

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 191 | Date February 12-18, 2024

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 122 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.

February 14: In Mersin, 14 people, including Nuray Şahin, executive of Çukurova Association for Assistance to Families of Prisoners and Detainees (Çukurova TUAY-DER), were [detained](#) in house raids. It is learned that the prosecutor's office imposed a confidentiality order on the file and restricted lawyer visits for 24 hours.

February 15: 10 people (Yunus Emre Cangir, Abdullah Toka, Mehmet Zahir Sarıtaş, Fuat Yıldım, Zeynep Nas, Saniye Kaysi, Mizgin Yılmaz, Aysel Sartık, Esmer Oktayi and Dİlbin Oktayi) including Peace Mothers and DEM Party members were [detained](#) in house raids in Siirt. The reason for detention could not be learned.

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 EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 12: Public broadcaster Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) [dedicated](#) 78 times more airtime to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and politicians from his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) than to main opposition leader Özgür Özel, between January 1 and February 10.

February 14: Sedat Cezayirlioğlu, a local environmental activist known for his years-long advocacy against gold mining in the region, was [detained](#) due to his remarks in videos he posted on social media in reaction to the gold mining incident in Erzincan.

February 14: Upon the request of the General Directorate of Security, 45 social media posts [made](#) after the heap leaching area in the Çöpler Gold Mine site where Anagold Madencilik Sanayi ve Ticaret A.Ş. was producing gold in the İliç district of Erzincan slipped and 9 workers were buried under the soil were blocked from access by the Ankara 8th Criminal Judgeship of Peace on the grounds of national security and protection of public order.

February 15: The Europe branch of Article 19, a London-based international organization defending free expression worldwide, has [called](#) for the charges against a journalist, Sinan Aygül, who is standing trial under a controversial media law to be dismissed.

February 15: A Turkish court has [convicted](#) journalist Zafer Arapkirli of insult charges due to his social media criticism of former interior minister Süleyman Soylu and current gendarmerie general commander Arif Çetin.

February 16: Turkish prosecutors are [seeking](#) a prison sentence of up to five years for a journalist, Tolga Şardan,

due to one of his articles last year in which he talked about alleged corruption in the judiciary.

the Turkish government's transnational repression at a congressional hearing in Washington, D.C.

February 16: A Turkish prosecutor is [seeking](#) the arrest of six journalists who were detained earlier this week in the western province of İzmir on terror-related charges.

February 17: The Turkish Ministry of Education has [revised](#) the regulations for private educational institutions and now bans the celebration of Western holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Halloween.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

February 14: The Governorate of Tunceli [announced](#) that the exit from Tunceli to Erzincan is banned for 5 days between February 14, 2024 and February 18, 2024.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 14: A report drafted by two international judicial advocacy groups has [revealed](#) the increasing pressure, acts of legal harassment and widespread crackdown on lawyers in Turkey following a coup attempt in 2016 for engaging in the legal profession and how their independence has declined over time.

February 15: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has [lashed](#) out at two of the country's top courts due to some rulings that go against the stance of his government, describing their decisions as "incomprehensible" and "unsettling".

February 16: Turkish President and Justice and Development Party (AKP) leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has [appointed](#) 10 people, some of whom are politicians in his party who never served at the foreign ministry, as ambassadors.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 13: 1 person who was in a house raided by the police in Esenyurt district of Istanbul was [subjected](#) to torture and ill-treatment and was wounded in various parts of his body.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

February 17: Abdülhamit Bilici, the former editor-in-chief of the now-closed Zaman daily, has [given](#) a testimony on