

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR

June 22-28, 2020



ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

June 23: Two people from the youth branch of the Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were briefly [detained](#) in Mardin for putting up political banners demanding education in native Kurdish.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

June 23: Yasin Ugan, who in February 2019 went missing for seven months in what his family members suspected to be an enforced disappearance, [revealed](#) in a court statement that he was abducted by National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and unlawfully interrogated under torture for six months. Meanwhile, former public sector worker Yusuf Bilge Tunç remains missing since August 2019.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

June 22: Some 60 heads of Turkish bars associations walking on Ankara in protest were [denied](#) by the police entry to the capital city. The bar heads staged a sit-in to end what they call the "Defense March," which they had launched in reaction to government plans to amend the law on bar associations' election systems in what critics say an effort to increase the number of pro-government figures in bars.



Blocked by the police, Turkish bar heads staging a sit-in

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

June 22: A Turkish court [ruled](#) to block access to two pages on the Ekşi Sözlük forum website. The pages included satirical comments about First Lady Emine Erdoğan and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son Bilal Erdoğan.

June 22: Jinnews reporter Beritan Canözer was [handed down](#) a prison sentence of 1 year, 10 months, and 15 days for "spreading terrorist propaganda" in her social media posts.

June 23: A regional court of appeals in İstanbul [upheld](#) the prison sentence of prominent opposition politician Canan Kaftancıoğlu. The İstanbul head of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) was sentenced to nine years, eight months over tweets posted from 2012 to 2017, which earned her a string of criminal charges including insulting the president and spreading terrorist propaganda. Kaftancıoğlu will be able to appeal the decision at the Supreme Court of Appeals.

June 23: Journalist Mevlüt Öztaş, who was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer while in jail and is currently at stage four of the disease, has been [released](#) from prison. The welcome development came after repeated calls and long campaigns for his release. Öztaş was convicted of terrorism over his work at a news agency with links to the faith-based Gülen movement.

June 23: Turkey's Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body responsible for regulating publicly funded advertisements in the media, [imposed](#) a record 45-day advertising ban on the left-wing Evrensel newspaper over a government-critical opinion column published on May 5.

June 24: The trial of journalists Barış Pehlivan, Barış Terkoğlu, Hülya Kılınç, Ferhat Çelik, Aydın Keser and Murat Ağirel [started](#) in İstanbul. The journalists were imprisoned in March 2020 over a news report about the funeral of a Turkish intelligence officer who was killed in Libya and they are charged with disclosing classified information. The court ruled to release Terkoğlu, Çelik and Keser pending trial while keeping the others behind bars.

June 25: Mardin prosecutors [indicted](#) reporter Ahmet Kanbal for insulting Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu on social media.

KURDISH MINORITY

June 22: Gendarmerie forces carried out early morning raids into the house of Hatice Taş, former mayor of İkköprü town in the Batman province who was previously ousted by the interior ministry. Taş and six others were detained as part of the same investigation, according to media [reports](#). Since the local elections last year, Turkey's interior ministry has [removed](#) from office more than 40 elected Kurdish mayors in the southeast, replacing them with pro-government trustees. Many of the mayors later faced criminal charges of alleged links to the PKK.



Ousted Kurdish mayor Hatice Taş

June 22: A government-appointed trustee who replaced the ousted Kurdish mayor of the city of Batman [removed](#) bilingual (Turkish and Kurdish) pedestrian crossing signs in the city, replacing them with monolingual signs in Turkish.

June 23: Previously ousted mayor of Suruç, Hatice Çevik, was [released](#) from prison where she was held since November 2019. Çevik is standing trial for alleged membership in a terrorist organization.

June 23: Former co-mayor of Karayazı district in Erzurum, Dinçer Polat, who was detained on June 14, was [arrested](#) by the court.

June 24: A Turkish court [handed down](#) prison sentences of up to 10 years to 68 Kurdish politicians and activists, including a former elected mayor, on account of their alleged links to the PKK.

OTHER MINORITIES

June 26: The İzmir Bar Association reported that the Çeşme municipality [demolished](#) dozens of tents where Roma people lived.

PRISON CONDITIONS

June 22: Deputy Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu [tweeted](#) that he received complaints regarding lack of water supply in a prison in southeastern province of Şanlıurfa.

June 23: Reports [indicated](#) that prisoners in the Adana Kürkcüler Type F Prison have launched a hunger strike in protest of rights violations.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

June 24: Two Iranians who fled to Turkey due to fear of political persecution by Iranian authorities for participating in nationwide protests last year, were [sentenced](#) to death after Turkey deported them to Iran where they were immediately arrested.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

June 23: The Human Rights Association (İHD) [released](#) a report on torture and ill-treatment from 2010 to 2019, in which it found a significant rise in allegations of torture in police custody between 2016 and 2019. The report was prepared based on 690 such complaints that the association received over the last decade.

June 26: Several rights groups said that Kurdish politician Sevil Rojbin Çetin was [detained](#) at her home in Diyarbakır and that during the detention the police had two dogs attack her, causing serious injury.