

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 227 people over 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.

March 25: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in favor of eight out of 11 former HDP politicians who submitted individual applications to the court in 2017 claiming that their detention and arrest in late 2016 and early 2017 were unlawful.

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.

March 25: An İstanbul court [held](#) the first trial of the 46 members of the Saturday Mothers, a group comprising families of victims of state-enforced disappearances who have been gathering every Saturday in İstanbul for a silent protest since 1995. The indictment by İstanbul prosecutors said that the protest had been banned because it posed a threat to national security, public order and public norms.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

March 22: The police in Konya [detained](#) 11 people for attending Newroz celebrations in the city.

March 22: İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) seven people over their attendance in Boğaziçi University protests, seeking up to 11 years in prison on a series of charges. Prosecutors [indicted](#) 23 others on March 24.

March 22: Three people who were arrested for attending Boğaziçi University protests were [released](#) from prison while two others were released from house arrest.

March 23: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 21 people for attending Newroz celebrations in the city. The authorities also issued detention warrants for 15 others.

March 25: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 12 university students for carrying rainbow flags during ongoing Boğaziçi University protests. The next day, the police [detained](#) 42 other students who gathered outside İstanbul's main courthouse in a show of support for their friends. All the detainees were released on probation a day after being taken into custody.

March 25: An İstanbul court [held](#) the first trial of the 46 members of the Saturday Mothers, a group comprising families of victims of state-enforced disappearances who have been gathering every Saturday in İstanbul for a silent protest since 1995. The indictment by İstanbul prosecutors said that the protest had been banned because it posed a threat to national security, public order and public norms.

March 26: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) three people, including one minor, while holding a protest in front of the courthouse.

March 26: A Şanlıurfa court [sentenced](#) 19 people to five months in prison each over their attendance in a commemoration event for the victims of a bomb attack in 2015.

March 26: The Tunceli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

March 26: The Şanlıurfa Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 22: A court [sentenced](#) jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş to three-and-a-half years in prison on the charge of insulting the president.

March 22: A state agency [blocked](#) access to news reports about misconduct allegations against a high judiciary member, based on a previous court order that blocked access to other reports on the same issue.

March 22: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about a fire at a leather factory in İstanbul.

March 23: An Adana court [ruled](#) to arrest socialist ESP member Ömer Temel on terrorism charges over a newspaper that was found in his bag.

March 23: An İstanbul court [handed down](#) a suspended prison sentence of eight months, 25 days to a man named Hüseyin Güngör on the charge of insulting presidential aide Fahrettin Altun by liking a post on social media.

March 23: Diyarbakır prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda over his speech during the Newroz celebrations.

March 24: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Perihan Kaya to 15 months in prison on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda.

March 24: An Elazığ court [ruled](#) to block access to a total of 97 URLs, including news reports and blog entries, about the death of Kyrgyz journalist Yeldana Kaharman who allegedly committed suicide after being sexually assaulted by the son of a politician close to the government.

March 24: An Antalya court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about a high-ranking prison system official

who was removed from his duty following allegations that he paid an informal visit to a prisoner.

March 25: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) journalist, writer and documentarian Ruhi Karadağ for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda in one of his books. Karadağ was released the next day, with an international travel ban.

March 25: The police in Şanlıurfa [detained](#) Emine Şenyaşar and Ferit Şenyaşar while staging a sit-in protest in front of the city's courthouse over their loss of a family member in an armed conflict implicating ruling party politicians.

March 25: The police in Malatya briefly [detained](#) local socialist politician Hasan Bali over his social media messages. Bali was released on probation later in the same day.

March 26: The police in Gaziantep [detained](#) leftist activist Nail Ulutaş over his social media posts. Ulutaş was released the next day, with an international travel ban.

March 26: The police in Nevşehir [detained](#) local HDP member Nilgün Salmaner on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda on social media. Salmaner was released to house arrest later in the same day.

March 26: A Mardin court [ruled](#) to arrest writer Adil Başaran who was detained as part of an investigation into the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK) last week.

March 26: The Interior Ministry [launched](#) an investigation into Semih Şahin, the opposition mayor of Bilecik, for putting up billboards promoting the İstanbul Convention on combating domestic violence from which the presidency announced Turkey's withdrawal last week.

March 26: An Aydın court [ruled](#) to acquit journalists Özer Akdemir and İlyas Tekin who stood trial for publishing a news report about the working conditions at a mining company.

March 27: An Ankara prosecutor [indicted](#) Alice Petit, Gérard Biard, Julien Sérignac and Laurent Sourisseau, four staff members of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo, seeking up to four years for the journalists on

charges of insulting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by way of a cartoon published last year.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 26: The family of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was murdered in broad daylight in İstanbul 14 years ago, [said](#) in a statement regarding a court ruling delivered at the final hearing of the murder case that it was not convincing because the trial did not include the real actors behind the journalist's assassination. The family pointed out that Dink was murdered at the end of a three-year campaign during which the journalist was threatened and pointed to as a target by officials from the General Staff, politicians, journalists and members of pro-government associations.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 22: The police in Konya [detained](#) 11 people for attending Newroz celebrations in the city.

March 22: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to arrest one of the 11 pro-Kurdish politicians detained on March 19 while releasing the rest.

March 22: A court [sentenced](#) jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş to three-and-a-half years in prison on the charge of insulting the president. Demirtaş has been held behind bars since November 2016 on various terrorism-related charges.

March 22: The Interior Ministry [removed](#) from office Mehmet Kaysı, a HDP city council member in Siirt, on the grounds that he was being investigated for suspected ties to terrorism.

March 23: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 21 people for attending Newroz celebrations in the city. The authorities also issued detention warrants for 15 others.

March 23: Diyarbakır prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar on the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda over his speech during the Newroz celebrations.

March 24: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Perihan Kaya to 15 months in prison on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda. Kaya was formerly a reporter for the pro-Kurdish Jin News agency.

March 25: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in favor of eight out of 11 former HDP politicians who submitted individual applications to the court in 2017 claiming that their detention and arrest in late 2016 and early 2017 were unlawful.

March 25: The guards at a Bayburt prison reportedly [mistreated](#) inmates for holding Newroz celebrations. The prisoners are also facing an investigation for shouting slogans during the celebrations.

March 25: The soldiers [raided](#) a village in Bingöl during Newroz celebrations, physically and verbally assaulting a group of villagers, including a 11-year-old. Three people who filmed the raid were later detained and released after deletion of video footage from their phones.

March 26: Reports [revealed](#) that the police in Şırnak mistreated for four days local Kurdish politician Azad Polat who was detained on March 18.

March 26: The police in Nevşehir [detained](#) local HDP member Nilgün Salmaner on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda on social media. Salmaner was released to house arrest later in the same day.

March 26: A Mardin court [ruled](#) to arrest writer Adil Başaran who was detained as part of an investigation into the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK) last week.

MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

March 23: A Şanlıurfa court [sentenced](#) Dozgin Temo, a member of the Syrian-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), to life in prison, two years after she was captured by the Turkish military in northern Syria.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

March 22: Marie Arena, a Belgian member of the European Parliament (EP) and chairperson of the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights said in an [interview](#) that the EU must protect its territory against the Turkish government's efforts to intimidate its critics residing in the EU with the same vigilance it uses to counter Ankara's claims to EU territory in the eastern Mediterranean.

March 23: Claire Koç, a journalist and second-generation Turkish immigrant in France, [filed](#) a criminal complaint over what she says are death threats from supporters of the Turkish government.

March 25: Photos have emerged [showing](#) a member of an alleged Turkish hit team posing for a photo with the Turkish ambassador to France at the embassy building in Paris. The members of the hit team were exposed as they were allegedly preparing for attacks on two Kurdish politicians based in Belgium.

OTHER MINORITIES

March 22: The Presidential Communications Directorate in a written [statement](#) about Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention claimed that the convention was "hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality."

March 25: Photos of an apparent [hate crime](#) with a man displaying a person whose face was covered in blood with a caption "pervert gay scum" led to outrage on social media. Later in the day, prosecutors announced that the alleged suspect, Fırat Kaya, was detained.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 27: Inmates from several prisons [reported](#) that they were suffering from scabies and that the prison administrations were not responding to their requests for proper treatment.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 23: A group of streetcleaners [assaulted](#) a Syrian refugee in Antalya in what appears to be the latest hate crime targeting refugees. The victim was beaten, his motorcycle was crushed with a garbage truck and set on fire. The assailants were detained.

March 25: The authorities [arrested](#) and deported to China several members of the Uyghur community amid a visit by the Chinese foreign minister.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 23: The guards at an İstanbul prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates and seized their personal belongings.

March 25: The guards at a Diyarbakır prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates and placed in one-person cells those who reacted.

March 25: The guards at a Bayburt prison reportedly [mistreated](#) inmates for holding Newroz celebrations. The prisoners are also facing an investigation for shouting slogans during the celebrations.

March 25: Reports indicated that sick prisoner [Gökhan Gündüz](#) was subjected to physical violence and strip-searches by the guards at an İzmir prison during an involuntary transfer from a Kırıkkale prison on March 9.

March 25: The soldiers [raided](#) a village in Bingöl during Newroz celebrations, physically and verbally assaulting a group of villagers, including a 11-year-old. Three people who filmed the raid were later detained and released after deletion of video footage from their phones.

March 26: Reports [revealed](#) that the police in Şırnak mistreated for four days local Kurdish politician Azad Polat who was detained on March 18.

March 26: The police in İstanbul [rear-handcuffed](#) and dragged on the ground the university students detained while protesting in front of the İstanbul courthouse.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

March 22: Four women were [killed](#) by romantic partners in a single day. The incidents took place after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan withdrew Turkey from the İstanbul Convention on combating domestic violence.

March 26: The Interior Ministry [launched](#) an investigation into Semih Şahin, the opposition mayor of Bilecik, for putting up billboards promoting the İstanbul Convention on combating domestic violence from which the presidency announced Turkey's withdrawal last week.