

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 87 | February 14-20, 2022

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 227 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.

February 15: Opposition MP [announced](#) that Sevim Yıldırım, the mother of a 11-month-old child, was arrested and sent to prison, despite laws stipulating the postponement of prison sentences for women who have given birth within the last year and a half.

February 17: The Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) [presented](#) to court its report on ailing Kurdish politician Aysel Tuğluk, stating that she displayed symptoms of mild cognitive impairment and was fit to remain in prison. Tuğluk suffers from dementia and rights groups have been calling for her immediate release.

February 17: The wife of Ahmet Zeki Özkan, a 65-year-old man jailed on conviction of links to the Gülen movement despite suffering from end-stage cancer, [called on](#) the authorities to immediately release her husband.

February 19: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in a case that it is lawful to arrest suspects even if the incriminating testimony of a secret witness is the only piece of evidence against the individual.

February 20: Yusuf Bekmezci, an ailing 82-year-old businessman jailed for links to the Gülen movement, [lost](#)

his life behind bars. An İzmir court had refused to implement a forensic medicine decision to postpone the execution of Bekmezci's prison sentence.

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

February 15: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) Esin Çelik, an executive for an association established for solidarity with relatives of prisoners.

February 16: The police in Ağrı [detained](#) six people for their participation in events in 2015.

February 17: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) three people handing out flyers about sick prisoners.

February 18: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a workers' protest, briefly detaining 100 people.

February 18: The police in Ankara [intervened](#) in a women's protest, briefly detaining eight people.

February 18: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) one person demonstrating for sick prisoners.

February 18: The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 14: The police in Mardin [detained](#) 22 people over their social media messages and their involvement in the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the umbrella organization of the Kurdish political movement.

February 14: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) journalist Zeynep Durgut. Durgut was released on February 17.

February 14: An Ankara court [imposed](#) a monetary fine on Emine Şenyaşar for insulting İbrahim Halil Yıldız, a ruling party affiliate whose security detail killed Şenyaşar's spouse and two children.

February 14: A Denizli court [arrested](#) a person who was detained on charges of insulting the president on social media.

February 15: The police in Erzurum [detained](#) eight people on charges of insulting the president on social media.

February 15: An İstanbul court [released](#) journalists Barış Pehlivan and Murat Ağirel hours after they were sentenced to jail over their coverage of the deaths of Turkish intelligence officers in Libya. The journalists were convicted on charges of disclosing confidential information.

February 15: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to four columns which raised allegations implicating high-level defense ministry officials.

February 16: The police in Adana [detained](#) three people for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

February 16: The youth organization of an opposition party in Mersin [attacked](#) the office of a local newspaper which reported on alleged municipal corruption in the province that implicated the party.

February 16: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) a fine and temporary broadcast suspension on Halk TV due to remarks of a journalist about Cyprus.

February 17: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit Gökhan Biçici who was standing trial on charges of insulting the president due to a news report.

February 17: A Tunceli court [ruled](#) to acquit Eren Keskin, an executive of the Human Rights Association (İHD), who stood trial on terrorism related charges due to a speech and her social media posts.

February 19: Güngör Arslan, a local journalist in Kocaeli, was [shot dead](#) in his office after reporting on a local corruption allegation.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

February 15: The police in Kars detained Ziyadin Can, a provincial executive of the Human Rights Association (İHD).

February 17: A Tunceli court [ruled](#) to acquit Eren Keskin, an executive of the Human Rights Association (İHD), who stood trial on terrorism related charges due to a speech and her social media posts.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 19: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in a case that it is lawful to arrest suspects even if the incriminating testimony of a secret witness is the only piece of evidence against the individual.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 14: The police in Mardin [detained](#) 22 people over their social media messages and their involvement in the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the umbrella organization of the Kurdish political movement.

February 14: The police in Batman [detained](#) four members of the HDP.

February 14: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) journalist Zeynep Durgut, a reporter for the Mezopotamya news agency. Durgut was released on February 17.

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

February 15: The police in Kars [detained](#) five people, including a provincial HDP executive.

February 15: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 10 people, including members of the HDP.

February 15: The police in Kocaeli [detained](#) two local HDP executives.

February 17: An appeals court in Diyarbakır [upheld](#) the prison sentence of six years, three months handed down to HDP MP Kemal Bülbül on terrorism charges.

February 17: The Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) [presented](#) to court its report on ailing Kurdish politician Aysel Tuğluk, stating that she displayed symptoms of mild cognitive impairment and was fit to remain in prison. Tuğluk suffers from dementia and rights groups have been calling for her immediate release.

February 17: A parliamentary committee [voted](#) to lift the immunity of HDP MP Semra Güzel who risks standing trial on terrorism charges.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 14: An İzmir prison [denied](#) hospitalization to sick inmates Fatma Özbay and Siya Çınar.

February 15: An Adana prison [denied](#) hospitalization to inmate Fatih Özgür Aydın who refused to undergo mouth search. Aydın suffers from Crohn's disease and has been deemed by doctors as a stroke risk.

February 19: A Mersin prison [restricted](#) prisoners' right to weekly video and phone calls, denied prisoners' access to two newspapers critical of the government and blocked the delivery of packages sent to prisoners. The prison administration also denied medical treatment to inmates who refused to receive treatment in handcuffs.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 17: A Van court [handed down](#) a lenient prison sentence of five months to a police officer who fatally punched an Afghan migrant in 2014.

February 19: Ahmad Rafik Olabi, a 69-year-old Syrian refugee, was [killed](#) in his house by three individuals who introduced themselves as police officers. The alleged assailants were arrested.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 14: The guards in a Şanlıurfa prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates and confiscated their personal belongings during a ward search.

February 15: The gendarmerie in Bingöl physically [mistreated](#) a man and his family during a house raid to detain him.

February 16: Guards in an Afyon prison physically [mistreated](#) an inmate named Fırat Beyazıt and forced him to undergo a strip-search.

February 17: A Van court [handed down](#) a lenient prison sentence of five months to a police officer who fatally punched an Afghan migrant in 2014.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

February 14: Men [killed](#) at least 339 women and inflicted violence on at least 793 women in 2021, according to data released by Bianet.

February 16: Media reports [revealed](#) that a Turkish man who was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of four women was released by Turkish courts six years after his extradition to Turkey to serve the remainder of his sentence.