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**2022 IN REVIEW**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

SOLIDARITY WITH OTHERS

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MAY 2023  
BELGIUM

# OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

İlyas Akça, Secretary General

The year 2022 saw no substantial improvement in Turkey's human rights situation; worrying trends observed in 2020 and 2021 continued to exist.


The authorities persisted in their mass detention and incarceration campaign, specifically targeting government critics associated with the Gülen movement and individuals who are involved in Kurdish political networks. This relentless crackdown disregarded Turkey's own laws and international legal standards.

Disturbingly, pregnant and post-partum women, as well as critically ill inmates, remained incarcerated in violation of their rights and were deprived of necessary medical care.

Tragically, some of these individuals lost their lives either behind bars or shortly after their belated release.

Turkish courts continued to abuse their powers by punishing individuals for merely expressing their views on social media and participating in peaceful demonstrations. This ongoing suppression of dissent has, therefore, stifled freedom of expression and violated the right to voice opinions without fear of reprisal.

Another significant setback occurred in women's rights, dealing a tremendous blow to efforts to address domestic violence and other gender-based forms of violence, undermining the progress made in ensuring women's safety and well-being.

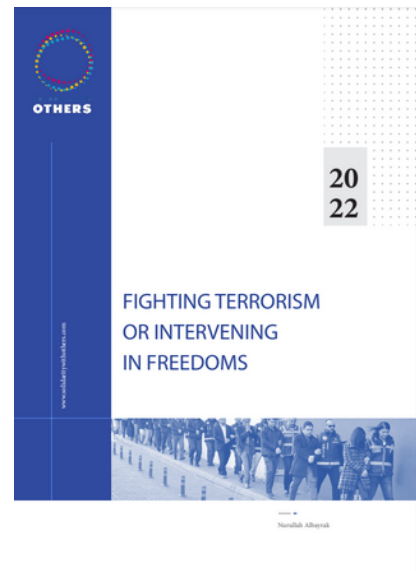


Overall, despite the change in the calendar year, Turkey's human rights landscape in 2022 remained the same, marked by widespread detention campaigns, abusive prosecutions, transnational repression, and regressive actions against gender-based violence prevention. These ongoing violations underscored the urgent need for continued international attention and advocacy to address the deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

# OUR REPORTS

## **Fighting Terrorism or Intervening in Freedoms** **Nurullah Albayrak - February 2022**

The [report](#) discusses how the fight against terrorism in Turkey has resulted in the suspension of human rights and freedoms and how anti-terrorism laws with serious legality and foreseeability issues and unreasonably broad discretion offered to the judiciary in interpreting them leads to serious human rights violations and the persecution of opposition groups. It also shows exactly how criminal investigations are being carried out in a way which goes beyond legitimate national security concerns and how they interfere with fundamental rights and freedoms.



## **Open letter to European Commission officials** **July 2022**

The letters, which were sent to [Ursula von der Leyen](#), president of the European Commission, and [Ylva Johansson](#), European Commissioner for Home Affairs, aimed to draw their attention to the continuing push-back incidents on the Greek-Turkey border and request their support in ending this most heinous practice which has so far claimed so many lives and ruined a lot more.

## **Letter to ICPA** **December 2022**

The [letter](#) addressed an award given to the Turkish Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses by a Brussels-based international organization, highlighting the numerous human rights violations and gross mistreatment of prisoners in Turkish prisons, and criticized the organization for failing to acknowledge and consider the plight of Turkish prisoners before presenting the award.

# EVENTS

## Brussels Human Rights Workshop

In February and March 2022, we organized the first ever Brussels Human Rights Workshop, an awareness event we intend to organize annually. On the occasion of the workshop, we held a series of webinars and met new human rights activists from Europe and around the world, to exchange ideas on current and theoretical issues in the field of human rights, and to meet experts on technical issues and benefit from their knowledge.

The workshop aimed to strengthen the collective understanding of human rights and explore innovative approaches to address existing challenges. By creating a space for interaction and learning, the workshop provided an opportunity for participants to enhance their skills, broaden their perspectives, and forge valuable connections with individuals working in the field of human rights.



## Art Exhibition on Pushbacks

In March 2022 we organized an art exhibition at Brussels Central Train Station with the aim of raising awareness about migrant pushbacks at Europe's borders.

To capture the essence of the event and its impact, a documentary was created. The documentary featured the preparations leading up to the art event, the artists' creative processes, the voices and stories of the victims of pushbacks, and the reactions and interactions of passers-by.

It also included interviews with key participants, organizers, and experts to provide further context and insight into the issue.

Overall, the art event and accompanying documentary served as powerful instruments to raise awareness, initiate conversations, and create a space for solidarity and empathy. By bringing together art, personal narratives, and the public, the initiative aimed to contribute to a more compassionate and informed understanding of migrant pushbacks at Europe's borders.

**Panel discussion on Pushbacks**

In November 2022, we had the honor of participating in a panel discussion at the Chapel for Europe in Brussels.

The discussion was focused on the ongoing issue of illegal pushbacks at Europe's borders and aimed to draw attention to the systematic pushbacks occurring at the Turkish-Greek border. The panelists emphasized the importance of respecting the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees, highlighting the right of every individual to apply for asylum and the need for due process. Additionally, the prevention of violence against refugees was emphasized, and the importance of holding those who violate these fundamental human rights accountable was underscored.

Prior to the panel, OTHERS member Ali Dinçer gave an interview to Radio Chrétienne Francophone as part of the "Stop PushBack" project, providing information on pushbacks occurring during the asylum process. He also talked about the conditions and the persecution that led to becoming a political refugee in Belgium.

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**Demonstration in Strasbourg**

In June 2022, we participated in a demonstration held in front of the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. We were also involved in the organization of the demonstration as part of the Peaceful Actions Platform.



# INTERVIEWS

## Street Talk Episode 2

In the second episode of Street Talk, we conducted street interviews with passers-by in Brussels to discuss the International Women's Day and the human rights situation in Turkey.



Participants expressed their concerns regarding the protection of human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the treatment of marginalized groups in Turkey. Particularly, they shared their views on the situation of women in Turkey, discussing issues such as gender-based violence, access to education and healthcare, and the importance of promoting women's rights within the country.



By capturing the perspectives of local inhabitants in Brussels, the interviews provided a platform for dialogue and understanding, highlighting the global significance of International Women's Day and shedding light on the human rights situation in Turkey. Through these street interviews, viewers gained valuable insights into the thoughts and experiences of people directly impacted by these issues.

## Rights Talk - Manuel Soares

In June 2022, Rights Talk, our interview series on YouTube, hosted Manuel Soares, the President of the Association of Portuguese Judges.

Answering questions asked by lawyer Coşkun Yorulmaz, Soares shared his views on the dynamics between authoritarian leaderships and human rights, the effectiveness of UN



mechanisms and the European Court of Human Rights in countering human rights abuses and providing remedy to victims and the priority given to Turkey's human rights record by Western governments.



### Rights Talk - Tineke Strik

Another guest who appeared on Rights Talk was [Tineke Strik](#), professor of citizenship and migration at Radboud University in the Netherlands and a Dutch Member of the European Parliament.

Interviewed by OTHERS member Ali Dinçer, MEP Strik informed our viewers on her observations at the Turkey-Greece border, her talks with Greek government officials on pushbacks and the responsibility of Frontex as an agency funded by EU taxpayers. She also encouraged our viewers to support a signature campaign launched by the Greens/EFA group at the European Parliament to put pressure on the European Commission to take action against pushbacks.

## NEW DATABASES

In addition to those launched in 2020 and 2021, we unveiled two new online databases in 2022.

### Terror Crime Statistics

This [database](#) provides data on terrorism-related investigations and trials since 2015 based on Justice Ministry figures. While the database inevitably includes those investigated and prosecuted for actual terrorism offenses and on substantiated charges, the overwhelming numbers it features offer an insight into the magnitude of politically motivated investigations and trials that stem from Turkey's overly broad and ambiguous anti-terror legislation.



### Rights Violations in Prisons

This [database](#) compiles open source information on reported rights violations that political prisoners have faced in Turkey's prisons since 2016, shedding light on the profound persecution suffered by political prisoners in addition to their already unfair prosecution and incarceration.

## ONGOING PROJECTS

### Previously launched databases

While we launched two new databases in 2022, we also continued to keep [those](#) that we began publishing in earlier years up to date. These included:

- **[Arbitrary detention](#)**: The database that compiles information on the arbitrary and/or unlawful imprisonment of people such as pregnant women, the elderly or the ill.
- **[Deprivation of life](#)**: The database that brings together those who died as a direct or indirect result of the massive crackdown on the faith-based Gülen movement.
- **[Mass detention](#)**: The database that gathers open source information on the mass detention orders issued by Turkish prosecutors against people with suspected links to the Gülen movement, which, according to a recent UN working group opinion, could amount to crimes against humanity.
- **[Criminal judgeships of peace](#)**: The database that keeps track of the judges presiding over criminal courts that in recent years regularly commit violations of the right to a fair trial in the cases of people prosecuted on politically motivated grounds.
- **[Closed institutions](#)**: The database that compiles information on all the institutions such as media outlets, educational institutions, foundations, that were arbitrarily shut down by emergency decree-laws after the coup attempt of July 2016.
- **[Social and economic rights violations](#)**: The database that focuses on the discrimination suffered by the decree-law victims following the 2016 attempted coup.
- **[Dismissals and disbarments](#)**: The database that gathers all publicly available data on mass dismissal of civil servants as well as disbarment of judges and prosecutors following the coup attempt of July 2016.
- **[Deportations and extraditions](#)**: This database deals with transnational repression, an issue that should be a priority item for anyone interested in Turkey's human rights record since 2016. It covers incidents of abusive extradition requests filed by the Turkish government against alleged members of the Gülen movement living abroad, incidents where the targeted Turkish nationals were extradited despite significant fear of persecution, and incidents where the victims were extrajudicially abducted by Turkey's intelligence.



## Turkey Rights Monitor

Launched in mid-2020, our weekly [newsletter](#) remained in regular publication throughout 2022.

In the weekly newsletter, all notable human rights violations of the week get covered on a thematic basis, with the most eventful themes being arbitrary detention, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of expression and media, judicial independence and rule of law, crackdowns on the political rights of the Kurdish minority, migrant rights and torture and mistreatment.

We continued to publish the newsletter and communicate it to our network in English, French and Dutch. We also published the Turkish-language version for Turkish speakers in our network.

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR

Issue 132 | December 26, 2022-January 1, 2023



## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 38 people over alleged links to the Gülen movement. In October 2020, a UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) [opinion](#) said that widespread or systematic imprisonment of individuals with alleged links to the group may amount to crimes against humanity. Solidarity with OTHERS has compiled a detailed [database](#) to monitor the Gülen-linked mass detentions since a failed coup in July 2016.

**December 27:** [Gülten Sayın](#), the mother of 6-year-old Yusuf Kerim Sayın who is suffering from a type of bone cancer, was reportedly arrested on December 16 to serve a prison sentence on charges of links to the Gülen movement.

**December 28:** An appeals court [upheld](#) the life sentence of Osman Kavala, a civil society leader who is accused of attempting to overthrow the government by financing street protests in 2013. Turkish authorities have ignored a European Court of Human Rights ruling ordering Kavala's release.

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#), a former public sector worker who was sacked from his job by a decree-law during the 2016-2018 state of emergency

was reportedly interrogated under heavy physical torture during that time.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

**December 26:** The gendarmes in İzmir [intervened](#) in several workers' protests that were sparked by the layoff of a mineworker, detaining 22 people.

**December 26:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration staged outside the French consulate to protest an armed attack on a Kurdish association in Paris, briefly detaining 14 people.

**December 29:** The authorities in Van [imposed](#) monetary fines on at least 25 people for attending a women's rights march in November 2022.

**December 29:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit 12 university students who stood trial for protesting a rector that was appointed by the government and for carrying rainbow flags.

**December 30:** The Mardin Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**December 30:** The Siirt Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



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