

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



June 29-July 5, 2020

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

July 5: A pro-Kurdish news outlet [reported](#) that Fatma Elarslan, a 13-year-old girl, who was found dead in the southeastern province of Şırnak after being missing for 20 days during a local curfew in February-March 2020, was registered by local prosecutors as being “killed in clashes with security forces,” based on anonymous witness statements denouncing her as a “member of a terrorist organization.”

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

June 29: The police [blocked](#) a protest organized by lawyers in the western city of İzmir against the government’s plans to amend the law on lawyers. The lawyers subsequently staged a sit-in, according to reports.

June 30: Lawyers from the Adana Bar Association were [blocked](#) by the police from holding a protest march. The lawyers later held a sit-in.

July 1: Four people who made a public statement commemorating the Sivas massacre were [detained](#) by the police in Ankara who cited a ban on assemblies issued by the governor’s office.

July 2: The Ankara Governor’s Office released a statement [banning](#) all meetings, marches and assemblies for 15 days, citing increasing number of cases in the Covid-19 pandemic. The ban came a day prior to the “Grand Defense Rally” organized by bars associations.

July 3: The police [used](#) pepper spray against lawyers who gathered at Ankara courthouse to protest a government-led bill to amend the law on lawyers.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

June 29: Documents revealed that Turkey [requested](#) from Sweden the extradition of government-critical journalist Levent Kenez for allegedly insulting a prosecutor and a judge in an article he published.

June 30: A Turkish court [started](#) the trial of 20 Saudi nationals suspected to be involved in the 2018 murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, including two former aides to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in absentia. The prominent Riyadh critic was killed after he entered the Saudi Consulate in İstanbul in October 2018. Riyadh has described the murder as a “rogue” operation, but both the CIA and UN Special Rapporteur Agnès Callamard have linked Crown Prince Mohammed to the killing.

July 1: Turkey’s media watchdog RTÜK [imposed](#) five-day broadcast bans against two government-critical TV channels. The two outlets risk losing their broadcast licenses entirely if they get penalized again in the future.

July 1: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [asked](#) the parliament to draft a bill aimed at controlling or shutting down social media platforms and streaming services such as YouTube, Twitter and Netflix. Last year, Erdoğan’s government [granted](#) media watchdog RTÜK censorship powers over online streaming.

July 1: At least 11 people were [detained](#) in Turkey for social media postings that allegedly insulted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s daughter and son-in-law after they announced the birth of their fourth child on Twitter.

July 2: Doğan Akın, founder and editor-in-chief of the T24 news website, was [acquitted](#) by an İstanbul court of criminal charges related to his reporting on the tweets of the famous government whistleblower “Fuat Avni”

between 2014 and 2016. Meanwhile, journalist Ayşenur Parıldak who was [arrested](#) in 2016 for being followed by Fuat Avni on Twitter, remains in jail.

July 5: Turkey's media watchdog RTÜK [banned](#) the broadcasting of a music video by singer Sila Gencoğlu for "encouraging smoking." The video had close to 25 million hits on YouTube at the time the ban went into effect.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

June 30: Haluk Savaş, 54, a leading human rights activist and a victim of a large-scale post-coup purge in Turkey, [died](#) of cancer after his treatment abroad was significantly belated by an arbitrary travel ban and ultimately produced no result.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

July 3: An İstanbul court [handed down](#) prison sentences to four human rights defenders out of the 11 who were on trial on terrorism-related charges. Those sentenced included Taner Kılıç, former Chair of Amnesty International Turkey Executive Board.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

June 30: Serkan Gölge, an American NASA scientist, [returned](#) with his family to the United States after nearly four years of imprisonment and house arrest in Turkey, and more than seven months after US President Donald Trump said he had secured an agreement for his release. Gölge was imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

KURDISH MINORITY

June 29: Belarussian news reports indicated that the Supreme Court of Belarus [ruled](#) to extradite Hicri Mamas, a Kurdish political activist, to Turkey where he is accused of "threatening the unity and territorial integrity of the state."

June 29: An Ankara criminal court [ruled](#) to keep behind bars Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, former co-chairs of the Kurdish-oriented Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) who have been imprisoned since November 2016. Turkey previously [defied](#) an ECtHR order for Demirtaş's release.

OTHER MINORITIES

June 29: Presidential aide Fahrettin Altun [defended](#) the homophobic remarks of Kerem Kınık, the head of Turkish Red Crescent.

PRISON CONDITIONS

June 29: Esra Terzioğlu, the wife of a jailed TV director Fatih Terzioğlu, continued to [campaign](#) for the immediate release of her husband who has serious health problems.

June 29: Media reports [indicated](#) that authorities in the Ağrı Patnos Prison in eastern Turkey were holding up prisoners' letters and deliveries, confiscating their radios, unduly restricting prisoners' social and sportive rights, depriving prisoners of hot water and supplying unhygienic meals.

July 1: Birsen Yıldırım, the wife of inmate Deniz Yıldırım, [called](#) on the authorities for the release of her husband who was diagnosed with colon cancer and COVID-19 in the Elazığ prison where he is held.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

July 1-3: Bodies of seven Afghan migrants were [recovered](#) by rescue teams in lake Van in eastern Turkey after a boat carrying around 70 Afghan migrants was reported missing on June 27.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

July 2: Ruling AKP's deputy chairman Numan Kurtulmuş said Turkey might [withdraw](#) from the İstanbul Convention, the international convention on against gender-based violence which has been slammed in Turkey's conservative circles as "damaging to family values."

July 3: In June 2020, men [inflicted](#) violence on at least 61 women, killed 21 women and raped seven women, according to monthly gender-based violence figures compiled by the Bianet news website.