

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 306 | Date 27 April – 3 May

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 10 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.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

29 April: A 26-year-old lawyer, Hatice Kocaefe, was [shot](#) dead in Bursa by a suspect linked to enforcement proceedings she initiated, sparking condemnation from groups including the İstanbul Bar Association and opposition figures over threats to the legal profession.

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

28 April: Turkish police [detained](#) nearly 40 people, including journalists and opposition figures, in preemptive raids in İstanbul ahead of International Workers' Day.

2 May: Turkish authorities [released](#) all 576 people detained during International Workers' Day rallies in İstanbul, including union official Başaran Aksu, after police used tear gas to disperse crowds near Taksim Square, while an additional 47 people had been detained beforehand, with four jailed and nine placed under house arrest.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

28 April: Turkish prosecutors are [seeking](#) up to two years in prison for legal scholar İzzet Özgenç over social media posts criticizing former top judge Mehmet Akarca, in a case highlighting ongoing concerns about judicial independence.

28 April: Twenty-five press freedom groups including Reporters Without Borders [condemned](#) Turkey's use of Article 217/A, the disinformation law, to prosecute journalists such as Alican Uludağ, calling for its repeal and the release of those detained under it.

30 April: Turkey [ranked](#) 163rd out of 180 in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, reflecting worsening media freedom marked by state control, legal pressure and arrests of journalists amid deepening authoritarianism.

30 April: Journalist Tolga Şardan was [sentenced](#) to five months in prison for "insulting the judiciary," with the verdict suspended, while being acquitted of spreading misleading information over his reporting.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

27 April: UN special rapporteurs including Mary Lawlor [warned](#) that Turkey is misusing counterterrorism and terrorism financing laws to prosecute and intimidate human rights defenders linked to groups like Human Rights Association, citing cases such as Hatice Onaran and others facing charges over legitimate rights activities.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

27 April: Turkish authorities [refused](#) to authorize an investigation into 36 officials over alleged negligence in a 2025 wildfire in Eskişehir that killed 10 people, drawing criticism from victims' families over accountability and disaster response failures.

30 April: Authorities [detained](#) 29 people in coordinated probes targeting CHP (Republican People's Party)-linked Antalya municipality over alleged corruption, in an ongoing crackdown against opposition parties.

30 April: A Turkish court [sentenced](#) human rights lawyer Nurcan Kaya to over six years in prison on terrorism-related charges linked to alleged ties with the Peoples' Democratic Congress

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

30 April: Five rights groups [called](#) for the release of critically ill Kurdish prisoner Enver Yanık, citing his severe neurological conditions, repeated fainting episodes, delayed forensic medical evaluation and prolonged incarceration despite legal provisions allowing sentence suspension for seriously ill inmates.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

29 April: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [urged](#) Turkey to rejoin the Istanbul Convention, warning that its 2021 withdrawal has weakened protections amid persistently high femicide rates and ongoing concerns over enforcement and accountability.