

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 137 | January 30-February 5, 2023

## EARTHQUAKE IN SOUTHERN TURKEY

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected by the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. We send our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims during these difficult times.

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 71 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.

**January 31:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [faulted](#) Turkey over the imprisonment of journalist Abdullah Kılıç over his links to the Gülen movement. The ECtHR found several rights violations in Kılıç's arrest, including the right to liberty and security as well as the right to a trial within a reasonable time.

## 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

**February 3:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) 14 people to six months in prison due to their attendance in Boğaziçi University protests.

**February 3:** The Mardin Governor's Office [banned](#) a concert by musician Azad Bedran, citing a blanket ban on outdoor events it previously issued.

**February 4:** Governorates of Van and Şırnak [issued](#) blanket bans on all outdoor gatherings for four days and 10 days respectively.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**January 30:** A Bursa court [handed down](#) varying prison sentences to 21 people on charges of insulting the president, due to slogans they chanted during a commemoration event in 2015. The defendants were sentenced to imprisonments ranging from 11 months to one year, two months.

**January 30:** Prosecutors [demanded](#) up to two years in prison for singer Melek Mosso on charges of insulting a former soldier convicted of raping an 18-year-old.

**January 30:** Documentary filmmaker Sibel Tekin who was taken into custody while shooting a film in Ankara on December 16 was [released](#) from pretrial detention on probation. Tekin faces terrorism charges.

**January 31:** Bitlis prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Sinan Aygül on charges of disinformation over his reporting on an alleged child abuse case in the province. Reports highlighted that Aygül became the first person in Turkey to be indicted under a controversial law which criminalizes the dissemination of "false or misleading information" and

stipulates prison sentences of up to three years for those who are found guilty of it.

**January 31:** İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Sezgin Kartal on terrorism-related charges. Kartal was arrested on January 13.

**January 31:** Gendarmes in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) a man named Aydın Aydoğan due to his social media posts.

**February 1:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) opposition activist Perihan Koca due to her social media posts.

**February 1:** The authorities [released](#) journalist Rojin Altay who was detained on terrorism charges last week.

**February 1:** An appeals court in Ankara [overturned](#) a prison sentence of 10 months handed down by a lower court to journalist Alican Uludağ over his social media comments about a prosecutor.

**February 2:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) TV programmer Metin Uca due to complaint about his remarks during a theater performance.

**February 2:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) fashion designer and outspoken government critic Barbaros Şansal on charges of degrading the military and police.

**February 2:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a 100suzler.org, a website launched by exiled journalists Can Dündar and Erk Acarer.

**February 2:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least six news reports on opposition politicians' responses to a statement made by the president.

**February 2:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report covering misconduct allegations implicating Constitutional Court judge İrfan Fidan.

**February 2:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to at least three news report on public tenders awarded to a close friend of the president's son Bilal Erdoğan.

**February 2:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to acquit reporter Ramazan Akoğul, who stood trial due to his work for the Dicle news agency (DİHA).

**February 2:** An appeals court in İzmir [overturned](#) a prison sentence previously handed down to Mezopotamya news agency reporter Ahmet Kanbal. The court ruled to acquit

Kanbal, who stood trial due to a complaint filed against him by a high-ranking military officer.

**February 2:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit former opposition MP Eren Erdem, who stood trial on charges of insulting the president on social media.

**February 3:** An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) one person to one year, two months in prison on charges of insulting a public official during Boğaziçi University protests.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**February 4:** Bingöl prosecutors [declined](#) to investigate a complaint filed by a person named Sonuç Gürdeğer who claimed to be tortured while in police custody in August 2021.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**February 2:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to acquit reporter Ramazan Akoğul, who stood trial due to his work for the Dicle news agency (DİHA).

**February 2:** An appeals court in İzmir [overturned](#) a prison sentence previously handed down to Mezopotamya news agency reporter Ahmet Kanbal. The court ruled to acquit Kanbal, who stood trial due to a complaint filed against him by a high-ranking military officer.

**February 3:** A Mardin court [sentenced](#) district mayors Nilüfer Elik Yılmaz and Gülistan Öncü to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

**February 3:** A Mardin court [sentenced](#) former district mayor Ahmet İnci and local Kurdish politician Mehmet Kılıç to six years, three months in prison on terrorism charges due to their attendance in a political event.

**February 3:** The police in Van [detained](#) seven people, including local Kurdish politicians.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**February 3:** [Omer Hammud](#), a Syrian refugee legally residing in Turkey, was reportedly sent back to Syria for buying smuggled cigarettes.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**January 31:** Customs officers at the Turkish-Iraqi border physically [mistreated](#) a woman whose name was not disclosed. The local governor's office announced that an investigation was launched into the incident and two officers were suspended from their duties.

**January 31:** The guards in a Samsun prison [mistreated](#) inmate Mustafa Karakoç.

**February 1:** The guards in a Manisa prison [mistreated](#) inmate Gürsel Bizci.

**February 3:** Revealed video footage [showed](#) a police officer in Mardin physically assaulting a person on the street. The local governor's office announced that an investigation was launched into the incident.

**February 3:** The guards in an Elazığ prison physically [mistreated](#) and injured inmate Deniz Şah.

**February 4:** Bingöl prosecutors [declined](#) to investigate a complaint filed by a person named Sonuç Gürdeğer who claimed to be tortured while in police custody in August 2021.

## TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

**February 3:** [Uğur Demirok](#), a businessman who was abducted from Azerbaijan and forcibly returned to Turkey last year was sentenced by an İstanbul court to two years, two months in prison on terrorism charges.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**February 3:** A women's rights platform [reported](#) that men killed 31 women in January. The group also said that 28 women died under suspicious circumstances throughout the month.