

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 98 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

14 January: Protests [erupted](#) following the arrests of pro-Kurdish DEM Party mayors and the appointment of a trustee to Akdeniz Municipality in Mersin, leading to police intervention and the detention of five individuals.

14 January: Turkey's ruling AKP has [reintroduced](#) a controversial bill allowing the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) to act as trustee for companies and associations under investigation for financial crimes, granting it extensive authority over company operations, asset sales, and liquidation based on "strong suspicion," a measure critics argue undermines due process and

threatens property rights, particularly following the seizure of over 1,100 companies linked to the Gülen movement after the 2016 coup attempt.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

16 January: Turkey's new cybersecurity law [threatens](#) journalism by criminalizing the creation of a perception of a data leak, even if no leak occurs, with penalties of up to five years in prison and heavy fines.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

16 January: UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, [expressed](#) deep concern over Turkey's imprisonment of human rights lawyers on terrorism charges, criticizing the misuse of anti-terror laws to target legal professionals.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

14 January: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey violated Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights by denying 42 judges and prosecutors legal recourse following their dismissal under the 2014 Law No. 6524, which restructured the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK).

15 January: Bekir Altun, a judge in Turkey, previously accused of corruption, accepting bribes, and abuse of power during their tenure, has been controversially [appointed](#) as head of the Justice Academy responsible for training the country's future judges and prosecutors.

15 January: The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has [filed](#) a lawsuit seeking the dismissal of Istanbul Bar Association President İbrahim Kaboğlu and its executive

board, accusing them of disseminating terrorist propaganda following their call for an investigation into the deaths of journalists Nazım Daştan and Cihan Bilgin in northern Syria.

16 January: The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the rights of former police chief Ramazan Akyürek by detaining him for six years without sufficient justification, ordering Turkey to pay him €6,500 in non-pecuniary damages and €250 in costs.

KURDISH MINORITY

15 January: The İzmir Regional Court of Justice 2nd Criminal Chamber [overturned](#) the acquittal of Kasım Taşdoğan, who was accused of "making terrorist propaganda" for singing Kurdish songs, and sentenced him to 1 year and 8 months in prison.

17 January: Six Kurdish journalists, including Reyhan Hacıoğlu, Necla Demir, and Ahmet Güneş, were [detained](#) in coordinated police raids in İstanbul, Van, and Mersin as part of an investigation by the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, drawing criticism from rights groups who see it as part of Turkey's ongoing crackdown on Kurdish media and freedom of expression.

16 January: Muş Alparslan University [initiated](#) an investigation into a professor from its Kurdish Language and Literature Department for incorporating Kurdish poetry books into coursework, alleging the materials contained inappropriate political content, despite these works being officially approved and available in the university's library.

OTHER MINORITIES

19 January: Eighteen years after the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) [criticized](#) Turkey for failing to ensure justice, as the trials were politicized by the AKP ruling party to target the Gülen movement for political gains, a narrative widely criticized and unconvincing, with controversial decisions by Judge Akın Gürlek—now leading investigations against CHP mayors in İstanbul—drawing particular scrutiny.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

14 January: In İstanbul's Bağcılar district, unidentified assailants [entered](#) a house sheltering Syrian refugees and attacked two children with stones, resulting in the death of 12-year-old M.S. and injuries to another child.

17 January: Off the coast of Kuşadası in Aydın, seven refugees [lost](#) their lives, and 32 were rescued after falling into the sea from a rubber boat that reportedly ignored a stop warning by the Coast Guard, with search operations recovering four missing bodies and three survivors currently in intensive care.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

14 January: Lokman Yalçın, an inmate at Bitlis Ahlat T Prison who completed his 7-year, 6-month sentence, had his release [postponed](#) for the fourth time on December 30, 2024, by the Prison Administrative and Observation Board (CİGK) for another three months, following three previous delays—twice for four months and once for three months.

15 January: Hayati Uysal, a 29-year-old who was targeted during Turkey's post-coup crackdown, [reveals](#) his harrowing experience of torture in detention, including severe beatings that led to a debilitating eye condition requiring a transplant, exposing the systemic abuse faced by alleged Gülen movement affiliates.

15 January: Kenan Kaya, a former DEM Party Hakkari provincial chairperson and an ailing prisoner held in Samsun Kavak S-Type Prison who has previously suffered two heart attacks, has reportedly been [denied](#) medication and hospital treatment.

17 January: Journalist Gülistan Dursun, transferred from İstanbul Bakırköy Women's Prison to İstanbul Marmara (Silivri) Prison, [faces](#) a disciplinary investigation for refusing to wear an identification card labeled "terror offender."