

# Freedom of Expression Violations in Turkey Report (11)

## August 2020

*This report was prepared in collaboration of the Human Rights Association, Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and the Initiative for Freedom of Expression and was launched as a video conference.*

### 1. Administrative Bans, Security Interventions

**01: Ankara** Labourers wanting to make a statement in front of the Human Rights Monument on Yüksel Street for the last 1361 days in order to protest their dismissals with Statutory Decrees and to express their demand for re-employment were prevented by the police once again.

**03: Istanbul** The police detained two people in the press statement organized in Kadıköy with the demand to remove the concert ban against Grup Yorum.

**04: Siirt** A curfew was declared in five neighborhoods (Dadaklı, Dönerdöver, Dağdöşü, Gülburnu, Özlüpelit) of Eruh district on August 4, 2020 and starting from 09:00 due to “a military operation.”

**05: Istanbul** The police raided the concert rehearsal of Grup Yorum members in Beykoz and detained six people. Idil Cultural Center was raided the same day, with six detainments.

**05: Izmir:** Women’s organizations gathered at Kıbrıs Şehitleri Street in order to protest violence against women and femicides. The police prevented the march; one man and fifteen women were beaten and detained. The violence continued inside the police vehicle as well, the women were injured.

**06: Düzce** Alev Şahin protested in front of the Governorate for re-employment after having been dismissed with a Statutory Decree and was detained after a police intervention.

**07: Adana** 16 people, including three children as well as People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Party Assembly members and Youth Organization members, were detained in house raids.

**07: Izmir** A 60-year-old, who is 81% disabled and his son in Tire were beaten by the police at the District Governorate after they asked why their disability pension was not paid.

**07: Urfa** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 30 days.

**08: Istanbul** The award ceremony organized by the Suruç Families Initiative at Taksim Hill Hotel was banned by Beyoğlu District Governorate.

**08: Mardin** A curfew was declared in 2 neighborhoods and nearby regions in Mazıdağı and Derik districts until second notice, due to “a military operation.”

**09: Istanbul** The concert organized by Grup Yorum in Yenikapı was prevented by the police. The police detained 25 people, who opened banners.

**11: Bitlis** The Governorate declared a curfew in 36 neighborhoods and nearby regions in Central Bitlis until second notice.

**12: Ankara** The press statement organized by “Ankara Women’s Platform” in order to protest discussions on the withdrawal of signature from the Istanbul Convention was prevented by the police.

**13: Bursa** Five people in Osmangazi, Gemlik, Nilüfer and İnegöl districts were detained during house raids due to their social media posts.

**13: Düzce** Seven people were detained and six people were arrested after organizing a protest in Düzce that is similar to the “re-employment” protests organized on Yüksel Street in Ankara, with house raids.

**13: Istanbul** The police detained four women in the press statement organized by women’s organization groups in front of Akit Daily with the demand for Istanbul Convention to be applied.

**13: Mersin** 4 people were detained in house raids due to “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda.”

**14: Aydın:** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations in the province for 3 days due to the anniversary of PKK’s armed attacks in Şemdinli and Eruh on August 15, 1984.

**15: Antep** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**15: Tunceli** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**16: Antalya** Education and Science Workers’ Union (Eğitim-Sen) Central Secretary General and two union members were detained within an investigation based in Muş. Two people were arrested.

**16: Muş** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**19: Hakkari** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**19: Şırnak** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**20: Bursa** Local “Yörem Daily” owner Şaban Önen was attacked by four people in Karacabey.

**20: İstanbul** Four people, who made a press statement in Taksim on İ.E. after she was sexually attacked by a specialized sergeant in Batman and then committed suicide, were detained by the police.

**20: Van** The Governorate banned all protests and demonstrations within the province for 15 days.

**24: İstanbul** 10 people were detained as they were standing watch to draw attention to the state of indefinite hunger-striker Ebru Timtik in front of Bakırköy Sadri Konuk Hospital, where she was kept.

**25: Antalya** An armed attack was organized against the Dim Media Gazipaşa Representative’s home by unidentified people.

**25: Nevşehir** An attack was organized against the parked vehicle in front of the Journalists Association building, which belonged to the association, by unidentified people.

**27: İstanbul** The police intervened the group and journalists waiting in front of the Institute of Forensic Medicine to receive the funeral of Ebru Timtik, who died during her indefinite hunger strike, with tear gas and rubber bullets; detaining four people. Journalists were prevented from reporting the incident.

**27: İstanbul** 21 people were detained after wanting to hold a press statement in front of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s home on the states of Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal.

**29: Ankara** The police prevented the protest against drugs, organized in Yenimahalle district by Batikent Solidarity Platform.

**29: Ankara** A banner hung by the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Mamak district organization for the event, “Peace against war, freedom against confinement” was removed due to the measures within the Covid-19 outbreak.

**29: İstanbul** Republican People’s Party (CHP) Youth Organization member Mutlu Yıldırım was targeted by Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu due to his social media post on Ebru Timtik; his house was raided by the police.

**30: Kırşehir** The march organized by the Republican People’s Party (CHP) on the Victory Day was prevented by the police.

**31: İstanbul** Parliament member Barış Atay was attacked by four people in Kadıköy late at night after having been targeted by Interior Minister Soylu due to his comment on Soylu through a social media post. He was mildly injured.

## 2. Investigations, Arrests and Prosecutions

**03: Aydın** A person, who started an indefinite hunger strike to support the protests of indefinite hunger-strikers Ebru Timtik and Aytaç Ünsal, was detained due to “illegal organization membership” and “making illegal organization propaganda.”

**04: Batman** An investigation was started against Jıyan Haber owner İdris Yayla due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through the news published on the newspaper’s website regarding İ.E. being sexually attacked by specialized sergeant M.O. and then committing suicide on July 16, 2020.

**06: Adana** An investigation was started against 10 Labour Party (EMEP) members, who participated in the press statement organized on July 7, 2020, as well as against Evrensel Daily reporter Volkan Pekal, with the allegation of “preventing the freedom of labour.”

**11: İstanbul** The prosecution of arrested former People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Party Assembly member Bülent Uyguner continued at the 32nd Assize Court, the defendant was not released.

**13: Hakkari** 13 people were detained and 12 were arrested during house raids organized on the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) case in central Hakkari as well as Şemdinli, Çukurca and Yüksekova districts.

**17: Denizli** Four people were detained with the allegation of making DHKP/C and PKK/KCK propaganda on social media.

**21: İzmir** A woman was detained in Bayraklı with the allegation of being a PKK/KCK member.

**25: Maraş** Arif Kocabıyık was detained with the allegation of “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” through his social media posts.

**26: Adıyaman** Local “Gerger Fırat” Daily’s news director Özgür Boğatekin was imprisoned after his 1-year 15-day imprisonment sentence was approved by the Court of Cassation.

**26: Muğla** A woman, who was born in Germany, was detained in Bodrum with the allegation of insulting Interior Minister Soylu on social media.

**27: İstanbul** Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office prepared an indictment against Can Ataklı with a claim of imprisonment due to having insulted the President in his commentary regarding earthquake taxes on a TV show.

**27: İzmir** Four Syrians were detained with the allegation of PYD/YPG membership.

## 3. Other Violations

**01 :** **Iskenderun** 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against a news article on Sendika63, Artı Haber and Kızılbaş websites.

**03:** **Istanbul** Ebru Timtik, who was on an indefinite hunger strike with a demand of fair trial, wasn't handed a pen and paper so she could write a formal letter to the prison administration and the hospital administration.

**04:** **Izmir** Applications of not replying to formal letters, solitary confinement without a confinement penalty and the prevention of treatment continue at Menemen Type-T Prison.

**13 :** **Ankara** Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) sentenced Serdar Savaş, who attended the "Gündem Özel" show on KRT TV on June 19, 2020, to an administrative fine due to his critical statements on the opening of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**13 :** **Ankara** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) sentenced Radio Harman with blackout and administrative fine due to the expressions of People's Democratic Party (HDP) Group Deputy Chairman Saruhan Oluç, who criticizes Turkey's policies on Syria.

**13 :** **Ankara** Information Technologies and Communications Authority banned access from the websites of Jinnews news agency and Özgürüz Radio.

**14 :** **Ankara** The Ministry of the Interior took legal action against 6,743 social media users due to "making provocative social media posts that make terrorist organization propaganda, incite people towards resentment and hostility or denigrate people, drag the society towards fear and panic and make a perception operation through launching fake documents," also announced that a total of 14,186 social media accounts are being examined from January 1, 2020 and August 14, 2020.

**14 :** **Ankara** 8th Criminal Judicature of Peace banned access from the news published on Cumhuriyet, Sözcü and Milli Gazete due to the Agriculture Credit Cooperatives.

**17 :** **Ankara** 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace banned access from the social media post of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Malatya MP Veli Ağbaba on the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

**17:** **Istanbul** Anatolian 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace banned access from the websites of Oda Tv, Haber Sol and Halk TV due to violating personal rights of National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar.

**19:** **Istanbul** Informative posters hung by the Metropolitan Municipality on bridges regarding the "Canallstanbul" project were taken down by the police.

**27 :** **Ankara** Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) penalized Tele1 TV channel with an administrative fine from the upper limit due to "encouraging the praise of terrorism

and showing terrorist organizations as strong and rightful” through broadcasting the video on the 25th anniversary of Evrensel Daily.

#### 4. Comments and Suggestions

##### **Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV - Coşkun Üsterci):**

There were of course nothing very new and unique last month; the violations are ongoing with full weight and intensity; there are security interventions against the freedom of meeting and demonstration. Women holding protests against the debates on the Istanbul Convention faced serious violence and were detained; these applications continued everywhere around Turkey. My friend Osman gave numbers on the one-year applications of the Interior Ministry just before, the Ministry itself announces it and it's a massive number. There were examinations against more than 14 thousand, almost 15 thousand people; legal actions were taken against 6,743 people due to relations with terrorism. Restrictions against websites and especially certain TV channels; access bans, administrative fines... There were lately applications against human rights advocates and politicians that are in line of detainments or kidnapping by unidentified people who introduce themselves as police officers; being accused with espionage. Evrensel Daily's local reporter was accused of espionage with similar methods. I believe that this is an important example that shows how bad the situation is.

##### **Human Rights Association Ankara (IHD - Osman İşçi):**

The variety of violations in August in terms of the basic focus of this work, which are freedom of expression, freedom of meeting and demonstration; actually gives a message to human rights advocates, human rights organizations, press organizations and professional unions in terms of what needs to be done. What I mean is, in case violations on administrative fines increase, we need indicators so we can identify what needs to be done in order to eliminate such violations. Or, for instance, if TV channels start to get penalised, we have to find a methodology on how we can eliminate such violation of freedom of expression and focus on the matter of resolution. Furthermore, public authorities have to realise that they aren't only responsible for not intervening against the demonstrations but they also are responsible for preventing such attacks.

##### **Human Rights Association Diyarbakır (IHD - Gurbet Yavuz):**

We are in a process of a long-term pandemic. Unfortunately, when the government was expected to decrease rights violations, refrain from detaining and arresting so many people; we see that the rights violations instead continue increasingly. For instance, in this period we can't identify rights violations so well; for there isn't transparency here, just as there isn't anywhere else. We don't exactly know now how many prisoners are infected with COVID-19, how many of them received medical treatment, whether there are any casualties; we can't know these. That is why we have to develop new methods and styles of fighting against this.

##### **Human Rights Association Istanbul (IHD - Leman Yurtsever):**

Security forces intervening against press statements, demonstrations and marches, events; with arbitrary bans; especially reporting these violations is extremely important. It is very important to document all rights violations and bring them to the public agenda. Campaigns are very important. We are facing a repressed, silenced society. The slightest criticism is considered an insult against the President or those governing the country, and that's why the society is silenced. I believe that mechanisms which will trigger an action in these have to be activated.

**Human Rights Association Izmir (IHD - Ahmet Çiçek):**

There were many preventions, bans and detainments especially against women's demonstrations. The sheer violence that happened during detainments were identified from the applications made at the Human Rights Association and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey as well. What comes to us from the authorities is always stuff that is copied and pasted. Non-prosecution, non-investigation, non-examination, so many things come that are in line with these that those who apply to us started to have an issue like, "What's happening there, we wonder if they do nothing about our problems." Parliament Member Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu announced that many issues are not being debated at the GNAT Human Rights Committee. We send a letter to them in the applications that come to us as well, and the responses we get are very few and rare. Therefore, I believe that the government has to have an attitude that is suited to our legal entity, at least.