

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 161 | July 17-23, 2023

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 14 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.

July 17: The authorities finally [released](#) ailing 85-year-old prisoner Mehmet Emin Özkan. Rights groups and family members have been campaigning for Özkan's release for several years.

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

July 17: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a commemorative event staged by leftist youth organizations, detaining 46 people.

July 20: The police in İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara [intervened](#) in demonstrations to commemorate the victims of a bomb attack in 2015, detaining a total of 181 people.

July 20: The Aydın Governor's Office [issued](#) a new ban on LGBT-themed events in the province.

July 22: The police in İstanbul and Tunceli [intervened](#) in demonstrations about those who disappeared in police custody in the 1990s, briefly detaining a total of 30 people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

July 17: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) three distributors of the Kurdish-language Azadî newspaper. The detainees were released the next day.

July 18: Aydın prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist Mehmet Murat Yıldırım on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda in his reporting. A court in the province issued a detention warrant for Yıldırım.

July 18: An administrative court in Ankara [issued](#) an injunction on a seven-day broadcasting ban imposed earlier this month by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) on the anti-government TELE1 TV station due to on-air political commentary.

July 18: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [faulted](#) Turkey in the case of two prisoners whose bi-weekly periodicals were withheld by prison authorities. The ECtHR said that Turkey had violated the applicants' freedom of expression.

July 19: A Mersin court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports covering allegations that pro-government candidates received favoritism during a process to recruit district governors.

July 20: The police in İstanbul detained journalist Umut Taştan who was following a demonstration.

July 20: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least six news reports covering a traffic accident in which the president's son, Ahmet Burak Erdoğan, hit and killed a vocal artist.

July 20: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least six news reports covering a Reuters report that revealed a US-Swedish joint corruption investigation implicating the president's son, Bilal Erdoğan.

July 20: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least six news reports covering allegations that lucrative government contracts were awarded to a friend of the president's son, Bilal Erdoğan.

July 20: Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released a [statement](#) urging the Turkish government to refrain from expelling Syrian refugee journalists. The group said the journalists were likely to be imprisoned, abducted, or even killed in the case of a return to Syria.

July 21: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) a monetary fine and a temporary broadcast ban on the pro-opposition Halk TV channel.

July 21: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports covering a tweet posted by Melih Tanrıverdi, the executive of a defense company close to the government.

July 21: An İzmir court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports covering allegations that former ruling party executives were among those detained as part of an investigation into a crime syndicate.

July 22: The Turkish Telecommunication Authority (BTK) [imposed](#) an advertising ban on social media platform Twitter for failing to comply with a law that tightens control over social media by requiring companies to appoint a local representative in Turkey.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

July 18: An Aydın court [ruled](#) to acquit five prison guards who stood trial over the death of an inmate named Yılmaz Ekinci who was allegedly subjected to mistreatment, citing lack of sufficient evidence.

KURDISH MINORITY

July 17: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) three distributors of the Kurdish-language Azadî newspaper. The detainees were released the next day.

OTHER MINORITIES

July 20: The Aydın Governor's Office [issued](#) a new ban on LGBT-themed events in the province.

July 21: A court [reinstated](#) transexual doctor Larin Kayataş who was fired from a public hospital by the Ministry of Health in 2021 for "corrupting public morals."

PRISON CONDITIONS

July 18: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [faulted](#) Turkey in the case of two prisoners whose bi-weekly periodicals were withheld by prison authorities. The ECtHR said that Turkey had violated the applicants' freedom of expression.

July 18: A Samsun prison [denied](#) hospital referral to inmate Enes Bilgen for refusing to undergo a mouth search.

July 18: Reports revealed that [Aziz Yalçın](#), an inmate suffering from Crohn's disease incarcerated in Samsun, has not been referred to the hospital in the last two months.

July 18: Reports revealed that a Giresun prison has been [denying](#) hospital referral to inmate Yahya Güneş who is suffering from cancer.

July 21: An İzmir prison [denied](#) medical care to sick inmate Fatma Özbay.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

July 17: The government agency for migration [announced](#) that there are a total of 4,893,752 foreigners in the country, including both refugees and migrants.

July 17: Reports in the British media [revealed](#) that the United Kingdom is seeking an agreement to deport migrants to Turkey.

July 20: In a video that circulated on social media, two police officers were seen physically [assaulting](#) a Senegalese migrant in İstanbul.

July 20: Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released a [statement](#) urging the Turkish government to refrain from expelling Syrian refugee journalists. The group said the journalists were likely to be imprisoned, abducted, or even killed in the case of a return to Syria.

July 21: In a [video](#) that widely circulated on Turkish social media, people in military uniforms were seen torturing individuals believed to be irregular migrants.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

July 18: An Aydın court [ruled](#) to acquit five prison guards who stood trial over the death of an inmate named Yılmaz Ekinci who was allegedly subjected to mistreatment, citing lack of sufficient evidence.

July 20: Reports revealed that a women's prison in Kayseri was [holding](#) seven inmates in a one-person cell.

July 20: In a video that circulated on social media, two police officers were seen physically [assaulting](#) a Senegalese migrant in İstanbul.

July 20: The police in İstanbul physically [assaulted](#) a man named Zeki Gülyüz who was detained due to a dispute at a nightclub.

July 21: In a [video](#) that widely circulated on Turkish social media, people in military uniforms were seen torturing individuals believed to be irregular migrants.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

July 19: A Kosovo court [handed down](#) a prison sentence of four years, eight months to Driton Gashi, the country's former intelligence chief, due to his role in the illegal deportation of six Turkish citizens from the country in 2018. The six men were arrested at Turkey's request over their alleged links to the Gülen movement.