

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 61 | August 16-22, 2021

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.

August 16: The police in İstanbul [forced](#) three people into a an armored vehicle and subjected them to torture and ill-treatment in an attempt to turn them into informants.

August 18: Prosecutors [denied](#) permission to Murat Turan, a man imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement, who wanted to visit his 11-year-old son Ömer Faruk, currently in an intensive care unit due to a heart condition.

August 18: The Ministry of Justice [said](#) in a written opinion that the arrest of a student from Boğaziçi University on charges of inciting hatred in a poster depicting the Kaaba – Islam’s most sacred site – with LGBT flags was “lawful,” adding that homosexuality was “forbidden” in Islam.

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.

August 21: Alev Şahin, a former public sector worker known for her activism after being summarily removed from her job, [announced](#) on social media that six people who introduced themselves as police officers attempted to lead her into a black panel van without presenting an official detention order. Şahin said that it was an attempt at an abduction.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

August 16: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) activist Nursel Tanrıverdi while staging a sit-in to protest her summary removal from her public sector job in the aftermath of a 2016 coup.

August 17: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 11 people including four minors for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda during their attendance at a festival organized by the HDP.

August 18: The gendarmerie in Şanlıurfa [detained](#) 11 people for holding a protest against a local energy distributing company over power cuts. The detainees were released later in the same day after appearing before a court.

August 20: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [issued](#) a presidential decree authorizing the State Supervisory Council (DDK) to inspect NGOs. The development came after last year’s parliamentary legislation allowing the Ministry of Interior to replace executives of any foundation prosecuted on charges of “terrorism.”

August 22: The police in Hatay [detained](#) four people who were protesting a police raid in January which led to

the death of a 70-year-old woman who had a heart attack.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

August 16: JinNews reporter Beritan Canözer who was detained on Aug. 13 as part of a terrorism-related investigation, was [released](#) after three days in police custody.

August 17: An annual [report](#) released by the Freedom of Expression Association (İFÖD) said that a total of 349,763 websites were banned in Turkey between 2016 and 2020.

August 17: Reports published in the pro-government media [said](#) that the ruling party is planning to propose a new bill which stipulates prison sentences for social media users who “insult” someone or spread “lies and disinformation” online.

August 17: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) six people for hanging anti-migrant banners in public places. The detainees were released within the same day after appearing before a court.

August 17: The authorities [blocked](#) access to several news reports about an alleged municipal corruption in Kocaeli.

August 17: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a press freedom monitor’s blog entry about a previous access block on news reports about an alleged judicial corruption.

August 18: The police in Ankara [detained](#) six people including HDP employees over their social media posts.

August 19: Neighborhood watchmen in İstanbul [attacked](#) three reporters and prevented them from covering a news story involving the death of a three-year-old child who lost her life at the hospital after falling into an elevator shaft.

August 19: Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released a [statement](#) urging Turkish authorities to swiftly and transparently investigate the death of journalist Aydın Taş, Turkey director of the Crimean News Agency (QHA) who was found dead on August 8 in Ankara. While Taş’s death has been classified as a suicide, the journalist’s colleagues said they did not believe Taş had really killed himself.

August 20: Opposition politician Buğra Kavuncu was [punched](#) by an attacker while leaving a TV studio where he appeared on a program. The incident took place following threatening remarks by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who said that a previous attack on opposition leader Meral Akşener was “just the beginning.”

August 22: National public broadcaster TRT [fired](#) without compensation Deniz Salmanlı, a 22-year-long technical employee who faced an investigation over her social media commentary.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

August 17: Sadık Yıldırım, a man believed to be close to the ruling party, was [released](#) by a court shortly after being detained for threatening on social media the police officer who had taken him into custody after finding drugs and guns in his car.

August 18: The Ministry of Justice [said](#) in a written opinion that the arrest of a student from Boğaziçi University on charges of inciting hatred in a poster depicting the Kaaba – Islam’s most sacred site – with LGBT flags was “lawful,” adding that homosexuality was “forbidden” in Islam.

August 19: A journalist revealed that terrorism charges against a US-based Turkish businessman were [dropped](#) in July, a month after he was visited by the Turkish Ambassador to the US.

August 20: Opposition politician Buğra Kavuncu was [punched](#) by an attacker while leaving a TV studio where he appeared on a program. The incident took place following threatening remarks by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who said that a previous attack on opposition leader Meral Akşener was “just the beginning.”

KURDISH MINORITY

August 16: JinNews reporter Beritan Canözer who was detained on Aug. 13 as part of a terrorism-related investigation, was [released](#) after three days in police custody.

August 17: A group of people in Antalya [stopped](#) a car and beat a man named Erhan Sevim because he was of Kurdish origin. The incident took place following pro-government claims that the wildfires that hit the region

were started by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

August 17: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 11 people including four minors for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda during their attendance at a festival organized by the HDP.

August 18: The police in Ankara [detained](#) six people including HDP employees over their social media posts. Five of the detainees were released under judicial control on August 20 while one was arrested by a court.

August 19: The gendarmerie in Hakkari [detained](#) eight people including provincial HDP executives. The detainees were released on August 22.

August 20: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 19 members and provincial executives of the HDP.

August 20: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) former co-mayor Serhat Kadirhan.

August 22: An Elazığ prison [launched](#) an investigation into inmate and former HDP lawmaker Leyla Güven for singing Kurdish music behind bars.

OTHER MINORITIES

August 16: [Ebrar Karakurt](#), a player for the women's national volleyball team player, faced homophobic attacks online after she shared a photo with her girlfriend on Instagram.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

August 16: The police in İstanbul [forced](#) three people into an armored vehicle and subjected them to torture and ill-treatment in an attempt to turn them into informants.

August 18: A police officer in Şanlıurfa physically [assaulted](#) a man named Mustafa Bektaş who accidentally rang his doorbell and broke his leg.

August 19: Media reports revealed that eight inmates who were involuntarily transferred from a Şanlıurfa prison to other prisons on August 11 were [subjected](#) to torture and ill-treatment during the transfer.

August 20: The guards in an Adana prison physically and verbally [assaulted](#) inmates.

August 20: The gendarmerie in Hakkari physically [assaulted](#) lawyer Harika Günay Karataş who was visiting a center to visit clients that were held in custody.

August 20: A group of police officers in Hakkari physically [assaulted](#) a delivery company employee over the complaint of a police officer's spouse.

August 20: A report jointly prepared by three Turkish human rights organizations [revealed](#) that inmates were subjected to insults, threats and battery in two prisons in Adana and Kahramanmaraş.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS

August 17: A Turkish [air raid](#) hit a clinic in northern Iraq, resulting in the death of eight people.