

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 269 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.

September 20: [Bekir Güven](#), who suffers from the neurodegenerative Huntington's Disease, was sent to prison after an appeals court upheld a 22-month prison sentence for a tweet he posted in 2015.

September 21: A prosecutor unilaterally [extended](#) the prison sentence of political prisoner Resul Baltacı without the benefit of a court proceeding, eliminating his chances for parole. Baltacı was investigated for possessing two prohibited items in prison, resulting in an extension of his original sentence of 36 years to 45 years.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

September 20: A military helicopter in Van reportedly [opened](#) fire on a group of people at the Turkish-Iranian border, killing two young people aged 19 and 16.

September 20: Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [called on](#) the Turkish government to get to the bottom of the murder four years ago of husband and wife Ali Ulvi and Aysin Büyüknöhutçu, environmental defenders who challenged two illegally polluting stone quarries in an agricultural area near Antalya.

September 23: Ahmet Baran Çelik, a lawyer from the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), [announced](#) at a press conference that since the start of the Syrian war in 2011, Turkish security forces have killed a total of 502 people at the Syrian border.

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

September 20: The police in Ankara briefly [detained](#) nine students who protested the problems encountered by university students in finding affordable accommodation.

September 21: The police in Adana [detained](#) nine people, including a local HDP executive and two executives of an NGO established for solidarity with the relatives of prisoners.

September 22: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) eight people as part of an investigation into an NGO established for solidarity with the relatives of prisoners. The detainees were placed in house arrest on September 24.

September 22: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Yelda Çiçek to one year, eight months in prison for following the protests held in the province against the

government-appointed trustee who replaced the elected mayor.

September 22: The police in Eskişehir [detained](#) six university students who were sleeping in a park to protest the high housing prices.

September 22: The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) four people protesting unaffordable student housing.

September 22: The Supreme Court of Appeals [overturned](#) the prison sentence of six years, three months which was handed down to journalist Aziz Oruç on account of a protest that he attended as a student in 2011.

September 23: The police in Tekirdağ [attacked](#) a workers' protest, detaining 58 people.

September 23: The police in İzmir [detained](#) three people protesting high housing prices for students.

September 24: The police in Bolu briefly [detained](#) three people who protested their summary removal from public service in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt.

September 25: A district governor's office in Hatay [banned](#) a concert planned by human rights groups, citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

September 20: [Bekir Güven](#), who suffers from the neurodegenerative Huntington's Disease, was sent to prison after an appeals court upheld a 22-month prison sentence for a tweet he posted in 2015.

September 21: An Antalya court [sentenced](#) journalists Cihat Ünal, Ömer Özdemir and Serhat Şeftali to six years, three months in prison on charges of membership in a terrorist organization. The court also sentenced journalists Osman Yakut and Olgun Matur to three years, two months on aiding a terrorist organization. The sentences were handed down over the journalists' alleged links to the Gülen movement.

September 21: A yearly [report](#) by Freedom House on global Internet freedom revealed that Internet freedom continued to decline for a third year in a row in Turkey and that hundreds of websites were blocked during the period covered.

September 21: İstanbul prosecutors [indicted](#) mafia boss Sedat Peker on charges of insulting and slandering Erkam Yıldırım, the son of senior ruling party figure Binali Yıldırım, in a video post in which he made drug trafficking allegations, seeking up to six years, four months in prison.

September 21: The authorities [decided](#) to confiscate the 82nd issue of the Teori ve Politika magazine for allegedly praising a prominent left-wing activist.

September 22: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) journalist Yelda Çiçek to one year, eight months in prison for following the protests held in the province against the government-appointed trustee who replaced the elected mayor.

September 22: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the owner of a hotel that was constructed on a cove that was previously open to public.

September 23: The police in İzmir briefly [detained](#) journalist Süleyman Gençel.

September 23: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to three web addresses used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews website.

September 23: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a column penned by a government-critical journalist.

September 23: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about police officers who conducted a violent house raid that claimed the life of a 25-year-old woman.

September 23: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports containing allegations that a former high-ranking health ministry official had the institution issue a report that his father who suffers from Alzheimer's was in fact healthy, in order to be able to make a real estate transaction in his name.

September 23: The Health Ministry [launched](#) a civil lawsuit against three newspapers; Cumhuriyet, Birgün and Evrensel; for reporting on a parliamentary question about allegations that a company partly owned by the spouse and the son of the deputy health minister was awarded numerous public tenders by the ministry.

September 24: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

September 24: A Mersin court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports involving allegations that a local ruling party executive and his family members were engaging in a number of illicit activities.

September 24: A Batman court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about allegations that the province's mayor awarded a public tender to the son of one of his close friends.

September 24: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about a previous access block imposed on news reports that a construction tender was awarded to a friend of the president.

September 25: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Özgür Gelecek news website.

September 26: The Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body responsible for regulating publicly funded advertisements in the media, [imposed](#) a 74-day advertising ban on the government-critical Cumhuriyet daily over its reporting on allegations that a presidential aide engaged in an illegal construction on public terrain.

September 26: İdris Yayla, a Batman-based journalist, was [threatened](#) on the phone by unidentified individuals. The same day, two people fired shots in the air in front of the journalist's house.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

September 21: The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey released a [fact sheet](#) which said that a total of 1,098 human rights defenders were taken into custody and 33 were arrested between March 1 and August 31.

September 23: A Hakkari court [sentenced](#) Human Rights Association (İHD) official Sait Çağlayan to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

September 20: Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, [called on](#) the Turkish government to get to the bottom of the murder

four years ago of husband and wife Ali Ulvi and Aysin Büyüknohutçu, environmental defenders who challenged two illegally polluting stone quarries in an agricultural area near Antalya.

September 21: Media reports [revealed](#) that public prosecutors initiated some 1.5 million investigations on allegations of terrorism between 2016 and 2020, concluding 208,833 of them.

KURDISH MINORITY

September 20: A group of local inhabitants in Düzce [attacked](#) Kurdish seasonal workers, injuring several people.

September 20: A prison administration in Elazığ [refused](#) to accept a dress sent for former opposition deputy Leyla Güven because it featured “the colors traditionally associated with the Kurdish people.”

September 20: A group of assailants in Antalya [attacked](#) an intercity bus bound for the predominantly Kurdish province of Diyarbakır, leaving two people injured.

September 21: A Van court [sentenced](#) HDP official Fırat Keser to seven years, six months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

September 21: The police in Adana [detained](#) nine people, including a local HDP executive and two executives of an NGO established for solidarity with the relatives of prisoners.

September 22: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to release former HDP MP Çağlar Demirel who was imprisoned in December 2016 on terrorism-related charges.

September 23: The police in Ankara [detained](#) HDP official Betül Ünsal on terrorism-related charges. Ünsal was arrested by a court the same day.

September 23: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to three web addresses used by the pro-Kurdish Jinnews website.

September 24: The parents of Deniz Poyraz, a 38-year-old HDP employee who was killed in an armed attack on the HDP office in İzmir on June 17, [filed](#) a criminal complaint against the local police, whom they accuse of negligence.

September 24: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

September 25: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a web address used by the pro-Kurdish Özgür Gelecek news website.

PRISON CONDITIONS

September 20: Media reports [revealed](#) that Kenan Özcan, an inmate held in an Afyon prison, was hospitalized on September 17 and that he died three days later. Özcan's son said that the authorities do not release any information about the cause of his father's death.

September 20: A prison administration in Elazığ [refused](#) to accept a dress sent for former opposition deputy Leyla Güven because it featured "the colors traditionally associated with the Kurdish people."

September 22: A Diyarbakır prison [launched](#) a disciplinary investigation into inmate Ayşe Gökkan over her remarks in a petition she wrote to prosecutors about the rights violations she faced behind bars.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

September 20: The Interior Ministry [ordered](#) the demolition of buildings primarily lived in by Syrian refugees in Ankara, where a violent anti-refugee riot took place in August.

September 21: The families of migrants who were thrown into the Evros River by Turkish gendarmes [called on](#) authorities to find their relatives. In the incident that took place in August, more than 50 migrants were thrown into the river by the Turkish gendarmes after they were pushed back by Greece.

September 23: Eight former teachers and police officers who were fired by decree-laws in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt were [detained](#) by coast guard security in western Turkey and subsequently arrested while trying to flee to Greece on a dinghy.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

September 22: Media reports revealed that the Constitutional Court in May 2021 [ruled](#) in favor of

applicant Eyüp Birinci, a former teacher who was tortured in police custody after being arrested in July 2016 for links to the Gülen movement.

September 23: The Constitutional Court [ordered](#) the state to pay compensation to the family of a person who in 1992 was tortured to death by soldiers in the predominantly Kurdish province of Diyarbakır.

September 26: The police in Hatay physically [assaulted](#) two people over an argument that erupted at a road checkpoint.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND VIOLATIONS

September 23: The Der Spiegel news website [reported](#) that the German police on September 17 raided a hotel in Düsseldorf and detained a 40-year-old Turkish man with a gas pistol and a large amount of ammunition in addition to a list of followers of the Gülen movement.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

September 21: The İzmir branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD) [released](#) a report, noting a surge in violations of rights against women in the region after Turkey's withdrawal from the İstanbul Convention on combating violence against women.