

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 38 | March 8-14, 2021

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 170 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.

March 8: The daughter of 82-year-old [Yusuf Bekmezci](#), a businessman and philanthropist held in pre-trial detention over alleged links to the Gülen movement, said her ailing father had been condemned to die in prison. Bekmezci suffers from Alzheimer's and cannot take care of himself. He also has high blood pressure, sleep apnea, prostate cancer and partial deafness.

March 11: Reports indicated that [Yasemin Melizci](#), the mother of a 9-month-old baby who was arrested on terrorism charges for alleged links to the Gülen movement, has been sentenced to nine years in prison and she continues to be held behind bars, despite the legal requirement of delaying the execution of the prison sentences for women who have given birth within the last 18 months.

March 14: [Hayrettin Yılmaz](#), a 65-year-old cancer patient, lost in life in prison in Afyon after the authorities delayed his legal right to parole despite the severity of his medical condition.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

March 8: A Diyarbakır court [found](#) the Interior Ministry culpable in the killing of a 12-year-old girl by unexploded

military ammunition in 2009 and ordered that a fine of \$37,000 be paid to the family by the ministry.

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.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

March 11: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) 18 women, including a minor, who took part in a march to mark International Women's Day on March 8, on charges that they insulted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The women were released on probation the same day.

March 13: The police [detained](#) at least 722 people in February for participating in protests, demonstrations, press releases and passing out flyers, according to a monthly rights violations report by opposition MP Sezgin Tanrikulu.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 8: An Ankara court [handed down](#) suspended prison sentences to journalists Müyesser Yıldız and İsmail Dükkel, on charges of revealing state secrets, over a report on the government's military involvement in Libya. Yıldız was sentenced to three years, seven months, 10 days and Dükkel received a sentence of one

year, 15 days. The court suspended the execution of both sentences.

March 8: A group of about two dozen people [assaulted](#) journalist Levent Gültekin who was on his way to the Halk TV headquarters to host a political commentary program. The attack came after Gültekin criticized Alparslan Türkeş, the founder of Turkey's far-right MHP.

March 8: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to tweets posted by main opposition CHP about central bank reserves and former finance minister Berat Albayrak who disappeared after resigning in November.

March 8: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to tweets posted by opposition MPs Özgür Özel, Lütfü Türkkan, Engin Özkoç and Aykut Erdoğan about central bank reserves.

March 9: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) six journalists and civil society activists each to one year, six months, 22 days in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, over their social media commentary about Turkey's military invasion of the Syrian province of Afrin.

March 10: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) local HDP member Mehmet Masyan over his social media messages.

March 11: The police in Siirt briefly [detained](#) journalist Zekeriya Güzipek. The journalist was released the same day after his questioning.

March 11: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to reports about extortion allegations implicating a high judiciary member, a former intelligence operative and an alleged drug lord.

March 11: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the appointment of a prosecutor's wife to replace a prison doctor that the prosecutor was investigating.

March 12: An Edirne court [sentenced](#) opposition mayor Recep Gürkan to two months, 15 days in prison on charges of praising crime and criminals, over his remarks during the failed coup of July 2016. The court ruled to suspend the execution of the prison sentence.

March 12: A Bursa court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about a company which allegedly overpriced meat products. The court also ruled for the removal of the content.

March 12: A Rize court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about an academic who was promoted to head a university department, despite having been the subject of harassment and insult complaints filed by female students.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 10: Nils Muižnieks, Director of Amnesty International's Europe Regional Office, [called](#) on member states of the Council of Europe to institute infringement proceedings against Turkey for failing to implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

KURDISH MINORITY

March 10: A Muş court [sentenced](#) local HDP politician Ülkü Karaaslan to two years, three months in prison on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda.

March 10: An Erzurum court [sentenced](#) local HDP politician Dinçer Polat to three years, 45 days in prison on terrorism-related charges.

March 10: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) local HDP member Mehmet Masyan over his social media messages.

March 11: The police in Şanlıurfa [detained](#) four people, including HDP district executive Hatice Göktepe, on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda. The detainees were released the next day after appearing before a court.

March 11: The police in Malatya [detained](#) local left-wing Kurdish politician Halil Göktaş.

March 11: A mobile app developed by the national police to help women against domestic violence [drew](#) criticism from rights groups and the Kurdish politicians for failing to include Kurdish among its six supported languages.

March 11: [Sevim Dağdelen](#), a Kurdish-German politician from the German Left Party, said she has been receiving death threats from Turkish ultranationalist groups.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

March 11: [Sevim Dağdelen](#), a Kurdish-German politician from the German Left Party, said she has been receiving death threats from Turkish ultranationalist groups.

March 11: [Bahar Kimyongür](#), a Belgian journalist of Turkish origin, known for his outspoken criticism of the Turkish government, left Twitter after receiving repeated death threats.

OTHER MINORITIES

March 9: A trans woman who is also a Syrian refugee was [attacked](#) with hydrochloric acid by a person named Emre B. in İstanbul. The victim was hospitalized and has suffered significant injury due to the incident.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 11: Kemal Gömi, a sick prisoner diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia was reportedly attacked by unknown persons in an İstanbul prison. His lawyer declared that the authorities are not implementing a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) order for his treatment in a hospital. She also said she is not allowed to meet her client.

March 11: University professor Mustafa Hakkı Ertan [referred](#) to the LGBTI community as “debauched” and “dishonorable.”

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 8: Reports indicated that nine-year-old [Nurefşan Teke](#) drowned while trying to cross the Evros river on the Greek border with her mother, in order to reunite with her father, who had to flee Turkey due to political persecution five years ago.

March 9: A trans woman who is also a Syrian refugee was [attacked](#) with hydrochloric acid by a person named Emre B. in İstanbul. The victim was hospitalized and has suffered significant injury due to the incident.

March 12: Turkish immigration authorities in Mardin [initiated](#) deportation procedures for Syrian refugee Ali El Sulo after he allegedly rejected to cooperate with the intelligence agency MİT as an informant. His lawyers have applied to the Constitutional Court for interim measure, according to the reports.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 8: Police officers at a traffic checkpoint in Adiyaman reportedly [assaulted](#) Mehmet Mithat Arıkcı and Mehpare Sahan.

March 11: Two of the 18 women who were [detained](#) over their attendance in a Women’s Day march in İstanbul were subjected to strip-searches while in police custody.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

March 10: Opposition leader [Meral Akşener](#) denounced the sexist and misogynistic rhetoric that she has been subjected to by nationalist circles close to the government.

March 11: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 18 women, including a minor, who took part in a march to mark International Women’s Day on March 8, on charges that they insulted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.