

Turkey parliament passes anti-alcohol bill

Measure to curb consumption and advertising seen by critics as sign of government's increasing conservative policies.

24 May 2013

Turkey's parliament has backed a controversial **bill restricting the consumption and advertising of alcohol** in the predominantly Muslim country.

The measure, passed on Friday, prohibits alcoholic beverage companies from **sponsoring events** and **restricts the places** where such drinks can be consumed. It also bans the sale of alcoholic drinks between 10pm and 6:00am, but only in shops.

Health Minister Mehmet Muezzinoglu said that the ban would not affect bars and restaurants, and open air bars and cafes would continue to serve alcohol past 10pm.

Supporters of the measure - introduced by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Party, which has its roots in Islam - say the law is **seeking to protect society, particularly children**, from the harmful effects of alcohol.

Critics see it as a sign of increasing conservative policies but Turkish secularists argue the legislation intrudes into private life.

TV series, films or music videos are not allowed to contain images encouraging the consumption of alcohol under the new legislation.

It also brings **stricter penalties on drunken driving**. Drivers with a blood alcohol content of more than 0.05 percent will be slapped with a nearly \$388 fine and their driving licenses will be confiscated for a six-month period. Drunken drivers with a blood alcohol level over 0.1 percent will face up to two years' imprisonment.

The law must be approved by President Abdullah Gul to take effect. He is expected to sign it soon.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, in power for over a decade, is often accused of creeping efforts to make the country more conservative.

Under Erdogan's rule, headscarves - banned in public institutions - have become more visible in public places and alcohol bans more widespread.

The US banned alcohol in the 1920's, it didn't make them Muslims.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/05/2013524101622966667.html>