

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 37 | March 1-7, 2021

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 204 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.

March 3: Ayten Öztürk, who was abducted from Lebanon in 2018 by Turkish intelligence, testified in an İstanbul court about the torture and inhumane [treatment](#) she was subjected to at a black site.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

March 1: The Hakkari Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 1: The Şırnak Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 3: The Van Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days. Through

consecutive extensions the ban has been kept uninterruptedly in effect since 2016.

March 5: The police in Kocaeli [blocked](#) a workers' protest, briefly detaining 22 people.

March 5: The Batman Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

March 6: The police in İstanbul [blocked](#) a pro-LGBT group from attending a Women's Day march, briefly detaining nine people.

March 6: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to release on probation university student Murat Can Demirci who was arrested for attending Boğaziçi University protests.

March 7: The Mardin Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

March 1: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit actors Müjdat Gezen and Metin Akpınar. The two stood trial for insulting the president.

March 2: An Ordu prosecutor [demanded](#) a sentence of up to two years in prison for İstanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on charges that he insulted former Ordu governor Seddar Yavuz.

March 2: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to Etkin news agency.

March 2: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Fatih Portakal of the charge of insulting the president and violating banking laws. Portakal stood trial over his social media commentary.

March 3: The police in Bursa briefly [detained](#) a high school student over social media posts. The student was released the same day after being questioned by prosecutors.

March 3: An Osmaniye court [ruled](#) to block access to the Mezopotamya news agency. The decision constituted the second access block imposed on the news agency, known for its focus on human rights violations in the Kurdish-majority regions.

March 4: Batman prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into the provincial HDP administration over its social media commentary for allegedly provoking hatred and enmity among public.

March 4: A Gaziantep court [rejected](#) a lawsuit filed by the local municipality against journalist Hazal Ocak.

March 5: The police in Samsun briefly [detained](#) a person with the initials Y.B. over social media commentary. Y.B. was released the same day after appearing before a court.

March 5: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that the Press Advertising Agency (BİK), the state body regulating publicly funded advertisements on the media, violated the freedom of expression and media by imposing a ban on the Korkusuz newspaper over an article.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

March 2: Forensic Architecture, a London-based multidisciplinary research group, [said](#) that their findings contradicted with Turkish prosecutors' indictment concerning the killing of prominent human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi. The researchers said Elçi was killed not by the militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as alleged by the indictment but rather by the police officers present at the scene.

March 4: An İstanbul court trying 26 Saudi suspects in absentia for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi [refused](#) to admit as evidence a declassified US report blaming Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the incident, on the grounds that it "would bring nothing to the trial."

March 4: The European Court of Human Rights [asked](#) Turkey to provide its justification for the non-prosecution of two intelligence operatives in relation to the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007.

March 5: The European Court of Human Rights [posed](#) a series of questions to the Turkish government about the ByLock messaging app in the case of former teacher Yüksel Yalçinkaya who was dismissed from his public sector job and arrested in 2016 over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

KURDISH MINORITY

March 2: The Supreme Court of Appeals [launched](#) an investigation into the HDP, asking for documents from Ankara prosecutors related to ongoing investigations into HDP lawmakers and officials. The development came after calls by government official [Cahit Özkan](#) and nationalist government ally [Devlet Bahçeli](#) for the pro-Kurdish party's closure.

March 2: The police in Erzurum [detained](#) Halit Uğun, a local HDP district co-chair. Uğun was released on probation March 3, after appearing before a court.

March 2: The police in Ağrı [detained](#) local HDP executives Gönül Öztürk and Hamide Turan over a Women's Day demonstration held in the city. The two were released the same day after a questioning.

March 2: The police in Mersin and Diyarbakır [detained](#) eight people, including members of the HDP, as part of a Mersin-based investigation.

March 2: An Antalya court [sentenced](#) former Diyarbakır district co-mayor Fatma Arşimet to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

March 2: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) local HDP executive Hatun Yıldız to six years, three months on terrorism-related charges.

March 2: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to the pro-Kurdish Etkin news agency.

March 3: A regional appeals court in Van [overturned](#) an acquittal decision for former Yüksekova district co-mayor İrfan Sarı and sentenced Sarı to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

March 3: The Turkish Medical Association (TBB) [warned](#) against inequality between regions in Covid-19 vaccination, citing the lower rates in the predominantly eastern and southeastern provinces.

March 3: An Osmaniye court [ruled](#) to block access to the Mezopotamya news agency. The decision constituted the second access block imposed on the news agency, known for its focus on human rights violations in the Kurdish-majority regions.

March 4: Batman prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into the provincial HDP administration over its social media commentary for allegedly provoking hatred and enmity among public.

March 5: The police in Mardin briefly [detained](#) local HDP youth member Berfin Can.

MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

March 1: Kosovar authorities [indicted](#) three former high-level intelligence, police and immigration officials involved in the illegal deportation to Turkey of six teachers in March 2018, charging them of abusing their official position and illegal deprivation of liberty.

March 4: A German prosecutor [denied](#) a Turkish court's request for judicial assistance in the case of exiled singer Ferhat Tunç, who is facing terrorism-related charges in over his social media messages criticizing Turkey's military invasion of Syria's Afrin province.

OTHER MINORITIES

March 5: The Adana police [banned](#) the use of LGBTI-related banners at a Women's Day rally scheduled for March 8.

PRISON CONDITIONS

March 1: A prison administration in Tekirdağ [imposed](#) extreme restrictions on jailed police chief Ömer Köse's water supply. Köse was imprisoned due to his role in a corruption probe in December 2013 that implicated high-level government officials.

March 3: Önder Ateş, a former teacher arrested over alleged links to the Gülen movement, [died](#) in prison of Covid-19.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

March 1: Caize Yarıcı, a HDP executive in Aydın, [filed](#) a complaint against local police for an unlawful strip-

search conducted at a police station after she and other HDP members were detained in mid-February.

March 3: Prison guards in Batman reportedly [assaulted](#) inmates.

March 4: Prison guards in Isparta reportedly [assaulted](#) and verbally insulted three inmates.

March 4: Prison guards at a Kahramanmaraş prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates.

March 6: [Kurbani Özcan](#), a prisoner who was subjected to strip-searches during a prison transfer as well as physical and psychological violence, reportedly attempted to commit suicide.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

March 4: A monthly gender-based violence [report](#) compiled by Bianet found that men inflicted violence on at least 57 women and killed at least 33 in February.