

# TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



Issue 15 | September 28-October 4, 2020

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

**September 28:** The governor's office in Tunceli [imposed](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days, citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

**September 28:** The governor's office in Kars [imposed](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 15 days, citing national security and public order.

**October 2:** The Interior Ministry [imposed](#) a ban on all events to be held by NGOs, professional organizations, unions and cooperatives until December 1, 2020.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

**September 28:** The government-critical Halk TV [stopped](#) broadcast after a five-day broadcast ban imposed by media watchdog RTÜK went into effect. The channel risks losing its license entirely in case of a repeat of the same penalty.

**September 28:** Kocaeli-based journalists Faruk Bostan and Bülent Karagöz were [arrested](#) after publishing a news report on a sexual abuse allegations implicating local ruling AKP executives in Kocaeli.

**September 29:** Activists Şehmus Kavak, Misli Cihan Şenleten and Özgür Doğu Erhan from the Movement of the Nameless (İsimsizler Hareketi) were [arrested](#) for allegedly insulting the president.

**September 29:** An Ankara court [accepted](#) the indictment against OdaTv journalist Müyesser Yıldız and TELE1 broadcaster's İsmail Dükel. The indictment seeks up to 17 years, 6 months in prison for each journalist on charges of disclosing confidential information.

**September 29:** Journalist Merdan Yanardağ, who is standing trial for allegedly targeting the Ankara Chief

Public Prosecutor in a news report, was [released](#) on probation. Yanardağ's indictment was prepared by the office of the same Chief Public Prosecutor.

**September 30:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) journalist Hakkı Boltan.

**September 30:** An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to two online news articles about a Turkey-based bank's alleged transactions based on the FinCEN Files leaked from the US Secretary of the Treasury.

**September 30:** The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) [blocked](#) access to Sendika.org and Yeni Demokrasi news websites as well as the pro-Kurdish Mesopotamia news agency.

**October 1:** Turkey's new [regulations](#) with tighter restrictions and control over platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, took effect. The law was approved by the Turkish parliament back in July.

**October 1:** Reporters Without Borders (RSF) claimed that at least 347 news articles were [censored](#) by Turkish authorities over the past three months.

**October 2:** Van prosecutors [imposed](#) confidentiality order on the allegations that two Kurdish villagers were thrown off military helicopters and banned broadcasting or publishing news about the issue.

**October 2:** Journalist Ayşenur Arslan was [summoned](#) as a suspect by prosecutors in İstanbul for a questioning over her social media posts.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

**September 29:** Parliament Speaker Mustafa Şentop [expressed](#) support for the calls in favor of reintroducing

the death penalty, which was abolished in 2004 as part of Turkey's EU accession bid.

**September 29:** Journalist Merdan Yanardağ, who is standing trial for allegedly targeting the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor in a news report, was [released](#) on probation. Yanardağ's indictment was prepared by the office of the same Chief Public Prosecutor.

**September 29:** The Constitutional Court [postponed](#) its session where the individual application of imprisoned civil society leader Osman Kavala is to be reviewed.

**September 30:** A German foreign ministry [report](#) drafted to advise the country's immigration authorities about asylum applications found that Turkey's judiciary is mostly dysfunctional.

**October 1:** A Bursa prosecutor [demanded](#) the conviction on terror charges of jailed lawyer Levent Pişkin who is standing trial for having visited jailed Kurdish political leader Selahattin Demirtaş.

**October 1:** The Constitutional Court [rejected](#) an appeal by the main opposition CHP against the government-led law allowing multiple bar associations in a city. The controversial law was criticized by rights groups and legal experts for being designed to weaken the bar associations in large cities and to undermine their role as human rights watchdogs.

**October 2:** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [voiced](#) his support for the overhaul of the Constitutional Court, Turkey's highest court. The development came after Interior Minister Süleyman Soyly repeatedly targeted the court over a decision annulling a law restricting the freedom of assembly.

## KURDISH MINORITY

**September 29:** The police in Mersin [detained](#) local pro-Kurdish HDP politicians Gülbahar Şöfer and Barış Karabıyık in house raids.

**September 30:** Servet Turgut, a 55-year-old Kurdish villager who was allegedly thrown from a military helicopter, [died](#) after 20 days in intensive care. Van prosecutors [imposed](#) confidentiality order on the file and banned broadcasting or publishing news about the issue.

**September 30:** The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) Gülistan Ensarioğlu, the co-mayor of the Eğil district from the pro-Kurdish HDP.

**September 30:** Kurdish musician Hozan Canê was [released](#) after spending two years behind bars. The musician was sentenced to 6 years, 3 months on terror charges. She was released after a court reviewing her case found the prison sentence disproportionate. Hozan Canê is also a citizen of Germany and the German government had made diplomatic efforts about her case.

**September 30:** The Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) [blocked](#) access to the pro-Kurdish Mesopotamia news agency.

**October 1:** Şevin Alaca, the co-mayor of the Kars province, was [detained](#) after the other co-mayor, Ayhan Bilgen, was detained last week along with 81 other pro-Kurdish politicians. A trustee was [appointed](#) by the interior ministry to replace the co-mayors.

**October 1:** A Bursa prosecutor [demanded](#) the conviction on terror charges of jailed lawyer Levent Pişkin who is standing trial for having visited jailed Kurdish political leader Selahattin Demirtaş.

**October 2:** An Ankara court ruled to [arrest](#) 17 Kurdish politicians, out of the 82 who were detained last week.

## OTHER MINORITIES

**September 28:** Amidst the clashes between Azerbaijan and Armenia, a [convoy](#) of cars with Azerbaijan flags was seen touring around the Kumkapı quarter in İstanbul which is home to the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople as well as many migrants from Armenia, leading to [fears](#) among the country's Armenian minority.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

**September 28:** A women's prison in southeast Turkey [banned](#) a book about freedom of expression. The book was co-authored by the chairman of Turkey's Constitutional Court.

**September 29:** Turkey-based Human Rights Association (İHD) [reported](#) that 20 people have died in prisons since the beginning of the year. İHD also claimed that there are 1,605 sick prisoners, 604 of which are seriously ill.

**September 29:** Jailed lawyer Aycan Çiçek had her finger [broken](#) after a scuffle with prison guards and she was placed in solitary confinement afterwards, instead of

being taken to a hospital for treatment, according to revelations made to the media by the lawyer's mother.

**October 1:** The Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CİSST) released a [report](#) on prison conditions, listing a number of problems including lack of proper ventilation, clean tap water, disinfectants and face masks.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

**October 4:** Turkish authorities reportedly [detained](#) 72 irregular migrants in the eastern province of Van. Two of the migrants were found dead inside the overcrowded van carrying them.

## TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

**September 30:** Servet Turgut, a 55-year-old Kurdish villager who was allegedly thrown from a military helicopter, [died](#) after 20 days in intensive care. Van prosecutors [imposed](#) confidentiality order on the file and banned broadcasting or publishing news about the issue.