

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 26 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 23: Manisa prosecutors [ordered](#) the detention of 20 people for providing financial assistance to the families of those imprisoned or fired from public service over their alleged links to the Gülen movement.

February 23: [Ebubekir Ertuğrul](#), a man incarcerated in Ankara due to his links to the Gülen movement, was not allowed to attend the funerals of his wife and children who died in the earthquakes.

February 25: [Yusuf Kerim Sayın](#), a six-year-old boy suffering from a serious type of bone cancer and undergoing treatment without the company of his mother who is imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement, has reportedly lost significant weight.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

February 24: A Van court [ruled](#) to acquit two soldiers who shot dead a villager named İbrahim Baykara on the grounds that they were acting in “self-defense.”

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunc](#), 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 20: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a students’ protest, detaining 25 people.

February 22: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration against the government’s handling of the earthquake, detaining four protesters.

February 23: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in favor of Saturday Mothers, a group of activists seeking the whereabouts of loved ones disappeared in police custody in the 1980s whose protest vigil in August 2018 was violently dispersed by the police.

February 26: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a protest organized by a leftist group, briefly detaining 109 activists.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 21: The police in Gaziantep [detained](#) Umut Polat, a socialist activist who was in the province to assist search and rescue efforts after the earthquakes, on charges of insulting the president. Polat was arrested by a court the next day.

February 21: Gaziantep prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into NGO executive Mehmet Türkmen on charges of spreading misinformation. Türkmen was summoned by the police for a questioning.

February 22: A Hakkari court [ruled](#) to arrest Osman Arslan, a 76-year-old man, on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda.

February 22: İzmir prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into a man named Hakan Yakaç on misinformation charges after he reacted to the authorities' obstruction against earthquake relief organized by opposition parties.

February 22: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), the broadcasting regulator, [imposed](#) fines and broadcasting bans on Tele 1, Halk TV and Fox TV due to their coverage on earthquakes.

February 22: An İstanbul court [imposed](#) a censorship on a book authored by theologian İhsan Eliaçık on the grounds that it contained "elements that were objectionable with respect to the basic characteristics of the Islamic faith."

February 23: İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist Seyhan Avşar for reporting on allegations of mistreatment surrounding the death of a young man in police custody after he was detained on suspicion of looting.

February 23: An Ankara court [blocked](#) access to 340 websites and URLs, including news websites, blogs and social media accounts due to their alleged terrorist propaganda. The censorship was imposed at the request of the Security Directorate General (EGM).

February 23: An annual press freedom [report](#) found that at least 55 members of the press were assaulted 28 journalists were sentenced to a total of 50 years, six months in prison in 2022.

February 23: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Erol Mütercimler who stood trial on charges of degrading a segment of the public due to his remarks on a television program about religious high schools (imam hatip).

February 24: A court [handed down](#) suspended sentences to six executives of the Chamber of Architects of Turkey, including its chairperson Tezcan Karakuş, on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda, due to an award granted to JIN TV, a women's TV station that broadcasts in Kurdish.

February 24: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a tweet about the death of a man named Ahmet Güreşçi who died in police custody after allegedly being tortured.

February 26: Prosecutors [ordered](#) the detention of 10 more people over "provocative" social media commentary about the earthquake, bringing the total number of detentions to 141.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 20: An İstanbul prosecutor [demanded](#) prison sentences of up to 15 years for four lawyers who previously represented Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), on terrorism-related charges.

February 23: Manisa prosecutors [ordered](#) the detention of 20 people for providing financial assistance to the families of those imprisoned or fired from public service over their alleged links to the Gülen movement.

February 24: A Van court [ruled](#) to acquit two soldiers who shot dead a villager named İbrahim Baykara on the grounds that they were acting in "self-defense."

February 25: A scholarship program announced by state agency TÜBİTAK for the benefit of higher education students affected by the earthquakes [excluded](#) those who were dismissed from their jobs during the 2016-2018 state of emergency.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 23: The gendarmes in Mardin [detained](#) former HDP executive Şiyar Koç. Koç was released the next day.

February 24: A court [handed down](#) suspended sentences to six executives of the Chamber of Architects of Turkey, including its chairperson Tezcan Karakuş, on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda, due to an award granted to JIN TV, a women's TV station that broadcasts in Kurdish.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 26: Reports indicated that an Antalya prison was not [providing](#) special nutrients for babies that are imprisoned along with their mothers.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 22: A Syrian refugee who spoke at a press conference [announced](#) that he was attacked by local inhabitants on suspicion of looting after the earthquakes.

February 22: Statistics released by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) [showed](#) that Turkish citizens were the third largest group of asylum seekers in the EU in 2022, with a total of 55,000 asylum applications filed throughout the year.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 20: The police in Hatay physically [assaulted](#) one person.

February 21: The guards in a Gaziantep prison physically [assaulted](#) and injured six inmates on the grounds that they showed “disrespect.”

February 21: The Human Rights Association (İHD) [reported](#) an increase in mistreatment and rights violations in prisons in the provinces hit by the earthquakes. Another rights group [announced](#) that inmates who were transferred to other facilities due to the earthquakes were only allowed to take with them a small bag of personal items and that they were subjected to strip-searches during the transfers.

February 23: [Ebubekir Ertuğrul](#), a man incarcerated in Ankara due to his links to the Gülen movement, was not allowed to attend the funerals of his wife and children who died in the earthquakes.

February 23: [Ahmet Bugur](#), a man who was detained for arguing with an imam in Ağrı, lost his life in police custody.

February 24: Special operations police in Hatay [mistreated](#) three people. Rights groups reported that one of the victims suffered memory loss due to the incident.

February 25: The police in Hatay physically [assaulted](#) an earthquake survivor on suspicion of theft.

February 25: An Antalya court [sentenced](#) a man named Çağdaş Yırtıcı to three years, 15 days in prison on charges of insulting and resisting the police during an incident where he was physically assaulted in front of his home, while acquitting the police officers involved.

February 26: An employee of a women’s prison in Afyon physically [assaulted](#) inmate Sabahat Kunduracı.