

JAILING WOMEN IN TURKEY

SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN OF PERSECUTION AND FEAR





Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) is an advocacy organization that promotes the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights and freedoms with a special focus on Turkey, a nation of 80 million that is facing significant backsliding in its parliamentary democracy under its autocratic leaders.

SCF, a non-profit organization, was set up by a group of journalists who have been forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey .

SCF is committed to serving as a reference source by providing a broader picture of rights violations in Turkey, monitoring daily developments on fact-based investigative journalism and documenting individual cases of the infringement of fundamental rights. The founders of SCF are top-notch journalists who had managed national dailies in Turkey and worked for leading media outlets before they were forced to leave. They have the expertise, human resources and network on the ground to track events in Turkey despite serious challenges.

Introduction

There has been a systematic campaign conducted for some time now by the Turkish government to jail women on trumped-up charges as part of an escalating witch-hunt targeting critics and opponents of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government.

The motivation behind this unprecedented crackdown on women is to create a chill factor in Turkish society and intimidate people from exercising their rights including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and other liberties. The logic follows that if the regime goes to this extreme in jailing women who, in some cases, have just delivered babies or are pregnant, and subjecting them to torture and ill-treatment in detention centers and prisons, the prevailing perception will be that nobody is safe from the wrath of Erdoğan and the government.

One woman was detained in a hospital immediately after the delivery of her baby before she had a chance to recover, while another was jailed as she was visiting her imprisoned husband, leaving her children stranded in a car parked in a lot under the care of the elder brother. A woman who lost her sanity under torture while in police detention was thrown back into prison, despite a diagnosis to that effect while she was jailed, because her husband, a journalist, remained at large. The government has jailed the wives of businessman who are seen as supporting the opposition to Turkey's autocratic President Erdoğan in addition to seizing all their businesses and personal assets. That has taken a toll not only on jailed women but also on their children and family members.



Nazlı Ilıcak, 72-yr old jailed journalist, has an impeccable record for fighting freedoms.

The persecution of women through the abuse of the criminal justice system cuts across all age groups, from as young as 18 to over 80 years of age. Most of the recent detentions targeted a highly educated segment among women's groups that includes professionals ranging from academics, doctors and teachers to judges and prosecutors. To name just a few: the president of Dicle University, Ayşe Jale Sarac, and the head of the 2nd Chamber at Turkey's Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), Nesibe Ozer, and Nazlı

Ilıcak, a 72-year-old veteran journalist who had also previously served as a lawmaker in Parliament. None of them had any criminal record but now face criminal charges just because the government declared them to be terrorists and coup plotters overnight. These women victimized by Turkey's repressive regime most certainly qualify as political prisoners.

SCF cited well-documented cases in this report to draw a picture of a larger pattern of institutionalized abuse of jailed women in Turkey as the art of systematic targeting by the authorities to crack down on the right to dissent, the right to freedom of speech and the right to hold differing views from the prevailing ideology of the current Islamist government. SCF believes the torture and ill-treatment of women in detention and jails are worse than what is publicly



Reported cases of the abuse of women in Turkey's jails represent tip of the iceberg.

reported since many victims fear that coming forward and sharing their horrific stories about the abuse would lead to further negative repercussions from the authorities.

In addition to imprisonment on false charges, these women were stripped of their right of easy access to health care, denied the provisions they requested and separated from their babies and children, in blatant violation of the Turkish government's obligations under international conventions as well as the Turkish Constitution. Turkey is breaching, inter alia, the Council of Europe (CoE) 2006 European Prison Rules and the 1957 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Article 17 of the Turkish Constitution states: "No one shall be subjected to torture or maltreatment; no one shall be subjected to penalties or treatment incompatible with human dignity." These provisions appear to have lost their meaning to the current Turkish government.

In a report in June 2008, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) made a call to member states including Turkey that "when imprisoning a woman, particularly if she is the sole or main carer of children, the judicial authorities of member states should be convinced that this decision is more justifiable than a non-custodial sentence, given the disruption and emotional costs which may ensue to both the mother and child(ren)."¹ It also said "the suspension of the imprisonment sentence during pregnancy could also be considered."

The provisions of the revised European Prison Rules state that "prison conditions that infringe prisoners' human rights are not justified by lack of resources." In the case of pregnant women, restrictions must be relaxed and family visits must be allowed. PACE underlined that member states must "ensure that prison regimes and facilities are flexible enough to meet the requirements of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and prisoners whose children are with them." It further noted that state authorities must "ensure that, in situations where babies and young children in prison with their mother have to be separated from her, this is done gradually, so that the process is as painless and non-threatening as possible."²

Many of these provisions were in fact incorporated into Turkish law. According to Article 16 of Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, which was approved on December 13, 2004,³ people who have serious health problems, have recently given birth or are pregnant can be released pending trial and/or their prison time can be postponed. This provision is valid both for suspects in pre-trial detention and those who have been convicted.

In fact, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), in the case of *Gülây Çetin v. Turkey* in 2013, indicated that waiting until one's conviction becomes final in order for Article 16 of Law No. 5275 to be applied was a worrying situation in cases of appeals proceedings. The court said

1] Women in prison (2008, June 3), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?file-id=12087&lang=en>

2] Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules (2006, January 11), <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806f3d4f>

3] Ceza ve güvenlik tedbirlerinin infazi hakkında kanun (2004, December 13), <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5275.html>

the difference in treatment between detainees awaiting trial and convicted prisoners when it came to considering their release on medical grounds had been evaluated as a violation of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) because the former did not enjoy the same legal protection as the latter when suffering from a terminal illness.

As a result, it unanimously found Turkey in breach of ECHR Articles 14 and 3.⁴ In response to the judgement, the Turkish government notified the Committee of Ministers that it had transmitted the judgement to the relevant authorities including the courts and provided statistics indicating that Turkey has released 559 persons (15 of whom were detainees) from prison on the grounds of a severe or continuing illness in accordance Article 16 of Law No. 5275.⁵

1. OVERCROWDED PRISONS

The Turkish Justice Ministry has not provided exact figures on the number of women imprisoned despite repeated motions by advocacy groups that exercised their right to obtain information from the government under the law. The government often claims there are no specific data on the number of women in prison and how they are jailed in prisons that were made for men and says it needs to work on several databases to compile such figures.⁶ The practice appears to be a deliberate attempt to suppress knowledge on this matter.

There are several figures reported in the Turkish media which put the number of women in prison at 6,616 as of March 2016⁷ and 7,894 as of November 2016.⁸ The number of women who were jailed pending trial tripled from 1,157 in March 2016 to 3,235 in November 2016. Following a 207 percent increase in the number of detainees without a conviction, the Turkish government has stopped publishing data on the number of detainees and prisoners, which used to be posted on the Ministry of Justice's website with daily updates.

The website was last updated on March 18, 2017, which showed 80,482 people in pre-trial detention and 108,734 as having been convicted and serving time. That is a considerable spike compared to figures posted on the website exactly a year ago, on March 18, 2016, which showed 26,257 people in pre-trial detention and 141,739 convicted. The overcrowding problem was not resolved despite a government amnesty for convicted felons in August 2016 that reduced to the number of convicts in jail from 141,739 a year ago to 108,734 on the day the Justice Ministry stopped reporting.⁹

4] *Affaire Gülay Çetin c. Turquie*, Requête no 44084/10, (2013, March 5) [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/en-g#{"itemid":\["001-116946"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/en-g#{)

5] Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers (2016, January 25), <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016805ac7fa>

6] Turkish Parliament Human Rights Commission Subcommittee meeting, (2016, January 28), https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon_tutanaklari.goruntule?pTutanakId=1546

7] *Cezaevlerinde sınır aşıldı!* (2016, March 1), <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1202922-cezaevlerinde-sinir-asildi>

8] *Tutuklu kadın sayısı üçe katlandı: Çıplak arama artık rutin*, (2017, February 23), <https://journos.com.tr/tutuklu-kadin-sayisi-ciplak-arama>

9] *Turkey Stops Publishing Data On Prison Figures Amid Mass Crackdown*, (2017, March 31), <http://stockholmcf.org/turkey-stopped-publishing-data-on-prison-figures-amid-mass-crackdown/>

Many women get detained on the spot while visiting their loved ones in the jail.



The drop was quickly compensated for by the new imprisonment that the Turkish government launched against the Gülen movement as part of a witch-hunt persecution carried out by President Erdoğan. The crackdown on the Kurdish political movement was also a factor in the increase. Turkey's Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu said on April 2, 2017 that 113,260 people have also been detained for alleged links to the Gülen movement. Of these, 47,155 were formally arrested and put behind bars pending trial in the last eight months alone.¹⁰ Based on these figures, several estimates were reported by Turkish media outlets that the number of detained women range from 16,000 to 20,000. There were no figures on how many of these detainees had been formally arrested.

Considering that Turkish prisons have a capacity of 180,176,¹¹ the overcrowded jails present significant problems. There are only six prisons (one is an open prison) in Turkey specifically dedicated to women, while many women were incarcerated in prisons built just for men. Although women were kept in a separate section of these prisons, they were not allowed to enjoy their rights because of the lack of facilities for women. That means an additional and unjustifiable penalty applied to women in such prisons.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) recommended in 2015 that “the Turkish authorities redouble their efforts – in consultation with the prosecutorial and judicial authorities – to combat prison overcrowding by adopting policies designed to limit or modulate the number of persons sent to prison.”¹² It specifically asked Ankara to comply with the CoE's Committee of Ministers concerning prison overcrowding and prison population inflation and on improving the implementation of the European rules on community sanctions and measures.

10] Minister Soylu Says 47,155 People Jailed, 113,260 People Detained Over Alleged Gülen Links,(2017, April 2), <http://stockholmcf.org/minister-soylu-says-47155-people-jailed-113260-people-detained-over-alleged-gulen-links/>

11] Turkish Parliament Human Rights Commission Subcommittee meeting, (2016, January 14) https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/komisyon_tutanaklari.goruntule?pTutanakId=1549

12] Report to the Turkish Government on the visit to Turkey carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 9 to 21 June 2013, (2015, January 15), <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680698344>

1.1. WOMEN IN JAILS AND DETENTION FACILITIES DESIGNED FOR MEN

Although the women in Turkish jails are still a minority, they suffer more because the detention centers and prisons in Turkey are, by and large, designed to accommodate men rather than women. This has further exacerbated their plight. Not only were they subjected to undue restrictions because of a lack of facilities for women in these places, they also faced the risk of abuse and ill-treatment by male guards.

Sevcan Adıgüzel, a female inmate in the high-security Silivri Prison No.9, which was specifically designed for men, was subjected to torture when guards hit her head on the wall and squeezed her nipples on October 10, 2016.¹³ According to a statement from the People's Law Office, a law firm that represents some female clients in Silivri Prison, the prison administration told lawyers to urge their client to behave or face repercussions. "Tell them not to resist. This is a male prison; our guards are all men. We will not be responsible for what may happen," the warden told the lawyers.

Detention centers appear to be worse for women than prisons as revealed by journalist Tuba Tekerek, who was detained as she was covering the human tragedy of mass persecution in front of the police station in Istanbul's Gayrettepe district. As she was reporting on the plight of men and women who were detained in that police station, on August 21, 2016, Tekerek found herself in the same detention cell when police took her into custody. She shared a small cell with 27 women who had been detained on alleged links to the Gülen movement. Police told her she might be charged with terrorism just for taking pictures on the street outside of the police station as a reporter.

She was initially denied any recording of the fact that she was detained in a police station. When she told the police, "You can't hold me in custody without any record," a police officer slammed the door shut, banged his fist on the table and said: "Emergency rule is in force. We can keep you in here without any record until morning and do whatever we want, if we want to. And you file a complaint once you are set free." Her lawyer eventually succeeded in formally registering her name as a detainee, and the prosecutor was alerted. In the meantime, she was also threatened with possible harm to her family members by the police. Eventually, she was charged with insulting the president in a tweet message and released by the prosecutor with a warning after a one-day detention.

She wrote a touching story afterwards detailing the conditions of detention first hand.¹⁴ "I was wondering if I would be by myself or with an inmate in the cell. When the iron gate was opened, I saw dozens of shoes. And a very heavy smell... Twenty-seven people were living in three cells which are supposed to accommodate only three to five people each," Tekerek said.

"I was lucky that I had had enough time to call my lawyer friend from P24, Veysel Ok, when

13] Silivri 9 No'lu Cezaevinde kadın mahkumlara işkence iddiası (2016, October 12), <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/silivri-9-no-lu-cezaevinde-kadin-mahkumlara-iskence-iddiasi-131179.html>

14] <http://platform24.org/p24blog/yazi/1701/ohal-de-perde-degistirmek>



Collective punishment for the women who are affiliated with Gülen movement.

the police officer first took me inside the building. Veysel reportedly phoned me back but failed to get an answer. When out of curiosity he called the Gayrettepe Police Station, he was told that there was no record of any “Tuğba Tekerek.” My friend did not believe the response and stopped by the station. I was really lucky that somebody from the outside knew I was there and that it would not be that easy for the police to do anything to me,” she added.

The following are excerpts from her story:

“It was about 3 in the morning when I was put into the cell. Women in custody asked me if I was a clerk of the court. While I was still trying to understand the question, they said: “We are all clerks. ... We used to work at the Anadolu Courthouse.” Twenty-four out of 27 were clerks. They had all managed to type 90 words in three minutes in the exam to become clerks. But now, they were detained for being members of “FETÖ” [an abbreviation coined by the government to describe the alleged terrorist network of the Gülen movement within state institutions].

“They surrounded me although it was almost midnight. They were longing for any small news and asking me ‘What is happening?’ They had been there for the past seven days and were denied permission to see their family members. They had no lawyers. Attorneys appointed by bar associations as legal aid were not willing to meet with them, either. (Rumor even has it that police officers from departments other than counterterrorism units are also involved in operations against ‘FETÖ.’ When police officers call for lawyers for any detainee, they willingly show up thinking that they will be defending a murder suspect. When police officers tell them that they will defend members of ‘FETÖ,’ they don’t come.)

“I can’t describe what I saw on their faces when I told them that I was detained because I took photos near the Gayrettepe Police Station because the people I took pictures of were their relatives, who they had been longing to hear from. ‘Did you see that boy?’ ‘Was that woman there?’ and similar questions rained down on me. The inmates are mainly between 25 and 30 years of age. Most of them have babies. A 7-month-old baby was brought to its detained mother from Sultanbeyli, a district two hours away, twice a day for breastfeeding. But she is among the luckiest ones because the other women, even if they have 15-month-old babies, are not allowed to see their children. Whenever this woman sees her 7-month-old baby, others sit back and weep softly. They think of their children or mothers as missing themselves.

“There was a pregnant woman who often stayed out of the conversation, dealing with her own problems. The difficulties she is undergoing were written all over her face. Back in normal life, she had been studying law while working, but she now hates the law. She was on maternity leave when she was detained. When she learned about the search warrant issued for her, she went to the prosecutor and said: ‘I want to surrender myself.’ She has another daughter who is three-and-a-half years old. ‘I have almost forgotten the face of my baby. I wish I had brought one of her pictures with me,’ she said in tears. Another one interrupted: ‘They would not allow you to do so anyway. There isn’t even a mirror here.’ Yes, this is a place where people may forget even their own face.

Detained women who have no past criminal record were forced to parade for the press.



“The light inside the cell was always switched on regardless of whether it was night or day. We didn’t know the time as our watches were taken away upon entering. The sunlight reflected on the wall across from our 10-centimeter window was the only way we were able to know what time it was. I was told that the police let women go into the shared courtyard only when they feel like it. They let them outside for five minutes the other night, for example. They allow toothpaste at their own discretion.

“We were like stuck in the motor of an air conditioner that makes constant, scary noises. I tried not to think about the high temperature and the fact that I was having trouble breathing. We didn’t know how long all this would take.

“I couldn’t say a single word when they asked me ‘Is there any reaction to our arrest out there?’ Then one of them replied: ‘What did we used to say when others were being arrested? We used to say, “Ah, those innocent will be released, inshallah!” That’s it. Now others probably wish the same for us.’

“One of them said: ‘I tried to get a credit card from Bank Asya in 2014. Bank Asya was the only lender that would give me a credit card. That is my only fault.’ Another one was thinking that she was detained because she had been answering phones at a dersane [preparatory school] affiliated with the Gülen movement seven years ago. And yet another other woman said: ‘I have never gone to their dersanes, I have never taken out loans from Bank Asya. I have never attended any of their meetings, and I have never read the Zaman newspaper. Why, then, am I here?’

“The authorities’ intention was to drag them down and wrangle words out of them. Nearly 20 of them who had earlier been interrogated by a prosecutor were told that they were under arrest. But I learned after my release that almost all of them have been set free.

“They were held in custody without any news from outside, and they were misled as well.

“I was called by the police at about 11 the next morning. I left the cell burdened with a guilt that I still feel. I know that independent media outlets, even if only a few are left, including P24 and Ben Gazeteciyim İnsiyatifi [the ‘I Am a Journalist Initiative’] looked out for me. I was able to resist the situation with their help. But it is much harder for the women inside to do so.”

2. HEALTH NEEDS OF WOMEN

In a 2009 resolution, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) called on member states “to ensure that prison policies and programs for women in the area of health care exist and that they are specifically tailored to their needs and that the health care needs of minority groups of women prisoners, such as pregnant, breastfeeding, post-natal and older women, are identified and met.”¹⁵

15] Resolution 1663 (2009), Women in prison, (2009, April 28), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17733&lang=en>

PACE also said authorities must “ensure that, whenever possible, prisoners are allowed to see a doctor on their own and not in the presence of guards or other prison staff and that male guards are never present when women prisoners are consulting a doctor or nurse.”

The 2006 European Prison Rules state that “prisoners shall have access to the health services in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation” and “health policy in prisons shall be integrated into and compatible with national health policy.”¹⁶

Yet in many cases, both detention centers and prisons in Turkey are far from meeting these criteria set up by CoE and the UN. Writer Aslı Erdoğan, who was imprisoned for over four months, described her experience to Turkish media. She said the prison cells were far from meeting basic hygienic conditions, inmates were not allowed to use bathrooms and urine became the natural smell in the cells. No heating was available, cells were extremely cold and no clean water was given to prisoners. The guards were inflicting psychological violence by even removing flowers that were grown by the prisoners.¹⁷

Attorney Ezgi Duman, a lawyer from the Civil Society Association, which works on the issue of women prisoners, stated that there was evidence that prisons turned into places where women were systematically humiliated.¹⁸ She said the government kept reshuffling women from one prison to another under emergency rule, often to provinces far from their families. “These transfers are accompanied by male gendarmerie officers, and with a vehicle that is very cold in winter and very hot in summer.”

She added that women were subjected to humiliating naked searches during these transfers when the regulation states that strip searches can only be conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that inmates possess contraband or goods that are banned. Duman also pointed out that women, many in pre-trial detention and not yet convicted, were systematically placed in high-security prisons when the practice in the past was to put them in dormitory-type, light-security facilities.

This is in fact against the specific recommendation made by PACE with respect to Turkey in a resolution of December 13, 2015. The resolution and accompanying report, titled “The fate of critically ill detainees in Europe,” called on Turkey to “entrust the responsibility for transporting detainees to outside hospitals to a body other than the Gendarmerie, and take all necessary measures to safeguard the detainee’s dignity prior to and during such transfers, in particular by making sure that they take place without undue or discriminatory delays and by avoiding any ill-treatment of detainees during the transfers.”¹⁹

16] 2006 European Prison Rules, Recommendation Rec(2006)2, rules 40.3 and 40.2.

17] Aslı Erdoğan’ın cezaevindeki 136 günü (2017, January 8), <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/ayse-arman/asli-erdoganin-cezaevindeki-136-gunu-40329758>

18] Tutuklu kadın sayısı üçe katlandı: Çıplak arama artık rutin, (2017, February 23), <http://journos.com.tr/tutuklu-kadin-sayisi-ciplak-arama>

19] The fate of critically ill detainees in Europe (2015, November 13), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22244&lang=en>

That recommendation appears to have fallen on deaf ears in Ankara as in many cases SCF documented women prisoners were escorted by gendarmes during transfers and hospital visits. PACE also calls on member states to insure that women prisoners be “monitored for signs of depression or other mental illnesses.” It says “Particular attention must be paid to vulnerable groups such as women prisoners who are more likely to self-harm.”²⁰

Since most of the women who were jailed in the post-coup crackdown are alleged to be affiliated with the Gülen movement, they are political prisoners and not criminals and offenders. When they see the bars and walls of a jail for the first time, they are put in a traumatic situation that may lead to mental health problems including depression, phobias and anxiety. The following case is one example of how imprisonment may be a traumatic experience for some women. It also shows how the Turkish government totally disregarded the PACE advisory in such cases.

2.1. THE CASE OF TUĞBA YILDIZ

At least in one case SCF documented, Turkey applied a policy that is contrary to the recommendation on monitoring signs of depression or other mental illness. Tuğba Yıldız, arrested on January 15, 2017 in Tekirdağ province along with her husband, had been tortured and was threatened by authorities with her children being taken away. She eventually developed symptoms of psychological disorder and lost her sanity during an unusually long 24 days in police detention. Although the doctors’ reports revealed that the victim was subjected to heavy torture for days and therefore her mental health was in critical condition, a Tekirdağ court ruled for the arrest of Yıldız and sent her to prison, where she has been incarcerated ever since. The victim has a 14-year-old son and two daughters aged 10 and 11. One of the daughters is a leukemia patient and in need of constant care. They are being looked after by their grandparents.



Tuğba Yıldız

Yıldız was reported to have been talking in her sleep about the daughter with leukemia. She started calling other children accompanying jailed mothers in the same cell by the names of her own children. She lost a lot of weight and fell ill due to malnutrition. She has developed an eating disorder over fears of being poisoned. It has been confirmed by psychiatrists at Bakırköy Hospital that Yıldız was diagnosed with schizophrenia after suffering a high level of trauma during the process, and she remains in prison as of today.²¹

2.2. OTHER CASES

A female teacher identified by the initials A.A. in the western province of Uşak was detained although she had been undergoing treatment for brain cancer for the last two years. A.A., a mother of two, required regular medicine and suffered from heart irregularities. Media reports

20] Women in prison (2009,, April 28), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?file-id=17733&lang=en>

21] Gözaltında akli dengesini yitiren öğretmen cezaevine kondu, (2017, February 27), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/27/gozaltinda-akli-dengesini-yitiren-ogretmen-tekrar-cezaevine-konu/>

stated she was not allowed to see any family members and denied access to her much-needed drugs. Her family is concerned that she may be at risk of dying.²²

3. VISITATION RIGHTS

PACE called on member states to “ensure that all prisons have visitor centres. Such centres may be particularly beneficial for young children.” It also asked authorities to “ensure that special efforts are made to allow the children of prisoners to visit the prison and that staff are given training in dealing with visiting children. Any new measures or policies proposed should be analysed for the effects they may have on children visiting the prison and take into account the rights of the child. Security measures imposed around visits must not be intimidating to children.”

It also said prison authorities should “ensure that prisons should provide supervised play areas that allow children to be looked after while their mother and other visitors can talk privately during the visit if necessary.”

Turkey is pursuing a completely contradictory policy with respect to these recommendations and in clear violation of Turkish law and Turkey’s commitments under international treaties. According to prison regulations, inmates are allowed to receive visitors every week and talk to them from behind a protective screen. Once in two months they are also allowed to see their family members in an open visiting environment without any barriers separating them.

However, during emergency rule, the government put into practice harsh restrictions on such visits, not just by reducing the number of visits but also applying policies arbitrarily, suspending these rights at the whim of prosecutors and prison guards. Members of the Gülen movement are especially singled out in this arbitrary practice as a result of the harsh government narrative that vilifies this whole social group, numbering in the millions of people. As a result, during prison visits, family members of those who are alleged to be affiliated with Gülen face undue restrictions, denial of the right to pay visits or in some cases detention on the spot.

3.1. THE CASE OF NAGİHAN GÖKÇEK

On January 23, 2017, Nagihan Gökçek, a mother of five, was first detained and then arrested while she was entering a prison to visit her husband, Abdul-



A woman was detained while visiting the jailed husband, leaving kids including one with a Down Syndrome stranded in the car in the parking lot of the prison.

22] Savci geçmişini unutmamak için anne ve çocuklara zulüm talimatı verdi, (2017, February 26), <http://www.tr724.com/savci-gecmisini-unutmamak-icin-anne-cocuklara-zulum-talimatı-verdi/>

lah Gökçek. Their five children, one of them suffering from Down syndrome, were left alone in the prison parking lot until their relatives came to pick them up.

The video showing five children left alone in tears in front of the prison after their mother was detained went viral on social media, prompting an outcry. “Leaving children alone in such a situation is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all related laws. We will follow this issue,” said Mahmut Tanal, a deputy from the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) and a member of the Human Rights Commission in the Turkish Parliament.²³

In the video a child opens the door of a car in the prison parking lot, showing his brothers crying, and says in tears: “We are five brothers, left alone. We have a handicapped brother. I commend those people to God’s punishment.” The boy with Down syndrome, sitting in the back seat of the car, appears to be scared. He looks to be five or six years old.

The mother was later transferred to another prison in Tokat, which is hundreds of miles from her children in Ankara. A fund-raising campaign was launched in the US to help the family, and she was later released on TL 50,000 (\$14,000) bail. Her case is still pending.

3.1. THE CASE OF AYFER YAVUZ

Ayfer Yavuz was about six months pregnant when her husband, Emre Yavuz, was detained in July 2016 in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt. She gave a birth to a baby boy in September 2016 in the western province Muğla. On January 23, 2017, she took her 5-month-old baby and 4-year-old daughter for a first visit to her husband, who was imprisoned in the northeastern province Kars. She was allowed entry into the prison and was waiting in the hall to see her husband after being apart for months. Before the visit took place, she was detained right there inside the prison by the gendarmerie because there was reportedly an arrest warrant out for her. She was taken to the Penal Court of Peace in Iğdır, a neighboring province. Then she was sent to prison. She did not want to be separated from her 5-month-old son as she was breastfeeding him. Prison officials initially denied her request but later agreed after the grandfather intervened. The 4-year-old daughter was sent to the care of her grandparents.²⁴ The Kars

T-type prison where she was jailed in a crowded cell with 35 others is reported to be lacking conditions suitable for the baby and the breastfeeding mother.

3.2. THE CASE OF NAZAN ASLAN

Nazan Aslan, a literature teacher, was detained in the town of Ereğli in Turkey’s central Konya province while visiting her jailed husband, İbrahim Aslan, on February 16, 2017. The Aslans have



Ayfer Yavuz



Nazan Aslan

23] Babalarını ziyarete gittikleri cezaevinde anneleri de gözüaltına alındı; 5 çocuk ortada kaldı!, (2017, January 23), <http://t24.com.tr/haber/babalarini-ziyarete-gittikleri-cezaevinde-anneleri-de-gozaltina-alindi-5-cocuk-ortada-kaldi,384702>

24] Eşini ziyarete gitti, bebeğiyle tutuklandı, (2017, February 2), <http://www.yeniyon6.com/esini-ziyarete-gitti-bebegiyle-tutuklandi/>



Sometimes, the government releases detained women only to be detained again on the same charges to stoke fears among critics and dissidents.

two children, a 10-year-old and a 6-year-old who were deprived of the care of their parents. Nazan was previously detained in Sakarya province at the order of the same prosecutor's office in Ereğli but released under judicial supervision after her testimony.²⁵

3.3. OTHER CASES

İlknur Ayşe Oğanberdi was detained on February 14, 2017 in Trabzon, where she was visiting her jailed husband, Habib Oğanberdi. The visit was over and Ayşe was ready to leave the prison with her 6-year-old son Yasin but was detained on the spot by the gendarmerie. She was later formally arrested by a judge, leaving the boy stranded at the prison until the grandparents, who reside in the western province of Manisa, came to pick him up from the jail.²⁶

Meryem Yazırlı, a retired teacher who had previously been detained but released under judicial supervision, was again detained on February 14, 2017 during her visit to jailed husband Ali Yazırlı. Meryem was later formally arrested.²⁷ S. Yıldırım was detained while visiting her jailed husband, Kadir Yıldırım, who was the deputy chief physician at the Erzurum Atatürk University Hospital and had been jailed on August 16, 2016 over alleged links to the Gülen movement. With the couple's imprisonment, their four children, with the youngest being one-and-a-half-years-old, were left in the care of relatives.²⁸

A woman identified only by her initials İ.A.O. was detained at Trabzon Prison when she was visiting her husband, H.O., who had earlier been jailed as part of the government's post-coup witch-hunt, on Valentine's Day. H.O. was the Zaman newspaper's local representative in Trabzon's Of district until the paper was closed down by the government in July 2016. The couple's 6-year-old son, Y.O., was left in his relatives' care, and İ.A.O. was ultimately arrested by a court.²⁹ S.Ö., whose husband was jailed a few weeks before she gave birth to a baby, was detained in Sakarya on March 8 when she went to Sakarya Prison to show him their newborn baby. S.Ö.'s husband had been imprisoned 45 days earlier over links to the failed coup in Turkey in July of last year. S.Ö. gave birth to a baby 17 days later.³⁰

İlknur Halıcı, the wife of former police chief Mustafa Bulent Halıcı, who had already been jailed, was detained at the correctional center where she went to visit him on October 18, 2016. There has been no more information available about İlknur Halıcı since then.

25] Konya'da cezaevi ziyaretinde gözaltına alınan iki çocuk annesi tutuklandı!, (2017, February 23), <http://www.haberdar.com/gundem/konya-da-cezaevi-ziyaretinde-gozaltina-alinan-iki-cocuk-annesi-tutuklandi-h43881.html>

26] Eşini cezaevinde ziyarete gitti, çıkışta tutuklandı, (2017, February 15), <http://www.shaber3.com/esini-cezaevinde-ziyarete-gitti-cikista-tutuklandi-haberi/1280674/>

27] Konya'da cezaevi ziyaretinde gözaltına alınan iki çocuk annesi tutuklandı, (2017, February 21), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/21/konyada-cezaevi-ziyaretinde-gozaltina-alinan-iki-cocuk-annesi-tutuklandi/>

28] <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/03/01/annelere-zulimde-erzurum/>, (2017, March 1), Erzurum'da eşi tutuklu 4 çocuk annesi cezaevinde gözaltına alındı

29] Woman detained during visit to imprisoned husband on Valentine's Day, (2017, February 16), <https://turkeypurge.com/woman-detained-during-visit-to-imprisoned-husband-on-valentines-day>

30] Woman detained while showing newborn baby to jailed husband, (2017, March 9), <https://www.turkish-minute.com/2017/03/09/woman-detained-showing-newborn-baby-jailed-husband/>

4. HUMAN DIGNITY

The women in detention centers and prisons were also abused by male police officers and prison guards. In many cases SCF has reviewed, they were threatened with rape and sexually harassed. Sometimes threats were made to husbands to force them to sign false confessions, while in other cases women were threatened directly. SCF has received numerous reports to that effect but was unable to identify victims by name in most cases because women are fearful of the shame of being exposed and humiliated in Turkish society.

The guidelines on who should be interacting with women detainees and prisoners were clearly laid out by the CoE, of which Turkey is a founding member state. The PACE resolution asks member states to “ensure that male prison guards do not hold positions involving physical contact with female prisoners and do not supervise female prisoners when they are likely to be in a state of undress” and “put in place safeguards to protect female prisoners from all forms of abuse including gender-specific abuse, violence or exploitation from other prisoners or staff within the prison or during transit.”

The 2006 European Prison Rules recommend that prisoners should only be searched by staff of the same gender.³¹ The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners asserts that women prisoners shall be attended and supervised only by female officers.³²

4.1. THE CASE OF AYŞENUR PARILDAK



Twenty-six-year-old journalist Ayşenur Parıldak was detained on August 6, 2016 and formally arrested on August 11, 2016 because her Twitter account was being followed by Fuat Avni, a Twitter whistleblower who criticized the government by tweeting from the inner circles of the government. Parıldak has been in pre-trial detention since then. She wrote a letter from prison to the Cumhuriyet newspaper stating that she was beaten and sexually harassed by drunk police officers during her eight days in custody.

After her letter was published in the daily, the government’s response was to put her in isolation for 19 days. As a journalist, she was not

only informing the public about her condition while in custody, she was also trying to be a voice for other women detainees. Parıldak recently said: “We were taken to a doctor with a detained female judge. She had slit her wrists and attempted suicide. My roommate A.B. (who is 60

31] European Prison Rules, Recommendation Rec(2006)2, rule 54.5.

32] 1957 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, rule 32

years old) has been strip searched twice.”³³ Parıldak admitted in her letter that she fears being forgotten in jail.

5. PREGNANT WOMEN, DELIVERY, POST-NATAL CARE

Poor conditions in Turkish prisons and detention centers have caused complications for expectant mothers or mothers with newborn babies. They are deprived of required diet, vitamins, medicine, proper care and assistance during or after the pregnancy. They are also prohibited from engaging in exercise necessary for the wellbeing of themselves and their babies.

SCF has received various reports that women were denied visits to a medical center or hospital because the prison was unable to assign a guard to accompany them. Hence, appointments were often cancelled or rescheduled, which delayed necessary screening.

According to the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, Rule 23.1 and the 2006 European Prison Rules, Recommendation Rec(2006)2, Rule 34.3., prisoners should give birth in an ordinary hospital outside of the prison. Female prisoners should not be handcuffed during delivery or examination according to recommendations by the UN and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).³⁴ “Such an approach is completely unacceptable and could certainly be qualified as inhuman and degrading treatment. Other means of meeting security needs can and should be found,” the CPT stated. Yet in many cases, Turkish authorities have violated these rules.

5.2. THE CASE OF FADIME GÜNAY

On January 28, 2017, Fadime Günay, a housewife, was hospitalized at Baskent University Alanya Teaching and Research Hospital in the southern province of Antalya to give birth. The police raided the maternity ward to detain her. Her husband was already in custody, and the police wanted the hospital to discharge her so that she could be detained and dragged to the police station for interrogation. In the meantime, she was kept under police surveillance while in the hospital.³⁵

Günay was detained in the morning under anti-terror laws and charged with links to the Gülen movement after the delivery of her baby. Her picture was published in the media showing the mother, apparently in pain and with difficulty in walking, as the police were holding her by the arms. The grandmother was next to her carrying the brand new baby. She



A woman who had just delivered a baby dragged to police detention in a pain and agony with newborn baby on grandmother's arms.

33] ‘Darp edildim, tacize uğradım’, (2016, October 4), http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/610115/_Darp_edildim__tacize_ugradim_.html

34] 10th General Report on the CPT’s activities (1999) including a section on Women deprived of their liberty, paragraph 27, www.cpt.coe.int/en/docsannual.htm.

35] Bunun adı soykırım!.. Erdoğan’ın SS’leri yeni doğum yapan anneyi gözaltına almak için hastane kapısında bekliyor, (2017, January 30) <http://romanyahaber.com/2017/01/30/bunun-adi-soykirim-Erdoganin-ssleri-yeni-dogum-yapan-anneyi-gozaltina-almak-icin-hastane-kapisinda-bekliyor/>



was questioned at the police station and later referred to court for arraignment. The judge allowed her to stay for an additional day at the hospital.³⁶ The following day, she was brought back to the court and then conditionally released with a requirement that she sign in with the police on a regular basis.³⁷

5.1. THE CASE OF FATMA KAYA

On December 30, 2016, Fatma Kaya gave a birth to a baby in a hospital in Turkey's southeastern Mersin province. On January 3, 2017, she was rushed to the hospital because of a postpartum hemorrhage. After she was admitted to the hospital, police raided the emergency ward, interrupting her treatment. She was detained and taken to the police station for questioning by the order of public prosecutor Tansel Ünal, who also ordered the separation of the baby from the mother, allowing only limited access to the baby for breastfeeding.³⁸

Doctors said the baby's breastfeeding was critical because the newborn was suffering from jaundice. Kaya was denied medicine while in detention and has continued to experience health problems because of the interruption of her treatment even after she was released.

5.2. THE CASE OF ŞÜKRAN AKBAŞ

On January 3, 2017, Şükrü Akbaş, a teacher by profession, was detained in the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa while she was breastfeeding her prematurely born baby, who was in an incubator at the hospital. She was taken to another province, Aksaray, 660 kilometers from Şanlıurfa on the order of public prosecutor Ayhan Demir. Although her lawyer provided medical reports indicating that the mother needed to be with the baby at the hospital and that she could not travel, Akbaş was dragged all the way to Aksaray and put in detention. Only after the issue was brought to Parliament's agenda by main opposition party lawmaker Mahmut Tanal was Akbaş released from detention under judicial supervision.

Adding insult to injury, Aksaray Chief Public Prosecutor Ramazan Akın issued a statement confirming the medical reports but saying they were not produced by a state-owned hospital but rather by a privately run hospital.³⁹ Akın had no idea that PACE had called on Turkey to respect medical reports that were issued by doctors independent of the government. The PACE 2015 report said Turkey must insure that "a petitioner's eligibility for compassionate release is evaluated based on medical reports from doctors who are independent from the prison ad-

36] Doğum yaptıktan bir gün sonra gözaltına alındı (2017, January 30), <http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/dogum-yaptiktan-bir-gun-sonra-gozaltina-alindi>

37] Doğum Yaptıktan Sonra Fetö'den Gözaltına Alınan Kadın Serbest, (2017, January 31) <http://www.haberler.com/dogum-yaptiktan-sonra-feto-den-gozaltina-alinan-9216343-haberi/>

38] Yeni doğum yapan anneye vicdansız uygulama (2017, January 5), <http://aktifhaber.com/m/gundem/ye-ni-dogum-yapan-anneye-vicdansiz-uygulama-h88088.html>

39] Statement by Ramazan Akın was shared by Ayhan Demir on his Facebook page but that posting was later removed by him. Still available for an access via Google Cache though. (2017, January 4), <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:RKowEckIYGkJ:https://www.facebook.com/demirhan.demir.7370/posts/880908015345346+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=se&client=safari>

ministration and the executive branch of government.”⁴⁰ It is obvious that doctors working in government-run hospitals are not as independent as those who work at private institutions.

Prosecutor Akin also claimed that any suffering the suspect was experiencing was because of her remaining at large for almost four months. Akin also threatened those who raised this issue in public with criminal charges. The investigating prosecutor Demir also reportedly insulted the brother of Akbaş, who pleaded with the prosecutor for the wellbeing of the baby and mother by submitting medical reports to his office. “Tell me where that son of a bitch [referring to the husband of Akbaş, who remains at large] is. I know what I will do to him when I catch him,” he said.⁴¹ After a public outcry, Akbaş was finally released under judicial supervision.

5.3. THE CASE OF NURHAYAT YILDIZ

On August 29, 2016, Nurhayat Yıldız, a pregnant woman residing in the northern province of Sinop, was detained on a bus bound for neighboring Samsun while she was on her way to the doctor for a pregnancy examination. She was 14 weeks pregnant with twins after the couple had tried to have a baby for three years. Her husband said everything was going well until her detention and imprisonment. She was charged with membership in the Gülen movement. The authorities cited a messaging application called ByLock as evidence of a crime, although she said she had not even downloaded this publicly available application to her smartphone.

Yıldız pleaded for her release from pre-trial detention, citing health issues backed by medical reports. But her petition was turned down and she was kept in a crowded cell that housed 24 other inmates. The worst came true when Yıldız suffered a miscarriage on October 6, 2016, during the 19th week of her pregnancy. She was put back in prison after two days of treatment at the hospital in the presence of a prison guard following the miscarriage.⁴² Her husband said Yıldız started having psychological problems in jail after the miscarriage and remains concerned for her wellbeing.

5.4. THE CASE OF AYŞE BÜYÜKGEZİRİCİ

Ayşe Büyükgezirici, a nurse, is another victim of Erdoğan’s persecution in Turkey. While she was pregnant, a public prosecutor in the northwestern province of Kocaeli ordered her detention as part of a prosecution. The court released her pending trial under judicial supervision that required her to check in with the police three days a week. Under duress and pressure, Büyükgezirici delivered her baby boy prematurely. Doctors needed to monitor the boy, named Yavuz Selim, on a constant basis, and treated him for anemia with regular injections every week.

While both mother and the baby were being treated, another prosecutor, this time from the prov-

40] The fate of critically ill detainees in Europe (2015, November 13), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22244&lang=en>

41] Mafya usulü yargı: O... çocuğu eniştten nerede? (2017, January 4), <http://www.shaber3.com/mafya-usulu-yargi-o-cocugu-enisten-nerede-haberi/1278778/>

42] Bu Haksızlıkları Durdurun (2016, October 15), <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/yazarlar/emin-colasan/bu-haksizliklari-durdurun-1448641/>

ince of Tekirdağ, launched an investigation into her on similar charges and secured a detention warrant for her on February 15, 2017. Her lawyer challenged the decision, saying that a similar case on the same charges was already under way and presented the doctor's report on why her and baby's health required Büyükgezirici to stay in Balıkesir, her hometown. Yet prosecutor Sedat Taş insisted on her detention anyway and she was put in police custody along with the baby for two days. Later she and the baby were transported in an armored vehicle from Balıkesir to Tekirdağ, a four-hour drive. Büyükgezirici was also separated from her two other children, aged 9 and 13. No information is available on her or baby Selim's current status or their health.⁴³

5.5. OTHER CASES

There were more reported cases of abuse and ill-treatment of pregnant women or women with newborn babies. Suffice to say that the cases reported so far suggest a systematic pattern of torture by authorities in Turkey. Two additional cases may be worth citing here. On February 7, 2017 Filiz Yavuz, who was in the maternity ward of a hospital in the southeastern province of Mersin, was taken into police custody only eight hours after the delivery. She was taken from the hospital in a wheelchair to the police station for interrogation.⁴⁴ Yavuz was among some 150,000 public employees who were dismissed by the government over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

On February 7, 2017 Gül Tezer, who was in a hospital in Denizli for the delivery of her baby, was reported to be facing immediate detention by the police, who were waiting next to the delivery room. There is no further information about Tezer's current situation.⁴⁵ In another case, reported by Twitter whistleblower Turkeydeiskence (torture in Turkey), a woman named Fatma Çördükçü, who was nine months pregnant, was detained by Istanbul police on or about August 25, 2016. She reportedly was subject to the risk of miscarriage. No information is available on her status and what happened with her pregnancy.⁴⁶

6. ABUSE OF WOMEN IN PRISON AND DETENTION

Although women were subjected to abuse in detention and prison on a large scale in Turkey, there appears to be no accountability for the abusers, either in the form of disciplinary or criminal action. In fact, the environment of pervasive impunity was officially approved in the case of a complaint filed by an individual who was arrested on terror charges and who claimed that he was assaulted, mistreated and subjected to threats while in custody in northeastern Trabzon province. Yet the prosecutor's office refused to investigate, citing a government executive order issued under emergency rule. The prosecutor said Article 9 of Decree-Law No. 667, which

43] Annelere zulümde bugün, hasta bebeğiyle gözaltında, (2017, February 19), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/19/annelere-zulumde-bugun-hasta-bebegiyle-gozaltinda/Europe>

44] Hizmet Hareketi'ne yönelik soykırım sürüyor: Yeni doğum yapan anne 8 saat sonra gözaltına alındı, (2017, February 8), <http://www.zamanaustralia.com/2017/02/hizmet-hareketine-yonelik-soykirim-suruyor-yeni-dogum-yapan-anne-8-saat-sonra-gozaltina-alindi>

45] Denizli'de Zulüm! Yeni doğum yapmış anne Gül T. gözaltına alınmak isteniyor (2017, Feb 8), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/08/denizlide-zulum-yeni-dogum-yapmis-anne-gul-t-gozaltina-alinmak-isteniyor/>

46] <https://twitter.com/Turkeydeiskence/status/768824029063118848>

was published in the Official Gazette on July 23, 2016, states: “Legal, administrative, financial and criminal liabilities shall not arise in respect of the persons who have adopted decisions and fulfilled their duties within the scope of this Decree-Law.”⁴⁷ Therefore, he dropped the probe into the torture complaint.

Impunity in the post-coup era is one of the concerns raised in a torture report published by Human Rights Watch. “By removing safeguards against torture, the Turkish government effectively wrote a blank check to law enforcement agencies to torture and mistreat detainees as they like,” said Hugh Williamson, Europe and Central Asia director at HRW. “The cases we have documented seem to indicate that some have done just that. Turkey’s government should reinstate these crucial safeguards now,” he added.⁴⁸

Mothers and children in jail have borne the brunt of mass persecution in the Turkish government post-coup crackdown. Although the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recognized the children of mothers in prison as among the most vulnerable in 2004,⁴⁹ the Turkish government appears to be seeing them as leverage against critics and a major weakness to exploit to force suspects into false confessions.

6.1. WOMEN WITH BABIES

The terrible saga experienced by women who are detained and/or imprisoned with babies is another human tragedy that is unfolding in Turkey. Again, what has been reported so far in various cases indicates a systematic and deliberate campaign by the government of Turkey in blatant violation of CoE and UN rules on how to treat mothers with babies in detention centers or prisons. This was especially true after the failed coup of July 2016, which prompted the government to declare emergency rule under which the period of detention was extended to 30 days, before reducing it to a week in January 2017. The government has renewed emergency rule as the mass crackdown on critics and opponents escalates even further.

In many cases, women who were detained under emergency rule were kept in terrible conditions in detention, sometimes separated from their babies, up until the maximum detention time of 30 days. It was clear that the government was using pre-trial detention as a punishment in itself. In most cases SCF documented, women with newborn babies were only allowed to breastfeed their babies once a day. Even that was considered to be a favor by the authorities as in several cases babies were separated from mothers for a longer period of time.

Mahmut Tanal, a member of the Human Rights Commission in the Turkish Parliament, told lawmakers that a mother with a 2-month-old baby in Sincan Prison in Ankara was abused because the baby was prevented by authorities from breastfeeding for 17 days, in violation of Turkish law. He also said a month-old baby in the same prison was taken to a clinic for vaccinations without the

47] İşkenceye KHK bahanesi, (2017, January 16), http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/661197/iskenceye_KHK_bahanesi.html

48] Turkey: Emergency Decrees Facilitate Torture, (2017, October 25), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/25/turkey-emergency-decrees-facilitate-torture>

49] Consideration of the reports submitted by the states parties under Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding observations”, Thailand, CRC/C/THA/CO/2, paragraph 48.

mother. The mother claimed the wrong vaccinations were given to her baby.⁵⁰

6.1.A. THE CASE OF SERAP ŞAHAN

Serap Şahan, a math teacher with two children aged four and eight in the southeastern province of Malatya, was detained on December 3, 2017 and formally arrested 10 days later by a penal court of peace. During the arraignment hearing that took place after a 13-hour wait in the courtroom, she pleaded with the judge to release her because of her two young children who needed their mother's care and also because she suspected she was pregnant with a third baby. The judge sent her to prison anyway. On January 20, she learned that she was one month pregnant after blood tests results came in.

She wrote a letter about her ordeal from the prison to be published in the media and recounted how she did not want to bring a baby into the world under the terrible conditions she was experiencing in prison. She was held with 18 other women in the same cell and witnessed how a woman with a 4-year-old son struggled to survive in prison, while another woman suffering from a bipolar disorder presented more challenges for all the women in that small, confined space.

Şahan petitioned the public prosecutor's office twice, submitting a doctor's report and asking to be released pending trial so that she could have a healthy pregnancy and a problem-free delivery. She received no response to her petitions. She wrote a third petition on February 14, 2017, but in the late hours of the same day she started bleeding and was taken to a hospital. Doctors told her they could not hear the heartbeat of the baby and advised an abortion. She asked for her husband to make a joint decision, also seeking the comfort of her loved one in a time of need. Yet authorities refused her request to allow her husband to come to the hospital. She was taken back to the prison.

The next day, she saw more blood and was taken to the hospital. Doctors again urged an abortion, citing the fact that the baby was not developing well. She insisted on waiting for a couple of days to be sure before making the decision to abort. Şahan was again put back to the prison cell, where she lost her baby after her situation worsened. She was rushed to the hospital for surgery. This time authorities informed her husband, who came to the hospital but was not allowed to approach her. Şahan wrote that she was happy nonetheless to see her husband for the first time, even from a distance of one meter under the watch of a prison guard and gendarmes.

She was scheduled to go into surgery at 6 a.m. on February 17, 2017. Her husband left the hospital at 3 a.m., promising to come back before the surgery. Yet 10 minutes after the husband's departure, she was taken for an operation that lasted an hour, with the guards waiting outside the operating room. When she was transferred to a bed, gendarmes wanted to cuff her hands to the bed, then decided to put chains on her legs. She was discharged from the hospital at 8 a.m., handcuffed and rushed back to jail cell No.B-16. She collapsed on her bed and stayed there the entire day. That same night, the cell door was opened at around 10 p.m. and she was

50] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Genel Kurul Tutanağı 26. Dönem 2. Yasama Yılı 68. Birleşim (2017, February 9), https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_sd.birlesim_baslangic?P4=22844&P5=H&web_user_id=15455253&PAGE1=1&PAGE2=74

told she had been released.⁵¹

Turkey was once again seen as violating recommendations made by PACE that specifically called on Ankara “to adopt a national policy stipulating that the use of restraints on detainees in medical settings must be exceptional and at all times proportionate to the security risks that the person can realistically pose.”⁵² The fact that Şahan was treated in the presence of a prison guard in addition to gendarmes, Turkey also violated another PACE recommendation that called on member states in 2009 to “ensure that no means of restraint (such as handcuffs) are used during medical consultations since such practices infringe upon the dignity of the prisoners concerned and prohibit the development of a proper doctor-patient relationship (and are possibly detrimental to the establishment of an objective medical finding).”⁵³

6.1.B. THE CASE OF ÖZLEM MECİ

On November 3, 2016 Özlem Meci, a teacher, was arrested in the western province of İzmir on terror and coup charges. She was six months pregnant at the time of the arrest. Her petitions for release on the grounds of pregnancy were rejected. Meci gave birth to a baby on February 15, 2017 at Aliğa State Hospital while she was still in pre-trial detention at the İzmir Aliğa Women’s Closed Prison. Immediately after giving birth, her baby was taken from her without her consent and sent to a hospital in the town of Menemen, some 36 kilometers from Aliğa. She was robbed of her maternal right to hug her newborn baby. Her family was not even notified about the delivery of a baby until the next day. No explanation was provided to Meci or her family.⁵⁴

6.1. WOMEN JAILED AS HOSTAGES

In addition to the abuse of expectant mothers or women with children in detention centers and prisons in Turkey, there has also been a systematic targeting, jailing and harassment of women because of their husbands. The practice is mainly used to create a chill factor and use women as hostages to punish their husbands and force them return to Turkey to face charges.

In the Dinar district of the western province Afyonkarahisar, Chief Public Prosecutor Emrah Özge Yelken issued sweeping detention orders for the wives of 21 jailed men on Feb. 17, 2017. Of these women, 10 have babies under a year old, and two of these women are over 70 years of age. They were reportedly arrested to influence their husbands’ testimonies and force them to agree to false allegations.⁵⁵

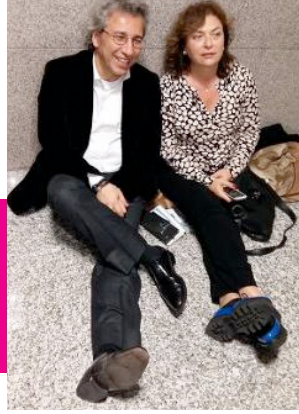
51] Malatya cezaevinden mektup: Düşük yapan hamile kadının dramı, (2017, March 3) <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/03/03/malatya-cezaevinden-mektup-dusuk-yapan-hamile-kadinin-drami/>

52] The fate of critically ill detainees in Europe (2015, November 13), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22244&lang=en>

53] Women in prison (2009,, April 28), <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17733&lang=en>

54] Annesinden Koparılan Bir Günlük Bebek, (2017, February 15), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/17/annesinden-koparilan-1-gunluk-bebek/>

55] Eşlerine İfade İmzalatmak için 21 Kadına Gözaltı İddiası, (2017, February 18), <http://aryenhaber9.com/eslerine-ifade-imzalatmak-icin-21-kadina-gozalti-iddiasi/>



Dilek Dündar (the wife of journalist Can Dündar)

Dilek Dündar, the wife of journalist Can Dündar, who was forced to live in exile after a criminal case was launched against him over reports of the Turkish government's illegal arms shipments to jihadists in Syria, was denied permission to travel abroad when her passport was cancelled. Her husband was sentenced to five years, three months' imprisonment for slander, and other charges are pending. His wife was stopped at an Istanbul airport and her passport was seized on September 3, 2016. It turned out the police had cancelled her passport on August 22, 2016.⁵⁶

6.2.A. THE CASE OF THE YILMAZER SISTERS

Two women, Fatma Saadet Yılmaz and Rabia Fitnat Yılmaz, were detained on March 16, 2017 and formally arrested on March 27 when their jailed father, former police intelligence chief Ali Fuat Yılmaz, started revealing clandestine operations run by Turkish President Erdoğan, during hearings in an ongoing trial. Many believe the arrest of these women was orchestrated by Erdoğan to force the police chief to be silent.

Fatma, also a lawyer, had been representing her father in court, while Rabia, a law student, was helping her elder sister prepare their father's defense as an intern in the law firm. Both women were charged under ludicrous copy-paste allegations of belonging a terror group, possessing a dollar bill at home, having an account in the Gülen-affiliated Bank Asya and using a publicly available messaging application known as ByLock.⁵⁷

Ali Fuat Yılmaz was jailed following corruption probes in late 2013 implicating then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government. He played a critical role in police intelligence units during the first two terms in office of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan and had earlier said it was Erdoğan himself who ordered investigations into several cases including that of news website Odatv.com.



Turkey government started going after family members of critical journalists. Hacer Korucu, the wife of Bülent Korucu, the editor-in-chief of a national daily, was arrested.

6.2.B. THE CASE OF HACER KORUCU

In another case, police came to detain journalist Bülent Korucu, editor-in-chief of the critical national daily *Yarına Bakış*, which was shut down by the government in July, but instead detained his wife Hacer on July 30, 2016, just two weeks after the failed coup. The message the police were sending was that she would be kept as a

hostage until her husband surrendered.

Hacer, a mother of five who had nothing to do with a journalism other than being an avid reader of the daily her husband managed, was formally arrested on August 9, 2016. She has been in jail without a conviction since then. Police went to the Korucu home several times afterwards,

56] Can Dündar'ın eşi Dilek Dündar rehin tutuldu, (2016, September 3) http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/595070/Can_Dundar_in_esi_Dilek_Dundar_rehin_tutuldu.html

57] 2 daughters of jailed police intel chief arrested over links to Gülen movement (2017, March 27), <https://www.turkishminute.com/2017/03/27/2-daughters-jailed-police-intel-chief-arrested-links-gulen-movement/>

The wives of businessmen who are not seen supportive of Turkey's president were arrested on trumped-up charges.



even threatening their children with jail as well. The EU Commission has called on Turkey to respect human rights in response to the arrest of journalist Bülent Korucu's wife.⁵⁸

6.2.C. THE CASE OF THE BOYDAK FAMILY

Aliye Boydak, the wife of Şükrü Boydak, was arrested on July 28, 2016 as part of a crackdown on prominent industrialists in the central province of Kayseri.⁵⁹ The Boydak family members had been persecuted for some time in a relentless witch-hunt by Erdoğan against people believed to be linked to the Gülen movement.



Aliye Boydak.

Boydak Holding is active in several sectors, including energy, furniture and banking, with 38 subsidiary companies. It has an annual turnover of more than TL 6 billion (\$2 billion) and employs over 13,000 people. The government seized all companies belonging to the family without bothering to wait for a conviction in a trial that most believe was based on false charges and a political vendetta by Erdoğan.

6.2.D. OTHER CASES

Another woman, Betül Özbey Bayındır, the wife of leading businessman Faruk Bayındır, was also jailed on Oct. 11, 2016 on similar charges brought by the government of Turkey.⁶⁰ An arrest warrant was issued for Faruk Bayındır as part of an investigation into major business group AKFA and its subsidiaries. The government later seized AKFA Holding and its 44 subsidiaries. Bayındır, who had shares in AKFA, was also the owner of Tarkim Aviation. The husband remains at large, so the Turkish government jailed his wife instead.

A woman whose husband was arrested eight months earlier was detained along with two of her children at the order of a police chief. The husband, identified by the initials B.K., suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and shares a prison cell with 24 other inmates in a space designed for only eight people. On March 2, 2017 police raided B.K.'s home and detained his wife, a high-school-age son and a daughter who had been forced to leave university due to financial hardship. When the police failed to find any incriminating evidence in the home, the police chief ordered the detention of the mother and children until evidence was found.⁶¹

58] EU Commission urges Turkey to respect human rights in reaction to Korucu case, (2016, September 10), <https://www.turkishminute.com/2016/09/10/eu-commission-calls-turkey-respect-human-rights-korucu-case/>

59] Aliye Boydak ile birlikte 9 kişi tutuklandı, (2016, July 28) <http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/is-yasam/haber/1273233-aliye-boydak-ile-birlikte-9-kisi-tutuklandi>

60] Tanınmış işadamı Faruk Bayındır eşi Betül Özbey Bayındır tutuklandı, (2016, October 11), http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/614247/Taninmis_isadami_Faruk_Bayindir_esi_Betul_Ozbey_Bayindir_tutuklandi.html

61] Kütahya'da bir aile komple gözaltına alındı, (2017, March 2), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/03/02/kutahyada-bir-aile-komple-gozaltina-alindi/>

6.2. DEVASTATING IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Many women in Turkish prisons are mothers although there is no official data to indicate the exact numbers. Since their detention and imprisonment have an impact on their children, not only the rights of the mothers but also the rights of their children are at risk. That is relevant both in cases of children being separated from their mother and in instances when they are allowed to stay with them in prison. The relevant PACE resolution on this issue urges member states to encourage the maintenance of family bonds and asks governments to set up special places for mothers with children.

The practice of jailing women whose husbands were already imprisoned has disastrous consequences for the family and children because they became the sole caretakers when their husbands were taken away. In some cases, authorities put women in prisons located far from their homes, making it very difficult to maintain family ties. This is especially troublesome when a mother needs to take care of or nurture a close relationship with a newborn baby with the help of immediate and extended family members.

Unfortunately, not only children but also other relatives have been impacted by the persecution of women in Turkey. The cases detailed here represent only the tip of the iceberg in Turkey's massive human rights violations.

6.3.A. THE CASE OF NEJLA AKDAĞ

Nejla Akdağ and her husband were working as teachers at a public school in the northwestern province of Edirne until the government launched a massive purge of members of the Gülen movement on trumped-up charges. Nejla was detained on August 30, 2016, but was released afterwards to take care of her ailing 86-year-old mother, Fahriye Asrak, who had cardiac problems and was paralyzed and bedridden. Nejla's 83-year-old father also suffers from chronic heart problems and has high blood sugar. Nejla's husband had left home to look for a job but was not heard from again after police searched their home on August 30, 2016.

Akdağ was detained again on January 27, 2017 when police raided the home where she lived with her three children and elderly parents. She showed her mother's medical reports to the police and told them that she had a sick mother and three children to take care of. The police said she would be released when her husband surrenders. Akdağ was formally arrested three days later and sent to pre-trial detention after three days in custody. Her mother died only 10 days after her daughter was put in prison.⁶² Akdağ's two children reportedly refuse to go to school after twice experiencing the trauma of police raids on their home and the absence of both parents.

6.3.B. THE CASE OF M.O.

M.O., a dismissed teacher and father of two children with 92 and 98 percent disability ratings,

62] O Anneyi Öldürdüler, (2017, February 12), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/12/o-anneyi-oldurduler/>

has reportedly been kept in an Antalya prison since September over alleged links to the Gülen movement. The wife of M.O. said their house was raided by a group of police officers on Sept. 16, 2016 and that her husband was taken into custody.

“Police came to our house at around 6. They searched everything and seized computers, books. Because he got scared, my son with Down syndrome had an epileptic seizure and then fainted. Officers took my husband away and left us in a miserable situation,” the wife told to the Aktifhaber.com news website.

“After being kept in police custody for nine days, he was arrested by a court and sent to a prison in Antalya. He is still there. My husband and I are teachers, and we loved our country. We did not do anything wrong. I am now left alone with my disabled children, and they are suffering from major health problems. My kids are 9 and 4 years old. One of them has a 92 percent disability rating, while the other has 98 percent. We have no income, no job and no insurance. Nothing,” the wife added.

“No one will give me a job. I am rejected by everybody. And even if I get a job, I can’t leave my children alone. The younger one is getting worse by the day. He has episodes almost every day,” the wife stated.⁶³

6.3.C. THE CASE OF RUKIYE BUNLU

Rukiye Bunlu was detained on October 23, 2016 and kept in custody for 20 days. Then she was sent to prison. Her husband, Timur Bunlu, a former police chief, had earlier been arrested and detained. The couple has a two-year-old daughter, Ayşe Sena, who has been diagnosed with Down syndrome. The medical board at Avcılar Hospital that examined Ayşe Sena Bunlu on April 11, 2016 stated in its report that “the patient has Down syndrome and pulmonary heart disease. She needs her parents’ care.”

Baby Ayşe had also been diagnosed with Down syndrome, mental retardation and motor development disorder by the Istanbul Cerrahpaşa Medical Center on June 8, 2016. Ayşe was transferred to the Bağcılar Medlife Hospital on January 3, 2017 and stayed in

the intensive care unit for 20 days for acute kidney and respiratory failure, acidosis, bacterial pneumonia, bronchopneumonia, heart failure, congenital hypothyroid goiter and congestive heart problems.⁶⁴

63] Kids with Down syndrome suffer from major health problems in absence of jailed teacher father, (2017, April 4), <https://turkeypurge.com/kids-with-down-syndrome-suffer-major-health-problems-in-absence-of-jailed-teacher-father>

64] Down sendromlu kalp hastası Ayşe Sena annesini bekliyor, (2017, February 16), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/16/down-sendromlu-kalp-hastasi-ayse-sena-bebek-annesini-bekliyor/>



Baby Ayşe with a Down Syndrome was separated from both her dad and mom who were jailed on government witch-hunt persecution.

Ayşe Sena’s grandparents have been taking care of the little girl since both of her parents were put in jail. Ayşe Sena’s grandmother, Billur Yıldız, has said the baby girl not only suffers from Down syndrome but also has heart problems and said they have been visiting the emergency room almost every day since her parents’ imprisonment.

“We demand at least the release of the mother on judicial probation. We don’t say she is guilty or not, we just say she needs to be with her baby,” said Yıldız. The grandmother also said Ayşe Sena needs to undergo physical therapy, but getting a medical report for her to receive this treatment is impossible in the absence of her parents. “We don’t know what to do. We just want a solution to be found. We are taking care of her but can’t provide the love of her mother. Although she can’t normally utter a word, Ayşe Sena says, ‘Mummy,’ while crying,” said Yıldız.⁶⁵

7. WOMEN DETAINED ALONG WITH THEIR HUSBANDS

There have been many reported cases where women were also detained along with their husbands in simultaneous police operations or after their husbands were already incarcerated, leaving the children in a very difficult situation. Some of these cases were already covered in other parts of this report. The police appear to routinely apply this practice of jailing women to blackmail their husbands and force them to sign prepared confessions alleging the commission of a crime. In some cases, fearing for the wellbeing of children left alone or in the care of relatives, both men and women sign false testimony.

7.1. THE CASE OF HATİCE KÖKOĞLU



The Magduriyetler.com website reported on February 27, 2017 that a woman named Hatice Kökoğlu was detained by police in the province of Kütahya, when her husband had already been jailed since August 15, 2016 in pre-trial detention. Hatice, a mother of triplets with two of them disabled and in need of special care, was detained at her home and taken to the police station while the children were left alone at home. Neighbors came to their aid and called an uncle to alert him about the situation of the children who were left alone after their mother’s detention. The family presented medical reports to the police, showing that one child was disabled with a 98 percent rating and the other at 78 percent and stating that they need the care of their mother.⁶⁶ The current status of Hatice is unknown.

The devastating toll on children who need special care when their mothers were jailed is a major cause for a concern.

7.1. OTHER CASES

65] Zulüm her yerde: Down sendromlu Ayşe Sena’nin hikâyesi, (2017, February 17), <http://www.tr724.com/zulum-her-yerde-down-sendromlu-ayse-senanin-hikayesi/>

66] Kütahya’da babaları tutuklu engelli iki çocuğun anneleri de gözaltına alındı, (2017, February 27), <http://magduriyetler.com/2017/02/27/kutahyada-babalari-tutuklu-engelli-iki-cocugun-anneleri-de-gozahtina-alindi/>

Prosecutor Dilek Bozlan Kelesoglu and her husband, Arif Kelesoglu, were arrested on July 19, 2016 in the town of Ermenek in Karaman province.⁶⁷ On July 20, 2016 prosecutor Y.H. and his wife, judge E.A.H., prosecutor F.A. and his wife, judge N.A., prosecutor M.C. and his wife, judge G.H.C., prosecutor S.K. and his wife, judge G.K., prosecutor H.I.N. and his wife, judge G.I.N., were arrested in Turkey's northeastern province of Kars.⁶⁸ Nuray Özyürek and her husband, Fevzi Özyürek, were arrested after the government shut down Bedi Education, Inc., on September 22, 2016.

The mayor of the Bucak district in Turkey's Burdur province, Süleyman Mutlu, was arrested with his wife, Mine, on Oct. 25, 2016. The chief doctor at Atatürk State Hospital in northern Sinop province, Ercan Yarar, and his wife, E.Y., were detained on Feb.17, 2017. Ali Türk, district governor at the town of Darende in the southeastern province of Malatya, was arrested on Feb. 21, 2017. His wife was also detained on Feb. 16, 2017. Kadir Güntepe, the former governor of the Beytüşşebap district of southeastern Şırnak province, was arrested on Feb. 1, 2017. He and his wife were both detained on Jan. 14. His wife was released on Jan. 31.

8. AFTER RELEASE

The victimization of women persists in Turkey under the witch-hunt carried out by political leaders who demonize and vilify their critics in a wholesale approach by constantly calling social groups like the Gülen movement traitors and agents of foreign powers. Therefore, many women feel stigmatized, isolated in their own neighborhoods, even if they are released from jail. In some cases, they were declared a pariah among their own immediate and extended family members who are afraid of the government.

All of them face the bitter reality of unemployment as they are unable to find a job because of profiling by the government. Since the massive purges took a toll on close to 150,000 public servants in Turkey, affecting more than half a million individuals, women who were let go realize that they have lost their pensions and social security benefits due to government decrees under an extended emergency rule declared after the failed coup of July 15, 2016. There have been cases where even children were denied critical treatment at hospitals because of mothers who were jailed. Shelter is another problem because in many cases, they lost their homes since they were unable to pay their mortgages or leases.

Employers in Turkey are found to be unwilling to hire someone with a history of imprisonment on charges of affiliation with the Gülen movement even if they were acquitted of any criminal activity. The government obligation to support those released from prison in order for them to better adjust to the community is not relevant in this case as the state itself is the main violator of the rights of the victims. Therefore, they face discrimination by both government and nongovernmental entities after their release. Since the prison time women served may have

67] Karaman'da kari-koca hakim ve savcı tutuklandı, (2016, July 19), http://www.karamandan.com/Asayis-Karamanda_kari_koca_hakim_ve_savci_tutuklandi-h40506.html

68] Kari-koca hakim-savcılar tutuklandı, (July 20, 2016), <http://www.gazetepusula.net/2016/07/20/kari-koca-hakim-savcilar-tutuklandi/>

broken some families apart with divorce and separation, in some instances women's adjustment to normal life is further hindered.

The Turkish government has also gone after volunteer groups that were set up to help struggling children when their parents were jailed for alleged Gülen affiliation, by arresting those who raise funds for the victims' families. In one case, 12 businessmen were detained in Kayseri province for raising humanitarian aid for families of people jailed in the ongoing crackdown on the Gülen movement. Ten of them, identified as Hanifi Y., Muaz B., Mehmet A., Altan A., Mahmut A., Mustafa A., Selçuk A., İbrahim Ş., İhsan Y. and Ali K. were formally arrested, while Hacı Ali D. and Fuat G. were released under judicial supervision.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

The widespread torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners in Turkey in the aftermath of the failed coup of July 2015 has been well documented by reports from nongovernmental organizations as well as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The Turkish government's persecution and witch-hunt of critics and opponents of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have systematically and deliberately targeted vulnerable groups such as women and children in order to apply undue pressure on men who are forced to sign false confessions even though they have not committed any crime.

The Gülen movement has borne the brunt of the Turkish government's attacks on rights and freedoms, suffering tremendously at the hands of regime operatives who were instructed to disregard due process and fair trial protections. By doing so, Turkey has violated a number of international conventions, especially with respect to the rights of female detainees and their children. Ankara appears to be cool to the idea of complying with Turkey's commitments under these treaties or to fulfilling the state's obligations towards its citizens under Turkish law and articles of the Constitution.

The abuse of women and children ranges from sexual abuse to physical torture and ill-treatment. Pregnant, elderly and sick women or women with babies were denied effective access to health care, their visitation rights were ignored and they were threatened with the persecution of other family members including their children. This inhumane treatment leaves a mark on many women and children that in some cases may have a permanent effect on their wellbeing and health.

The international community must be mobilized to raise their voices against Turkey, and President Erdoğan must be named and shamed for this unprecedented persecution of his critics and opponents. It is vitally important that intergovernmental organizations as well as nongovernmental organizations observe, identify, investigate and report these massive human rights violations in Turkey and hold those who act with impunity to account.

69] Fetö Üyeleri Bağ Evinde Toplantı Yaparken Yakalandı, (2017, March 2), <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/feto-uyeleri-bag-evinde-toplanti-yaparken-kayseri-yerelhaber-1878757/>

ANNEX: BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE GÜLEN MOVEMENT

The Gülen movement is inspired by US-based Turkish Muslim intellectual Fethullah Gülen, who advocates science education, poverty reduction, community contribution and interfaith and intercultural dialogue. The movement promotes a moderate version of Islam with a heavy emphasis on public service and volunteer work for the community. It remains staunchly opposed to any violence or terrorism in the name of religion or nationalism. The movement runs schools, universities and other institutions in 180 countries.

Gülen has been a vocal critic of the Turkish government and Turkey's autocratic President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over massive corruption in the government as well as Turkey's aiding and abetting of radical groups in Syria and other places. Erdoğan launched an unprecedented persecution against Gülen and his followers in December 2013 immediately after a major corruption probe went public and incriminated Erdoğan's family members.

Turkey's ruling AKP's Islamist leaders labeled the movement as "FETÖ," a terrorist organization, although Gülen, a 75-year-old cleric, and his followers have never advocated violence but rather have remained firmly opposed to any violence, radicalism or terror in the name of religion for decades. Gülen has been an outspoken cleric condemning al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (IS), Boko Haram and other violent radical Islamist groups.

Erdoğan, who described the botched military coup attempt of July 15, 2016 that killed over 240 people as a gift from God, immediately pinned the blame on the Gülen movement despite the lack of any evidence to that effect. Although the Gülen movement strongly denies having any role in the putsch, Erdoğan escalated a witch-hunt against the group that had been under way since the revelation of corruption in December 2013. The government initiated a widespread purge aimed at cleansing sympathizers of the movement from within state institutions, dehumanizing its popular figures and putting them in custody.

Contrary to accusations made by Erdoğan and the Turkish government, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament has concluded that Fethullah Gülen and the movement he inspired as a whole were not behind a failed coup in Turkey on July 15. The head of Germany's Federal Intelligence Service (BND), Bruno Kahl, said Turkey could not convince them that US-based Turkish-Islamic scholar Gülen was behind the coup attempt. Similarly, Devin Nunes, chairman of United States House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said he has not seen any evidence showing Gülen's involvement in the putsch, either. German intelligence expert and author Erich Schmidt-Eenboom said Erdoğan was behind the failed coup attempt based on intelligence reports from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the BND.

In the currently ongoing post-coup purge, over 135,000 people, including thousands within the military, have been purged due to their real or alleged connections to the Gülen movement since the July 15 coup attempt, according to a statement by the labor minister on Jan. 10. A total of 7,317 academics were also purged as well as 4,272 judges and prosecutors who had been dismissed due to alleged involvement in the failed coup.

Turkey's Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu announced on April 2 that 47,155 people have been jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement since July 15, 2016. According to Soylu, 113,260 people have also been detained on the same accusation, and 745 were still in detention as of April 2 over alleged links to the Gülen movement.

Minister Soylu also announced that 41,499 people have been released under judicial supervision and 23,861 have been released without any conditions attached. Soylu added that 863 suspects remain at large.

According to information provided by Minister Soylu, 10,732 of those who have been arrested are police officers, while 168 generals and 7,463 military officers had been jailed as of April 2, 2017. Moreover, Soylu said that 2,575 judges and prosecutors, and 208 governors or other public administrators have been imprisoned. The number of jailed civilians, including handicapped people, housewives and the elderly, is 26,177.



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