

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 256 | Date 12-18 May

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 117 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.

16 May: Turkish authorities have [detained](#) 101 more people across 27 provinces in the ongoing crackdown on the Gülen movement, with the accusation of contacting members of the movement via pay phones and aiding families of those who were removed from their jobs by Emergency Decrees (KHK).

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

12 May: Turkish Education Minister Yusuf Tekin publicly [labeled](#) a teacher a “terrorist” after he criticized the controversial interview-based hiring system, sparking outrage from educators and opposition figures who say the

system is rife with favoritism and has driven hundreds of teacher candidates to despair or suicide.

14 May: Turkish police [detained](#) 97 people during student protests at Boğaziçi University against preacher Nureddin Yıldız, known for controversial remarks on child marriage; six protesters were later formally arrested.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

13 May: Turkish prosecutors have [indicted](#) chronically ill university student Esila Ayık for allegedly insulting President Erdoğan by calling him a “dictator” at a protest, seeking up to 4 years, 8 months in prison, while she was kept in pretrial detention for weeks without access to vital medication.

15 May: Turkish journalist Furkan Karabay was [arrested](#) on charges of insulting the president and targeting public officials involved in counterterrorism efforts in his reports and social media posts concerning investigations into opposition mayors.

15 May: A Turkish court [sentenced](#) journalist Evrim Kepenek to a 10-month suspended prison term for allegedly violating investigation confidentiality in her reporting on the suspected sexual abuse and death of a 2-year-old.

15 May: Prominent physician and human rights advocate Dr. Ayşe Uğurlu was [dismissed](#) from public service for allegedly insulting President Erdoğan by reading a women’s rights statement.

16 May: Turkey’s media watchdog RTÜK [fined](#) pro-opposition channels Sözcü TV, Halk TV, and Tele1 for their coverage of an assault on opposition leader Özgür Özel and

a high-profile blackmail scandal, drawing criticism for politically motivated censorship.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

15 May: İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, jailed on corruption charges widely seen as politically motivated, [testified](#) in a new investigation for “insulting public officials” after criticizing prosecutors during a March court hearing,

KURDISH MINORITY

12 May: The PKK has officially [declared](#) its dissolution and the end of its armed campaign against Turkey after 40 years of conflict.

PRISON CONDITIONS

16 May: Turkey’s prison population has [surpassed](#) 400,000—exceeding official capacity by over 100,000—as a result of mass detentions targeting dissenters, including Gülen movement followers and Kurdish activists, amid an eightfold rise in inmates over 25 years.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

12 May: In Antalya’s Kepez district, a person was [subjected](#) to physical violence by two police officers on the street, an incident filmed by a bystander and revealed on social media, leading to the suspension of both officers.

14 May: A female law student detained in last week’s mass crackdown on alleged Gülen movement followers has [attempted](#) suicide four times in four days, prompting outcry from MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who blamed Turkish authorities for her deteriorating condition amid ongoing arrests and judicial pressure on students and women.

14 May: T24 reporter Can Öztürk was [subjected](#) to physical violence by police and detained with his hands cuffed behind his back while covering a protest at İstanbul’s Boğaziçi University campus on May 13, 2025. It was also reported that his press card was torn by the police.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

14 May: Human Rights Watch has [accused](#) Turkey-backed Syrian factions of continuing to detain, torture, and extort

civilians in northern Syria with impunity, urging Syria’s transitional government to end these abuses and hold implicated commanders—some now in top military posts—accountable.