising in Turkey is possible under certain conditions stipulated by law. The principal law which regulates the principles of elections in Turkey is the Law on Basic Provisions on Elections and Voters Registers (“Election Law”).

According to Article 55/B of the Election Law, the political parties and independent candidates can make propagandas by oral, written or visual advertisements oriented to the voting period in printed media or by way of opening websites within the permitted propaganda period which begins from the morning of the 10th day prior to the voting day and ends at 18:00 on the day before the voting day.

Another law having provisions about electoral broadcasting and electoral advertising is the Law on Establishment of Radio and Television Enterprises and their Media Services (“RTUK Law”).

Article 31 of the RTUK Law allows the media service providers to broadcast advertisements of political parties and candidates during an election period as announced by the High Election Board (the “Election Board”) until the time the broadcast prohibition starts. On the other side, Article 30 of the RTUK Law allows for broadcasting during election period, stating that all the procedures and principles in relation to broadcasts on elections which will be made during the election period shall be solely regulated and controlled by the Election Board and makes reference to the relevant Articles of the Election Law.

Coming to its practice in Turkey, the electoral advertising is extensively made during the election periods. It would not be wrong to say that the governing party makes the most extensive advertising but needless to say, the opposing parties also use electoral advertising as an important tool during the election periods.

On August 10, 2014, there was a presidential election in Turkey. It was the first time in Turkey where the Turkish nationals directly voted for their President. The candidates for this election were from the governing party AKP and the opposing parties CHP and HDP. During this election period, it was very obvious that the candidate of AKP who was also the Prime Minister in Turkey was more advertised than the others. Such that; one of his advertisement films broadcasted for the promotion of his presidential election campaign has been banned by the Election Board. The Election Board rendered the ban decision upon the appeal of another opposing party MHP. The

commercial was banned on the grounds that it abused religious feelings by depicting the Azan, a prayer mat and a woman performing Namaz (praying of Muslims).

As can be seen, no matter there are rules for electoral advertising, the dominance and the economic power of the governing parties/candidates also play an important role on the volume of the advertisement. However, the strict control of the Election Board seems to maintain the balance during these election periods.