

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 154 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 16: İstanbul prosecutors [dropped](#) negligence charges in the case of Deniz Hakan Şen, an inmate who died of cancer after being denied timely treatment and released only two weeks before his death, claiming “he would have died even if he had received treatment.”

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

March 17: An İstanbul court [sentenced](#) a police officer to 16 years, eight months in prison for the killing of Festus Okey, a Nigerian man who was shot dead at the Beyoğlu Police Department in 2007.

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 16: [Sezer Tatar](#), a HDP member in Van, was reportedly forced into a vehicle by individuals who

introduced themselves as police officers. He was coerced into becoming an informant for authorities and physically assaulted before he was released the same day.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

March 16: The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 18: The police in Ankara [detained](#) nine activists who were protesting the expulsion of Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu from the parliament. The detainees were released later in the same day.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 14 people while celebrating the Kurdish festival of Newroz.

March 20: The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a women's rights demonstration to protest Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention, detaining two people.

March 20: The police in Malatya briefly [detained](#) a man and his two children during the Newroz celebrations. The detainees were released the same day.

March 21: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 63 people, including six minors, for wearing yellow-red-green scarves while on their way to the Newroz celebrations. Of the detainees, 39 were released within the day.

March 21: The police in Adana [detained](#) eight people, including three minors, during the Newroz celebrations.

March 21: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 11 people during the Newroz celebrations.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 15: The police in Şanlıurfa briefly [detained](#) Emine Şenyaşar, who had been staging a sit-in protest in front of the provincial courthouse after losing his spouse and two children due to a brawl between her family members and a local ruling party deputy. Şenyaşar was released a few hours later.

March 16: The parliament [expelled](#) MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu due to a prison sentence he was handed down for a tweet in which he shared a news report by the T24 news website. Gergerlioğlu [refused](#) the leave the parliament building in protest until he was forcibly [removed](#) by the police and briefly detained on March 21.

March 16: Radio presenter [Hazım Özsü](#) was shot dead in Bursa. Arrested by the police, the gunman explained that he killed Özsü because he disliked his comments on the radio.

March 16: A Muğla court [sentenced](#) journalist Hakan Aygün to seven months, 15 days, for provoking hatred an enmity, over a tweet mocking the government's national pandemic relief campaign.

March 16: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news report about the alleged off-shore Maltese bank accounts of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak and his brother Serhat Albayrak.

March 16: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about economist Ali Bilge's remarks on a US federal court prosecution against state lender Halkbank.

March 16: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report about a pro-government businessman's lawsuit against a journalist over a column.

March 16: An İstanbul court [acquitted](#) journalists Seyhan Avşar and Necdet Önemli of the charge of the charge of disclosing the identities of public officials who took part in the fight against terrorism, over a news report about a prosecutor who turned out to be an ex-convict.

March 16: A Kars court [ruled](#) to acquit former MP Mahmut Alınak of the charge of insulting the president on social media.

March 17: The Constitutional Court [found](#) no rights violation in the case of Ercan Gün, a former news editor

who has been held in pre-trial detention for nearly five years.

March 17: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) journalist Enver Aysever on the charge of denigrating religious values, over a tweet of a cartoon depicting a janitor appearing to disinfect the mind of a religious cleric. Aysever was released after his questioning.

March 17: An Ordu court [ordered](#) İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu to pay a monetary fine for insulting a former governor of Ordu. In the trial, the opposition mayor faced a sentence of up to two years in prison.

March 17: An İstanbul court [imposed](#) a monetary fine against journalist Ali Ergin Demirhan for insulting the president, over news reports published in 2018 about Turkey's military operations in Syria.

March 17: An İstanbul court [released](#) from pre-trial detention two university students, in the first hearing of a case in which they, along with five other defendants, face jail terms of up to three years due to the display of a poster depicting the Kaaba with LGBT flags. The students are accused of "publicly degrading the religious values of a segment of the public."

March 18: A Van court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Arif Aslan of terrorism charges.

March 19: A pro-government daily [claimed](#) that Twitter would appoint a representative to Turkey in line with a controversial social media law tightening government control over social media platforms. The company was recently slapped with an advertising ban for failing to comply with the law and faces a bandwidth reduction that would make it practically inaccessible if it continues to resist.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) French journalist Sylvain Mercadier upon arrival at the airport to follow up on Newroz celebrations. Mercadier was deported the next day on the grounds that he was a threat to national security.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

March 17: Multiple reports [indicated](#) that Protestants living in Turkey were increasingly threatened with arbitrary legal cases targeting members of their community.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

March 16: The parliament [expelled](#) MP and leading rights advocate Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu due to a prison sentence he was handed down for a tweet in which he shared a news report by the T24 news website. Gergerlioğlu [refused](#) the leave the parliament building in protest until he was forcibly [removed](#) by the police and briefly detained on March 21.

March 19: The police in Ankara [detained](#) Öztürk Türkddoğan, the head of the Human Rights Association (İHD), on terrorism-related charges. Türkddoğan was [released](#) on probation later in the same day.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 16: İstanbul prosecutors [dropped](#) negligence charges in the case of Deniz Hakan Şen, an inmate who died of cancer after being denied timely treatment and released only two weeks before his death, claiming “he would have died even if he had received treatment.”

March 16: A Muğla court [sentenced](#) journalist Hakan Aygün to seven months, 15 days, for provoking hatred an enmity, over a tweet mocking the government’s national pandemic relief campaign. The ruling came despite a Constitutional Court [decision](#) in February that had found Aygün’s pre-trial detention due to the tweet in violation of his rights.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 15: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Murat Öndeş to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

March 17: A prosecutor for the Supreme Court of Appeals [asked](#) the Constitutional Court to shut down the pro-Kurdish HDP, parliament’s third-largest group. The prosecutor’s indictment [equated](#) the party with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which is listed as a terror group in Turkey and internationally, and demanded a political ban for more than 600 party officials, including its current co-chairs and jailed former leaders Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ.

March 17: A Muş court [sentenced](#) former HDP mayor Adnan Topçu to eight years, one month, 15 days in prison on various terrorism-related charges.

March 19: The police in several provinces [detained](#) at least 36 members of the HDP over alleged terrorism links.

March 19: The ministry of education [prepared](#) an introductory schoolbook on the Kurdish-majority province of Diyarbakır, which made no reference to the local Kurdish identity and claimed that the language spoken in the province was Azeri Turkish.

March 20: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) 14 people while celebrating the Kurdish festival of Newroz.

March 20: The police in Malatya briefly [detained](#) a man and his two children during the Newroz celebrations. The detainees were released the same day.

March 21: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 63 people, including six minors, for wearing yellow-red-green scarves while on their way to the Newroz celebrations. Of the detainees, 39 were released within the day.

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MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

March 15: Belgian authorities [suspected](#) that Turkey’s former ambassador to Paris, İsmail Hakkı Musa, was implicated in the assassination of three alleged members of the PKK in Paris in 2013.

OTHER MINORITIES

March 17: The LGBT community [suffered](#) back-to-back attacks on its members in recent weeks, with at least three trans women injured or dead.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

March 17: Deputy Foreign Minister Faruk Kaymakçı [said](#) the EU should renew the March 2016 migrant deal.

March 19: Turkish officials [accused](#) Greek coast guards of handcuffing seven migrants and throwing them into the Aegean sea without life jackets, resulting at least three deaths.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 21: The police in Diyarbakır physically and verbally [abused](#) in custody the people who were detained while on their way to the Newroz celebration.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

March 20: The presidency [released](#) a presidential decree pulling Turkey out of the İstanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women. According to a yearly gender-based violence [report](#) compiled by Bianet, men killed at least 284 women and inflicted violence on 792 in 2020. Another [report](#) released by the Human Rights Association (İHD) put the number of women subjected to economic, physical, psychological violence at 1,075. The İHD's report also said that 41 women were driven to suicide and 178 were found dead under suspicious circumstances.

March 20: The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a women's rights demonstration to protest Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention, detaining two people.