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**2021 IN REVIEW**

# ANNUAL REPORT

SOLIDARITY WITH OTHERS

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MAY 2022  
BELGIUM

# OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

Ali Dinçer, Secretary General

The year 2021 brought no substantial improvement in any aspect of Turkey's human rights record. The mass detention campaign against government critics, particularly people with suspected links to the Gülen movement and those engaged in pro-Kurdish political activism, continued at full steam. The authorities systematically disregarded Turkey's laws and international human rights standards by keeping behind bars pregnant and post-partum women as well as critically ill inmates some of whom died in prison or very shortly after their belated release.

Courts continued their abusive prosecutions against people who expressed their views on social media and those who exercised their right to peaceful demonstration. The government's notorious campaign of transnational repression culminated in the abduction of a Gülen-linked educator from Kyrgyzstan. A presidential decree announcing Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women represented a tremendous setback in the efforts to stop domestic and other gender-based violence.



At Solidarity with OTHERS, our efforts focused first and foremost on widening the scope of our reporting so that we can cover and properly document in detail every incident of concern. In addition to a series of databases that we had launched back in 2020, we added new ones in 2021. We continued to publish and circulate our weekly newsletter, Turkey Rights Monitor, in which we compiled open source data on the week's major human rights related developments in Turkey. We also published three major reports on relatively less documented aspects of Turkey's human rights record. We maintained our contacts with European institutions and decision makers in order to highlight the importance of human rights in as an agenda item with Ankara.

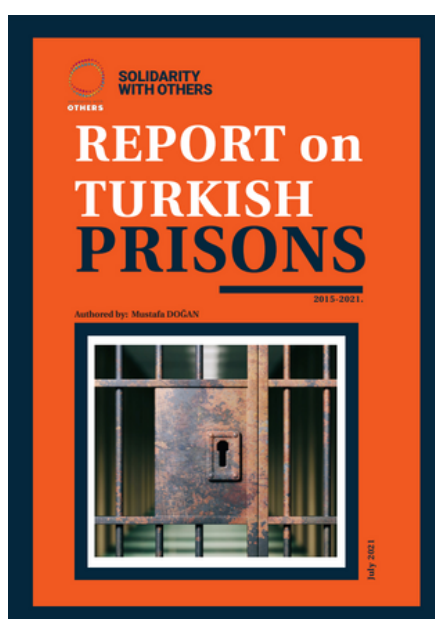


# OUR REPORTS

## Report on Mass Detentions

*Nurullah Albayrak - April 2021*

Published on the occasion of the 7th anniversary of the mass detention campaign targeting real or perceived members of the faith-based Gülen movement in Turkey, this report aimed to shed light on the legal and humanitarian dimensions of the practice which, according to one UN opinion released in October 2020, could amount to a crime against humanity.



## Report on Turkish Prisons

*Mustafa Doğan - July 2021*

Presenting an overview of the situation in Turkey's prisons between 2015 and 2020, the report highlighted the prison system as the scene of some of the most shocking human rights violations.

**Guilty Books****Seyit Ecirli - October 2021**

This report dealt with the widespread censorship and criminalization of books deemed undesirable by the Turkish government after a failed military coup in July 2016.



## EVENTS

**Attendance at Turkey Tribunal**

In September 2021, some of our members attended the sessions of Turkey Tribunal, a people's tribunal initiated by Belgian jurists and academics to adjudicate on major human rights violations in Turkey.

Held in Geneva, the tribunal brought together world-renowned legal experts, academics, journalists with a number of witnesses from Turkey.

The event provided an opportunity to exchange views with two members of the European Parliament who took part as observers.

On the occasion of the tribunal, we published a special issue of our weekly newsletter, Turkey Rights Monitor, in which we presented a brief overview of the reports submitted to the tribunal, witness testimonies and the concluding opinion delivered by the panel of judges.

**Demonstration for Orhan İnandı**

In June 2021, we organized a demonstration at the Luxembourg Square in Brussels, in front of the European Parliament, to ask the whereabouts of Orhan İnandı, a Turkish-Kyrgyz educator who went missing in Bishkek on May 31.



From the very first day, İnandı's disappearance raised suspicions about a possible case of abduction involving Turkey's intelligence operatives. These suspicions were confirmed a few weeks later when Turkey's president announced that İnandı was rendered to Turkey. Immediately arrested and sent to prison upon return, İnandı showed visible signs of torture in the first photos after his disappearance, which were released by Turkey's state-run news agency.

**Demonstration for Ayşe Özdoğan**

On October 30, 2021, we organized a demonstration at the Luxembourg Square in Brussels, in front of the European Parliament, to urge the Turkish authorities to immediately release Ayşe Özdoğan, an end-stage cancer patient who was jailed for alleged links to the Gülen movement.

We also called for the release of other sick inmates such as Kurdish politician Aysel Tuğluk.

We were honored to be joined by Belgian Senator Simone Susskind who echoed our call.

In a rare but welcome development, Özdoğan was released shortly afterwards.

### Attendance at Mirabal March

On November 28, 2021, our members and volunteers joined a national mobilization in Brussels on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which was organized by the Mirabal Belgium platform.

The march presented a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about the widespread male violence as well as state violence targeting women in Turkey. The participants told the stories of prominent victims of violence and highlighted Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, a major setback in the fight against gender-based violence.



## INTERVIEWS

### Rights Talk

In 2021, we launched Rights Talk, a series of YouTube interviews aimed at talking to prominent academics, jurists, journalists, authors, politicians and other prominent figures about major issues of concern in the field of human rights.

#### Johan Heymans

Belgian human rights lawyer at the Ghent-based Van Steenbrugge Advocaten law firm, Johan Heymans told our viewers about an ongoing hate crime case in Belgium that involves people of Turkish descent as well as Turkey Tribunal, a people's tribunal for which he was tasked with submitting a report on abduction of government critics in Turkey.



**Emre Turkut**

A research fellow at Ghent International Law Institute and a rapporteur for Turkey Tribunal, Emre Turkut talked about the concept of impunity, the root causes of the impunity problem in Turkey and the ways to fight impunity.

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**Marie Arena**

Belgian Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, Marie Arena discussed with us the arbitrary terrorism charges directed against political dissidents in Turkey, the problem of transnational repression by the Turkish government and its consequences in Europe, the abusive and systematic practice of strip-searches in Turkey's prisons and human rights record as an agenda item in Europe's relations with Ankara.

**Koen Lemmens**

Director of the Leuven Institute for Human Rights and Critical Studies, Prof. Koen Lemmens told our viewers about his organization and answered our questions on the lack of independence and impartiality that characterizes Turkey's justice system as well as Ankara's refusal to implement some of the judgments delivered by the European Court of Human Rights.

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**Hannah Neumann**

German Member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, Hannah Neumann discussed with us her report on the human rights violations in the Turkish-controlled territories of northern Syria, the role of the European Union in dealing with the problem, the idea of imposing individual sanctions on human rights abusers in the Middle East and the humanitarian situation in the Idlib region in Syria.

**Samuel Cogolati**

Member of the Chamber of Representatives of Belgium, Samuel Cogolati shared with us his views on the legal aspect of extradition requests targeting refugees, the immunity enjoyed by certain authoritarian regimes on the international level and the applicability of a Magnitsky Act to Turkey.

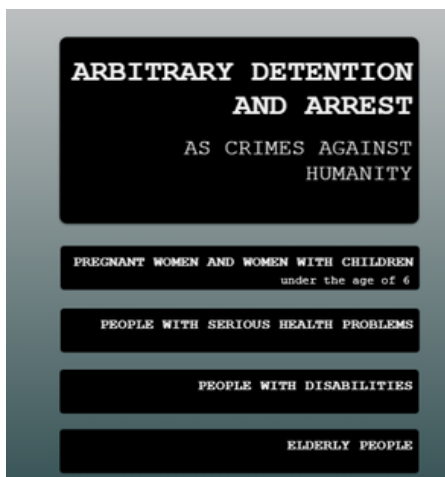
## WEBINAR ON ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

On March 25, 2021, we organized an online discussion on online violence against women and girls, as a parallel event on the occasion of the 65th forum on the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Moderated by Merve Reyhan Kayıkçı from the Catholic University of Leuven, the event included presentations by Viviane Teitelbaum, a member of the Brussels-Capital Region parliament and President of the Observatory of Violence Against Women, Germany-based Turkish journalist Sevinç Özarslan and Samira Rafaela, Dutch member of the European Parliament and a member of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM).



# NEW PROJECTS

As part of our efforts to create a comprehensive and detailed archive on various types of rights violations in Turkey, we launched three new databases in 2021, in addition to the six (mass detentions, criminal judgements of peace, closed institutions, violations of social and economic rights, dismissals and disbarments, unlawful deportations and extraditions) that we had launched back in 2020.



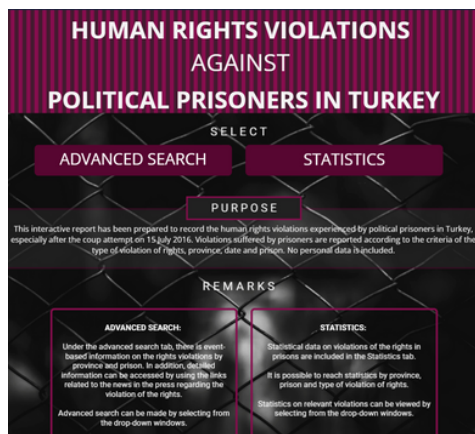
## Arbitrary Detention and Arrest

This database compiles open source information on the detention of pregnant and women small children, people with grave illnesses, people with disabilities and elderly people. Along with the mass detention campaign conducted against members of the Gülen movement and pro-Kurdish political activists, these detentions represent the extent to which deprivation of liberty has become an instrument for Turkish authorities to intimidate and suppress dissenting groups in the society.



## Deaths

This database keeps track of the death toll of the rights violations in Turkey since July 2016. It offers statistics on people that have died in prisons, in police custody, while fleeing the country, due to illnesses which were not treated due to arbitrary travel restrictions as well as those who have committed suicide as a result of the psychological burden of government persecution and social exclusion.



### Rights Violations in Prisons

This database handles the violations of prisoners' rights, with a particular focus on political prisoners. It allows advanced searches on the incidents where inmates' rights were violated and offers statistics on various aspects of these rights violations including the prison facilities and the types of violation.

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