

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No 4 | July 13-19, 2020

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

**July 14:** Turkey's Constitutional Court [defied](#) a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling which found the pre-trial detention of a former judge to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**July 14:** A press briefing [organized](#) by the pro-Kurdish HDP in Ankara was blocked by the police who briefly detained HDP member Veli Saçılık.

**July 14:** The police [intervened](#) against a group marching towards Ankara from İstanbul to raise the demands of imprisoned lawyers Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal who are on a hunger strike. The convicted lawyers have launched the hunger strike to demand fair trial.

**July 17-18:** The police [intervened](#) in gatherings in Batman, Tunceli and Şırnak against the sexual assault against an underage girl by a military officer, briefly detaining several people.

**July 20:** The police [intervened](#) against several gatherings in commemoration of the 33 victims of a suicide bomb attack in Urfa in 2015.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**July 13:** The head of Turkey's official media watchdog [signaled](#) censorship on an episode of Netflix series The Protector that featured two women kissing.

**July 15:** A man was [detained](#) by police after allegedly insulting Islam and the Prophet Muhammed on social media.

**July 15:** Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into Nurcan Kaya, a columnist for the Artı Gerçek news website, for alleged terrorist propaganda over her social media postings.

**July 15:** A Gaziantep court [decided](#) to block access to news reports about a worker who allegedly concealed the result of his Covid-19 test out of fear that he might be fired from the pasta factory where he is working.

**July 16:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) Turkish-German journalist Deniz Yücel to 2 years, 9 months, 22 days in prison on charges of "disseminating terrorist propaganda." Yücel had returned to Germany when he was released in February 2018 after a year of pre-trial detention.

**July 16:** Turkish courts [delivered](#) two separate rulings during the week, ordering main opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu to pay President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his close circle a total of \$81,000 in damages for raising allegations back in 2017 that the group had transferred large sums of money to an offshore company based in the Isle of Man.

**July 17:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to arrest Melek Çetinkaya, the mother of a former military cadet sentenced to life in prison on coup-related charges, over her remarks on a TV show claiming her son is innocent. Çetinkaya is charged with "disseminating terrorist propaganda."

**July 17:** Turkish parliament [moved to](#) set up a new committee to "regulate online content" after President Erdoğan's remarks on "entirely banning or regulating social media."

**July 18:** Journalist Cüneyt Özdemir [claimed](#) that talks between the Turkish government and Netflix broke down as the two sides were unable to reach an

agreement over the censorship of homosexuality. Özdemir further claimed that Netflix halted production of series in Turkey and could leave the country. Netflix [denied](#) the reports that it is leaving Turkey while remaining silent on censorship allegations.

**July 19:** A Turkish court [sentenced](#) journalist Mehmet Baransu to 19 years, 6 months in prison on charges of espionage and having links to terrorism.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

**July 17:** A Turkish court [decided](#) on non-prosecution of a case involving the suspicious death of an 11-year-old girl despite her father's allegation of a coverup by a senior member of Turkey's ruling party.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**July 13:** The police [detained](#) Betül Yaşar, the co-mayor of the Diyadin municipality in the eastern province of Ağrı, along with three others. A government-appointed trustee replaced Yaşar.

**July 14:** A government-appointed trustee in the Kurdish-majority province of Van [instructed](#) municipal employees to attend coup attempt commemorations on July 15. The failed putsch was a turning point for the crackdown on Kurdish politics after which more than 46 elected Kurdish mayors were removed from office by the Interior Ministry and replaced with pro-government appointees.

**July 14:** The police [detained](#) 33 people in Gaziantep and a number of others in Diyarbakır, including local Kurdish politicians and local journalists working for pro-Kurdish news outlets.

**July 15:** A Diyarbakır court [upheld](#) former Diyarbakır Mayor Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı's prison sentence for alleged links to terrorism. Mızraklı was the elected mayor of Turkey's largest Kurdish-majority city until he was ousted by the Interior Ministry in August 2019.

**July 17:** A military officer who allegedly assaulted a 17-year-old girl in the province of Batman was [released](#) by a court a day after his police detention.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**July 13:** Three LGBTI individuals [filed](#) criminal complaints against a beach club in İstanbul after they were not allowed inside due to their sexual orientation.

**July 16:** A photography studio in Kocaeli [received](#) threats after shared pictures of a homosexual couple on social media.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**July 17:** Turkey's Constitutional Court [rejected](#) an appeal from the main opposition CHP to abrogate an early release law that allowed the early release of some 90,000 inmates amid the Covid-19 pandemic while discriminating against political prisoners. The CHP had brought the law to the top court on the grounds that it violated the constitutional right of equality.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**July 13:** The death toll from a sunken migrant boat in Lake Van in eastern Turkey [reached](#) 50 as rescue teams continued to recover bodies. The boat was reported missing on June 27.

**July 16:** Human Rights Watch [called](#) on Greece to investigate pushbacks at the Turkish-Greek land and sea borders with migrants being forcibly returned to Turkey.

**July 18:** A Syrian teenager was [beaten](#) to death in the northwestern province of Bursa, after defending a Syrian woman who was harassed by a group.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**July 13:** The daughter of a former judge who has been imprisoned since a failed coup in July 2016 [revealed](#) on social media that her father was subjected to torture and ill-treatment at the hands of prison guards.

**July 13:** A total of 144 incidents of torture and ill-treatment at the hands of authorities were reported in June, according to a monthly rights violations [report](#) released by opposition lawmaker Sezgin Tanrıku.

**July 18:** Reports [indicated](#) that three people who were detained in İstanbul for allegedly attacking a police vehicle were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in custody. Photos circulated on social media showing the individuals with visible marks of torture.