

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 237 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.

**November 2:** The mother of Devrim Ayık, a jailed journalist with significant health problems, [announced](#) that her son is kept behind bars despite his worsening condition.

## 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

**November 2:** İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) nine lawyers who made a public statement to protest an Interior Ministry decision to remove three Kurdish mayors from office in August 2019.

**November 2:** The Mardin Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**November 4:** The police across several provinces [blocked](#) demonstrations organized by the HDP to mark the fifth anniversary of the imprisonment of former party co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ. The intervention resulted in the brief detention of four people in Ağrı and two people in Van.

**November 6:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) 18 people protesting the Council of Higher Education.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**November 1:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that nine access bans imposed by lower courts on online articles violated the freedom expression and media, asking the Parliament to amend the law.

**November 1:** A monthly report [found](#) that 58 journalists stood trial in October, facing up to a total of 896 years in prison.

**November 2:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [demanded](#) up to 15 years in prison for Kurdish author Azad Zal who is standing trial on terrorism charges.

**November 2:** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) a monetary fine on the government-critical TELE 1 broadcaster over a program about nepotism allegations involving a pro-government foundation.

**November 3:** A Yalova court [sentenced](#) Kurdish poet Yılmaz Odabaşı to 11 months, 20 days in prison on charges of insulting the president.

**November 3:** The police [announced](#) that they launched an investigation into 30 social media users who circulated rumors about the president's death.

**November 3:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Kaan Göktaş to two years in prison on charges of insulting the president, over a social media message in which he shared a 300-year-old poem.

**November 3:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) lawyer Sinan Bin to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges, due to a speech he gave at a symposium.

**November 3:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about nepotism allegations involving pro-government foundations.

**November 3:** An appeals commission [refused](#) to reinstate two academics who were fired from their universities for signing a declaration that called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Kurdish provinces.

**November 4:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) author Erdal Yıldırım to one year, six months, 22 days in prison on terrorism-related charges, over his social media posts about clashes in Syria between ISIS and Kurdish militants.

**November 5:** [Majed Shama](#), a Syrian journalist residing in Turkey, was reportedly forced to sign a “voluntary repatriation document” after his report on Syrian refugees in Turkey sharing videos online to protest racism and discrimination. His lawyer later announced that he was not going to be deported.

**November 5:** The police in Elazığ [detained](#) academic Hifzullah Kutum on terrorism charges, for writing “Long live Kurdistan” in a social media post. Kutum was also suspended from the university where he worked.

**November 5:** A Bursa court [imposed](#) a monetary fine of €620 on a man named Yüksel Üstün who referred to the president as a secret Jew in a Facebook post, convicting him of insulting the president.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**November 3:** The Inquiry Commission on State of Emergency Measures, an appeals commission set up to review individual complaints related to 2016-2018 post-coup state of emergency measures, [refused](#) to reinstate two academics who were fired from their universities for signing a declaration that called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Kurdish provinces.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**November 1:** A court [ruled](#) to arrest HDP executive Sevim Akdağ who was detained on October 29.

**November 2:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [demanded](#) up to 15 years in prison for Kurdish author Azad Zal who is standing trial on terrorism charges.

**November 2:** The police in Adıyaman [detained](#) Mustafa Yüksel, an advisor to HDP deputy Kemal Bülbül.

**November 3:** Security forces in Adıyaman [detained](#) former HDP lawmaker Behçet Yıldırım on terrorism charges.

**November 4:** The police across several provinces [blocked](#) demonstrations organized by the HDP to mark the fifth anniversary of the imprisonment of former party co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ. The intervention resulted in the brief detention of four people in Ağrı and two people in Van.

**November 5:** The police in Elazığ [detained](#) academic Hifzullah Kutum on terrorism charges, for writing “Long live Kurdistan” in a social media post. Kutum was also suspended from the university where he worked.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**November 1:** An Adana prison [denied](#) hospitalization to inmate İbrahim Karakaş who refused to undergo a mouth search.

**November 1:** A Trabzon prison [denied](#) hospitalization to several inmates for refusing to undergo a mouth search.

**November 2:** An Eskişehir prison [denied](#) hospitalization to inmate Cihan Alkan for refusing to undergo a mouth search.

**November 3:** An inmate in an İzmir prison [reported](#) that prison authorities were pressuring inmates into joining Islamic activities.

**November 5:** Erkam Özkaya, a father of four arrested for links to the Gülen movement, [said](#) in a letter to a MP that he had not seen his family for more than two years due to the distance between his prison and family home and that prison authorities had not responded to his request to be transferred to a prison closer to his family.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**November 2:** Ahmet Baran Çelik, a lawyer who represents five survivors of an incident where Turkish gendarmes allegedly threw a group of migrants into the Evros River, [complained](#) that Edirne prosecutors were stalling the investigation into the officers who were allegedly involved.

**November 3:** Human Rights Watch and 32 other human rights groups released a joint [statement](#), urging the Turkish government to ensure the protection of the rights and freedoms of Turkmen nationals residing in Turkey from the threats of Turkmen authorities.

**November 5:** [Majed Shama](#), a Syrian journalist residing in Turkey, was reportedly forced to sign a “voluntary repatriation document” after his report on Syrian refugees in Turkey sharing videos online to protest racism and discrimination. His lawyer later announced that he was not going to be deported.

**November 5:** A report [claimed](#) that Iranian intelligence services have been threatening and abducting Iranian dissidents living in Turkey.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**November 6:** Ayhan Demir, a 45-year-old man, [said](#) he was made impotent as a result of the sexual torture and electrocution he was subjected to during his detention by the Mersin police in September 2016.

**November 6:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey [filed](#) a criminal complaint against former intelligence chief Mehmet Eymür who confessed in a TV interview that he had resorted to torture during interrogations since the 1970s.

**November 6:** The police in Diyarbakır [mistreated](#) a man named Behçet Bayhan during a house raid to detain him. The officers also verbally assaulted the other people who were in the house.

**November 7:** The police in Ankara [mistreated](#) a student who was detained over left-wing activism.

**November 7:** Soldiers in Mardin [mistreated](#) 73-year-old Abdurrahman Dinler during a house raid.

## TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS

**November 1:** A [report](#) published by the Heritage Foundation argued that Turkey is unfit to host the upcoming INTERPOL General Assembly due to its record of abusing the institution to target and harass its critics living abroad.

**November 3:** A new research [highlighted](#) that Turkey-backed armed groups in northern Syria have been weaponizing water by building dams on a river that serves as a lifeline for communities living downstream in Kurdish-majority areas.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**November 3:** A monthly gender-based violence [report](#) compiled by Bianet found that men killed at least 22 women and inflicted violence on 53 others in October.

**November 5:** Women's rights groups [condemned](#) a Supreme Court of Appeals decision to uphold a lengthy prison sentence handed down to a woman who killed her abusive husband in self-defense.