

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 50 | May 31-June 6, 2021

## ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 219 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.

## 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.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**May 31:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a demonstration held to commemorate the 2013 Gezi Park protest, detaining 13 people.

**May 31:** The police in İstanbul briefly [detained](#) activist Nursel Tanrıverdi while staging a sit-in to protest her summary removal from public service.

**May 31:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a students' protest against the pro-government rector of Boğaziçi University and detained two people while hanging a banner on the university entrance against the rector.

**May 31:** The Beyoğlu District Governor's Office in İstanbul [banned](#) events scheduled to mark the eighth anniversary of the anti-government Gezi Park protests.

**May 31:** The Rize Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. The ban came amid environmental protests against the construction of a stone quarry in the province.

**May 31:** The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**May 31:** The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**June 1:** The police in Ankara [blocked](#) a commemoration event about the death of a protester due to police shooting during the 2013 Gezi Park protests, briefly detaining nine people.

**June 4:** The Siirt Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

**June 5:** The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a leftist manifestation, briefly detaining 35 people.

**June 6:** The Mardin Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**May 31:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the allegedly shady release of a businessperson who was imprisoned for fraud.

**June 1:** The police in Osmaniye [raided](#) the house of local journalist Hasan Tolga Balcılar three times in a week after he reported on alleged corruption in the municipality. Balcılar shared video footage of one of the raids during which the police are seen laying him on the

ground and one officer putting his knee on his neck while he is being handcuffed.

**June 1:** Prosecutors [reopened](#) an investigation into the murder of Turkish Cypriot journalist Kutlu Adalı in 1996 based on the recent revelations of a crime boss who claimed that state actors were involved in the murder.

**June 1:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to a series of tweets by journalist Erk Acarer about an alleged crime network implicating a military general, a prominent businessperson and a former interior minister.

**June 1:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to YouTube videos and tweets by a crime boss revealing details about the alleged rape and murder of Kazakh journalist Yeldana Kaharman that implicated a ruling party deputy.

**June 1:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to a news report by the Mezopotamya news agency about a botched food distribution organized by the local governor's office.

**June 2:** A prosecutor [demanded](#) a prison sentence of up to 45 years for jailed journalist Mehmet Baransu on various accusations concerning the revelation of state secrets in a news report.

**June 2:** Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into Nebiye Merttürk, the chairperson the Halkevleri (People's Houses) – a human rights organization, on charges of insulting the president in a tweet in which she criticized Turkey's exit from the İstanbul Convention.

**June 2:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to fine a Facebook user TL 5,300 (\$614) for calling nationalist ruling party ally Devlet Bahçeli a 'dotard'.

**June 2:** A report released by opposition MP Utku Çakırözer [revealed](#) that 14 members of the press appeared in court and two were sentenced to prison in May in Turkey.

**June 3:** The police in Batman [detained](#) three people for allegedly spreading terrorist propaganda on social media. The detainees were released pending trial the next day.

**June 3:** An Ankara prosecutor [indicted](#) actress Ezgi Mola on insult charges after she tweeted in August 2020 about the release of a former soldier accused of raping an 18-year-old woman.

**June 3:** Media regulator RTÜK [fined](#) government-critical broadcasters Halk TV, FOX TV and KRT over political remarks of presenters and guests.

**June 4:** A court [sentenced](#) former TV executive Hidayet Karaca to 1,406 years in prison on various charges in a trial concerning allegations of conspiracy in a match-fixing scandal that surfaced in 2011.

**June 4:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports about the alleged dumping of toxic waste by an hotel located on the Aegean shore.

**June 4:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news reports involving the name of Bilal Erdoğan, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son.

**June 5:** The police [detained](#) rapper Ufuk Yıkılmaz on charges of insulting the president. He announced his release the next day.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**June 2:** Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into Nebiye Merttürk, the chairperson the Halkevleri (People's Houses) – a human rights organization, on charges of insulting the president in a tweet in which she criticized Turkey's exit from the İstanbul Convention.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**May 31:** The European Court of Human Rights [requested](#) a statement from Turkey regarding the case of four prosecutors who were given lengthy jail sentences after conducting a 2014 investigation into trucks operated by the Turkish intelligence that were allegedly carrying arms to Syria.

**June 4:** A judge in Antalya was reassigned and [suspended](#) after criticizing the lack of investigation into the political links in a drug smuggling case.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**June 3:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) local HDP district executive Cahit Alkan.

**June 4:** The authorities [detained](#) and arrested HDP youth executive Esengül Kılıç.

## MILITARY OPERATIONS ABROAD

**June 1:** A German NGO [accused](#) the Turkish government of promoting a radical interpretation of Sunni Islam and erasing the Yazidi faith in the once multi-religious Afrin region of northern Syria. The region has been controlled by the Turkish military and Turkey-backed militia since 2018.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**May 31:** [Orhan İnandı](#), the president of a school network in Kyrgyzstan, went missing in Bishkek. His wife, Reyhan İnandı, said in a video she posted on Twitter that her husband was being held in the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek and was being forced to sign a document renouncing his Kyrgyz citizenship so that he can be taken back to Turkey where he will face prosecution.

**June 4:** An Ankara court [ruled](#) to arrest Selahattin Gülen, a nephew of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, after his forcible return from Kenya by intelligence operatives, despite rulings by Kenyan courts against his extradition.

**June 4:** Interpol [rejected](#) 773 red notice requests lodged by Turkey against people with alleged links to the Gülen movement, on the grounds that the requests were in violation of the Interpol's constitution.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**May 31:** Sedat Peker, a crime boss who has been making scandalous allegations about the relationship between state actors and the mafia [claimed](#) that former Turkish interior minister and police chief Mehmet Ağar is planning an attack on a cemevi, an Alevi house of worship, to create sectarian chaos in the country.

**June 2:** Cemal Uçarman, an Alevi person living in İstanbul, was [attacked](#) by his neighbors in a hate crime.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**June 2:** A human rights NGO released a monthly report [said](#) that the food offered to prisoners were cold and of poor quality. The group also noted problems with regard to food hygiene.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**June 4:** A study conducted by the Human Rights Association's (İHD) İzmir branch [found](#) that refugees living in the Aegean region of Turkey suffered 2,980 rights violations in the first four months of 2021.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**June 4:** The police in Batman physically [assaulted](#) and injured a person while detaining him.

**June 4:** The guards at a Diyarbakır prison physically and verbally [assaulted](#) inmate Kurbanî Özcan who was previously the victim of an incident of torture that resulted in the breaking of his fingers.

**June 5:** The guards at a Diyarbakır prison [assaulted](#) inmate Şükriye Gezin. Various rights groups reported that Gezin had visible marks of torture on her body.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**June 4:** A monthly report by the We Will End Femicide Platform [said](#) that 17 women were murdered by men in May and 20 more died under suspicious circumstances. Another gender-based violence [report](#) compiled by Bianet said that men inflicted violence on at least 67 women.