

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 92 | March 21-27, 2022

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 365 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.

**March 22:** [Abdo Baran](#), a 80-year-old prisoner suffering from end-stage cancer, died in a Mardin prison.

**March 24:** The Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) for the third time [issued](#) a report saying that Yusuf Özmen, an inmate with end-stage cancer, is healthy enough to remain in prison.

**March 25:** An Ankara hospital [issued](#) a report saying Mehtap Şentürk, a wheelchair-bound woman suffering from multiple sclerosis and paralysis, is fit to remain in prison. Şentürk is a former science teacher who earlier this month was sentenced to prison over her alleged links to the Gülen movement.

## ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

**March 22:** Şervan Can Güder, a 22-year-old inmate, [died](#) of heart attack in a Van prison. The opposition announced that Güder had no prior health problems and that his death was suspicious.

**March 26:** [Muharrem Aksem](#), a 16-year-old minor in Şanlıurfa, was found dead under suspicious circumstances on a target practice training ground for special operations police.

## ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#), 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

**March 21:** The police in Diyarbakır, Ağrı, Hakkari, Konya and Mardin [intervened](#) in Newroz celebrations in the province, detaining at least 353 people.

**March 22:** An Adana court [ruled](#) to acquit seven people who stood trial over their participation in protests against the government-appointed rector of Boğaziçi University.

**March 23:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to acquit 33 women who were standing trial for participating in protests against Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention.

**March 25:** The police in İzmir and Tekirdağ [detained](#) at least 55 people over their participation in Newroz celebrations.

**March 25:** A human rights lawyer [lodged](#) a complaint with the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of three Iranian refugees in Turkey who face deportation for protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention.

**March 26:** Denizli prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into four people, including an NGO executive, for sending money to their relatives in prison.

**March 26:** The Diyarbakır Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 10 days.

**March 26:** The Şanlıurfa Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**March 27:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a leftist group's demonstration, detaining six people.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**March 21:** The police [detained](#) a 70-year-old man on charges of insulting the president on social media.

**March 21:** Journalist Altan Sancar was [intercepted](#) and verbally threatened by three armed individuals while he was covering Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır.

**March 21:** The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the rights of Zehra Doğan, a journalist and painter who was arrested on terrorism-related charges.

**March 23:** The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [called on](#) the Swedish authorities to conduct a swift and thorough investigation into an attack on Ahmet Dönmez, a government-critical journalist in exile who was physically assaulted in broad daylight in Stockholm.

**March 23:** The authorities [blocked](#) access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

**March 24:** The police in Eskişehir briefly [detained](#) local HDP executive Şükriye Ercan for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda in a speech she gave.

**March 24:** A Rize court [ruled](#) to acquit Mehmet Ali Sancaktutan, a man who was standing trial on charges of insulting the president in a street interview.

**March 24:** An İzmir court [ruled](#) to arrest a man on charges of insulting the president in a street interview.

**March 24:** An İstanbul court [suspended](#) the prison sentences of defendants who were convicted on charges of willful injury for physically assaulting journalist Levent Gültekin.

**March 25:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the Özgür Gelecek magazine.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**March 24:** The Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey [reported](#) that dozens of Protestant pastors have had to leave Turkey along with their families over the past three years due to de facto entry bans and intelligence reports labelling them as "security risks."

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**March 21:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to extend the pretrial detention of civil society leader Osman Kavala.

**March 22:** The police [detained](#) Alişan Şahin, a lawyer for the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD). Şahin was released the next day.

**March 23:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) Fırat Akdeniz, a member of the Human Rights Association (İHD), to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**March 23:** The Chief Public Prosecutor's Office at the Supreme Court of Appeals [demanded](#) that the court overturn a 17-year prison sentence handed down for to Alaattin Çakıcı, a notorious mafia boss with ties to the government. Çakıcı was convicted for "incitement to premeditated murder."

**March 23:** The International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations [said](#) in a report that it notes with concern the high number of rejections by a body established in Turkey after a failed coup to review appeals against the dismissal of some 130,000 civil servants by emergency decree-laws.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**March 21:** The police in Diyarbakır, Ağrı, Hakkari, Konya and Mardin [intervened](#) in Newroz celebrations in the province, detaining at least 353 people.

**March 22:** The Constitutional Court [rejected](#) an application submitted by HDP deputy Semra Güzel for a reversal of a decision to lift her parliamentary immunity

on terrorism charges. Later in the week, an Ankara court [issued](#) an arrest warrant for Güzel.

**March 23:** A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) city council member Şehriban Zuğurlu to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**March 24:** A Van court [handed down](#) a suspended prison sentence of 18 months to HDP deputy Murat Sarısaç on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda.

**March 24:** The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CoE) [adopted](#) a recommendation and resolution on the situation of mayors in Turkey, calling on the Turkish authorities to modify the definition of terrorism in its legislation and to stop the practice of removing mayors, mostly members of the HDP, without court decisions.

**March 25:** The police in İzmir and Tekirdağ [detained](#) at least 55 people over their participation in Newroz celebrations.

**March 27:** A HDP district office in Mersin was [assaulted](#) by unknown assailants who fired at the office with a shotgun.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**March 21:** Media reports [indicated](#) that LGBTI individuals were attacked during Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**March 22:** Şervan Can Güder, a 22-year-old inmate, [died](#) of heart attack in a Van prison. The opposition announced that Güder had no prior health problems and that his death was suspicious.

**March 22:** A women's prison in İzmir [confiscated](#) cards sent to political prisoners on the occasion of the International Women's Day, citing alleged terrorism propaganda and incitement to crime.

**March 22:** A Van court [restricted](#) inmates' access to an award-winning novel by journalist Gökçer Tahincioğlu.

**March 23:** Melek Çetinkaya, the mother of a former military cadet who is serving a life sentence for allegedly participating in a coup attempt in July 2016, [announced](#)

on Twitter that her son's prison cell was not provided with heating or warm water.

**March 25:** A Samsun prison [restricted](#) the visitation and phone call rights of inmate Emir Karakum for protesting rights violations in prison.

**March 26:** A women's prison in İstanbul [denied](#) medical treatment to inmate Tenzile Acar for refusing to undergo treatment in handcuffs.

**March 26:** A Van court [placed](#) six inmates in solitary confinement and restricted their rights to spend time together. The prison administration also restricted the visitation rights of another inmate for one month for writing on ventilation walls.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**March 25:** A human rights lawyer [lodged](#) a complaint with the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of three Iranian refugees in Turkey who face deportation for protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention.

**March 25:** The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) [reported](#) that a total of 23,737 Turkish nationals sought international protection in EU member states, Norway and Switzerland in 2021. The number represented an increase of 38 percent compared to the previous year.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**March 24:** The police in İstanbul [strip-searched](#) a woman named Zeynep Gonca Karakoç who was detained in a house raid.

**March 24:** The guards in a Malatya prison physically [assaulted](#) inmate Musa Kültür during a ward search.

**March 24:** The guards in a Çorum prison [strip-searched](#) and physically assaulted two inmates who were involuntarily transferred from another prison. The inmates were later placed in solitary confinement.

**March 24:** Kemal Koranel, the president of the Ankara Bar Association, [resigned](#) amid a controversy after he refused to publish a report by the bar's human rights committee on allegations of torture made by detainees held at a police detention center in January.

**March 25:** The police in Van physically [assaulted](#) four people during a roadside control.

**March 25:** The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) [reported](#) that Turkish police employed unlawful tactics, including mistreatment and beating, while detaining 13,935 people between 2018 and 2021.

## **TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS**

**March 22:** A court [handed down](#) a prison sentence of three years, four months to Selahattin Gülen, a teacher who was forcibly returned from Kenya to Turkey last year due to his affiliation with the Gülen movement.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**March 23:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to acquit 33 women who were standing trial for participating in protests against Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention.