

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 79 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 19: The police in İzmir [detained](#) 47 people for providing financial aid to the families of those imprisoned over their links to the Gülen movement. Personal savings, jewelry, mobile phones and computers were confiscated in the operation which was ordered by İzmir prosecutors.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunc](#), 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

March 13: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) 13 people, including members and executives of the HDP, due to their attendance in an event held at a party building.

March 15: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration held outside a courthouse, briefly detaining 45 protesters.

March 16: An İzmir court [sentenced](#) 30 former university students to more than three years each in prison for taking part in protests over a mining disaster in 2014.

March 19: The police in İstanbul, Mardin and İzmir [intervened](#) in Newroz celebrations, detaining 272 people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 13: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports about allegations of embezzlement involving a mosque association.

March 13: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports and six tweets about allegations that the owner of a TV station had ties to a mob boss.

March 13: Yalova University in northwestern Turkey [launched](#) an administrative investigation into academic Çiğdem Kurt who criticized the government's handling of the earthquakes during a lecture.

March 13: An administrative court in Ankara [ruled](#) for the reinstatement of five academics who were previously dismissed from their positions after signing a declaration criticizing the government's handling of the Kurdish conflict.

March 14: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) Ferhat Çelik, an executive of the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency.

March 14: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports about a company that allegedly caused public loss by forging fake bills.

March 14: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least six news reports covering allegations about a

construction company which built the highways that were destroyed in the earthquakes of February.

March 14: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report covering misconduct allegations about İrfan Keskin, a former executive of the government agency for disaster relief.

March 14: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit reporter Adil Demirci who stood trial on terrorism charges.

March 15: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports covering nepotism allegations implicating Minister of Treasury and Finance Lütfi Elvan.

March 16: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) journalist Aren Yıldırım.

March 16: The police in Ankara [detained](#) Kurdish journalist Hamdullah Bayram, who is facing terrorism-related charges. Bayram was later arrested by a court.

March 16: The police in Van [detained](#) nine people, including politicians and NGO executives, on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda.

March 16: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to an opinion column about corruption allegations implicating ruling party politician Doğan Çelik.

March 16: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report covering the comments of an anonymous gendarmerie officer who admitted that government agencies were caught unprepared for the earthquakes of February.

March 17: The police in Şanlıurfa [detained](#) journalist Gülistan Dursun who was following a protest vigil.

March 17: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to six news reports covering allegations about a political party that announced its endorsement for the incumbent president in the upcoming elections.

March 17: A Rize court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports covering allegations of fraud implicating former cabinet minister Berat Albayrak.

March 17: Media reports [claimed](#) that German news agency Deutsche Welle is planning to close its Turkey office after Turkish authorities refused to renew its license.

March 17: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalists Ozan Buz and Fırat Fıstık who stood trial due to their reports about a controversial government-appointed university rector.

March 19: The Security Directorate General (EGM) [announced](#) that a total of 185 people were detained due to their “provocative” social media posts about the earthquakes, up from 179 last week.

March 19: An Uşak court [imposed](#) a monetary fine on actress Farah Zeynep Abdullah, on charges of insulting a former serviceman suspected of rape.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 14: A tax amnesty announced by the government [included](#) a discriminatory clause against those investigated or dismissed from public service due to their links to the Gülen movement.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 13: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) 13 people, including members and executives of the HDP, due to their attendance in an event held at a party building.

March 14: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) Ferhat Çelik, an executive of the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency.

March 19: The police in İstanbul, Mardin and İzmir [intervened](#) in Newroz celebrations, detaining 272 people.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 14: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the authorities violated the rights of an imprisoned couple by not allowing them to exchange visits.

March 15: A Balıkesir prison [obstructed](#) the hospitalization of inmates who refused to undergo mouth searches.

March 17: Reports revealed that a Manisa prison was [holding](#) 20 inmates in a ward designed for eight people and that some inmates were forced to sleep on the ground due to overcrowding.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 17: The Association for Migration Research (GAR) [released](#) a report which indicated that Syrian refugees in the earthquake-hit areas in southern Turkey were subjected to “multi-layered discrimination,” including hate speech, ill-treatment and physical violence.

March 19: Reports [claimed](#) that Turkish security forces tortured two Syrian refugees to death at the Turkish-Syrian border. Three gendarmes were detained in connection with the allegations.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 16: An Ağrı prison [imposed](#) restrictions on the phone call rights of jailed religious community leader Alparslan Kuytul on the grounds that “he was the only one who spoke” during his phone calls. Kuytul was imprisoned following his outspoken criticism of the government.

March 17: Neighborhood guards in Hatay physically [assaulted](#) earthquake survivors who were trying to retrieve personal belongings from a damaged building.

March 19: Reports [claimed](#) that Turkish security forces tortured two Syrian refugees to death at the Turkish-Syrian border. Three gendarmes were detained in connection with the allegations.