

TURKEY: MONTHLY HUMAN RIGHTS DIGEST

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PHILANTHROPIST OSMAN KAVALA REARRESTED HOURS AFTER ACQUITTAL



On February 18th, Istanbul's 30th Heavy Criminal Court acquitted businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala who was one of eight defendants on trial for their alleged involvement in planning, managing, and directing Gezi Park Protests. Kavala spent 840 days, or more than two years, in pretrial detention before the court acquitted him of all charges. Only a few hours after his acquittal, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's office issued a new order for Kavala's re-arrest, this time due to allegations of his involvement in the failed military coup of 2016. The Prosecutor's politically charged warrant for Kavala provides a glimpse into President Erdogan's unrelenting crackdown on all dissidents through the extensive use of loyalist judges and prosecutors. In the words of Emma Sinclair-Webb, the Turkey director of Human Rights Watch, detention of Kavala immediately after his release has shown the judiciary is "lawless and vindictive."

FORMER LEGAL ADVISOR TO THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES: "I AM HONORED TO BE IN PRISON"

On January 24, as part of the ongoing failed military coup trials, Istanbul's 25th Court of Assize found 17 defendants guilty. The Court sentenced 4 defendants to aggravated life sentences, 2 to life sentences, and 13 to varying sentences between 7.5 to 10.5 years. All defendants had been in custody for years awaiting a trial, a long wait which amounted to punishment on its own.



More importantly, the court's partiality and willingness to carry out the Erdogan administration's vendetta against political enemies drew a vocal criticism from Muharrem Kose, one of the defendants, who described the situation as follows: "I am honored to be in prison in a judicial order where men like Ahmet Altan continue to be behind bars. I don't believe you will deliver a fair judgment today. May God give judges sitting on this bench a long life so that you can be tried legitimately for your illegitimate actions."

PREGNANT MOTHER FORCED TO GIVE BIRTH UNDER POLICE SUPERVISION

On February 21st, Elif Tugral gave birth to her second child, a son, after spending the final four months of her pregnancy in Sakran Penitentiary in the city of Izmir. Sentenced for 6 years and 10 months, Elif Tugral was found guilty of maintaining a bank account with the now defunct Asia Bank ("Bank Asya"). Taken into custody while five months pregnant, Elif Tugral was forced to carry out the rest of her pregnancy under duress in abysmal prison conditions while suffering from a multitude of health issues, including a potentially fatal chronic intravascular coagulation condition. In words of her husband, Nuri Tugral, "[Elif] gets hospital visits but it's very grueling. She travels to the hospital in prisoner transport vehicles for nearly 2 hours with lots of shaking and wobbling on the road." After four painful months, Tugral was taken to the hospital by 10 police officers who refused to leave and adamantly supervised her during and after she gave birth. In his reaction to the tragic event, Parliamentarian Gergerlioglu tweeted: "10 male officers brought the mother to the hospital... Why, how would she even escape?"



GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT: FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL SENTENCED DUE TO \$1 BILL



On February 1st, the Turkish Court of Cassation's Penal Chamber sentenced Mehmet Simsek, the former Secretary-General of the Military Court of Cessation, to 7.5 years for his alleged affiliation with the Hizmet Movement. In trial, Simsek complained that he faces major public prejudice because of his removal from office and imprisonment after the 2016 coup attempt. He argued that he not only had no affiliation with the coup attempt but he had already submitted his plans for retirement in August of that year. In line with all political imprisonments under the leadership of AK Party and Erdogan, the Court of Cessation found Simsek guilty of all charges, presenting the 1 US Dollar bill found in his apartment as evidence of supposed affiliation with the Hizmet Movement. Simsek's case sheds light on the breakdown of the Turkish criminal justice system under the current government's draconian crackdown on all voices of opposition.

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN USES 3.5 MILLION SYRIAN REFUGEES TO BARTER WITH THE EU

On February 29th, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made an official statement after ordering for the Turkish-Greek border gate to be opened temporarily. In his statement regarding 3.5 million Syrian refugees who were taken into the country by Mr. Erdogan's own administration, Erdogan proclaimed "We will not close these doors in the coming period and this will continue. Why? The European Union needs to keep its promises. We don't have to take care of this many refugees, to feed them." At the time of publication, 18,000 refugees were allowed to cross the border as part of Erdogan's plan to extract more money and resources from the EU. Among these thousands of refugees, many are women and children who suffer from abysmal travel and living conditions.

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TURKEY'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IN NUMBERS

612,347 INVESTIGATED	160K+ ARRESTED	130K PUBLIC SERVANT DISMISSED	62,669 POLITICAL PRISONERS	4,000 WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS	780 CHILD POLITICAL PRISONERS	161 JOURNALISTS JAILED
3,003 SCHOOLS & DORMITORIES SHUT DOWN	15 PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES SHUT DOWN	301,878 BOOKS DESTROYED	1.8M TEXTBOOKS DESTROYED AND REPRINTED	6,021 ACADEMICS DISMISSED	1,600 UNIONS & NGO SHUT DOWN	200 MEDIA OUTLETS SHUT DOWN
51 SUSPICIOUS DEATHS IN PRISON	4,463 JUDGES & PROSECUTORS DISMISSED	2,718 TORTURED & ABUSED	128 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN TURKEY & ABROAD	1,539 ATTORNEYS TRIED IN COURT	580 ATTORNEYS IMPRISONED	109 RANK ON RULE OF LAW INDEX