

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 22 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.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

18 March: Musa Üçgül, a former district governor dismissed by emergency decree after Turkey's 2016 coup attempt, [died](#) Thursday after falling from a seventh-floor scaffold at a construction site where he had recently started working, highlighting the deadly toll of post-purge hardship faced by many former public servants.

20 March: Emine Sarıaydın, a young teacher in Turkey's Giresun province, [died](#) by suicide after being denied a teaching position despite scoring 84 on the KPSS exam, reigniting outrage over politically influenced hiring practices and the lack of meritocracy in public sector recruitment.

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

20 March: Turkish riot police [fired](#) rubber bullets and tear gas at thousands of protesters near İstanbul City Hall on Thursday as demonstrations intensified over the detention of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu.

22 March: More than 1100 people were [detained](#) across Turkey following massive protests sparked by the detention of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, as Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya vowed zero tolerance for what he called attempts to provoke chaos amid growing unrest in over 50 provinces.

23 March: The governor of İstanbul has [extended](#) a citywide ban on public gatherings until March 27 and restricted entry for those "suspected" of illegal activity after huge protests sparked.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

19 March: Journalist İsmail Saymaz was [detained](#) over alleged involvement in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, accused of aiding an attempt to overthrow the Turkish government and maintaining close ties with convicted figures like Osman Kavala.

20 March: Turkey's media watchdog RTÜK, led by President Ebubekir Şahin, a former government appointee with close ties to the ruling AKP, [warned](#) broadcasters against expressing personal views on the detention of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and threatened them with potential sanctions.

20 March: Turkish authorities have [detained](#) 37 people for allegedly posting “provocative” messages on social media about İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu’s arrest, as Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced ongoing efforts to track 261 users amid criticism of a broader crackdown on dissent.

21 March: X has [blocked](#) access to student-run accounts from top Turkish universities at the request of the Turkish government amid nationwide protests over the detention of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and the annulment of his university diploma, drawing renewed criticism over the platform’s compliance with authoritarian censorship.

21 March: Journalist Merdan Yanardağ was [sentenced](#) to over a year in prison on Thursday for insulting Turkey’s security forces after criticizing alleged gendarmerie involvement in election propaganda.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

17 March: Belgian journalist Chris Den Hond has been [denied](#) entry to Turkey due to his participation in a celebration marking the liberation of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2015.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

18 March: İstanbul University announced that it had annulled the diploma of opposition Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu due to an “obvious error” in graduation records, a politically motivated move to block İmamoğlu’s potential 2028 presidential bid, which constitutionally requires a university degree. The decision also affected 27 others, including Prof. Dr. Aylin Ataay Saybaşılı, head of Galatasaray University’s Business & Management department.

19 March: More than 80 people, including İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, two district mayors, city officials, journalists, and businessmen, were [detained](#) as part of corruption and terrorism investigations seen by critics as a politically motivated effort to block İmamoğlu’s expected presidential candidacy, just one day after his university degree was annulled.

20 March: Alevi cleric Aslan Uzun was [arrested](#) for “inciting hatred and enmity” after filing a legal complaint

accusing Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa of crimes against Syria’s Alawite community.

21 March: The İstanbul 17th Civil Court of First Instance [issued](#) the ruling to dismiss the executive board of the İstanbul Bar Association, citing allegations of “terrorist propaganda” and “publicly spreading false information,” following the bar’s demand for an investigation into the killing of two Kurdish journalists in a suspected Turkish drone strike in Syria.

23 March: The Turkish Interior Ministry has [suspended](#) İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and two district mayors from office following their arrests on corruption and terrorism charges, appointing a trustee to Şişli and scheduling council elections for Mar 26 to replace İmamoğlu and Beylikdüzü Mayor Murat Çalık.

PRISON CONDITIONS

18 March: Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) lawmaker Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu [condemned](#) the incarceration of mothers with young children in Turkey, highlighting during a visit to Bafra Prison that 759 children are currently living in prison with their mothers despite laws prohibiting such practices for infants under 18 months.

20 March: Inmates at Kırşehir Prison have reportedly [developed](#) skin lesions and foul body odor due to contaminated, rust-tainted water.