

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 100 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.

22 May: Özlem Düzenli, convicted over alleged links to the Gülen movement, was [imprisoned](#) with her 6-month-old baby after a failed escape attempt to Greece, underscoring the ongoing criminalization of dissidents and the harsh treatment of mothers and infants in Turkey.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

22 May: A total of 1,026 inmates [died](#) in Turkish prisons between July 2023 and December 2024, prompting outrage from rights advocates who blame systemic neglect, lack of medical care, and government policies for turning prisons into spaces of silent elimination.

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

20 May: Over 350 mostly female agricultural workers at Queen Flowers in İzmir have been [protesting](#) for 20 days against alleged union-busting practices, wage cuts, and workplace intimidation after joining the United Agricultural Workers Union (Tarım-Sen).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

19 May: Swedish journalist Joakim Medin, arrested in Turkey on charges of insulting President Erdoğan and alleged terrorist ties, has been [released](#) and is returning to Sweden, following diplomatic efforts by the Swedish government.

20 May: Human Rights Watch has [urged](#) Turkey to repeal Penal Code Article 299, under which more than [128,000](#) investigations and over 27,000 criminal cases were initiated between 2014 and 2020, with over 11,000 prosecutions in 2021 alone, citing recent cases and European Court rulings that deem the law a violation of free speech.

20 May: Turkish journalist İsmail Arı and his family have [received](#) death threats following his report alleging a \$2.5 million bribe to avoid detention in an organized crime case, with anonymous messages referencing his home address and targeting his relatives by phone.

22 May: In early 2025, Google and YouTube algorithm updates [caused](#) up to an 80% drop in traffic for several independent Turkish media outlets, while exiled journalists reported de-ranking of their content, prompting parliamentary scrutiny amid allegations of digital censorship and ongoing government pressure on dissent.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

23 May: Prominent European rights advocates have [accused](#) the Council of Europe of abandoning human rights defenders, highlighting its silence on Turkey's persecution of lawyers and politically motivated arrests, and calling for urgent institutional reforms to protect legal professionals and uphold the rule of law.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

22 May: U.S. Senator Adam Schiff has [accused](#) President Erdoğan of democratic backsliding over the jailing of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, urging the Senate to support a resolution demanding either credible evidence or his release and calling on Secretary of State Marco Rubio to confront Turkey over its anti-democratic practices.

23 May: Turkish police have [detained](#) 44 more individuals, including Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's private secretary, in a corruption probe widely seen as politically motivated, bringing the total to 237 detentions and 92 arrests since the mayor's jailing two months ago.

KURDISH MINORITY

22 May: Turkey's parliament [rejected](#) a motion by the pro-Kurdish DEM Party to investigate enforced disappearances through a Truth and Justice Commission, despite decades-long pleas from Kurdish families and victims' relatives during the Week of the Disappeared.

OTHER MINORITIES

20 May: Israeli-Turkish singer Linet Manashe [canceled](#) her Istanbul concert after facing threats to her life from pro-Palestinian protesters outside the venue, prompting police intervention and her evacuation under protection.

PRISON CONDITIONS

20 May: Turkey's Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that recording prison visits and uploading inmate letters to the judiciary's digital system violates prisoners' rights to privacy and freedom of communication, ordering compensation for the applicant and highlighting the lack of legal basis for such surveillance practices.

23 May: Twelve international human rights organizations have [urged](#) Turkey to include political prisoners in a new

sentence reform bill aimed at alleviating severe prison overcrowding, warning that continued exclusion based on broad anti-terror laws perpetuates discrimination and injustice.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

19 May: Iran's Supreme Court has [upheld](#) a death sentence for blasphemy against pop singer Amir Hossein Maghsoudloo, known as Tataloo, who was extradited from Turkey in 2023 and is also serving a 10-year prison term for charges including promoting corruption and propaganda.

20 May: Turkey [deported](#) Syrian human rights activist Taha Elgazi and his wife to Syria on Monday after detaining them incommunicado, despite legal prohibitions on returning individuals to countries where they may face harm.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

20 May: A report by CHP deputy Gamze Akkuş İlgezdi [revealed](#) that Turkey has only 150 women's shelters with eight beds per 100,000 women, far below European standards, highlighting a critical gap in state protection.

23 May: Seventy-nine women were [killed](#) in domestic violence incidents in Turkey in the first five months of 2025, prompting protests against the government's "Year of the Family" initiative, which women's rights activists say prioritizes traditional roles over genuine protection and ignores the ongoing femicide crisis.