

Human Rights Report: Türkiye

February 2026



JUSTICE SQUARE

Stichting Justice Square, based in Amsterdam, is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation working globally to make a meaningful impact on the lives of persecuted people, refugees, victims of war and those affected by conflict and displacement by promoting democratic values, encouraging international cooperation and advocating for the protection of human rights.



OUR CONTACT:



Email
info@justicesquare.org



Website
www.justicesquare.org

Table of Contents

1	
I. INTRODUCTION	5
1. Working Method	6
2. Facts and Figures	7
3. Numbers for the Gülen-Related Investigations in 2025	9
4. Politically Motivated Crackdowns on Opposition Figures.....	11
I. RECURRENT PROSECUTIONS, RESTRUCTURING CASES AND RE- IMPRISONMENT: "RESTRUCTURING OPERATIONS" IN 2025.....	12
1. "Civil Death" in Turkey: Gülen-Linked Individuals Targeted Through Business Raids and Employment Bans	13
1.1. February 21, 2025: First Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees (Maydonoz Döner)	16
1.2. April 11, 2025: 36 Individuals were Detained on Charges Related to Providing Employment Opportunities to Gülen-Linked Employees	16
1.3. May 12, 2025: 10 Individuals Detained	17
1.4. May 26, 2025: Crackdown on Dessert Restaurant Chain Employees	17
1.5. May 27, 2025: Second Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees (Maydonoz Döner)	17
1.6. June 24, 2025: Third Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees (Maydonoz Döner)	18
1.7. July 15, 2025: 26 individuals were detained on Charges Related to Providing Employment Opportunities to Gülen-Linked Employees	19
1.8. July 15, 2025: Detention for 422 as a Mark of the 9th Anniversary of July 15 Coup 20	
2. Minors Discriminatively Targeted as a Result of Family Relations in Restructuring Cases	21
2.1. Gaziantep Crackdown: 320 Detained, Mostly University Students, on May 6, 2025 22	
2.2. Another Operation Targeting University Students in İstanbul (May 27, 2025) 30	
2.3. İzmir Operation Targeting University Students: Criminalizing Social Bonds (June 2025).....	31
2.4. Edirne Operation Targeting University Students: 12 Student Deatined (December 2, 2025).....	35
2.5. The "Student Restructuring" Paradigm and Its Impact on Vulnerable Youth.	35

2.6. UN Mandates of UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups on the “student restructuring” Operations (Ref.: AL TUR 9/2025- 8 October 2025)	36
3. Turkey’s Continued Use of Vague Evidence in Gülen Investigations Defies ECtHR’s <i>Yalçinkaya, Demirhan, Karşlı, Seyhan and Bozyokuş</i> Rulings	44
3.1. Is the ECtHR Grand Chamber’s <i>Yalçinkaya</i> judgment taken into account by the Turkish judiciary?	45
3.2. Communication Letters Issued by Stichting Justice Square with under Rule 9(2) of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers	47
3.3. Continued 2025 Crackdowns Disregarding ECtHR’s <i>Yalçinkaya</i> Ruling.....	48
3.4. Investigation Initiated Nine Years After Death: Lieutenant Murat Ataş.....	59
3.5. Those Left to Die: Prisoners Denied Release Despite Serious Illness	59
II. POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRACKDOWN ON THE OPPOSITION IN TÜRKİYE	66
1. Beşiktaş Mayor Rıza Akpolat detained on January 17, 2025	67
2. Beykoz Mayor Alaattin Köşeler detained on March 3, 2025	67
3. İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, Şişli Mayor Resul Emrah Şahan, and Beylikdüzü Mayor Mehmet Murat Çalık Detained on March 19, 2025	68
3.1. Due Processes in Question: Controversial Investigations Against İmamoğlu	68
3.2. İmamoğlu’s Diploma Revocation and Arrest	70
3.3. İmamoğlu’s Political Espionage Case, July 2025.....	70
3.4. Human Rights Violations Intensify: Crackdown on Protesters Following İmamoğlu’s Arrest.....	71
4. Political Hostages of the State: <i>Kavala, Demirtaş</i> Cases	72
4.1. The Referral of <i>Kavala v. Türkiye</i> (No. 2) to the ECtHR Grand Chamber.....	73
4.2. The ECtHR Judgment in <i>Selahattin Demirtaş v. Türkiye</i> (No. 4): A Landmark Case on Political Repression and Human Rights.....	73
4.3. The Systemic Use of “Ulterior Motives” in Judicial Detention: <i>Tuğluk v. Türkiye</i> 74	
III. A NATION IN FEAR	75
1. Systemic Marginalization and Criminalization of the Member of Gülen Movement or KHK-Dismissed Individuals	76
2. The Utilization of the Judiciary as an Instrument of Oppression:	79
“The Turkish judiciary is a relentless repression machinery.”- Nacho Sánchez Amor, Permanent Rapporteur for Türkiye, European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET),	79

3. The Complete Silencing of Free Media: The Erosion of Journalistic Voices in Türkiye	80
3.1. RTÜK's Sanctions on Opposition Media.....	80
4. Systemic Repression: Beyond Social Media	81
IV. COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AND CORE INSIGHTS.....	84
1. Repression Against the Members of the Gülen Movement Intensified with a Lower Evidentiary Threshold.....	85
2. New Targets of Gülen-Linked Crackdowns: Children of the Member of Gülen Movement	86
3. Erosion of Democracy and Judiciary as a Weapon	88
4. Medical Neglect and Political Persecution in Turkish Prisons	89
5. The Impossibility of Normalization: Institutional and Strategic Motivations for Continued Persecution	89
V. CONCLUSION	90

I. INTRODUCTION

Stichting Justice Square respectfully submits this report to draw attention to the alarming and escalating pattern of human rights violations in Türkiye in 2025. The report primarily documents the systematic persecution of individuals associated — or merely perceived to be associated — with the Gülen Movement, alongside recent politically motivated crackdowns targeting opposition politicians, including elected mayors from the Republican People's Party (CHP) and peaceful protesters. For nearly a decade, the Turkish government has pursued a policy of persecution through mass arrests, detentions, and unjust prosecutions of Gülen Movement members, relying on an abusive interpretation and application of anti-terror legislation. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has repeatedly indicated that these actions may constitute crimes against humanity (§785)¹.

1. In our previous reports dated **February 22², June 5³, and June 18⁴ 2024, the Annual Report released in February 2025⁵ and Human Rights Overview: Türkiye, January–July 2025 released in July 2025⁶** we kindly informed the international community and relevant authorities about the widespread and grave human rights violations in Turkey from the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, to the present.
2. We believe that **relevant authorities and international NGOs** are closely following the developments in Türkiye and constantly evaluating the ongoing human rights violations including the persecution of individuals and members of the Gülen Movement. This repression has resulted in what can only be described as the “civil death” of hundreds of thousands of citizens. This phenomenon, characterized by the wholesale exclusion of individuals from civic, economic, educational, and social life, represents a grave affront to the principles enshrined in international human rights law.

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session96/A-HRC-WGAD-2023-3-AEV.pdf>

2 <https://justicesquare.org/indye-yapilan-bildirim/>

3 <https://justicesquare.org/onze-melding-aan-de-ind/>

4 <https://justicesquare.org/new-notification-to-ind/>

5 <https://justicesquare.org/update-ind/>

6 <https://justicesquare.org/human-rights-overview-on-turkiye-january-july-2025/>

3. Despite the international community's concerns and warnings regarding ongoing repression and human rights violations, the Erdoğan government's sustained crackdown on the Gülen Movement — which began with the December 17–25, 2013 corruption investigations and intensified relentlessly after the attempted coup on July 15, 2016 — stems from its perception of the group as a threat that must be entirely eradicated. President Erdoğan reiterated once again in his X (formerly Twitter) post dated July 15, 2025, that the fight against the Gülen Movement will continue with unwavering determination.⁷

1. Working Method

4. The primary objective of this report is to evaluate the policies and practices of the Turkish government and judiciary toward individuals associated with the Gülen Movement, particularly in the context of prosecutions and judicial proceedings, within the framework of universal legal principles. The report examines whether the Turkish judiciary acts in accordance with international legal standards — in particular, the principle of *nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege* (no crime, no punishment without law) enshrined in Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) — or continues to rely on arbitrary and vague accusations, as highlighted by the European Court of Human Rights in its judgments in *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* (2023), *Demirhan and Others v. Türkiye* (2025), *Karlı and Others v. Türkiye* (2025), *Bozyokuş and Others v. Türkiye* (2025) and *Seyhan and Other v. Türkiye* (2025) which emphasized a pattern of systemic violations.
5. The second objective of this report is to highlight the broadening scope of human rights violations in Türkiye, extending beyond the Gülen Movement to other groups, including members of the Republican People's Party (CHP), peaceful protesters, and individuals exercising their right to freedom of speech.
6. This report compiles evidence from a diverse array of sources to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Turkish government's ongoing prosecutions targeting individuals associated or perceived to be associated with the Gülen Movement, as well as other groups including members of the Republican People's Party (CHP), peaceful

⁷ <https://x.com/RT Erdogan/status/1921920800329969978>

protesters, and individuals exercising their right to freedom of speech, in Türkiye in 2025. These sources include open-source information, international human rights reports, authoritative court rulings such as the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, and meticulous investigations into specific operations, such as the Gaziantep (May 2025), İstanbul (June 2025) and the İzmir operations (June 2025).

7. The report's multi-faceted methodology delivers a thorough and impartial analysis of the Turkish government's policies, addressing both legal and humanitarian dimensions. This rigorous approach facilitates a balanced evaluation of systemic human rights abuses, underscoring violations of international legal standards and the profound impact on vulnerable groups, including minors, family members, elected officials, and peaceful protesters.

2. Facts and Figures

8. For over a decade, the Turkish government has followed a well-established policy of systematic, arbitrary, and unlawful practices targeting individuals perceived to be affiliated with the Gülen Movement. Throughout this period, human rights violations have escalated through widespread detentions, mass dismissals carried out under emergency decree-laws (KHK), and an institutionalized regime of repression. In recent years, this wave of persecution has expanded to include vulnerable groups—particularly the children and family members of those previously prosecuted or dismissed—thereby deepening and broadening the scope of the abuses.

According to the latest figures released by the **Anadolu Agency**, the official government press, since the outset of the coup attempt, prosecutors across Türkiye have conducted investigations resulting in the detention of **390,354** individuals over nine years.⁸

9. The extensive figures released by the Anadolu Agency, detailing the detention of **390,354 individuals** since the 2016 coup attempt, alongside Justice Minister Yılmaz

8 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/fetonun-15-temmuzdaki-darbe-girisiminden-bu-yana-113-bin-837-zanli-tutuklandi/3630249>

TUNÇ's statement that **705,172 individuals** have been prosecuted on "FETÖ" charges by July 2024⁹, and the revelation that a total of **2,478,734 individuals** were subjected to investigations for alleged membership in terrorist organizations, primarily the Gülen Movement, labeled as "FETÖ" by the Turkish government between 2015 and 2023¹⁰, collectively illuminate the staggering scale of persecution directed at the Gülen Movement post-15 July.

10. **Minister of Justice Yılmaz Tunç**, marking the **9th anniversary of the 15 July 2016** coup attempt, emphasized Türkiye's judicial response to the Gülen Movement as he highlighted that:

"There are 11,085 convicted or sentenced individuals and 555 detainees in prisons related to FETÖ." He further noted that *"24,000 individuals are currently undergoing trial, while investigations continue for 58,000 suspects, reflecting the ongoing judicial efforts as of July 2025"*¹¹

11. According to the statements of Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç, investigations into **58,000 suspects regarding Gülen Movement affiliations are currently ongoing**, a figure that underscores the extensive scope of judicial scrutiny as of July 2025. Given that terrorism investigations in Türkiye are conducted in secrecy, **the identities of these 58,000 individuals remain undisclosed**, rendering it impossible for any person to ascertain whether they are under investigation until subjected to detention. This opaque and arbitrary process poses a profound and alarming threat to individuals perceived as Gülen Movement members or labeled as such, perpetuating a climate of pervasive fear and uncertainty that severely undermines fundamental rights to due process and legal transparency.

9 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/adalet-bakani-tunc-demokrasiye-mudahale-olmasin-diye-hem-yargimiz-hem-yasamamiz-gerekli-tedbirleri-almaya-devam-ediyor/3273261>

10 <https://www.koprudergisi.com/kopru-hukuk-ve-hurriyet-sayi-163/2465/>

11 <https://www.adalet.gov.tr/adalet-bakani-yilmaz-tunc-fetonun-darbe-girisiminin-9-yilinda-15-temmuz-u-degerlendirdi>

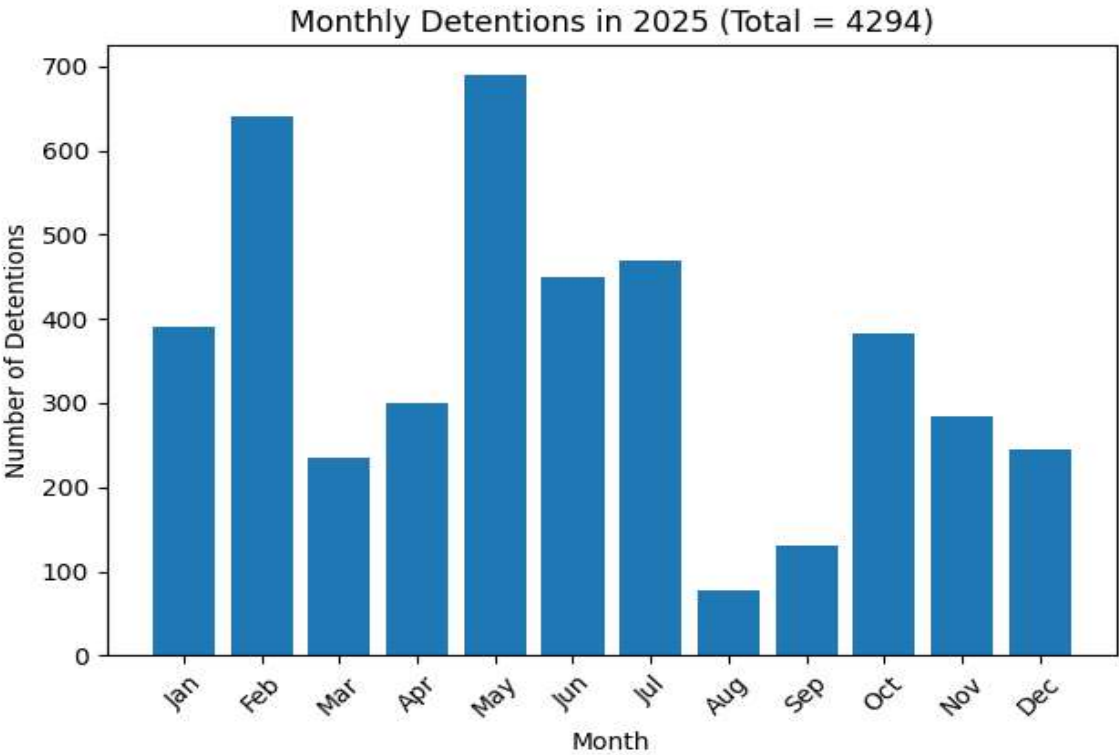
3. Numbers for the Gülen-Related Investigations in 2025

12. The Turkish government and judiciary have perpetuated the persecution of individuals affiliated with the Gülen Movement by maintaining a continuous cycle through so-called "restructuring cases" in 2025.
13. . As **the Minister of Interior** stated on July 14, 2025, **in the first 6 months of 2025 alone**, the operations against the Gülen Movement have led to the **arrest of 910 individuals** and the imposition of judicial control on 1,006 others, **totaling 1,916 individuals affected**.¹² The suspects were sought for offenses such as:
 - *Engaging in the current structure of the FETÖ terrorist organization,*
 - *Maintaining contact with responsible figures via payphones,*
 - *Providing financial support to alleged FETÖ-affiliated aid organizations, and*
 - *Propagating the organization's agenda through social media accounts.*
14. In a subsequent official statement evaluating the performance of his tenure within the current cabinet, covering the period from **4 June 2023 to 21 September 2025**, the Minister of the Interior, Ali Yerlikaya, disclosed **macro-level statistical data** concerning law-enforcement operations conducted against the Gülen Movement. According to the data disclosed, **a total of 11,667 separate operations** were carried out during the tenure in the office, resulting in **the detention of 19,025 individuals** who were subsequently subjected to judicial proceedings.¹³
15. Data aggregated from various open-source platforms—including official disclosures from the Minister of Interior's social media accounts¹⁴, Anadolu Agency reports, and pro-government media publications—indicates that **the number of individuals detained** during specialized operations **reached 4,294 in 2025**.

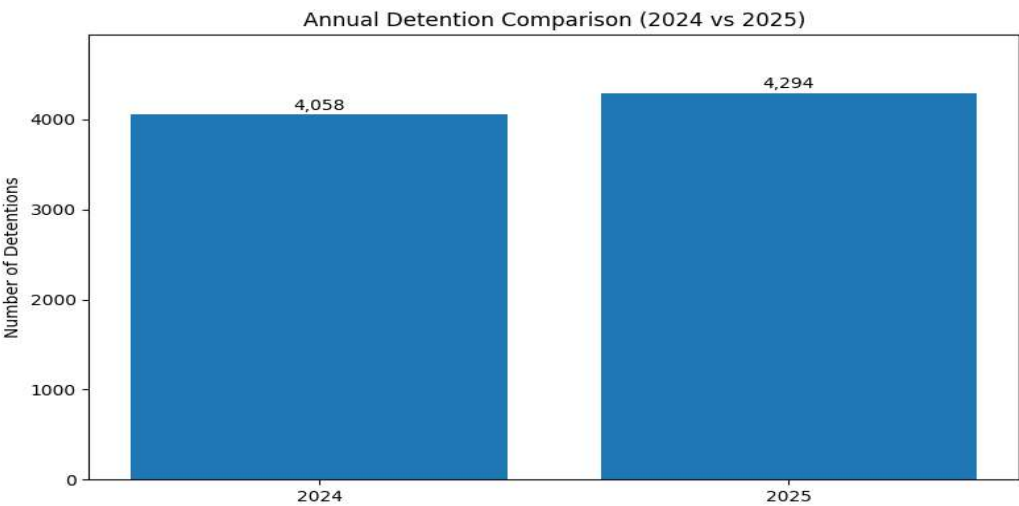
12 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1944631748605657119>

13 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1969680577633698123?s=20>

14 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2002675618840735764>



16. This figure demonstrates that detention has evolved from an isolated measure into a suppression mechanism spanning the entire year, and that there has been no softening in the number of investigations and detentions in the last reporting year. On the contrary, there is an upward trend in the number of investigations and detentions in 2025.



17. Regrettably, the data presented do not capture detentions from unpublicized or lesser-known operations, which remain outside the scope of open-source reporting. Similarly, the figures exclude cases that have not been documented in publicly available sources or that have otherwise escaped public scrutiny, potentially underrepresenting the full extent of the violations. This limitation underscores the clandestine nature of some repressive measures and highlights the need for further investigation to ensure a complete accounting of the systemic human rights abuses perpetrated under the guise of counter-terrorism.
18. For this reason, civil society organizations such as Solidarity with Others, a Brussels-based civil society organization dedicated to defending and promoting human rights in Türkiye, publish annual reports on human rights violations in Türkiye. According to the latest report published by Solidarity with Others, **4,916 people were detained between January 1, 2025, and January 1, 2026.**¹⁵

4. Politically Motivated Crackdowns on Opposition Figures

19. Furthermore, the government has escalated its efforts to undermine democratic institutions by subjecting elected local authorities, notably mayors and municipal officials—predominantly affiliated with opposition parties—to politically motivated investigations, with **more than 500 individuals detained** and questioned since the probe began in October of the previous year.¹⁶ These officials face arbitrary detentions and are frequently replaced by government-appointed trustees, a practice that compromises electoral integrity and local autonomy. This systematic displacement of democratically elected representatives, predicated on vague and unsubstantiated claims, infringes upon the right to political participation and significantly diminishes public confidence in democratic mechanisms. The appointment of trustees, a strategy widely condemned by international entities such as the Council of Europe, serves to disenfranchise local communities and centralize state authority, thereby disregarding fundamental principles of democratic governance.

15 <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/html/2025/en.html>

16 https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-detains-hundreds-erdogan-opponents-pursuit-octopus-corruption-2025-07-10/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

I. RECURRENT PROSECUTIONS, RESTRUCTURING CASES AND RE-IMPRISONMENT: “RESTRUCTURING OPERATIONS” IN 2025

20. Since 2020, Turkish authorities under the Erdoğan government have intensified their persecution of released or suspected members of the Gülen Movement, launching a new wave of sophisticated and systematic **"restructuring"** investigations, which, unlike earlier purges, employ advanced surveillance techniques, harsher prosecutorial tactics, and highly deterrent operations designed to instill fear and prevent societal reintegration among the accused.
21. This approach fundamentally undermines core legal principles such as individual criminal responsibility and the prohibition of double jeopardy (*ne bis in idem*). By enabling the criminalization of social and familial associations, it contributes to a broader pattern of systematic persecution—**particularly alarming in light of the increasing targeting of minors and young adults**—and demands urgent international attention and intervention.
22. The sheer volume of these "restructuring" investigations, which continues to escalate at an alarming rate, reflects a deliberate strategy to suppress perceived dissidents by criminalizing past affiliations, revoking basic rights, and ensuring that released individuals remain under relentless legal and social pressure. Numerous cases illustrate that individuals previously prosecuted in connection with the Gülen Movement, often released pending trial, face **renewed investigations under the "restructuring" framework**, while both technical and physical surveillance by law enforcement and intelligence agencies subjects them to ongoing scrutiny, leading to further criminal proceedings. This sustained legal crackdown not only prevents reintegration into society but also **creates a chilling effect**, deterring others from engaging in legitimate activities for fear of arbitrary persecution. The targeting of minors, the disregard for ECtHR rulings, and the use of familial ties as a basis for prosecution underscore the urgent need for international intervention to address these systematic human rights violations and hold Turkish authorities accountable.
23. These aggressive and far-reaching investigations, which lead to repeated waves of arrests, detentions, and convictions, categorize members of the Gülen Movement into **three primary high-risk groups**:

- (1) Individuals who have previously been detained or convicted—many of whom are now being subjected to recurrent re-arrests, re-detentions, and re-convictions for the same or similar acts—exemplify the broader phenomenon of "**civil death**" in Turkey, wherein Gülen-linked individuals are systematically targeted through business raids, employment bans, and relentless legal harassment;
- (2) **Family members of those previously detained or convicted**—such as spouses, children, parents, and siblings—who are being subjected to criminal investigations and prosecutions solely on the basis of familial ties; and
- (3) Individuals who, despite the passage of nearly a decade since 2016—and despite having faced no prior criminal or administrative investigation, including those who continued to work in public institutions without sanction—**are now being arrested and detained for the first time on the basis of the same allegations identified as systemic violations by the European Court of Human Rights in *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye***, demonstrating that the mere absence of prior proceedings offers no safeguard against future prosecution and that such actions are driven not by newly discovered criminal conduct, but by a presumed and enduring affiliation.

1. "Civil Death" in Turkey: Gülen-Linked Individuals Targeted Through Business Raids and Employment Bans

24. As clearly demonstrated in the news article below published by the state-run Anadolu Agency (AA) on April 11, 2025, the Erdoğan regime's systematic persecution of individuals previously accused of affiliation with the Gülen Movement has reached its peak with the application of Code 37; lawful activities such as establishing companies or working together have been treated by judicial authorities as evidence of terrorist organization membership, and merely having a Social Security Institution (SGK) registration for individuals who have previously undergone judicial proceedings, been dismissed from public service, or imprisoned due to alleged links to FETÖ is considered sufficient grounds to initiate a terrorism investigation.

"36 people were detained in a FETÖ-related operation based in Istanbul.

Acting in coordination with the Counterterrorism Branch Directorate and the Intelligence Branch Directorate, and within the scope of efforts to uncover the current/restructuring activities of the FETÖ/PDY armed terrorist organization, it was determined that a company operating in Istanbul had SGK (social security) registrations for individuals who had judicial proceedings, dismissal records, and prison records related to FETÖ.

Upon an assessment that the company in question might be under the control of the terrorist organization, an investigation launched by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office examined technical and physical surveillance data, MASAK reports, HTS (call detail) records, and cell-site correlations.”¹⁷

25. As evidenced, individuals previously dismissed, detained, or convicted on allegations of involvement with the Gülen Movement are being repeatedly targeted, arrested, and reconvicted under the pretext of "restructuring" for actions that do not constitute crimes under the law, such as providing humanitarian financial assistance or working together, reflecting a pattern of systemic persecution.
26. The news article published by Anadolu Agency (AA), the official state-run news outlet of Turkey, on April 11, 2025 above, clearly demonstrates on what grounds the so-called “restructuring operations” against members of the Gülen Movement can be carried out. It reveals that these individuals are subjected to constant technical and physical surveillance, and that the mere presence of social security (SGK) records of individuals—who had previously faced judicial proceedings, been dismissed from public service, or served prison time due to alleged links with FETÖ—at a company operating in Istanbul is considered sufficient to launch a terrorism investigation. It also shows that both these individuals and those who employ them are detained under the pretext of “restructuring,” and that during home searches, even their money and investment gold were confiscated despite the absence of any evidence indicating a direct link to criminal activity.
27. First, the concept of "**civil death**" targets individuals who, having served sentences or with cases still pending, attempt to rebuild their lives through lawful means, such as establishing new businesses, working for companies run by former Gülen-linked

17 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-feto-operasyonunda-36-zanli-yakalandi/3534747>

individuals, or being employed by neutral employers who disregard **the SGK Code 37**¹⁸, a marker that effectively functions as an indefinite professional blacklist used to flag Gülen-associated workers; however, authorities conduct raids on these businesses, detain employees and employers, and appoint trustees, effectively stripping these individuals of their right to work and perpetuating their social exclusion.

28. **The presence of Code 37**, as a designations in official databases, perpetuates societal bias by implicitly branding individuals as "terrorists", irrespective of the absence of any judicial conviction or legal finding against them. This classification not only hinders employment prospects but also subjects private employers to state-imposed pressures, including intimidation, municipal police inspections, and tax audits, if they choose to hire individuals blacklisted under these codes. In many instances, employers receive informal warnings—often conveyed by undercover police officers—advising them against hiring dismissed individuals. Should they persist in providing employment, they risk criminal prosecution for aiding and abetting an armed terrorist organization, a charge that carries severe legal consequences.
29. For example, **Burhan Çelebi, a teacher dismissed by a Statutory Decree (KHK)**, was subjected to further injustice when **his employment as a school bus driver was terminated** after the Manavgat District Governorship and the Directorate of National Education discovered **his SGK 37 record**. In particular, Member of Parliament Dr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu condemned the incident in unequivocal terms, likening the treatment of Çelebi to Nazi practices and emphasizing that such actions exemplify the erosion of the rule of law and the escalation of authoritarian tendencies within Türkiye.¹⁹ This case illustrates how hundreds of thousands of individuals have been

18 Even individuals who were dismissed from their positions by emergency decrees (KHKs) but were never subjected to criminal investigation, were acquitted, or have already served their sentences continue to face systemic discrimination. This is primarily due to their registration under **Code/37** in their social security records, a designation that effectively functions as **an indefinite professional blacklist**.

While the emergency decrees explicitly prohibit those dismissed from holding public sector positions, either directly or indirectly, their employability in the private sector is also severely restricted. Employers in the private sector frequently hesitate to hire dismissed individuals due to concerns about potential government scrutiny, reputational damage, or operational difficulties. This is facilitated by the storage of dismissal records within the Social Security Institution (Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu – SGK) database and the national e-Devlet information system, which prospective employers can access.

19 <https://x.com/gergerliogluof/status/1915443115529273371>

subjected to extrajudicial dismissals, rights violations, and the denial of fundamental freedoms.

1.1. February 21, 2025: First Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees (Maydanoz Döner)

30. On February 21, 2025, Turkish authorities conducted a significant wave of detentions as part of the "**Maydanoz Döner**" investigation, initiated by the Antalya Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, marking the **40th operation in the ongoing "Kıskaç" series** targeting alleged Gülen Movement members.²⁰ During this nationwide operation, **372 individuals**, including former civil servants, were detained in coordinated police raids.²¹ According to the pro-government newspaper *Sabah*, **197 of the detainees had previously been prosecuted and convicted for alleged links to the Gülen Movement.**²² Turkey's Minister of Interior, via his personal Twitter account, described the operation as targeting the ongoing restructuring of the Gülen Movement and its alleged financial networks. He specifically accused the Maydanoz Döner restaurant chain of providing employment and financial support to individuals under investigation for their alleged ties to the Movement. He emphasized, as usual, that the struggle against the Gülen Movement would continue with unwavering determination.²³

1.2. April 11, 2025: 36 Individuals were Detained on Charges Related to Providing Employment Opportunities to Gülen-Linked Employees

31. In another crackdown across 4 provinces centered in Istanbul, authorities detained **36 individuals on charges related to providing employment opportunities and facilitating social security payments for those dismissed by decree-laws (KHK).**²⁴ Consequently, **20 of those detained have been arrested.** This exemplifies the broader

20 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1892858456220324137>

21 <https://en.haberler.com/in-the-maydanoz-doner-operation-126-people-who-18406924/>

22 <https://www.sabah.com.tr/galeri/gundem/son-dakika-doner-zinciri-degil-fetonun-hucre-evi-maydanozun-her-yani-hainlerle-dolu-polis-hakim-muhasebeci/3>

23 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1892858456220324137>

24 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-feto-operasyonunda-36-zanli-yakalandi/3534747>

strategy to undermine the very possibility of subsistence, perpetuating a state of civil death where individuals are rendered invisible and marginalized within society, stripped of their rights to earn a livelihood.

1.3. May 12, 2025: 10 Individuals Detained

32. In an operation targeting the Gülen Movement across five provinces, centered in Mersin, 10 individuals were detained by the Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office for allegedly providing financial assistance to those previously subjected to judicial proceedings and labeled as Gülen Movement affiliates.²⁵

1.4. May 26, 2025: Crackdown on Dessert Restaurant Chain Employees

33. Turkish authorities detained **33 individuals** associated with **Antiochia Künefe**, a prominent İzmir-based dessert restaurant chain, **on May 26, 2025**, alleging that the business funneled financial resources to the Gülen Movement.²⁶ The İzmir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, in collaboration with Turkey's Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), orchestrated the operation, confiscating the chain's assets and appointing trustees to oversee its operations, a strategy emblematic of the government's approach to dismantling so-called Gülen-linked enterprises. Absent credible evidence, authorities asserted that the dessert chain's activities supported movement affiliates financially.

1.5. May 27, 2025: Second Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees

(Maydonoz Döner)

34. On May 27, 2025, as part of an investigation into the alleged reorganization of the Gülen Movement, **24 individuals** were detained in Samsun on charges of "membership in a terrorist organization" and "financing terrorism."²⁷ These individuals included former public officials who had previously been dismissed from

25 <https://turkishminute.com/2025/05/21/turkey-detains-10-more-people-over-alleged-gulen-links/>

26 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/26/turkey-targets-dessert-chain-in-latest-crackdown-on-gulen-movement-33-detained/>

27 <https://stockholmcf.org/23-detained-in-latest-crackdown-on-allegedly-gulen-linked-doner-chains-in-turkey/>

their positions and subjected to legal proceedings due to alleged ties with the Gülen Movement, as well as business owners who had employed them in legally established fast-food restaurants — namely Maydanoz Döner and Kral Döner — operating in Samsun to meet their own and their families' basic needs.

1.6. June 24, 2025: Third Crackdown on Döner Restaurant Chain Employees (Maydanoz Döner)

35. On June 24, 2025, Turkish authorities detained **63 individuals**, mostly former public officials previously sacked and prosecuted for alleged Gülen Movement connections, in coordinated raids across eight cities. They face charges of "membership in a terrorist organization" and "financing terrorism" as part of the third wave of the ongoing Maydanoz Döner operation, linked to restructuring investigations.^{28 29}
36. In a latest development in the widely discussed *Maydanoz Döner* investigation, the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has finalized the indictment in the case concerning allegations of financing an armed terrorist organization. Prosecutors are seeking prison sentences of up to **18.5 years** for **nine suspects**, and the case is scheduled to be heard before the **Ankara 2nd Heavy Penal Court on 21 November**.³⁰
37. Despite the absence of a final and binding judicial decision, the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) has placed the Maydanoz Döner Group up for sale as a commercial and economic entity, setting a reserve price of TRY 2.36 billion and requiring a deposit of TRY 236 million for participation in the tender.³¹ The sale decision, taken while criminal proceedings are still pending and before any court has rendered a definitive judgment, raises serious concerns regarding the presumption of innocence and the principle of legal certainty. The liquidation and transfer of a company's assets prior to the conclusion of judicial review may result in irreversible economic consequences, not only for the accused individuals but also for employees,

28 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/06/24/60-detained-in-latest-operation-targeting-turkish-restaurant-chain-over-alleged-gulen-ties/>

29 <https://en.haberler.com/second-wave-operation-on-maydanoz-doner-18781818/>

30 https://www.son.tv/maydanoz-doner-ankara-iddianamesi-tamamlandi-9-supheli-hakkinda-18-bucuk-yila-kadar-hapis-cezasi-talep-ediliyor/#google_vignette

31 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/tmsf-maydanoz-doner-i-satisa-cikardi-iste-istenen-fiyat,1297805>

franchisees, and third parties. Such measures, implemented before the establishment of criminal liability by a competent court, risk amounting to a de facto sanction imposed in advance of conviction.

1.7. July 15, 2025: 26 individuals were detained on Charges Related to Providing Employment Opportunities to Gülen-Linked Employees

38. The Turkish government has seized control of two prominent İstanbul-based retail entities: **Hakmar**, a widely recognized discount supermarket chain with approximately 800 branches nationwide, and **Tatbak**, a pastry enterprise with around 80 outlets in İstanbul. The management and operational control of these companies have been entrusted to the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF), which has been authorized to oversee their activities under allegations of channeling financial resources to the Gülen Movement. Concurrently, a total of 26 individuals — including Zeki Doruk, the proprietor of both retail chains — were taken into custody as part of a sweeping investigation conducted across nine provinces, underscoring the broad scope and intensity of the judiciary’s ongoing campaign against alleged affiliates of the Gülen Movement.³²

39. These abovementioned operations were ostensibly justified by allegations of providing employment opportunities to individuals dismissed under emergency decree-laws (KHK), a charge that epitomizes the state-sanctioned civil death imposed on perceived Gülen affiliates, raising serious human rights concerns. Despite being excluded from formal employment due to state-imposed restrictions, these individuals have sought to sustain their families through lawful and independent economic activities. However, the Erdoğan regime’s policies not only deny them the right to work but also criminalize their efforts to create livelihoods for others who have similarly been marginalized and stigmatized. This operation underscores the intolerable climate for Gülen Movement affiliates, who are closely monitored and systematically excluded from civic life, even in contexts involving lawful employment. While securing social security coverage is a legitimate means of labor integration, the Istanbul Chief Public

32 <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/mitten-feto-operasyonuhakmar-vetatbaka-kayyum-atandi,hQCCCKQ8ptE-WIEQhliZZXg>

Prosecutor's Office has criminalized these actions, classifying the employment of former civil servants as a "crime" under the pretext of 'restructuring'.

1.8. July 15, 2025: Detention for 422 as a Mark of the 9th Anniversary of July 15 Coup

40. Every July 15, the Erdoğan regime orchestrates mass detentions to maintain relentless pressure on perceived Gülenists, a practice that underscores a deliberate strategy of persecution. This annual ritual, characterized by extensive arrests and judicial overreach, serves as a stark reminder of the regime's intent to eradicate any remnant of the Gülen Movement, fostering a climate of fear and impunity that demands urgent international scrutiny and condemnation, given the systemic violation of human rights and the absence of credible evidence.
41. In sweeping operations spanning 60 provinces, prosecutors have ordered **the detention of 422 individuals, including 78 residing abroad.**
 - İzmir: 371 individuals detained³³
 - İstanbul: 51 individuals detained³⁴
42. The accusations center on the purported channeling of funds to movement followers, disguised as revenues from food sales and aid packages.
43. The latest operations (including the Hakmar/Tatbak operations above) targeting the Gülen Movement was also strategically timed to coincide with the anniversary of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, a deliberate act imbued with symbolic significance. This deliberate timing, coinciding with the **9th anniversary of the 15 July 2016** coup attempt, underscores the Erdoğan regime's intent to demonstrate the enduring nature of its genocidal campaign against the Gülen Movement, reinforcing a message that these operations will persist unabated.

33 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/07/15/turkey-marks-coup-anniversary-with-fresh-raids-targeting-alleged-gulen-followers-businesses/>

34 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-feto-operasyonunda-51-zanli-yakalandi/3630925>

2. Minors Discriminatively Targeted as a Result of Family Relations in Restructuring Cases

44. In recent years, a discernible trend has emerged wherein Turkey's legal framework has been systematically instrumentalized to target not only individuals suspected of affiliation with the Gülen Movement but also those connected to them through familial or social ties, thereby expanding the scope of persecution beyond direct association to encompass broader relational networks. **The Gaziantep Operation**, as examined below, conducted as part of this ongoing campaign, exemplifies **the radical extent of this repressive policy**, which has evolved into a systemic model of oppression that warrants rigorous sociological and psychological scrutiny rather than being confined to the traditional boundaries of criminal law.
45. The newly emergent trend of operations, framed under the so-called **"student restructuring"** paradigm, reveals a troubling dimension in the Turkish authorities' approach, whereby routine activities—**such as maintaining family relations, sharing university accommodations, participating in communal living or even traveling abroad for leisure or educational purposes**—are arbitrarily interpreted as evidence of membership in an armed terrorist organization, targeting students engaged in educational pursuits who face accusations based on daily life behaviors like residing together or maintaining social ties with peers or relatives previously dismissed under emergency decree-laws (KHK).
46. This expansive interpretation of anti-terrorism laws, which conflates everyday social and educational interactions with criminal activity, not only undermines fundamental rights to association and education but also perpetuates **a climate of fear and stigmatization, particularly among university students** whose academic and professional futures are jeopardized by such allegations.
47. As highlighted in **Human Rights Watch's World Report 2024**, schoolchildren were detained despite the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's** recommendation that the Turkish government 'ensure that children under 18 are not detained or prosecuted under anti-terrorism laws'.³⁵ However, a significant portion of

35 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/turkey>

the individuals affected by the so-called "student restructuring" operations consists of adolescents aged 14-17 and young adults aged 18-24. **At the time of the 2016 coup attempt, these individuals were between the ages of 6 and 16** and often had no direct involvement in or awareness of the allegations against the Gülen Movement. Their prosecution is primarily **based on their familial ties** to individuals associated with the movement.

2.1. Gaziantep Crackdown: 320 Detained, Mostly University Students, on May 6, 2025

48. On May 6, 2025, Turkish authorities issued detention warrants for an initial total of **208 individuals across multiple provinces—primarily targeting university students—** and this number **later increased to 320**.³⁶ These detentions stem from an investigation characterized by serious procedural irregularities and a lack of transparency, with the entire process conducted in a highly secretive manner. Authorities imposed strict 24-hour restrictions on access to legal counsel, effectively preventing detainees from consulting with their lawyers, thereby undermining their right to a fair defense.

2.1.1. Baseless Allegations Linking Detainees to Terrorism in Gülen Movement Investigations

49. In the Gaziantep Operation, authorities issued detention warrants for 320 individuals, predominantly university students, based on actions such as traveling abroad, sharing accommodations with peers, or engaging in routine social interactions. Official reports and detainee testimonies reveal that interrogations focused on questions probing personal and lawful behaviors—such as inquiries about passport acquisition, travel purposes, financial transactions for plane tickets, and participation in EU-funded academic programs.

50. The basis for these allegations typically includes non-criminal activities such as:

- International travel,
- Participation in educational programs like Erasmus,
- Use of social media platforms, or

36 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/08/students-questioned-about-lawful-activities-in-gaziantep-investigation-targeting-gulen-followers/>

- Maintaining familial or social connections with individuals previously investigated for Gülen Movement ties.

51. These questions lack any direct link to terrorism or criminal conduct and instead target private life choices, violating the right to privacy under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

2.1.2. A New Level of Persecution: “Indicators of Association”

52. The use of such baseless allegations is emblematic of the Turkish government’s strategy to criminalize ordinary activities under the guise of counter-terrorism. For example, authorities have cited “indicators of association” like **digital communication records**, **shared travel histories**, or **even living arrangements** as evidence of membership in an armed terrorist organization. These indicators, condemned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in its 2023 *Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* ruling, do not constitute substantive proof of criminality and violate the principle of *nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege* (no crime, no punishment without law) under Article 7 of the ECHR.

53. The allegations linking the detainees to terrorism-related activities are baseless and unconnected to criminal conduct. Official reports and the detainees’ testimonies reveal that the questioning involved questions such as:

- *“Why did you take your passport?”*
- *“Why did you go abroad?”*
- *“Is the passport you used to travel abroad yours? Did you travel through legal channels?”*
- *“Do you know the other Turkish citizens you traveled with?”*
- *“Which tour did you go abroad with?”*
- *“Did you know the people in the tour company beforehand?”*
- *“Who bought your plane ticket?”*
- *“To whom does the credit card used for the ticket belong?”*
- *“Why do you stay with the other detainees in the same house?”*

- *"Do you have a Twitter or Instagram account?"*
- *"Why did you participate in EU-funded Erasmus exchange programs?"³⁷*

54. The accusations, however, probe into individuals' private lives without any suspicion of criminal activity, violating the fundamental rights to privacy and due process. Asking whether a passport was obtained legally, recognising a passport control photo, or inquiring about personal relationships and financial details are also clear violations of personal privacy. This approach reflects a broader pattern of systematic persecution by Turkish authorities, who exploit overly broad anti-terrorism laws to target individuals based on perceived affiliations rather than evidence of criminal activity, thereby undermining fundamental principles of justice and human rights.
55. **These students were prosecuted only because their parents were charged with being members of the Gülen Movement under emergency decree-laws (KHK).** They had no credible involvement in or awareness of the coup events. **The criminalization of their routine activities, like studying together, traveling, or keeping social connections, shows a deliberate expansion of persecution.** This targets entire relational networks based solely on their parents' alleged affiliations and violates the principle of individual criminal responsibility. Moreover, the targeting of young individuals, **many of whom were children (aged 8–12) at the time of the 2016 coup attempt**, underscores the absurdity of these allegations.
56. This practice not only perpetuates a climate of fear and stigmatization but also contributes to the phenomenon of "**civil death**," where individuals are systematically excluded from social, economic, and, most importantly, educational spheres. The Gaziantep operation, in this respect, **saw 77 youths** formally arrested, including students preparing for critical university entrance exams and **one individual with a life-threatening heart condition detained** in an inadequate prison environment. These actions exacerbate generational trauma, infringe on educational rights under Article 2 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR, and violate the right to health and life, further highlighting the disproportionate and inhumane nature of the allegations.

37 https://x.com/odakdunyam_/status/1920549429745946647

57. This wave of arrests follows a troubling pattern observed in recent years. Notably, in **May 2024**, several minors aged 13-17 were also detained and prosecuted on similar baseless charges—including banal activities such as going bowling or studying together. This case, widely known as “**the Teenage Girls Case**,” was conducted on the same date last year (May 6, 2024)³⁸ and drew sharp international criticism from UN special rapporteurs and the EU Parliament’s Turkey Rapporteur.³⁹ It exemplified the alarming extent to which ordinary youth activities are criminalized, further illustrating the ongoing erosion of legal and human rights protections in Turkey.

2.1.3. Discriminatory Targeting and Systematic Monitoring

58. Gaziantep Operation has uncovered numerous unlawful practices and human rights violations, highlighting **systematic monitoring and discriminatory targeting** of individuals previously accused in FETÖ-related investigations, as well as their family members. The use of technical surveillance methods facilitated discriminatory practices, particularly through the **screening of all passengers traveling from Turkey to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania**. Children of those previously investigated for FETÖ connections were **uniquely singled out and subjected to invasive questioning regarding their travel intentions, financial arrangements, accommodations, and participation in Erasmus programs**.

2.1.4. Students Accused of Terrorism for Travelling Abroad or Sharing the Same Houses: An Alarming Escalation in Repression

59. These university students have been subjected to discriminatory treatment solely because they are the children of individuals who were previously subjected to judicial and/or administrative measures on allegations related to the Gülen Movement. In

38 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2024/05/15/erdogan-crackdown-donot-spare-minors-teenagers-recount-trauma-of-police-custody/>
<https://boldmedya.com/2024/05/11/nefret-operasyonunda-29-kisi-hapse-gonderildi-parkinson-hastasi-anne-de-tutuklandi/>

See for the update on the Teenage Girls Case:

<https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/06/28/prosecutor-seeks-prison-for-defendants-in-terrorism-trial-of-girls-over-religious-social-activities/?r=7>

39 https://x.com/Ozgurmedya_tr/status/1862168386563654080

Turkey, as in many other countries, it is common for students to share apartments and travel abroad. However, the fact that only these particular students were taken into custody on such grounds clearly reveals that the true motive is to punish the children of those previously investigated under Gülen-related accusations—despite no wrongdoing on the part of the students themselves.

2.1.5. No Access to Legal Assistance

60. Compounding these violations, individuals in detention were denied access to legal assistance, particularly during the critical first 24 hours of interrogation, and were subjected to coercive measures or ill-treatment to extract confessions. These systematic abuses underscore the urgent need to address the deterioration of human rights protections and the erosion of democratic principles under the pretext of counter-terrorism efforts in Turkey.
61. As MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu warned on his social media account, on May 6, 2025, such measures effectively force individuals to give confessions under duress—through pressure, threats, intimidation, and in some cases, torture—highlighting a troubling continuation of practices enabled by the state of emergency (OHAL) decrees and KHK (Decree Laws) that ostensibly serve to justify and facilitate these violations.⁴⁰ These mechanisms ultimately facilitate the production of false evidence and wrongful convictions. Human rights organizations, including our foundation, have extensively documented these alarming practices. However, the widespread reliance on flimsy or nonexistent evidence, coupled with the systematic denial of fair trial guarantees, has become characteristic of Turkey’s post-2016 purge era.

2.1.6. Life-Threatening Arrests

62. Following a four-day detention and interrogation period, **77 youths have been formally arrested** in a manner that raises significant concerns regarding legality and due process, while the remaining individuals have been released under judicial control. **These youths are children of families previously subjected to administrative**

40 <https://x.com/gergerliogluof/status/1920091164469829883>

or judicial actions in “FETÖ-related” investigations, with many of their parents having lost jobs or faced imprisonment following the alleged coup attempt on July 15, 2016. These university students, who were only 8 to 10 years old when their parents were dismissed from their professions and imprisoned, are now being detained and arrested themselves. As a result, both they and their families are being punished twice, which significantly intensifies the severity of the persecution they endure.

63. The university students detained in the Gaziantep Operation faced **severe disruptions to their academic and social lives** due to exclusion from critical university entrance examinations and other educational opportunities. This arbitrary denial of access to essential academic assessments, scheduled within the time they were arrested, constitutes a grave violation of their right to education under Article 2 of Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Additionally, the detentions have upended the personal lives of these young individuals, many of whom were preparing for significant life events, such as forthcoming weddings, further exacerbating their social isolation and emotional distress.
64. One of the most striking cases involves **a young female law student** who was formally arrested shortly after being taken into custody. Due to the intense psychological pressure of detention, her mental health deteriorated rapidly, and **within just four days, she attempted suicide four times**. This tragic situation serves as a concrete example of the devastating consequences that can result when a young woman’s academic aspirations, social environment, and personal freedom are abruptly and unjustly stripped away without any legal basis.
65. Like the other detained students, this individual was targeted without any reasonable or concrete evidence of criminal conduct. Instead, she was subjected to investigation solely due to familial ties with individuals associated with the Gülen Movement and entirely lawful activities such as international travel. In particular, **a summer trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2023** became the focal point of the investigation. During her interrogation, she was asked detailed questions regarding the purpose of her visit, her accommodations, and who had covered her travel expenses. Authorities also questioned whether she knew any fellow passengers on her flight who had previously been subjected to FETÖ-related investigations or were family members of such

individuals. Based solely on such relational assumptions—without any substantive evidence of wrongdoing—she was placed under arrest.

66. The intense pressure of detention, compounded by social stigmatization and the loss of her educational prospects, has plunged her into a state of acute despair, highlighting the inhumane impact of these baseless prosecutions. Her repeated suicide attempts underscore the urgent need for mental health support and protection for vulnerable detainees, as well as the broader systemic failure to uphold human dignity and the right to psychological well-being. These actions, rooted in the Turkish authorities' misuse of anti-terrorism laws, not only violate international human rights standards but also perpetuate a cycle of trauma and marginalization for young individuals—particularly those like this female student—who face devastating social and mental consequences in an environment devoid of adequate care or legal recourse.⁴¹
67. In other deeply alarming cases, individuals with serious medical conditions have been subjected to detention in prison environments grossly inadequate for their health needs. One such case involves **a young detainee with a life-threatening cardiac condition**, held in a facility lacking the specialized medical infrastructure required to monitor and treat such a critical illness. The absence of appropriate care places this individual at immediate and heightened risk, amounting to a direct violation of their right to life and health as protected under international human rights law. Another distressing case **concerns a woman who is four months pregnant and suffers from cardiac arrhythmia**. Her continued detention under substandard conditions not only endangers her own physical and mental well-being, but also poses serious risks to the health and development of her unborn child. The psychological stress and inadequate medical support in such facilities exacerbate the already severe consequences of her incarceration.⁴²
68. These cases illustrate a broader and systemic disregard for the fundamental rights of vulnerable individuals in detention, where punitive measures are prioritized over basic humanitarian considerations. By confining individuals with urgent medical

41 <https://stockholmcf.org/female-student-arrested-following-mass-crackdown-on-gulen-movement-attempts-suicide/>

42 <https://stockholmcf.org/pregnant-womans-health-rapidly-declines-in-turkish-prison-after-gulen-linked-arrest/>

needs to environments that lack essential healthcare services, Turkish authorities violate their obligations under both domestic and international law. Moreover, this pattern of neglect reflects a deeper erosion of legal principles such as proportionality, non-discrimination, and human dignity—core values enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and other international legal instruments.

69. According to **the first indictment issued by the Gaziantep Chief Public Prosecutor's Office**,⁴³ **the charges**—primarily directed at university students and young adults—are **based on vague, indirect, and arbitrary indicators that fall significantly short of the legal threshold required for terrorism-related offenses** under national penal law and international human rights law. The indictment notably fails to cite a single criminal act that would constitute evidence of membership in an armed terrorist organization.
70. What is particularly alarming is the nature of the activities deemed incriminating. The indictment accuses two female university students—whose parents had previously been subjected to judicial or administrative investigations due to alleged links to the Gülen Movement—of being members of an armed terrorist organization under Article 314/2 of the Turkish Penal Code. The evidence cited includes the fact that they lived together in the same student apartment and traveled together to Bosnia and Herzegovina for a one-week stay. These routine and entirely lawful activities are described in the indictment as inconsistent with the "normal course of life"—specifically because of their familial ties to individuals previously investigated for alleged Gülen affiliation, a subjective and extra-legal rationale for criminalization.
71. This form of prosecution underscores a broader and deeply alarming trend in which Turkey's legal system is increasingly being weaponized not only against individuals who have previously been subjected to investigations related to the Gülen Movement, but also against those who merely share familial or social proximity with them. It marks a shift from the principle of individual criminal responsibility to a logic of "**guilt by association**," reminiscent of—and even surpassing in some respects—the practices of several notorious authoritarian regimes in modern history.⁴⁴

43 Republic of Türkiye, Gaziantep Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, Terrorism Crimes Investigation Bureau, Investigation No: 2025/51824, Case No: 2025/21299, Indictment No: 2025/3678.

44 **The McCarthy era in the United States (1950s):** Professionals were blacklisted not for criminal acts, but merely for associating with suspected communists, attending meetings, or reading certain publications. (See: Schrecker, Ellen. *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*. Princeton University Press, 1998.) **East**

72. The Gaziantep indictment illustrates how **educational endeavors, family solidarity, or even tourism can be interpreted as subversive acts**—mirroring historical practices that have been widely condemned for violating the most basic principles of rule of law and due process.
73. This approach not only undermines the credibility of judicial institutions but also contributes to a chilling climate in which routine aspects of daily life become grounds for suspicion and prosecution. It contradicts both Turkey’s constitutional guarantees and its binding obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

2.2. Another Operation Targeting University Students in İstanbul (May 27, 2025)

74. On 27 May 2025, the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office launched an investigation targeting individuals alleged to be affiliated with the Gülen Movement in the districts of Maltepe, Kartal, Pendik, and Tuzla. As part of the operation, arrest warrants were issued for and 54 of whom— the majority of whom were university students — were taken into custody.⁴⁵
75. The only common characteristic among these students, like the Gaziantep Operation, is that **their family members had previously been subjected to investigations related to the Gülen Movement**. These students were arbitrarily and unlawfully detained under the pretext of being part of the Movement’s so-called “**restructuring efforts**,” simply because they were living together in student housing in an attempt to meet their basic shelter needs.
76. These students were also socially marginalized and stigmatized as terrorists without any concrete evidence, merely due to their family background. Punishing the lawful act of living in shared student accommodation reflects a discriminatory and unjust approach, criminalizing ordinary behavior and denying young people their basic rights.

Germany under the Stasi: Citizens were criminalized for maintaining familial or social relationships with perceived regime opponents. (See: Gieseke, Jens. *The History of the Stasi: East Germany’s Secret Police, 1945-1990*. Berghahn Books, 2014.) **Stalinist USSR:** Entire families and communities were punished for mere associations with “enemies of the state.” (See: Conquest, Robert. *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*. Oxford University Press, 2008.)

45 <https://www.memurlar.net/haber/1136740/istanbul-da-feto-operasyonu-58-supheli-hakkinda-gozalti-karari.html>

2.3. İzmir Operation Targeting University Students: Criminalizing Social Bonds (June 2025)

77. **On June 17, 2025**, the İzmir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office conducted house raids across İzmir, Ankara, Aydın, Balıkesir, Kocaeli, and Denizli. This operation, centered in İzmir, resulted in the detention of **42 individuals, 38 of whom were female university students**. These students, primarily children of families previously prosecuted or dismissed from public service under emergency decree-laws (KHK) for alleged affiliations with the Gülen Movement, faced accusations of participating in the movement's so-called **"student restructuring."** The charges stem from their engagement in routine social interactions, such as sharing living accommodations with peers, **maintaining friendships with classmates similarly stigmatized and marginalized by society**, or conducting innocuous phone conversations.
78. The İzmir Operation's focus on female students underscores a gendered dimension to the persecution, exacerbating the psychological and social toll on an already vulnerable group. These young women, many of whom were children during the 2016 coup attempt, face accusations rooted not in evidence of terrorist activity but in their efforts to maintain normal social bonds with peers who share similar experiences of marginalization. By criminalizing actions such as cohabitating or communicating with classmates, the Turkish authorities have lowered the threshold for terrorism charges to an unprecedented degree, targeting routine behaviors that are fundamental to social and academic life.

2.3.1. Same Invasive Questions in the Context of the İzmir Operation (June 2025)

79. Reflecting the absurd and baseless accusations observed in the Gaziantep operation and the 'Teenage Girls Case,' the interrogation questions in the İzmir operation of June 17, 2025, invasively probed personal and lawful aspects of students' lives, including their living arrangements, utility payments, phone usage, and international travel.
- *How long have you been residing at your current address?*
 - *Do you have any other residences where you stay?*
 - *Who rented the residences you have stayed in?*

- *Between which individuals were the rental agreements made?*
- *Who pays the rent for the residences you live in, and how is it paid?*
- *Who covers the electricity, water, internet, and natural gas bills for these residences?*
- *Provide information about the GSM lines you use.*
- *Have you ever given a GSM line to someone else for their use?*
- *Which internet-based programs do you use?*
- *Do you have a driver's license or passport?*
- *Have you traveled abroad? If so, for what purpose and with whom did you travel?*
- *Do you have social media accounts?*
- ***Are you a member of any political party, association, union, or civil society organization?***
- *Have you ever worked in public or private institutions to date?*

80. Directed primarily at female university students, these inquiries also lack any credible link to criminal conduct. Instead, they reflect a deliberate strategy **to persecute vulnerable individuals based on vague associations, violating the principle of individual criminal responsibility, right to liberty and security, principle of no crime, no punishment without law (Nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege), right to privacy** (Article 5,7,8 of the ECHR) **and education** (Article 2, Protocol 1, ECHR). By targeting everyday behaviors—such as renting a home, paying bills, or maintaining social media accounts—the authorities perpetuate the phenomenon of “civil death,” subjecting these students to relentless surveillance and social stigmatization without evidence of wrongdoing, in clear defiance of the European Court of Human Rights’ 2023 *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* ruling.

2.3.2. **Sueda Güngör, a Young Woman Campaigning for Release of Father Suffering from Alzheimer’s, Arrested in İzmir Operation over Gülen Links**

81. On June 17, 2025, Sueda Güngör, a young woman tirelessly advocating for the release of her **72-year-old father, İbrahim Güngör**, who suffers from advanced Alzheimer’s

disease and remains incarcerated, was also detained in sweeping İzmir operation.⁴⁶ Sueda Güngör's efforts to secure her father's release have been both relentless and deeply personal, driven by the dire circumstances of his imprisonment. İbrahim Güngör, a former director of student affairs at the now-defunct Gediz University in İzmir, was sentenced to over eight years in prison for alleged Gülen Movement activities, including hosting religious gatherings and collecting donations for students. Despite his advanced Alzheimer's disease, which has left him unable to recognize his daughter or perform basic daily tasks, Türkiye's Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) controversially ruled him fit to remain incarcerated, a decision criticized for reflecting political pressure rather than medical objectivity.

82. Sueda has **utilized social media platforms to amplify her father's plight**, sharing poignant updates, including a heartfelt Father's Day post on June 15, 2025, which drew significant attention to his deteriorating condition. Her advocacy gained international traction when the **Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**, a bipartisan body of the **U.S. Congress**, **highlighted İbrahim Güngör's case during a June 11, 2025**, hearing on Türkiye's human rights violations, describing his imprisonment as emblematic of the systemic abuse of political prisoners.⁴⁷ The timing of Sueda's detention, mere days after the Tom Lantos Commission's spotlight on her father's case, strongly suggests an act of retaliation by Turkish authorities. Her arrest, alongside predominantly female students, reflects a disturbing pattern of targeting young women who are already marginalized due to their families' alleged Gülen connections. The accusations against Sueda and her peers—centered on routine social and educational activities—lack any credible evidence of criminality, echoing the absurd and invasive interrogations documented in prior operations, such as the Gaziantep crackdown.
83. Sueda's arrest has sparked widespread outrage, with human rights advocates and online commentators decrying it as a punitive measure aimed at silencing her advocacy. The psychological toll of her detention, coupled with the ongoing trauma of her father's imprisonment, highlights the inhumane impact of Türkiye's anti-Gülen campaign on families. By targeting Sueda for her courageous efforts to seek justice for

46 <https://turkishminute.com/2025/06/21/woman-campaigning-for-release-of-father-suffering-from-alzheimers-among-27-arrested-over-gulen-links/>

47 <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/events/hearings/human-rights-turkey-today-0>

her ailing father, the authorities not only violate her rights to freedom of expression and association but also perpetuate a cycle of persecution that disregards the principles of individual criminal responsibility and human dignity.

84. Despite repeated warnings regarding his rapidly deteriorating health, İbrahim Güngör remained incarcerated. After contracting a serious infection, he was transferred on 25 July 2025 from Menemen R-Type Prison to hospital, where he was treated for approximately twenty days before being returned to prison. Shortly thereafter, on 29 August 2025, the 72-year-old former educator was again admitted to İzmir City Hospital, this time to the intensive care unit, suffering from respiratory failure and high fever. During his nine-day stay in intensive care, his family reportedly received little to no information regarding his condition. İbrahim Güngör died in the early hours of 7 September 2025, at approximately 1:00 a.m., while still under detention. His death triggered widespread public outrage.⁴⁸

2.3.3. Confiscation of University Students' Money and Valuables

85. University students were subjected to early-morning raids carried out by heavily armed law enforcement officers. During these operations, authorities unlawfully confiscated the students' money and personal valuables. These actions have led to deeply tragic consequences.
86. For instance, in the İzmir operation, one student who was detained and subsequently arrested had already endured profound hardship: her mother was imprisoned in a separate facility, and her father—after being released from custody and seeking asylum in a European country—had left money for his daughter to cover not only her own and her younger sibling's educational expenses but also their mother's needs in prison. In addition to seizing this essential money, authorities also confiscated a gold bracelet given to the student by her grandmother as a birthday gift. The family has no other financial resources available to meet their urgent needs.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ <https://solidaritywithothers.com/sick-inmate-who-died-in-prison-ibrahim-gungor/>

⁴⁹ İzmir 7th Peace Criminal Judgeship, Decision No. 2025/1463

2.4. Edirne Operation Targeting University Students: 12 Student Deatined (December 2, 2025)

87. On December 2, 2025, the Edirne Chief Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation aimed at uncovering what it described as the "current student structure" of the Gülen Movement, resulting in coordinated, simultaneous operations carried out across five provinces. According to official statements, the operations were based primarily on communication surveillance and reports prepared by the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK).⁵⁰ As mentioned above, however, framing routine social or educational interactions as indicators of terrorist activity reflects a persistent pattern of criminalization that undermines the principles of legality, proportionality, and individual criminal responsibility.

2.5. The "Student Restructuring" Paradigm and Its Impact on Vulnerable Youth

88. The Turkish government's so-called "student restructuring" paradigm represents a deeply problematic framework that criminalizes lawful and routine activities, such as receiving academic tutoring or associating with peers who are children of individuals subjected to social exclusion and "civil death" due to alleged Gülen Movement affiliations. This paradigm, evident in operations like the Gaziantep crackdown (May–June 2025), İstanbul operation (May 29, 2025), the İzmir operation (June 17, 2025) and Edirne Operation (December 2, 2025) subjects minors and young adults—often high school or university students—to extensive physical surveillance, wiretapping of their communications, and meticulous documentation of their daily activities, as if they were engaged in terrorist activities. Such invasive measures, which include monitoring attendance at educational courses and recording personal interactions, lack any credible link to criminal conduct and contravene the principle of individual criminal responsibility.

89. **The profound human toll of this approach cannot be overstated.** Hundreds of thousands of individuals, particularly young students and their families, live under constant psychological distress, haunted by the ever-present threat of early-morning

50 <https://www.msn.com/tr-tr/haber/turkiye/edirne-merkezli-fet%C3%B6-operasyonu-%C3%B6%C4%9Frenci-yap%C4%B1lanmas%C4%B1nda-12-g%C3%B6zalt%C4%B1/ar-AA1RDuts>

police raids. This pervasive anxiety stems from the Turkish authorities' reliance on overly broad and arbitrary criteria for terrorism-related charges, which do not require evidence of violent acts or other essential elements of terrorism as defined under international law. Instead, **mere familial ties to individuals previously imprisoned or dismissed under emergency decree-laws (KHK) for alleged Gülen Movement connections, or even receiving assistance from such individuals, suffice to trigger accusations of terrorist organization membership.** This guilt-by-association tactic not only violates right to liberty and security (Article 5, ECHR) the principle of no crime, no punishment without law (Article 7, ECHR), right to privacy (Article 8, ECHR) and the right to education (Article 2, Protocol 1, ECHR) but also perpetuates a cycle of social marginalization, forcing young individuals into a state of perpetual fear and exclusion.

2.6. UN Mandates of UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups on the “student restructuring” Operations (Ref.: AL TUR 9/2025- 8 October 2025)⁵¹

90. Against this backdrop, the practices described above raise serious concerns not only under the European Convention on Human Rights but also within the broader framework of international human rights law as monitored by United Nations special procedures. The criminalization of students and young people through the “**student restructuring**” paradigm, the use of intrusive surveillance measures, and the reliance on guilt by association fall squarely within the mandates of several UN human rights mechanisms. These patterns engage issues of arbitrary detention, counter-terrorism abuse, violations of the right to education, privacy, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of religion or belief, and gender-based discrimination. It is therefore significant that these concerns have attracted the attention of *the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education; the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression; the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; the Special*

⁵¹ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30317>

Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy; the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls, culminating in a joint communication addressed to the Turkish authorities (Ref.: AL TUR 9/2025), which reflects the international community's growing alarm at the systemic nature of these violations.

91. The UN Mandates of the Special Rapporteur have expressed grave concern over the systematic and discriminatory targeting of minor children in Türkiye within the context of investigations related to alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement. These practices reveal a clear departure from individualised criminal responsibility and instead reflect a pattern of punitive measures imposed on children solely on the basis of their family relations, particularly the perceived political or organisational affiliations of their parents.
92. According to information received by the UN Special Procedures, **Turkish authorities have increasingly subjected minors to surveillance, investigation, and detention measures that are incompatible with both domestic safeguards and international child protection standards.** Reports indicate that children as young as 12 years old have been subjected to wiretapping, physical monitoring, and intelligence gathering, despite the absence of any allegation of violent conduct or direct involvement in criminal activity. Such measures appear to be triggered exclusively by familial association, constituting a form of collective punishment.

2.6.1. 7 May 2024 raid- *The Teenage Girls Case* ^{52, 53}

(Events preceding the 7 May 2024 raids)

93. On 19 December 2023, the police launched a terrorism investigation targeting 17 individuals – primarily female university students – based on secret information allegedly provided by “reliable sources.” Despite the absence of concrete evidence or specific suspicions, on 18 January 2024 the Criminal Judgeship of Peace authorised wiretapping and physical surveillance of the students, their families, and their homes at the request of the prosecutor's office. On 31 January 2024, invoking “a case where delay is prejudicial,” the prosecutor ordered the wiretapping of a 16-year-old girl on

52 <https://silencedturkey.org/reports/the-teenage-girls-case-a-call-for-justice>

53 <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30317>

allegations of membership in an armed terrorist organisation. The following day, on 1 February 2024, the Criminal Judgeship of Peace authorised her physical surveillance on the same charges. On 25 February 2024, the police sought authorisation to wiretap and physically surveil a 12-year-old girl under similar allegations and circumstances. On 29 April 2024, it was alleged that 117 individuals suspected of “acts of terrorism” had been identified through the surveillance activities, including students’ movements in and out of their residences and their lawful meetings, which were classified as terrorist conduct. On 6 May 2024, the prosecutor ordered the detention of an other 16-year-old girl and the compulsory police summons of 16 children aged between 12 and 17 on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation. On the same day, an order was issued for the detention of 38 individuals, the majority of whom were female university students.

94. On 7 May 2024, acting on instructions from the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, the Istanbul Police Department’s Anti-Smuggling Division launched a coordinated counter-terrorism operation resulting in the detention of 40 individuals – primarily women and university students – and the simultaneous apprehension of 15 minors by the Child Protection Branch. The minors, aged between 13 and 17, were reportedly the children of several adult detainees. Although the operation was officially described as an “information gathering” exercise, the minors were apprehended during pre-dawn raids, removed from their homes, transported in handcuffs, and subjected to forensic medical examinations.
95. While in custody, the children were allegedly registered and treated as criminal suspects. They were verbally threatened and questioned using information derived from technical surveillance. They were denied access to legal counsel and family members throughout the process, with relatives reportedly notified only after the fact and prohibited from delivering food. The minors were allegedly addressed with degrading language and left without food for extended periods. Although social services personnel – who are legally mandated to ensure the protection of minors – were present, they reportedly failed to intervene, and in some instances, they attended multiple interrogations simultaneously, raising serious procedural concerns. The

children were reportedly compelled to sign documents in their capacity as criminal suspects.

96. The adult detainees were kept in custody for four days and experienced similar conditions of detention, including deprivation of food, psychological pressure, physical torture, and restriction of communication with the outside world or other detainees.
97. On 10 May 2024, the prosecutor referred 33 adult detainees to the Criminal Judgeship of Peace with a request for their arrest. Twenty-eight individuals, including university students and relatives of minors, were remanded in custody on terrorism charges including “membership in an armed terrorist organisation”. The charges were based on seemingly ordinary behaviour, such as voluntarily providing English and religious lessons to middle and high school students and organising social activities, all of which were characterised as terror-related activity.
98. Among those arrested, 10 were university students aged between 19 and 25 years, who were in the middle of their exams. Additionally, the mothers and sisters of some of the children, as well as individuals with serious health conditions, were arrested.
99. On 14 May 2024, two detained minors, aged 16 and 17, publicly described the conditions of their arrest and treatment in custody. A criminal complaint was subsequently filed by the mother, Aysu Öztaş Bayram, concerning the alleged torture of her daughters, aged 16 and 17, but as of the date of this communication, no action has been taken by the Public Prosecutor’s Office.
100. On 10 June 2024, the prosecution filed a 529-page indictment which presented no material evidence implicating the accused in violent acts or formal terrorist organisational membership. Instead, the indictment relied on participation in voluntary tutoring and lawful social activities, characterising this as criminal conduct. The lawful activities of legal professionals were also cited as purported evidence of criminal intent.
101. **On 18 September 2025**, the İstanbul 24th High Criminal Court issued its judgment in what has been widely referred to as the “Teenage Girls’ trial.” Nineteen defendants were convicted and 19 acquitted on charges of membership in a terrorist organisation. Reports indicate that the group of approximately 41 defendants included numerous

young women and several high-school-aged girls, prosecuted on the basis of participation in religious study circles, voluntary educational activities, and other routine social conduct. It is alleged that no evidence of violence or incitement was presented at trial, and that the convictions rested instead on lawful association, family background, and religious observance. The outcome illustrates that arrests and indictments based on tenuous associations have now resulted in criminal convictions, with severe consequences for the educational and professional futures of the young women concerned.

2.6.2. 6 May 2025 raid- *Gaziantep Operation*⁵⁴

102. On 6 May 2025, a large-scale coordinated operation was carried out across 47 provinces in Türkiye under the direction of the Gaziantep Chief Prosecutor's Office, with the assistance of the Counter-Terrorism Department (TEM) and the Intelligence Directorate. A total of 208 individuals were taken into custody, many of whom were female university students or minors, often with no previous criminal history. Public announcements by the Minister of Interior framed the operation as a major dismantling of the alleged organisational structure of the Gülen Movement. Official social media communications published photos of handcuffed individuals and declared that the "current 3 structure of the organisation was deciphered", prior to any formal judicial finding of guilt.
103. Although the exact charges remain unclear, the detentions appear to relate to accusations of "membership in a terrorist organisation" under article 314 of the Turkish Penal Code. Individuals were reportedly interrogated for engaging in entirely lawful conduct, such as applying for passports and travelling abroad for tourism or study (including participation in Erasmus programmes), transferring money to roommates to cover rent, using secure messaging applications such as Signal or Jitsi, or having a family member previously dismissed by decree or convicted after the 2016 coup attempt.
104. The investigation reportedly relies heavily on the testimony of a single anonymous witness and the contents of a USB drive purportedly containing audio and written

54 <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30317>

materials concerning travel, housing or student life abroad. There is no evidence that the contents of the USB directly implicate the individuals detained, nor has any information been provided regarding the chain of custody or authenticity of this material. Nevertheless, these materials were reportedly used as the primary justification for arrest warrants and home raids.

105. Numerous procedural irregularities were reported during the initial detention phase. Detainees were denied access to legal counsel for the first 24 hours. Families were either not informed of the detainees' whereabouts or were misled about their location. Lawyers were reportedly expelled from police stations or prevented from meeting their clients. In some cases, defence counsel were forced to sign pre-prepared minutes, and detainees were pressured to sign statements in the absence of any legal representation. Case files were restcited under article 153/2 of the Criminal Procedure Code, preventing timely access to evidence and hindering the right to an effective defence. Detainees were brought before the Gaziantep 5th Criminal Judgeship of Peace and placed in pre-trial detention based on formulaic reasoning lacking any individualised assessment.

2.6.3. Serious Procedural Deficiencies During the Detention and Interrogation of Minors

106. Furthermore, the UN Mandates of the Special Rapporteur documented serious procedural deficiencies during the detention and interrogation of minors. Children were reportedly questioned without the presence of legal counsel, parents, or guardians, exposed to degrading and intimidating language, and compelled to sign statements without adequate understanding of their legal implications. Such conduct raises serious concerns under Articles 37 and 40 of the CRC, which require that deprivation of liberty be used only as a measure of last resort and that children be afforded heightened procedural safeguards.
107. Taken together, these practices demonstrate an institutionalised pattern of discrimination against minors rooted in presumed family affiliation rather than individual conduct. The UN Special Procedures emphasise that the instrumentalisation of counter-terrorism frameworks to target children not only undermines the rule of law but also constitutes a profound violation of Türkiye's obligations under international

human rights and child protection law. These violations form part of a broader restructuring strategy in which family relations are used as a basis for criminal suspicion, eroding the foundational principles of legality, proportionality, and individual criminal responsibility.

2.6.4. The case of Ms. Elif Değirmenci⁵⁵

108. The UN Mandates of the Special Rapporteurs have also expressed grave concern regarding the first indictment issued in connection with the Gaziantep Operation, particularly as illustrated by the case of Ms. Elif Değirmenci. According to the Mandate, during her detention, Ms. Değirmenci was reportedly subjected to verbal harassment, coercive questioning, and denied timely access to legal counsel or hygienic facilities. In detention in both Ankara and Gaziantep, she was reportedly kept in an overcrowded and a cell which mixed male and female 5 prisoners. Her interrogation was conducted without legal representation, under the designation of a “preliminary interview”, and documented as an “information note.” When she requested a lawyer, she was reportedly shouted at, insulted and threatened with life imprisonment. She reportedly **endured humiliating strip searches**. At her detention hearing on 7 May 2025, Ms. Değirmenci denied all allegations, **explaining that her international travel was for academic purposes** and that her use of messaging applications or shared student housing bore no relation to ideological activity. She cited her clean criminal record, mental health conditions, and imminent graduation as grounds for release. Despite this, she was placed in pretrial detention based on standardised reasoning citing the severity of the offence and risk of absconding, with no reference to her individual circumstances. Her current detention – far from her family, under conditions more restrictive than national policy permits – has had serious implications for her psychological health, access to education, and basic human dignity.
109. On 26 June 2025, the Terrorism Crimes Investigation Bureau of the Gaziantep Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office filed **an indictment against Ms. Değirmenci** under article 314/2 of the Turkish Penal Code (membership in an armed terrorist organization). It is alleged that the charges brought against Ms. Değirmenci are based on lawful activities

⁵⁵ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=30317>

and a presumed association or perceived affiliation with the Gülen Movement. The indictment states that:

*"It was determined that the individuals named Elif Değirmenci, (...) continued their university education in Ankara, and that **there was no personal connection between them (such as hometown, address, kinship, etc.).** Despite this, it was reported by affiliated institutions that they resided together at the address (...). Additionally, **since the parents of these individuals had judicial records as part of investigations into the FETÖ/PDY terrorist organization, their cohabitation at the same address despite being enrolled at different universities and having different enrollment dates, along with the fact that they had records of departing abroad (to Bosnia and Herzegovina) on the same flight,** and that audio files referenced in the case included conversations stating that overseas training camps were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Georgia, and North Macedonia, **all suggest that their coming together is not consistent with the ordinary course of life.** It was therefore assessed that they participated in an OVERSEAS TRAINING 6 CAMP allegedly organized by the organization and were carrying out activities within the FETÖ/PDY terrorist organization."*

110. While Ms. Değirmenci has been released, 25 of the 30 students arrested in the same Gaziantep-based operation are said to remain in pretrial detention, facing similarly vague and unsubstantiated charges. It is alleged that the case of Ms. Değirmenci may not be isolated but indicates a broader pattern of repression reportedly targeting youth and women, including female university students, pregnant women, and mothers of young children. These individuals are allegedly being subjected to arbitrary detention across various regions of Türkiye under charges that appear to be politically motivated and not only on alleged links to the Gülen Movement but on family ties.

3. Turkey's Continued Use of Vague Evidence in Gülen Investigations Defies ECtHR's *Yalçinkaya, Demirhan, Karşlı, Seyhan and Bozyokuş* Rulings

111. Following the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, multitudes of applications were lodged with the ECtHR by individuals claiming to be the victims of the violations of their rights throughout the investigations and criminal proceedings launched against them. And to this date, the ECtHR has held that a total of **6,915 individuals**, including **1,225 judges and prosecutors, were unlawfully detained**.⁵⁶ In addition, the number of cases currently pending before the ECtHR is **60,250** according to the latest statistics. Of this number, **35.2%**, or **21,200**, are from Türkiye alone.⁵⁷ *Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* case (App. No: 15669/20), in which the ECHR seized the opportunity to rule over the merits of the case under Article 7, 6, and 11, was announced on September 26, 2023.⁵⁸
112. On July 22, 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered another judgment in ***Demirhan and Others v. Türkiye***⁵⁹, addressing the **convictions of 239 Turkish nationals** for alleged membership in the Gülen movement, primarily based on their alleged use of the encrypted messaging application ByLock. Building on the landmark *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* [Grand Chamber] ruling of 2023, *Demirhan* judgment reaffirms violations of Articles 7 (no punishment without law) and 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ruling exposes systemic judicial deficiencies in Türkiye's handling of Gülen movement-related prosecutions, highlighting the misuse of judicial processes to criminalize a group of people.⁶⁰
113. Furthermore, on 16 December 2025, ECtHR issued Committee judgments in the cases of *Bozyokuş and Others*⁶¹, *Karşlı and Others*⁶², and *Seyhan and Others v. Türkiye*⁶³, collectively covering **2,420 applications**. The Court unanimously found violations of

56 <https://x.com/ufukyesil01/status/2014697397977313347?s=20>

57 <https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/stats-pending-month-2025-bil>
<https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr/annual-report-2024-eng>

58 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-227636>

59 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-244217%22%7D>

60 <https://strasbourgobservers.com/2025/10/21/the-ecthrs-demirhan-judgment-the-issue-of-systemic-judicial-problems-in-turkey/>

61 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001%E2%80%939357429%22%7D>

62 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-247550%22%7D>

63 <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-247548%22%7D>

Article 7 (no punishment without law) and/or Article 6 §1 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

114. Relying in its earlier rulings in *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Grand Chamber) and *Demirhan and Others v. Türkiye*, the Court reaffirmed that the categorical and automatic treatment of ByLock use by Turkish courts—treating mere use of the encrypted messaging application as sufficient proof of terrorist organization membership—violates the Convention.⁶⁴

3.1. Is the ECtHR Grand Chamber's *Yalçinkaya* judgment taken into account by the Turkish judiciary?

115. In the *Yalçinkaya* and the abovementioned following judgments, the European Court of Human Rights established the following criteria in relation to the alleged use of Bylock and stated that decisions made without any of them would violate the right to a fair trial under Article 6 of the Convention and the principle of legality in crime and punishment under Article 7 of the Convention.

116. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has ruled that the use of ByLock evidence in Turkey constitutes a systematic violation of human rights, requiring Turkish authorities to make necessary adjustments and ensure courts comply with the judgment. The Court's key rulings include:

- *The ECtHR identified the treatment of ByLock as automatic evidence of guilt as a systematic violation, mandating Turkish authorities to align their practices with the judgment's criteria and ensure courts adhere to its findings. (Systematic Violation and Compliance)*
- *Considering the mere download of ByLock as direct evidence of guilt deprives individuals of their defense rights and ignores the moral element of the crime, which requires conscious and voluntary participation. (ByLock as Direct Evidence)*
- *Turkey must stop treating ByLock use as automatic proof of guilt. The moral element must be clearly proven, and punishing someone solely for downloading or using ByLock without evidence of awareness and intent violates the principle of no punishment without law. (Cessation of Automatic Guilt Assumption)*

⁶⁴ <https://silencedturkey.org/press-release/the-european-court-of-human-rights-december-16-2025-judgments-on-turkiye>

- *The failure to provide raw ByLock data for judicial review and to allow defendants to examine, challenge, or request independent expert examination of the evidence violates the right to a fair trial. (Right to a Fair Trial and Access to Evidence)*
- *Deciding on the legality of ByLock data use in criminal proceedings without adequate examination and justification breaches fair trial rights. (Inadequate Scrutiny of ByLock Data)*
- *Turkish courts' failure to address objections to ByLock data reliability—such as inconsistencies in user lists, prosecution discrepancies, and download uncertainties—violates the right to a fair trial. (Ignoring Reliability Objections)*

117. Although more than two years have passed since the European Court of Human Rights' ruling in Mr *Yalçınkaya*'s case, and despite the subsequent reiterative judgments in the cases of *Bozyokuş*, *Karşlı*, and *Seyhan* (collectively covering 2,420 applications) delivered by the end of 2025, **neither the Constitutional Court nor the Court of Cassation, nor the High Criminal Courts, have issued a single decision demonstrating that they have taken into account or implemented the principles set out in the *Yalçınkaya* judgment.**

118. Unfortunately, after the *Yalçınkaya* and reiterative judgments, the Constitutional Court has not ruled on individual applications involving the ByLock allegation. While the Constitutional Court should have ruled immediately after the *Yalçınkaya* judgment on the applications before it that involve systematic violations, taking into account the ECtHR's finding of violation in the *Yalçınkaya* judgment, it is delaying its decision in this regard, thus preventing and delaying those whose rights have been violated from applying to the ECtHR.

119. The Court of Cassation similarly continues to ignore the points emphasized by the ECtHR in the *Yalçınkaya* judgment. The reversal decisions issued by the Court of Cassation also do not meet the points emphasized by the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR in the *Yalçınkaya* judgment. For example, so far, no overturning decision has been made on the grounds that the raw ByLock data should be brought by the court and the applicant party (the defendant) should be given the opportunity to at least inspect the parts related to him, to have an independent expert examination and to be able to

oppose it. Again, no reversal decision was made on the grounds that it was not justified by discussing whether the moral element of the crime was realized or not.

120. Unfortunately, the local High Criminal Courts continue to ignore the ECtHR's Yalçinkaya judgment. In fact, Kayseri 2nd High Criminal Court, in the retrial following the violation decision of the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR, did not take into account the ECtHR's decision by giving its previous decision.

3.2. Communication Letters Issued by Stichting Justice Square with under Rule 9(2) of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers

121. Following the announcement of the *Yalçinkaya* judgment, local courts in Türkiye have systematically failed to implement its findings, leading to ongoing violations of fundamental rights. In response, our foundation has submitted multiple applications to the Committee of Ministers under **Article 9(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**, highlighting the persistent non-compliance and urging supervisory measures.⁶⁵

122. In the latest Communication Letter issued by our foundation under Rule 9(2) of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers concerning the execution of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application no. 15669/20), it is evident that the Turkish Government has not taken any

65 -1483rd meeting (December 2023) (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from an NGO ('Stichting Justice Square') (02/11/2023) in the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [anglais uniquement] [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD\(2023\)1389E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD(2023)1389E)
 1492nd meeting (March 2024) (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from an NGO (Stichting Justice Square) (13/02/2024) concerning the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [anglais uniquement] [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD\(2024\)217E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD(2024)217E)
 -1507th meeting (September 2024) (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from NGOs (Justice Square Foundation, Italian Federation for Human Rights, Statewatch, Cross Border Jurists Association, The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, Solidarity with OTHERS) (09/07/2024) concerning the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD\(2024\)832E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD(2024)832E)
 -1514th meeting (December 2024) (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from NGOs (Justice Square Foundation, Italian Federation for Human Rights, Cross Border Jurists Association, The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, Solidarity with OTHERS) (13/09/2024) concerning the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD\(2024\)1075E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD(2024)1075E)
 -1521st meeting (March 2025) (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from NGOs (Justice Square Foundation, Italian Federation for Human Rights, Cross Border Jurists Association, The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, Solidarity with OTHERS, Human Rights Solidarity, Human Rights Defenders) (16/12/2024) in the case of *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD\(2025\)12E](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG?i=DH-DD(2025)12E)

legislative steps to align judicial practices with the Yüksel Yalçınkaya judgment. Contrary to the Government's assertions, **there has been no change in the jurisprudence or judicial practice to meet the requirements of the Yüksel Yalçınkaya judgment.**

123. Thus, our foundation has reported numerous domestic court decisions, in the communication letter, to the **Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe** as part of its application regarding the failure to implement the *Yalçınkaya* judgment. These decisions demonstrate that Turkish courts continue to treat ByLock usage as the primary and decisive evidence for terrorism-related convictions, disregarding the European Court of Human Rights' binding ruling. The submission to the Committee of Ministers highlights this systematic non-compliance and urges appropriate measures to ensure adherence to the European Convention on Human Rights.⁶⁶

124. As detailed extensively in our report, investigations and detentions targeting the Gülen Movement have intensified and increased in 2025. Unfortunately, not only have the requirements of the *Yalçınkaya* judgment not been fulfilled, but new investigations and prosecutions are being carried out in the same manner as before, disregarding the violations identified in the ruling.

3.3. Continued 2025 Crackdowns Disregarding ECtHR's *Yalçınkaya* Ruling

125. Investigations and detentions targeting the Gülen Movement, as detailed in our previous reports⁶⁷, have intensified in 2025. However, Turkish authorities persist with similar allegations to justify new probes, showing clear disregard for international legal standards. Despite extensive probes, Turkish authorities have consistently failed to produce concrete evidence of criminal conduct by these individuals, instead relying on vague allegations of "terrorism" based on lawful activities such as **ByLock usage, bank transactions, or social associations**. This approach has been roundly condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in its 2023 *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* and the subsequent

⁶⁶ **1507th meeting (September 2024)** (DH) - Rule 9.2 - Communication from NGOs (Justice Square Foundation, Italian Federation for Human Rights, Cross Border Jurists Association, The Arrested Lawyers Initiative, Solidarity with OTHERS) (09/09/2024) concerning the case of *Yüksel Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* (Application No. 15669/20) [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD\(2024\)1053E%22%5D%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/ENG#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD(2024)1053E%22%5D%7D)

⁶⁷ 2024 Update: Legal and Human Rights Developments for Gülen-Related Cases in Türkiye <https://justicesquare.org/update-ind/> :

reiterative *Bozyokuş v. Türkiye* (2025), *Karşlı v. Türkiye* (2025), and *Seyhan v. Türkiye* (2025) rulings, which criticized the lack of substantive proof in such cases.

3.3.1. Ongoing “Kıskaç” Operations

126. In 2023, Turkish society has been introduced to operations called “Kıskaç”.⁶⁸ These operations, which Interior Minister Ali YERLİKAYA announces almost always through hate speech on his X account, are largely carried out within the framework of “restructuring”, involving large-scale arrests, and most of the detained Gülenists are publicly exposed in the media. The latest of the Kıskaç operations, named “**Kıskaç 40**,” was announced by the Minister on **February 21, 2025**, and it was reported that **353 individuals** were arrested during the operation.⁶⁹ The fact that the **40th Kıskaç operation** was carried out indicates that the operations targeting the Gülen Movement have become so routine that both the national and international communities' attention to the situation has significantly weakened, and these operations have now become normalized.

127. The figures of “Kıskaç” investigations against the members of the Gülen Movement, which were carried out simultaneously in many cities in from January 1 to February 21, 2025 are as follows:

- Kıskaç 32 – **37 individuals detained**, January 7, 2025⁷⁰
- Kıskaç 33 – **63 individuals detained**, January 8, 2025⁷¹
- Kıskaç 34 – **110 individuals detained**, January 14, 2025⁷²
- Kıskaç 35 – **47 individuals detained**, January 18, 2025⁷³
- Kıskaç 36 – **71 individuals detained**, January 24, 2025⁷⁴
- Kıskaç 37 – **93 individuals detained**, February 4, 2025⁷⁵

68 “Kıskaç” (clamp) is the discreditable name which was produced by the Minister of Interior specially for the operations against the member of Gülen Movement.

69 See parag 27 above

70 <https://www.tr724.com/ankarada-nefret-operasyonunda-37-gozalti-suclama-cezaevindeki-khkli-mahpuslara-ve-ailelerine-yardim/>

71 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1876854205648163016>

72 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1879112467084870036>

73 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1880495287132635437>

74 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1882649505402589518>

75 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1886693710122877055>

- Kıskaç 38 – **45 individuals detained**, February 10, 2025⁷⁶
- Kıskaç 39 – **103 individuals detained**, February 15, 2025⁷⁷
- Kıskaç 40 – **353 individuals detained**, February 21, 2025⁷⁸ (see parag. 29 above)

128. Nevertheless, the exact numbers of detained people can still not be revealed in the climate of fear and censorship created by the Erdoğan regime in Türkiye. Besides, **the Turkish Interior Minister**, on his X account, brazenly reiterates the Government's firm position and persisting policy that the members or supporters of the Gülen Movement are the traitors and the most violent terrorists, who should be annihilated:

*"Even after the death of the leader of FETO, there is no room for any slackening in our fight against this treacherous terrorist organization. We will continue to fight until we completely eradicate this treacherous structure that attempted to strike a blow to our national will."*⁷⁹

3.3.2. Continued Nameless Crackdowns: New Targets, Old Tactics

129. Following the release of several international reports exposing the "Kıskaç" operation, the Turkish Minister grew uneasy about the operation's name, which had become associated with unlawful investigations targeting the Gülen Movement, increasingly viewed as part of broader crimes against humanity. These reports criticized the operation's methods and disregard for international legal standards, drawing global attention to its problematic nature. As a result, the minister stopped using the "Kıskaç" name and abandoned the practice of assigning specific titles to subsequent operations against the Gülen Movement. This shift was an attempt to deflect international criticism and scrutiny while continuing the crackdown with a lower profile, maintaining the government's aggressive stance against the group without the controversial branding that highlighted its questionable legality.

130. The figures relating to the "unnamed" investigations conducted against individuals alleged to be affiliated with the Gülen Movement, which were carried out simultaneously in numerous provinces between 19 March and 21 December 2025, are as

76 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1888819544065474597>

77 <https://turkishminute.com/2025/02/15/turkey-detains-103-in-operations-targeting-alleged-gulen-followers1/>

78 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1892858456220324137>

79 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1892858456220324137>

follows. According to official statements, these operations were reportedly initiated on the basis of allegations that the individuals concerned had used the ByLock messaging application, communicated through public payphones (so-called “ankesörlü hat” investigations), engaged in social media activities characterised as FETÖ propaganda, provided financial assistance to alleged members of FETÖ, or resided together in student apartments purportedly linked to the movement. On these grounds, coordinated detention and arrest operations were conducted as detailed below:

- **35 Medical Doctors** detained, February 18⁸⁰ and April 30, 2025⁸¹
- **73 individuals** detained in 27 provinces, March 19–27, 2025⁸²
- **31 individuals** detained in İzmir, April 28, 2025⁸³
- **169 individuals** detained in 42 provinces, April 30, 2025⁸⁴
- **33 individuals** detained in 11 provinces, May 5, 2025⁸⁵
- **101 individuals** detained in 27 provinces, May 16, 2025⁸⁶
- **61 active duty military officers** detained, May 28, 2025⁸⁷
- **56 individuals** detained nationwide, June 17, 2025⁸⁸
- **195 active duty soldiers and police officers** detained in 43 provinces, June 24, 2025⁸⁹
- **20 active duty police officers** detained in İzmir, June 26, 2025⁹⁰
- **14 individuals** detained in 7 provinces, July 15, 2025⁹¹
- **49 individuals** detained in 29 provinces, August 6–16, 2025⁹²

80 <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/17-doktor-fetoden-gozaltinda-4677704>

81 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-feto-operasyonunda-18-doktor-gozaltina-alindi/3552640>

82 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1908144903630078414>

83 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/04/30/over-200-detained-in-nationwide-turkish-operations-targeting-alleged-gulen-supporters/>

84 <https://stockholmcf.org/over-200-detained-in-nationwide-turkish-operations-targeting-alleged-gulen-supporters/>

85 <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/33-suspects-of-fetos-police-set-up-detained>

86 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/16/turkish-police-detain-101-more-people-over-alleged-gulen-links-minister/>

87 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/27/turkey-arrests-61-active-duty-military-officers-over-gulen-links/>

88 <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-261/>

89 <https://www.tr724.com/asker-ve-polislere-nefret-operasyonu-195-gozalti/>

90 <https://aktifhaber.com/genel/tanik-ifadelerinde-adi-gecti-iddiasıyla-20-polise-daha-gozalti.html>

91 <https://www.indyturk.com/node/761869/haber/15-temmuz%E2%80%99un-9-y%C4%B1ld%C3%B6n%C3%BCm%C3%BC%E2%80%99nde-feto-operasyonlar%C4%B1>

92 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1956576340242505851?s=20>

- **29 public service officers** detained, August 25, 2025 ⁹³
- **41 individuals** detained in 21 provinces, August 26–September 4, 2025 ⁹⁴
- **53 individuals** detained in 19 provinces, September 10, 2025 ⁹⁵
- **15 individuals** detained, September 19, 2025 ⁹⁶
- **97 individuals** detained nationwide (39 operations), September 21, 2025 ⁹⁷
- **91 individuals** detained in 30 provinces, October 3, 2025 ⁹⁸
- **62 individuals** detained in 32 provinces, October 19, 2025 ⁹⁹
- **286 individuals** detained in 50 provinces, October 21, 2025 ¹⁰⁰
- **56 individuals** detained in 31 provinces, November 1, 2025 ¹⁰¹
- **178 individuals** detained in 45 provinces, November 7, 2025 ¹⁰²
- **71 individuals** detained in 27 provinces, November 17, 2025 ¹⁰³
- **22 individuals including 8 active duty military officer** detained, November 17, 2025¹⁰⁴
- **92 individuals** detained in 32 provinces, November 29, 2025 ¹⁰⁵
- **121 individuals** detained in 37 provinces, December 2, 2025 ¹⁰⁶
- **21 individuals** detained in 6 provinces, December 2, 2025¹⁰⁷
- **13 individuals** detained in 6 provinces, December 9, 2025¹⁰⁸
- **160 individuals** detained in 39 provinces, December 17, 2025 ¹⁰⁹

93 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/3-bakanlikta-feto-operasyonu-29-gozalti/635436>

94 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1963539997304168568?s=20>

95 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1965634062623646138?s=20>

96 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/fetonun-disisleri-bakanligi-mahrem-yapilanmasina-yonelik-sorusturmada-15-gozalti-karari/3688724>

97 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1969680577633698123?s=20>

98 <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/30-ilde-feto-operasyonlari-91-supheli-yakalandi-64u-tutuklandi-42970127>

99 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1979793291777368199?s=20>

100 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1980500413632725111?s=20>

101 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1984517817748553842?s=20>

102 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1986641920177652183?s=20>

103 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1990319889626579055?s=20>

104 <https://halktv.com.tr/gundem/son-dakika-kara-kuvvetleri-komutanligina-feto-operasyonu-22-gozalti-987000h>

105 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1994664040522465790?s=20>

106 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/1995719416479175087?s=20>

107 <https://haber.mynet.com/son-dakika-3-bakanlik-calisanlarina-feto-operasyonu-9-u-aktif-gorevde-21-gozalti-110107256204>

108 https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/6-ilde-feto-nun-sirketler-yapilanmasina-operasyon-13-gozalti-karari-2459796#google_vignette

109 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2001149069419229502?s=20>

- **76 individuals** detained in 28 provinces, December 21, 2025 ¹¹⁰

131. This **sustained pattern of mass detentions**, often relying on vague or non-specific evidence, underscores a systemic disregard for the standards established by the European Court of Human Rights in cases such as *Yalçınkaya*, *Demirhan*, *Karşlı*, *Seyhan*, and *Bozyokuş*, highlighting the ongoing challenge of aligning domestic practice with international human rights obligations.

3.3.3. Active Professionals Targeted: Misuse of Anti-Terror Legislation in Türkiye's Ongoing Crackdown on the Gülen Movement

132. Despite the almost ten years that have passed since the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the Turkish government and judiciary continue to carry out new operations and dismissals targeting individuals who have never been investigated before and who are still actively serving in their professions. This ongoing practice causes widespread concern and helps sustain a persistent climate of fear throughout the country. In fact, a teacher who had been dismissed from their position solely by an emergency decree (KHK) without undergoing any judicial investigation after the July 15 coup attempt, and who was later reinstated by a decision of the OHAL Commission, was taken into custody and subsequently arrested during an operation centered in Istanbul on July 15, 2025¹¹¹. The teacher was once again dismissed from their profession following the arrest.

3.3.3.1. February 18 and April 30, 2025: 35 Medical Doctors Detained

133. On February 18 and again on April 30, 2025, Turkish authorities conducted two separate but strikingly similar large-scale operations targeting actively practicing medical doctors. The first operation, centered in Istanbul and spanning multiple provinces, resulted in the detention of 17 doctors.¹¹² The second operation, also based in Istanbul and carried out across 10 other provinces, led to the detention of an additional 18 doctors¹¹³, bringing the total number to 35. In both operations, the doctors were detained

110 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2002675618840735764?s=20>

111 Istanbul 10th Criminal Court of Peace, Decision No. 2025/76.

112 <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/17-doktor-fetoden-gozaltinda-4677704>

113 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-feto-operasyonunda-18-doktor-gozaltina-alindi/3552640>

based on the testimony of an informant, on the grounds that they had prepared for the Medical Specialization Examination (TUS) in 2015 at a study center allegedly linked to the Gülen Movement.

134. By criminalizing participation in TUS preparation programs — which are legitimate educational activities essential for medical specialization — authorities are effectively depriving these doctors of both their right to education, protected under Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and their right to work.

3.3.3.2. May 28, 2025: 61 Military Officers Detained

135. On May 28, 2025, a Turkish court in İstanbul ordered the arrest of **61 active-duty military officers**, drawn from the Turkish Armed Forces on charges of alleged affiliations with the Gülen Movement, following their detention in a nationwide operation spanning 36 provinces. These officers, who have remained in continuous service since the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, have not been linked to any criminal activity over the intervening nine years. The accusations rest solely on historical payphone communication records, a form of evidence that lacks substantive reliability and fails to meet international standards for criminal prosecution.¹¹⁴

3.3.3.3. June 24, 2025: 174 active-duty Military Officers and 13 active-duty Police officers detained

136. On June 24, 2025, Turkish authorities conducted a series of unlawful operations in İstanbul and İzmir, resulting in the detention of **195 individuals**, including **174 active-duty soldiers** and **13 active police personnel**, all accused of having ties to the Gülen Movement.¹¹⁵
137. The İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued detention orders for a total of 176 suspects, comprising 174 active-duty soldiers and 2 former students of closed military schools, all allegedly linked to the Gülen Movement, with the operations spanning İstanbul, İzmir, and 41 other provinces across Turkey. The detained soldiers include 16 personnel from the Air Force Command, 86 from the Land Forces Command, and 6 from

114 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/27/turkey-arrests-61-active-duty-military-officers-over-gulen-links/>

115 <https://www.tr724.com/asker-ve-polislere-nefret-operasyonu-195-gozalti/>

the Naval Forces Command, with ranks consisting of **11 colonels, 16 lieutenant colonels, 46 majors, 27 captains, 5 lieutenants**, and 1 non-commissioned officer, as part of a coordinated crackdown targeting individuals accused of affiliations with the Gülen Movement.

138. These claims fuel an ongoing, seemingly **never-ending investigation** characterized by overly broad interpretations of Turkey's anti-terrorism laws, which often lack specificity and rely on vague or circumstantial evidence. The opaque and non-transparent nature of these investigations raises significant concerns about their legitimacy, as they frequently fail to adhere to international legal standards or provide clear, verifiable evidence to support the accusations. Moreover, these operations stigmatize the targeted individuals, particularly military officers, casting a long shadow over their professional reputations and personal lives. With the upcoming Supreme Military Council on the horizon, the timing of these detentions is particularly consequential, as officers implicated in these probes – whether detained, released, or even acquitted – face the risk of expulsion from the armed forces, severely jeopardizing their future career prospects and livelihoods. This pattern of relentless investigations not only undermines due process but also perpetuates a climate of fear and uncertainty within the military, further eroding trust in the judicial and institutional frameworks.

3.3.3.4. June 26, 2025: 14 active-duty police officers detained in İzmir

139. On June 26, 2025, the İzmir Police Department's Organized Crime Branch conducted operations across 13 districts, detaining **14 active-duty police officers**, 4 retired or resigned former police officers, 1 assistant revenue specialist, and 1 civil servant in an investigation based on alleged membership, statements claiming affiliation, sequential call system records, and data analysis reports.¹¹⁶

3.3.3.5. 17 November 2025: Detention Orders Issued for 80 Individuals, Including 23 Active Public Officials

140. In a press statement issued by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on 17 November 2025¹¹⁷, it was announced that, within the scope of an investigation initiated by the Office, detention orders had been issued for 80 individuals on

¹¹⁶ <https://aktifhaber.com/genel/tanik-ifadelerinde-adi-gecti-iddiasıyla-20-polise-daha-gozalti.html>

¹¹⁷ <https://x.com/istanbulCBS/status/1990391024951153058>

allegations of membership in FETÖ. The individuals concerned included 23 active public officials (comprising teachers, research assistants, and doctors), 17 dismissed public officials, and 40 private sector employees. It was further stated that 72 individuals had been apprehended, while 8 others could not be detained as they were determined to be abroad.

3.3.3.6. 2 December 2025: Detention Orders Issued for 21 Individuals, Including 9 Active Public Officials

In an investigation initiated by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on allegations of FETÖ membership, detention orders were issued for 21 individuals, including 9 active public officials employed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, and the Capital Markets Board. The detention orders were reportedly based on allegations that the individuals had communicated through public payphones ("ankesörlü hat" investigations).¹¹⁸

3.3.3.7. January 14, 2026: Tuzla District Director of National Education detained in İstanbul

141. On January 14, 2026, Tuzla District Director of National Education Metin Çangır, who had long served in a senior educational administrative role and was known for his close association with the pro-government union Eğitim-Bir-Sen, was taken into custody as part of an Istanbul-centered operation spanning five provinces and involving 81 suspects.¹¹⁹

142. Notably, following news of his detention, the Ministry of National Education swiftly removed his name from its official website, a reaction that suggests an attempt at reputational damage control rather than adherence to principles of transparency and the presumption of innocence. Although Çangır was ultimately released under judicial control after providing testimony to the prosecutor, the episode underscores how even individuals embedded within state institutions and aligned with government-affiliated

118 <https://haber.mynet.com/son-dakika-3-bakanlik-calisanlarina-feto-operasyonu-9-u-aktif-gorevde-21-gozalti-110107256204>

119 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/siyaset/meb-ismini-hizla-sildi-tuzla-ilce-milli-egitim-muduru-metin-cangir-feto-den-gozaltinda-2470006>

structures are not shielded from sudden criminalization. This practice reinforces concerns that Gülen-related investigations continue to rely on opaque criteria and reflexive administrative measures, thereby undermining legal certainty, due process guarantees, and the integrity of public administration.

3.3.3.8. Early Morning Mass Detentions in February 13, 2026: From Legal Conduct to Terror Accusations

143. According to the press release issued by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on 13 February 2026, an Istanbul-based operation was carried out against alleged FETÖ members; detention orders were issued for **94 tax inspectors employed within the Ministry of Treasury and Finance** on the allegation that they had communicated via the organization's so-called "payphone (ankesörlü telefon) system."
144. This development demonstrates that, despite the passage of nearly ten years since 2016, operations and new detention measures continue, and that not having been subject to investigation for a long period does not constitute any safeguard or presumption in one's favor. Despite the significant lapse of time, contact through payphones—conduct that in itself does not constitute a criminal offence and is entirely lawful—is being characterized as terrorism-related activity; moreover, despite the European Court of Human Rights' findings of systematic violations in similar contexts, individuals can still be taken into custody on this basis. The execution of mass detentions in the very early hours of the morning (05:00 a.m.), resulting in individuals being confronted with terrorism charges, raises serious concerns regarding violations of the right to liberty and security and the presumption of innocence.¹²⁰

3.3.4. Non-Stop Crackdowns Against Gülen Movement in 2026

145. These operations have continued without interruption since the beginning of 2026, with no indication of restraint or policy reconsideration. The Minister of Interior systematically publicizes the operations and detentions through his personal X account using the same exclusionary and hostile rhetoric, routinely announcing that dozens of individuals are taken into custody on a weekly basis. The use of such language by the

120 <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/istanbul-merkezli-11-ildeki-feto-operasyonunda-93-vergi-mufettisi-gozaltina-alindi/3828662>

highest state authority responsible for internal security is fundamentally incompatible with the presumption of innocence and the principle of individual criminal responsibility. Rather, it institutionalizes collective criminalization and stigmatization of persons associated, whether actually or allegedly, with the Gülen Movement.

146. The figures relating to so-called “unnamed” investigations targeting alleged members of the Gülen Movement, conducted simultaneously across multiple cities since January 2026, are as follows:

- **77 individuals detained** in 34 provinces, December 27-January 10, 2026¹²¹
- **10 individuals detained** in Çorum, January 8, 2026¹²²
- **9 students detained** in Burdur, January 12, 2026¹²³
- **81 on-duty public servants detained**, January 12, 2026¹²⁴
- **151 individuals detained** in 46 provinces, January 28, 2026¹²⁵
- **63 individuals detained** in 29 provinces, January 26-February 9, 2026¹²⁶
- **8 individuals detained** in Ankara, February 10, 2026¹²⁷
- **94 active duty tax auditor detained** in 11 province, February 13, 2026¹²⁸

147. **In total, 493 individuals** were detained within a period of approximately **44 days**, through coordinated, multi-province operations. The scale, frequency, and geographic spread of these detentions demonstrate **that there has been no reduction whatsoever in the intensity or scope of the persecution**. Rather, they confirm the continued application of a systematic and punitive enforcement policy, incompatible with the principles of individualized suspicion, proportionality, and legal certainty under international human rights law.

121 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2009876506999468417?s=20>

122 https://www.habercim19.com/3sayfa/corumda-feto-den-10-gozalti/84505#google_vignette

123 <https://x.com/kaanarslanKA/status/2010795023772619004?s=20>

124 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2010588074221166809?s=20>

125 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2016378246175326454?s=20>

126 <https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2020775583026643247?s=20>

127 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/fetonun-tsk-yapilanmasina-operasyon-cok-sayida-gozalti-var-,1298132>

128 <https://www.diken.com.tr/hazine-ve-maliye-bakanligina-feto-operasyonu-93-vergi-mufettisi-gozaltinda/>

3.4. Investigation Initiated Nine Years After Death: Lieutenant Murat Atas

148. Lieutenant Murat Atas, who passed away in 2016, became the subject of a criminal investigation in 2025—approximately nine years after his death—on allegations of membership in FETÖ, initiated by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office. Within the scope of this investigation, travel bans and passport restrictions were imposed not only in relation to the deceased officer but also on his family members.
149. The situation reportedly came to light when Murat Atas’s children applied for passports at the civil registry office. During the application process, they learned that an investigation had been opened in 2025 against their father—who had died in 2016—on allegations of FETÖ membership, and that, on this basis, both they and their deceased father had been subjected to travel bans and passport restrictions.
150. This development illustrates that, despite the passage of many years, criminal proceedings can be initiated even against a deceased individual, with consequential restrictions imposed on surviving family members. Such measures raise serious concerns regarding legal certainty, foreseeability, and the principle of individual criminal responsibility.¹²⁹

3.5. Those Left to Die: Prisoners Denied Release Despite Serious Illness

151. Türkiye’s ongoing crackdown on alleged members of the Gülen Movement has seen a disturbing pattern in which prisoners with severe or terminal illnesses are systematically denied early release or adequate medical care, with political persecution overriding basic medical and humanitarian imperatives. Despite clear evidence of critical health deterioration, individuals remain incarcerated, resulting in unnecessary suffering and, in many cases, death. Several cases illustrate the lethal consequences of this approach, where judicial decisions prioritize punitive measures over human dignity and life. This pattern exposes the broader human rights crisis, demonstrating how the criminal justice system is weaponized against a politically stigmatized group, even at the cost of fundamental humanitarian standards.

129 https://x.com/av_06_hamaney/status/2012167451920728571?s=20

3.5.1. İbrahim Güngör (72)

152. İbrahim Güngör was the former Director of Student Affairs at İzmir Gediz University, an institution closed by emergency decree (KHK) following the July 15 coup attempt. He was first detained on 18 January 2019 on charges related to alleged affiliation with the Gülen Movement. After spending approximately ten months in pre-trial detention, he was released; however, the İzmir 20th Heavy Penal Court subsequently sentenced him to eight years and one month of imprisonment. The conviction was based on allegations such as hosting religious discussion meetings at his home, inviting others to participate in such gatherings, and collecting financial assistance for students.
153. Following his release, Güngör underwent surgery in 2022 due to hydrocephalus, during which a shunt was implanted in his brain. He also suffered from advanced Alzheimer's disease, prostate illness, and diabetes. Despite these serious and multiple medical conditions, Güngör was re-arrested on 14 December 2024 after the Court of Cassation upheld his conviction.
154. Despite the fact that Güngör was no longer able to recognize his daughter, Sueda Güngör—who had been campaigning relentlessly for his release and was later arrested for criticizing the government over the injustice in her father's case (see para. 78 above) — and despite the steady deterioration of his physical and psychological condition during prison visits, the Forensic Medicine Institute issued a report stating that he was “fit to remain in prison.” On 25 July, after contracting an infection due to a catheter, Güngör was transferred from Menemen Prison to İzmir City Hospital, where he was hospitalized for twenty days before being discharged and returned to prison. However, on 29 August, he was again hospitalized due to respiratory failure and high fever. İbrahim Güngör, an educator suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease, was admitted to the intensive care unit of İzmir City Hospital, diagnosed with pneumonia, and ultimately died on 7 September 2025.¹³⁰

130 <https://solidaritywithothers.com/sick-inmate-who-died-in-prison-ibrahim-gungor/>

3.5.2. Süleyman Yıldırım (59)

155. Süleyman Yıldırım, a 59-year-old lawyer, was arrested in the aftermath of the 15 July 2016 coup attempt during the state of emergency, within the scope of persecutions targeting the Gülen Movement, and spent ten months in pre-trial detention. He was later sentenced by the Denizli 2nd Heavy Penal Court to six years and three months' imprisonment on the grounds of depositing money in Bank Asya, sending his children to schools closed by emergency decree (KHK), and alleged use of the ByLock application.
156. After the Court of Cassation upheld the conviction, Yıldırım was re-arrested on 27 July 2025 while undergoing medical treatment at Denizli State Hospital and was transferred to Denizli T-Type Prison. His health rapidly deteriorated, and he was soon hospitalized again. Medical reports stated that he required continued hospitalization; however, despite these findings, he was returned to prison. On 6 September, Yıldırım was admitted to the intensive care unit and underwent heart surgery.
157. On 1 October, **his left leg was amputated below the knee**. Notwithstanding medical reports from Denizli State Hospital explicitly stating that he was unfit to remain in prison and could not even endure travel, the Forensic Medicine Institute summoned him to İstanbul for further assessment. Due to the life-threatening nature of his condition, he was unable to travel, yet no suspension of sentence was granted, even while he remained in intensive care.
158. As his condition continued to deteriorate, a second application was eventually accepted, and Yıldırım was released with a sentence deferral of only three months, at a time when his condition had already become life-threatening; he was intubated on 1 December and **died on 8 December 2025**. Prior to his death, **his weight had dropped to just 40 kilograms**, and his family alleged that he had received inadequate medical care both during his imprisonment and following his release.¹³¹

131 <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/12/08/turkish-lawyer-jailed-over-gulen-links-dies-after-delayed-release-from-prison/>

3.5.3. Ferah Oktan (37)

159. Ferah Oktan, currently held in Edirne L-Type Prison, is a former primary school teacher who was dismissed from public service by emergency decree-laws (KHK) issued in the aftermath of 2016. She was prosecuted on allegations of membership in the Gülen Movement and sentenced to six years and three months' imprisonment. Her husband was prosecuted in a similar case and spent four years in prison. In August 2024, Oktan and her husband were detained in Edirne while allegedly attempting to leave the country, and Ferah Oktan has remained in custody since that time.
160. **A mother of two**, Oktan was **diagnosed with cancer** in September 2025. Owing to the late detection of the disease and delays in accessing adequate medical treatment, the cancer metastasized and spread to other parts of her body. The 37-year-old has so far undergone five rounds of chemotherapy. As a result of the treatment, she has lost her hair and developed severe sores in her mouth, causing significant difficulty in eating. She is currently unable to maintain proper nutrition under prison conditions. Her medical treatment and serious health condition have also **prevented her from staying with her two-year-old child**.¹³²
161. Furthermore, Oktan suffers from intense pain in the lymph nodes under her arm, leaving her unable to lift her arm or carry out basic daily activities, including washing her own clothes. Her condition has reached a point where she is no longer able to sustain daily life in prison. Despite the presence of critical medical and humanitarian exigencies, multiple petitions for her release were filed with the Istanbul 23rd and 24th High Criminal Courts; however, both judicial bodies summarily rejected these requests. While Ferah Oktan was eventually granted her release in **February 2026**—shortly before her scheduled seventh round of chemotherapy—the prolonged delay in securing adequate clinical conditions suggests that this judicial intervention may have come too late for a meaningful recovery.¹³³

132 <https://solidaritywithothers.com/critically-ill-prisoners-in-turkish-prisons-ferah-oktan/>

133 <https://www.omerfarukgergerlioglu.com/basin/tahliye-edilen-khkli-ogretmen-bu-mektubu-size-6-kemoterapiyi-alirken-yaziyoruz/38318/>

3.5.4. Hüseyin Parlak (70)

162. Hüseyin Parlak, a 70-year-old detainee held in Manisa Alaşehir Prison, suffered a fatal brain hemorrhage on 8 August after collapsing under extreme heat conditions. At a time when temperatures inside the prison reportedly reached 43 °C, Parlak fainted, fell to the ground, and struck his head. He was subsequently transferred to the intensive care unit.
163. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, MP, emphasized that serious negligence occurred not only within the prison but also at the hospital level. According to Gergerlioğlu, Parlak was taken to the emergency department on three separate occasions, yet no blood tests were conducted during any of these visits. Instead, he was repeatedly discharged with a diagnosis of an “upper respiratory tract infection.” It was only during his fourth hospital admission that his sodium level was measured and found to have dropped to 108, as a result of severe dehydration and electrolyte loss. At that point, he was admitted to intensive care in a critical, near-death condition, and medical intervention was no longer sufficient to save his life.¹³⁴
164. Reports further indicate that Parlak was held in a cell lacking basic sanitary and environmental safeguards, including a toilet door and a window. No preventive measures—such as ventilation or air conditioning—were taken to mitigate the extreme heat, and water cuts reportedly prevented prisoners from meeting their most basic needs. The absence of adequate infirmary services meant that Parlak’s deteriorating health condition was not identified in a timely manner, and the necessary referral and transfer procedures were significantly delayed.
165. As a consequence of these omissions, **Parlak died on 15 August 2025**. Human rights defenders have characterized the cumulative neglect to which Parlak was subjected as tantamount to “being sent to death.” They have stressed that judicial and administrative authorities are under a positive obligation to implement urgent and effective procedures for the protection of seriously ill prisoners, particularly those held in conditions that pose an immediate risk to life and physical integrity.

134 <https://www.omerfarukgergerlioglu.com/basin/cinayet-gibi-olum-cezaevinde-beyin-kanamasi-geciren-manisali-hayirseverin-olumune-goz-yumuldu/37075/>

3.5.5. Tayfun Kahraman (44)

166. Tayfun Kahraman, who is currently detained in Silivri Prison in connection with the **Gezi Park trial**, was transferred to Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Medicine Hospital after suffering an acute multiple sclerosis (MS) attack that could not be adequately managed under prison conditions. Having been in detention for 43 months, Kahraman is experiencing a progressive deterioration of his health. Despite the existence of a medical board report confirming the advancement of his illness, he has not been released. His wife, Meriç Kahraman, has publicly stated that his condition is serious and that he is undergoing intensive treatment to control the acute MS attack. It is further noted that the Constitutional Court of Türkiye (AYM) previously found a violation of Kahraman's right to a fair trial and ordered a retrial. However, the lower courts have refused to comply with this ruling or to order his release, despite the Court's binding decision and the ongoing risks to his health.¹³⁵

3.5.6. Emre Uysal (45)

167. Emre Uysal (45), an academic who was dismissed by emergency decree (KHK) while serving at the Department of Interior Architecture of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Anadolu University, was taken into police custody in Eskişehir within the scope of investigations targeting the Gülen movement. After being held in detention for 13 days, he was formally arrested on 13 December 2017. During the eight-month period he spent in pre-trial detention, he was unable to access his prescribed medication on a regular and continuous basis. As a result, he suffered two epileptic seizures in the prison ward and lost consciousness on both occasions. It was further reported that the medical device he was required to use for the treatment of sleep apnea was initially withheld. Subsequently, due to the absence of a generator in the prison, power outages placed him at risk of death while asleep. Uysal was released at the time due to his serious health conditions. However, following the upholding of his conviction, he was re-arrested on 19 September

135 <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/591820/gezi-tutuklusu-tayfun-kahraman-hastaneye-kaldirildi>

2022. His family has voiced serious concern, citing his own statement that he believes he will not leave prison alive.¹³⁶

3.5.7. Asaleddin Çelik (52)

168. Asaleddin Çelik, a former lawyer dismissed by emergency decree (KHK), who had been sentenced to six years and three months' imprisonment on the sole basis of having an employment-related social security record at Işık College—an institution closed following the events of 15 July—had been held in Düzce T-Type Prison for approximately two and a half years. According to reports, Çelik had been undergoing treatment for lung cancer for the past seven years.
169. His case was also raised before the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye by DEM Party Member of Parliament Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who stated that Çelik was undergoing cancer treatment, had previously undergone lung surgery, struggled even to stand, suffered epileptic seizures, and had lost consciousness in recent weeks due to severe malnutrition. However, despite the rapid deterioration of his health, he was not released until he lost consciousness. On 24 July, he was admitted to the intensive care unit in an unconscious state. A decision to postpone the execution of his sentence on medical grounds was issued on 15 August 2026, yet Çelik died approximately one month after his release.¹³⁷
170. According to reporting by Sevinç Özarslan for TR724, during the period Çelik remained in detention, his illness reportedly progressed rapidly. In the final months of his imprisonment, Çelik's health condition deteriorated significantly, and he was held under particularly harsh conditions. Family members reported that when his wife attempted to visit him, he was too unwell even to attend the prison visit.¹³⁸

136 <https://stockholmcf.org/jailed-academics-worsening-mental-health-sparks-calls-for-his-release/>

137 https://www.boldmedya.com/2025/09/13/bilincini-kaybedince-tahliye-edilmisti-kanser-hastasi-khkli-ingilizce-ogretmeni-asaleddin-celik-hayatini-kaybetti/#google_vignette

138 <https://www.tr724.com/bilincini-kaybedene-kadar-tahliye-edilmeyen-kanser-hastasi-khkli-ogretmen-vefat-etti/>

II. POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRACKDOWN ON THE OPPOSITION IN TÜRKİYE

171. In 2025, a large-scale corruption investigation launched by the Turkish government has led to the detention or interrogation of over 500 individuals within nine months. Initially focused on Istanbul, the investigation has quickly spread to other major cities where CHP secured electoral victories in 2024, **including İstanbul, İzmir, Adana, Antalya, and Adıyaman**. As this report was being prepared, investigations targeting opposition municipalities were ongoing, reflecting a broader pattern of governmental pressure. In this regard, the former İzmir Mayor Tunç Soyer¹³⁹, Adana Mayor Zeydan Karalar, Adıyaman Mayor Abdurrahman Tutdere, and Antalya Mayor Muhittin Böcek were detained in the latest wave of probes, underscoring the intensifying scrutiny faced by opposition figures.¹⁴⁰ The operations primarily target municipalities governed by the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), and are described by the Erdoğan administration as a widespread corruption network spreading “like an octopus.”¹⁴¹
172. The probe has involved 14 CHP mayors (including Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu), more than 202 party members, and local government staff, who have been either arrested or placed under judicial control. Opposition figures and independent legal experts argue that the investigation is politically motivated and lacks concrete and widespread evidence. Former Minister of Culture Ertuğrul Günay stated that these operations have been “transformed into political weapons rather than objective legal procedures.” CHP leader Özgür Özel characterized the crackdown as a “coup against Atatürk’s party.”¹⁴²
173. The politically motivated crackdowns on elected opposition party mayors first began on **October 30, 2024**, as part of an investigation conducted by the Terror and Organized Crime Bureau of the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office and **Esenyurt Mayor Ahmet Özer** was taken into custody during a raid on his home at 6:00 a.m. and **arrested**

139 <https://www.birgun.net/haber/operation-against-izmir-metropolitan-municipality-tunc-soyer-and-chp-provincial-chair-aslanoglu-arrested-636069>

140 <https://apnews.com/article/chp-opposition-arrests-adiyaman-adana-tutdere-karalar-c401785ae68f56ebf137b93cd86cf237>

141 <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/erdogan-decries-tentacles-of-corruption-surrounding-istanbul/news>

142 https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/04/13/ozgur-ozel-the-apparatchik-turned-turkey-s-chief-opponent_6740165_4.html

on the very same day on charges of "membership in the PKK/KCK armed terrorist organization". Following the arrest, the Ministry of Interior suspended Ahmet Özer from his duties and appointed Istanbul Deputy Governor Can Aksoy as trustee in his place. Ahmet Özer was convicted on **January 23, 2026**, and sentenced to **6 years and 3 months in prison for "membership in a terrorist organization."**¹⁴³

174. The systematic expansion of investigations against elected CHP mayors has escalated into a broader judicial campaign, ultimately targeting the Mayor of Istanbul, **Ekrem İmamoğlu**. This wave of high-profile arrests and prosecutions reflects a deepening pattern of politically charged legal actions, signaling an institutionalized strategy to destabilize municipal administrations and sideline prominent opposition figures through coordinated detention practices.

1. Beşiktaş Mayor Rıza Akpolat detained on January 17, 2025

175. **On January 13, 2025**, as part of an investigation initiated by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on charges of "bid rigging," "membership in a criminal organization," and "unlawful enrichment," 47 individuals — including **Beşiktaş Mayor Rıza Akpolat** and Beşiktaş Deputy Mayor Alican Abacı — were taken into custody.¹⁴⁴

2. Beykoz Mayor Alaattin Köşeler detained on March 3, 2025

176. **On February 27, 2025**, the Beykoz Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation on charges of "bid rigging" and "establishing, leading, and assisting a criminal organization." As part of the investigation, an arrest, search, and seizure warrant was issued for 22 individuals, including **Beykoz Mayor Alaattin Köşeler**.¹⁴⁵

143 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/ce8zj6vprevo>

144 <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-chp-besiktas-arrest-mayor-bidrigging-95509cdb155e9cad787bb6e01a04051a>

145 <https://www.patirkey.com/news/2025/turkish-court-arrests-beykoz-mayor-alaattin-koseler-over-bid-18923/>

3. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, Şişli Mayor Resul Emrah Şahan, and Beylikdüzü Mayor Mehmet Murat Çalık Detained on March 19, 2025

177. The latest investigation targeting Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul, starkly highlights the ongoing erosion of the rule of law and judicial independence in Türkiye. On March 19, 2025, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office ordered the detention of **106 individuals, including İmamoğlu**, Şişli Mayor Resul Emrah Şahan, and Beylikdüzü Mayor Mehmet Murat Çalık, as part of probes into allegations of "corruption" and "terrorism" linked to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB). Subsequent proceedings led to the arrest of 44 individuals on corruption charges and 3 on terrorism charges, with others released under judicial control, while İmamoğlu and the mayors of Şişli and Beylikdüzü were dismissed from their positions and face a range of serious accusations, including "establishing and leading a criminal organization," "taking bribes," "extortion," "illegally recording personal data," "bid rigging," and "terrorism," as outlined in Articles 220, 252, 235, 236, 250, and 158/1-e of the Turkish Penal Code. Notably, **President Erdoğan's** cryptic remark prior to these arrests that "**the worst is yet to come**"¹⁴⁶ has intensified concerns about the politically motivated nature of these judicial actions. Although the court rejected the Prosecutor's request to detain İmamoğlu on terrorism charges, he continues to face prosecution on this count, underscoring how the judiciary has been increasingly instrumentalized to suppress political dissent and further erode impartiality in Türkiye.¹⁴⁷

3.1. Due Processes in Question: Controversial Investigations Against İmamoğlu

178. In relation to the local elections, a lawsuit was filed against İmamoğlu on May 28, 2021, for allegedly "insulting the members of the High Election Committee." Consequently, on December 14, 2022, he was sentenced to a prison term of 2 years, 7 months, and 15 days by the Istanbul Anatolian 7th Criminal Court of First Instance, along with a political ban imposed under Article 53 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK). This decision has been

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cwygdje8wy8o>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/istanbul-buyuksehir-beylikduzu-ve-sisli-belediye-baskanlarinin-icisleri-bakanliginca-gorevden-uzaklastirilmasina-dair-basin-aciklamasi>

appealed and is currently pending review by the 24th Criminal Chamber of the Istanbul Regional Court of Appeals. Should the appeal be rejected, the case will be referred to the 4th Criminal Chamber of the Court of Cassation, and if upheld, İmamoğlu would face the termination of his mayoral position and be barred from future political engagement.

179. Subsequently, in 2023, a lawsuit was initiated against İmamoğlu in connection with a tender that was organized in 2015 during his tenure as Mayor of Beylikdüzü Municipality. This legal action arose as a result of an investigation conducted by the Ministry of Interior, which led to charges against İmamoğlu for "bid rigging." The case is currently pending before the 10th Criminal Court of First Instance in the Büyükçekmece district, where prosecutors are requesting a prison sentence ranging from three to seven years, along with a prohibition on his future political participation. The next hearing for this case is scheduled to take place on July 11, 2025.
180. In November 2024, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office commenced an investigation against İmamoğlu on allegations of "abuse of office," specifically related to expenditures incurred during events organized by the Istanbul Municipality. It is important to note that, as of now, this investigation has not yet progressed to the stage of filing formal charges or initiating a lawsuit.
181. In addition, İmamoğlu's remarks regarding the investigations conducted by Akın Gürlek, Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor, against other mayors members of the Republican People's Party (CHP) have also led to the initiation of a lawsuit. İmamoğlu contended that Prosecutor Gürlek, who previously held the position of Deputy Minister of Justice, could not maintain impartiality and asserted that the investigations carried out by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office against CHP municipalities were politically motivated. The remarks made by İmamoğlu led to the initiation of another investigation on January 20, 2025, which resulted in charges being filed against him for "threatening and targeting individuals involved in the fight against terrorism." Prosecutors are seeking a prison sentence of up to 7 years and 4 months, alongside a deprivation of his capacity to be elected or to hold political office. At the final hearing of his trial, on July 16, 2025, the Istanbul 14th High Criminal Court sentenced İmamoğlu to

a year and eight months in prison for insulting and threatening Istanbul's chief prosecutor, Akin Gürlek.¹⁴⁸

3.2. İmamoğlu's Diploma Revocation and Arrest

182. According to the Turkish Constitution, a university degree is a prerequisite for candidacy in presidential elections; thus, without a valid university diploma, Ekrem İmamoğlu would be ineligible to run for the presidency of the Turkish Republic. In light of this requirement, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office initiated an investigation against İmamoğlu on February 22, 2025, based on allegations of “forgery of official documents,” specifically questioning the legality of his transfer from Girne American University in Cyprus to Istanbul University in 1990 and asserting that his university diploma was invalid. Consequently, on March 18, 2025, Istanbul University revoked İmamoğlu's diploma. However, he retains the right to appeal this decision to the Administrative Court, followed by the regional administrative court and ultimately to the Council of State.

183. The arbitrary arrest of İmamoğlu echoed across international media and political discourse, highlighting significant concerns regarding democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights within Türkiye. Human rights organizations, including **Amnesty International** and **Human Rights Watch (HRW)**, have classified İmamoğlu's detention as a violation of fundamental rights, urging the international community to hold the Turkish government accountable for potential infractions against established laws protecting individual freedoms.¹⁴⁹

3.3. İmamoğlu's Political Espionage Case, July 2025

184. In another investigation conducted by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, a new public prosecution has been initiated against the Mayor of Istanbul and CHP presidential candidate **Ekrem İmamoğlu**, journalist **Merdan Yanardağ**, and advisor **Necati Özkan** on charges of “**political espionage**.” The indictment, which covers the

148 <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-istanbul-mayor-imamoglu-hit-with-jail-term/a-73301845>

149 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/03/turkiye-massive-escalation-in-ongoing-crackdown-including-arrest-of-istanbul-mayor/>

period between 2019 and 2025 and is predicated on the testimony provided under "effective repentance" by Hüseyin Gün—who was detained on July 4, 2025—seeks prison sentences ranging from **15 to 20 years** for each defendant.¹⁵⁰

3.4. Human Rights Violations Intensify: Crackdown on Protesters Following İmamoğlu's Arrest

185. The revocation of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's university diploma, coupled with his subsequent detention and the ensuing demonstrations—during which law enforcement exercised excessive force and several university students and journalists were apprehended—further underscores this troubling trend. This situation expresses an alarming concern regarding the heightened escalation of governmental measures against freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly following the detention of Mayor İmamoğlu.
186. The Minister of Interior reported that, as of March 26, 2025, a total of **1,900 individuals** had been **detained** in connection with the protests. Among these, 301 individuals were held in pre-trial detention as of March 30, 2025.¹⁵¹ During the demonstrations, law enforcement officials exercised excessive and unlawful force, striking demonstrators with batons and forcibly subduing them. Additionally, police used pepper spray, tear gas, plastic bullets, and water cannons indiscriminately, resulting in multiple injuries among participants. A considerable number of protesters are university students actively raising their voices in opposition to the prevailing political climate, which has increasingly been characterized by authoritarian tendencies.
187. Furthermore, sweeping bans on public gatherings have been instituted in Istanbul since March 19, and in Izmir and Ankara since March 20. In a further escalation of restrictions, the Governor of Istanbul issued a decree prohibiting individuals, groups, and vehicles deemed "likely to participate in illegal activities" from entering or leaving the city. The vague phrasing of this directive raises significant concerns regarding its implementation and the potential for arbitrary enforcement.

150 <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c77k2xm8l3mo>

151 <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-1900-protesters-detained-after-imamoglus-arrest/a-72059045>

188. The detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu's lawyer, **Mehmet Pehlivan**, on June 20, 2025, amidst a broader crackdown on opposition figures, exemplifies the Erdoğan regime's erosion of legal protections, particularly targeting those associated with the Republican People's Party (CHP).¹⁵² Similarly, the refusal to release **Beylikdüzü Mayor Mehmet Murat Çalık**, who is battling cancer, despite a medical report dated July 20, 2025, highlighting the severity of his condition, underscores a blatant disregard for human rights and judicial fairness.¹⁵³ President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on the other hand, repeatedly practices presuming guilt before a finalized conviction, notably in public statements on July 15, 2025, flagrantly violating the principle of the presumption of innocence, a cornerstone of due process.

4. Political Hostages of the State: *Kavala, Demirtaş* Cases

189. In addition to the numerous examples previously cited, the cases of **Osman Kavala** and **Selahattin Demirtaş** stand as two of the most profound and symbolic manifestations of the Turkish judiciary's transformation: from an independent oversight body into a punitive apparatus utilized to suppress dissenting voices rather than safeguarding fundamental rights and liberties.

190. As substantiated by the legally binding rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), both figures remain deprived of their liberty for "ulterior political motives," a direct violation of Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). As of 2026, Kavala has been detained for over eight years and Demirtaş for over nine years. They continue to be held as political hostages through the implementation of "repetitive indictments" and "cyclical detention" practices—judicial maneuvers whose legal validity has been thoroughly discredited. Throughout this reporting period, the binding judgments issued by the ECtHR regarding both individuals have continued to be systematically disregarded.

152 <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/imamoglus-lawyer-arrested-as-4-more-released-under-effective-repentance-210548>

153 <https://stockholmcf.org/rights-group-urges-release-of-ailing-opposition-mayor-amid-crackdown/>

4.1. The Referral of *Kavala v. Türkiye* (No. 2) to the ECtHR Grand Chamber

191. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has announced a significant procedural advancement in the litigation involving Turkish philanthropist and civil society figure **Osman Kavala**. On **December 16, 2025**, the Chamber primarily responsible for the application exercised its right of relinquishment, formally referring the case to the **Grand Chamber**—the Court's highest judicial authority—as confirmed by official court registries.¹⁵⁴
192. In accordance with Article 30 of the European Convention on Human Rights, a Chamber may relinquish jurisdiction to the Grand Chamber when a case raises a "serious question affecting the interpretation of the Convention" or where the resolution might be "inconsistent with a judgment previously delivered by the Court."
193. The Grand Chamber's intervention signifies that the ongoing detention of Kavala, following the seminal 2019 ruling (*Kavala v. Turkey*, No. 28749/18), presents a fundamental challenge to the efficacy of the Convention system. The Court must now address whether the subsequent conviction and sentencing of Kavala to aggravated life imprisonment constitute a legitimate judicial outcome or an organized circumvention of the original order for his "immediate release."

4.2. The ECtHR Judgment in *Selahattin Demirtaş v. Türkiye* (No. 4): A Landmark Case on Political Repression and Human Rights

194. On **July 8, 2025**, the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) *Selahattin Demirtaş v. Türkiye* (No. 4) judgment, building on the 2020 *Demirtaş* (No. 2) [GC] ruling, addressed European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) violations stemming from the prolonged detention of Selahattin Demirtaş, former HDP co-chair, and exposed systemic judicial abuses targeting political dissent in Türkiye. This blog post analyzes the 2025 ruling, connects it to the 2020 judgment, and evaluates their combined implications for human rights, judicial reform, and democratic governance, emphasizing Türkiye's ongoing non-compliance with mandates for judicial independence and pluralism.

154 <https://stockholmcf.org/ecthr-grand-chamber-to-examine-kavala-case-over-post-2019-detention-life-sentence/>

195. The Demirtaş (No. 4) ruling exposes Türkiye's deepening democratic backsliding, characterized by the **systematic targeting of opposition figures**, particularly from the HDP, through judicial harassment. The ECHR's findings align with the Venice Commission's 2017 concerns about the erosion of judicial independence and the misuse of vague terrorism laws to criminalize dissent. The re-detention of Demirtaş, despite the 2020 ruling, exemplifies a deliberate strategy to marginalize pro-Kurdish voices, as seen in the ongoing HDP closure case and the detention of other opposition leaders, such as Osman Kavala (*Kavala v. Türkiye*). This creates a **chilling effect**, deterring political participation and undermining democratic debate, particularly for Türkiye's Kurdish minority, which constitutes approximately 15-20% of the population. The ECHR's emphasis on Article 18 violations underscores the need for structural reforms to restore judicial impartiality, protect minority representation, and strengthen checks and balances. By highlighting executive interference—evidenced by public statements from high-ranking officials—the ruling calls for accountability mechanisms to curb the politicization of judicial processes, critical to reversing democratic erosion.¹⁵⁵

4.3. The Systemic Use of "Ulterior Motives" in Judicial Detention: *Tuğluk v. Türkiye*

196. On October 14, 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has delivered a significant judgment in the case of *Tuğluk v. Türkiye*, further solidifying the legal precedent regarding the misuse of criminal proceedings to suppress political dissent. The ruling concerns the 2016 detention of Aysel Tuğluk, former Vice Co-Chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), on allegations of establishing or managing an armed terrorist organization under Article 314/1 of the Turkish Criminal Code.

197. Most critically, the ECtHR concluded that Tuğluk's detention was not a standard criminal pursuit but was driven by an "**ulterior motive**" to suppress political opposition and restrict pluralism. This resulted in a rare finding of a violation of **Article 18** in conjunction with **Article 5 § 1**. The Court explicitly noted that Turkey's derogation

155 <https://strasbourgobservers.com/2025/08/20/the-ecthr-judgment-in-selahattin-demirtas-v-turkiye-no-4-a-landmark-case-on-political-repression-and-human-rights/>

during the State of Emergency (OHAL) did not justify such fundamental breaches of democratic debate.¹⁵⁶

III. A NATION IN FEAR

198. Türkiye is currently experiencing a pervasive climate of fear, which is intensifying daily through the instrumentalization of the judiciary. This climate has progressively undermined the country's commitment to democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, and the advancement of scientific inquiry.
199. The erosion of trust in the justice system, coupled with the absence of judicial independence and impartiality, constitutes one of the primary factors contributing to the prevailing climate of fear. Specifically, judicial decisions influenced by political power and the lack of transparency in legal processes have resulted in the unjust arrest and conviction of individuals. Consequently, assessments by international organizations indicate that Türkiye ranks among the lowest globally in terms of the rule of law.
200. **The German Federal Foreign Office**, in its travel advisory for Türkiye published on February 16, 2025, stated that Türkiye has a broad definition of terrorism. It warned that merely making a social media post, liking, sharing, or commenting on a post—while constitutionally protected in Germany—could lead to criminal investigations in Türkiye.
201. Additionally, under the newly adopted "**Disinformation Prevention Law**," statements deemed by authorities to be false and considered a threat to national security, public order, or public health may constitute a criminal offense and be subject to prosecution. The advisory also highlighted that citizens could be arbitrarily detained and that even individuals who had previously entered and exited Türkiye without any issues might still face detention upon their return due to old or new allegations.¹⁵⁷
202. To understand how striking the atmosphere of fear in Türkiye is, **Amnesty International** (IAÖ) published a report titled "Braving the Storm: Defending human

156 [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-245254%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-245254%22]})

157 <https://www.avrupa-postasi.com/almanyadan-turkiyeye-seyahat-uyarilari-keyfi-olarak-gozaltilar-mumkun>

rights in a climate of fear in Türkiye”.¹⁵⁸ This atmosphere of fear, which continues to grow today, poses a grave threat to the future of Türkiye as a democratic state of law and to the free world in its relationship with Türkiye. Commenting on the report, Gauri van Gulik, IOM Europe Director, said:

*“The imprisonment of journalists and activists may have made the headlines, but it is difficult to measure the deep-rooted impact of Türkiye’s crackdown on society at large. But this does not change the reality: under the pretext of the state of emergency, the Turkish authorities are deliberately and systematically destroying civil society, imprisoning human rights defenders, closing associations and creating an overwhelming climate of fear.”*¹⁵⁹

1. Systemic Marginalization and Criminalization of the Member of Gülen Movement or KHK-Dismissed Individuals

203. Individuals dismissed under emergency decree-laws (KHK), predominantly those accused of affiliations with the Gülen Movement, endure profound social, economic, and psychological marginalization as a direct result of the Turkish government’s relentless and systematic campaign of persecution.
204. According to the latest report released by **Dr. Levent Mazılıgüney**, a prominent human rights lawyer, following the failed coup attempt in July 2016,
- **134,258** individuals were specifically named in KHK dismissal lists published in the The Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey (Resmî Gazete), targeting alleged affiliations with terrorist organizations, primarily the Gülen Movement. (Report indicates that, with the authority of superiors, this number **increased to 400,000**.)
 - **4,383 judges and prosecutors were dismissed** during the OHAL period, significantly impacting the judiciary’s independence and capacity.
 - Between **10,549 and 15,000 academics were dismissed** during the OHAL process, undermining Türkiye’s academic infrastructure and research capabilities.

158 <https://www.amnesty.org.tr/public/uploads/files/WEATHERING%20THE%20STORMD.pdf>

159 <https://www.amnesty.org.tr/icerik/turkiye-hukumetin-baskisi-korku-iklimi-yaratarak-sivil-toplum-alanini-daraltiyor>

- **A total of 2,478,734 individuals were subjected to investigations for alleged membership in terrorist organizations, primarily the Gülen Movement,** labeled as “FETÖ” by the Turkish government between 2015 and 2023. This figure highlights the unprecedented scale of judicial scrutiny. (Approximately 300,000 individuals worldwide are classified as terror suspects, underscoring the disproportionate number of investigations in Türkiye relative to global figures.)
- **97.9% of KHK-dismissed individuals** reported experiencing significant **economic difficulties**, including unemployment, loss of income, and inability to secure new employment due to stigmatization.
- **88.6% of KHK-dismissed individuals** reported psychological issues, such as anxiety, **depression, and social isolation**, exacerbated by social stigmatization and relentless surveillance.¹⁶⁰

205. **In a follow-up study updating his earlier findings**, human rights lawyer Dr. Levent Mazılıgüney further demonstrates the expanding scale of post-coup repression in Türkiye. According to the revised data, the total number of individuals accused of terrorism-related offenses **between 2016 and 2024 has reached 3,093,084**. Dr. Mazılıgüney further states that there is a widespread understanding that **the number of individuals registered as terrorism suspects in international security and intelligence systems worldwide is approximately 300,000**. Although this figure cannot be conclusively verified, it is generally regarded as a reasonable and realistic global estimate. By contrast, the fact that **more than three million citizens in Türkiye** were subjected to judicial or administrative proceedings on terrorism-related charges between 2009 and 2024 cannot be explained by reference to legal principles, rationality, or the requirement of proportionality. This stark disparity demonstrates that the concept of counter-terrorism has been extraordinarily expanded, and that the criminal justice system has been detached from the principle of individual criminal responsibility, effectively transforming into a mechanism of mass criminalization at the societal level.¹⁶¹

160 <https://liberaltr.com/?p=23291>

161 <https://www.hukukihaber.net/turkiyede-kac-terorist-var-tck-314-istatistikleri-uzerinden-degerlendirme>

206. Labeled as “Gülenists” or members of the so-called “FETÖİST,” these individuals face accusations rooted in vague and unsubstantiated claims, such as maintaining bank accounts with Bank Asya, using the ByLock messaging app, or participating in religious or educational activities associated with the Gülen Movement. These tactics, condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in its 2023 *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* ruling for violating Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), exemplify the Turkish authorities’ misuse of Counterterrorism Law No. 3713 to criminalize lawful behavior, perpetuating a state of “civil death” that isolates members of Gülen Movement from society.
207. Socially, KHK-dismissed Gülenists are subjected to a relentless campaign of stigmatization and isolation. The Turkish government’s broad application of terrorism charges extends punishment to entire families, as seen in cases like the above-mentioned Gaziantep, İstanbul and İzmir operations. Relatives, neighbors, and friends hesitate to offer even basic humanitarian assistance—such as financial aid, emotional support, or social interaction—due to fears of being targeted with charges like “FETÖ membership” or “knowingly aiding a terrorist organization.”
208. The Turkish government’s criminalization of humanitarian assistance isolates individuals dismissed under emergency decree-laws (KHK)—predominantly alleged Gülen Movement members—from their communities, leaving no room but “civil death.” This systemic exclusion is compounded by employers’ reluctance to hire KHK-dismissed individuals due to fears of investigations and accusations of aiding terrorism under Counterterrorism Law No. 3713, rendering social and economic reintegration nearly impossible and perpetuating the marginalization of these individuals.^{162 163 164}

162 <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/khk-ve-kod-37-kabusu-isveren-duyunca-kaciyor-haber-1555160>

163 https://x.com/caapulcukiz/status/1294554639426347010?s=46&t=DN60JPQkk_1wpndH1oQWsQ

164 https://www.istanbulgercegi.com/khklilar-icin-ise-almayin-sosyal-yardim-yapmayin-gibi-gizli-emirler-veriliyor_220750.html

2. The Utilization of the Judiciary as an Instrument of Oppression:

“The Turkish judiciary is a relentless repression machinery.”- Nacho Sánchez Amor, Permanent Rapporteur for Türkiye, European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET),¹⁶⁵

209. At this critical juncture, Türkiye finds itself enveloped in a pervasive climate of fear, a situation exacerbated by **the utilization of the judiciary as an instrument of oppression**. This escalating atmosphere of intimidation not only distances the nation from its democratic ideals but simultaneously undermines core principles related to human rights, freedom of expression and assembly. The systematic **erosion of public trust in the judiciary**, compounded by the inability to ensure judicial independence and impartiality, emerges as one of the principal factors contributing to this oppressive climate.
210. A particularly alarming aspect of this situation is the prevalence of judicial decisions that are heavily influenced by prevailing political authority, coupled with a significant lack of transparency within legal processes. These dynamics have culminated in **arbitrary arrests** and **wrongful convictions**, which violate the fundamental tenets of justice. As a result, evaluations conducted by various international organizations indicate that Türkiye occupies a notably low position in global rankings concerning the rule of law.
211. According to the 2024 Global State of Democracy report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (**International IDEA**), Türkiye ranks 145th out of 173 countries in the rule of law.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the 2025 World Rule of Law Index report places Türkiye 118th out of 142 countries.¹⁶⁷ In this regard, the country has regressed to a state reminiscent of the pre-1908 era in terms of the rule of law.
212. In addition, **The Global Torture Index 2025, released by OMCT on June 25, 2025,**¹⁶⁸ evaluates Türkiye’s performance across seven thematic pillars: political commitment, detention conditions, civic space, victim protection, legal framework for redress, judicial

¹⁶⁵ <https://x.com/NachoSAmor/status/2014735903835451454?s=20>

¹⁶⁶ <https://tr.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/09/17/demokratik-degerler-2024-raporu-avrupada-demokrasi-zayifliyor>

¹⁶⁷ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global/2025/T%C3%BCrkiye/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.omct.org/site-resources/files/factsheets/Factsheet-Turkiye-EN.pdf>

independence, and accountability mechanisms. Türkiye's high-risk designation is based on data from 2023 and 2024, revealing persistent human rights violations rooted in the continued use of emergency powers introduced post-2016 coup attempt. Although the state of emergency was lifted in 2018, its decrees remain entrenched, enabling authorities to target perceived opponents—**journalists, Kurdish activists, Gülen Movement affiliates, and now CHP supporters**—with impunity. The index specifically cites Counterterrorism Law No. 3713, whose vague definition of terrorism facilitates expansive and arbitrary prosecutions, as a key driver of torture and ill-treatment during politically charged investigations.

3. The Complete Silencing of Free Media: The Erosion of Journalistic Voices in Türkiye

213. The government's repressive response to the protests has been accompanied by a stringent crackdown on independent media and journalists. At least 12 local journalists were detained in Istanbul and Izmir for their coverage of the protests.¹⁶⁹ On March 25, seven of these journalists were formally charged with violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations; however, they were subsequently released on appeal on March 27, pending trial.¹⁷⁰ This suppression extends to international media, as evidenced by an incident reported by the BBC on March 27, in which its correspondent, **Mark Lowen**, was detained at his hotel in Istanbul and subsequently deported on the grounds of posing a "threat to public order." Additionally, on March 28, 2025, Swedish journalist Joakim Medin was arrested upon arrival at Istanbul Airport while preparing to report on the ongoing demonstrations.¹⁷¹

3.1. RTÜK's Sanctions on Opposition Media

214. Türkiye's Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has implemented punitive measures against media outlets in an effort to control the state's narrative. RTÜK Chairman Ebubekir Şahin has issued a warning to broadcasters and journalists, urging

169 <https://www.mlsaturkey.com/en/number-of-journalists-detained-over-sarachane-protests-rises-to-10>

170 <https://x.com/globalfreemedia/status/1905573343589179585?s=12&t=Q2BVk0QWfT4oEJH5LyZi4A>

171 https://x.com/ETC_redaktionen/status/1905626950657605728

them to ensure that their reporting remains "free from political bias" and has threatened severe penalties, including the possibility of license revocation:

*"As clearly stated in Article 8 of Law No. 6112 on the Establishment and Broadcasting Services of Radio and Television Enterprises, "Broadcasting services cannot be contrary to the principles of the rule of law, justice and impartiality." Every broadcasting organization is obliged to comply with the rules set out in this law. The investigations carried out are completely within the framework of the law and the broadcasts are constantly examined by our monitoring experts. We would like to remind that the necessary sanctions will be applied at the highest limit to broadcasting organizations that broadcast in violation of the legal legislation, and we would like to thank all media organizations that ensure that our people receive accurate and impartial news."*¹⁷²

215. Within the effort to control the state's narrative, Türkiye's Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed financial penalties and temporary broadcast suspensions of up to 10 days on several news channels, including Halk TV, SCZ TV, Tele 1, and Now TV, on March 21 and June 26 2025.^{173 174}

4. Systemic Repression: Beyond Social Media

216. In addition, social media platforms have emerged as one of the few remaining avenues for independent voices in Türkiye; however, they too have come under significant censorship. As protests escalated, government officials acted swiftly to restrict access to online platforms and messaging services, effectively hindering the dissemination of information related to the protests. Beginning on the morning of March 19—coinciding with the initial wave of detentions—major social media platforms experienced bandwidth throttling, which severely limited access to independent news sources.¹⁷⁵ These restrictions primarily impacted users in Istanbul and remained in effect for 42 hours before being lifted on March 21, with no official justification provided for either the implementation or removal of these measures.

¹⁷² <https://x.com/ebekirsahin/status/1902375396072386623>

¹⁷³ <https://bianet.org/haber/pro-opposition-tv-channel-handed-10-day-blackout-over-imamoglu-protest-coverage-305913>

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.mapmf.org/alert/33451>

¹⁷⁵ <https://mastodon.social/@netblocks/114196561751149217>

217. This process escalated with the blocking of at least **42 accounts on the platform X on February 5, 2025**, marking a significant intensification in Turkey's efforts to suppress dissent in the digital realm. These accounts belonged to **Turkish journalists, activists, lawyers and independent media organizations, many operated by exiled reporters** such as **Cevheri Güven** and **Abdullah Bozkurt**, and **Dr. Gökhan Güneş** who continue to shed light on pressing issues facing Turkish society despite the hostile environment. The Ankara court's decision to justify this censorship by citing the need to protect "national security and public order" exemplifies the government's broad and vague approach to silencing opposition. By applying such sweeping justifications to accounts with extensive followings—some with hundreds of thousands of followers—it reveals the regime's readiness to go to great lengths to restrict access to diverse viewpoints and manipulate public discourse. This wave of censorship has since extended to prominent opposition figures like Ekrem İmamoğlu, whose social media account access was subsequently restricted—a clear indication of how digital repression has become a key component of the broader authoritarian strategy.
218. The imposition of a **block on Ekrem İmamoğlu's social media account** on the platform X (with 10 Million followers) also exemplifies a broader pattern of authoritarian measures aimed at suppressing political dissent and controlling public discourse. According to Özgür Özel, this action signifies "We are facing the digital front of the coup." explicitly connecting it to the digital dimension of the regime's efforts to silence opposition.¹⁷⁶ Such restrictions not only hinder elected officials' ability to communicate directly with their constituents but also serve as a tool to curtail the dissemination of critical voices and alternative narratives. The blocking of İmamoğlu's social media account also underscores how digital spaces are being increasingly militarized and politicized, reinforcing authoritative control over information flow and reinforcing the suppression of dissenting voices in the political arena.
219. The detentions of **Leman magazine staff**, including cartoonist Doğan Pehlevan, graphic designer Cebraile Okçu, managing director Zafer Aknar, and company manager Ali Yavuz, on charges of "publicly insulting religious values" following the publication of a controversial cartoon, exemplify the Erdoğan regime's escalating crackdown on freedom

176 <https://www.politico.eu/article/x-blocks-account-of-turkish-opposition-leader/>

of expression.¹⁷⁷ This action, condemned by international press freedom organizations and the ECtHR for its chilling effect on satirical media, underscores the regime's intolerance for dissent, particularly when it challenges religious or political sensitivities.

220. **The arrest of journalist Fatih Altaylı on June 21, 2025**, following his detention for allegedly "threatening the President" due to remarks made in a June 20, 2025, YouTube broadcast, exemplifies the ongoing suppression of press freedom in Türkiye. The Erdoğan regime's portrayal of Altaylı's comments on the Turkish public's historical critical stance as a threat reveals the instrumentalization of the judiciary to silence dissent and intimidate journalists, underscoring the intensifying restrictions on freedom of expression and democratic principles.¹⁷⁸ On November 26, Fatih Altaylı, was convicted and sentenced to a prison term of four years and two months on baseless charges of threatening President Erdoğan during a broadcast.

221. **On 5 August 2025**, the Ankara 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace (Case No: 2025/9174 D. İş) issued a decision ordering the removal of content and the blocking of access to multiple social media accounts and URLs under Article 8/A of Law No. 5651. Among the blocked platforms was **JUSTICE SQUARE FOUNDATION**, an independent platform dedicated to documenting human rights violations, monitoring judicial practices, preserving legal records, and providing structured analysis on rule of law and accountability in Turkey.¹⁷⁹ The decision relied on broadly framed national security and public order grounds, without individualized reasoning. From a human rights perspective, the blocking of Justice Square—despite the fact that it has never disseminated political content and has consistently confined its publications to legal analysis and documentation—underscores that, in practice, even strictly legal and rights-based expression is afforded no protection under the current approach to digital censorship in Türkiye.

222. **On January 30, 2026**, a public statement issued by **Burhaneddin Duran, the Head of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye**, highlighted the scale of executive-led digital repression targeting freedom of expression. According to the announcement, **379**

177 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/01/istanbul-turkey-leman-magazine-alleged-prophet-muhammad-cartoon-protests-arrests>

178 <https://cpj.org/2025/06/journalist-arrested-accused-of-threatening-turkish-president/>

179 Ankara 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace on August 5, 2025 (Case No: 2025/9174 D.İş)

social media accounts were identified as “FETÖ or FETÖ-affiliated” following what was described as “comprehensive digital monitoring and analysis,” and were subjected to access bans and legal action. However, no information was provided regarding the identities of the account holders, the specific content deemed unlawful, the legal thresholds applied, or whether any independent judicial review preceded these measures. The statement publicly asserted that these accounts were engaged in “terror propaganda” and “systematic disinformation,” effectively declaring guilt prior to any judicial determination.¹⁸⁰

223. The sustained mass targeting of hundreds of social media users raises serious concerns under Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the ECHR, which require restrictions on expression to be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and individually justified. Instead, the use of broad national security rhetoric and collective labelling risks sweeping journalists, activists, and ordinary users engaged in lawful expression into the scope of counter-terrorism measures. By framing digital platforms as battlefields and critical speech as an existential threat, such practices deepen self-censorship and undermine pluralism. Far from safeguarding national security, **the censorship of 379 accounts** at once reflects a structural erosion of freedom of expression and the public’s right to receive and impart information in Türkiye.

IV. COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AND CORE INSIGHTS

224. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, Türkiye experienced a profound and widespread atmosphere of repression, which resulted in the systematic targeting of thousands of individuals suspected of affiliation with the Gülen Movement. This repressive climate extended beyond legal measures such as investigations and arrests, encompassing a broader societal context marked by social exclusion and stigmatization. The repression further escalated into a pervasive climate of fear, fueled by severe **economic hardships, public smear campaigns, and intense psychological pressures.** These factors collectively contributed to an environment where individuals not only

180 <https://x.com/burhanduran/status/2017161629595521136?s=20>

faced legal persecution but were also subjected to ongoing **societal marginalization** and coercive forces, effectively undermining their personal and professional lives.

1. Repression Against the Members of the Gülen Movement Intensified with a Lower Evidentiary Threshold

225. The report by the Italian Federation for Human Rights (FIDU)¹⁸¹, as detailed in our 2024 Annual Report¹⁸², highlights a concerning pattern in Turkish prosecutions, identifying **commonly used criteria** to charge individuals with membership in an armed terrorist organization based on a review of 118 indictments. Among these, the use of the ByLock messaging application and anonymous tips or denunciations stand out as frequent bases for allegations, reflecting a reliance on tenuous evidence. While these standards were prevalent in earlier investigations, **recent practices**, however, have seen a **significant lowering of the evidentiary threshold**, with individuals linked to the Gülen Movement—**especially family members and students**—now targeted for minimal activities such as **cohabiting in student housing, traveling abroad, or being employed in the same working places**, indicating a more arbitrary approach to persecution.

226. In 2025, new waves of repression have taken shape through large-scale restructuring operations. These operations **primarily target individuals previously investigated in relation to Gülen Movement**, subjecting them to renewed scrutiny and legal action. Under this intensified crackdown, individuals are being investigated and arrested for acts that would traditionally be viewed as ordinary social or educational activities, such as providing **mutual financial assistance**, sharing the same houses, travelling abroad, employing formerly investigated on the ground of being a member of Gülen Movement or engaging in basic forms of solidarity. In this context, **individuals blacklisted** by the state can face recurrent charges at any point in their lives, perpetuating a cycle of legal and social instability.

227. In tandem with ideological suppression, economic persecution has become a critical instrument of oppression against individuals suspected of affiliation with the Gülen Movement. **The "Code 37"** policy effectively bars these individuals from securing

181 <https://fidu.it/wp-content/uploads/FIDU-Report-Turkut-Dent-Yildiz.pdf>

182 <https://justicesquare.org/update-ind/>

employment in the private sector, plunging them into financial instability and enforcing a state of “civil death.” This blacklisting mechanism, exemplified by operations such as the three **Maydanoz Döner raids and Hakmar/Tatbak operations in 2025**, traps affected individuals in a cycle of poverty and despair by systematically denying them access to livelihoods.

2. New Targets of Gülen-Linked Crackdowns: Children of the Member of Gülen Movement

228. Türkiye’s legal framework has been weaponized to target not only individuals suspected of Gülen Movement affiliation but also their familial and social networks, as exemplified by the **Gaziantep (May 6, 2025), İstanbul (May 29, 2025), İzmir (June 17, 2025) and Edirne (December 2, 2025) Operations**. These operations, framed under the “**student restructuring**” paradigm, criminalize routine activities such as **sharing accommodations**, participating in **Erasmus programs**, or **traveling abroad**, labeling them as evidence of membership in an armed terrorist organization. Strikingly, many detained individuals, including 320 university students in Gaziantep and 38 female students in İzmir, **were aged 8–12 during the 2016 coup attempt**, with prosecutions based solely on familial ties rather than credible evidence, violating Article 7 of the ECHR as criticized in the 2023 *Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye* ruling.
229. The persecution is starkly evident in the **inhumane custody conditions**, where detainees suffer from critical health crises. Among them are **a female law student who made multiple suicide attempts**, **a young individual with a life-threatening heart condition** held without adequate medical attention, and **a pregnant woman enduring cardiac arrhythmia**, all of whom experience severe violations of their rights to health and life.
230. Notably, detainees, in Gaziantep Operation, are **denied legal consultation during the critical first 24 hours**, a period exploited for inhumane degradations, physical or psychological pressure, and torture to extract confessions or fabricate statements, as documented by human rights organizations like the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (İHD). This lack of due process, coupled with the societal indifference toward vulnerable young people—whose plight is overshadowed by **discrimination among**

victims—further entrenches their marginalization, leaving them without public support or advocacy amidst the ongoing persecution.

231. The **arbitrary denial of access to university entrance exams** severely jeopardizes the educational futures of these young individuals, infringing on their rights under Article 2 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR, and depriving them of opportunities to pursue academic and professional aspirations. This systemic oppression, documented by Human Rights Watch and UN rapporteurs, reflects a deliberate strategy to expand persecution, with minors and young adults bearing the brunt of psychological trauma and social exclusion. The Turkish authorities' reliance on vague "indicators of association," such as digital communication or travel histories, disregards individual criminal responsibility and international standards, demanding urgent international scrutiny to halt these violations and protect the rights of vulnerable youth.
232. Of an extent that transcends description, **the arrest of 18-year-old individuals** stands as a stark and **tragic example** of the Erdoğan regime's indiscriminate and harsh approach, targeting individuals regardless of their age or the absence of concrete legal justification.
233. These university students, who were only 8 to 10 years old when their parents were dismissed from their professions and imprisoned, are now being detained and arrested themselves, resulting in a dual penalization that significantly intensifies the severity of the persecution they and their families endure. The discriminatory treatment they face is solely due to their status as children of individuals previously subjected to judicial and/or administrative measures on allegations related to the Gülen Movement.
234. In Turkey, as in many other countries, it is common for students to share apartments and travel abroad; however, the selective targeting of these students on such grounds reveals the true motive: to punish the children of those previously investigated under Gülen-related accusations, despite no wrongdoing on the students' part. This approach not only violates principles of individual responsibility but also exacerbates the intergenerational impact of the persecution, creating a cycle of suffering that extends beyond the initial targets.

3. Erosion of Democracy and Judiciary as a Weapon

235. For the past decade, the lack of rule of law in Türkiye, particularly against the Gülen Movement, has persisted, a trend that has now transformed into politically motivated operations targeting the opposition in 2025, as evident in the Erdoğan regime's strategic utilization of the judiciary as a weapon to suppress dissent and dismantle democratic institutions. This assessment is echoed by **Nacho Sánchez Amor**, Socialist Member of the European Parliament and the EP's rapporteur on Türkiye within the AFET and DROI committees, who has openly criticized the structural degradation of judicial independence in the country. Sánchez Amor has described **the Turkish judiciary as "a relentless repression machinery,"**¹⁸³ emphasizing that it no longer even attempts to conceal its political bias, and noting that it appears **"unafraid of presenting itself before the legal profession and the international community as openly biased and profoundly unprepared."** This characterization reinforces concerns that the judiciary has been systematically instrumentalized as a tool of political repression rather than functioning as an independent guarantor of the rule of law.¹⁸⁴
236. The politically motivated crackdowns on opposition figures, exemplified by the detention of CHP mayors like Ekrem İmamoğlu and the targeting of municipalities across cities such as Istanbul and İzmir, underscore a deliberate erosion of judicial independence, with vague charges and arbitrary arrests undermining the rule of law. This repression extends to the silencing of freedom of speech through RTÜK sanctions on media outlets, the censorship of social media platforms, and the blocking of accounts belonging to journalists and activists, effectively stifling critical voices and alternative narratives. The instrumentalization of legal mechanisms, coupled with the marginalization of dissenters and the curtailment of democratic processes—as criticized by international bodies like the ECtHR and Human Rights Watch—demands urgent global intervention to restore judicial integrity, protect freedom of expression, and safeguard Türkiye's democratic framework.

183 <https://x.com/NachoSAmor/status/2014735903835451454?s=20>

184 <https://x.com/NachoSAmor/status/2014735903835451454?s=20>

4. Medical Neglect and Political Persecution in Turkish Prisons

237. Türkiye's treatment of prisoners accused of affiliation with the Gülen Movement and opposition figures reveals a systematic pattern in which political persecution overrides medical necessity and humanitarian obligations. Despite clear evidence of life-threatening health conditions, critically ill detainees are routinely denied release or adequate care, leading to preventable suffering and deaths. This practice illustrates a broader human rights crisis in which the criminal justice system is weaponized against a stigmatized group at the expense of human dignity and the right to life.

5. The Impossibility of Normalization: Institutional and Strategic Motivations for Continued Persecution

238. Nearly a decade has elapsed since the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, a period marked by investigations into millions of citizens, the incarceration of thousands, and the dismissal of approximately two million individuals alleged to be members or sympathizers of the Gülen movement. Despite the movement being legally proscribed and its domestic infrastructure largely dismantled, the Turkish government maintains that it remains the preeminent threat to national security. Official rhetoric continues to underscore a commitment to a total purge, a stance recently reaffirmed at the highest levels of state policy formulation.

239. The National Security Council (MGK) meeting held on July 30, 2025, serves as a primary example of this institutional persistence. The post-meeting declaration stated: "The current stage of the struggle against FETÖ and subsequent courses of action were evaluated; an unwavering will to completely dismantle the network of betrayal and eliminate its final remnants was emphasized."¹⁸⁵ This discourse is systematically echoed across official channels, including the Ministry of Interior's social media announcements regarding ongoing detentions and widespread media coverage.

240. Furthermore, Akın Gürlek—the prosecutor responsible for the investigation leading to the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, and who was appointed Minister of Justice during the drafting of this report—reiterated this hardline stance in a televised interview, stating: "FETÖ is a threat to this country; they are constantly changing colors,

185 <https://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/mgk-toplanti-30072025>

and our struggle will continue to the very end."¹⁸⁶ Such high-level pronouncements signal a rigid continuity in state policy, rendering any expectation of a shift in the government's approach toward the Gülen movement virtually impossible in the near term.

V. CONCLUSION

241. The most critical issue in Turkey today is the lack of an independent and impartial judiciary. Unfortunately, following the corruption investigations of December 17–25, 2013, in which a significant portion of the government was implicated, the Erdoğan regime began to perceive the independent judiciary as a threat. In a short period, it gradually increased its power over the judiciary, especially through the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), by means of legal and constitutional amendments.
242. Following the July 15, 2016, coup attempt, the Erdoğan government swiftly dismissed approximately one-third of the judiciary—around 5,000 judges and prosecutors—based on blacklists previously compiled by the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), targeting those perceived as threats to its authority. These individuals were replaced with 17,000 new judges and prosecutors, selected to align with the ruling coalition's (AKP-MHP) views and desires. The regime further consolidated its control by appointing İrfan Fidan, the former Istanbul prosecutor who closed the December 17–25 corruption investigations at the government's behest, first as Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor and now as a member of the Constitutional Court, and Fuzuli Aydoğdu as Deputy Chairman of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK). Through its complete dominance over the HSK, the regime has established full control over the Court of Cassation and the Council of State, utilizing HSK-appointed prosecutors to initiate investigations against opponents and employing criminal peace judgeships to arbitrarily detain those deemed oppositional. These detentions are subsequently adjudicated by HSK-selected high criminal court presidents, with sentences upheld by Court of Cassation chambers, such as the 9th, 16th, and currently the 3rd Criminal Chamber, meticulously restructured to handle terrorism-related cases.

186 <https://x.com/MediaMuhtari/status/2022390139688001838?s=20>

243. Most recent example of this transformation is **Akın Gürlek, who was appointed Minister of Justice** by presidential decree in February 2026. Gürlek's career trajectory clearly illustrates how the Erdoğan regime has used the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) to reshape the judiciary into an instrument of political repression. The courts over which Gürlek presided are associated with numerous legally questionable decisions, ranging from disregarding rulings of the Constitutional Court to imposing severe prison sentences on journalists, politicians, and human rights defenders. He presided over the court that refused to implement the Constitutional Court's ruling of a rights violation in the case of CHP MP Enis Berberoğlu.¹⁸⁷
244. **The promotion of Akın Gürlek to the position of Minister of Justice** serves as a seminal development in the erosion of judicial independence in Turkey, functioning as a potent symbolic signal to the legal community that judicial officers are rewarded not for their adherence to the rule of law but for their alignment with executive political directives. Having presided over numerous High Criminal Courts, Gürlek established a controversial record of delivering heavy prison sentences against dissidents, including members of the Gülen movement, Kurdish political leaders, and civil society figures, in trials frequently characterized by international observers as lacking due process and reasonable suspicion. His role as the lead prosecutor in the investigation and subsequent indictment of Istanbul **Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu**—a case widely regarded as a strategic maneuver to neutralize a formidable political rival through judicial intervention—further underscores his utility to the executive branch. By virtue of this ministerial appointment, Gürlek also assumes the constitutional role of **President of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK)**, the body responsible for the appointment, promotion, discipline, and dismissal of all judges and prosecutors in the country. This dual role creates an inherent conflict of interest and ensures that the career trajectories of judicial officers remain contingent upon executive approval, effectively transforming the judiciary into a punitive apparatus where loyalty to the state's security narrative is the primary prerequisite for professional advancement while independence is met with significant disciplinary risk.

187 <https://medyascope.tv/2021/02/08/istanbul-14-agir-ceza-mahkemesi-enis-berberoglu-hakkinda-anayasa-mahkemesi-kararina-uyulmasi-yonunde-karar-verdi/>

245. Despite the repeated assertions by President Erdoğan and the Minister of Justice that the judiciary is independent and impartial, the reality is that it operates under the government's control, functioning as a tool to punish political dissent, a situation that underscores Turkey's most pressing issue: the absence of an independent and impartial judiciary. This lack of legal certainty pervasive in Turkey, where no one feels safe, as individuals risk arbitrary arrest, asset seizure, and life-altering consequences within a single day, reflects a systemic erosion of due process.
246. Following the December 17–25 corruption investigations, the Erdoğan regime identified the Gülen Movement as the driving force behind these probes, alleging that the prosecutors and police officers involved were movement affiliates, prompting a state-backed campaign to eradicate the movement. Leveraging blacklists compiled by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the regime justified mass dismissals, arrests, and asset seizures under the pretext of the July 15, 2016, coup attempt, subsequently designating the Gülen Movement as an "armed terrorist organization." This has led to unprecedented mass detentions and dismissals, actions that international reports, including those from the ECtHR and Human Rights Watch, have condemned as potentially constituting crimes against humanity, a practice that continues unabated. The regime's control over the judiciary is primarily directed against Gülen Movement members, driven by a deep-seated hostility stemming from the corruption investigations, with Erdoğan repeatedly vowing to eradicate the movement entirely, reflecting a relentless and unyielding campaign.
247. More disturbingly, the crackdown has extended to children and students, some of whom were minors during the 2016 coup attempt. These individuals are now prosecuted for entirely legal activities—such as traveling abroad, living in the same student apartments, or having familial ties to KHK-dismissed individuals—effectively punishing families a second time. Economic marginalization tools like "Code 37," denial of education and job opportunities, and the arbitrary arrest of peaceful protesters further entrench this climate of fear and lawlessness.
248. The judiciary, now fully instrumentalized, is also used against political opposition beyond the Gülen Movement. In recent years, the Erdoğan regime has targeted municipalities led by the Republican People's Party (CHP)-led administrations. The

politically motivated investigations and arrests of mayors such as Ekrem İmamoğlu reflect this broader authoritarian shift. Concurrently, media censorship and digital repression—enforced through regulatory bodies like RTÜK and restrictive social media laws—have silenced dissent across all platforms.

249. In sum, the Erdoğan regime has dismantled judicial independence to consolidate power and eliminate opposition, weaponizing the courts against political, social, and civil actors. This has created an environment devoid of legal certainty, where no one feels safe from arbitrary prosecution. Urgent international attention and action are required to halt this systematic subversion of the rule of law and restore judicial integrity and fundamental freedoms in Turkey.