

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 3 | July 6-12, 2020

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

**July 6:** The police blocked a press briefing in İstanbul's Kadıköy district, [detaining](#) one person. The press briefing was about jailed lawyers Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal who have been on a hunger strike.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**July 6:** The governor's office in the eastern province of Van released a statement [banning](#) all outdoor gatherings, marches, sit-ins, concerts, festivals as well as distribution of flyers, brochures, banners for 15 days. The ban has been uninterrupted in effect since November 2016.

**July 8:** The Şanlıurfa governor's office in southeastern Turkey [extended](#) for 15 days its ban on all assemblies which has been in effect since October 2019.

**July 9:** Bar association head who gathered in the Kuğulu park in Ankara in protest of a government-led bill to amend the law on lawyers were [surrounded](#) by the police who blocked journalists and other lawyers from entering the area.

**July 9:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that the rights to freedom of assembly of two Turkish applicants were violated when they were handed down terrorism-related sentences for attending a demonstration. The court fined Ankara to pay each applicant € 5,000 in compensation.

**July 10:** The police [blocked](#) lawyers from marching towards the parliament in protest of the government bill to alter the law on lawyers.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**July 6:** A report by NGO Press in Arrest [found](#) that Turkey's authorities prosecuted 92 journalists and held 59 trials between March 17 and June 15, despite COVID-19 measures in effect.

**July 7:** Academics Şebnem Korur Fincancı and Gençay Gürsoy were [acquitted](#) from terrorism-related charges over a peace petition they signed in 2016 calling for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast and condemning Turkish security forces' excessive use of force.

**July 7:** Deputy chairman of ruling AKP in an interview [implied](#) government censorship over a homosexual character on a Turkish show on Netflix.

**July 7:** Government-critical Dokux8 Haber news website's account was [restricted](#) by Twitter without explanation.

**July 8:** İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) two veteran actors, Metin Akpınar and Müjdat Gezen, for allegedly insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, due to their remarks on a TV program in 2018. The indictment seeks up to 4 years, 8 months in prison for each of the actors.

**July 9:** An İstanbul court [blocked](#) access to a YouTube video of the government-critical Halk TV broadcaster.

**July 9:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's spokesperson İbrahim Kalın [reiterated](#) the president's remarks last week announcing government plans to 'control' social media platforms. Kalın said the Turkish government does not intend to fully shut down social media.

**July 10:** A trial monitoring [report](#) by two NGOs found that in 60 percent of journalists standing trial between February 2019 and March 2020 were charged with

terrorism-related offenses and that in 74 percent of the cases, journalistic work was used as evidence.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**July 6:** Turkish authorities [sent](#) deportation orders to two American Christian workers, according to a Christian news outlet which said at least 16 foreign Christian workers were expelled from Turkey this year.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**July 9:** The rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) issued a joint [statement](#) urging Turkey to revise its anti-terror laws, following the recent [convictions](#) of four Turkish human rights defenders.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

**July 10:** Turkey's Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) [suspended](#) 26 judges and prosecutors over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. The HSK disbarred some 4,500 judges and prosecutors following a failed coup in July 2016.

**July 11:** Turkey's parliament [passed](#) into law a controversial bill amending the law on lawyers and altering the election mechanism of bar associations. The bill drew protests from lawyers across the country and right groups like Human Rights Watch and International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) have [warned](#) that the amendment would undermine the bar associations' role as human rights watchdogs.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**July 6:** The police [detained](#) nine local Kurdish politicians in the southeastern city of Batman, including the city's former co-mayor Ömer Kulplu who was removed from office by the interior ministry and replaced with a government-appointed trustee. The nine people were released within the same day.

**July 7:** A court ruled to [arrest](#) Sevil Rojbin Çetin, a local Kurdish politician from the ranks of HDP who was reportedly exposed to torture for three-and-a-half hours during her detention by the police on June 26.

**July 8:** Local Kurdish politicians Bekir Karageçit, Hıdır Oktay and İhsak Gündüz were [detained](#) in house raids in Şanlıurfa.

## MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

**July 9:** A war monitor reported that Turkish-backed rebels [plundered](#) several houses in Syria's Hasakah province in northeastern Syria. Turkey controls several towns in the region since its cross-border military operation in October 2019.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**July 9:** Germany's domestic security agency BfV [said](#) in its annual report that Turkey's intelligence service MİT spies on Turkish dissidents living in Germany.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**July 11:** A university student in Ankara [received](#) online death threats after promoting an upcoming lecture on LGBTI rights.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**July 7:** Media reports said cancer patient prisoner Fatma Özbay was [denied](#) treatment by authorities in the western province of İzmir.

**July 8:** The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that audio or video recording of non-contact prison visits were in violation of rights, upon an application by a prisoner.

**July 12:** Fatih Terzioğlu, jailed TV director who has been suffering from health problems behind bars, was [released](#) after an intensive campaign on social media led by his wife.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**July 8:** Turkish rescue teams [located](#) the boat carrying over 100 migrants in Lake Van after it was reported missing on July 27. New bodies were recovered throughout the week and the [death toll](#) hit 21 on Sunday.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**July 6:** Journalist Sibel Hürtaş [revealed](#) in a column that she was exposed to torture during her brief detention by the police on July 3.

**July 7:** Media reports [indicated](#) that Tacettin Kardaş who was detained on June 30 for his social media posts was subjected to torture and ill-treatment during his questioning by the police in the Kurdish-majority province of Diyarbakır.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**July 7:** A prosecutor [dropped](#) the investigation into a Twitter user over his sexual assault threats against four prominent government-critical women, citing lack of grounds for prosecution. Last week, at least 11 people were [detained](#) over comments on social media that allegedly insulted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's daughter and son-in-law.

**July 7:** A 27-year-old woman was [found dead](#) in her hometown a week after her husband forced her to return to eastern Bingöl from a shelter in İstanbul. The husband was detained. The Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation [accused](#) public officials of endangering women by disclosing the location of shelters.

**July 8:** Seven women were [detained](#) in İstanbul after hanging a banner from a building defending the İstanbul Convention. A Turkish government official recently [hinted at](#) Turkey's potential withdrawal from the international convention against gender-based violence.