

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 160 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.

March 8: Mehtap Şentürk, a wheelchair-bound women who has been suffering from multiple sclerosis (MS) for 14 years was [sent](#) to prison after a top appeals court upheld a sentence handed down to her due to her affiliation with the Gülen movement.

March 9: [Adem Erdoğan](#), a 52-year-old man who was arrested for links to the Gülen movement and held in prison despite suffering from chronic heart disease, contracted Covid-19 for a second time behind bars.

March 13: [Ayşe Asude Gök](#), an 11-year-old girl with Down syndrome, stopped interacting with her caregivers after her mother was arrested to serve a sentence for conviction of links to the Gülen movement.

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

March 7: The İstanbul Governor's Office [banned](#) demonstrations and marches to mark International Women's Day.

March 7: A Şırnak court [ruled](#) to acquit 16 people who were standing trial over their participation in a commemoration event for the victims of a Turkish airstrike that killed 34 civilians in 2011.

March 8: The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the right to freedom of assembly of 15 applicants who were sentenced to prison over a non-violent protest at a courthouse in 2003.

March 8: The police in İstanbul, İzmir, Antalya and Diyarbakır [intervened](#) in Women's Day marches, briefly detaining at least 78 people.

March 10: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) Kurdish author Azad Zal to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges, citing as evidence his memberships in pro-Kurdish associations, his involvement in pro-Kurdish media and his affiliation with the Kurdish political movement.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 7: The authorities [launched](#) investigations into 45 Twitter users for allegedly posting provocative posts or spreading disinformation about cooking oil prices.

March 7: İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into reporter Mazlum Engindeniz over his social media posts.

March 9: The police in Elazığ briefly [detained](#) journalist Sultan Eylem Keleş, who was facing charges of insulting the president. An İzmir court handed down a suspended prison sentence of one year, two months, 17 days on March 10.

March 9: The police in Malatya [detained](#) two people for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

March 9: Reports revealed that academic Mehmet Baki Deniz is [facing](#) criminal charges for allegedly insulting the president in a Ph.D. thesis he wrote at a New York university on rising authoritarianism in Turkey.

March 9: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a press freedom monitor's report on an earlier access block imposed on news reports containing allegations about high-ranking defense ministry officials.

March 9: Reports on the media [indicated](#) that the Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the agency responsible for regulating publicly funded ads on the media, has been denying advertisement to Evrensel, a government-critical newspaper, for more than 900 days.

March 9: The Van Governor's Office [ordered](#) the removal of banners that were put up by a local medical chamber to support the İstanbul Convention on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

March 10: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) Kurdish author Azad Zal to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges, citing as evidence his memberships in pro-Kurdish associations, his involvement in pro-Kurdish media and his affiliation with the Kurdish political movement.

March 10: Ankara prosecutors [asked](#) the parliament to lift the legislative immunity of HDP MP Feleknas Uca, who is charged with "inciting hatred and enmity among public" over a speech where she mentioned Kurdistan.

March 10: The Bolu municipality [fired](#) a janitor for posting a photo on social media of jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş.

March 10: A Hatay court [ruled](#) to block access to the websites of pro-Kurdish Pir news agency (PİRHA) and the Yeni Yaşam newspaper.

March 10: A Mardin court [acquitted](#) journalist Ahmet Kanbal, who was standing trial on charges of insulting

the interior minister on social media. On the other hand, Mardin prosecutors [launched](#) another investigation into Kanbal, this time on charges of provoking hatred and enmity among public.

March 11: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) journalist Sedef Kabaş to two years, four months in prison on charges of insulting the president on a TV program. The court suspended the sentence and ordered the release of the journalist, who was arrested in January.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 10: The Supreme Court of Appeals [upheld](#) a prison sentence of 10 years handed down to Murat Arslan, president of the now-dissolved Judges and Prosecutors Association (YARSAV). Arslan was convicted on terrorism-related charges over his alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement. He was awarded the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2017 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

KURDISH MINORITY

March 8: The guards in an Afyon prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates for speaking in Kurdish.

March 8: A district governor's office in Şırnak [banned](#) the staging of a Kurdish-language theater play without citing a justification.

March 10: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) Kurdish author Azad Zal to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges, citing as evidence his memberships in pro-Kurdish associations, his involvement in pro-Kurdish media and his affiliation with the Kurdish political movement.

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March 11: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) HDP executive Beritan Yaşar to seven years, six months on terrorism-related charges.

March 12: The police in Van [detained](#) three youth members of the HDP.

OTHER MINORITIES

March 12: LGBTI inmates incarcerated in a Mersin prison were physically and sexually [mistreated](#). They were also reportedly coerced into withdrawing their complaints about the incident.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 9: Reports revealed that an Adana prison has been [denying](#) hospitalization to inmates for three months.

March 12: A prison administration in Mersin [refused](#) hospitalization to four LGBTI inmates.

March 12: An İstanbul prison [denied](#) hospitalization to inmates.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 9: Cemil Karabidek, a former sergeant who was dismissed from the military by a decree-law, [died](#) while trying to cross the Evros river into Greece.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 7: Prison officials in Aksaray [subjected](#) inmates to strip-search during an involuntary prison transfer.

March 8: The guards in an Afyon prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates for speaking in Kurdish.

March 8: Opposition MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu [announced](#) that 41 students who were detained for alleged links to the Gülen movement were mistreated at İstanbul police headquarters.

March 8: Gendarmerie officers in İzmir physically [assaulted](#) inmate Latif Mollaahmetoğlu for refusing to undergo medical treatment in handcuffs. The inmate was injured as a result of the violence.

March 10: The police in Adana physically [mistreated](#) and injured a man named Eyüp Şendur during a house raid to detain him.

March 10: The Human Rights Association (İHD) [announced](#) that reported incidents of torture in prisons in the northwestern Marmara region doubled from 2020 to 2021.

March 12: LGBTI inmates incarcerated in a Mersin prison were physically and sexually [mistreated](#). They were also reportedly coerced into withdrawing their complaints about the incident.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS

March 8: An Ankara prosecutor [demanded](#) up to 15 years in prison for Selahaddin Gülen, a teacher who was forcibly returned from Kenya to Turkey last year due to his affiliation with the Gülen movement.

March 10: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Azerbaijan violated the rights of four Turkish teachers, stating that their detention and deportation to Turkey amounted to “extrajudicial rendition.” The four teachers were arrested for alleged links to the Gülen movement, upon their arrival in Turkey in 2017 and 2018. The ECtHR ordered Azerbaijan to pay each applicant 9,000 euros for non-pecuniary damages.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

March 7: The İstanbul Governor’s Office [banned](#) demonstrations and marches to mark International Women’s Day.

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March 9: The Van Governor’s Office [ordered](#) the removal of banners that were put up by a local medical chamber to support the İstanbul Convention on the occasion of the International Women’s Day.