

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue No. 218 | Date 19-25 August

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 14 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 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 August: During the World Beykozular Day celebrations in Istanbul's Beykoz district, a group reportedly affiliated with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) attempted to [disrupt](#) Suavi's concert by chanting slogans such as "We don't want terrorists in Beykoz."

22 August: A man was [detained](#) after staging a protest by throwing melons in front of an AKP-run municipality, expressing his dissatisfaction with the local government's actions.

22 August: In Mardin's Savur district, the gendarmerie used tear gas and water cannons to [disperse](#) people

protesting the Dicle Electricity Distribution Inc. (Dicle Elektrik Dağıtım A.Ş.) teams who had arrived in Sürgücü neighborhood under gendarmerie escort.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

19 August: Poet Nevzat Çelik was [detained](#) in İzmir due to a social media post about a forest fire but was released after giving a statement.

20 August: Sözcü correspondent Evren Demirdağ has faced online [threats](#) and personal attacks from Ziver Holding's chair, Veysel Demirci, after reporting on a major government contract awarded to the company.

22 August: The website of the pro-Kurdish news agency, Mezopotamya Ajansı (MA), has been [blocked](#) in Turkey.

23 August: Journalist Murat Ağirel is under [investigation](#) in Turkey due to his book "Havana," which discusses drug trafficking, and has given a statement to the police as part of the inquiry.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

23 August: Former İstanbul chief public prosecutor Hadi Salihoğlu and several other high-ranking judicial officials are set to face trial for allegedly using their positions to [protect the criminal network](#) of convicted TV preacher Adnan Oktar.

KURDISH MINORITY

23 August: Two local politicians from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) have been [detained](#) in a police operation in İstanbul.

OTHER MINORITIES

19 August: Hate crimes against religious minorities in Turkey are [rising](#), with incidents targeting Christians, Jews, and Alevis, though many go unreported due to victims' reluctance and fear of inadequate legal support, according to a report by the Freedom of Belief Initiative.

PRISON CONDITIONS

19 August: Inmates at a Malatya prison are being [forced](#) into overcrowded wards, leading to serious health concerns, limited access to water, and inadequate meals, as families call on authorities to address the deteriorating conditions.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

23 August: several refugees who witnessed the alleged torture and ill-treatment of Syrian refugee İbrahim İzziddin at the Kırklareli Removal Center, where he died on July 16, 2024, were [forcibly deported](#) after being made to sign "voluntary return documents." One witness claimed they signed due to fear of violence, while İzziddin resisted and later died after guards allegedly ignored his pleas for help.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

21 August: Turkish authorities have [postponed](#) the release of 51-year-old inmate İlhan Sami Çomak by three months, citing concerns about his awareness of his crime and potential for reoffending, despite his eligibility for parole.

21 August: Nevzat Akbulak, an inmate at Elazığ No. 1 High-Security Prison, had his release [postponed](#) for a third time by six months after the Prison Administration and Observation Board deemed him "not of good behavior" for refusing to accept enforced remorse.

23 August: The Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CİSST) has [raised](#) concerns over the deteriorating health of 81-year-old Abdulalim Kaya, an inmate with dementia and multiple serious health conditions, urging Turkish authorities to improve prison conditions and consider his release for proper medical care.