

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 140 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 20:** The Forensic Medicine Institution [issued](#) a report that Yusuf Özmen, a prisoner with cancer, is fit to stay in prison. Five different hospitals had concluded otherwise.

**December 21:** Aydın Çubukçu, a 62-year-old disabled inmate held in a Van prison, [said](#) in a letter that his requests for release were refused despite a hospital report confirming his health problems. Çubukçu also reported that the prison administration was not providing him with his necessary daily medication and his special diet prescribed by doctors.

**December 23:** Eyüp Çetin, the father and caregiver of a 15-year-old autistic boy suffering from epilepsy and hypotonia was [arrested](#) over his alleged links to the Gülen movement.

## ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

**December 24:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the police violated the right to life of Aynur Kudin, a Kurdish woman who died from a brain hemorrhage after falling down a staircase while trying to avoid inhaling tear gas during Kobani protests in 2014.

## 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 and who was reported missing as of August 6, 2019 in what appears to be one of the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

**December 20:** The police in Ankara [intervened](#) in a demonstration held by former public sector workers summarily dismissed by decree-laws in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt, detaining four people.

**December 20:** A court [ruled](#) to arrest Osman Aksoy and Mirza Kurt, two pro-Kurdish NGO members who were detained on December 19.

**December 23:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) two members of a pro-Kurdish charity association to two years, one month in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**December 23:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) 11 people staging a protest against rights violations in prisons and the continuing detention of sick prisoners.

**December 25:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) two people who were making a public statement to demand the release of a sick prisoner.

**December 25:** The police in Mersin briefly [detained](#) four HDP members who were handing out flyers about the downturn in the economy.

**December 26:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 16 people on terrorism charges during a youth meeting organized by the HDP.

**December 26:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 10 workers on strike who displayed a banner denouncing a district mayor.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**December 21:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) columnist Enver Aysever to nine months in prison on charges of inciting hatred and animosity among the public, for posting a cartoon on Twitter.

**December 21:** The Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency [announced](#) that it will take legal action against people who share critical comments on social media about the government's monetary policy.

**December 21:** The authorities [blocked](#) access to a news report about the acquittal of a rights advocate who stood trial for making public comments about a case on which a media blackout was imposed.

**December 21:** An İstanbul court [acquitted](#) 18 journalists who stood trial due to their resistance during a police raid on the now-shuttered Özgür Gündem newspaper.

**December 22:** The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) Ertürk Yılmaz, a local correspondent for the Etkin news agency (ETHA).

**December 22:** An İstanbul court [imposed](#) a monetary fine on lawyer Mert Yaşar on charges of insulting the president on social media.

**December 22:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to 351 news reports involving the name of a prominent corporate executive.

**December 22:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

**December 23:** An Ankara court [ordered](#) opposition politician Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu to pay President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan TL 80,000 (€ 6,000) in non-pecuniary damages due to his remark calling the president a “pharaoh” and a “thief.”

**December 24:** An Aksaray court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports about a teacher who was seen in videos physically assaulting a secondary school student.

**December 24:** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), Turkey's broadcasting watchdog, [imposed](#) TL 21.5 million (€ 1.6 million) in fines in 2021 on TV channels with critical stances towards the government.

**December 25:** Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into 26 HDP MPs over their remarks urging the Turkish government to recognize the Armenian genocide.

**December 25:** Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into local leftist politician Murat Güzel on terrorism charges, due to a post he shared on social media.

**December 26:** An Ankara court [sentenced](#) university student Tunahan Gözlügöl to eight months in prison on charges of insulting the university rector on social media.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**December 23:** An İstanbul court [rejected](#) an appeal against the imprisonment of Osman Kavala, a civil society leader who has been kept behind bars since 2017 despite a European Court of Human Rights order for his release and a recent Council of Europe decision to start infringement proceedings against Turkey due to Kavala's continued imprisonment.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**December 23:** An İstanbul court [rejected](#) an appeal against the imprisonment of Osman Kavala, a civil society leader who has been kept behind bars since 2017 despite a European Court of Human Rights order for his release and a recent Council of Europe decision to start infringement proceedings against Turkey due to Kavala's continued imprisonment.

**December 24:** The Edirne Chief Public Prosecutor's Office [declined](#) to pursue a case against gendarmes who allegedly threw refugees into a river after they were pushed back by Greece. The decision was made without taking the testimony of all the witnesses and the accused.

**December 24:** The authorities [froze](#) the assets of 770 people, including journalists in exile and rights advocates, on the grounds of “terrorism financing.”

**December 26:** The Interior Ministry [announced](#) that it launched an investigation into hundreds of staff working for the opposition-held Istanbul municipality over alleged terrorism links.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**December 20:** The police in Şırnak [detained](#) local HDP executive Zozan Aksu on terrorism charges. Aksu was arrested by a court on December 23.

**December 20:** A group of ultranationalists [attacked](#) stands at a book fair in Karabük where books authored by jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş were being sold.

**December 21:** A Tunceli court [sentenced](#) former co-mayor Nurhayat Altun to 10 years in prison on terrorism-charges.

**December 21:** A Kars court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Cengiz Anlı to 12 years, 6 months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**December 22:** The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) local HDP executive Emin Orhan.

**December 23:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) two members of a pro-Kurdish charity association to two years, one month in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**December 24:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the police violated the right to life of Aynur Kudin, a Kurdish woman who died from a brain hemorrhage after falling down a staircase while trying to avoid inhaling tear gas during Kobani protests in 2014.

**December 24:** The police in Van [detained](#) five local HDP executives and members.

**December 25:** The police in Mersin briefly [detained](#) four HDP members who were handing out flyers about the downturn in the economy.

**December 26:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 16 people on terrorism charges during a youth meeting organized by the HDP.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**December 21:** Aydın Çubukçu, a 62-year-old disabled inmate held in a Van prison, [said](#) in a letter that his requests for release were refused despite a hospital report confirming his health problems. Çubukçu also reported that the prison administration was not providing him with his necessary daily medication and his special diet prescribed by doctors.

**December 24:** Reports revealed that Ali Aydeniz, a 61-year-old man imprisoned for allegedly aiding and abetting his daughter who was wanted for links to the Gülen movement, was [handcuffed](#) to his hospital bed after heart surgery in November.

**December 25:** A Denizli prison [denied](#) treatment to sick inmate Yusuf Akbaba.

**December 25:** Reports revealed that an Adana prison has since the month of June been [denying](#) treatment to 12 sick inmates who refused to undergo mouth searches.

**December 26:** A lawyers' association [released](#) a report on the situation of female prisoners in Ankara, noting a number of undue restrictions on basic needs as well as significant inequalities compared to male inmates.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**December 22:** Three young Syrian workers were [burned](#) to death in a racist attack in İzmir.

**December 24:** The Edirne Chief Public Prosecutor's Office [declined](#) to pursue a case against gendarmes who allegedly threw refugees into a river after they were pushed back by Greece. The decision was made without taking the testimony of all the witnesses and the accused.

**December 25:** At least 30 migrants [lost](#) their lives while crossing the Aegean Sea in three separate incidents in a week.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**December 20:** Reports revealed that the police in Afyon [mistreated](#) Günnur Şahin, a woman who was detained for alleged links to the Gülen movement while visiting her husband in prison together with her daughter.

**December 26:** Veysel Işık, an inmate held in a Balıkesir prison, [attempted](#) to commit suicide twice after being subjected to torture.

**December 26:** The guards in a Tekirdağ prison physically [assaulted](#) inmate Yasin Eneç who was injured in his skull as a result of the incident. Eneç was hospitalized after being made to wait for three hours and his petitions addressed to the Justice Ministry and the Parliament were confiscated by the prison administration.

**December 26:** The guards in a Diyarbakır prison physically and verbally [assaulted](#) inmates during a ward search, confiscating personal belongings.

## **TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS**

**December 23:** The Swedish Supreme Court [rejected](#) a request from Turkey for the extradition of journalist Levent Kenez, stating that Turkey's allegations against Kenez did not contain a criminal element under Swedish law and that if returned to Turkey, he would face the risk of persecution.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**December 26:** A lawyers' association [released](#) a report on the situation of female prisoners in Ankara, noting a number of undue restrictions on basic needs as well as significant inequalities compared to male inmates.