

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

**September 17:** Abdülselem Kutlu, the head of a local workers' association, was [detained](#) after he called on workers to halt work in protest of low daily wages.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**September 14:** The governor's office in Tunceli [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for 15 days, citing Covid-19 measures.

**September 14:** İstanbul police [blocked](#) a protest against local government Covid-19 measures against outdoor gatherings, detaining five people including two journalists.

**September 15:** Protesters named Filiz Özçelik and Ümit Özçelik were briefly [detained](#) by the police during a public statement in Hatay.

**September 15:** A protest march organized by local health professionals about the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic was [blocked](#) by the police.

**September 16:** Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP and an ally of the ruling AKP, in a series of tweets [targeted](#) the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) which criticized the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Bahçeli called for TTB's shutdown as well as legal proceedings against its executives.

**September 17:** The police briefly [detained](#) 20 people trying to hold a press statement protesting a businessman who reportedly laid them off without paying severance.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**September 15:** A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [said](#) Turkey violated the right to liberty and security as well as freedom of expression of the Sweden-based writer Ragıp Zarakolu. In 2019, the High Court of Sweden rejected Turkey's request for Zarakolu's extradition.

**September 15:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to gabile.com, a dating and chat site for Turkey's LGBTI+ community.

**September 15:** Germany [rejected](#) Turkey's request for mutual judicial assistance to take the testimony of musician Ferhat Tunç, who is tried by an İstanbul court for allegedly insulting the president. The court overseeing Tunç's case issued a warrant against the musician.

**September 16:** A prosecutor in Muş [charged](#) journalist İdris Sayılğan with terror propaganda over his Facebook posts. The journalist has already served 1,137 days behind bars.

**September 16:** Enes Keskin, a local leftist politician based in Edirne, was briefly [detained](#) over his social media posts.

**September 17:** Media regulator RTÜK [imposed](#) fines against government-critical TV channels Haber Global, Meltem TV, TELE 1 and Fox TV. Haber Global also received a broadcast suspension over the remarks of a guests against religious high schools (imam hatip).

**September 17:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that MP Enis Berberoğlu's rights were violated after he was sentenced to 5 years, 10 months over his reporting as a

journalist of the Turkish intelligence trucks heading to the Syrian border loaded with guns.

**September 17:** English PEN [appointed](#) imprisoned journalist Nedim Türfent as an honorary member.

**September 17:** Fatma Turan, a member of Turkey's [Saturday Mothers](#), was briefly [detained](#) for allegedly insulting the president.

**September 18:** An İstanbul court overseeing the trial of exiled journalist Can Dündar [declared](#) Dündar as a “fugitive,” ruling for a confiscation of all his property in case he fails to appear before court within 15 days.

**September 18:** Local courts have not implemented a Constitutional Court [ruling](#) to lift the access block imposed on leftist sendika.org, which was delivered in March 2020.

**September 19:** Kurdish politician Sebahat Tuncel was [sentenced](#) to 11 months in prison for insulting the president, over her remarks calling the president “an enemy of women and Kurds.”

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

**September 14:** The mass detention of 60 lawyers on Sept. 11 continued to draw reactions throughout the week. The İstanbul Bar Association on Monday [denounced](#) the detentions. The Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) [called](#) for a release of the lawyers. Human Rights Watch (HRW) [said](#) the detentions undermined the right to a legal defense. Turkey's Human Rights Association (İHD) [said](#) it was unacceptable to criminalize lawyers for representing their clients. The Norwegian branch of PEN International, Norsk PEN, [said](#) that the detentions confirm that the government is waging “outright war on legal defence profession.” Sixty Turkish jurists [issued](#) a joint letter describing the detentions as a campaign to intimidate and deter legal professionals. The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, the German Bar Association, and the Law Society of England and Wales released an open [letter](#) to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, urging the release of the detainees.

**September 15:** The Supreme Court of Appeal [upheld](#) the prison sentences of 14 lawyers from the Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD), who were convicted of terrorism-related charges.

**September 15:** Jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş in an [interview](#) to Financial Times said the ineptness of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in preventing the Turkish government from abusing the country's judiciary had left him and thousands of others languishing in jail.

**September 15:** Interior minister Süleyman Soylu verbally [targeted](#) the president of the Constitutional Court after the court ruled to annul a law prohibiting demonstrations and protest marches on intercity roads, saying “Then, you do not need to have police protection. Go to work by bike.”

**September 18:** Local courts have not implemented a Constitutional Court [ruling](#) to lift the access block imposed on leftist sendika.org, which was delivered in March 2020.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**September 14:** An armed attack targeting Kurdish workers in Afyon [claimed](#) the life of Özkan T. while two others were wounded as a result of the incident.

**September 14:** Kurdish politicians, including HDP MP Murat Sarısaç, were [prevented](#) by the police from attending the funeral for Özkan T. who was killed in a racist attack in Afyon.

**September 14:** A military conscript, Doğan Çetin, [alleged](#) that he was battered by two soldiers in the unit for saying he wished there was education in Kurdish.

**September 17:** Diyarbakır prosecutors [prepared](#) a Red Notice request against Osman Baydemir, a former MP for the pro-Kurdish HDP and the former mayor of Diyarbakır. The Chief Prosecutor's Office also asked the Justice Ministry to demand Baydemir's extradition from the UK where he reportedly lives.

**September 17:** Former HDP MP Leyla Güven was briefly [detained](#) by the police after joining a protest held by the [Saturday Mothers](#).

**September 17:** The trustee appointed by Ankara to replace the Kurdish mayor of the eastern city of Van [substituted](#) local place name signs in Kurdish with signs in Turkish.

## MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

**September 16:** A UN [report](#) alleged that persons detained by Turkey-backed Syrian forces, including Syrian nationals, have been transferred to Turkey for detention and trial. Turkey [denied](#) the allegation.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**September 15:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to gabile.com, a dating and chat site for Turkey's LGBTI+ community.

**September 18:** Hrant Dink Foundation [released](#) its yearly hate speech report for 2019, in which it found that 80 different groups of people were targeted by 5,515 hate speech items throughout the year.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**September 16:** A quarterly [report](#) by the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) on the prison conditions in the Marmara region found a surge in rights violations against prisoners including deprivation of nutrition, undue transfers and strip searches, and denial of necessary medical treatment.

**September 18:** Media reports [indicated](#) that sick inmate Semire Direkçi has been denied surgery that she needs.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**September 14:** A 16-year-old Syrian refugee child was reportedly [stabbed](#) to death in fight between two groups in Samsun.

**September 16:** Eighty-three out of 100 refugee workers interviewed by a workers' association [stated](#) that they lost their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The refugee workers were also reportedly excluded by the social benefit programs extended to those who lost their jobs during the pandemic.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**September 20:** Turkish soldiers [tortured](#) two Kurdish villagers they had detained, throwing them from a helicopter after battering them, according to eyewitness claims. A medical report stated one of the villagers suffered injuries consistent with a fall from a height.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**September 16:** The family of a 12-year-old rape survivor have reportedly been [receiving](#) threats after they reported the leader of a religious cult for sexual assault against their daughter.

**September 16:** An İzmir court [issued](#) a restraining order against the ex-husband of a woman, three years after she was murdered by him.

**September 18:** A union [report](#) on gender pay gap found that men in Turkey earn 31.4 percent higher than their female counterparts.