

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 32 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.

31 January: Turkish authorities [detained](#) 23 people over the past week for alleged links to the Gülen movement, including eight former judges and prosecutors, amid ongoing post-coup investigations based on accusations such as using ByLock, contacting movement members via pay phones, and having accounts at Bank Asya.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunc](#), 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

29 January: Police [detained](#) three people during a protest in front of Siirt Municipality against the appointment of a trustee replacing pro-Kurdish DEM Party Mayor Sofya Alağaç.

29 January: Following the removal of Siirt Co-Mayor Sofya Alağaç from office, the Siirt Governor's Office [announced](#) a 10-day ban from January 29 to February 7 on all public gatherings, protests, and related activities, including the entry of individuals and vehicles for such events.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

28 January: A woman, identified as N.K., was [arrested](#) for insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his family after criticizing his leadership in a street interview, following an investigation launched by the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

29 January: Veteran journalist Şirin Payzın [announced](#) that Turkish prosecutors have launched an investigation into her for allegedly "disseminating terrorist propaganda" under Article 7/2 of the Anti-Terror Law.

29 January: A court order [blocked](#) access to 361 URLs containing news articles and social media posts about former AKP Mersin MP Zeynep Gül Yılmaz's 2021 roadside argument with police during a routine road check, which was publicized by CHP MP Ali Mahir Başarır, citing violations of personal, trademark, and copyright rights.

1 February: On February 1, Turkey's media watchdog RTÜK [imposed](#) the highest possible fine on Halk TV for airing a phone conversation between journalist Barış Pehlivan and a court-appointed expert witness, citing privacy violations under Law No. 6112, while Pehlivan, along with journalists Seda Selek and Serhan Asker, was detained as part of a criminal investigation for alleged privacy breaches and attempting to influence judicial proceedings.

1 February: Academic and journalist Çiğdem Bayraktar ÖR was [arrested](#) by an İstanbul court on Friday following an

investigation by the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office into a social media post allegedly insulting the president and a public official.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

27 January: Turkish prosecutors [initiated](#) a new investigation into İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on accusations of "attempting to influence a judicial officer" and "attempting to influence a fair trial" after he criticized a court expert for allegedly being selectively assigned to cases against opposition-run municipalities.

31 January: Turkey [remains](#) the highest case-count country before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 2024, with approximately 21,600 pending applications, accounting for 35.8 percent of the court's caseload.

2 February: The We Are Still Witnesses Platform has [called](#) for solidarity ahead of the February 7 hearing at İstanbul's 15th High Criminal Court, urging support for sociologist and writer Pınar Selek, who faces retrial and a possible aggravated life sentence despite four acquittals in the 26-year-long Egyptian Bazaar case, which has been marred by forged evidence and judicial irregularities.

KURDISH MINORITY

29 January: The Turkish Interior Ministry [removed](#) Siirt Mayor Sofya Alağaç from office and appointed a government trustee after a court sentenced her to over six years in prison on terrorism charges, making Siirt the eighth pro-Kurdish DEM Party municipality taken over by the government since the March 2024 elections.

OTHER MINORITIES

31 January: Turkish authorities have [refused](#) to comply with a Constitutional Court ruling recognizing the Vakıflıköy Armenian Church Foundation's property rights, rejecting its restitution request despite a legal mandate and prompting the foundation to file a criminal complaint.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

27 January: Tokat T-Type Prison inmate Mehmet Şirin Kaya was reportedly [subjected](#) to forced mouth searches and handcuffed medical examinations during infirmary and hospital transfers.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

30 January: Human Rights Watch (HRW) has [condemned](#) a January 18 drone strike by the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) on a Kurdish Red Crescent ambulance in northern Syria as an apparent war crime, following an earlier attack on protesters at Tishreen Dam that killed at least six people and wounded 16 others.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

1 February: Turkey's Court of Cassation [overturned](#) the aggravated life sentence of Cemal Metin Avcı for the 2020 murder of university student Pınar Gültekin, ruling that he did not act with "monstrous feeling" and should receive a reduced sentence with an "unjust provocation" reduction.