

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 136 | January 23-29, 2023

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 60 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.

## 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

**January 23:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in an animal rights demonstration, briefly detaining two activists.

**January 24:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [ordered](#) the postponement of a metal worker strike in Kocaeli for a period of 60 days, citing national security reasons.

**January 24:** İstanbul prosecutors [dismissed](#) a complaint filed by labor union executive Dilbent Türker whose leg was broken during a police intervention in a protest march.

**January 27:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit 19 people who stood trial over their participation in a pride march in 2021.

**January 27:** The Çanakkale Governor's Office [banned](#) a concert organized by the HDP.

**January 28:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a demonstration staged on a steamboat to protest an incident of child abuse, briefly detaining nine activists.

**January 28:** Governorates of Hakkari, Siirt and Mardin [issued](#) 15-day-long bans on all outdoor gatherings.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**January 23:** Greek authorities [pushed back](#) to Turkey journalist Murat Verim who fled to Greece to avoid imprisonment. Upon his forcible return to Turkey, Verim was arrested and sent to an Edirne jail on terrorism charges.

**January 23:** The police in Kocaeli [detained](#) Kurdish musicians Gencay Malkoç and Yusuf Keleş on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, due to songs they sang during an event organized by the HDP.

**January 24:** Journalist Yıldız Yazıcıoğlu was physically [assaulted](#) in the parliament after asking a question to nationalist politician Devlet Bahçeli.

**January 24:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three opinion columns about allegations of corruption involving the Social Security Institution (SGK) and a former ruling party MP.

**January 24:** An İzmir court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Nazlan Ertan who stood trial for insulting a public official on social media.

**January 25:** Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into the presidents of 12 bar associations across the country on charges of insulting the state, due to a joint statement they

released against Turkey's military operations in Syria and Iraq.

**January 25:** Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist Hale Gönültaş for reporting on the alleged sexual abuse of a 12-year-old girl in the province of Aydın.

**January 25:** İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into journalist Osman Akın on terrorism-related charges due to news reports and opinion articles published in a newspaper of which he is the editor in chief.

**January 25:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to two news reports covering the remarks of opposition MP Murat Bakan who raised allegations that two religious networks had infiltrated the military.

**January 25:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to two news reports covering allegations of corruption implicating the spouse of ruling party MP Zehra Taşkesenlioğlu. On January 27, the same court [censored](#) three other news reports related to the same subject.

**January 26:** A Zonguldak court [ruled](#) to block access to a domain used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews website to publish news.

**January 26:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit writer Ataol Behramoğlu who stood trial on charges on insulting the president on a television program.

**January 27:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports about allegations of forgery implicating former football club executive Umut Güner.

**January 28:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) Kurdish journalist Rojin Altay.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**January 24:** İstanbul prosecutors [dismissed](#) a complaint filed by labor union executive Dilbent Türker whose leg was broken during a police intervention in a protest march.

**January 24:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in an individual application in favor of activist Nazan Bozkurt who in 2019 was punched by a police officer during a demonstration, which led to an orbital fracture. The top court told Ankara prosecutors who had previously dismissed Bozkurt's complaint to reinvestigate the incident of violence as it exceeded the scope of lawful use of force.

**January 26:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) published an [annual report](#) which showed that Turkey was the biggest case provider among the countries under ECtHR jurisdiction, with more than 20,000 pending applications.

**January 28:** Ağrı prosecutors [dismissed](#) a complaint filed by an inmate named Zülküf Kaya who was reportedly mistreated by prison guards.

**January 28:** Ankara prosecutors [dismissed](#) a complaint filed by jailed journalists who were strip-searched in a women's prison in the province.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**January 23:** The police in Kocaeli [detained](#) Kurdish musicians Gencay Malkoç and Yusuf Keleş on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda, due to songs they sang during an event organized by the HDP.

**January 24:** Former HDP executive Mehmet Sayit Demir was reportedly [pushed back](#) by Greek forces after fleeing Turkey, and was subsequently arrested and sent to jail for violating parole.

**January 26:** A Hakkari court [sentenced](#) former mayor Cihan Karaman to 10 years, six months in prison on terrorism charges. Karaman was one of the mayors elected from the ranks of the HDP and subsequently removed from office by the Interior Ministry.

**January 26:** A Zonguldak court [ruled](#) to block access to a domain used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews website to publish news.

**January 27:** A Mersin prosecutor [demanded](#) up to 15 years in prison for Osman Şiban, a Kurdish villager who in September 2020 was allegedly tortured by a group of soldiers and who is accused of membership in the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

**January 27:** The Çanakkale Governor's Office [banned](#) a concert organized by the HDP.

**January 28:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) Kurdish journalist Rojin Altay.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**January 26:** Reports [revealed](#) that inmates in a Kütahya prison did not have adequate access to tap water and that sick inmates in the facility were not provided with medical treatment.

**January 27:** Reports [indicated](#) that security cameras were installed in the wards and bathrooms of a women's prison in Diyarbakır and that sick inmates were not provided with meals compatible with their medically prescribed diets. The same prison facility also denied inmates' request for a Kurdish-language newspaper, restricted their right to have books with them and limited their social and collective activities.

**January 27:** An İzmir prison did not [provide](#) adequate heating in wards and did not deliver books sent to inmates.

**January 29:** A Rize prison did not [provide](#) adequate tap water to inmates.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**January 23:** Greek authorities [pushed back](#) to Turkey journalist Murat Verim who fled to Greece to avoid imprisonment. Upon his forcible return to Turkey, Verim was arrested and sent to an Edirne jail on terrorism charges.

**January 24:** Former HDP executive Mehmet Sayit Demir was reportedly [pushed back](#) by Greek forces after fleeing Turkey, and was subsequently arrested and sent to jail for violating parole.

**January 28:** Reports claimed that Turkish soldiers [shot](#) and killed Memdoh Ehmed El Musa, a Syrian citizen attempting to cross the Turkish border.

**January 28:** A Syrian refugee was [found dead](#) at his home in İzmir under suspicious circumstances.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**January 24:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in an individual application in favor of activist Nazan Bozkurt who in 2019 was punched by a police officer during a demonstration, which led to an orbital fracture. The top court told Ankara prosecutors who had previously dismissed Bozkurt's complaint to reinvestigate the incident.

**January 27:** Inmates in a women's prison in Diyarbakır are reportedly [strip-searched](#) during their transfer to courts and hospitals. Their relatives who came to visit are also subjected to strip-searches. Reports also indicated that those who objected to the practice faced visitation bans as disciplinary sanction.

**January 27:** A Mersin prosecutor [demanded](#) up to 15 years in prison for Osman Şiban, a Kurdish villager who in September 2020 was allegedly tortured by a group of soldiers and who is accused of membership in the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

**January 28:** Ankara prosecutors [dismissed](#) a complaint filed by jailed journalists who were strip-searched in a women's prison in the province.