

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

**November 3:** Alparslan Kuytul, the leader of a religious civil society group critical of the government and known for its outspoken denunciation of human rights violations, was [acquitted](#) of charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda. Kuytul had spent 22 months in pre-trial detention until he was released pending trial in December 2019.

## ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

**November 3:** Şerali Dereli, a farmer in Hakkari, was reportedly [shot dead](#) on Oct. 29 by soldiers. Family members claimed that Dereli was unarmed and taking his horses to a barn located at some 50 meters from their house. Local prosecutors subsequently summoned five soldiers for questioning, imposing travel bans to three.

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

**November 4:** In response to an inquiry by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Justice Ministry [denied](#) the allegations that former public sector employee Yusuf Bilge Tunç was abducted by government agents. Tunç was reported missing in Ankara in August 2019 and his family members allege that the authorities show no real effort to investigate his disappearance. Tunç's case bears a resemblance to nearly 30 cases of similar allegations occurred over the past for years, a pattern comprehensively reported by [Solidarity with OTHERS](#), [Human Rights Watch](#) and the Turkey-based [Rights Initiative Association](#), among others.

**November 5:** A special [report](#) released by the Human Rights Association (İHD) said that during the first 10 months of 2020 government agents used abduction and

torture against a total of 160 people to coerce them into becoming informants for the authorities.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**November 2:** The Governor's Office in Adana [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**November 2:** The Governor's Office in Hakkari [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**November 3:** The police in İstanbul [attacked](#) a demonstration held by workers protesting their layoff without severance, detaining seven people.

**November 4:** The police and gendarmerie forces in Manisa [blocked](#) a protest march organized by mine workers to demand fair wages and compensations, detaining two people. One worker was injured.

**November 4:** The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a demonstration held in front of the parliament to protest a bill on labor rights, detaining eight members of a participating leftist political party as well as a [union representative](#).

**November 5:** The Governor's Office in Siirt [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**November 7:** Authorities [prevented](#) the Turkish Psychologists' Association from setting up a voluntary support team for victims of last week's earthquake in İzmir.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**November 2:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a news story about a previous access block decision on news stories about the alleged suspicious transactions of

a Turkish bank [implicating](#) high-level Turkish government officials.

**November 3:** An İstanbul appeals court [overturned](#) the acquittal of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Turkey representative Erol Önderoğlu, writer Ahmet Nesin and prominent human rights defender Şebnem Korur Fincancı, who stood trial for spreading terrorist propaganda over their solidarity with the Özgür Gündem newspaper, which was shut down by authorities in 2016. Önderoğlu, Nesin and Fincancı are now to be retried. Fincancı was recently targeted by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who accused her of being a “terrorist.”

**November 3:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Hakkı Boltan, who was detained on Sept. 30., for alleged membership in a terrorist organization, seeking up to 15 years in prison.

**November 3:** Alparslan Kuytul, the leader of a religious civil society group critical of the government and known for its outspoken denunciation of human rights violations, was [acquitted](#) of charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda. Kuytul had spent 22 months in pre-trial detention until he was released pending trial in December 2019.

**November 4:** The government [imposed](#) fines of TL 10 million (€ 1.03 million) each on social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope and Tiktok for failing to comply with a new social media law seeking to tighten control over social media by requiring companies to appoint a representative in Turkey and to keep their servers with Turkish user data in Turkey. According to the law, the social media companies will face [additional sanctions](#) if they continue their defiance, such as new fines, advertising bans and bandwidth reductions by 90 percent, which would render the platforms practically inaccessible. Meanwhile, Netflix and Amazon Prime were [granted](#) licenses after they fulfilled the requirements.

**November 4:** A Balıkesir court [sentenced](#) documentary film-maker Kutbettin Cebe to 2 years, 4 months in prison over a documentary he made on the Kurdish militant groups’ fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in northern Syria. Cebe stood trial for allegedly “disseminating terrorist propaganda.”

**November 4:** The police in Adana [detained](#) journalist İbrahim Karakaş for alleged membership in a terrorist

organization. Karakaş was arrested after appearing before a court on Nov. 6.

**November 4:** Media watchdog RTÜK [imposed](#) a fine against TLC TV for airing a show depicting the life of a homosexual couple.

**November 4:** Edirne prosecutors [launched](#) a probe into Çetin Doğan, a military conscript who was previously assaulted by two other soldiers for advocating for Kurdish-language education, for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda.

**November 4:** Writer and translator Fahriye Adsay, who was [detained](#) in Diyarbakır on Oct. 31, was released on probation by a Balıkesir court. Adsay is reportedly under investigation for helping inmates in Balıkesir.

**November 5:** A Mersin court that handed down a prison sentence of 19 years, six months to jailed investigative journalist Mehmet Baransu on three separate charges [said](#) in its reasoned decision that he had published classified information with “terror motives” and not for purposes of journalism.

**November 5:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Onur Emre Yağan to 1 year, 2 months and 17 days in prison for allegedly insulting the president, over four tweets posted by the İleri Haber news website where he was the editor-in-chief after tweets were posted.

**November 5:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 12 people over their social media posts about last week’s earthquake in İzmir.

**November 6:** An Ankara appeals court [ruled](#) to uphold the aggravated life sentences of four defendants, including journalist Hidayet Karaca, former lawmaker İlhan İşbilen and Alaeddin Kaya, the former owner of the now-shuttered Zaman newspaper. The sentences were handed down for allegedly “attempting to overturn the constitutional order.”

**November 6:** Media authority RTÜK [imposed](#) fines against Halk TV and Tele 1 broadcasters over comments critical of the government and the army, Kanal D for “normalizing extramarital relationships,” Show TV for “damaging the reputation of the teaching profession,” Beyaz TV over foul language on a sports show and TV8 over a harsh attitude against a contestant on a game show.

**November 6:** A [report](#) by Press in Arrest said that in October at least 74 journalists stood trial.

## FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

**November 6:** The Interior Ministry [announced](#) the lifting of restrictions on 42,893 passports which were imposed during a two-year-long state of emergency declared after a failed coup in 2016.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**November 2:** The Human Rights Association (İHD) [announced](#) that one of its local members in Balıkesir was detained by the police on Oct. 31 over his visits to inmates in Balıkesir prisons.

**November 2:** Rojda Barış, a women's rights activist who was detained and arrested in June 2020 as part of an investigation into the Kurdish political movement, was [sentenced](#) to 6 years, 3 months in prison for alleged membership in a terrorist organization.

**November 3:** An İstanbul appeals court [overturned](#) the acquittal of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Turkey representative Erol Önderoğlu, writer Ahmet Nesin and prominent human rights defender Şebnem Korur Fincancı, who stood trial for spreading terrorist propaganda over their solidarity with the Özgür Gündem newspaper, which was shut down by authorities in 2016. Önderoğlu, Nesin and Fincancı are now to be retried. Fincancı was recently targeted by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who accused her of being a "terrorist."

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## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**November 4:** The Governor's Office in Hatay [refused](#) to grant permission for the prosecution of seven police officers implicated in the case concerning the death of Ahmet Atakan, a demonstrator who lost his life during the nationwide Gezi Park protests of 2013.

**November 5:** A Gaziantep appeals court [ruled](#) in favor of a lower court decision to hand down a lenient sentence to a police officer who caused the death of two siblings aged six and seven after hitting their house with an armored vehicle in Şırnak. The officer involved was sentenced to 2 years, 1 month in prison for recklessly causing the death of one or more people, which was commuted to a monetary fine, while his chief was acquitted.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**November 2:** A Mardin court [handed down](#) prison sentences of more than six years to local HDP politicians Ali Sincar, Leyla Bozkurt, Şehmuz Sun, Alaatin Semir Zuğurlu and Sedat Ay for alleged membership in a terrorist organization.

**November 2:** Rojda Barış, a women's rights activist who was detained and arrested in June 2020 as part of an investigation into the Kurdish political movement, was [sentenced](#) to 6 years, 3 months in prison for alleged membership in a terrorist organization.

**November 2:** A new report by journalist and MP Ahmet Şık [revealed](#) that Kurdish villagers Osman Şiban and Servet Turgut were tortured by a mob of soldiers and not, as initially reported, thrown from a military helicopter. Turgut had died on Sept. 30 as a result of his injuries.

**November 3:** Şerali Dereli, a farmer in Hakkari, was reportedly [shot dead](#) on Oct. 29 by soldiers. Family members claimed that Dereli was unarmed and taking his horses to a barn located at some 50 meters from their house. Local prosecutors subsequently summoned five soldiers for questioning, imposing travel bans to three.

**November 3:** A Kurdish MP [was](#) among the 65 people who on a boat arrived in the Greek town of Katakolo to flee government persecution, although the reports did not reveal whether it was a former or a current MP.

**November 3:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Hakkı Boltan, who was detained on Sept. 30, as part of an investigation into a Kurdish political group, for alleged membership in a terrorist organization, seeking up to 15 years in prison.

**November 3:** İbrahim Binici, Mesut Bağcı and Ayşe Yağcı, HDP politicians in Urfa who were detained on Oct. 27 as part of an investigation into the 2014 protests

in predominantly Kurdish cities, were [arrested](#) after appearing before a court.

**November 3:** Academic Adem Yıldırım was [fired](#) from the Adıyaman University over a translation he made for the Kampplatz magazine for an interview with a Kurdish politician from northeastern Syria. The university administration cited Yıldırım's alleged ties to "terrorism" as grounds for his removal.

**November 4:** The police in Osmaniye [detained](#) six local members of the HDP, including provincial co-chairs Kadriye Töre and Ali Coşkun.

**November 4:** Edirne prosecutors [launched](#) a probe into Çetin Doğan, a military conscript who was previously assaulted by two other soldiers for advocating for Kurdish-language education, for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda.

**November 5:** A Gaziantep appeals court [ruled](#) in favor of a lower court decision to hand down a lenient sentence to a police officer who caused the death of two siblings aged six and seven after hitting their house with an armored vehicle in Şırnak. The officer involved was sentenced to 2 years, 1 month in prison for recklessly causing the death of one or more people, which was commuted to a monetary fine, while his chief was acquitted.

**November 6:** The police [detained](#) 26 teachers in Diyarbakır over their alleged links to the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), an umbrella group of the Kurdish political movement.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**November 4:** Media watchdog RTÜK [imposed](#) a fine against TLC TV for airing a show depicting the life of a homosexual couple.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**November 2:** [Yusupjan Emet](#), a Uighur man in İstanbul was left in critical condition after he was shot. The victim had previously given an [interview](#), alleging that he was coerced to spy for China by Chinese officials who threatened to harm his family.

**November 3:** A Greek news website [reported](#) the arrival of 65 asylum seekers fleeing Turkey, including former police officers, militants of the Kurdistan

Workers' Party (PKK), academics, a member of the Turkish parliament and a journalist.

**November 5:** A [report](#) said that jihadists groups have been luring unemployed migrant women in Turkey to Syria with job promises.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**November 2:** A new report by journalist and MP Ahmet Şık [revealed](#) that Kurdish villagers Osman Şiban and Servet Turgut were tortured by a mob of soldiers and not, as initially reported, thrown from a military helicopter. Turgut had died on Sept. 30 as a result of his injuries.

**November 5:** A special [report](#) released by the Human Rights Association (İHD) said that during the first 10 months of 2020 government agents used abduction and torture against a total of 160 people to coerce them into becoming informants for the authorities.

**November 6:** A [report](#) by opposition MP and human rights defender Sezgin Tanrıkulu said that 339 incidents of torture took place in October, 200 of which in prisons.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**November 3:** A report released by the Stop the Murder of Women Platform [showed](#) that 21 women in Turkey were victims of fatal domestic violence in October. Bianet's [Male Violence Monitor](#) put the number at 23.