

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Belgian law firm Van Steenbrugge Advocaten (VSA) [announced](#) on March 1 that they have, jointly with two NGOs, submitted a communication to the International Criminal Court (ICC) that seek the launch of an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed by the Turkish government. While Turkey is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the communication includes documents of crimes against humanity allegedly committed by Turkey in 45 states under the jurisdiction of the Hague court.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 21 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

February 27: The police in İstanbul and Ankara [intervened](#) in demonstrations held by leftist groups, detaining at least 26 activists.

February 28: The police in Mersin [detained](#) four people due to their participation in protests against the government's handling of the earthquakes.

February 28: The police in Ankara and İstanbul [intervened](#) in demonstrations held by NGOs to protest restrictions against healthcare personnel in earthquake-hit zones, briefly detaining 22 people.

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

March 1: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration held by a leftist political party, detaining 77 people.

March 1: The police İstanbul [intervened](#) in a women's rights protest, detaining five activists.

March 2: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration held to protest a fatal house raid in September 2018, briefly detaining four people.

March 3: The Osmaniye Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 5: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a women's rights protest, detaining five activists.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 27: The police in Osmaniye [detained](#) and arrested journalists Ali İmat and İbrahim İmat on charges

of disseminating “misinformation,” after they reported on allegations that tents were withheld from earthquake victims in the province.

February 27: Samsun prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into lawyer Hüseyin Cimsit on charges of insulting the president, due to a criminal complaint against the president’s alleged mismanagement of the earthquakes. Cimsit was summoned for a questioning.

February 28: A Bitlis court [handed down](#) a suspended prison sentence of 10 months to journalist Sinan Aygül on charges of spreading “disinformation,” due to his reporting on allegations of child abuse. Aygül became the first member of the press in Turkey to be convicted under a controversial law that criminalizes the dissemination of “false or misleading information.”

February 28: The police in Elazığ [detained](#) academic Övgün Ahmet Ercan on charges of fomenting hatred and enmity among the public, due to his social media posts about the earthquakes. Ercan was released under judicial control and with a travel ban the next day.

February 28: The authorities [banned](#) the fans of İstanbul football club Fenerbahçe from attending an away game against Kayserispor after they shouted anti-government slogans in an earlier home match. Reports published on March 1 [revealed](#) that at least 74 people were informed by the authorities that they were banned from following sporting events for their participation in anti-government chants.

February 28: A Zonguldak court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA), citing national security and public order reasons.

March 1: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) journalists Asena Tunca, Ezgi Can Ceylan and Ahmet Can Sarıkaya who were following a demonstration.

March 1: The police in Ankara [detained](#) journalist Gökhan Özbek on charges of spreading misinformation due to his reporting. Özbek was released the next day.

March 1: The police in İzmir [detained](#) three university students on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda.

March 1: An İstanbul prosecutor [demanded](#) up to three years in prison for singer Gülşen Bayraktar Çolakoğlu who

is standing trial on charges of inciting hatred and enmity among the public due to her remarks during a concert.

March 3: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to Ekşi Sözlük, a popular social media website. The ruling came after a previous access block was lifted by another court. The authorities had censored the website for the “protection of national security and public order.”

March 3: İzmir prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into local opposition politician Emir Sarı on charges of insulting the president, due to a party banner. Sarı was summoned by the police for a questioning.

March 3: Telecommunication authorities [blocked](#) access to at least three news reports covering corruption allegations implicating former cabinet member Ruhsar Pekcan.

March 3: A Bursa court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports covering public tenders awarded to ruling party politician Muharrem İleri.

March 3: Media designer Fevzi Yazıcı was [released](#) from prison after a Supreme Court of Appeals overturned a previous life imprisonment handed down to him by a lower court. Yazıcı spent 6.5 years behind bars due to his professional work for the now-shuttered Zaman newspaper.

March 5: The Security Directorate General (EGM) [announced](#) that as of March 5, a total of 152 people were detained due to their social media posts about the earthquakes, up from 141 last week.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 5: The squad and fans of Amedspor, a football club from the predominantly Kurdish province of Diyarbakır, were [subjected](#) to a number of racist attacks during an away game in Bursa.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 27: Media reports [indicated](#) that an İstanbul prison was giving inadequate meals to prisoners and restricting water supply.

February 27: An Antalya prison [continued](#) to deprive babies who were staying in prison alongside their mothers of special baby food. The problem is reportedly causing health problems among the babies.

March 2: Media reports [indicated](#) that a women's prison in Mersin was providing inmates with insufficient food and water and that the inmates in the prison were kept in overcrowded wards after incoming transfers from earthquake-hit areas.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 2: Media reports [claimed](#) that Turkey's authorities were discriminating against Syrian refugees in distributing humanitarian aid to earthquake-hit areas.

March 4: The UN [urged](#) countries to take Syrian refugees from earthquake-hit zones in Turkey, saying they were facing the trauma of loss and displacement all over again.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 27: Gendarmes in Hatay informally [detained](#) six leftist activists and verbally mistreated them.

March 1: An İzmir prison [demanded](#) an exorbitant amount of money (approx. 2,000€) from inmate Şükrü Çiçek, who demanded to attend his father's funeral.

March 1: The police in Tunceli [mistreated](#) a man named Erkan Gül during a house raid.

March 2: The guards in an Antalya prison [strip-searched](#) inmates during a transfer. The prison administration launched disciplinary investigations into those who resisted the practice.

March 4: The Şanlıurfa Bar Association [announced](#) that two people (Mehmet Samur and Adle Samur) who were detained on March 2 were mistreated in police custody.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

March 3: A monthly gender-based violence report released by Bianet [showed](#) that men killed at least 11 women and inflicted violence on at least 40 others in February.