

May 2021 Report

1. Administrative Bans, Police Interventions

- 01: Ankara** The police intervened against the protest organised at Mamak Neighborhood and detained five people.
- 01: Ankara** The police detained 10 people in total from two different groups, who wanted to march towards the Kızılay Square.
- 01: Ankara** The police intervened against the protest organised at Yüzüncü Yıl Neighborhood and detained eight Student Collectives members by using violence.
- 01: Antalya** Four Community Center members were detained after they opened a banner due to May 1, Labour and Democracy Day.
- 01: Antalya** The police intervened against a protest and detained 4 Community Center members.
- 01: Artvin** 20 people were detained with the allegation that they were going to participate in the May 1st protest in Hopa.
- 01: Hakkari** 14-year-old S.T. was detained in Şemdinli due to insulting the President through his social media posts.
- 01: Istanbul** The police intervened against the group, who wanted to march towards Taksim for the May 1st celebrations, and detained 21 people using violence. 20 EHP members, 15 United Resistance Forces, 19 people from the Revolution Movement, 10 SODAP members in Mecidiyeköy and 4 people in Esenler were detained. 256 people were detained in total in Istanbul.
- 01: Izmir** 31 people were detained over organising a demonstration on May 1, Labour Day in Konak, Bornova and Buca.
- 01: Rize** Five people were detained over participating in the nature watch to prevent the construction of a stone quarry in İşkencedere Valley in İkizdere district.
- 01: Trabzon** The police intervened against the protest organised by the Community Center and Student Collectives, detaining 12 people.
- 02: Van** The Governorate banned all open-air meetings and demonstrations across the province for 15 days, once again. The protest and demonstration ban that has been ongoing since November 21, 2016 was extended to 1639 days without break.
- 03: G.Antep** The police intervened against the prayer organised in various mosques by Furkan Foundation members, detaining 56 people.
- 03: Rize** One person was detained over participating in the nature watch to prevent the construction of a stone quarry in İşkencedere Valley in İkizdere district.
- 04: Adana** The police intervened against the prayer organised in various mosques by Furkan Foundation members and detained the Foundation's Chairman Alpaslan Kuytul with others. The police further intervened against the group wanting to protest the detainments as well.

06: Adana The police intervened against the group of Furkan Foundation members waiting in front of the Security Directorate, where those detained from mosques during prayers were kept. The police used tear gas and shields during the intervention.

06: Istanbul The police intervened against the press statement organised by ESP and SDGF members, who gathered in front of the Cengiz Holding building in Üsküdar district to protest the oppression of the nature watch against the stone quarry to be built in İşkencedere Valley of İkizdere District in Rize, and detained four people.

08: Çanakkale SYKP member Ahmet Saymadı was detained due to “insulting the President” through a social media post he made in 2016.

10: Istanbul Nursel Tanrıverdi and Hüseyin Kütük were detained over performing a sit-in protest in Bakırköy Square to demand re-employment after their dismissal from public service via Statutory Decrees.

11: Istanbul The police intervened against the press statement organised for the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention by the We Want To Live Initiative and detained three women by using violence.

13: Bursa One person in Osmangazi district was exposed to physical violence by guards after he resisted to show his identity to them.

13: Istanbul Guards applied violence against a person due to “disrupting public peace” during the curfew in Fatih district, attempted to insult and hit those reacting against the application and opened fire in the air.

14: Urfa Emine Şenyaşar and her older son Ferit Şenyaşar performed a justice watch in front of the courthouse for Emine Şenyaşar’s killed husband Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar and sons Adil and Celal Şenyaşar as a result of the quarrel between AKP MP candidate İbrahim Halil Yıldız, his security guards and shop owners in Suruç district in June 2018. Before the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) board visit to the justice watch, the police intervened against the watch using violence. The justice watch was afterwards performed by the HDP board, including HDP Co-Chair Pervin Buldan.

15: Istanbul The poster hung on the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Esenyurt district building to draw attention to the hunger strikes in prisons was taken down by the police. One party executive was detained and three people were summoned to testify.

16: Hakkari The Governorate banned all meetings and demonstrations, including the distribution of leaflets and hanging posters, for another 15 days.

17: Batman The police intervened against the protest organised by musician Ethem Tüzer in front of the Governorate building on musicians who committed suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic, detaining the musician.

17: Istanbul The police intervened against the press statement organised by ESP and SDGF members, who gathered in front of the Cengiz Holding building in Üsküdar district to protest the oppression of the nature watch against the stone quarry to be built in İşkencedere Valley of İkizdere District in Rize, and detained 13 people.

17: Istanbul Nursel Tanrıverdi and Hüseyin Kütük, who had been performing a sit-in protest at Bakırköy Square to be re-employed after having been dismissed with a Statutory Decree, were detained.

- 17: Mersin** The police prevented the press statement organised by someone who filed a criminal complaint against Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu in front of Mersin Courthouse.
- 17: Van** The Governorate banned all open-air meetings and demonstrations across the province for another 15 days. With this decree, the protest and demonstration ban that has been ongoing since November 21, 2016 was extended to 1654 days.
- 18: Istanbul** The police intervened against the press statement organised by the United Youth Assemblies to commemorate İbrahim Kaypakkaya in Kadıköy district and detained 15 people, preventing the journalists from recording visuals.
- 18: Istanbul** Anti-Terror Units charged Selahattin Kaya, who was detained after hanging banners, with espionage.
- 19: Ankara** The press statement organised in front of the Ministry of Justice by the family of Umut Gündüz, who died after being hit by a car as he was riding a bike on July 21, 2020, was prevented by the police.
- 19: Antalya** Sümeyya Avcı was detained due to her social media posts after she was dismissed from public service with a Statutory Decree in 2016.
- 19: Istanbul** Seven people were detained due to attending a commemoration organised on the anniversary of İbrahim Kaypakkaya's death.
- 20: Ankara** The police intervened against the commemoration organised for İbrahim Kaypakkaya at Tekmezar Park in Mamak district and detained 13 people.
- 20: Istanbul** The police intervened against the group who wanted to make a statement at Taksim in order to protest Israel's attacks against Palestine and detained 15 people using physical violence.
- 20: Izmir** The press statement organised by women's organisations in Kemeraltı with the topic, "Women defending Kobane are being prosecuted," was prevented by the police and the attending women were checked for their criminal backgrounds.
- 20: Rize** Good Party members were prevented from visiting those resisting against the stone quarry to be constructed in İşkenecedere Valley of İkizdere district. Only the party's Chair Meral Akşener was permitted to enter the area.
- 22: Istanbul** The offices of Hadi and Süleyman Özişik were raided by the police following the criminal complaint filed against them by Süleyman Soylu; their computers and cell phones were confiscated.
- 23: Adana** 20 people, including People's Democratic Party (HDP), Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and TUAYDER members and executives, were detained in the operation organised in three provinces as part of an investigation.
- 23: Istanbul** One person was detained during the house raids organised due to their participation in the protests against the appointed rector to Boğaziçi University.
- 23: Istanbul** Former People's Democratic Party (HDP) Esenler District Co-Chair and six others were detained during house raids against the Democrat Party (DP) members.
- 24: Ankara** The police intervened against the press statement organised in front of the Human Rights Monument on Yüksel Street within the protests for re-employment, dispersing the crowd from the area.

- 25: Ankara** The police intervened against the press statement organised by Community Center members in front of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) Headquarters, detaining five people.
- 25: Ankara** Eight union members, including the Health and Social Service Labourers Union (SES) Co-Chair Selma Atabey, were detained within an investigation against the SES members and executives.
- 25: Istanbul** The police intervened against the protest for re-employment organised in front of Şişli Municipality, detaining Turan Aktaş and Hüseyin Kütük.
- 25: Rize** The police intervened against the nature watch organised to prevent the construction of a stone quarry in İşkencedere Valley of İkizdere District and detained two people.
- 26: Adana** Two different press statements organised by the Adana Democracy Forces and Social Freedom Party (TÖP) on the allegations of Sedat Peker in his videos were prevented due to the Governorate ban against meetings and demonstrations.
- 26: Izmir** The Governorate issued a protest and demonstration ban across the province for seven days. Official institutions were exempted from the ban.
- 26: Izmir** The press statements organised by Izmir Education and Science Workers' Union (Eğitim-Sen) Izmir and TÖP, and announced before the one-week protest and demonstration ban, were prevented by the police.
- 27: Artvin** The police intervened against those marching towards the Çaykur Directorate to protest the quota application on tea, detaining 32 people.
- 27: Van** The gendarmerie and guards intervened against those protesting the stone quarry to be constructed in the Yurtbaşı neighborhood of Gürpınar district by opening fire in the air. Four people were detained.
- 28: Istanbul** The police intervened against Youth Assemblies members, who wanted to organise a press statement on the announcements of Sedat Peker at Taksim, detaining two people with violence.
- 31: Denizli** The gendarmerie prevented the protests and demonstrations organised by the villagers against the stone quarry to be constructed in Güzelpınar neighborhood of Pamukkale.
- 31: Istanbul** The police intervened against the students performing a watch at the South Campus to protest the appointed rector to Boğaziçi University, taking the students out of the campus.
- 31: Istanbul** The police wanted to prevent the "Week of the Missing / Closing event" organised by the Saturday Mothers / Human Rights Association Missing Persons Committee due to the District Governorate ban against meetings. The event was held in front of the association under police blockade, following the bargain with the police.
- 31: Istanbul** The police intervened against those wanting to make a statement due to the anniversary of the Gezi Park protests in Fatih, detaining 13 people with violence.
- 31: Istanbul** The press statement organised for the anniversary of the Gezi Park protests was prevented due to the District Governorate ban. The statement could be held partially after various bargains with the police.

31: Istanbul Nursel Tanriverdi was detained over performing a weekly sit-in protest in Bakırköy Square to demand re-employment after her dismissal from public service via Statutory Decrees.

31: Istanbul Two people were detained over hanging a poster on the door of Medeniyet University, on which it wrote, *“Bulu cannot be a rector to Boğaziçi University, nor a lecturer at Medeniyet University.”*

2. Investigations and Prosecutions

01: Muğla One person was detained and arrested in Milas due to insulting the President on social media.

03: Istanbul 256 people, who were detained in May 1 celebrations, were sentenced to 888 thousand Turkish Liras of administrative fine in total due to violating the curfew.

04: Istanbul An investigation was started against Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu due to praising the criminal through visiting People’s Democratic Party (HDP) municipalities and showing disrespect by clasping his hands behind at the Fatih Mehmet Mosque.

05: Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office opened an investigation against Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul Parliament member Aykut Erdoğan due to *“insulting the President”* through a social media post, in which he wrote, *“I will do my best to get you prosecuted due to treason after you go down with an election.”*

05: Izmir PIRHA reporter Ersin Özgül was detained. The reason for detainment is unknown.

06: Izmir A Syrian refugee was detained due to criticising the ruling power on social media, a decision of deportation was made due to him being a threat against public safety.

07: Istanbul An investigation was opened against someone who wrote on social media, *“LGBTQ+ children do exist.”*

07: Izmir Ege University administration issued disciplinary penalties against many students due to their protests on January 15, 2015 as well as against two Human Rights Association executives, who were observing the protests.

12: Istanbul Taylan Kulaçoğlu was arrested after having been detained due to his social media posts.

12: Istanbul Chief Prosecutor’s Office prepared an indictment against journalist Deniz Yücel due to his expressions, *“Dead before his Kurdish mother could see him”* and *“Armenian genocide”* in two different news articles published in 2016. Yücel faces an imprisonment sentence from 6 months up to 2 years.

18: Ankara The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against 108 People’s Democratic Party (HDP) members and executives, 28 of whom were arrested including former HDP Co-Chairs, was held at the 22nd Assize Court. The court decided for 28 defendants to remain arrested and denied the claim for recusation, scheduling the next hearing for June 14, 2021.

18: Osmaniye The lawsuit filed against People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Provincial Co-Chairs Kadriye Tören and Ali Coşkun started at the 2nd Assize Court due to “illegal organisation membership”. The next hearing is on October 7.

21: Istanbul The prosecution of the lawsuit filed against Republican People’s Party (CHP) Istanbul Provincial Chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu started at the Anatolian 13th Criminal Court of First Instance due to photographing the house of the Presidential Communications Director İ. Altun. Kaftancıoğlu is facing an imprisonment sentence for up to 10 years and six months.

21: Istanbul Journalist Melis Alphan was acquitted of “making illegal organisation propaganda” in the lawsuit filed against her due to sharing a photo on social media that was taken during a Newroz celebration organised in Diyarbakır in 2015.

21: Mardin The prosecution of People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Derik District Co-Chair Mülkiye Esmez continued at the Assize Court. Mülkiye Esmez attended the hearing through the Audiovisual Information System (SEGBIS). According to the interim decree issued, she will remain under arrest. Esmez had been detained and arrested on November 16, 2019 and was replaced with a trustee. The next hearing was scheduled for June 25.

22: Istanbul In the latest hearing of the Gezi Park Case at the 30th Assize Court, the court decided for Osman Kavala to remain under arrest.

25: D.Bakır The prosecution of 81-year-old Meryem Soylu continued at the 5th Assize Court within the investigation against the Association for Solidarity with the Families Who Lost Their Relatives in the Cradle of Civilization. Meryem Soylu attended the hearing through the Audiovisual Information System (SEGBIS). After the defense statements, the court decided for Meylem Soylu to be released and scheduled the next hearing for September 14.

25: Istanbul The lawsuit filed against the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) Assembly member Uğur Ok, who was kept in Silivri Prison, continued at the 22nd Assize Court. Ok remains under arrest.

25: Ş. Urfa The prosecution of the lawsuit filed against Metropolitan Municipality Assembly member İsmail Kaplan started at the 6th Assize Court. Kaplan attended the hearing through the Audiovisual Information System (SEGBIS). After the defense statements, the court released İsmail Kaplan.

26: D.Bakır The lawsuit filed against the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Sur District Co-Mayor Cemal Özdemir, who was arrested on December 21, 2018 and was replaced with a trustee, continued at the 8th Assize Court. Özdemir was facing a sentence of imprisonment, starting from 17 years and six months, up to 36 years due to “making illegal organisation propaganda,” “unpermitted possession of dangerous substances” and “purchasing and possessing lethal ammunition” through 22 events he attended, a secret witness statement against him as well as three social media posts he made. The court issued the arrest of Cemal Özdemir and scheduled the next hearing for September 22.

26: Hakkari Peace Mother Fatma Turan was sentenced to 10 months of imprisonment due to “public incitement towards resentment and hostility” as well as 25 days of imprisonment due to “praising the crime and the criminal” in the lawsuit filed against her at the 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance based on a speech she gave at an event.

26: Iğdır People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Mayor Yaşar Akkuş, who was arrested on May 18, 2020 and was replaced with a trustee, was sentenced to 7 years and six months of

imprisonment due to “illegal organisation membership” in the lawsuit filed against him at the 2nd Assize Court.

26: Istanbul The first hearing of the lawsuit filed against journalist Mehmet Aslan, who was arrested due to the news he reported, was held at the 24th Assize Court. The court issued the release of Aslan and scheduled the next hearing for October 14.

27: D.Bakır The prosecution of journalist Roza Metina started at the 5th Assize Court. Metina is charged with “illegal organisation membership”. After defense statements, the court scheduled the next hearing for September 14.

27: Erzurum The lawsuit filed against Mesopotamia News Agency reporter Dindar Karataş started at the 3rd Assize Court due to “illegal organisation membership.” The court scheduled the next hearing for September 7.

3. Other Violations

03: D.Bakır 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the websites of JinNews and Mesopotamia News Agency due to the “*protection of national security and public order.*”

03: D.Bakır 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the website of JinNews due to the “*protection of national security and public order.*”

03: Izmir No newspapers, books or magazines are handed to prisoners at Şakran Women’s Closed Penitentiary Institute.

05: Antalya Judge Ali Dursun Turan, who put an annotation against the court decree in the drug trafficking case in Alanya and stated, “Relatives of politicians having connections with the mafia receive less penalty” was appointed to Siirt with a judicial ordinance announced a day after the decree.

14: Ankara A group of three unidentified people attacked the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) Headquarters in Çankaya.

18: Istanbul A five-day ad ban was issued by the Press Ad Institute against Evrensel Daily due to journalist Ceren Sözeri’s article in the newspaper with the title, “*The homeland writes legend, people can’t breathe.*”

19: Izmir Many refugees were beaten at Harmandalı Deportation Center as a result of the protests that emerged after an officer replied to the refugees’ claim to read the Quran with swear words.

21: Ankara 8th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the website of Sedat Peker due to the “*protection of national security and public order.*”

21: D.Bakır 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the website of JinNews due to the “*protection of national security and public order.*”

25: Aksaray 1st Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the news articles on HaberTürk and Sözcü Daily’s websites regarding Sarıyahşi Mayor using the municipality resources for his personal affairs.

25: Ankara Summaries prepared against three Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MPs were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT).

27: Ankara Summaries prepared against 10 People’s Democratic Party (HDP) MPs and one independent MP were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT).

28: Istanbul Anatolian 4th Criminal Judicature of Peace issued an access ban against the social media account of MP Ahmet Şık due to seven posts he made on the former lawyer of the President.

4. Comments and Suggestions

Human Rights Foundation of Turkey - Coşkun Üsterci

Violations against the right to freedom of expression, meeting and organisation continued with full speed even though there was a curfew within the “measures against the Pandemic” during the majority of May 2021. The right to meeting and demonstration was seriously violated as a result of the interventions made by police forces against peaceful meetings and demonstrations organised by workers, students, women, environmentalists and faith groups. The police used disproportionate force during such interventions.

354 people were detained with torture and mistreatment across Turkey as a result of the police interventions against May 1st celebrations, at least one person was injured. 256 people detained in Istanbul were sentenced to 888 thousand TL judicial fine in total. The circular issued by the Security General Directorate at the end of April had banned the recording of visuals and sounds during meetings and demonstrations; during the May 1st celebrations, the circular was tested/applied. Many journalists and citizens wanting to record visuals of the violations faced police intervention and were detained.

The police forces applied heavy interventions against the prayers organised by Furkan Foundation members at various mosques in Antep, Manisa, Mersin and Adana on May 3-4, 2021. The police went inside mosque and used force/violence against those praying that reached a level of torture and mistreatment, using chemical agents similar to tear gas, in a closed area and from a close range. 361 people were detained in total. A Syrian refugee, who was detained in Izmir due to posting on social media that criticised the police violence against Furkan Foundation members, was released afterwards and decided to be deported.

May 3 was “World Press Freedom Day.” In the 2021 Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders (RFS), Turkey is unfortunately ranked 153rd among 180 countries.

Turkish Journalists Union (TGS) launched the “Press Freedom Report” for the period between April 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021. According to the report, 43 journalists are still in Turkish prisons due to their journalistic activities. 57 journalists remained under detainment for 144 days in the past year and six journalists faced violence by the police under detainment. Furthermore, 44 journalists were physically attacked for various reasons and 23 journalists were verbally threatened.

The report further handles the issue of unemployment in the media. Including those working without social security, it is expressed that the unemployment rate has reached 30-40%.

All of these are indicators that a heavy democracy and human rights crisis is ongoing in the country.

Turkey was talking about the disclosures of criminal organisation leader Sedat Peker during May. A part of those disclosures were on the oppression and attacks against the press and journalists that reached levels of killing.

One of those cases was the suspicious death of journalist Yeldana Kaharman, a Kazakhstan citizen working for the local press in Elazığ. An effective investigation was needed to be opened to illuminate the incident, whereas an investigation was opened against journalist Baransel Ağca instead, who published Kaharman’s autopsy report. This situation is quite ironic.

Another method to oppress the media recently is the ad bans issued against the oppositional media organisations, whose economical structures are already quite weakened. The Press Ad Institute (BIK) issued a 5-day ad ban against Evrensel Daily due to the article with the title, “The homeland writes a legend, the people can’t breathe.” With this last penalty, the ad bans issued against Evrensel Daily reached 103 days in total.

I would like to finish the evaluation of this month by the protest and demonstration bans issued by local administrations (Governorates and District Governorates). Governorates and District Governorates issue protest and demonstration bans under every circumstance. It must have been removed from the legislation already, but the country is almost being governed under a State of Emergency law. An extreme example of this issue is happening in Van. Van Governorate extended the protest and demonstration ban across the province for 15 days, starting on May 19, 2021. Thus, the protest and demonstration ban, that has been going on since November 21, 2016, was extended to 1654 days.