

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 316 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.

February 22: The wife of jailed former colonel Mustafa Özcan Çay [announced](#) to the media that her husband can barely see or move due to his multiple sclerosis (MS) and requested his immediate release.

February 24: The wife of jailed former teacher Veysel Tıkaç [called on](#) the authorities to release her husband, saying in an interview that he had chronic heart disease and that his health had deteriorated considerably in prison.

February 26: The wife of jailed former teacher Ünal Üneş [said](#) in a letter to an MP that her husband suffered from chronic heart disease and called on the authorities to release him from prison.

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

February 21: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) two leftist activists for handing out flyers for an event.

February 22: A court [ruled](#) to arrest one of the 11 members and executives of an NGO for solidarity with relatives of inmates who were detained on February 15, while releasing others on probation.

February 23: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) one person for participating in a demonstration in front of a courthouse to demand the release of sick prisoners.

February 24: The police in Ankara battered and [detained](#) the members of a family who were staging a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Justice.

February 24: The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) six people protesting the Russian invasion of Ukraine in front of the Russian embassy.

February 24: The police in Van [detained](#) four university students who staged a protest at the university cafeteria.

February 27: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 21: An appeals court [upheld](#) the prison sentence of Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş, which was handed down for insulting the president over remarks he made 2015. Demirtaş was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison.

February 21: A Diyarbakır court [acquitted](#) nine lawyers who stood trial over a joint statement which contained references to the Armenian genocide and Kurdistan.

February 21: A Diyarbakır court [acquitted](#) Kurdish journalist Durket Süren who stood trial on terrorism charges.

February 22: The authorities in the Turkish-controlled northern Cyprus [launched](#) an investigation into columnist Ali Kışmir, demanding up to 10 years in prison over an article in which he criticized the Turkish government.

February 22: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports containing allegations that a high-ranking health ministry official was receiving multiple salaries.

February 22: Media ombudsman Faruk Bildirici [said](#) in an article that Turkish reporters have been reluctant to regularly cover trials of real and alleged members of the Gülen movement due to self-censorship.

February 23: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports on a variety of allegations implicating high-level defense ministry officials.

February 23: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports about surveillance footage allegedly showing a pro-government journalist stealing money from a woman's purse.

February 25: A Mersin court [sentenced](#) Kurdish journalist Berivan Altan to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges.

February 25: Arif Kocabıyık, a journalist known for his political street interviews, and the crew of his YouTube channel were [attacked](#) by a group of 10 people while conducting an interview in Antalya.

February 25: A group of ultranationalists [attacked](#) the house of government-critical journalist Memduh Bayraktaroğlu.

February 25: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) opposition politician Nurullah Anku Efe to two years, two months and seven days in prison on charges of insulting the president in his remarks at a press conference.

February 25: An İzmir court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports on misconduct allegations implicating a local district governor.

February 25: Ankara prosecutors [indicted](#) former Kurdish MP Altan Tan on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda in a TV program.

February 25: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency to publish news, citing national security reasons.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 23: The Bertelsmann Foundation in Berlin [found](#) that rule of law in Turkey declined faster in the past ten years than anywhere else in the world.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 21: An appeals court [upheld](#) the prison sentence of Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş, which was handed down for insulting the president over remarks he made 2015. Demirtaş was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison.

February 21: A Diyarbakır court [acquitted](#) Kurdish journalist Durket Süren who stood trial on terrorism charges.

February 22: A court [ruled](#) to arrest HDP executives Mesut Hayri Bökü and Naile Gümüştaş who were detained on terrorism charges on February 14.

February 23: Three Kurdish university students in Antalya were slightly [injured](#) in an allegedly racist attack on a university campus by a group of 30 people.

February 25: A Mersin court [sentenced](#) Kurdish journalist Berivan Altan to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges.

February 25: Ankara prosecutors [indicted](#) former Kurdish MP Altan Tan on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda in a TV program.

February 25: A parliamentary commission [proposed](#) the lifting of the legislative immunity of HDP MP Semra Güzel, who is faced with terrorism-related charges.

OTHER MINORITIES

February 22: A new report published by Boğaziçi University researchers [found](#) that discrimination against the Roma community in Turkey increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report noted a worsening in the

community's access to healthcare, education, job opportunities and housing.

February 23: A Turkey-based NGO [reported](#) that at least eight hate murders targeted the LGBT community in 2021.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 23: A Balıkesir court [denied](#) treatment to 74 inmates who tested positive for Covid-19.

February 24: An Adana prison [denied](#) treatment to inmates who refused to undergo cavity search.

February 24: Two inmates staging hunger strikes [announced](#) that they would be continuing their protests indefinitely after the Ministry of Justice rejected their requests for the release of critically sick prisoners and an end to arbitrary disciplinary punishment in prison.

February 25: Reports revealed that a Mardin prison has been [denying](#) hospitalization to an inmate for five months for refusing to undergo strip-search.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 21: The police in Ankara verbally [threatened](#) and used racial slurs against two Somalian nationals.

February 22: The authorities [closed](#) 16 provinces, including İstanbul and capital Ankara, to all foreign residency applications, in line with an Interior Ministry policy to dilute Syrian refugees.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 21: The Turkish Medical Association (TTB) [announced](#) that a prosecutor in Şırnak physically assaulted a doctor over a disagreement about a relative's medical treatment.

February 21: The police in İzmir [subjected](#) to strip-search a 17-year-old girl who was detained for handing out flyers.

February 24: The guards in an Afyon prison [tortured](#) two inmates who reportedly resisted a military style head count.

February 24: The guards in a Kayseri prison [forced](#) inmates to recite the national anthem and mistreated the ones who refused.

February 26: The police in Bursa [mistreated](#) 13 students who were detained due to alleged links to the Gülen movement.

February 27: The police in Şanlıurfa [mistreated](#) four people over a discussion.