

# April 2021 Freedom of Expression Violations Report

(This report has been prepared with the collaboration of the Human Rights Association (IHD), Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) and the Initiative for Freedom of Expression (IFoX))

## 1. Administrative Bans, Police Interventions

- 01: Adana** The press statement organised by the Student Solidarity at the Youth Square to demand the release of arrested students and independent universities was prevented by the police.
- 01: Şanlıurfa** The police intervened against the sit-in protest started by Emine Şenyaşar, who lost her husband and two sons following the attack of AKP MP İbrahim Halil Yıldız's guards, with the demand of justice. Her son Ferit Şenyaşar was beaten, dragged on the floor and had to be hospitalised. Şenyaşar filed a criminal complaint against the police officers beating her, at Urfa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.
- 03: Adana** Eight people were detained in house raids due to "making illegal organisation propaganda" and "participating in illegal meetings and demonstrations."
- 04: Şanlıurfa** Soldiers and the police stopped the 15-vehicle convoy of the DTK, TJA, DBP and HDP on their way to Ömerli Village of Halfeti district in order to celebrate the birthday of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, preventing their entrance in the district.
- 05: Bursa** The Public Prosecutor's Office didn't reply to the application made by PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's lawyers.
- 05: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised by Kocaeli Migros workers, who were dismissed from work due to being members of professional unions, in front of the villa of Migros Executive Board Chairman Tuncay Özilhan in Beykoz district. Using physical violence, the police detained the workers.
- 06: Istanbul** Eight people were detained during house raids organised in Istanbul within an investigation against the PKK.
- 08: Artvin** Leftist Party Provincial Chairman was detained due to the banner hung on the party building regarding the Istanbul Convention.
- 08: Hatay** The police intervened against those protesting the Environmental Impact Evaluation meeting, which was organised regarding the stone quarry to be constructed in Akçay village of İskenderun district, detining 4 Socialist Refoundation Party (SYKP) members and executives.
- 08: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised by Kocaeli Migros workers, who were dismissed from work due to being members of professional unions, in front of the villa of Migros Executive Board Chairman Tuncay Özilhan in Beykoz district. Using physical violence, the police detained 36 workers.

- 09: Bursa** Posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), exhibited on billboards asking "Where is the 128 billion dollars" were taken down upon the Prosecutor's order.
- 10: Diyarbakır** The march organized by TJA and People's Democratic Party (HDP) Women's Assembly at Dünya Square in Kayapınar district of Diyarbakır to say, "We won the Istanbul Convention on the streets and we will defend it on the streets" was prevented by the police.
- 11: Edirne** Posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), exhibited on billboards asking "Where is the 128 billion dollars" were taken down upon the Prosecutor's order.
- 13: Edirne** Posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), exhibited on billboards asking "Where is the 128 billion dollars" were taken down upon the Prosecutor's order.
- 13: Istanbul** Posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), exhibited on the CHP Provincial building and 39 district buildings, asking "Where is the 128 billion dollars" were taken down upon the Prosecutor's order.
- 13: Izmir** Four women were beaten and detained over protesting Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in front of the Presidential Communications Office in Konak district.
- 13: Kocaeli** Posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), exhibited on billboards asking "Where is the 128 billion dollars" were taken down by the Metropolitan Municipality.
- 14: Diyarbakır** The press statement organised in front of the Human Rights Monument in Bağlar District regarding the hunger strikes started in prisons, ongoing for 139 days in order to protest the solitary confinement application against PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, was prevented. HDP, TJA, TUAY-DER members and executives and many citizens performed a sit-in protest.
- 14: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised by Kocaeli Migros workers, who were dismissed from work due to being members of professional unions, in front of the villa of Migros Executive Board Chairman Tuncay Özilhan in Beykoz district. Using physical violence, the police detained 14 workers.
- 15: Ankara** The police intervened against the group distributing leaflets on May 1st and detained eight people using physical violence.
- 15: Denizli** The Governorate banned all meetings, demonstrations, press statements and protests for 1 month within the measures against the Coronavirus.
- 15: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised by PTT workers, who were dismissed from work due to being members of PTT-SEN union, in front of the Social Security Institute's Provincial Directorate. Eight people were detained.

- 15: Istanbul** The march organised by professional health organisations in front of the Provincial Health Directorate in order to say, “We do not give up on our right to life, stop the deaths,” was prevented by the police.
- 15:Diyarbakır** The commemoration event organised by Amed Health Platform in front of the Provincial Health Directorate for former SES Diyarbakır executive Cuma Kurt, who lost his life due to the Coronavirus, was prevented by the police due to the area being an “institutional” location.
- 16: Aydın** The Governorate banned all mass events for 1 month within the measures against the Coronavirus.
- 16: Edirne** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 14 days.
- 16: Gebze** The application made by the Union of Professional Unions for May 1st celebrations was denied by the District Governorate based on the ban decree issued by the Governorate against all meetings and demonstrations.
- 16: Istanbul** The police prevented the press statement organised by workers, who were dismissed from Bayrampaşa Municipality, in front of the municipality building to demand their re-employment.
- 16: Istanbul** The banner hung on the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Sultangazi District building regarding the Istanbul Convention was taken down by the police upon a District Governorate decree.
- 16: Istanbul** Kartal District Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the district for 1 month.
- 16: Istanbul** The press statement organised by Kayı Construction workers in front of Kartal Courthouse before the hearing on the company’s declaration of bankruptcy was prevented by the police.
- 16: Kocaeli** The Governorate banned all mass meetings and demonstrations across the province for 1 month.
- 17: Edirne** The poster hung on Leftist Party building with the writing, “Istanbul Convention is Ours” on it, was taken down by the police due to posters being banned.
- 19: Batman** The visit organised by the group, including People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MPs and previously dismissed mayors, at the grave of Peace Mothers Assembly member Muhlise Kına in Akça village after she died due to the Coronavirus, was prevented by the police based on a denouncement that an “illegal organisation propaganda” was going to be made.
- 19: Istanbul** The Governorate banned all mass events across the province until May 17, 2021.
- 20: Izmir** Three people were detained due to hanging posters for May 1st.

- 22: Istanbul** The police intervened against the Community House members, who were distributing leaflets in Esenyurt district for May 1st, and detained seven people.
- 22: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised in Kadıköy for May 1st and detained 41 people, including one lawyer.
- 22: Manisa** The Governorate took down all May 1st posters hung by the Labour Party and the Labour Youth on workers' stops.
- 22: Manisa** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 1 month.
- 23: Istanbul** The police intervened against the group, who hung a poster related for May 1st in Sarıgazi Neighborhood, and detained eight people.
- 25: Rize** The gendarmerie intervened against the nature watch organised in order to prevent the construction of a stone quarry in İşkencedere Valley of İkizdere district and detained 15 people using physical violence.
- 26: Ankara** Mesopotamia News Agency reporters D. Y. and S. G. were exposed to physical violence by the police as they were following the Kobanê Case, being prevented from following the hearing.
- 26: Istanbul** Those having been dismissed from public service with Statutory Decrees issued within the State of Emergency organised a sit-in protest in Bakırköy Square with the demand of re-employment. The police intervened against the group and detained two people.
- 26: Istanbul** The police intervened against the protest organised in front of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Provincial Chairmanship with the claim of re-employment, detaining two people.
- 26: Istanbul** The police prevented TAYAD members, who wanted to hold a press statement in front of the Forensic Medicine Institute in order to demand the release of ill prisoner Ali Osman Köse, and detained three people using physical violence.
- 26: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised in front of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) Provincial building on the Kobanê Case and detained two journalists.
- 26: Istanbul** The police prevented the press statement organised to protest the police intervention against those resisting the construction of a stone quarry in İşkencedere Valley of İkizdere district in Rize.
- 26: Istanbul** The press statement organised by Community House members in front of Şişli Etfal Hospital with the demand, "Remove Patenting of Vaccines" was prevented by the police.
- 27: Ankara** The police prevented the press statement organised by Tuzluçayır Womens' Solidarity Association in Kartaltepe Park of Mamak district regarding May 1st.

- 27: Antalya** The special guards intervened against the lawyers, who protested the obligation to pass through an x-ray device at the entrance of the courthouse.
- 28: Ankara** The police intervened against the Mamak May 1st Platform members, who were distributing leaflets in Mamak on May 1st, and detained six people.
- 28: Izmir** The People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Izmir Provincial Co-Chairs made a short statement on the security forces preventing the press statement organised by them in front of the Provincial building to say, “Democratic Politics Can Not Be Prevented”
- 28: Izmir** The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) Branch No.8 and Labour Party members grouped together and marched in order to support the press statement organised every week by the Education and Science Workers’ Union Branch No.2 in Karşıyaka. The police prevented them from marching and chanting slogans.
- 29: Ankara** Following the press statement organised in Çankaya district for May 1st, the police intervened against the participants of the statement with tear gas due to not folding the flags they were carrying. The police had intervened against another protester group during their march as well.
- 29: Istanbul** The police intervened against a symbolic funeral prayer in absentia to be performed by Labour and Justice Platform members in Üsküdar district for workers, who lost their lives in work murders. Eight people were detained.
- 29: Izmir** The police intervened against the groups wanting to participate in the press statement organised by professional unions, workers and political structures at the entrance of Konak Kemeraltı for May 1st. Three people were detained by being stepped on their heads.

## **2. Investigations and Prosecutions**

- 01: Dersim** 35 people, who participated in the Newroz celebrations and danced, were penalised with 427 TL administrative fines each due to “violating the rules of social distancing within the measures against the Coronavirus.”
- 01: Istanbul** The prosecution of lawyer Oya Aslan, who was arrested at Silivri Prison, continued at the 37th Assize Court.
- 02: Ankara** People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu was detained with physical violence by the police who came into his home after he lost his Parliament membership. Gergerlioğlu was imprisoned.
- 02: Istanbul** Journalist Yılmaz Özdil testified at the Prosecutor’s Office within an investigation opened against him due to a social media post.

- 02: Istanbul** The prosecution of 23 people, 2 of whom were arrested, started at the 32nd Criminal Court of First Instance due to protesting the rector appointment to Boğaziçi University in Kadıköy.
- 03: Izmir** Eight of the nine people detained in March during operations against the DHKP-C were released. One person, who was taken to the Criminal Judicature of Peace on Duty, was released on the condition of judicial measures.
- 03: Izmir** Four people were detained by Anti-Terror units due to making PKK/KCK/YPG propaganda on social media.
- 04: Balıkesir** Anti-Terror units detained four people in Ayvalık, Bandırma and Edremit due to making PKK/KCK propaganda on social media.
- 05: Adıyaman** The police raided the People's Democratic Party (HDP) Provincial building due to a denouncement.
- 05: Ankara** The prosecution of those protesting for re-employment after they had been dismissed from public service with Statutory Decrees issued within the State of Emergency continued at the 28th Assize Court.
- 05: Denizli** Anti-terror units detained one person due to making DHKP-C, TKP-ML, THPK-C propaganda on social media.
- 05: Diyarbakır** The police raided and searched the Rosa Women's Association.
- 06: Istanbul** The prosecution of journalist Melis Alphan started at the 32nd Assize Court due to a social media post.
- 06: Kars** 2nd Assize Court sentenced Co-Mayor Şevin Alaca to 6 years, 10 months and 15 days of imprisonment due to "illegal organisation membership". Alaca was released.
- 06: Mardin** An investigation was opened against seven Newroz Celebration Organisation Committee members due to "violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911" through the celebration organised in Kızıltepe district.
- 07: Diyarbakır** 9th Assize Court sentenced People's Democratic Party (HDP) Assembly member Halide Türkoğlu to 6 years and three months of imprisonment due to "illegal organisation membership".
- 07: Diyarbakır** 11th Assize Court sentenced Democratic Regions Party (DBP) press worker Ismail Bardakçı to 6 years and three months of imprisonment due to "illegal organisation membership".
- 07: Istanbul** The prosecution of Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) Chairman lawyer Selçuk Kozağaçlı and lawyer Barkın Timtik continued at the 18th Assize Court.
- 08: Ankara** The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against three Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) members was held at the 27th Assize Court due to "illegal organisation membership." The next hearing was scheduled for June 25.

- 08: Artvin** Leftist Party Provincial Chairman Sercan Dede and Borçka District Chairman Ömer Çatan were detained due to the poster hung on the Provincial Organisation building that said, “The Istanbul Convention is ours. The one man decrees are null and void.”
- 08: Dersim** The police organised a house raid in Pertek district and detained People’s Democratic Party (HDP) District Co-Chair Aydın Köse. The HDP District Organisation was simultaneously raided and searched as well.
- 08: Istanbul** The prosecution of Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul MP Sezgin Tanrikulu continued at Bakırköy 37th Criminal Court of First Instance due to insulting the President.
- 09: Adana** The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against 14 people, including People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Provincial Co-Chairs, former Bar Association members, was held at the 3rd Criminal Court of First Instance due to the press statement organised on August 26, 2020 to protest the trustee appointments to Diyarbakır, Mardin and Van Metropolitan Municipalities.
- 09: Ankara** The prosecution of former People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Chairman Selahattin Demirtaş continued at the 25th Assize Court due to “threat” and “targeting public officers taking part in the fight against terrorism.” The next hearing was scheduled for May 7th.
- 09: Istanbul** The prosecution of 16 people, 9 of whom were arrested including Nuriye Gülmen, started at the 27th Assize Court due to the protest of re-employment organised in Ankara.
- 09: Mardin** A protest demonstration was organised in Yeşilli district on April 6, 2021 against the urban transformation project to be put in action by the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning and the municipality. Gül Neighborhood headman Çağdaş Aziz was dismissed from his duty for a month due to organising the protest demonstration. An investigation was started against 10 citizens, who reacted against the urban transformation project through the protest, due to “insulting” Mayor Hayrettin Demir and violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations.
- 11: Denizli** Four Iranian refugees, who participated in the press statement for the Istanbul Convention organised in Çınar Square in March, had been detained on April 5. On April 6, the refugees were decided to be deported due to “disrupting public order.”
- 13: Diyarbakır** A lawsuit was filed against journalist Cihan Ölmez at the 5th Assize Court due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” within the investigation started against him in October 2020 through “secret witness statements”. The indictment presents Ölmez’s speeches to press organisations as well as his posts on social media as criminal evidence, for he was there during the curfews and clashes happening in 2015 and 2016 in Cizre district of Şırnak.

- 13: Istanbul** After the decrees of conviction issued against writers and journalists Şahin Alpay, Ali Bulaç, Mümtazer Türköne and Mehmet Özdemir were reversed by the Court of Cassation, their re-prosecution started at the 13th Assize Court.
- 14: Ankara** The prosecution of former People's Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş continued at the 19th Assize Court. The next hearing is on May 6.
- 14: Diyarbakır** The final hearing of the lawsuit filed against People's Democratic Party (HDP) Provincial Co-Chair Hülya Alökmen Uyanık during the time she was the SES Branch Co-Chair in 2012 was held at the 9th Assize Court. The court sentenced Alökmen to 10 years and six months of imprisonment and issued a warrant against her. Alökmen was detained in Savur district of Mardin.
- 14: Diyarbakır** An investigation was started against MP Leyla Güven due to "making illegal organisation propaganda" through her speeches during the "National Unity Workshop" held on January 18, 19, 20, 2020 at Demir Hotel in Sur district.
- 14: Edirne** Journalists Naci Kaya and Idris Sayılğan were acquitted in the lawsuit filed against them at the 8th Criminal Court of First Instance due to tracking news information on the refugees passing borders.
- 14: Istanbul** The prosecution of journalist Buse Söğütlü continued at the 23rd Assize Court.
- 15: Istanbul** The prosecution of journalist Cengiz Çandar continued at the 30th Criminal Court of First Instance due to a social media post.
- 15: Ordu** The prosecution of seven citizens, who resisted against the hydroelectric plant (HES) to be constructed in Korgan district, started at the Criminal Court of First Instance with the allegation of "violating the freedom of labour." The next hearing was scheduled for June 25.
- 16: Antalya** A citizen, İ. H., was acquitted in the lawsuit filed against them at the 14th Criminal Court of First Instance due to chanting slogans in a protest.
- 16: Izmir** 2 Syrians were detained in Menderes district due to being PKK/KCK/PYD/YPG members.
- 16: Konya** R.K. was detained due to his social media posts on the military operation organised against Gara region by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) within the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Administration borders. R. K. was arrested by the court they were taken to due to "making illegal organisation propaganda."
- 19: Istanbul** Lawyer Efkan Bolaç testified at the Prosecutor's Office within an investigation opened against him due to his social media posts.
- 19: Istanbul** Stage artist Genco Erkal testified at the Presidency's Chief Prosecutor's Office Press Crimes Investigation Office within the investigation opened against him due to insulting the President through a social media post.



- 19: Istanbul** In the lawsuit filed at the 12th Criminal Court of First Instance against writer Erol Mütercimler due to his expressions on a TV show, the court sentenced Mütercimler to 10 months of imprisonment and deferred the announcement of the verdict.
- 20: Istanbul** Journalist Inci Aydın was acquitted in the lawsuit filed against her at the 26th Assize Court due to a news article published in Yeni Yaşam Daily on July 17, 2020.
- 21: Denizli** The objection made by 4 Iranian refugees kept at the General Directorate of Customs (GGM) after having been detained on April 5 for administrative monitoring was denied.
- 21: Samsun** An investigation was opened against Leftist Party Provincial Chairman due to “making illegal organisation propaganda” through the post made by his party on social media, depicting the photos of Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan.
- 22: Antalya** A lawsuit was filed against 40 people at the 18th Criminal Court of First Instance due to various charges like damaging public property and resisting to prevent duty during the Gezi Park protests.
- 22: Antalya** 40 people were sentenced to varying imprisonment sentences in the Gezi Park Case between 8 months and 10 days as well as 1 year and 8 months, 15 months before the time limitation was fulfilled.
- 26: Diyarbakır** The prosecution of journalist Durket Süren continued at the 11th Assize Court. Süren faces a claim of imprisonment from 1 year up to 8 years due to “aiding an illegal organisation” and “making illegal organisation propaganda” through his social media posts as well as selling the banned Özgür Gündem Daily and Azadiya Welat issues, which were previously shut down with Statutory Decrees.
- 26: Diyarbakır** An investigation was started against the Bar Association Chairman and Executive Board members due to “denigration of the Turkish Nation, the government of the Republic of Turkey as well as the bodies of the state” through their declaration on the Armenian Genocide.
- 27: Manisa** Six people were detained in the operations organised against the homes of People’s Democratic Party (HDP) members in the early hours of morning.
- 27: Mardin** The prosecution of 8 people, including five journalists (Rojda Aydın, Halime Parlak, Nurcan Yalçın, Ahmet Kanbal and Mehmet Şah Oruç), started at the 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance after they had been detained during the protests organised against the trustee appointment to the Metropolitan Municipality on August 20, 2019. The next hearing was scheduled for October 13, 2021.
- 28: Ankara** Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office prepared an indictment against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Kocaeli MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who lost his seat at the Parliament, due to “irregular undertaking of public duty” and “violating workplace immunity” through the justice watch he performed.

- 29: Istanbul** The imprisonment sentences issued against former People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş (4 years and 8 months) and former MP Sirri Süreyya Önder (3 years and 6 months) due to the speeches they gave during the Newroz celebrations in 2013, were approved by the 2nd Criminal Chamber of the Regional Court.
- 29: Istanbul** Bülent Şık was acquitted in the lawsuit filed against him at the 26th Assize Court due to publishing the results of a research conducted by the Ministry of Health, after the Ministry decided to hide the results from the public.
- 29: Istanbul** Republican People’s Party (CHP) Provincial Chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu was sentenced to pay 56,000 TL compensation due to insulting the President through her social media posts.

### **3. Other applications**

- 02: Bursa** 6th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued access bans against three separate news articles on Sözdü and Sabah Daily websites regarding the sexual harassment allegations against Republican People’s Party (CHP) former Osmangazi District Chairman.
- 03: Muş** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 05: Siirt** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 06: Ankara** The Interior Ministry announced that legal actions were taken against 5478 people due to their social media posts, 261 people were detained and 11 people were arrested in March.
- 06: Mardin** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 07: Ankara** 14 Parliamentary summaries prepared with the demand to take off Parliamentary immunities of 11 Parliament members were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.
- 07: İskenderun** District Governorate announced that all meetings and demonstrations were banned across the district for 7 days, starting on April 8.
- 09: Istanbul** Anatolian 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the news and posts made by two separate social media posts as well as on Diken, DW, Evrensel and Yurtgazetesi websites.
- 10: Kastamonu** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “Where is the 128 billion dollars?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.

- 12:Alanya** Prisoners performing a hunger strike against the solitary confinement application at Alanya Type-L Penitentiary Institute were penalised with 11 days of cell lockdown.
- 13: Bursa** 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against three news articles on BirGün and Sol.org websites regarding the Istanbul Convention.
- 14: Bilecik** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “Where is the 128 billion dollars?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.
- 14: Istanbul** The prosecution of Evrensel Daily’s former Managing Editor Cem Şimşek continued at Bakırköy 27th Criminal Court of First Instance due to the news article published in the newspaper with the headline, “German cartoonists drew Erdoğan so bad.”
- 14: Istanbul** Anatolian 2nd Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the news articles published on the websites of gazetemanifesto, kocaeligazetesi and halktv regarding the appointment of the son of Kocaeli University rector to a position at the Presidency.
- 14: Karaman** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “Where is the 128 billion dollars?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.
- 14: Kastamonu** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “What have you done with half of that 256?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.
- 14: Niğde** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “Where is the 128 billion dollars?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.
- 16: Hakkari** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 16: Zonguldak** The distribution of leaflets prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP) were prevented by the police due to a Prosecutor order against the expression of “One Man” that was written on the leaflets as well. The leaflets exhibited the writings, “Electric Bill by One Man Inc.” and “Gas Bill by One Man Inc.”
- 19: Adana** Three Labour Party executives were sentenced to 39,711 TL administrative fine in total in accordance with the Law of Misdemeanor after they hung posters regarding May 1st.
- 19: Ankara** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) issued an administrative fine against Halk TV due to the news on the primetime newscast.
- 19: Ankara** 22 Parliamentary summaries prepared for the revocation of Parliamentary immunities of 20 MPs were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT).
- 19: Van** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 20: Adana** The poster hung by the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) on its Seyhan District building regarding the Istanbul Convention was taken down by the police.

- 20: Bartın** The poster prepared by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), asking, “Where is the 128 billion dollars?” was taken down upon the Prosecutor order.
- 20: Siirt** The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days.
- 28: Ankara** The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) issued an administrative fine against KRT and TELE1 channels due to their broadcasts.
- 30: Ankara** The Security General Directorate sent a circular on April 27, 2021 regarding “The Recording of Visuals and Audio”, banning the citizens from recording visuals during demonstrations.

#### **4. Comments and Suggestions**

##### **Osman İşçi (Human Rights Association - IHD - Executive Board Member)**

In terms of violations against freedom of expression and the freedom of meeting and demonstration, interventions, detentions, investigations and prosecutions continued in Ankara and surrounding provinces in April 2021. Among the violations happening in this period, especially police interventions, access bans, Parliamentary summaries, posters being taken down and prosecutions were observed to have continued. Applications resulting in rights violations continued in April 2021. Effective documentation, reporting and advocacy on such violations are necessary to be made through long-term planning and coordination with other rights organisations.

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

April 2021 was a month full of heavy violations in terms of freedom of expression, meeting and organisation. I would like to evaluate the month by highlighting a few incidents:

The first was the press statements organised by workers and labourers throughout April and the security interventions against them with violence. As my colleagues have just stated, many people were detained as a result of such interventions, there were even those injured. The center of such protests and interventions was usually Istanbul. The security interventions were mostly against the protests and resistances of workers, who were dismissed from work due to being members of professional unions. Thus, not only the freedoms of expression, meeting and demonstration but also the torture ban and mistreatment ban were successively violated.

I would like to give two examples on such violations: Workers of Migros storage unit in Çayırova district of Kocaeli as well as workers dismissed due to their membership to the Union of Storage, Port, Harbour, Shipyard and Marine Workers organised demonstrations and press statements. Separate events were organised in front of the villa of Migros Chief Executive Board Chairman Tuncay Özilhan in Beykoz, on April 5, 8, and 14. 60 people were detained in total as a result of these press statements, two people were injured. One person's arm was broken after they refused the reverse handcuffing application. Another example was the protests of PTT workers, who were dismissed due to being members of the PTT Union. They organised a press statement in Istanbul on April 15 as well. There was a police intervention against it, with violence again. 8 people were detained. However, what was interesting here was this: The police confiscated the cell phones of those detained and deleted the recordings of the police intervention.

The police confiscating the phones and deleting visuals of the intervention constitute another highlight of April. The disproportionate, unlawful, unmonitored violence applied arbitrarily by the police, especially against peaceful meetings and demonstrations, have been increasing for a while. These applications were tied to a rule and attempted to be legitimised. The Security General Directorate launched a circular on April 27, 2021 with the title, "Regarding the Recording of Visuals and Audio" and ordered the prevention of recordings during police interventions, even when legal conditions are there, the circular ordered legal action to be taken against those recording the visuals and audio due to "violation of privacy." This circular is a worrying development that will result in all crimes committed by security forces, especially torture and mistreatment, committed during arbitrary and unlawful interventions against the right to peaceful meeting and demonstration protected by the Constitution be covered up.

Another worrying development in April 2021 was that even though the opposition parties' main job is to criticise the decisions taken and work done by the ruling power, the banners, posters and ads used by the parties within their right to criticism were taken down either upon Prosecutor orders or court decrees. This is an activity that aims to block the political field against opposition parties. For instance, banners prepared by the Leftist Party in Artvin and Edirne, as well as the People's Democratic Party (HDP) in Istanbul and Adana to protest Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention were taken down in six places. What's even more striking is that posters prepared by the Republican People's Party (CHP), asking where the 128 billion dollars are and hung on party buildings, were taken down in 7 provinces and 41 districts upon Prosecutor's order.

On the other hand, interventions against May 1st have already started in April, becoming even more tense due to the measures against the pandemic. 136 people, including three journalists, were detained. 11 people were fined within the Law of Misdemeanor. Governorate bans were issued in 8 provinces (Aydın, Denizli, Edirne, Hakkari, İstanbul, Kocaeli, Siirt ve Van) and 2 districts (Gebze ve Kartal) in April, especially between April 15-20, to include May 1st as well. These bans usually lasted between 15 days and 1 month, banning all meetings and demonstrations.

When it comes to Governorate bans, I would like to end my evaluation by pointing out to the ongoing meeting and demonstration ban in Van for more than four years. Van Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations across the province once again for 15 days on April 17, 2021. Thus, the continuous protest and demonstration ban applied in the province since November 21, 2016 was extended to 1624 days.