

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 96 people over alleged links to the Gülen movement. Since 2017, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has issued 26 [opinions](#) concerning arbitrary detentions based on alleged membership in the Gülen movement, in which it has expressed grave concern that the widespread or systematic imprisonment of individuals linked 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.

17 February: Turkish authorities [detained](#) 148 people in coordinated operations across multiple provinces and arrested 52 over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

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

20 February: Turkey's pro-Kurdish DEM Party said police [detained](#) at least 99 minors in January over social media posts and protests linked to a Syrian offensive against Kurdish-led forces, with 25 arrested and allegations of strip-searches, ill-treatment, and restrictions on legal access.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

16 February: A Turkish government [bill](#) reportedly set for parliamentary introduction would mandate identity verification for social media users, ban accounts for children under 15, enable swift administrative content removal without court orders and impose bandwidth penalties on noncompliant platforms.

18 February: Turkish cartoonist Öznur Kalender was [detained](#) in Ankara on accusations of insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over a New Year's Eve cartoon depicting the president among public figures in Santa's sack, in a case brought under Article 299 of the penal code criminalizing insults against the president.

20 February: An İstanbul court ordered the [arrest](#) of Deutsche Welle Turkish reporter Alican Uludağ over 22 social media posts deemed to constitute repeated public insults of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

20 February: Turkey detained six European activists from Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and Russia who were visiting to examine prison conditions for political detainees and moved them toward [deportation](#).

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

16 February: Eighty of Turkey's 83 bar associations [condemned](#) Justice Minister Akın Gürlek's proposal to restrict detainees' access to lawyers, warning that limiting confidential meetings would violate constitutional and European Convention safeguards protecting the right to defense and further undermine judicial independence.

19 February: A Turkish lawyer in İzmir was briefly [detained](#) on accusations of slander after insisting that his client's torture allegations be officially recorded during interrogation.

20 February: The International Federation of Journalists [condemned](#) Turkish authorities for citing a journalist's 350-lira payment for an International Press Card as evidence in a terrorism probe targeting four EHTA reporters detained in an investigation into alleged links to the Socialist Party of the Oppressed, calling it a dangerous misrepresentation of routine union activity.

KURDISH MINORITY

19 February: A Turkish prosecutor [indicted](#) Kurdish journalist Ceylan Şahinli for attending a December 2024 commemoration in Suruç for two colleagues killed in a drone strike, accusing her of violating the law on demonstrations and seeking up to three years in prison.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

19 February: A 72-year-old inmate imprisoned over alleged Gülen links has reportedly [lost](#) his ability to speak and suffered repeated health crises after authorities rejected his request to suspend his sentence despite multiple serious illnesses and dozens of infirmary visits.

20 February: A former physics teacher, Asuman Birinci, imprisoned in Antalya over alleged links to the Gülen movement is reportedly being [denied](#) urgent treatment despite severe anemia indicated by hemoglobin levels of 6.8 g/dL, while her husband alleges longstanding health needs have gone unmet during her 21 months in prison.

20 February: Eight Turkish human rights groups [urged](#) authorities to immediately suspend the sentence of 70-year-old inmate Mehmet Edip Taşar, who suffers from heart failure and multiple chronic illnesses and recently underwent his 19th angioplasty, warning that keeping him in prison despite repeated forensic reports deeming him fit for detention endangers his life.

GENDER RIGHTS

17 February: Turkey's Justice Ministry is reportedly [preparing](#) draft legislation that would criminalize public praise of LGBT identity and same-sex ceremonies, impose prison terms for unauthorized gender transition

procedures and significantly tighten legal gender change requirements.