

# Journalist Ufuk Şanlı on Hunger Strike

[Briefing for International Stakeholders]

## Executive Summary

Turkish journalist **Ufuk Şanlı** (b. 1978), a veteran financial reporter and author, was **re-detained on 11 July 2025** in Istanbul and is currently held at **Marmara (Silivri) Prison**. On **20 August 2025**, he **announced a hunger strike** to protest



what he describes as unlawful prosecutorial practices and delays in indictment. He says the strike will continue **until the indictment is filed and trial begins**.<sup>1</sup>

Şanlı previously **served 4.5 years** following a **7 years 6 months** sentence for “membership of a terrorist organisation” in the so-called “FETÖ media” case; the **Supreme Court upheld** the convictions in **March 2020**. International monitors criticised the proceedings.<sup>2 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, August 26). Jailed Turkish journalist begins hunger strike to protest prosecutor’s unlawful practices. Turkish Minute.

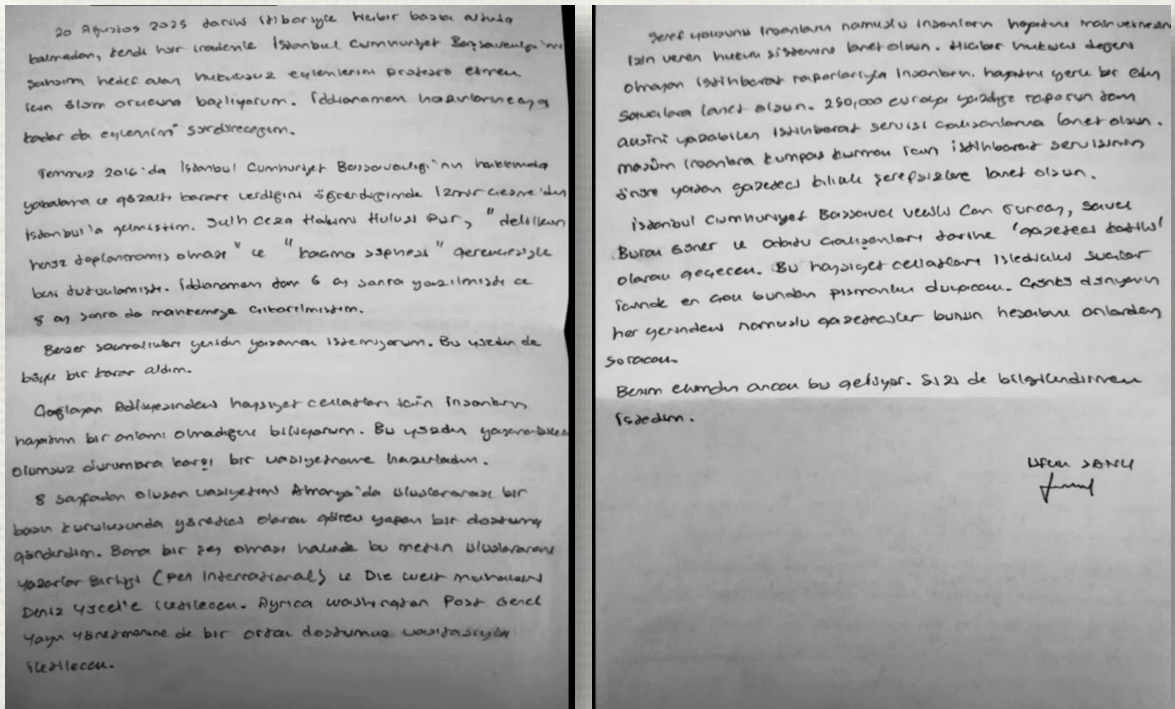
<https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/08/26/jailed-turkish-journalist-begins-hunger-strike-to-protest-prosecutors-unlawful-practices/?utm>

<sup>2</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, March 3). *Ufuk Şanlı - Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/data/people/ufuk-sanli/?utm>

<sup>3</sup> OSCE representative Désir urges Turkey to release and drop charges against 25 media workers sentenced to prison, including journalists Aksoy and Taş. (n.d.). OSCE.

<https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/374920?utm>

**Risk assessment:** Prolonged hunger strikes engage the State's **positive obligations** under **Articles 2 and 3 ECHR** (life; freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment) as well as **Articles 5 and 6** (liberty; fair trial). ECtHR guidance and factsheets emphasise the need for **independent medical monitoring**, informed consent, and lawful, humane prison practices.<sup>4</sup>



Handwritten letter of Mr. Şanlı, announcing his hunger strike

<sup>4</sup> European Court of Human Rights. (2023). *Factsheet – Hunger strikes in detention*. [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/fs\\_hunger\\_strikes\\_detention\\_eng?utm](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/fs_hunger_strikes_detention_eng?utm)

## Background and Procedural History (abridged)

- **2016–2018:** Arrested in the post-coup crackdown; convicted on **8 March 2018** by Istanbul’s 25th High Criminal Court alongside other journalists. OSCE and CPJ condemned the sentences.<sup>5 6</sup>
- **2020:** Court of Cassation upheld a tranche of convictions in the “FETÖ media” case (decision uploaded to UYAP on **8 June 2020**).<sup>7</sup>
- **2021:** Released after serving 4.5 years.
- **2025:** Re-detained on **11 July** amid renewed investigations; transferred to Marmara (Silivri) Prison.

## Current Detention and Hunger Strike

On **20 August 2025**, Şanlı communicated (via a prison letter shared publicly) that he had begun a **hunger strike** in protest at prosecutorial conduct and procedural delay; he pledged to continue **until an indictment is issued**. His statements name specific prosecutors and criticise certain media figures.<sup>8 9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobsen, K. (2018, March 9). *Turkey sentences at least 22 journalists on terrorism-related charges*. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2018/03/turkey-sentences-at-least-22-journalists-on-terror/>

<sup>7</sup> Ufuk Şanlı - *Expression interrupted*. (n.d.). <https://www.expressioninterrupted.com/ufuk-sanli/?utm>

<sup>8</sup> Aydın, Y. (2025, August 23). *Journalist Ufuk Şanlı begins hunger strike in prison: “History will remember these prosecutors and ODATV staff as journalist killers”* - International Journalists. International Journalists. <https://ijaev.org/journalist-ufuk-sanli-begins-hunger-strike-in-prison/?utm>

<sup>9</sup> Jailed Journos. (2025, August 23). *Tutuklu gazeteci Ufuk Şanlı ölüm orucuna başladı* - Jailed Journos. *Jailed Journos*. <https://jailedjournos.com/tutuklu-gazeteci-ufuk-sanli-olum-orucuna-basladi/?utm>

## Comparative Context: Hunger Strikes in Turkish Prisons

(Framing: **not the first and, absent structural change, not the last**)

A non-exhaustive set of examples demonstrates the **recurrence** of hunger strikes across Turkish places of detention, involving diverse profiles of detainees:

- **2012 mass actions:** Medical associations warned of **~700 inmates** refusing food in dozens of prisons; the protests focused on Kurdish rights and İmralı access.<sup>10</sup>
- **2018–2019 nationwide wave:** Beginning **November 2018**, **thousands** of prisoners joined hunger strikes linked to the isolation regime of Abdullah Öcalan; actions **ended on 26 May 2019** following his call.<sup>11 12 13</sup>
- **Educators' case (2017):** **Nuriye Gülmen** and **Semih Özakça** undertook prolonged hunger strikes after dismissal; detained in May 2017; Gülmen

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<sup>10</sup> Butler, D. (2012, November 1). Risk of death close for Turkish hunger strike: doctors. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/risk-of-death-close-for-turkish-hunger-strike-doctors-idUSBRE8A00SZ/?utm>

Butler, D. (2012, November 6). Turkey to allow Kurdish in court as hunger strike enters day 56. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/turkey-to-allow-kurdish-in-court-as-hunger-strike-enters-day-56-idUSBRE8A50DA/?utm>

*Reuters*. (2012, November 10). Kurdish politicians join militants' hunger strike in Turkey. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/kurdish-politicians-join-militants-hunger-strike-in-turkey-idUSBRE8A90AS/?utm>

<sup>11</sup> Butler, D. (2019, May 26). Kurdish MPs, prisoners end hunger strike in Turkey. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/kurdish-mps-prisoners-end-hunger-strike-in-turkey-idUSKCN1SW08G/?utm>

<sup>12</sup> Jazeera, A. (2019, May 26). Kurdish leader Öcalan's call ends jail hunger strikes in Turkey. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/5/26/kurdish-leader-ocalans-call-ends-jail-hunger-strikes-in-turkey?utm>

<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International. (2022, July 19). *Turkey: Hunger strikes: Rights violations faced by prisoners on hunger strike and those protesting in solidarity* - Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/0835/2019/en/?utm>

was later convicted but released pending appeal. ECtHR declined interim measures but set parameters for risk assessment.<sup>14 15 16 17</sup>

- **Cultural workers (2020):**
  - **Helin Bölek (Grup Yorum)** died **3 April 2020** (~288 days).<sup>18</sup>
  - **İbrahim Gökçek (Grup Yorum)** died **7 May 2020** (after ~323 days).<sup>19</sup>
  - **Mustafa Koçak** died **24 April 2020** following a prolonged strike demanding a fair trial.<sup>20</sup>
- **Legal profession (2020):** Human-rights lawyer **Ebru Timtik** died **27 August 2020** after **238 days**, prompting an **EU statement** expressing deep concern.<sup>21 22</sup>
- **Rotational/collective actions (2023–2024):** Political prisoners announced **rotational hunger strikes** from **27 November 2023** to **15 February 2024**, documented by domestic rights groups. Subsequent

<sup>14</sup> Toksabay, E. (2017, May 11). Weakened but defiant, Turkish hunger strikers protest purge. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/weakened-but-defiant-turkish-hunger-strikers-protest-purge-idUSKBN1872MD/?utm>

<sup>15</sup> Reuters. (2017, May 23). Turkey jails two hunger strikers pending trial. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/turkey-jails-two-hunger-strikers-pending-trial-idUSL8N1IP6DJ/?utm>

<sup>16</sup> Reuters. (2017, December 1). Turkish hunger striker found guilty of militant links, freed. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/turkish-hunger-striker-found-guilty-of-militant-links-freed-idUSKBN1DV5QR/?utm>

<sup>17</sup> Reuters. (2017, August 2). European court says jailed Turkish teachers on hunger strike do not have to be freed. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/european-court-says-jailed-turkish-teachers-on-hunger-strike-do-not-have-to-be-f-idUSKBN1AI2B6/?utm>

<sup>18</sup> Reporter, G. S. (2020, April 3). Member of banned Turkish folk group dies after hunger strike. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/03/banned-turkish-folk-group-member-dies-following-hunger-strike?utm>

<sup>19</sup> Reporter, G. S. (2020, May 7). Second member of banned Turkish folk group dies after hunger strike. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/07/second-member-banned-turkish-folk-group-grup-yorum-dies-hunger-strike--ibrahim-gokcek?utm>

<sup>20</sup> Bianet. (2021, May 25). Lost his life on a hunger strike, Mustafa Koçak billed for food. *Bianet*. <https://bianet.org/haber/lost-his-life-on-a-hunger-strike-mustafa-kocak-billed-for-food-244617>

<sup>21</sup> Turkey: Statement by the Spokesperson on the death of Ebru Timtik. (n.d.). EEAS. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/turkey-statement-spokesperson-death-ebru-timtik\\_en?utm](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/turkey-statement-spokesperson-death-ebru-timtik_en?utm)

<sup>22</sup> Human rights lawyer Ebru Timtik dies on hunger strike. (2020, September 1). Front Line Defenders. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/human-rights-lawyer-ebru-timtik-dies-hunger-strike?utm>

monitoring in early 2024 reported **vitamin denial and irregular medical checks** in several facilities.<sup>23 24 25</sup>

**Implication for Mr Şanlı’s case:** Given the well-documented **pattern** of hunger strikes, the **foreseeability of serious health risk** is high. Authorities therefore bear **heightened positive obligations** under **Articles 2 and 3 ECHR** to ensure independent medical oversight, access to appropriate supplementation (e.g., thiamine/B1), and strictly lawful responses to protest (no coercive or punitive practices).<sup>26</sup>

### Legal Standards and Recent Strasbourg Guidance

- **ECtHR Factsheet (Hunger Strikes in Detention):** Summarises State duties regarding health care, monitoring, and limits on coercive interventions.<sup>27</sup>
- **Grand Chamber — *Yüksel Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* (26 Sept 2023):** Found **violations of Articles 6, 7, and 11** in a post-2016 context. While not about hunger striking per se, the judgment underscores systemic fair-trial concerns relevant to cases like Şanlı’s (charging practices, evidentiary standards, criminalisation of lawful association/communication).<sup>28 29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> İhd. (n.d.). *Joint Monitoring Report on Hunger Strikes – İHD*. <https://ihd.org.tr/en/joint-monitoring-report-on-hunger-strikes/?utm>

<sup>24</sup> Bianet. (2023, November 27). Prisoners commence hunger strike demanding freedom for PKK leader. *Bianet*. <https://bianet.org/haber/prisoners-commence-hunger-strike-demanding-freedom-for-pkk-leader-288517>

<sup>25</sup> Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. (2024, February 28). 27 February 2024 HRFT Documentation Center Daily Human Rights Report - HRFT - Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. HRFT - Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. <https://en.tihv.org.tr/documentation/27-february-2024-hrft-documentation-center-daily-human-rights-report/?utm>

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *Judgment concerning Türkiye*. (n.d.). ECHR. <https://www.echr.coe.int/w/grand-chamber-judgment-concerning-turkiye?utm>

<sup>29</sup> ECHR. (n.d.). *YÜKSEL YALÇINKAYA v. TÜRKİYE*. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%7B%22001-227636%22%7D>

### Recommended Actions (time-sensitive)

1. **Prosecutorial expedition & transparency:** File the **indictment without delay**; provide defence with **full access** to the case file. (Arts. 5 & 6 ECHR.)
2. **Independent medical monitoring:** Daily checks by clinicians **independent** of the prison service; ensure **unhindered access to thiamine (B1)** and other recommended supplementation for hunger strikers.
3. **No coercion / no punitive measures:** Any intervention must comply with international standards (e.g., UN CAT; medical ethics rejecting force-feeding absent strict safeguards).
4. **International observation:** Invite **trial monitoring** (e.g., OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, NGOs) to **deter due-process violations**.
5. **Parliamentary & consular engagement:** Lawmakers and diplomatic missions in Ankara should seek **prison visits** and **court attendance** permissions; raise **Articles 2/3/5/6** obligations with the Ministry of Justice.
6. **Media & NGO coordination:** Use verified reporting and documented letters (English/Turkish) to maintain visibility; avoid speculative claims.

## Annex A — Key Timeline (Mr Şanlı)

- **1999–2016:** Financial/energy reporter (TGRT, Sabah, Vatan, Milliyet/Uzmanpara; TV work at CNBC-e; book: *Borç Kapanı*, 2002).
- **27–31 Jul 2016:** Arrested and jailed pending trial.
- **8 Mar 2018:** Sentenced to **7y6m** (Istanbul 25th HCC). OSCE condemned the verdicts.
- **Mar–Jun 2020:** Court of Cassation **upheld** convictions; decision uploaded **8 Jun 2020**.
- **7 Jul 2021:** Released after 4.5 years served.
- **11 Jul 2025:** **Re-detained**; placed in **Marmara (Silivri) Prison**.
- **20 Aug 2025:** **Hunger strike announced** via letter circulated publicly; action to continue until indictment and trial.