

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 44 | April 19-25, 2021

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 152 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.

**April 20:** [Abdülazim Özdemir](#), a 49-year-old engineer who was diagnosed with liver cancer during his 24-month incarceration, died after a belated release from prison. Özdemir was jailed on terrorism related charges over his alleged links to the Gülen movement.

**April 23:** Gümüşhane prosecutors [dropped](#) the investigation in the case of former police chief Mustafa Kabakçoğlu who was found dead in a prison quarantine cell after showing symptoms of Covid-19.

## 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.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**April 19:** The police in Batman [detained](#) 13 people for attending Newroz celebrations. The detainees were released on probation on April 23.

**April 19:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a worker's protest, detaining five people.

**April 19:** The İstanbul Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

**April 19:** The Trabzon Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of seven days.

**April 19:** An İstanbul prosecutor [indicted](#) 97 students who took part in Boğaziçi University protests.

**April 20:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) two people holding a protest to call for the release of a sick prisoner.

**April 20:** The Siirt Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**April 21:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining at least 30 people.

**April 21:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) two people holding a protest to call for the release of a sick prisoner.

**April 22:** The police in İstanbul [intervened](#) in a press briefing held on the occasion of the upcoming International Workers' Day, briefly detaining 41 people.

**April 25:** The gendarmes in Rize [detained](#) 15 environmental activists protesting against the construction of a quarry.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**April 19:** An İstanbul court [handed down](#) a suspended prison sentence of 10 months to journalist Erol Mütercimler over his remarks on a TV program.

**April 20:** Van prosecutors [indicted](#) freelance journalist Ruşen Takva, seeking a prison sentence of up to 18 years for attending the release of a press statement by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Regions Party (DBP).

**April 20:** Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published its [2021 World Press Freedom Index](#) in which Turkey was ranked 153<sup>rd</sup> out of 180 countries.

**April 20:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the Mezopotamya news agency, the 31th such ban on the pro-Kurdish outlet.

**April 21:** Ankara prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into opposition MP Engin Altay on charges of insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

**April 21:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [filed](#) an appeal against a recent ruling by an İstanbul court to acquit veteran actors Müjdat Gezen and Metin Akpınar of charges of insulting him.

**April 21:** The Information Technologies and Communication Authority (BTK) [banned](#) access to JinNews, the 24<sup>th</sup> such ban imposed on the pro-Kurdish agency since its establishment in 2017.

**April 21:** RTÜK, the official media regulator, [imposed](#) monetary sanctions on KRT TV and Halk TV broadcaster over the remarks of guests criticizing the government.

**April 22:** A Balıkesir court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the son of a former ruling party deputy who was summoned to testify in 2014 for allegedly receiving weed in a box.

**April 22:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) seven left-wing activists who were handing out fliers about the upcoming International Labor Day as well as eight others hanging a banner.

**April 25:** The police in Konya [detained](#) a person for allegedly insulting Atatürk, the founder of the republic.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**April 20:** Van prosecutors [indicted](#) freelance journalist Ruşen Takva, seeking a prison sentence of up to 18 years for attending the release of a press statement by the pro-Kurdish Democratic Regions Party (DBP).

**April 20:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the Mezopotamya news agency, the 31th such ban on the pro-Kurdish outlet.

**April 21:** The Information Technologies and Communication Authority (BTK) [banned](#) access to JinNews, the 24<sup>th</sup> such ban imposed on the pro-Kurdish agency since its establishment in 2017.

**April 21:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to web pages used by Umut Gazetesi and Yeni Demokrasi news websites.

**April 22:** Statistics released by the Ministry of Health [demonstrated](#) that predominantly Kurdish provinces have the lowest Covid-19 vaccination rates in the country.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**April 22:** Opposition MP Züleyha Gülüm [claimed](#) in a written parliamentary question to Justice Minister Abdülhamit Gül that prison parole boards discriminate against political prisoners who are eligible for parole.

**April 23:** Gümüşhane prosecutors [dropped](#) the investigation in the case of former police chief Mustafa Kabakçioğlu who was found dead in a prison quarantine cell after showing symptoms of Covid-19.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**April 20:** A Somali restaurant and its employees were [attacked](#) by a mob in Ankara after they were targeted by anti-migrant reporting by the Sözcü newspaper.

**April 21:** A hospital in İstanbul has [refused](#) to discharge the newborn baby of a refugee family for the past four months because the family has been unable to pay the hospital bill.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**April 21:** The police in İstanbul verbally threatened and physically [assaulted](#) a person who was released on

probation after being detained for attending Boğaziçi University protests and who was visiting the police station as part of the judicial supervision.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**April 21:** A Deutsche Welle report [revealed](#) that Turkish police departments are giving incorrect and conflicting information to women who request assistance and protection against violent and abusive partners.