

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 309 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.

**May 19:** The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) [reported](#) that a prison in Van was arbitrarily denying parole to political prisoners who are eligible. In the interviews conducted by the prison administration to decide whether parole would be granted, inmates were asked personal questions about their political ideologies, including whether they would continue working for the HDP after their release.

## ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

**May 19:** A report by the Baran Tursun Foundation [said](#) that the police killed a total of 404 civilians, including 92 children in the last 13 years.

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#) and [Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit](#), former public sector workers who were sacked from their jobs by decree-laws during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who were reported missing respectively as of August 6, 2019 and December 29, 2020, in what appear to be the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

**May 18:** The Human Rights Association (İHD) [said](#) in a statement that at least 1,388 people have been victims of enforced disappearance in Turkey in the last 40 years, with most of the cases taking place between 1980 and 2001.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**May 17:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) two former public sector workers staging a sit-in to protest their summary dismissal from their jobs in the aftermath of a failed coup in July 2016.

**May 17:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) an environmental protest against the construction of a stone quarry in northeastern Turkey, briefly detaining 13 people.

**May 18:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a commemoration event held by left-wing activists, detaining 15 people.

**May 18:** The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. Through consecutive extensions the ban has been held in effect since November 2016.

**May 19:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) seven people over a left-wing commemoration event.

**May 19:** The police in Batman briefly [detained](#) musician Ethem Tüzer while staging a one-person demonstration to commemorate the musicians who committed suicide due to financial problems during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**May 20:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a socialist demonstration against Israel's airstrikes on Gaza, detaining 15 people.

**May 20:** The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a commemoration event organized by leftist groups, detaining 13 people.

**May 20:** The police in Şanlıurfa [detained](#) Emine Şenyaşar and Ferit Şenyaşar while staging a sit-in protest to seek justice in the case of the killing of a family member by people close to the ruling party.

**May 23:** The police [raided](#) the houses of 10 people for attending Boğaziçi University protests, briefly detaining one of them who was found home.

**May 23:** The Kırklareli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. The ban came amid numerous environmental protests to prevent the construction of a stone quarry in a village.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**May 17:** A report released by opposition MP Gamze Akkuş İlgezdi [found](#) that media regulator RTÜK has imposed a record number of punitive measures against anti-government TV and radio stations over the past two years since a presidential system of governance with lesser checks went in to effect.

**May 18:** The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the rights of two journalists who were jailed for reporting on the leaked emails of former finance minister.

**May 18:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to the Kızıl Bayrak news website.

**May 19:** [Sümeyya Avcı](#), a teacher who was dismissed from public service after the 2016 coup attempt, was detained after she criticized the government in a street interview that attracted widespread attention on social media. Avcı was released the next day.

**May 19:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release journalist Pınar Gayıp from house arrest. Gayıp had been held under house arrest for more than five months on charges related to a left-wing political party.

**May 20:** Mob boss Sedat Peker [confessed](#) to involvement in a 2015 attack on the İstanbul offices of the Hürriyet daily on the orders of a lawmaker from the ruling party AKP.

**May 20:** A Zonguldak court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the revelations of notorious mobster Sedat Peker involving his ties to local mayor Selim Alan.

**May 21:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [made](#) changes to a 2018 press card regulation, in a second attempt to make card cancellations easier.

**May 21:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to the personal website of mob boss Sedat Peker who has been making incriminating revelations about high-ranking Turkish officials, citing national security and public order reasons.

**May 21:** A court [acquitted](#) journalist Melis Alphan of terrorism charges. Alphan stood trial due to a photo she posted on social media during Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır in 2015.

**May 21:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews website which is under a previously imposed ban from access.

**May 22:** The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) Tacettin Çolak, a lawyer and the executive of a left-wing party, on charges of insulting the president, over a banner that was hanged on the building of his party.

**May 22:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) a person over social media messages about an attack on the Diyarbakır military airbase.

**May 22:** The state-run Anadolu news agency [fired](#) reporter Musab Turan after he asked questions at a press conference about recent allegations of Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu's links to the mafia.

**May 22:** The police [raided](#) the office of a news website owned by journalists Hadi Özışık and Süleyman Özışık, after they were targeted by the interior minister.

**May 23:** Van prosecutors [indicted](#) singers Fuat Ege and Rohat Aram, charging them with spreading terrorist propaganda, for singing a Kurdish song during Newroz celebrations in the city.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**May 21:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to keep behind bars businessman and rights activist Osman Kavala, who has been kept in detention for three-and-a-half years.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**May 20:** [Eyyüp Akbulut](#), a Şanlıurfa prosecutor who announced on social media that he had launched an investigation into circulars released by the Interior Ministry regarding coronavirus measures he claims are unlawful was suspended by the Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK).

## KURDISH MINORITY

**May 18:** The police in Mardin [conducted](#) house raids in three districts, detaining 14 people including former and current HDP executives.

**May 18:** The European Court of Human Rights [ordered](#) Turkey to pay damages to the Diyarbakır-based Amedspor football club and its former player Deniz Naki. The court said that Naki's right to freedom of thought and expression and right to a fair trial were violated.

**May 19:** The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) [reported](#) that a prison in Van was arbitrarily denying parole to political prisoners who are eligible. In the interviews conducted by the prison administration to decide whether parole would be granted, inmates were asked personal questions about their political ideologies, including whether they would continue working for the HDP after their release.

**May 21:** Two Kurdish men were [shot](#) and seriously injured by Turkish security forces while trying to cross the border into Turkey from Iraq.

**May 21:** A court [acquitted](#) journalist Melis Alphan of terrorism charges. Alphan stood trial due to a photo she posted on social media during Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır in 2015.

**May 22:** The police in Şırnak briefly [detained](#) former HDP district executive Bengin Karaviş.

**May 23:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) six people, including a former HDP district executive.

**May 23:** The police in three provinces [detained](#) 20 people, including HDP members and executives, as part of an Adana-based investigation.

**May 23:** Van prosecutors [indicted](#) singers Fuat Ege and Rohat Aram, charging them with spreading terrorist

propaganda, for singing a Kurdish song during Newroz celebrations in the city.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**May 19:** The wife of teacher Selahattin Gülen [released](#) a video, claiming that her husband was abducted on May 3 by operatives of the Turkish government in Kenya, for being a relative of US-based preacher Fethullah Gülen.

**May 21:** A Kosovar court [accepted](#) the indictment of three officials involved in the illegal deportation of six Turkish teachers to Turkey in March 2018. The teachers were sought by the Turkish authorities over their alleged links to the Gülen movement.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**May 17:** A group of unknown individuals [attacked](#) a Syriac cave church in the southeastern province of Şırnak, destroying a number of Christian items inside.

**May 17:** Turkey was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> among 49 countries as regards the human rights of LGBT people, according to the [2021 Rainbow Europe Map](#) published by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA).

**May 21:** A mufti in Düzce in his Friday sermon [targeted](#) the Jewish community and people with a migratory background from Thessaloniki.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**May 17:** [Şeref Vatanserver](#), a teacher who was jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of Covid-19 after contracting the disease in a Kocaeli prison.

**May 19:** Ten NGOs [urged](#) the Justice Ministry to provide an update on the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey's prisons, pointing out that no data has been released on the outbreak behind bars for months.

**May 22:** A prison administration in Diyarbakır [denied](#) treatment to inmate Emine Erol, despite her severe illness due to Covid-19 which she contracted behind bars.

**May 22:** New reports [pointed](#) to a criminal neglect on the part of the authorities in the case of academic Halil Şimşek, who died in a Çanakkale prison after contracting Covid-19 behind bars.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**May 18:** The Turkey Human Rights Accountability Project (TUHRAP), a UK-based rights group, [lodged](#) applications concerning six Turkish officials involved in alleged incidents of torture as subjects for sanctions by the UK government under the newly adopted Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations, commonly known as the UK's Magnitsky Act.

**May 19:** [Kurbani Özcan](#), a Kurdish prisoner who requested his transfer out of prisons in Trabzon and Giresun due to torture, was transferred to a Diyarbakır prison where his ill-treatment continued and officers broke his fingers, according to the statements of his mother.

**May 20:** Reports said that a PKK militant was [tortured](#) by soldiers in Diyarbakır after being captured wounded during an operation.