

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 567 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.

**April 26:** The authorities [arrested](#) Merve Hande Kayış, the mother of three children including 13-month-old twins, for alleged links to the Gülen movement, in violation of Turkey's laws which require delaying the imprisonment or pre-trial detention of women who are pregnant or have given birth within the last year and a half.

**April 27:** The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) [accepted](#) as "urgent" a petition from Cihan Erdal, a doctoral student at Canada's Carleton University who has been in jail in Turkey for seven months on terrorism-related charges.

**April 28:** An Amasya prison is unlawfully [denying](#) parole to inmates imprisoned for links to the Gülen movement

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunc](#) and [Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyigit](#), former public sector workers who were sacked from their jobs by decree-laws during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who were reported missing respectively as of August 6, 2019 and December 29, 2020, in what appear to be the latest cases in a

string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**April 26:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a demonstration held to call for the release of a sick prisoner, briefly detaining three people.

**April 26:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) two people staging a sit-in protest against their summary dismissal from public service by decree-laws.

**April 26:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a social justice protest, briefly detaining two people.

**April 27:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a workers' protest held on the occasion of the upcoming May Day, briefly detaining 33 people including three journalists.

**April 28:** The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a demonstration held on the occasion of the upcoming May Day, briefly detaining six people.

**April 29:** The police in several provinces [blocked](#) demonstrations held on the occasion of the upcoming May Day, detaining three people in İzmir.

**April 29:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining eight people.

**April 29:** The Supreme Court of Appeals [overturned](#) the acquittal of 35 people who were put on trial for attending the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

**May 1:** The police across the country [blocked](#) May Day rallies, detaining 255 people in İstanbul, 41 in Ankara, 22 in İzmir, 4 in Antalya, 12 in Trabzon and 20 in Artvin.

**May 1:** The gendarmes in Rize intervened in a protest against the opening of a stone quarry, detaining at least five people.

**May 1:** The International Labour Organization (ILO), a UN agency setting labor standards, decided that the Turkish government violated UN conventions on labor by closing down trade unions and dismissing workers over alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement.

**May 2:** The Van governor's office issued a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. The ban has remained uninterrupted in effect since November 2016.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**April 26:** The police in Ankara briefly detained two reporters for the Mezopotamya news agency who were following up on a HDP press briefing.

**April 27:** A quarterly report by the Turkish Journalists' Association (TGC) said that four members of the press were arrested and 24 others were detained in the first three months of 2021.

**April 28:** The police in İstanbul briefly detained two young people for insulting the symbols of the sovereignty of the state, over a TikTok video where they were seen using Turkish passports for various purposes other than traveling such as coasters, oven gloves or bookmarks.

**April 28:** Diyarbakır prosecutors launched an investigation into the Diyarbakır bar association over a statement it released to commemorate the Armenian genocide.

**April 28:** Media regulator RTÜK imposed a monetary fine against the KRT TV over the remarks of opposition MP Engin Altay about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. RTÜK also fined Halk TV over the remarks on a political program.

**April 28:** The Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body responsible for regulating publicly funded advertisements in the media, imposed a three-day advertising ban on the Birgün newspaper over a report about an alleged corruption in a martial art federation.

**April 29:** The police in Muğla briefly detained and released on probation one person for allegedly insulting the president on social media. The individual was

arrested the next day as he/she continued his social media commentary after his/her release.

**April 29:** An İstanbul court ordered opposition politician Canan Kaftancıoğlu to pay \$7,000 in damages to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for insulting him on social media.

**April 30:** The police in Hakkari detained a 14-year-old boy on charges of insulting the president on social media.

**April 30:** A Diyarbakır court blocked access to a web address used by the Jin news to publish news.

**April 30:** An appeals court ruled to acquit scientist Bülent Şık who was previously sentenced to 15 months in prison for disclosing classified information, after exposing cancer risks from toxic pollution.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**April 28:** Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, a former MP and leading rights advocate who was stripped of his parliamentary status in March and subsequently jailed, now faces up to five years in prison for staging a "justice watch" in the parliament following his expulsion, according to a new indictment drafted by Ankara prosecutors.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**April 26:** The police in Diyarbakır detained 11 people, including politicians from HDP and DBP, on terrorism-related charges.

**April 26:** An Ankara court began the trial of 108 Kurdish politicians for their alleged roles in deadly 2014 protests. The police blocked a press briefing held in front of the provincial HDP headquarters and briefly detained two reporters for the Mezopotamya news agency who were following it.

**April 29:** The Supreme Court of Appeals upheld a prison sentence of four years, eight months given to Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş and three years, six months handed down to Sırri Süreyya Önder for disseminating terrorist propaganda, over a speeches they delivered during a Newroz celebration in İstanbul in March 2017.

**April 29:** The Supreme Court of Appeals upheld a prison sentence of seven years, six months handed down to former HDP MP İdris Baluken on terrorism-related charges.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**April 26:** Leaked documents revealed that Turkish diplomats in Turkmenistan engaged in a campaign of intelligence gathering on the activities of government critics in the country, leading to the prosecution of four individuals in Turkey.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**April 26:** Ümit Özdağ, a far-right MP, openly threatened Turkish-Armenian MP Garo Paylan on social media amid a debate about the Armenian genocide.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**April 29:** Security forces in Van shot and injured a local inhabitant who was looking for his lost sheep. The victim was also subjected to ill-treatment after being shot.

**April 30:** The guards at an İzmir prison physically assaulted and injured inmate Didem Akman.

**April 30:** The Security General Directorate (EGM) ordered police officers to stop people from recording videos while law enforcement is carrying out its duties. Human rights NGOs have described the move as an attempt to prevent incidents of police brutality from going public.

**May 1:** The police in İstanbul took eight people who were detained while demonstrating for May Day to a location without security cameras and tortured them.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**April 27:** A report by the İstanbul municipality found that a total of 13,740 underage marriages took place in Turkey in 2020. The report said 95 percent of the minors were girls.

**May 1:** A university study found that four out of every 10 Turkish women experience domestic violence during their lifetime.