

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 19 | October 26 – November 1, 2020

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

**October 26:** Rights group Amnesty International released a [report](#) calling on Turkey to put an end to mass arrests of politicians, lawyers and activists under terrorism-related charges.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**October 26:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 40 people during a demonstration held by leftist youth groups.

**October 26:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) released a [report](#) which said that over the first eight months of 2020, security forces intervened against at least 637 peaceful gatherings, detained 1,346 participants which resulted in 54 people being injured. Governor's offices in 33 provinces issued 89 blanket bans on outdoor gatherings.

**October 27:** The police and gendarmerie forces in Ordu [attacked](#) a group of villagers protesting mineral exploration plans in the area, briefly detaining 10 people. On Oct. 28, the security forces attacked a sit-in held in the planned exploration field, detaining at least 20 people.

**October 27:** The gendarmerie forces in Karaman [blocked](#) a protest march organized by mine workers. The workers want to march to the capital city of Ankara to express their complaints about not being able to receive their wages and compensation for over a year.

**October 28:** The Governor's Office in Tunceli [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days, citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**October 26:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) released a [report](#) which said that over the first eight months of 2020, 38 journalists were detained, 17 journalists were arrested, 24 people were detained for “insulting the president,” and the courts ruled to block access to 53 news reports, 75 websites and five social media accounts.

**October 26:** The police in Van briefly [detained](#) Özgür Değer Deniz, the head of a local chamber of medical doctors, over his social media posts.

**October 26:** A Muğla court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a litigation case between a local citizen and a district mayor.

**October 26:** A Şırnak court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about an alleged Ponzi scheme orchestrated by a cryptocurrency company.

**October 27:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the freedom of expression of opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu by sentencing him to pay compensation to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in damages for raising allegations that Erdoğan and his close circle had transferred large sums of money to offshore bank accounts.

**October 27:** Prison authorities in Kocaeli partially [censored](#) an article penned by imprisoned Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ.

**October 27:** An İstanbul court [acquitted](#) journalist Hazal Ocak of the charge of “insulting a public official.” Ocak stood trial for the accusation after she reported about alleged land purchases by Finance Minister Berat

Albayrak near the planned route of Kanal İstanbul, a major construction project.

**October 28:** Imprisoned journalist Aslihan Gençay [said](#) that she was subjected to ill-treatment and strip search in a Kayseri prison where she is held.

**October 28:** Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) a probe into French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for “insulting the president,” over the publication of a cartoon of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

**October 28:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Necla Demir of the charge of “insulting the president.” Demir stood trial over the publication of two articles.

**October 28:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to lift the access block on the Sendika.org news website, in compliance with a Constitutional Court order from seven months earlier. The development came after the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [requested](#) Turkey’s defense for failing to implement the top court’s judgment.

**October 29:** İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) Germany-based journalist Burhan Ekinci for alleged terrorist propaganda over his reporting of the Kobani clashes in northern Syria in 2014.

**October 29:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Nurcan Yalçın, seeking up to 15 years in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**October 30:** A Van court [ruled](#) to block access to the websites of JinNews, Etkin News Agency (ETHA) and the Yeni Demokrasi newspaper.

**October 31:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) Kurdish author and translator Fahriye Adsay.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**October 26:** Human Rights Watch and the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists [slammed](#) the new indictment against imprisoned civil society leader Osman Kavala, calling it “politically motivated” and “bereft of legal credibility.”

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**October 28:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to lift the access block on the Sendika.org news website, in compliance with a Constitutional Court order from seven months

earlier. The development came after the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [requested](#) Turkey’s defense for failing to implement the top court’s judgment.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**October 26:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) released a [report](#) which said that over the first eight months of 2020, the Turkish government ousted 14 elected Kurdish mayors from office, replacing them with pro-government trustees.

**October 26:** A woman in Diyarbakır [alleged](#) that the police tortured her and her two children (aged 7 and 16) with a dog for two hours during a raid into their house.

**October 27:** Kurdish politician and former MP İbrahim Binici and HDP member Mesut Bağcı were [detained](#) as part of an investigation into a series of protests in Kurdish-majority cities in 2014.

**October 27:** Prison authorities in Kocaeli partially [censored](#) an article penned by imprisoned Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ.

**October 28:** The police in Mardin [detained](#) HDP district councilwoman Samiya Demir, upon orders from Mardin prosecutors.

**October 28:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) three HDP members in house raids.

**October 29:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Nurcan Yalçın, seeking up to 15 years in prison on terrorism-related charges. The indictment mentioned as evidence, among others, Yalçın’s membership in Rosa Women’s Association, a Kurdish women’s rights group.

**October 30:** A Van court [ruled](#) to block access to the websites of JinNews, Etkin News Agency (ETHA) and the Yeni Demokrasi newspaper. The outlets are known for their pro-Kurdish stance and their advocacy for human rights issues in the Kurdish-majority regions.

## MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

**November 1:** A Syria watchdog [reported](#) several civilian deaths caused by the infighting among Turkey-backed militant groups in an area held by the Turkish military in northern Syria.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**October 27:** The staff of the Turkish Embassy in Bucharest [prevented](#) two government-critical Turkish journalists from reporting on the funeral of a Romania-based Turkish scholar.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**October 29:** Journalist Yetvart Danzikyan [said](#) that a total of 142 Armenians left Turkey due to the heightened anti-Armenian sentiment in the country amid the fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**October 27:** Prison authorities in Kocaeli partially [censored](#) an article penned by imprisoned Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ.

**October 27:** Authorities have been rejecting requests by prisoners to be transferred to facilities closer to their family members, citing the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a [report](#).

**October 28:** The Diyarbakır branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD) released a [statement](#) about their visit to a prison facility in Elazığ, reporting widespread lack of respect for Covid-19 social distancing requirements.

**October 29:** A [letter](#) sent by an inmate held at Silivri Prison in İstanbul said the prison authorities were keeping 44 prisoners infected with Covid-19 in a ward designed to hold only seven people. The inmate also reported extreme shortage of food and proper hygiene.

**October 30:** Sick prisoner Ruken Yıldız in the Van Prison is [deprived](#) of medical treatment despite having a cardiac disorder, a stomach problem and anemia, according to her family members.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**October 29:** Some 200 migrants were [found](#) inside the trailer of a freight lorry in the eastern province of Van.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**October 26:** A woman in Diyarbakır [alleged](#) that the police tortured her and her two children (aged 7 and 16) with a dog for two hours during a raid into their house.

**October 28:** Imprisoned journalist Aslihan Gençay [said](#) that she was subjected to ill-treatment and strip search in a Kayseri prison where she is held.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**October 28:** The government [announced](#) plans to build universities exclusively for female students as part of its 2021 Presidential Annual Program, despite criticism from women's rights activists who consider gender segregation as an act of discrimination.

**October 29:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Nurcan Yalçın, seeking up to 15 years in prison on terrorism-related charges. The indictment mentioned as evidence, among others, Yalçın's membership in Rosa Women's Association, a Kurdish women's rights group.