

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 82 | January 10-16, 2022

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 282 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 12: An İzmir court [rejected](#) an appeal lodged by 82-year-old inmate Yusuf Bekmezci to be released for proper medical care. Bekmezci is suffering from Alzheimer's disease and he underwent an operation on January 4, during which his heart stopped until he was revived after 15 minutes of heart massage.

January 12: Several rights groups [reported](#) that at least 59 sick prisoners lost their lives in 2021, seven of them shortly after the postponement of the execution of their sentences.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

January 12: An appeals court in Gaziantep [overturned](#) an administrative court decision ordering the Interior Ministry to pay a monetary compensation to the family of Kemal Kurkut, university student who was shot dead by the police in 2017. A criminal court handling the incident had acquitted the police officer who killed Kurkut.

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 10: The police in Bursa, Mardin and Siirt [intervened](#) in protests organized by the Furkan Foundation, an anti-government religious group, detaining dozens of people.

January 10: An İstanbul court [issued](#) arrest warrants for five people who are on trial over Boğaziçi University protests.

January 12: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

January 13: The Elazığ Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

January 14: The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in protests that erupted following the suicide of a university student, detaining 83 people. The student's death caused nationwide controversy due to a video he released prior to his death in which he denounced the pressures he faced at his Islamic cult-run dorm.

January 16: The police in Adana [used](#) tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse a protest held by an anti-government religious group to demand the release of its jailed members.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

January 10: İstanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu [appeared](#) at the first hearing of his trial at an İstanbul court on

charges of insulting election officials following the cancellation of a municipal vote in the city in 2019.

January 10: The police briefly [detained](#) academic and writer Fatih Yaşlı over his social media comments.

January 10: A quarterly media monitoring [report](#) found that at least 214 journalists appeared before courts in 81 cases in the last quarter of 2021, most of them facing terrorism-related charges on account of their publications.

January 10: A journalism platform [reported](#) that 19 women journalists faced physical violence in Turkey in 2021.

January 10: In a regional study conducted in western Turkey, nearly 85 percent of journalists [confirmed](#) applying self-censorship to avoid judicial repercussions.

January 11: Journalist Oktay Candemir [announced](#) that he received death threats on social media following his coverage of child abuse allegations implicating security forces in the eastern province of Van.

January 11: The police in Gaziantep briefly [detained](#) local labor union executive Mehmet Türkmen over his social media messages.

January 11: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to three tweets about the suicide of a university student who was staying in a religious dorm.

January 12: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a website used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency (ETHA).

January 13: The managing editor of a local newspaper in Elazığ was [fired](#) from office after the publication of a report about a university student who committed suicide due to pressure he faced at a dorm run by a religious community. The report was later removed from the newspaper's online edition.

January 13: Ankara and Hatay courts [ruled](#) to block access to a total of 17 news reports about the suicide of a university student who was staying in a religious dorm.

January 14: Two journalists were among those who were [detained](#) in İstanbul during a police intervention in a protest over the suicide of a university student.

January 14: Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into opposition politician Selçuk Özdağ for allegedly insulting election officials and provoking animosity among the public.

January 14: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports on allegations of municipal debt concerning the ruling party.

January 14: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to three news reports on alleged municipal corruption implicating the ruling party.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

January 10: Zühtü Arslan, the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, [announced](#) that more than 73 percent of the applications received by the court in 2021 concerned the violation of the right to a fair trial.

January 10: A columnist [announced](#) that the mayor of the island of Gökçeada was facing a criminal investigation for employing a former judge who was fired in the aftermath of a failed coup in July 2016.

January 13: The Constitutional Court [ordered](#) the state to pay 166 people damages due to their lengthy judicial proceedings.

January 13: Elazığ prosecutors [dismissed](#) a criminal complaint against prison guards in the province who reportedly assaulted inmate İbrahim Temel and threatened him with death.

KURDISH MINORITY

January 10: A prison in Kocaeli [imposed](#) disciplinary sanctions on 15 inmates, including former HDP MPs, for chanting to protest the death of a prisoner following reports that she was subjected to torture and sexual abuse by prison guards.

January 11: The police in Van [detained](#) local HDP member Cemal Aslan.

January 11: A prison administration in Kayseri [refused](#) to deliver some inmates' Kurdish-language letters and books, citing lack of translators.

January 15: The daughter of jailed Kurdish politician Leyla Güven [announced](#) on social media that her mother was threatened with physical violence by a prison guard.

OTHER MINORITIES

January 12: An administrative court in Ankara [ruled](#) that the suspension of a state-provided student loan due to a student's attendance at a Pride March in June 2021 was illegal.

January 13: A new study [found](#) that the average household income for Roma people in Turkey is one third of the official minimum wage.

January 16: A trans woman named Günay Özyıldız was [murdered](#) in front of her apartment building in İzmir by an unidentified perpetrator.

PRISON CONDITIONS

January 10: A women's prison in Diyarbakır [denied](#) visitation rights to inmates who refused to undergo a detailed body search in front of cameras.

January 10: A prison in Kocaeli [imposed](#) disciplinary sanctions on 15 inmates, including former HDP MPs, for chanting to protest the death of a prisoner following reports that she was subjected to torture and sexual abuse by prison guards.

January 11: A prison administration in Bolu [refused](#) to deliver to an inmate a novel authored by jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş on the grounds that it included obscenity.

January 11: A prison administration in Kocaeli [censored](#) an inmate's letter on the grounds that it contained criticism of a judge overseeing her court case.

January 11: A prison administration in Kayseri [refused](#) to deliver some inmates' Kurdish-language letters and books, citing lack of translators.

January 13: A person identified as Murat E. [lost](#) his life in a one-person cell in a Van prison one day after he was arrested. While the prison administration told family members that Murat E. had committed suicide, the authorities imposed a confidentiality order on the investigation into his death and a report issued by the local forensic medicine institution did not indicate the cause of death.

January 13: The family of Ali Osman Kayan, a former police officer jailed for links to the Gülen movement, [told](#) the media that they have not been able to visit him for

nearly two years due to the distance between the prison he is in and their family home.

January 14: An İzmir prison [launched](#) a disciplinary investigation into some prisoners who held a commemoration event.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

January 11: A group of unidentified assailants wearing police uniforms [raided](#) an İstanbul apartment, killing 19-year-old Syrian refugee Naif Elnaif.

January 13: Social media platform Twitter [deleted](#) a tweet posted by a famous Turkish singer on the grounds that it contained hate speech against migrants.

January 13: Turkey's state-run news agency [claimed](#) that the Turkish coastguard rescued 15,174 irregular migrants who were pushed back by Greece into the sea in 2021.

January 14: In a video that was widely shared on social media, a landlord was [seen](#) assaulting his rental unit in İstanbul, breaking down the front door with an ax while their Syrian tenants were sleeping. The incident reportedly took place after the tenants rejected a 230 percent rent increase and refused to move out. The landlord was briefly arrested afterwards.

January 16: Two irregular migrants reportedly [froze](#) to death at the Turkish-Iranian border.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

January 11: The guards in an Iğdır prison physically and verbally [assaulted](#) inmate Hogir Batu.

January 11: The guards in a Diyarbakır prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates Velat Aydın and Süleyman Alıkan. One of the prisoners were injured and hospitalized as a result of the incident. Their phone call with their families was interrupted as they were beginning to talk about the violence.

January 13: Elazığ prosecutors [dismissed](#) a criminal complaint against prison guards in the province who reportedly assaulted inmate İbrahim Temel and threatened him with death.

January 13: Prison guards in Diyarbakır [strip-searched](#) relatives of inmates who were visiting.

January 14: The guards in an İstanbul prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates during a ward search.

January 15: The daughter of jailed Kurdish politician Leyla Güven [announced](#) on social media that her mother was threatened with physical violence by a prison guard.

January 15: Police officers in Van physically [assaulted](#) a person while detaining him.

January 16: Neighborhood guards in İstanbul physically [assaulted](#) a lawyer over an ID check.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

January 10: A journalism platform [reported](#) that 19 women journalists faced physical violence in Turkey in 2021.