

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 378 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 February: Turkish authorities [detained](#) 353 people, including business associates and employees of the *Maydonoz Döner* chain, as part of a crackdown on alleged Gülen movement supporters, appointing a government trustee to the company in a move critics see as part of Turkey's systematic confiscation of private businesses allegedly linked to the movement.

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

18 February: Nearly 400 people, including 55 minors, have been [detained](#) during protests against the removal of Van Municipality mayor Abdullah Zeydan, with reports of mistreatment in custody.

21 February: The Kars Governor's Office [announced](#) on February 20, 2025, a 10-day ban on all demonstrations, including press statements, gatherings, marches, hunger strikes, sit-ins, rallies, setting up stands or tents, distributing leaflets, and hanging banners, as well as restricting the entry and exit of vehicles supporting such activities between February 21 and March 2, 2025.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

17 February: Turkish prosecutors are [seeking](#) prison sentences ranging from four to 14 years for Halk TV journalists and executives over airing a phone interview with court-appointed expert, whom İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu accused of bias against the opposition.

17 February: Mehmet Türkmen, head of the United Textile, Leather, and Shoe Workers' Union (BİRTEK-SEN), was [arrested](#) in Antep on February 17 on charges of "violating the freedom to work and labor" and "inciting the commission of a crime" over social media posts related to textile worker protests.

18 February: Journalist Özlem Gürses [faces](#) an indictment by the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office for "insulting state institutions and organs" over her remarks on Syria's political developments and ongoing conflicts in a YouTube broadcast.

20 February: The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) [imposed](#) administrative fines on SZC TV for the statements in the programme 'Monetary Policies' and on NOW TV, SZC TV, TELE 1 and Halk TV for the news reports about Serdar Öktem, who was arrested during the trial regarding the murder of Sinan Ateş.

21 February: Turkish mountaineer and AKUT founder Nasuh Mahruki [received](#) a suspended sentence of nearly

one year for "spreading disinformation" after criticizing election security on social media.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

21 February: Cuma Erçe, chairman of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (PSAKD), is under [investigation](#) for allegedly "spreading misinformation," "inciting hatred," and "insulting a public institution" after criticizing the government-affiliated Alevi-Bektashi Directorate for promoting gender segregation, in what he described as an attempt to suppress Alevi voices.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

19 February: Turkey's Supreme Court of Appeals [upheld](#) the acquittal of the final defendant in the Büyükada trial, closing the eight-year case in which Turkish media and the government relentlessly targeted 11 human rights defenders with terrorism accusations.

21 February: Turkish human rights defender and forensic doctor Şebnem Korur Fincancı was [acquitted](#) of charges of "publicly insulting the Turkish state" after alleging that abducted detainee Orhan İnanlı showed signs of torture.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

17 February: İstanbul prosecutors are [seeking](#) up to five years in prison and a political ban for Victory Party leader Ümit Özdağ over remarks comparing President Erdoğan's government to the Crusades, charging him with "publicly insulting the president" while he remains jailed on separate charges of inciting hatred.

19 February: Turkey's top judicial board, the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), launched an investigation into Judge Fatih Kapan for ordering the release of celebrity manager Ayşe Barım. This was considered as a clear evidence of government control over the judiciary.

22 February: The İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has [filed](#) criminal charges against İstanbul Bar Association President İbrahim Kaboğlu and 10 board members, seeking up to 12 years in prison for their call to uphold international humanitarian law following the killing of two Kurdish journalists in Syria.

KURDISH MINORITY

18 February: Turkish authorities [escalated](#) their crackdown on pro-Kurdish opposition, detaining 52 politicians, journalists, and artists in dawn raids across 10 provinces as part of an operation targeting the Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK).

20 February: Access to the Mezopotamya Agency (MA) website and JINNEWS's X account has been [blocked](#) in Turkey in a new wave of censorship targeting Kurdish media.

21 February: Mehmet Alkan, the co-mayor of Kağızman, was [sentenced](#) to six years and three months in prison on terrorism charges in a trial criticized as politically motivated, with his removal from office expected to be followed by the appointment of a government trustee.

PRISON CONDITIONS

20 February: Turkey's prison population has [surged](#) by over 50,000 in seven months, reaching 392,456 inmates—30 percent over capacity—as overcrowding worsens amid mass arrests and widespread pre-trial detentions.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

19 February: Six migrants [drowned](#), and 27 others were rescued when their boat sank off Turkey's western coast near İzmir, marking yet another deadly incident on the perilous migration route to Greece.