

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 33 | February 1-7, 2021

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 643 people over their 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: Media reports [revealed](#) that 13 prisoners across the country were kept behind bars despite being eligible for parole, based on a prison bylaw enacted in December 2020.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#) and [Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit](#), former public sector workers who were sacked from their jobs by decree-laws during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who were reported missing respectively as of August 6, 2019 and December 29, 2020, in what appear to be the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

February 2: Chaldean and Assyrian associations in Europe, the United States, Australia and Iraq sent a joint [letter](#) to Turkey's justice and interior ministers demanding a thorough investigation into the disappearance of Chaldean villager Hurmüz Diril and the murder of his wife Şimoni Diril.

February 4: The police in Ankara unlawfully [detained](#) in car and threatened Ronda Bat and Sultan Taş, two women who are members of the HDP youth council.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Throughout the week, the police in several provinces across the country [blocked](#) demonstrations held in protest of the appointment of a government loyalist as a rector to Boğaziçi University. According to Interior Ministry figures, over 500 people were detained while attending the protests. Videos of protests showed widespread police brutality against demonstrators while senior government officials, including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, verbally targeted the students and other demonstrators, calling them “terrorists.”

February 1: An İstanbul court overseeing the retrial of the 2013 Gezi Park protests case [imposed](#) an international travel ban on the defendants.

February 2: The Antalya Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

February 2: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. The ban has been kept in effect uninterruptedly since November 2016 through consecutive extensions.

February 2: The Kadıköy District Governor's Office in İstanbul [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of seven days.

February 4: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a pro-Kurdish demonstration, detaining 68 people, four of whom minors, including journalist Rojin Altay. The minors as well as Altay were released the next day.

February 5: Social media platform Twitter [removed](#) a tweet posted by far-right politician Devlet Bahçeli that referred to students protesting the appointment of a pro-government rector to Boğaziçi University as “poisonous snakes whose heads need to be crushed.” The tweet

was replaced with a notice that said it was removed due to violating Twitter rules that ban threats of violence.

February 5: The Adana Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 1: A Muş court [sentenced](#) journalist İdris Sayılğan to four years in prison on terrorism-related charges.

February 1: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to arrest two students from Boğaziçi University on charges of inciting hatred and insulting religious values over a poster depicting religious images with LGBTI flags.

February 1: The Interior Ministry [released](#) a statement announcing that a total of 5,394 social media accounts were examined for alleged terrorist propaganda, 2,237 of which faced investigations that led to the detention of 118 people in January 2021.

February 2: The European Court of Human Rights [ordered](#) Turkey to pay €2,000 in non-pecuniary damages for violating the freedom of speech of Michael Dickinson, the late British academic and college artist, by convicting him of "insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan when he was prime minister."

February 3: An Ankara court [sentenced](#) journalist Alican Uludağ to 10 months in prison over his social media posts about former Ankara Chief Prosecutor Yüksel Kocaman.

February 3: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) eight students on charges of allegedly provoking the public over their social media messages about the protests related to Boğaziçi University.

February 3: An İstanbul court began the retrial of [Erol Önderoğlu](#), the Turkey representative of Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Önderoğlu is facing up to almost 15 years in prison for joining a campaign to support a newspaper that was shut down in 2016 for allegedly having links to outlawed Kurdish militants. Forensic scientist and prominent human rights defender Şebnem Korur-Fincancı and exiled journalist Ahmet Nesin are also standing trial in the case.

February 3: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to the website of Gazete Alinteri.

February 3: Reports revealed that on Dec. 17, an Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a column penned by journalist İsmail Saymaz.

February 3: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to acquit Hülya Oruç, the wife of imprisoned journalist Aziz Oruç, of charges of "provoking hatred and enmity among public." Oruç faced the charges over her social media commentary.

February 4: An Ankara court ordered opposition leader [Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu](#) to pay President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan \$14,000 in non-pecuniary damages due to his criticism of the privatization of a military tank and pallet factory.

February 4: An Artvin court [ruled](#) to block access to a news story about an NGO executive who was summoned for a questioning over his criticism of three senior government officials including a presidential aide.

February 4: The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) [blocked](#) access to 331 websites which were allegedly found by the Diyarbakır Gendarmerie Command to be engaged in spreading terrorist propaganda.

February 5: Journalist [Osman Gülü](#) was attacked after leaving his office in İstanbul. He was injured and hospitalized due to the attack.

February 5: An Ankara prosecutor [demanded](#) up to 31 years, six months for journalists Müyesser Yıldız and İsmail Dükel on espionage charges for reporting on Turkey's military involvement in Libya.

February 5: Ankara prosecutors launched an investigation into independent deputy and journalist [Ahmet Şık](#) on charges of engaging in overt provocation to commit a crime, over his remarks in support of the weeks-long protests against the appointment of a government loyalist as the rector of Boğaziçi University.

February 5: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a previous access ban imposed on news stories about the public tenders granted to a friend of Bilal Erdoğan, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son.

February 5: The Press in Arrest initiative published a monthly media freedom [report](#) which found that two journalists appeared before a judge every day and two

were sentenced to a total of three years, 22 days in prison in January 2021.

February 7: The police in İzmir [detained](#) Beyza Buldağ, a university student who allegedly controlled a popular social media account focused on Boğaziçi University protests for “provoking hatred and enmity among public” and “inciting to committing crimes.” Buldağ appeared before a court which ruled for her arrest the same day.

February 7: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) local HDP youth member Muhammed Ünal over his social media messages. Ünal was arrested after appearing before a court.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

February 5: An İstanbul court ruled to keep businessman and human rights defender [Osman Kavala](#) behind bars at the second hearing of a trial related to a failed 2016 coup. Kavala has been imprisoned since October 2017, despite a European Court of Human Rights order for his release.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 3: The Constitutional Court underlined in a [reasoned decision](#) about the case of opposition politician Enis Berberoğlu that lower courts do not have the right to defy its rulings, warning that attempts in that direction would result in criminal, administrative and legal liabilities. Lower courts previously refused to enforce Constitutional Court rulings ordering Berberoğlu’s retrial.

February 4: The İstanbul Council of Forensic Medicine said that [Ali Yılmaz](#), a paralyzed inmate with several health problems, was “fit to remain in prison,” despite acknowledging in its report that they were unaware of conditions in the prison.

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KURDISH MINORITY

February 1: A Muş court [sentenced](#) journalist İdris Sayılğan to four years in prison on terrorism-related

charges. Sayılğan stood trial over his work for the pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya news agency.

February 1: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) asked Turkey to provide its defense for the pre-trial detention of Kurdish politician [Selahattin Demirtaş](#) in connection to street protests in the country’s Southeast in 2014.

February 2: The police in İstanbul reportedly [coerced](#) local HDP members Sinan Alabakır and Gülay Alabukan to become an informant for the state during their questioning. The two were detained a week before.

February 3: The police in six provinces [detained](#) nine members and executives of the HDP as part of an operation ordered by Ankara prosecutors. Two of the detainees were arrested after appearing before a court while seven were released to house arrest.

February 3: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) local politician Garip Kandemir to six months, three years in prison on terrorism-related charges.

February 4: The police in Ankara unlawfully [detained](#) in car and threatened Ronda Bat and Sultan Taş, two women who are members of the HDP youth council.

February 4: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a pro-Kurdish demonstration, detaining 68 people, four of whom minors, including journalist Rojin Altay. The minors as well as Altay were released the next day.

February 7: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) local HDP youth member Muhammed Ünal over his social media messages. Ünal was arrested after appearing before a court.

MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

February 3: Human Rights Watch [condemned](#) the illegal transfer to Turkey of more than 60 Syrians arrested by Turkey and its local proxies in Syria’s northeast in 2019, on account of their alleged links to Kurdish militia in the region that Turkey views as “terrorists.”

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

February 4: Freedom House published a [report](#) on global transnational repression, revealing the intensity, geographic reach and suddenness of the Turkish government’s campaign targeting dissidents abroad,

noting that Turkey has become number one among countries that have conducted renditions from host states since 2014.

OTHER MINORITIES

February 1: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to arrest two students from Boğaziçi University on charges of inciting hatred and insulting religious values over a poster depicting religious images with LGBTI flags.

February 2: Chaldean and Assyrian associations in Europe, the United States, Australia and Iraq sent a joint [letter](#) to Turkey's justice and interior ministers demanding a thorough investigation into the disappearance of Chaldean villager Hurmüz Diril and the murder of his wife Şimoni Diril.

February 2: Social media platform Twitter [flagged](#) a tweet posted by Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu that referred to LGBTI people as "perverts."

February 4: Melih Bulu, the controversial rector of Boğaziçi University [announced](#) the suspension of the university's LGBTI club over a poster that allegedly disrespected religious images.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 2: Media reports revealed that 44-year-old inmate [Kahraman Sezer](#), who was being held at a Hatay prison, died of Covid-19 behind bars.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

February 5: The Association for Migration Research released a [report](#) titled "Ghosts of İstanbul: Afghans at the Margins of Precarity," examining the conditions of Turkey's Afghan migrants.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 1: A Geneva-based association filed an [appeal](#) with the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) concerning the alleged torture of a soldier by the Ankara police.

February 2: The guards at a Malatya prison [assaulted](#) prisoners who refused to undergo strip-searches.

February 2: [Servet Erdil](#), a former public sector worker, revealed in an interview the details of the brutal treatment of detainees at the Ankara police headquarters, which he witnessed during his 10-day detention in December 2016.

February 5: The guards at a Kahramanmaraş prison reportedly [assaulted](#) inmates Sedat Karak, Veysi Altan, Servan Sertkaya, Orhan Doru and İhsan Oran.

February 5: Two women who were detained in İzmir while attending protests against the appointment of a pro-government rector to Boğaziçi University [revealed](#) that they were subjected to strip-searches during their detention.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

February 3: A monthly gender-based violence [report](#) found that men killed at least 22 women and inflicted violence on 60 in January 2021.