

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## NEW REPORT

Solidarity with OTHERS has published a [report](#) that illustrates the relationship between refugees and democratic societies during the inclusion and integration process and outlines ways in which refugees can be beneficial to democratic societies.

The report is built on the struggle of refugees for social and political engagement when they seek to enjoy their basic rights and get access to sources to meet their basic needs. In this regard, it first provides brief definitions of the concepts of democracy and refugee. Then, it discusses the challenges that refugees create and face in society. It also examines the methods how to deal with these challenges.

## THE STRASBOURG PROTEST

**June 20:** More than a thousand people [gathered](#) in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg to demand justice for the victims of human rights violations in Turkey, highlighting the inaction of the ECtHR as well as the Council of Europe (CoE) vis-à-vis the dramatic deterioration of Turkey's human rights record since 2016. Several prominent figures from across Europe, such as British MP Jeremy Corbyn and German MP Andrej Konstantin Hunko delivered speeches in solidarity with the protestors.

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 70 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.

**June 20:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [faulted](#) Turkey in the case of journalist Hidayet Karaca who has been imprisoned since 2014 over the scenario of a TV series that was broadcast by the television channel where he was an executive. The ECtHR said Karaca's detention violated his rights, ordering Turkey to pay him non-pecuniary damages.

## 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

**June 19:** The police in Ankara [intervened](#) in a leftist demonstration to protest the government's economic policies, briefly detaining 20 people.

**June 19:** A district governor's office in Bitlis [banned](#) a Kurdish-language theater play without a justification.

**June 21:** The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**June 21:** The authorities [banned](#) Ekofest, an environmental event that was planned to be held in Balıkesir.

**June 22:** A district governorate in İstanbul [banned](#) an event that was planned to commemorate a massacre that took place in 1993. The governorate then issued a blanket ban on all events in the district for a period of two days.

**June 22:** A Batman court [ruled](#) to acquit 25 people who stood trial over their attendance in a protest against the removal of elected Kurdish mayors from office.

**June 23:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) eight people, including a former HDP MP, to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges due to their attendance in protests and events, while acquitting nine others who were tried in the same case.

**June 23:** Çanakkale prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into 26 people over their attendance in a protest.

**June 25:** The police in İstanbul and İzmir [intervened](#) in Pride marches, detaining at least 163 people.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA**

**June 19:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalists Doğan Ergün and İzel Sezer to one year, eight months in prison for covering bribery allegations.

**June 19:** [Cafer Elmas](#), a local journalist based in Bilecik, suffered an armed attack in front of his home and was injured. Two people were taken into custody in connection with the incident.

**June 20:** [Ferit Kilis](#), a leftist politician in Adana, was arrested and sent to prison after his prison sentence of more than five years, which was handed down due to his social media posts, was upheld.

**June 20:** İstanbul courts [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news reports as well as six tweets about the death of a 12-year-old child who was found dead at the stable of a religious foundation.

**June 20:** A Sakarya court [ruled](#) to block access to 12 news reports as well as a tweet about allegations of sexual harassment implicating deputy provincial governor Alper Balcı.

**June 21:** A Bursa court [sentenced](#) musician Cafer Alp to one year, eight months in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, due to songs he sang at a HDP event in 2017.

**June 23:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports covering allegations that a family member of pro-government cleric Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü was awarded lucrative construction projects by a ministry. The court also [ruled](#) to block access to three other reports that announced previous censorship imposed on news reports covering the same subject.

**June 23:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least nine news reports covering a series of allegations implicating pro-government businessman Fettah Tamince.

**June 23:** Ankara prosecutors [indicted](#) journalists Sibel Yökler, Yıldız Tar and Deniz Nazlım who were detained while covering a protest in July 2022.

**June 23:** Imprisoned journalist Sezgin Kartal was [released](#) from pre-trial detention under judicial control. Arrested in January 2023, Kartal faces terrorism-related charges due to a photo allegedly depicting him with a member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

## **JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW**

**June 21:** The Ministry of Education [suspended](#) a teacher named Emine Yaşhi and a school principal in İstanbul for using a rainbow decoration at a school. The disciplinary action came after a ruling party member publicly accused the teacher of "promoting homosexuality."

## **KURDISH MINORITY**

**June 19:** A district governor's office in Bitlis [banned](#) a Kurdish-language theater play without a justification.

**June 20:** The guards in a women's prison in Ankara verbally [assaulted](#) inmates for speaking in Kurdish among themselves, saying "If you are going to live in Turkey you will speak in Turkish."

**June 20:** The guards in a Tekirdağ prison physically [assaulted](#) jailed HDP executive Seyithan Kırmızı.

**June 21:** A Bursa court [sentenced](#) musician Cafer Alp to one year, eight months in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, due to songs he sang at a HDP event in 2017.

**June 21:** A racist mob in Trabzon physically [assaulted](#) Kurdish construction workers, causing injury to six people and leaving two of them in critical condition.

**June 21:** Media reports [indicated](#) that a prison administration in İzmir was imposing visitation bans on inmates for speaking in Kurdish.

**June 22:** A Batman court [ruled](#) to acquit 25 people who stood trial over their attendance in a protest against the removal of elected Kurdish mayors from office.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**June 23:** Media reports [indicated](#) that a prisoner incarcerated in Antalya was found dead in prison. The prisoner was reportedly undergoing treatment in the prison infirmary but not referred to a hospital.

**June 23:** A Tekirdağ prison [failed](#) to provide sick inmate Hilmi Karaođlan with the medication that he needs to take regularly.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**June 19:** Reports [indicated](#) that gangs at the Turkish border with Iran have been abducting refugees from Afghanistan for ransom as well as assaulting them.

**June 20:** The Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) [released](#) a new report that examines the widespread hate speech and hate crimes targeting Syrian refugees in Turkey.

**June 21:** Media reports cited a European Union official who [announced](#) that the number of Turkish citizens seeking asylum in Europe has surpassed 26,000 so far in 2023.

**June 21:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) [reported](#) on the occasion of the World Refugee Day that at least 21 refugees lost their lives in Turkey as a result of racist attacks between January 2020 and November 2022.

**June 22:** In a video circulating on social media, a group of political asylum seekers from Turkey were [seen](#) chased by masked men with knives in Greece. Reports on the media later announced that the group was forcibly returned to Turkey, in disregard of a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) interim measure that urged Greece not to remove the asylum seekers from its territory.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**June 19:** [İsmail İshak Arslan](#), a 23-year-old man who in May was briefly detained in İstanbul for making the opposition's hand gesture during ruling party member Süleyman Soylu's election campaign event, filed a criminal complaint against Soylu and his security guards on allegations of insult, intentional injury and torture due to the treatment he received during his detention.

**June 19:** A prison administration in Şanlıurfa [destroyed](#) petitions where inmates reported rights violations they suffered behind bars.

**June 20:** The guards in a women's prison in Ankara verbally [assaulted](#) inmates for speaking in Kurdish among themselves, saying "If you are going to live in Turkey you will speak in Turkish."

**June 20:** The guards in a Tekirdağ prison physically [assaulted](#) jailed HDP executive Seyithan Kırmızı.

**June 21:** Media reports [indicated](#) that a prison administration in İzmir was regularly subjecting inmates' visitors to strip-searches, imposing visitation bans on inmates for speaking in Kurdish, restricting the communication privileges of inmates and failing to deliver print materials sent to inmates by their families.

## TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

**June 20:** Turkish airstrikes in northern Syria reportedly [killed](#) local Kurdish politicians Yusra Derwêş and Lîman Şiwêş as well as another civilian.

**June 23:** The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) [adopted](#) a resolution condemning Turkey's transnational repression against individuals with alleged links to the Gülen movement.