

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 41 | March 29-April 4, 2021

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 347 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 29:** The Human Rights Association (İHD) [called](#) for the release from prison of Fatma Güler, a 75-year-old Kurdish woman suffering from stomach cancer, asthma, high blood pressure and liver problems.

**March 30:** [Serdal Yıldırım](#), a paralyzed inmate, was placed in solitary confinement in an İstanbul prison, despite medical reports finding him unfit to care for himself.

**March 31:** [Eyvaz Akıncı](#), a 76-year-old man suffering from stage three lung cancer, was arrested and sent to prison after his terrorism-related sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court of Appeals.

**March 31:** [Oğuzhan Gürbüzer](#), a 26-year-old man with severe cognitive disabilities, was found dead in a prison cell in Samsun as his legal team awaited a ruling on their petition to delay the execution of his sentence.

**April 2:** [Bilal Konakçı](#), a severely disabled former police officer imprisoned on terrorism-related charges, said prison conditions are endangering his life as he can't walk, use the bathroom or eat on his own. Konakçı had retired as a police officer due to his disabilities caused by a bomb that detonated while he was trying to defuse it in front of a school in 2009.

## 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 29:** The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining 17 people.

**March 30:** The police in Şanlıurfa briefly [detained](#) Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit Şenyaşar while staging a sit-in protest in front of a courthouse.

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

**March 31:** The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining 16 people.

**April 1:** A district governor in İstanbul [banned](#) all gatherings in the district, after a calls for a demonstration by Boğaziçi University students. Later in the day, the police [detained](#) at least 35 people who wanted to stage the protest. The detainees were released the same day.

**April 1:** The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**April 2:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release two students who were detained in February during Boğaziçi University protests.

**April 2:** The Muş governor's office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**March 29:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a corruption allegation involving an energy distribution company.

**March 29:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to tweets about a video featuring bundles of cash loaded to a car by the advisor of a ruling party deputy.

**March 30:** A court [sentenced](#) Nilüfer Aydan, a 81-year-old actress, to 11 months, 20 days in prison on charges of insulting the president on social media.

**March 30:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a freedom of expression monitor's report on a previous access ban. The previous access block was imposed on news reports about extortion allegations implicating a high judiciary member.

**March 31:** A monthly press freedom report by opposition MP Barış Yarkadaş [found](#) that a total of 95 journalists appeared in court in March. The report also said that three journalists were reported; seven others were given prison sentences amounting to 11 years, 15 days in total; two journalists were subjected to physical attacks; access to two news websites was blocked; and one journalist was slapped with a fine.

**March 31:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a naval commander who was seen in a house run by a religious cult.

**April 1:** The Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body responsible for regulating publicly funded advertisements in the media, [imposed](#) a five-day advertising ban on the Evrensel newspaper for referring to the police response to Boğaziçi University protesters as an "attack," in a news article.

**April 1:** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), the broadcasting watchdog, [imposed](#) monetary penalties on Halk TV and TELE1 TV over comments critical of current and former government officials.

**April 1:** The Council of State, Turkey's highest administrative court, [suspended](#) the execution of some articles a 2018 regulation that made it easier for the government to cancel the press cards of journalists.

**April 2:** The police in Ankara [detained](#) Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, a leading rights advocate who was expelled from the parliament in March, over a prison sentence handed down on terrorism-related charges due to a social media post. Before being taken to prison, Gergerlioğlu was briefly hospitalized as a result of the violent police raid into his home.

**April 2:** A Van court [ruled](#) to release from pre-trial detention journalists Adnan Bilen, Cemil Uğur, Şehriban Abi and Nazan Sala after the first hearing of the case in which they stand trial on terrorism charges for reporting on an incident of torture implicating soldiers. The journalists were arrested in October 2020.

**April 2:** A Bursa court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about sexual harassment allegations involving a local CHP politician.

**April 3:** The police in İzmir [detained](#) seven people on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

## FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

**March 30:** [Tuna Altinel](#), a Turkish professor of a French university who was briefly jailed in Turkey on terrorism charges, is still unable to leave Turkey because the authorities have refused to grant his travel documents over a new investigation.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**April 2:** The police in Ankara [detained](#) Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, a leading rights advocate who was expelled from the parliament in March, over a prison sentence handed down on terrorism-related charges due to a social media post. Before being taken to prison, Gergerlioğlu was briefly hospitalized as a result of the violent police raid into his home.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**March 31:** The Constitutional Court [rejected](#) rights defender Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu's expulsion from the parliament. Gergerlioğlu [announced](#) that he will take the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

**April 1:** The Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) [launched](#) an investigation into a judge who ruled in favor of a social media user who faced complaints for

allegedly insulting the wife of a presidential aide, stating that the comments fell into the scope of freedom of expression.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**March 29:** Reports revealed that [İbrahim Ergün](#), a 24-year-old Kurd who had fled Turkey, was found hanging from the ceiling at the Corinth migrant camp in Greece. Ergül was reportedly driven to suicide by the camp's poor conditions as well as a recent deportation decision delivered by the Greek authorities.

**March 30:** The police in Antalya [detained](#) two local HDP members.

**March 30:** A Diyarbakır court [acquitted](#) former district co-mayor Ahmet Kaya of terrorism charges.

**March 31:** The Constitutional Court [returned](#) an indictment seeking closure of the HDP to the chief public prosecutor's office at the top appeals court for review on the grounds that there were deficiencies in the indictment.

**April 1:** Reports on the media [said](#) that the guards at a Diyarbakır prison battered inmates for speaking in Kurdish among themselves.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**March 31:** Imprisoned academic [Sedat Laçiner](#) was hospitalized after contracting Covid-19 behind bars.

**April 2:** The Human Rights Association (İHD) [said](#) in a report that it received petitions from a total of 1,182 inmates in 2020 in which they complained about the rights violations they were subjected to in prison. The inmates cited poor living conditions, maltreatment, lack of adequate nutrition and deprivation of medical care.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**March 29:** A mob in Gaziantep [attacked](#) a Syrian refugee family in their home in an apparent hate crime.

**March 29:** Reports revealed that [İbrahim Ergün](#), a 24-year-old Kurd who had fled Turkey, was found hanging from the ceiling at the Corinth migrant camp in Greece. Ergül was reportedly driven to suicide by the camp's poor conditions as well as a recent deportation decision delivered by the Greek authorities.

**April 2:** Greece and Turkey [accused](#) each other of pushing back migrant boats in the Aegean Sea.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**March 29:** The guards at an Aydın prison reportedly [subjected](#) an inmate to physical violence.

**April 1:** Reports on the media [said](#) that the guards at a Diyarbakır prison battered inmates for speaking in Kurdish among themselves.

**April 2:** A Van court [ruled](#) to release from pre-trial detention journalists Adnan Bilen, Cemil Uğur, Şehriban Abi and Nazan Sala after the first hearing of the case in which they stand trial on terrorism charges for reporting on an incident of torture implicating soldiers. The journalists were arrested in October 2020.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**April 2:** A monthly [report](#) by a women's rights platform found that 28 women were victims of fatal domestic violence in March. The report also said that 19 other women were found dead under suspicious circumstances.

**April 2:** Switzerland [granted](#) asylum to a woman who was sentenced in Turkey for killing her husband in self-defense.