

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 125 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.

## 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.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

**October 26:** The Tunceli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**October 27:** An Erzincan court [sentenced](#) 15 people to six years, eight months in prison each on charges related to their participation in the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

**October 28:** The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**October 25:** The authorities [blocked](#) access to three news reports about cleric Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü.

**October 25:** A Bursa court [sentenced](#) lawyer Sedat Ata to 11 months, 20 days in prison on charges of insulting the president. The development came days after a European Court of Human Rights ruling on another case that convicting individuals for insulting the president is a rights violation.

**October 25:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a column and two news reports about nepotism allegations targeting a pro-government foundation.

**October 26:** İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist Pınar Gayıp over her reports and social media commentary about a soldier who is standing trial for sexually assaulting a woman.

**October 26:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) [reported](#) that between 2015 and 2019, charges of spreading terrorist propaganda and insulting the president were the leading accusations used as grounds for curtailing freedom of expression.

**October 26:** Courts in Diyarbakır and Erzurum [ruled](#) to block access to four websites used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews, Umut Gazetesi and Etkin news agency.

**October 26:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) author Hamide Yiğit to pay a monetary fine to a pro-government NGO over a book that she published.

**October 26:** The Hatay Governor's Office [cancelled](#) a theater play over "obscene words" in the play.

**October 27:** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) a fine on Halk TV broadcaster over a program on nepotism allegations about a pro-government foundation. The RTÜK also [fined](#) TELE 1 broadcaster over a report on a former parliamentary speaker.

**October 28:** A Gaziantep appeals court [overturned](#) the 3-year prison sentence of Azadiya Welat reporter Çetin Kurşun, demanding a higher sentence on terrorism charges.

**October 28:** An İzmir court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Aziz Oruç after a previous prison sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court of Appeals.

**October 29:** The police in Siirt [detained](#) Cemil Taşkesen for using the word “Kurdistan” in a video. Taşkesen is accused of spreading terrorist propaganda.

**October 29:** An appeals commission [refused](#) to reinstate four academics who were fired from their universities for signing a declaration that called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Kurdish provinces.

**October 29:** The presidential office [prevented](#) two government-critical TV stations and a news agency from following the Republic Day ceremony held in Ankara.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**October 26:** The Arrested Lawyers Initiative [reported](#) that 450 lawyers have been sentenced to 2,786 years in total on terrorism charges since a coup attempt in July 2016.

**October 29:** An appeals commission [refused](#) to reinstate four academics who were fired from their universities for signing a declaration that called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Kurdish provinces.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**October 25:** The guards in a Şırnak prison tried to force inmates to chant the national anthem and physically [assaulted](#) those who refused. Some inmates were injured as a result of the aggression.

**October 26:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) local politician Emine Ruken Akça to seven years, six months on terrorism charges.

**October 28:** A Batman court [sentenced](#) local HDP politicians Fatma Ablay and Ömer Kulpu to one year, eight months in prison on terrorism charges.

**October 29:** The police in Siirt [detained](#) Cemil Taşkesen for using the word “Kurdistan” in a video. Taşkesen is accused of spreading terrorist propaganda.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**October 25:** A prison administration in Adana [denied](#) hospitalization to jailed journalist İbrahim Karakaş because he refused to undergo treatment in handcuffs.

**October 26:** The family of former teacher Hakan Kanat who was arrested for alleged links to the Gülen movement, [announced](#) that they have not been able to obtain information on his health since he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer two weeks ago.

**October 27:** The İstanbul branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD) [released](#) its quarterly report on rights violations in prisons in the Marmara region, stating that prison administrations continue to impose arbitrary restrictions on inmates and that inadequate nutrition undermines the health of sick prisoners.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**October 26:** A migrant boat [sank](#) in the Aegean, claiming the lives of four children, while 22 others were rescued by the Greek coast guard.

**October 27:** Human Rights Watch released a [statement](#), urging the Turkish government to halt any plans to deport two detained Turkmen activists to Turkmenistan, where they will be at risk of arbitrary arrest and torture.

**October 28:** The authorities [announced](#) plans to deport at least 11 Syrians for “provocatively” sharing videos in response to a street interview.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**October 25:** The police in Mardin physically [assaulted](#) İbrahim Dinler (73) and Faize Dinler (72) during a house raid to detain them.

**October 25:** The guards in a Şırnak prison tried to force inmates to chant the national anthem and physically [assaulted](#) those who refused. Some inmates were injured as a result of the aggression.

**October 25:** The police in Bursa [mistreated](#) a person who was detained over a social media post.

**October 26:** Rights groups [reported](#) that a prisoner in İzmir named Bengisu Demirel was visited in prison by a group of individuals who introduced themselves as police officers and who tried to coerce her into becoming an informant for the authorities. Demirel's criminal complaint about the visit was not forwarded by the prison administration. Her phone conversation with her family was cut short as she began to tell what happened.

**October 26:** The guards in a Şırnak prison physically [assaulted](#) 16 inmates.

**October 27:** The guards in a Van prison physically [assaulted](#) inmate Veysi Bayat.

**October 27:** The guards in an İstanbul prison physically [assaulted](#) an inmate.

**October 28:** The guards in a Kayseri prison physically [assaulted](#) disabled inmate Şaban Kaygusuz.

**October 30:** The guards in a Gaziantep prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates.

## **TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS**

**October 26:** Reports [claimed](#) that Turkey-backed mercenaries in Syria's Turkish-controlled Afrin province imposed taxes on the properties and crops of the local population.