

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 21 | November 9-15, 2020

November 11: A draft European Parliament [report](#) on Turkey highlighted the backsliding on the rule of law and fundamental rights in the country. The report included criticism of Turkey's overly broad anti-terrorism laws, disregard of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) rulings by the Turkish judiciary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

November 9: The police in İstanbul's Sabiha Gökçen Airport briefly [detained](#) leftist activist Deniz Aktaş for a questioning. Aktaş is under investigation over protests of government's removal of the elected mayor of Van.

November 11: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a sit-in organized by a group of workers demanding their unpaid salaries and severances, detaining four people.

November 11: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a press statement held by the members of the Furkan Foundation, briefly detaining 40 people.

November 12: The Governor's Office in Mardin [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a month, citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

November 12: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) activist Narin Gezgör to 7 years, 6 months in prison on terrorism charges, and prosecutors demanded up to 15 years for Sevim Coşkun, as part of an investigation into the Rosa Women's Association.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

November 9: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) online news editor Ali Ergin Demirhan to 1 year, 2 months, 17 days in prison for insulting the president, over six tweets he posted in 2018.

November 9: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to release journalist Müyesser Yıldız at the first hearing of her trial. Yıldız was arrested in June on charges of espionage over a report on Turkey's military involvement in Libya.

November 9: An Ağrı court [ruled](#) to release on probation journalist Aziz Oruç, who was arrested in December on terrorism charges.

November 9: A Nevşehir court [ruled](#) to censor and confiscate two books on alleged government corruption published by the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP).

November 9: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about the background of a government appointee, citing violation of personal rights.

November 9: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a previous access ban on news stories.

November 10: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the freedom of expression of journalists Murat Sabuncu, Akın Atalay, Musa Kart, Önder Çelik, Mustafa Kemal Güngör, Hakan Karasinir, Güray Tekin Öz and Bülent Utku who were imprisoned on terrorism charges.

November 10: The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) Hamdullah Bayram, an employee of the Yeni Yaşam newspaper.

November 10: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) journalist Cihan Ölmez as part of an investigation by Diyarbakır prosecutors into the Kurdish political movements.

November 10: Journalist Çağlar Tekin was briefly [detained](#) over a tweet about ISIS members in northern Syria using captured Turkish military vehicles.

November 10: A YouTube creator revealed that he and a person with whom he conducted a street interview were [summoned](#) by the police for questioning over comments in the interview about the resignation of the finance minister.

November 11: İstanbul prosecutors [demanded](#) up to 4 years, 8 months in prison for 80-year-old actress Nilüfer Aydan for allegedly insulting the president on social media.

November 12: An Ankara court [sentenced](#) journalist Yılmaz Özdil to five months in prison over his remarks on a TV show criticizing the defense minister.

November 12: The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Turkey violated the freedom of expression of journalist Halil İmrek, who was imprisoned over a speech.

November 12: An İstanbul prosecutor [indicted](#) former TV anchorman Erkan Akkuş, seeking up to 15 years in prison on charges of membership in a terrorist organization.

November 13: An opposition MP's [report](#) found that a total of 63,041 people have faced investigations on charges of insulting the president between 2014 when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took office and the end of 2019. The report said that 9,554 people were convicted as a result.

November 13: Bitlis prosecutors [cited](#) a storybook by imprisoned Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş as a terrorism evidence. The book was found in the house of Necmettin İşlek, who is standing trial for alleged membership in a terrorist organization.

November 13: The Governor's Office in Şanlıurfa [banned](#) a Kurdish-language theater play.

November 14: Ankara prosecutors [prepared](#) a summary of proceedings against opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, seeking the removal of his parliamentary immunity so that he can be tried of charges of "praising an offense and an offender."

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

November 11: [Gülhan Çolakoğlu](#), a former chemistry teacher purged from public service after a failed coup in July 2016, lost her life after authorities refused to lift her travel ban for her scheduled treatment in Germany.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

November 11: Justice Minister Abdülhamit Gül [announced](#) that 116,170 out of 167,719 tip-offs received by Turkish prosecutors in 2020 turned out to be false. The revelation threw into question the government's policies to encourage informers.

November 12: An opposition MP's [report](#) found that 52 percent of rights violation verdicts by the Constitutional Court involved violations of the defendants' right to a fair trial.

November 13: The Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) [demanded](#) the names of judges and prosecutors involved in court decisions to arrest businessman and civil society leader Osman Kavala. The HSK also sought the names of those involved in rulings that failed to honor a December 2019 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decision ordering Kavala's release.

KURDISH MINORITY

November 9: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) five people including Berivan Kutlu, former co-mayor of the Cizre district, and Güler Tunç, HDP district co-chair.

November 9: A Mardin court [ruled](#) to arrest Hasip Aktaş and Ahmet İnci, two former mayors who were detained on Oct. 30 as part of an investigation into the Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

November 9: A court ruled to [arrest](#) Ali Coşkun and Kadriye Töre, local HDP executives in Osmaniye who were detained on Nov. 4 on terrorism charges.

November 10: The police in Şırnak [detained](#) journalist Cihan Ölmez as part of an investigation by Diyarbakır prosecutors into the Kurdish political movements.

November 10: The police in Erzurum [detained](#) local HDP executives Necmettin Aydın and Adem Gözüngü. The politicians were arrested by a court on Nov. 12.

November 10: The police in Bingöl [detained](#) local HDP member Murat Aydın. The detainee was released on Nov. 11.

November 12: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) activist Narin Gezgör to 7 years, 6 months in prison on terrorism charges, and prosecutors demanded up to 15 years for Sevim Coşkun, as part of an investigation into the Rosa Women's Association.

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November 13: The Governor's Office in Şanlıurfa [banned](#) a Kurdish-language theater play.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

November 12: Media [reports](#) revealed the growing pressure on the Turkish staff members of a school in Albania, leading to fears of possible forcible returns to Turkey where the allegedly Gülen-linked individuals would be faced with a possibility of torture and ill-treatment. Albania has deported an alleged Gülen follower, Harun Çelik, to Turkey, despite his asylum request.

OTHER MINORITIES

November 9: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) 18 transgender women in what they and rights activists have described as a targeted harassment based on their identity.

November 12: Amnesty International launched an [online petition](#) requesting the acquittal of 18 university students and one academic who are standing trial for attending a LGBTI parade.

PRISON CONDITIONS

November 10: [Ahmet Kaplan](#), a former police officer who was diagnosed lung cancer while behind bars on terrorism charges, lost his life after authorities denied to release him for treatment.

November 12: Sıtkı Bektaş, a sick inmate held in a Tekirdağ prison, [lost his life](#) after having a gastric bleeding.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

November 11: An NGO alleged that government officials [discriminated](#) against migrants during the relief efforts following the devastating earthquake that hit İzmir.

November 13: A vehicle carrying migrants [overturned](#) on a highway in eastern Turkey. Two migrants lost their lives due to the accident while 31 people were injured.

November 15: The Turkish coast guard [rescued](#) 19 asylum seekers in a rubber dingy off the Aegean coast.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

November 9: A lawyers' group [announced](#) that Ahmet Ayva, one of their clients in police custody, was being coerced into becoming an informant for authorities.

November 12: Relatives of prisoners held in an İzmir prison [alleged](#) that the inmates were being subjected to torture in padded cells by prison guards.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

November 12: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) activist Narin Gezgör to 7 years, 6 months in prison on terrorism charges, and prosecutors demanded up to 15 years for Sevim Coşkun, as part of an investigation into the Rosa Women's Association.