

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 43 | April 12-18, 2021

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 224 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.

**April 12:** Kemal Gökhan Günel, a medical doctor in Osmaniye, was [detained](#) and rear-handcuffed after refusing to examine a local prosecutor without an appointment.

## ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

**April 14:** A report [said](#) that at least 10 people have suspiciously died during their compulsory military service since the beginning of 2021 and that their deaths were not investigated by the authorities.

## 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

**April 13:** The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) four women protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention on combating domestic violence.

**April 14:** The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining 14 people.

**April 15:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining eight people.

**April 15:** The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) eight activists handing out flyers about International Workers' Day celebrations.

**April 15:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration by a medical association to call on the government to tighten coronavirus restrictions to stop the latest surge in infections and fatalities.

**April 15:** The authorities in Mardin briefly [detained](#) a person for attending a protest against an urban renewal project.

**April 15:** The Kocaeli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

**April 16:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining 10 people.

**April 16:** The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**April 16:** The Denizli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

**April 16:** The Aydın Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

**April 16:** The Edirne Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 14 days.

**April 16:** The Kartal District Governor's Office in İstanbul [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

**April 17:** The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**April 12:** A monthly press freedom [report](#) found that at least 79 journalist appeared in court in March.

**April 12:** Courts [ruled](#) to release under judicial supervision 14 retired admirals who were detained after openly criticizing the government's plans to build a canal in İstanbul.

**April 13:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [condemned](#) Turkey for the imprisonment of journalists Ahmet Altan and Murat Aksoy on charges related to a coup attempt in 2016. Altan, who had been held behind bars since 2016, was [released](#) the next day.

**April 13:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Cihan Ölmez for alleged **terrorism** propaganda, over social media commentary about the curfews imposed in the predominantly Kurdish province of Şırnak in 2015 and 2016.

**April 13:** A Bursa court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a public school teacher who celebrated Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention on social media.

**April 14:** Upon orders by prosecutors, the police in several provinces [removed](#) the banners of an opposition party about the alleged erosion of Central Bank reserves.

**April 14:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the Mezopotamya news agency.

**April 14:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a pro-government university rector's son who was appointed to the presidency without an exam.

**April 14:** An Edirne court ruled to [acquit](#) journalists Naci Kaya and İdris Sayılğan, who were charged with entering a forbidden military zone, after reporting on the

situation of the migrants heading towards the border with Greece during a migration crisis last year.

**April 14:** Media regulator RTÜK [imposed](#) a monetary fine against Halk TV over a news report.

**April 15:** An İstanbul prosecutor [demanded](#) 2,445 years in prison for former TV executive Hidayet Karaca.

**April 15:** Ankara prosecutors [drafted](#) a summary of proceedings against journalist and independent opposition MP Ahmet Şık, seeking to lift his parliamentary legal immunity due to his support for the Boğaziçi University protests.

**April 16:** A court [ordered](#) the arrest of a social media user in Konya on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, over his criticism of a Turkish military operation in Iraq.

**April 16:** [Genco Erkal](#), a veteran stage actor and director, was summoned to testify on allegations that he insulted the president on social media.

**April 16:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to several news reports about former finance minister Berat Albayrak's alleged involvement in the Paradise Papers scandal.

**April 16:** A Muğla court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a singer who filed for a divorce from a Turkish-Iranian businessman who was prosecuted in the United States for violating sanctions against Iran on behalf of the Turkish government.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**April 14:** The son of imprisoned former TV executive Hidayet Karaca [announced](#) that his father's pension was confiscated by the authorities. Karaca has been held behind bars since December 2014 on terrorism-related charges.

**April 12:** Kemal Gökhan Günel, a medical doctor in Osmaniye, was [detained](#) and rear-handcuffed after refusing to examine a local prosecutor without an appointment.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**April 14:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Hülya Alökmen to 10 years, six months in prison on terrorism charges.

**April 14:** The police in Kocaeli [detained](#) former HDP provincial executive Kamuran Onay. The detainee was released to house arrest the next day.

**April 14:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the Mezopotamya news agency.

**April 15:** A Van court [sentenced](#) former HDP district co-mayor Yıldız Çetin to seven years, six months on terrorism charges.

**April 16:** [Rahim Gören](#), a city council member in Ağrı, was removed from office by the Ministry of Interior.

**April 16:** MP Hüda Kaya [said](#) that the remains of 261 alleged PKK members were buried in a mass grave next to a sewage line in an İstanbul cemetery and not returned to their families.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**April 14:** A prison administration in Van [withheld](#) a letter and an article sent to jailed journalist Nedim Türfent.

**April 16:** The justice ministry [admitted](#) in response to a petition submitted by an opposition deputy that overcrowding has occasionally occurred in some of Turkey's prisons during the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year, the government passed an early release legislation to ease the overcrowding behind bars, which was criticized for excluding political prisoners.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**April 12:** A Chechen migrant woman held at a migrant removal center in Kocaeli [lost](#) her 11-month-old baby with Down syndrome as a result of lack of treatment.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**April 14:** More than 30 local governors, who were detained over their alleged links to the Gülen movement as part of an investigation by Ankara prosecutors, were reportedly [subjected](#) to ill-treatment and torture in police custody in Ankara.

**April 15:** The gendarmes in Diyarbakır physically [assaulted](#) a person over a slogan written on a wall.

**April 16:** Fabien Azoulay, a gay and Jewish French national who is serving a prison sentence in Giresun for buying drugs online, was [tortured](#) by fellow inmates because of his sexual orientation in addition to being harassed, mistreated and threatened on a daily basis.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**April 16:** A total of 1,687 women subjected to various types of domestic violence [sought](#) help from the Mor Çatı Women's Shelter in 2020.

**April 17:** An opposition party [claimed](#) that 27 women were killed by men in Turkey in the one month since the president pulled the country out of the İstanbul Convention on combating domestic violence.