

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 23 | November 23-29, 2020

November 27: The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) [granted](#) its posthumous Human Rights Award to late lawyer Ebru Timtik who lost her life in August 2020 after a 238-day death fast demanding a fair trial.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

November 24: Former police officer [Ümit Gökhasan](#), who was diagnosed with stomach cancer while in prison, died three months after his release. Gökhasan was kept behind bars for seven months after the diagnosis, which allowed the stage three cancer to spread to other parts of his body due to lack of proper treatment.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

November 23: İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) 46 people who were detained during the police attack against the 700th sit-in of “Saturday Mothers” in August 2018. The Saturday Mothers is Turkey’s longest-running peaceful protest movement that comprises family members of those who disappeared in police custody in the 1980s and 90s.

November 23: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a demonstration held by the HDP, detaining 22 people.

November 23: The Governor’s Office in Kocaeli [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

November 24: A court [sentenced](#) 11 labor union officials and leftist politicians to prison sentences ranging from 2 years to 3 years over their involvement in the organization of a demonstration in October 2015.

November 24: The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a protest march organized by metalworkers, detaining 109 people. The protesters were released on Nov. 25.

November 24: The Governor’s Office in Mardin [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days. The office also imposed brief curfews in two districts.

November 25: The police in Adana, Ankara, İstanbul and Van [blocked](#) demonstrations organized on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; detaining 10 women during the intervention in İstanbul.

November 25: The police in Karaman [blocked](#) a protest march towards the capital city of Ankara organized by miners, detaining 30 people.

November 27: Opposition MP Süleyman Bülbül said that Turkish security forces [blocked](#) at least 700 demonstrations over the past five months.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

November 23: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Mehmet Baransu to 17 years, one month on four separate charges over a report he published in 2013. Another journalist in the trial, Murat Şevki Çoban, was cleared of all charges.

November 23: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) former labor union executive Rahmetullah Öral to 3 years, 4 months in prison for “spreading terrorist propaganda,” over his social media commentary.

November 23: Former MP Galip Ensarioğlu [testified](#) as a suspect to Diyarbakır prosecutors for offering his condolences to the family of a YPG militant killed by ISIS in Iraq.

November 24: The police in Van [detained](#) journalist Dindar Karataş on terrorism-related charges. Karataş was arrested on Nov. 26.

November 24: The police in Van [raided](#) the bureau of Mesopotamia news agency. The pro-Kurdish agency, which is known for hard-hitting reporting of human rights abuses in the predominantly Kurdish southeast, suffered its second police raid in the last two months.

November 24: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the rights of journalist Ahmet Şık who was kept in pre-trial detention for 14 months.

November 24: Prosecutors [launched](#) a criminal investigation into journalist Melis Alphan over a social media post.

November 25: A Balıkesir court [sentenced](#) five people, including a local leftist politician, to 1 year, 3 months, 16 days in prison each for insulting the president during a commemoration event.

November 25: The police in Van [detained](#) university student Reber Mazlum Safran over his social media posts.

November 25: Media regulator RTÜK [issued](#) an official warning against singer İrem Derici over alleged obscenity in her music video.

November 26: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 19 people in an operation, including an İstanbul district mayor as well as journalists Davut Uçar and Kesire Önel, over alleged ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

November 26: İzmir prosecutors [demanded](#) a criminal prosecution against Banu Özdemir, a local politician from the main opposition CHP, for allegedly provoking enmity and hatred among public in social media posts.

November 26: Authorities [blocked](#) access to news reports about a Nepalese domestic worker subjected to violence in Turkey.

November 26: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a column about a religious network within the police.

November 26: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to digital music platform TIDAL on the grounds that the platform failed to pay its licensing fee to media regulator RTÜK.

November 27: The police in Ankara [detained](#) journalist Hakan Yalçın over alleged ties to terrorism.

November 27: An Adıyaman court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Hacı Boğatekin of terrorism-related charges.

November 28: Prosecutors [filed](#) criminal charges against journalist Alican Uludağ over a tweet he posted about a prosecutor.

November 29: Media regulator RTÜK [launched](#) an investigation into a Habertürk TV show featuring the remarks of an opposition MP about Turkey's military.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

November 23: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey's judiciary violated the rights of pro-Kurdish politician Hasan Bakır by convicting him of terrorism based on anonymous witness testimonies as evidence. The recourse to anonymous testimonies is widespread in Turkish courts, particularly in terrorism-related trials.

November 26: The police in Bursa [detained](#) lawyers Cahit Kırkazak, İbrahim Korhan and Mehmet Deniz over their meetings with their imprisoned clients. The lawyers also represent jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş.

KURDISH MINORITY

November 23: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey's judiciary violated the rights of pro-Kurdish politician Hasan Bakır by convicting him of terrorism based on anonymous witness testimonies as evidence. The recourse to anonymous testimonies is widespread in Turkish courts, particularly in terrorism-related trials.

November 23: Former MP Galip Ensarioğlu [testified](#) as a suspect to Diyarbakır prosecutors for offering his condolences to the family of a YPG militant killed by ISIS in Iraq.

November 24: The police [detained](#) Dr. Şeyhmus Gökalp, a member of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), as part of an investigation into the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), a pro-Kurdish political network.

November 24: The police in Van [detained](#) journalist Dindar Karataş on terrorism-related charges. Karataş was arrested on Nov. 26.

November 25: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in a speech [referred](#) to jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş as a terrorist.

November 26: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 19 people in an operation, including an İstanbul district mayor as well as journalists Davut Uçar and Kesire Önel, over alleged ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

November 23: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a demonstration held by the HDP, detaining 22 people.

November 26: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) HDP MP Kemal Bülbül to 6 years, 3 months on terrorism charges.

November 26: The police in Bursa [detained](#) lawyers Cahit Kırkazak, İbrahim Korhan and Mehmet Deniz over their meetings with their imprisoned clients. The lawyers also represent jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş.

November 26: Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu [announced](#) that the Turkish government has ousted 151 mayors from office since 2014, mostly on accusations of having ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

November 27: The police in Ankara [detained](#) journalist Hakan Yalçın over alleged ties to terrorism.

November 27: The police in Van [detained](#) four people in raids, including HDP provincial co-chair Ökkeş Kava.

November 27: Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu during a parliamentary committee meeting [said](#) Kurdish villagers Servet Turgut and Osman Şiban, who were allegedly tortured by Turkish security forces in September, had been aiding members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The villagers were found by their families in a hospital with serious injuries two days after they were detained as part of an operation conducted by Turkish security forces in Van. Turgut succumbed to his injuries on Sept. 30. Authorities denied the torture allegation while four journalists who reported the incidents were arrested and an access block was imposed on the news reports about the allegation.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

November 24: Algeria [extradited](#) a Turkish national sought by Turkish authorities over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

November 27: Reports said that a Belgian court [referred](#) 14 Belgians of Turkish descent to the country's highest criminal court over Facebook comments targeting residents with ties to the Gülen movement.

OTHER MINORITIES

November 26: An İzmir court [sentenced](#) a police officer to life imprisonment for killing a trans woman.

PRISON CONDITIONS

November 24: Former police officer [Ümit Gökhasan](#), who was diagnosed with stomach cancer while in prison, died three months after his release. Gökhasan was kept behind bars for seven months after the diagnosis, which allowed the stage three cancer to spread to other parts of his body due to lack of proper treatment.

November 26: Imprisoned journalist [Harun Çümen](#) in a letter he sent from prison said that he and his fellow inmates are forced to live in cells invaded by rats.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

November 25: Turkey scored 43 points out of 100 on the [Migrant Integration Policy Index](#) (MIPEX) 2020, moving up from the bottom 10 countries since the 2015 index, with its policies shifting to "halfway favorable" for the social integration of migrants.

November 26: [Reports](#) revealed that an Iranian woman who was sexually abused at a migrant detention center in Van, continued to be kept at the same place.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

November 25: [Turkey Tribunal](#), an international non-binding and symbolic tribunal organized by Belgian law firm Van Steenbrugge Advocaten and Law Professor Johan Vande Lanotte to assess Turkey's human rights record, held a [webinar](#) on torture featuring contributions from specialists and the [testimony](#) of a torture survivor from Turkey.

November 26: A man named [Mehmet Şerif Coşkun](#), who suffered multiple heart attacks after being battered by police officers in İzmir on Nov. 13, died while receiving treatment in a hospital.

November 27: Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu during a parliamentary committee meeting [said](#) Kurdish villagers Servet Turgut and Osman Şiban, who were allegedly tortured by Turkish security forces in September, had been aiding members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The villagers were found by their families in a hospital with serious injuries two days after they were detained as part of an operation conducted by Turkish security forces in Van. Turgut succumbed to his injuries on Sept. 30. Authorities denied the torture allegation while four journalists who reported the incidents were arrested and an access block was imposed on the news reports about the allegation.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

November 24: A male violence monitoring [report](#) said 253 women were killed and 715 others were injured at the hands of men between Jan. 1 and Nov 21. in Turkey.

November 25: Opposition MP Gamze Akkuş İlgezdi released a [report](#) which found that Turkish prosecutors have filed criminal cases against only 4,910 out of a total of 25,841 domestic violence suspects over the last eight years.

November 25: We Want to Live Initiative, a women's group, [submitted](#) to the parliament 600,000 signatures they collected in favor of implementing the international İstanbul Convention against gender-based violence. Over the past year, government officials have made statements implying Turkey's possible withdrawal from the Council of Europe treaty.