

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 146 | April 3-9, 2023

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 105 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.

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

April 3: A Samsun court [handed down](#) varying prison sentences to 39 people due to their participation in a demonstration in June 2013. The prison sentences ranged from 10 months up to three years, one month and 15 days.

April 3: The Şırnak Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of two days.

April 4: Gendarmes in Şanlıurfa [intervened](#) in the opening ceremony of the Green Left Party's (YSP) local branch, detaining seven people.

April 4: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration held outside a courthouse, detaining at least 25 people.

April 4: Gendarmes in Hatay [intervened](#) in a demonstration against government's earthquake management, detaining 20 people.

April 4: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) five people who participated in a demonstration.

April 4: A district governor's office in İstanbul [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of one day.

April 5: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit former HDP MPs Levent Tüzel and Sebahat Tuncel who stood trial due to a demonstration they attended.

April 8: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration to raise awareness about enforced disappearances, detaining 15 activists.

April 8: Gendarmes in Muğla [intervened](#) in a protest of local inhabitants against plans to build a cement plant, detaining 11 people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

April 4: Rize prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into local leftist politicians Hasan Zorlucan and Kamil Çavuşoğlu on charges of spreading disinformation, over a banner that involved criticism of the government's handling of the earthquakes.

April 4: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) a person on charges of insulting the president during a street interview. The detainee was later placed in house arrest.

April 4: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Görkem Kınacı who stood trial for reporting on a racist attack.

April 5: The police in Karabük briefly [detained](#) reporter Ali Sencer Arslan on charges of violating the confidentiality of an investigation, for publishing security camera footage showing the last moments of a 17-year-old Gabonese university student who was found dead in a river under suspicious circumstances.

April 5: İstanbul Technical University (İTÜ) [fired](#) Funda Yirmibeşoğlu, an academic and the head of the university's Urban and Regional Planning Department, due to a declaration she published to criticize the presidential decree that allowed reconstruction in earthquake-hit zone to be finished in an unusually short period of time.

April 5: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) monetary fines on Fox TV, Tele1 and Halk TV channels due to programs during which government policies were criticized.

April 5: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit singer Yeşim Salkım who stood trial on charges of insulting the president on social media.

April 6: The judges of a high criminal court in İstanbul [filed](#) a complaint against lawyer Mustafa Bal for “insulting” and “targeting” the court, due to remarks the lawyer made at a hearing. Bal represented Tuğrul Özşengül, an academic jailed for alleged Gülen links who died of a heart attack in prison in July 2022, and he had criticized the court's decision to keep Özşengül behind bars despite his heart condition.

April 6: A Bursa court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Ceylan Erol Erdoğan to one year, six months in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda.

April 6: The police in Antalya briefly [detained](#) six people due to slogans they chanted during Newroz celebrations.

April 6: İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist İsmail Arı on charges of spreading disinformation over a report about municipal housing. Arı was summoned by the police for a questioning as part of the investigation.

April 6: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA) to publish news.

April 7: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) Mahir Akkoyun, a man who designed stickers that hold the

president responsible for high prices in stores, on charges of insulting the president.

April 7: Diyarbakır prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into reporter Cengiz Özbasar for reporting on a local energy distribution company. Özbasar was summoned by the police for a questioning as part of the investigation.

April 7: An annual report by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on its supervision of the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgement [underlined](#) Turkey's frequent non-compliance with rulings on the freedom of expression and the press.

April 8: Samsun prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into a 15-year-old child over social media commentary.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

April 6: The judges of a high criminal court in İstanbul [filed](#) a complaint against lawyer Mustafa Bal for “insulting” and “targeting” the court, due to remarks the lawyer made at a hearing. Bal represented Tuğrul Özşengül, an academic jailed for alleged Gülen links who died of a heart attack in prison in July 2022, and he had criticized the court's decision to keep Özşengül behind bars despite his heart condition.

April 7: An annual report by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on its supervision of the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgement [underlined](#) Turkey's frequent non-compliance with rulings on the freedom of expression and the press.

KURDISH MINORITY

April 3: Three Kurdish construction workers were physically [assaulted](#) in Muğla for speaking in Kurdish among themselves. The victims were injured as a result.

April 3: A racist mob in Bursa physically [assaulted](#) a vehicle due to its license plate indicating the province of Diyarbakır.

April 6: HDP MP Remziye Tosun [claimed](#) in a parliamentary inquiry that three prisoners incarcerated in İzmir were placed in solitary confinement for writing books in Kurdish.

April 6: A Bursa court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Ceylan Erol Erdoğan to one year, six months in prison on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda.

April 6: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA) to publish news.

PRISON CONDITIONS

April 4: Reports revealed that inmate Fikret Erden's arm was [injured](#) during the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş and that Erden was transferred to another prison without undergoing treatment.

April 9: Reports [revealed](#) that security cameras in an Antalya prison monitored bathrooms and toilets.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

April 5: Newly revealed video footage [showed](#) the last moments of Jeannah Danys Dinabongho Ibouanga, a 17-year-old Gabonese university student who last week was found dead in a river in Karabük. In the video, Ibouanga was seen running barefoot on the street. Some reports suggested that she might have been the victim of a racially motivated murder. Rights defenders as well as the lawyer for the Gabonese Embassy in Ankara criticized the local prosecutor's office for failing to conduct an effective investigation into Ibouanga's death. Reporter Ali Sencer Arslan, who found and published the video was briefly detained in Karabük for violating the confidentiality of the investigation.

April 7: The dead body of a 9-year-old Syrian girl was [found](#) in Kilis. Two men were arrested for sexually abusing and killing the child.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

April 5: Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) [released](#) a joint report that accused Turkish police and the armed forces of using the state of emergency in earthquake-hit areas as a "license to torture" alleged looters.

April 6: HDP MP Remziye Tosun [claimed](#) in a parliamentary inquiry that three prisoners incarcerated in İzmir were placed in solitary confinement for writing books in Kurdish.

April 6: The guards in an İzmir prison physically [assaulted](#) inmate İbrahim Aşkan who resisted a strip-search during his transfer from another facility. Aşkan was later placed in a one-person cell without bedclothes. His phone call was interrupted as he began to talk about the rights violations he suffered.

April 6: A prison administration in Diyarbakır [confiscated](#) a letter written by inmate Neşe Toprak on the occasion of the International Women's Day on the grounds that the letter was "objectionable."

April 8: The police in Van [strip-searched](#) a 17-year-old girl who was taken into custody.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

April 7: A report by the Freedom House on transnational repression [revealed](#) that Turkish authorities have committed 132 incidents of direct and physical transnational repression since 2014. The report noted that Turkey has become the world's second most prolific perpetrator of transnational repression, committing 15 percent of the total number of incidents.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

April 7: At least 23 women were [murdered](#) by men while 19 died under suspicious circumstances, according to a report released by a Turkey-based women's rights platform.