

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 152 | May 15-21, 2023

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 22 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.

**May 16:** Rights groups [announced](#) that the authorities arrested Şadinaz Yaşa Yılmaz, the mother of a 10-month-old infant who is accused of having links to the Gülen movement. Turkey's laws stipulate the postponement of sentences for women who are pregnant or have given birth in the last 18 months even if they are found guilty.

**May 17:** [Behçet Kaplan](#), a 31-year-old prisoner suffering from stomach cancer, lost his life in a prison in Bitlis.

## 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

**May 16:** The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) 10 people for protesting alleged fraud in the announcement of election results.

**May 20:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration about those who disappeared in police custody in the 1990s, briefly detaining 13 people.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**May 15:** Twitter [released](#) Turkish court orders to justify the restriction of series accounts with political content in Turkey ahead of the country's nationwide elections.

**May 16:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Cengiz Çandar to pay a fine for alleged terrorist propaganda on social media.

**May 16:** İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into actress Zeynep Başerler over her social media posts about the election results.

**May 17:** The police in Eskişehir [detained](#) a person named Ayşegül Didem Doğan over her social media commentary about the election results.

**May 17:** The police in Ankara [detained](#) Oktay Yaşar, the admin of a popular Twitter account known for its political content. Yaşar was arrested by a court the next day.

**May 17:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to acquit several members of the Ankara bar association who stood trial for criticizing the government's agency for religious affairs.

**May 18:** The police in Adana briefly [detained](#) eight people over their social media comments on election results.

**May 18:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a report released by the Freedom of Expression Association (İFÖD) on online censorship against content about high-ranking government officials.

**May 18:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports covering allegations that a religious extremist was hired by the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay).

**May 19:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) three university students on charges of insulting the president in an exhibition. The detainees were released the next day.

## **KURDISH MINORITY**

**May 17:** The police in Batman physically [mistreated](#) local HDP executive Yakup Orak on the street.

**May 18:** The police in İstanbul physically [mistreated](#) local HDP executive Yavuz Kahraman and Green Left Party (YSP) executive Cemal Korkmaz.

**May 21:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) four young Kurdish men for publicly playing music and doing traditional dance. The detainees were seen forced to lie on the ground in handcuffs.

## **OTHER MINORITIES**

**May 16:** An annual report released by the US Department of State on religious freedoms [found](#) that various religious groups and minorities in Turkey continued to suffer violations and were not allowed to practice their faith or train clergy in the country.

## **REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

**May 20:** The guards in a Şanlıurfa prison physically [assaulted](#) Syrian inmate Zekeriya Muhammed.

## **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

**May 17:** The police in Batman physically [mistreated](#) local HDP executive Yakup Orak on the street.

**May 18:** The guards in a Kocaeli prison [mistreated](#) inmate Sultan Işıklı.

**May 20:** The guards in a Şanlıurfa prison physically [assaulted](#) Syrian inmate Zekeriya Muhammed.

**May 21:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) four young Kurdish men for publicly playing music and doing traditional dance. The detainees were seen forced to lie on the ground in handcuffs.

**May 21:** The police in Şanlıurfa physically [mistreated](#) an individual named Ceylan Demir.