

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 235 | Date 16-22 December 2024

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 46 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.

21 December: Turkish authorities [detained](#) 85 individuals over alleged links to the Gülen movement recently, citing ByLock messaging app, despite this being declared inadequate and invalid by the ECtHR in the Yalçinkaya judgment.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#), a former public sector worker who was sacked from his job by a decree-law during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who was reported missing as of August 6, 2019, in what appears to be one of the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

17 December: In Ankara, police [intervened](#) with rubber bullets and tear gas against a march organized by the Hakkımı Ver Platform and the Private Sector Teachers' Union, demanding secure working conditions, from Çankaya Municipality to Parliament Park, detaining 49 people, including Süleyman Keskin, President of Enerji-Sen

under DİSK, and Nebiye Merttürk, President of Halkevleri, using physical violence.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

16 December: During the İYİ Party Regional Consultation Meeting in Çorum on December 15, 2024, bodyguards of İYİ Party leader Müsavat Dervişoğlu forcibly [removed](#) journalists covering the event, using verbal and physical violence.

19 December: The Kocaeli 1st Criminal Judgeship of Peace [imposed](#) an access ban on three separate NuJINHA news agency accounts on the social media platform X (Twitter), which shared content in Kurdish, Turkish, and English.

21 December: Hidayet Karaca, former chief executive of the now-defunct Samanyolu Media Group, has [entered](#) his 10th year of imprisonment in Turkey on charges based on scripted TV series content and witness testimonies deemed unreliable.

21 December: Turkish police [detained](#) 30 individuals, including 20 journalists, during a protest in İstanbul's Şişhane Square against the killing of two Kurdish journalists in a reported Turkish drone strike in northern Syria.

21 December: The pro-Kurdish daily *Yeni Yaşam* newspaper's website was [blocked](#) for the seventh time by a decision from Diyarbakır 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace, according to the Information and Communication Technologies Authority.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

16 December: The Turkish government [imposed](#) financial sanctions on six opposition-held municipalities, part of its

oppression targeting opposition-run administrations since the ruling party lost control of major municipalities in 2023 election.

16 December: The ECtHR [referred](#) the case of Şaban Yasak, convicted in Turkey for alleged Gülen movement links, to its Grand Chamber following criticism of its prior ruling validating Turkey's broad anti-terrorism laws.

17 December: The ECtHR [ruled](#) against Turkey for the unlawful pretrial detention of 450 individuals following the 2016 failed coup, citing insufficient evidence to justify their detention and violations of their right to liberty and security, ordering the Turkish government to pay €3,000 in non-pecuniary damages to each applicant.

KURDISH MINORITY

18 December: Turkey's Interior Ministry [defended](#) banning the Kurdish-language play "Qral û Travis" in Ağrı, citing public order concerns under laws criticized for enabling censorship of Kurdish cultural expression and linking cultural events to separatist activities without evidence.

18 December: Kurdish filmmaker Kerem Tekoğlu was [arrested](#) in Istanbul on charges of alleged membership in a terrorist organisation, with his professional links to former Esenyurt mayor Ahmet Özer reportedly misinterpreted deliberately.

21 December: Human Rights Watch [urged](#) Turkey to stop prosecuting individuals for Kurdish language and cultural activities, describing in its report that such actions undermine minority rights, foster discrimination, and constitute a misuse of anti-terrorism laws to silence Kurdish identity.

PRISON CONDITIONS

19 December: In Erzurum Dumlu No. 2 Prison, inmates [face](#) restrictions on activities, confiscation of personal items, overcrowded and damp conditions, denial of open visits, and five inmates were punished with solitary confinement and fines for alleged property damage.

19 December: In Tekirdağ F-Type No. 2 Prison, inmates are [forced](#) to buy their own spoons, and Kurdish letters are withheld by authorities, labeled as written in an "unknown language."

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

17 December: Turkey [deported](#) 300 Eritreans to Eritrea, where they face risks of torture and indefinite conscription, violating the principle of non-refoulement under international refugee law, according to UN special rapporteurs.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

19 December: Mehmet Bahaddin Öncü, an inmate at Muğla Bodrum Type D Prison, was [denied](#) permission by prison authorities to attend his mother's funeral, citing "local security concerns."

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

20 December: Two Kurdish journalists, Nazım Daştan and Cihan Bilgin, were [killed](#) in northern by a Turkish drone strike while covering clashes between Turkish-backed militias and U.S.-supported Kurdish forces.