

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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SPANO'S CONTROVERSIAL VISIT

September 3: European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) President Róbert Ragnar Spano paid a four-day [visit](#) to Turkey which sparked indignation among opposition, and rights groups which were excluded from the visit's schedule. Spano also received an honorary doctorate from the İstanbul University which had purged nearly 200 academics during Turkey's two-year-long state of emergency in the aftermath of the July 2016 coup attempt. Prominent Turkish writer Mehmet Altan addressed an [open letter](#) to Spano, highlighting the purge of Turkish academics.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

September 2: Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of nationalist MHP and an ally of ruling AKP released a [statement](#) calling for the reinstatement of the death penalty, which Turkey had abolished in 2004 as part of its EU accession bid. Speaker of the parliament Mustafa Şentop [endorsed](#) Bahçeli's proposal.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

August 31: The governor's office in Antalya [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for seven days.

September 1: The police in Urfa briefly [detained](#) six people holding a demonstration on the occasion of the UN Day of Peace. The authorities also banned and blocked Day of Peace activities organized in Diyarbakır, Ankara and Van.

September 1: The governor's office in İzmir [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for one day.

September 6: The İstanbul police violently [blocked](#) a march organized in İstanbul, detaining 39 people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

September 1: A monthly press freedom [report](#) released by opposition MP Barış Yarkadaş said that two journalists were arrested in the month of August while two were detained and two stood trial.

September 1: An Erzincan court [ruled](#) to ban access to news stories about a street vendor who set himself on fire on August 3 after authorities confiscated his vehicle and died on August 27.

September 2: Media watchdog RTÜK [shut down](#) the government-critical TELE1 broadcaster for five days over the remarks of a guest criticizing the country's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet).

September 2: Journalist Rawin Sterk, who has been imprisoned since March, was [released](#) after his first hearing about his reporting of the migrant crisis at the border with Greece.

September 3: A court [ruled](#) to ban access to news stories about an alleged child abuse by a religious preacher.

September 3: Grup Yorum music band member Ali Aracı, who was arrested in June 2019 as part of a prosecution against the leftist music group, was [released](#).

September 3: Media watchdog RTÜK [demanded](#) Netflix to remove the movie "Cuties" (Mignonnes) which it said contains images of child abuse.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

September 4: The Council of Europe (CoE) Committee of Ministers [urged](#) Turkey to comply with a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) order to release businessman and civil society leader Osman Kavala, who has been imprisoned since October 2017.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

September 1: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan verbally [targeted](#) the lawyers who commemorated Ebru Timtik, jailed lawyer who lost her life after a long hunger strike behind bars to demand a fair trial, suggesting that lawyers who “engage in terrorism” should be disbarred. Interior minister Süleyman Soylu and justice minister Abdülhamit Gül also [condemned](#) the İstanbul Bar Association for commemorating Timtik.

KURDISH MINORITY

August 31: Burhanettin Şahin, former elected mayor of the Karayazı district in Erzurum who was removed by the interior ministry and replaced with a government-appointed trustee was [detained](#). Şahin was arrested later on September 3. He was one of the scores of pro-Kurdish HDP mayors ousted from office by the interior ministry since last year’s local elections.

September 4: Sixteen Kurdish seasonal farm workers were [assaulted](#) by a farm owner and a group of villagers in the northwestern province of Sakarya in what appears to be a racist attack.

MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

September 5: A new [report](#) by Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Parliament said that Turkey’s military incursions into the country since 1992 have uprooted residents of over 500 Kurdish villages.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

September 1: Austria’s interior minister [announced](#) that the country is set to press charges against a person who has confessed to spying on behalf of Turkey’s intelligence services. The person allegedly spied on people with a Turkish migration background and reported them to the Turkish authorities.

PRISON CONDITIONS

September 2: Jailed journalist Gazel Bulut [revealed](#) in a letter to an MP that she has not been allowed to see her four-year-old daughter for the past six months due to Covid-19 measures related to contact visits in prison.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

September 2: Greek armed forces allegedly [pushed](#) 10 Turkish asylum seekers who had crossed the Evros river on a dinghy back to Turkey. The asylum seekers were immediately detained by Turkish gendarmerie afterwards.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

September 1: Media reports indicated that 18 people who were detained while trying to hold a press briefing on the occasion of the UN Day of Peace were [subjected](#) to torture and ill-treatment at the Sancaktepe police department.

September 4: One of the 23 female university students detained for alleged Gülen links [revealed](#) that they were subjected to abusive and repetitive strip searches in custody. The students were also [denied](#) the right to contact their families or their lawyers during the detention.

September 4: Media reports indicated that three people; Hamdullah Esen, Tayip Temel and Mehmet Sait Yardımcı; who were detained in house raids in Urfa for alleged membership in terrorist groups, were [subjected](#) to torture and ill-treatment while in custody at the Urfa police department. The victims reportedly had blood stains and bruises on their bodies during their meeting with their lawyer.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

September 3: A monthly gender-based violence [report](#) said that at least 122 women were subjected to male violence in August and that 31 women were killed.