

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Mass detentions: Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 273 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.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

February 8: The Eskişehir Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

February 9: The police in Artvin [blocked](#) a demonstration against the rector of Boğaziçi University, detaining two people. Two others were injured and hospitalized as a result of the intervention.

February 9: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release on parole 61 people, including local pro-Kurdish politicians, who were detained last week for holding a demonstration in the Kadıköy district.

February 9: The Denizli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a month.

February 10: Courts [ruled](#) to arrest a total of 11 university students for attending demonstrations against the appointment of a pro-government figure as rector of Boğaziçi University.

February 10: The police in İzmir [detained](#) three people while hanging banners protesting arbitrary strip-searches in police custody and in prison. The detainees were released later in the same day after their questioning.

February 11: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) a total of 14 people while holding a press statement at the Çağlayan courthouse to demand the release of the 11 students arrested for attending Boğaziçi University protests as well as three others holding a related protest march in the Esenyurt district. The detainees were released on probation the next day.

February 11: The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a demonstration against the rector of the Boğaziçi University, briefly detaining 17 people who were released later in the same day.

February 12: The police in Bursa [blocked](#) a demonstration held as part of Boğaziçi University protests, detaining 19 people including three minors. The minors were released the same day while the remaining 16 were released on Feb. 14.

February 12: The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 8: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) journalist Ayşen Şahin on charges of "provoking hatred and enmity among public" over her social media posts. Şahin was released after her questioning by the police.

February 8: The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) journalist Ahmet Takan over a lawsuit against him. Takan was released the same day after his questioning.

February 8: Authorities [detained](#) 39 people over their social media messages in the first week of February, according to a statement released on the website of the Interior Ministry.

February 9: A court fined [Misra Öz](#), a woman whose 9-year-old son was among the victims of a train accident in Turkey, on charges of insulting a public official during her social media campaign to bring those responsible for the deadly accident to account.

February 9: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) local CHP youth branch members Ozan Yalçın, Salman Demir and Cem Akbulut while hanging wanted posters for former finance minister Berat Albayrak who disappeared from public prominence after resigning in November.

February 9: The Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body responsible for regulating publicly funded advertisements in the media, in 2020 [imposed](#) 88 percent of its advertising bans on government-critical newspapers BirGün, Sözcü, Cumhuriyet, Korkusuz and Evrensel.

February 10: Broadcasting watchdog RTÜK [imposed](#) a monetary fine against Halk TV over the remarks of a guest of a program who criticized governors and judges, against KRT TV over the comments of a host criticizing law enforcement officers, against Tele1 over a program where someone called the president a dictator and against FOX TV over a news report.

February 10: An Elazığ court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a local man who allegedly engaged in extortion using his ties to government officials.

February 10: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a public tender granted to a construction company where a relative of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan serves as board member.

February 11: An Ankara appeals court [ruled](#) to uphold the prison sentence of one year, five months, 15 days handed down to academic Cenk Yiğiter for allegedly insulting the president on social media.

February 11: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to acquit jailed Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ of the charge of insulting the president over a written statement that she released when she was the co-chair of the HDP. Yüksekdağ continues to stand trial on terrorism-related charges, along with former co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş.

February 11: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories and tweets about a women's solidarity group raising sexual harassment allegations involving a university lecturer.

February 11: The police in Konya [detained](#) seven people including local HDP politician Süleyman İnan over their social media posts. The detainees were released the next day.

February 12: The police in Kahramanmaraş [detained](#) a person for allegedly denigrating the parliament and the state, over his remarks to a high-ranking AKP official who was visiting the province.

February 12: Courts [ruled](#) to release university students Beyza Buldağ and Muhammed Ünal who were detained and arrested last week due to their social media posts expressing solidarity with the protests against the appointment of a pro-government rector to İstanbul's Boğaziçi University.

February 12: A Kocaeli court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the appointment of the son of a university rector to the Presidency's public diplomacy agency.

February 13: The police in Adana [detained](#) briefly seven people for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda on social media. The detainees were released the same day after their questioning.

February 14: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) seven people over their social media messages.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

February 10: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to release Şeyhmus Gökalp, physician and member of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) who was arrested in late November 2020. Gökalp was released upon the first hearing of his trial where he is facing up to 15 years in prison on terrorism-related charges.

February 10: The US Department of State [called](#) on Turkey to release businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 8: After initial resistance, an İstanbul court finally [ruled](#) for the retrial of former opposition MP Enis Berberoğlu in line with a ruling from the Constitutional Court last month. The Constitutional Court had to rule for a second time that Berberoğlu's rights were violated after a first judgment was defied by lower courts.

Berberoğlu was arrested and sentenced to prison on espionage and terrorism charges in connection with media reports on Turkish national intelligence agency trucks carrying weapons to neighboring war-torn Syria. He was also stripped of his MP status over his conviction. On Feb. 11, the parliament [reinstated](#) Berberoğlu's parliamentary membership.

February 9: The Supreme Court of Appeals [ruled](#) for the release from prison of the three remaining defendants in a negligent death trial, all executives at a coal mining company in Manisa whose premises were the scene of the worst mining disaster in Turkish history in 2014 that claimed the lives of 301 miners.

February 9: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [found](#) that Turkey violated the rights of former Vice Admiral Kadir Sağıdıç who stood trial on coup-related charges. The ECtHR said that Turkey's domestic courts did not seek a proper balance between Sağıdıç's right to privacy and freedom of the press and that the content of several media articles published on newspapers at the time were incompatible with the standards of responsible journalism.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 9: The police in Bitlis [detained](#) local HDP city council member Ekrem Yalçın. Yalçın was released on probation on Feb. 12.

February 9: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release on parole 61 people, including local pro-Kurdish politicians, who were detained last week for holding a demonstration in the Kadıköy district.

February 10: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) former HDP district executive Arzu Karaman to nine years in prison on terrorism charges.

February 11: The European Court of Human Rights [delivered](#) its verdict in the case of 10 politicians from the now-closed pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP), 14 years after the case was brought before it, ruling that Turkey had violated the plaintiffs' right to freedom of assembly and association.

February 11: The police in Konya [detained](#) seven people including local HDP politician Süleyman İnan over their social media posts. The detainees were released the next day.

February 12: The police in Kocaeli [detained](#) 13 people including local HDP members in house raids.

February 13: The police in Şirnak [detained](#) local HDP member Mustafa Dal.

February 14: The police in Adın [detained](#) nine people including local HDP members and executives.

February 14: The police in Yalova [detained](#) eight local HDP executives.

February 14: The police in Mersin [detained](#) local HDP executive Songül Eriş.

February 14: The police in Batman [detained](#) eight people including local HDP executives. Three of the detainees were released the same day.

February 14: HDP [released](#) a statement announcing that between Feb. 12 and Feb. 14 authorities detained at least 143 party members and executives across the country.

MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

February 10: Sean O'Donnell, the Lead Inspector General for the US Department of Defense submitted his [quarterly report](#) on the Operation Inherent Resolve which expressed concern about reports of rights violations in the Turkish-controlled regions of northern Syria, stating that US officials received reports of killings, torture, kidnapping, extortion, arbitrary detentions and denial of water access to half a million civilians in areas under the control of Turkey-backed armed groups.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

February 8: The Justice Ministry [requested](#) Ankara prosecutors to prepare an extradition file for Mahmut Akpınar, academic and journalist living in the UK.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 10: The European Court of Human Rights [fined](#) Turkey over an İstanbul prison administration's refusal to grant a request for access to certain Internet sites lodged by lawyer Ramazan Demir in the course of his pre-trial detention.

February 11: Media reports indicated that prison officials in İstanbul were [denying](#) blankets to some of the prisoners arrested over Boğaziçi University protests.

February 12: Media reports revealed that Mahmut Yıldız, an inmate held in an İzmir prison, [attempted](#) to commit suicide on Feb. 3 to protest the isolation practices of prison administrations and that he is in a critical condition at a hospital.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 11: Authorities reportedly [threatened](#) to deport Mohammad Mosaed, an Iranian investigative journalist who fled Iran for Turkey to avoid a lengthy prison sentence. Mosaed has applied for international protection and his case is still pending.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 10: A former teacher [told](#) a news website that he was subjected to torture for a month during his detention by the Şanlıurfa police in January 2017.

February 11: Attorneys of university students [claimed](#) that the family members of some of their clients were verbally threatened on the phone by the police.

February 12: Speaker of the Turkish Parliament Mustafa Şentop [returned](#) a letter of a torture victim that was submitted to the parliament by lawmaker Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, claiming that it contained “vulgar and hurtful words.” The letter contained the details of the victim’s brutal treatment during his detention in 1990.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

February 9: The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) against Turkey in the case of a girl who was forced into prostitution from the age of 12, saying that she was not given sufficient legal protection and support.