

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 27 | December 21-27, 2020

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**December 22:** Ruling AKP tabled a [bill](#) authorizing the interior minister to shut down associations and the president to freeze assets without a court order. The legislation could lead to further stifling of Turkey's civil society. A total of 520 Turkey-based NGOs released a [joint statement](#), calling the bill to be in disregard of the freedom of association.

**December 22:** The police in İstanbul [attacked](#) a demonstration organized to protest the arrest of HDP politician Leyla Güven, using excessive violence against wheelchair-bound HDP MP Musa Piroğlu and detaining 14 people.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**December 21:** A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to block access to the pro-Kurdish JinNews website. The decision constituted the 27<sup>th</sup> such ban on the website.

**December 21:** A Şanlıurfa court [ruled](#) to block access about a local ruling AKP member who continued to serve among the party ranks after a public controversy.

**December 22:** The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office [launched](#) an investigation into social media posts and news reports exposing the extensive use of strip-searches in prisons, citing signs of "deliberate" and "organized" action.

**December 23:** An İstanbul court sentenced journalist [Can Dündar](#) to 27 years, six months in prison on espionage charges. Dündar lives in exile in Germany, which [rejected](#) calls from Turkey to extradite him.

**December 23:** Opposition MP Sezgin Tanrıku said that authorities were refusing to release imprisoned journalist [Hanım Büşra Erdal](#) despite the fact that she is eligible for parole.

**December 23:** A detailed investigative [report](#) claimed that state-owned TRT broadcaster has been using YouTube's copyright protection mechanisms to unlawfully harass government-critical channels and small content providers.

**December 24:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about criminal complaints filed against a judge who overturned an earlier non-prosecution decision about opposition politician Canan Kaftancıoğlu.

**December 25:** The police in Tunceli detained journalist [Gülistan Azak](#) for an investigation launched in 2018.

**December 25:** An Edirne court [imposed](#) a gag order on news reports about Veysel Filiz, a former employee of the Turkish Embassy in Brussels who was arrested on drug trafficking charges after police found 100 kilos of heroin in his vehicle.

**December 25:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to a tweet posted by opposition MP Lütfü Türkkan about a reported tax immunity granted to a construction company.

**December 26:** Private television station [Olay TV](#) closed down only 26 days after it started broadcasting, due to intense pressure from the ruling AKP government, according to reports.

**December 27:** The police in Rize [detained](#) local leftist politician Uğur Mert on account on his social media posts.

**December 27:** The police [detained](#) Taylan Özgür Karatepe over his social media commentary condemning the alleged rape of an 18-year-old girl in Siirt by a military officer which led to the victim's suicide.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**December 24:** Interior Minister [Süleyman Soylu](#) verbally targeted opposition MP and prominent human rights defender Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu for raising the allegations of undue strip-searches in prisons. Soylu accused Gergerlioğlu of being a “terrorist.” Gergerlioğlu also [filed](#) criminal complaints against a local police chief for failure to take action on the allegations.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**December 22:** The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş's detention since 2016 was politically motivated, ordering his release. President [Erdoğan](#) accused the court of trying to replace the country's judiciary and Interior Minister [Süleyman Soylu](#) called the judgment “meaningless.” On Dec. 26, an Ankara court [refused](#) an application for the implementation of the ECtHR judgment.

**December 26:** [Şaban Vatan](#), who has been searching for the truth about the suspicious death of his 11-year-old daughter for more than two years, was handed down a prison sentence and a fine in a case filed by a former minister of the ruling AKP.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**December 21:** A Diyarbakır court sentenced former HDP MP [Leyla Güven](#) to 22 years, three months on terrorism charges. Güven was ousted from the parliament in June. She was sent to prison on Dec. 22.

**December 21:** The police in İstanbul [detained](#) ESP politician Uğur Ok on terrorism charges. Ok was arrested on Dec. 25 after appearing before a court.

**December 22:** The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) [ruled](#) that Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş's detention since 2016 was politically motivated, ordering his release. President [Erdoğan](#) accused the court of trying to replace the country's judiciary and Interior Minister [Süleyman Soylu](#) called the judgment “meaningless.” On Dec. 26, an

Ankara court [refused](#) an application for the implementation of the ECtHR judgment.

**December 22:** The police in İstanbul [attacked](#) a demonstration organized to protest the arrest of HDP politician Leyla Güven, using excessive violence against wheelchair-bound HDP MP Musa Piroğlu, and detaining 14 people.

**December 22:** The police in Balıkesir [carried out](#) house raids to detain four local HDP members.

**December 23:** A Diyarbakır court [handed down](#) prison sentences of six and eight years to Rosa Women's Association members Gülistan Nazlıer and Sevim Coşkun on terrorism charges.

**December 23:** The police in Diyarbakır [carried out](#) a violent house raid to detain four local HDP politicians.

**December 23:** A [study](#) showed that 70 percent of Kurdish youths in Turkey encounter discrimination in their daily lives.

**December 23:** Authorities [launched](#) an investigation into a military conscript who in a video circulating on social media was seen singing in Kurdish.

**December 24:** The police in Ağrı [detained](#) local HDP executive Cemal Akar and HDP member Ceren Barış.

**December 25:** The police in Tunceli detained journalist [Gülistan Azak](#) for an investigation launched in 2018. Azak works for the pro-Kurdish JinNews website.

**December 25:** [Sakarya prosecutors](#) decided for a non-prosecution about the apparently racist attack on a group of Kurdish seasonal workers in the city.

## MISTREATMENT OF CITIZENS ABROAD

**December 24:** Germany-based Turkish boxer [Ünsal Arik](#), who is known for his outspoken criticism of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, announced on social media that he was attacked by Erdoğan supporters.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**December 25:** Opposition MP Gamze Akkuş İlgezdi drafted a [report](#) which found that over the last 10 years, close to 2 million inmates have filed complaints of human rights violations in prison.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**December 23:** The European Commission [announced](#) that it is extending two refugee assistance programs with Turkey.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**December 22:** The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office [launched](#) an investigation into social media posts and news reports exposing the extensive use of strip-searches in prisons, citing signs of "deliberate" and "organized" action.