

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 31 | January 18-24, 2021

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

January 21: The family of [Gökhan Güneş](#), missing since around noon on Jan. 20, alleged that he was abducted by police officers in İstanbul's Başakşehir district, where he works as an electrician.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

January 18: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. The ban has been uninterruptedly sustained since November 2016 in the province, through consecutive extensions introduced by the Governor's Office.

January 20: The police in Ankara [detained](#) two people who were handing out brochures supporting the protests against the appointment of a controversial pro-government rector to the Boğaziçi University.

January 21: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a public press statement held by the HDP about hunger strikes in Turkey's prisons, briefly detaining eight people.

January 21: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Zeynel Abidin Bulut to 10 months in prison on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda, over his attendance in a commemoration of a deceased journalist.

January 22: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a public press statement organized by local politicians about the alleged enforced disappearance of Gökhan Güneş, detaining four people.

January 22: The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a protest held by health workers, briefly detaining eight people including Ali Karakoç, the head of a local medical association.

January 23: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a public press statement organized by local politicians about the alleged enforced disappearance of Gökhan Güneş, detaining 12 people.

January 24: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a public press statement organized by local politicians about the alleged enforced disappearance of Gökhan Güneş, detaining five people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

January 18: Facebook [decided](#) to appoint a local representative to Turkey to comply with a new law tightening government control over social media. On Jan. 19, the government [imposed](#) advertising bans on Twitter, Pinterest and Periscope as part of a new round of sanctions on the platforms which failed to comply with the legislation.

January 19: İstanbul prosecutors [issued](#) a detention warrant for journalist Cengiz Çandar on the charge of praising crime and criminals over a 2017 tweet decrying the death of a woman killed while fighting ISIS among Kurdish militants in northern Syria.

January 19: A Bursa court [sentenced](#) Davut Toktaş to three years, two months, Resul Baykara to one year, six months in prison on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media.

January 19: The European Court of Human Rights delivered a [judgment](#) on the individual application of singer and columnist Atilla Taş, announcing that Taş's imprisonment for 14 months on account of his tweets and articles violated his right to liberty and security as well as his right to freedom of expression.

January 20: The police in Antalya [detained](#) four people in house raids over their social media posts.

January 20: An online freedom [report](#) compiled by Free Web Turkey found that 42 percent of the blocked news reports in Turkey between November 2019 and October 2020 were directly related to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, his family or officials from his ruling AKP.

January 21: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Zeynel Abidin Bulut to 10 months in prison on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda, over his attendance in a commemoration of a deceased journalist.

January 21: Prosecutors [indicted](#) journalist Yılmaz Özdil on charges of insulting the Turkish parliament for using lowercase letters in his abbreviation of the parliament's name in one of his articles. Özdil faces a prison sentence of two years.

January 21: A Bursa court [ruled](#) to block access to a column penned by journalist Murat Ağirel about alleged scandals involving Turkish supermarket chain BİM.

January 21: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories on opposition MP Ali Mahir Başarır's remarks about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's lawyer Ahmet Özel.

January 21: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a report by an NGO about a previous access ban imposed on news stories about the bribery allegations involving a former presidential lawyer, in a book co-authored by journalists Barış Pehlivan and Barış Terkoğlu.

January 23: The court [arrested](#) Erdal E. for allegedly insulting the president on social media.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

January 21: An İstanbul regional court of appeals [ruled](#) to overturn the decision of a high criminal court that acquitted businessman and civil society leader Osman Kavala and eight others of instigating the anti-government Gezi Park protests of 2013.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

January 20: Ankara prosecutors [refused](#) to file charges based on torture complaints filed by Zabit Kişi, who said he was tortured for more than three months after being forcibly returned from Kazakhstan by the Turkish

intelligence. The prosecutors cited lack of evidence while Kişi claims he provided them with documents and records he had gathered.

January 21: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the right to life of Nigerian migrant Festus Okey, who was fatally shot by a police officer in İstanbul in August 2007, was violated, while dismissing allegations and racial discrimination against Okey and lack of effective criminal investigations into the public officials responsible.

January 21: The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) calling on Turkey to implement a European Court of Human Rights decision ordering the immediate release of jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş.

January 22: The Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) [disbarred](#) nine judges and prosecutors and suspended four judges and prosecutors over their alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement.

KURDISH MINORITY

January 18: Ankara prosecutors are reportedly [drafting](#) summaries of proceedings against nine HDP deputies to lift their parliamentary immunity over the protests in Kurdish-majority cities in 2014.

January 20: A Diyarbakır court [issued](#) an arrest warrant for HDP deputy Hatice Kocaman who stands trial on terrorism charges, facing up to 15 years in prison.

January 21: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a public press statement held by the HDP about hunger strikes in Turkey's prisons, briefly detaining eight people.

January 21: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Zeynel Abidin Bulut to 10 months in prison on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda, over his attendance in a commemoration of a deceased journalist.

January 21: The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) calling on Turkey to implement a European Court of Human Rights decision ordering the immediate release of jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş.

January 24: The police in İstanbul [raided](#) HDP district headquarters, briefly detaining two HDP district executives.

OTHER MINORITIES

January 22: A Ministry of Health official in Tokat [used](#) a provincial map on which Alevi-majority villages appeared to be clearly marked, while communicating online with an elderly patient, leading to the fear of official discrimination against patients of Alevi confession.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

January 21: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the right to life of Nigerian migrant Festus Okey, who was fatally shot by a police officer in İstanbul in August 2007, was violated, while dismissing allegations and racial discrimination against Okey and lack of effective criminal investigations into the public officials responsible.

January 23: The police [detained](#) 72 suspected human smugglers in operations across the country. The detentions came after a Turkey-EU deal in Brussels to stem the flow of migrants across the Aegean Sea.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

January 19: Prison guards in Gaziantep physically assaulted inmate [Ömer Levent](#) after he refused to go through a strip-search.

January 20: Ankara prosecutors [refused](#) to file charges based on torture complaints filed by Zabit Kişi, who said he was tortured for more than three months after being forcibly returned from Kazakhstan by the Turkish intelligence. The prosecutors cited lack of evidence while Kişi claims he provided them with documents and records he had gathered.

January 22: Guards in an Aksaray prison reportedly beat up inmate [Mehmet Sıraç](#).

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

January 21: An annual gender-based violence [report](#) compiled by Bianet found that at least 284 women were killed and 792 others were subjected to violence by men in 2020 in Turkey.