

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 50 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 15: Hayri Karaş, a sick inmate, [died](#) in a hospital 10 days after his release from prison.

March 18: An Adana court [ruled](#) to keep behind bars 84-year-old ailing prisoner Mehmet Emin Özkan, despite the fact that Özkan could not even go to the videoconference room to attend his hearing.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

March 14: A regional appeals court in Diyarbakır [ruled](#) that no charges can be leveled against the police officer who shot a 23-year-old Kurdish university student to death during Newroz celebrations in 2017.

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.

March 18: The European Court of Human Rights [rejected](#) an application claiming that Turkish authorities failed to carry out an effective investigation into the case of Yusuf Bilge Tunç.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

March 14: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a protest against price hikes, briefly detaining 10 people.

March 14: The police in Eskişehir [detained](#) three members of a socialist youth organization. The detainees were released on March 16.

March 14: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 15: The police in Ankara [intervened](#) in a protest against increases in public transport prices, briefly detaining nine people.

March 16: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 24 women's rights activists over their participation in Women's Day demonstrations.

March 17: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) 79-year-old peace activist Meryem Soylu to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges, over her membership in an association for people who have lost their relatives in the armed conflict in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast.

March 17: The police in Mersin [detained](#) four people, including an executive for an association established for solidarity with relatives of inmates.

March 18: The police in Ankara [detained](#) one person staging a protest in front of a courthouse to demand the release of a sick prisoner.

March 18: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) one person holding a demonstration in front of the Forensic Medicine Institution to demand the release of a sick prisoner.

March 20: The police in Adana was [seen](#) in videos where they were using excessive violence on the members of a religious group protesting the government.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a Newroz celebration, briefly detaining 86 people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 15: Activist Acun Karadağ [announced](#) that her sister was detained at the airport upon her arrival from the Netherlands to attend a family member's funeral. Karadağ said that her sister was detained on charges of insulting the president.

March 15: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Zekine Türkeri to one year, six months, 22 days in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media. The court suspended the sentence.

March 15: Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP executive Veli Saçılık over his social media messages.

March 15: The Security Directorate General [announced](#) that a total of 106,000 social media accounts in Turkey were investigated in 2021 due to posts found problematic by the authorities.

March 15: A Van court [ruled](#) to acquit Handan Karakoyun, a local HDP executive who was standing trial over a social media message.

March 16: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that a three-day advertising ban imposed by public authorities on the pro-opposition Cumhuriyet daily in 2013 was in violation of the right to freedom of expression and media.

March 17: The police in Gaziantep [detained](#) six people on charges of insulting the president on social media and spreading terrorist propaganda.

March 17: Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into prominent human rights defender Şebnem Korur

Financı for speaking on the YouTube channel of an exiled journalist.

March 17: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

March 18: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) Kurdish musician Çiya Şenses for an undisclosed reason. Şenses was released the next day after his questioning.

March 18: The police in Adana [detained](#) 10 people on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

March 18: An Elazığ court [ruled](#) to acquit academic Hifzullah Kutum, who was standing trial on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, over a social media message containing the word "Kurdistan."

March 19: Ahmet Dönmez, an exiled journalist known for his outspoken criticism of the Turkish government, was [attacked](#) by two men in Stockholm. Dönmez was seriously injured as a result of the attack.

March 19: A district governor's office in Artvin [banned](#) a planned live broadcast by pro-opposition Halk TV channel in the district.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) journalist Hayri Tunç over his social media posts. Tunç was released the next day.

March 20: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) journalists Ertuğ Bozkurt and Mikail Barut.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

March 17: Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into prominent human rights defender Şebnem Korur Financı for speaking on the YouTube channel of an exiled journalist.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 16: Diyarbakır prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into 18 lawyers on terrorism-related charges, over their professional activities.

March 18: The Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) [disbarred](#) four prosecutors and one judge due to their alleged links to the Gülen movement.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 15: Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP executive Veli Saçılık over his social media messages.

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March 18: An Elazığ court [ruled](#) to acquit academic Hifzullah Kutum, who was standing trial on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, over a social media message containing the word "Kurdistan."

March 19: A Kurdish student in Kocaeli [was](#) the subject of threats and racist attacks after he said he would not vote for the ruling party in the 2023 elections.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a Newroz celebration, briefly detaining 86 people.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 16: A Mersin prison [restricted](#) the video calls of political prisoners.

March 16: Data released by the Directorate General of Prisons and Houses of Detention (CTE) [showed](#) that the number of inmates in Turkish prisons stood at 309,558 as of February 28. A Council of Europe [report](#) found that Turkey had the highest incarceration rate among member states in 2020, with 357 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. The report also indicated that Turkey has the most crowded prisons in Europe with 127 inmates per 100 available places as of January 31, 2020.

March 18: The daughter of Enver Altaylı, a former intelligence officer who was last year handed down a

lengthy prison sentence due to his alleged links to the Gülen movement, [announced](#) that her father has been held in solitary confinement for nearly two months because he is considered a "dangerous inmate."

March 19: A Kocaeli prison [restricted](#) inmates' access to books.

March 19: A Konya prison [rejected](#) an inmate's request for hospitalization.

March 20: Media reports [indicated](#) that Sinan Kaya, a 28-year-old inmate, died under suspicious circumstances in an İğdir prison.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 18: Turkish authorities [rejected](#) the citizenship applications of some Uyghur refugees, citing risks to the "national security" and "social order."

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 18: Media reports [revealed](#) that Sezer Alan, an inmate who died under suspicious circumstances in February 2022 in an İğdir prison, had told his family members during their last conversation that he had suffered violence at the hands of prison guards.

March 18: The guards in an Elazığ prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates during a ward search.

March 18: The guards in an İstanbul women's prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates and damaged their personal belongings.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS

March 19: Ahmet Dönmez, an exiled journalist known for his outspoken criticism of the Turkish government, was [attacked](#) by two men in Stockholm. Dönmez was seriously injured as a result of the attack. Previously, Abdullah Bozkurt, another Sweden-based Turkish journalist was the subject of a violent assault.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

March 14: A board at the Supreme Court of Appeals [found](#) the reduction of a sentence given to a man who was convicted of the murder of a woman to be

“reasonable” for a crime of passion because the victim rejected the man’s proposal of marriage.

March 17: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 24 women’s rights activists after their participation in Women’s Day demonstrations.

March 18: Women’s rights activists [criticized](#) a government proposal to combat gender-based violence, saying it was inadequate to protect women and lenient on perpetrators of violence.