

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 49 | May 24-30, 2021

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 263 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 27: Images on social media of [Mehmet Emin Özkan](#), an ailing 83-year-old man incarcerated in a Diyarbakır prison being taken to a hospital in handcuffs caused outrage among human rights groups who demanded his release.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#) and [Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit](#), former public sector workers who were sacked from their jobs by decree-laws during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who were reported missing respectively as of August 6, 2019 and December 29, 2020, in what appear to be the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

May 25: [Lezgin Tekay](#), a reporter for the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency, was forced into a vehicle without a license plate by a group of people who introduced themselves as intelligence operatives and coerced into becoming an informant for the state.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

May 24: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) Nursel Tanrıverdi while participating in a sit-in protest against the post-coup purge of public sector workers after 2016.

May 25: The police in several provinces [detained](#) executives and members of the Health and Social Service Employees Union (SES) over alleged terrorist links.

May 25: The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a demonstration held in front of the ruling party provincial headquarters, briefly detaining five people.

May 25: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) two people protesting their summary removal from public service during a post-coup purge after 2016. The detainees were released later in the same day.

May 25: The police in Rize [blocked](#) a protest against the construction of a stone quarry in an environmentally significant area, briefly detaining two people.

May 26: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) a person over a banner that was displayed during a press briefing held at a human rights association's local office.

May 26: The İzmir Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of seven days.

May 27: Gendarmes and village guards in Van [fired](#) shots as villagers protested the opening of a marble quarry. Four people were briefly detained after the intervention.

May 27: The police in Artvin [blocked](#) a protest march against quotas on tea, briefly detaining 32 people.

May 28: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a demonstration held by a youth organization, detaining two participants.

May 28: A [report](#) released by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) revealed that at least 4,771 human rights violations took place during protests and demonstrations held in Turkey between 2015 and 2019.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

May 25: Notorious mobster Sedat Peker in a YouTube video [admitted](#) that his public death threats to a group of academics who called for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem was aimed at helping the government create a climate of fear.

May 25: Atilla Peker, the brother of convicted crime boss Sedat Peker, [confirmed](#) his brother's recent claims, confessing at a police questioning that the mobster sent him on a mission to kill Turkish-Cypriot journalist Kutlu Adalı in 1996.

May 25: Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu [said](#) in an interview that he called his British counterpart to complain about a report in the BBC's Turkish edition.

May 25: An Aksaray court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about allegations that a district mayor used municipal units for personal affairs.

May 26: A Hakkari court [sentenced](#) peace activist Fatma Turan to 10 months, 25 days in prison on charges of provoking hatred and enmity among public and praising crime and criminals, over a speech she made during a demonstration.

May 26: A Van court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about allegations that a local social worker was beaten up by security guards after he refused to stand up in front of a district governor.

May 26: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to 59 social media messages on Facebook and Twitter about an allegation that a construction tycoon bribed public officials to have criminal charges against him dropped.

May 26: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release journalist Mehmet Aslan who was arrested in January 2021 on terrorism-related charges.

May 27: A Manisa court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about tweets involving questions to be asked to

the interior minister while he was on the air for a live interview.

May 28: An Ankara court [sentenced](#) jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş to two-and-a-half years in prison over his remarks at an earlier court hearing that targeted a public prosecutor who indicted him.

May 28: İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, seeking a prison sentence of up to four years, one month on charges of insulting election officials following the cancellation of a vote in İstanbul in 2019.

May 29: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a column written by journalist Murat Ağırel about alleged transfer of municipal funds to government-friendly artists.

KURDISH MINORITY

May 25: [Lezgin Tekay](#), a reporter for the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency, was forced into a vehicle without a license plate by a group of people who introduced themselves as intelligence operatives and coerced into becoming an informant for the state.

May 25: The police in Antalya [detained](#) former Batman mayor Sabri Özdemir as part of a Diyarbakır-based investigation.

May 26: An Iğdır court [sentenced](#) former mayor Yaşar Akkuş to seven years, six months in prison on terrorism-related charges. Akkuş was one of the dozens of HDP mayors who were removed from office by the Interior Ministry and replaced by pro-government trustees before standing trial for alleged links to terrorism.

May 26: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release journalist Mehmet Aslan who was arrested in January 2021 on terrorism-related charges. Aslan was imprisoned over his work for the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency.

May 28: An Ankara court [sentenced](#) jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş to two-and-a-half years in prison over his remarks at an earlier court hearing that targeted a public prosecutor who indicted him.

May 28: A Van court [ruled](#) to arrest HDP executive Fırat Keser on terrorism-related charges.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

May 24: Guards at a Kocaeli prison physically [assaulted](#) an inmate named Garibe Gezer.

May 25: Amnesty International [debunked](#) Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu's claims that the group has no findings or reports on allegations of torture in Turkish prisons.

May 26: A police officer in Diyarbakır reportedly [broke](#) a 55-year-old woman's teeth and arm while she protested the detention of her son on May 18.

May 29: Reports [revealed](#) that 86 people detained in an operation targeting the Gülen movement in Çanakkale on May 21, among them minors, were interrogated for days and subjected to torture by strappado, battery and threats of rape.

May 30: Guards at a Kocaeli prison physically [assaulted](#) an inmate named Cihangir Çeliker.