

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 255 | Date 5-11 May

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 354 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.

9 May: Turkish police [detained](#) 23 people in a new crackdown targeting individuals linked to Maydonoz Döner, a popular restaurant chain seized by the government over alleged ties to the Gülen movement, as part of a broader campaign involving mass detentions, property confiscations, and accusations of financing terrorism. Read our [Report](#) for details of the crackdown on Maydonoz Doner.

10 May: Turkish authorities [detained](#) 320 individuals—mostly female university students—for alleged ties to the Gülen movement, with accusations including lawful activities such as participating in Erasmus programs, traveling abroad, and sharing apartments with relatives of purged civil servants. Seventy-seven of the detainees were arrested after a 24-hour ban on access to lawyers.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

10 May: Erol Eğrek, a 48-year-old former textile technician, [died](#) after allegedly being beaten by private security guards outside İstanbul's Çalık Holding headquarters while demanding unpaid severance, with his family disputing official claims of a heart attack and calling for an independent investigation.

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

7 May: Turkish prosecutors have [charged](#) 16 people, mostly young protesters supporting opposition mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, with “insulting the president” during March demonstrations in İstanbul, leaving 14 in pretrial detention for 45 days ahead of their May 30 trial.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

7 May: A day after President Erdoğan condemned street interviews as disruptive, Arif Kocabıyık of İlave TV was [detained](#) in Antalya for allegedly insulting the president, sparking criticism over Turkey’s ongoing crackdown on independent journalism.

7 May: The European Parliament has [called](#) for the immediate and unconditional release of Swedish journalist Joakim Medin, who remains jailed in Turkey despite receiving a suspended sentence for allegedly insulting President Erdoğan, and now faces a second charge of terrorist group membership.

9 May: Turkish opposition lawmakers [accused](#) Google of undermining press freedom during a parliamentary session, claiming opaque algorithm changes have drastically reduced traffic and revenue for independent

news outlets, with Google denying any political bias and defending its updates as part of global search quality improvements.

9 May: Turkey's interior minister announced that 27,304 social media accounts were blocked in the first four months of 2025 amid an escalating digital crackdown criticized for targeting journalists, activists, and opposition voices under vague national security laws.

10 May: After Turkish courts [ordered](#) access bans on both his main and international X accounts, jailed opposition leader and İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu posted a defiant message condemning the moves as political censorship, vowing that efforts to silence him would only amplify his campaign for justice and democracy.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

8 May: The European Parliament has [called](#) on Turkey to recognize the legal status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and protect religious freedoms for minorities, citing continued restrictions on non-Muslim communities and warning that Turkey's EU accession process remains frozen amid ongoing rights violations.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

7 May: Nihat Göktaş, a member of the Human Rights Association (İHD) İstanbul Branch Prison Commission, and Hülya Gerçek, an İHD member, were [detained](#) in İstanbul on May 5, 2025, following a raid on their homes, accused of "financing terrorism" for sending money to a prisoner in need monitored by the commission.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

5 May: Turkey's Interior and Labor ministries have [blocked](#) investigations into their staff over alleged negligence in the January 21 Kartalkaya ski resort fire that killed 78 people, including 36 minors, by refusing prosecutors the required permission to proceed, prompting victims' families to accuse the state of obstructing justice.

5 May: İstanbul prosecutors have [filed](#) a new indictment against TÜSİAD executives Orhan Turan and Ömer Arif Aras for criticizing government policies, accusing them of trying to influence the judiciary and spreading misinformation.

7 May: The European Court of Human Rights [held](#) a Grand Chamber hearing in *Yasak v. Türkiye*, a landmark case challenging Turkey's use of counterterrorism laws to convict individuals like Şaban Yasak for peaceful, past associations with the Gülen movement, raising serious concerns over retroactive criminalization and violations of fundamental rights.

KURDISH MINORITY

9 May: Birsen Orhan, co-mayor of Tunceli from the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) who was removed from office by the Interior Ministry and replaced by a trustee, was [sentenced](#) to a total of 2 years, 2 months and 7 days in prison for "violating the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations" and "resisting to prevent the execution of duty."

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

8 May: LGBTQ rights advocates are [calling](#) for the release of activist Asya Gökalg, jailed in İzmir for a social media post, citing her critical brain cancer condition and deteriorating health in unsanitary prison conditions where she has also faced abuse for being lesbian.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

9 May: Brazil's Supreme Federal Court [ordered](#) the release of Turkish-Brazilian businessman Mustafa Göktepe, rejecting Turkey's extradition request over alleged Gülen movement ties due to lack of evidence and his protected status as a naturalized citizen, amid growing concern over Ankara's transnational repression tactics.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

7 May: According to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, 29 women were [murdered](#) by men and 14 others died under suspicious circumstances in Turkey in April, highlighting the country's ongoing femicide crisis amid judicial leniency and government inaction.