

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 85 | January 31-February 6, 2022

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 64 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 2: Turgay Deniz, a 39-year-old prisoner with severe tuberculosis, [lost](#) his life in an İstanbul hospital shortly after being released from prison.

February 4: A court [arrested](#) and sent to prison two people on charges of violating a law on protecting the image of Atatürk, the founder of the republic, over their attempts to vandalize a statue of Atatürk in Samsun.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

February 1: The ruling party and its nationalist ally [blocked](#) a parliamentary motion to investigate civilian deaths caused by armored vehicles in the predominantly Kurdish southeastern provinces. The motion was proposed by an opposition party after an armored vehicle in Şırnak hit and killed a 23-year-old student. According to a report by the Human Rights Association (İHD), armored vehicles have killed 36 people, including six women and 16 children, over the past 10 years.

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

January 31: The police in Kocaeli [intervened](#) in a workers' protest, briefly detaining 200 people.

February 3: An administrative court in Denizli [rejected](#) appeals filed by four Iranian refugees who are facing a possible deportation to Iran for protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention. The refugees announced that they faced pressure to sign papers for voluntary deportation during their detention at a migrant deportation center in April 2021.

February 3: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 17 people protesting to demand the release of sick prisoners.

February 3: A district governor's office in İstanbul [banned](#) an event for solidarity with prisoners.

February 3: The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

February 4: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) one person staging a protest about the situation of sick prisoners.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 2: The police in Diyarbakır briefly [detained](#) peace activist Şükran Akboğa due to her social media posts.

February 2: The Turkish Journalists' Association (TGC) [reported](#) that 47 journalists appeared in court in the first month of 2022.

February 3: The police in Mardin [detained](#) 10 people on charges of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

February 3: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Buse Söğütlü who faced criminal charges over a social media message in which she criticized a judge.

February 4: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) Kurdish journalist and writer Nurcan Yalçın.

February 4: An appeals court in İstanbul [upheld](#) prison sentences handed down to journalists Barış Pehlivan, Hülya Kılınç, Ferhat Çelik, Aydın Keser and Murat Ağirel. The journalists were convicted in September 2020 on charges of disclosing confidential information and documents, over their report on a Turkish intelligence officer who was killed in Libya.

February 4: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA) for news publication.

February 4: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) monetary fines on TV broadcasters ATV, FOX, Show TV, Beyaz TV, STAR, Halk TV and TELE 1.

February 5: The police in Zonguldak [detained](#) a person for allegedly insulting the president.

February 5: Balıkesir prosecutors [ordered](#) the removal of a banner that was displayed on the provincial headquarters of an opposition party. The banner, which contained criticism of the alleged lavish spending by the presidential office, was deemed as an insult to the president.

February 6: İstanbul prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into at least eight people due to their social media comments on the president testing positive for Covid-19. Four people were detained in connection with the investigation. The prosecutors also issued an arrest warrant for former national swimmer Derya Büyükcuncu on charges of insulting the president.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

February 2: The Committee of Ministers, the executive body of the Council of Europe, [decided](#) to launch infringement proceedings against Turkey for failing to comply with a European Court of Human Rights order for the release of jailed civil society leader Osman Kavala. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [declared](#) that Turkey will not respect the Council of Europe decision.

February 3: The police in Diyarbakır [raided](#) the provincial bureau of the Human Rights Association (İHD), detaining board member Ferhat Berkpınar.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 1: The Constitutional Court [found](#) no rights violation in the five-year pretrial detention of Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ, describing the measure as “proportionate.”

February 2: The Committee of Ministers, the executive body of the Council of Europe, [decided](#) to launch infringement proceedings against Turkey for failing to comply with a European Court of Human Rights order for the release of jailed civil society leader Osman Kavala. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [declared](#) that Turkey will not respect the Council of Europe decision.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 1: The Constitutional Court [found](#) no rights violation in the five-year pretrial detention of Kurdish politician Figen Yüksekdağ, describing the measure as “proportionate.”

February 1: The European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the freedom of expression of 40 former HDP MPs by lifting their parliamentary immunity through a constitutional amendment in 2016 and by their subsequent trial. The court ordered Ankara to pay €5,500 to each applicant.

February 1: The ruling party and its nationalist ally [blocked](#) a parliamentary motion to investigate civilian deaths caused by armored vehicles in the predominantly Kurdish southeastern provinces. The motion was proposed by an opposition party after an armored vehicle in Şırnak hit and killed a 23-year-old student. According to a report by the Human Rights Association

(İHD), armored vehicles have killed 36 people, including six women and 16 children, over the past 10 years.

February 3: The police in Van [prevented](#) a demonstration to protest the pressures on the Kurdish language.

February 4: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) Kurdish journalist and writer Nurcan Yalçın.

February 4: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA) for news publication.

OTHER MINORITIES

February 4: A newly released study [found](#) that the majority of Turkish citizens whose native languages are not Turkish are reluctant to speak their native languages in education, health and government institutions.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 4: An Ankara prison [placed](#) a female inmate who tested positive for Covid-19 alongside others who tested negative.

February 5: A Malatya prison [deprived](#) sick inmate Mehmet Yamaç of a respirator that he needs.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 3: Turkish authorities [announced](#) having discovered the frozen bodies of at least 19 migrants near the Greek border. Turkey accused Greece of stripping the migrants of their clothes in the winter cold and forcing them back across the border.

February 3: An administrative court in Denizli [rejected](#) appeals filed by four Iranian refugees who are facing a possible deportation to Iran for protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention. The refugees announced that they faced pressure to sign papers for voluntary deportation during their detention at a migrant deportation center in April 2021.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 2: An anonymous woman [announced](#) in a letter to an MP that she and her underage daughter were

subjected to a strip-search while visiting her husband in an Amasya prison.

February 3: Some inmates held in a Diyarbakır prison were reportedly [taken](#) to rooms without surveillance cameras and were subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

February 5: Four inmates who were involuntarily [transferred](#) from an İstanbul prison to an Afyon prison were subjected to torture and ill-treatment during the transfer. One of them, Hamgin Karakaş, reportedly had his eardrum ruptured due to the violence he suffered.

February 5: Five lawyers working at the Human Rights Center of the Ankara Bar Association [resigned](#) after the bar association's management prevented the publication of a report on allegations of torture at the Ankara Police Department.

February 6: The guards in a Kayseri prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates who resisted a counting standing up. Three inmates were reportedly injured as a result of the violence.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

February 3: An administrative court in Denizli [rejected](#) appeals filed by four Iranian refugees who are facing a possible deportation to Iran for protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention. The refugees announced that they faced pressure to sign papers for voluntary deportation during their detention at a migrant deportation center in April 2021.