

THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

IN TURKEY'S PRISONS:

**ANALYSIS OF THE CASES,
FINDINGS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**



WHO WE ARE

Advocates of Silenced Turkey

AST

AST is a 501(c)(3) Not for Profit charitable and educational organization based in NJ, exclusively for defending human and civil rights.

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OUR AIM IS,

To address all forms of human rights violations being perpetrated in Turkey-- including civil, political, economic, social and cultural-- based on the tenets upheld in fundamental human rights documents;

To speak up against any forms of genocide, crimes against humanity, arbitrary detentions, cases of torture and ill treatment, and discrimination, and stand up for principles and values such as the right to life, the rule of law, the right to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of associations;

To utilize all human rights advocacy tools, mechanisms, and systems that can possibly be utilized in order to protect and demand the fundamental human rights of those whose voices are being silenced in Turkey and beyond;

And to hold accountable the perpetrators who are denying individuals in Turkey and beyond their fundamental Human Rights while providing the victims with the opportunity to obtain justice and reparation.

In order to do so, we use the power of the law to fight the impunity of the perpetrators, their accomplices and the instigators of these crimes; we defend the interests of the victims before both national and international courts and we bring specific cases before the appropriate international human rights bodies, working in close collaboration with local partners and the victims themselves to make sure that the authorities take firm action against such violations.

THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK IN TURKEY'S PRISONS: ANALYSIS OF THE CASES, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This report informs about the confirmed Covid-19 cases seen in Turkey's prisons. Based on this and the official statements, the report presents its findings and recommendations.

The notoriously overcrowded prisons in Turkey pose serious health threats to inmates during the coronavirus pandemic, as indicated by the statements of the inmates' relatives who have reached us, and the written and oral statements in open sources, as well as the reporting of human rights activists and organizations. The recently passed Execution bill is also not able to eliminate those threats due to its unfair and discriminatory nature.

CORONAVIRUS CASES

Numerous audio recordings - which were shared in social media and later whose contents were confirmed by their sources - pointed to the inhumane conditions in prisons. Such claims as in the recordings were also expressed in the statements of many inmate relatives. These indicate that the rights to life of the inmates in prisons - which is among the most basic and universal human rights and protected by the 10th amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) - are under clear, serious, and near threat, as asserted by the inmates themselves. The statements of the inmates and the inmate relatives about the conditions in prisons are listed below.

April 3, 2020: *"Ahmet Turkmen, 68, has a history of chronic heart disease and underwent a serious by-pass operation, among other serious health problems. He has been held in Kayseri T-type no. 1 prison for the past three years and his 14-year sentence for being a member of a terrorist organization is on appeal. ... Despite the Forensic Medicine Institute's advice that Turkmen undergo a health check every six months, he has been taken to a health check only once in the last three years. Covid-19 poses a serious threat to Turkmen's life, who resides with 10 prisoners in a three-person cell. Turkmen's attorney applied to the Supreme Court of Appeals on March 18th for his release due to the threats that Covid-19 poses to his health conditions.*

Ismet Ozcelik, 61, is the former principal of a Malaysian school and has been held in Denizli T-type prison in Turkey since May 2017. Despite applying for asylum to the UN Refugee Agency in Malaysia, Ozcelik was kidnapped in Malaysia and forcibly taken to Turkey. In May 2019, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that Turkey must release Ozcelik and pay compensation for violating his human rights guaranteed by the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. However, Turkey did not implement this decision. ... Ozcelik's 10-year sentence is still in the process of appeal. Ozcelik, who has a heart condition, reported that no timely medical intervention was provided to him when he felt he had a heart attack in 2019. Ozcelik's attorney stated that despite the significant amount of time that passed, he was not provided with a copy of the detailed report for the health check Ozcelik underwent following his emergency complaint. Ozcelik's attorneys applied to the Supreme Court of Appeals in mid-March for his release due to the threats that Covid-19 poses to his health conditions.

Hussein Soykan, 48, a former police officer, has been held in Karaman M-type prison for 44 months. ... Medical reports show that Soykan has a chronic lung condition and that one of his lungs had collapsed (pneumothorax) in the past. He was rushed to hospital twice while in prison. Soykan stays with 28 prisoners in an eight-person cell. Another prisoner in the same cell, Amir Gulaç, died on October 20, 2019, shortly after his attorney pleaded about the poor prison conditions having negative impacts on the health of prisoners. Gulac's cause of death is thought to be heart failure. The Forensic Medicine Institution is expected to release the autopsy report on Gulac's death. Covid-19 is seemingly a lethal threat to Soykan, given his health conditions. Due to the severity of his health conditions, Soykan's attorney applied to the Supreme Court of Appeals on March 19 for his release.¹

May 8, 2020:

In the B12 cell of the Silivri prison no. 7, inmate Huseyin Kacan's examination request was refused by officials despite him repeatedly saying that "We are not feeling okay, test us (for the coronavirus)". There are 39 inmates in the B12 cell. It is claimed that the prison administration has not dealt with the inmates despite the coronavirus symptoms seen on April 25. Although the seriousness of the situation was understood after a 48-year old inmate fainted, no testing attempt was taken. After the relatives of those staying at the cell called Alo 184, the national emergency number, the Ministry of Health sent first responders to the prison for testing. The testing was conducted on May 6, 2020 and the test results were released on May 7, 2020. According to the results obtained from the E-Nabız (the ministry's health portal), everyone in the cell tested positive. Nevertheless, the prison administration took no action for those inmates. They still refuse to do anything for their treatment.²

May 8, 2020:

D, whose husband is in the B-12 cell, does not want to be named because she is worried about the health of her husband's parents who have heart disease. After learning that her 39-year old husband tested positive for Covid-19, D described what happened to the Arti Gercek news: "After I learned about the cases in the cell C-7, I was worried and asked him about their situation. He said that 'On Monday, they took away two friends from the cell and never brought them back, I think they tested positive. As a matter of fact, we all fell ill, it was like a flue, some have thrown up'. I asked if they were tested. 'Put aside testing, we are given only a small amount of soup for both sahur and iftar. The situation is so desperate. The phone call is the first time we were given masks', said my husband". Ekrem Solmaz, the father of another inmate, Yasin Solmaz from cell C-7, also found out last night that his son's Covid-19 test was positive.³

May 11, 2020:

HDP Kocaeli deputy, Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu called attention on the huge jump in the number of Covid-19 cases in Silivri prison. Gergerlioğlu had earlier announced that there were Covid-19 cases at cells B-10, B-12, C-7 in Silivri prison no. 7. Recently he added that there are also cases at cell C-6 of Silivri prison no.8 and the coronavirus is spreading to cell 5.⁴

May 11, 2020:

An inmate's relative, whose husband is held in cell C-6, and who wants to remain anonymous, said that some 30 inmates in the cell have tested positive and 4 inmates have tested negative whereas the remaining few inmates' test results were not informed. She also added that while those who have tested negative were taken to another cell, those who have tested positive remain in the same cell and are not receiving any sorts of treatment. Emphasizing the seriousness of the situation, the inmate's relative stated "The incident dates back a while. Numerous inmates in the cell had high fever complaints two weeks ago. Nevertheless, the complaints were not taken seriously so the situation grew worse and the virus spread to many more."⁵

May 14 2020:

According to the information given by Ali Riza Karaboğa, who remains in Silivri prison no. 7, to his wife during their phone call, two inmates from their adjacent cell were tested for the coronavirus and sent back to their cell despite being tested positive. During the phone call with her husband two weeks ago, Karaboğa mentioned that their body temperature was measured for the first time since the beginning of the outbreak. During this week's phone call, he also added that their body temperature was measured for a second time, and masks were provided for phone calls.⁶

May 14 2020:

Being among the coronavirus risk group, journalist Çetin Çiftçi, who was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison and has been in Sincan prison for 8 months, was diagnosed with Covid-19. Çiftçi, who also has kidney and heart problems, was reportedly under treatment. After Çetin Çiftçi's wife, Selda Çiftçi personally inquired about her husband's situation, she found out that he had been taken to the hospital many times while in prison.⁷

May 14 2020:

Stating the huge increase in the number of the coronavirus cases in Silivri prison, HDP Deputy Omer Faruk Gergerlioğlu said that 45 inmates stay in some of the 7-person cells. Gergerlioğlu also shared some letters from the relatives and prisoners. Here are a few of those letters:

- "Z. A. stays in the Silivri prison no. 5. In a phone call with his mother; he said that he had been taken to the infirmary twice, and then a sample was taken from him in a requested ambulance, but that he had not been informed about why the sample was taken, and that he had been sent back to his cell without being taken to a hospital."
- "My brother stays in the Silivri prison no.2. He had said in our call last week that they were given so little food. We are so worried about my brother's life, given the coronavirus threat. He is staying with 44 other inmates in a 7-person cell and the food service was so problematic due to the releases in the open prisons."
- "In Silivri prison no. 7, there stays 43 inmates in cells. The coronavirus outbreak spreads into the prison. Some 30 inmates have shown symptoms like diarrhea and vomiting. For weeks, there is a shortage in the prison canteen service, inmates denied access to soap, shampoo, and napkins, they use dishwashing liquid when showering and inmates were forced to take shower in cold water (due to the lack of provision of hot water)."

- *“At the C-7 cell of Silivri prison no. 7, unfortunately, an inmate was tested positive for Covid-19. The remaining 45 inmates in the cell are at greater risk. We are so worried about its spread to the other inmates in the cell.”*
- *“M.E. stays in Silivri L typed prison no. 5. As per his family, the inmate stated that he has a dry coughing problem which is among the coronavirus symptoms, that there are inmates in his cell with chronic diseases, that they were denied access to personal hygiene materials, that there is a shortage in the regular provision of cold and hot water, that they are not well-informed about the pandemic, that hygiene and proper cleaning of the dining holes were not adequate and no social distancing rules are being implemented, that the food being served is unhealthy and improper, and that a quarantine room is not available in the prison.”*
- *“My brother, H.O. stays in Silivri prison no. 8. When we talked to our brother, he said that there were patients who tested positive for the Covid-19, and they are in physical contact with those patients and that their request for testing was refused by the prison administration. He also said that they are staying in overcrowded cells. We are worried about my brother’s life. At my brother’s request, we ask them to be tested.”⁸*

May 14, 2020: *“My husband, R.K. is held in Silivri L-type prison no. 8. His first test for Covid-19 was negative. Today, however, the E-Nabız (the health portal) showed a second positive test result. Then I called the prison, but they said that a second test was not conducted and will happen later. Despite the positive test result in the E-Nabız, the prison (administration) states that the second test was not conducted. When I reached out (to the prison), I was told that he was transferred to another cell due to his negative test results and that he will have his phone call rights on Tuesday morning which is today. However, when I called the prison today, I was told that the phone call was postponed to Sunday. I haven’t received any news from my husband which is worrying me.”⁹*

May 14, 2020: *“Prepared by the HRFT Documentation Center, a report on the human rights violations associated with the Covid-19 outbreak in the period between March 11, 2020 – May 10, 2020 was released. According to the report, despite the calls which are based on the international standards and norms, inmates were completely restricted from family visits and partially restricted from attorney visits. Besides, the report stated that even after the High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged governments to take action in preventing the catastrophic rates of the COVID19 infection, the inmates’ limited access to proper health care, healthy food, fresh water, and hygiene materials during the pandemic amount to ill-treatment.”¹⁰*

May 15, 2020: Şakire Solmaz, the wife of ex-cadet Yasin Solmaz who has been sentenced to prison for life, M.T., the partner of teacher M.T., B. Çicek, the wife of ex-police officer Ali Çiçek, and Fatih Çiçek, Ali Çiçek's uncle and attorney, stated what they have been through during last week. They shared with Bold Medya their relative's Covid-19 diagnosis reports that were obtained from (the Ministry of Health's health portal) E-Nabız and the petitions that they submitted to the courts for their release. "They avoid us like the plague, no one is here to help", said Şakire Solmaz, the wife of Yasin Solmaz. Being locked up for 42 months, Ali Çiçek stays at the B10 cell of Silivri prison no. 7. His wife, B. Çiçek said "He rested for two days with a high fever. But he said he is fine now. Yet, the cell conditions are so bad. Foodservice is problematic. He said he has never seen so little food being served before. They were buying breakfast products from the prison canteen, but it is closed now. There is always a queue for the restroom. There is a queue even for the fridge, the living conditions got heavier. It is so crowded here, even if someone feels okay, the other who is not feeling okay affect him". Another inmate staying at the B12 cell of no. 7 is the teacher, M.T. Being locked up for 19 months, M.T. was diagnosed with Covid-19. Having not seen her husband for 65 days, and stating that a week amounts to a year for her since May 6, his wife M.T. talked about her phone call with her husband "Last time I spoke to my husband was on Wednesday, two days ago. Since May 6, a week passed like a year. Because it is recorded in the health portal that he was taken to see a doctor, I asked him what is happening. He said there is no such thing. We were only tested (for Covid-19). Since then, no one bothered to see us. They put such records in the system to make it look like they are monitoring us. They are only checking their temperature. They are not taking them to the doctor, but they put records in the system (falsely) showing that they are taking. They are in danger there. Not only their immune systems got weakened but also, they are not isolated. In fact, how to isolate them in a place where 39 people stay! This is against the law. The second thing, the food service is so problematic. He said no vegetable or fruits have been served for the last two weeks. They are only given a very small amount of food. He said we were left here to die, no one is coming to check on us. He asked to seek help from whomever/wherever I can."¹¹

May 17, 2020:

Based on their visits to Van T-type prison, Van High-Security prison, and Van F-type prison this week, the observations and findings of ÖHD (the Association of Lawyers for Freedom) Van Branch, The Prison (Watch) Commission of Van Bar, and Van Tuhay-Der (the Women Executives of the Prisoners' Families Aid Association) are as follows:¹²

- Measures taken in prisons for the Covid-19 outbreak are certainly not adequate. Given the excessive overcrowding rates, deprivation from hygiene and protective materials, and lacking access to health care, inmates' rights to life are under serious threat.
- Charging inmates for the protective materials, excessive pricing, infrequent and inadequate disinfection of cell, and body search of inmates whenever they go outside of their cells particularly aggravate the threats to their rights to life.

May 18, 2020: Another inmate was tested positive for the coronavirus in Silivri L-type prison no. 7. Accessed in the E-Nabız (the health portal), the test result for detainee Ali Kemal Ata, who is pending trial, was positive. Remaining in cell B-8 together with 29 inmates, Ata has been in prison for three years. Saying that she talks to her husband every Monday, Ata's wife, Vecibe Tuba Ata said "I will not be able to talk to my husband today because I know he is at the hospital. I am calling every day the hospital at the campus. Only on Friday, they replied to my call. They said he is in good condition, but his situation is still worrying us. I am trying to track his condition through the E-Nabız."¹³

May 19, 2020: An inmate in Silivri prison said no tests have been carried out for prisoners, except for the severe cases. In a phone call passed to the DW Turkish by his wife Y.S., an inmate describes the prison conditions to his wife: "The prosecutor's office declared the number of cases in Silivri prison as 44, but there were 31 positive cases in cell B-10 and 24 in cell B-12. So, they say that no tests will be carried out unless there are chronic cases, that is only those who seem not to be able to move around themselves should be tested. Other than that, the Ministry does not want any testing effort. We objected to this by saying how such a thing could be possible, and then we insisted on the doctor and he sent us to the hospital. Seven of us out of eight have tested positive. Most likely, there are now more cases in our cell, too. Everyone in the adjacent cell is sick." In the phone call, the inmate also adds that they were taken to the quarantine before the test results came out, but later the test result for one of the inmates among them came out negative and that he would be transferred to the cell designated for negatives. The inmate describes his concerns as follows: "There is no such thing as quarantine/isolation here anyway. If you heal on your own, you will be fine. Other than that, if you die, you die, there is nothing else to do. Nobody cares about you here. Nobody at all..."

Spoken to the DW Turkish, an inmate's relative Ş.S. indicated that her husband who is held in Silivri prison is at the quarantine and that some 39 inmates who have tested positive are held together at one place.

Claiming that she was told the quarantine rooms were 7-to-8-person cells, she stated that the warden of the prison has confirmed about the situation (that the 39 inmates are quarantined in one cell) to their attorneys. According to the information from her husband, Ş.S. also added that although there were 39 inmates in the cell, they were given so little food that could be adequate for only 15 inmates, that the cleaning and hygiene were limited, that the last time their body temperature being measured was three days ago and it was conducted by the guards in a way that they were measured through the door without the guards entering the cell, and that the inmates could not make their voice heard as there were not enough guards in the prison.

S.E. indicated that in Silivri L-type prison no. 7, inmates were given masks and gloves on May 11 for the first time when they left their cells for family phone calls. Further, an inmate's relative S.Ş. said "The only information they gave was that (they are) okay. I found out about my husband's infection in the E-Nabız platform. And now, I can not even track (his situation) from the platform. When we asked why we are not able to track it in the E-Nabız system, they said the (patient) records will no longer be entered (there)."¹⁴

May 19, 2020: Indicating that his son was given a flue medication and sent back to his cell, Ekrem Solmaz, the father of Yasin Solmaz who resides in Silivri L-type prison no. 7 and has tested positive for Covid-19, said "39 inmates are staying in one cell. This is massacre!". The officials of the Silivri L-type prison no. 7 said that they could not comment on this matter and referred us to the public prosecutor's office.¹⁵

May 20, 2020: Lawyers from ÖHD (the Association of Lawyers for Freedom) Ankara Branch and the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Iğdır deputy Habip Eksik have visited the Kayseri Bünyan Women's Prison and Kayseri Bünyan T-type prison no. 7. The delegation reported about the interviews they had with inmates and the prison administration. According to the report prepared by the Ankara Branch of the ÖHD, 5 imprisoned women in the Kayseri Bunyan Women's Prison were interviewed. The report indicates that 3 people were quarantined following their examination, but no coronavirus testing was carried out and that an inmate was having coughing and dry throat problems.¹⁶

May 20, 2020: "My brother held in Silivri prison was tested on the 10th day of the outbreak. His test results were positive. Stating that he was (only) given medication as treatment, my brother said that they are staying in overcrowded cells. He also added that the food service was problematic and that they were personally cleaning (their cells).

We have applied to the prison administration that my brother can not remain in prison under these circumstances, but we did not receive a positive reply.” These statements belong to Barış Kaçan, the brother of inmate Hüseyin Kaçan. Locked up in Silivri prison for 23 months, inmate Hüseyin Kaçan also has stomach pains and knee problems. According to his brother, even under normal circumstances, he was struggling in prison conditions, often experiencing pain, and getting sick. After his Covid-19 symptoms became increasingly noticeable, he was tested on the 10th day and he had found out that he was sick. In fact, from the moment the symptoms began, he and other inmates had applied to the prison administration for testing but were rejected.

Burak Çelen, who is also imprisoned in Silivri prison no. 7, has tested positive for Covid-19 a week ago. Sevda Çelen, the wife of Burak Çelen, had seen in the E-Nabız system that his husband has been infected by the coronavirus, and then their attorney has petitioned for his treatment in the hospital. Following the petition, Burak Çelen was taken to the hospital on May 7. Sevda Çelen said that after a day of observation in the hospital, his husband was given a 5-day drug therapy and sent to the quarantine cell in the prison. In her most recent phone call (with her husband), Sevda Çelen learned that that the prison conditions were not good. According to Burak Çelen, who is in the quarantine cell for 39 people, the amount of food served to the cell was for 15 people and the prison canteen was closed. He has also stated that the fever measurements were not carried out regularly, that no testing was applied after the 5-day drug therapy and that there were fresh air, and hygiene problems.

Cevriye Aydın is the lawyer of Yasin Solmaz, a coronavirus patient. Reached by Euronews, Aydın points out that the situation is a human rights violation. Stating that his client is not in healthy conditions, Aydın also indicates that the authorities should accommodate temporary solutions for those in prison during the pandemic: "Regardless of their views and religions, everyone in prisons is under the assurance (responsibility) of the state. First, the right to life is guaranteed by the state. Otherwise, the state will be responsible. The priority here is to secure the prisoners' rights to life. I am in a panic for those prisoners' rights to life. People out there are dying from Covid-19, too, but when they are out, being infected (by the virus) is in their own volition. However, when in prison, this is an incident happening in a place that is entirely under the political and legal responsibility of the state, the government, and those in power."¹⁷

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

The issues stated above clearly show that the Government of Turkey and the officials are not taking the necessary measures amid the global Coronavirus outbreak.

They do not even provide the essential basic needs of those inmates whose well-beings and health are under their responsibility to protect. Not only that, but it is also clearly seen that **they also fail to ensure physical conditions necessary to prevent the transmission of the disease, and that mass deaths can occur in prisons due to the “mass isolation” measures that are similar to the medieval practices.**

Some of the official statements reported in the media about the coronavirus cases in prisons are summarized below:

April 8, 2020: *It is claimed that a convict named Mehmet Yeter in Bafra prison, who reportedly had diabetes, was recently sent back to prison after his leg got amputated and three days later, he died from Covid-19. Despite the statement of the Bafra Public Prosecutor's Office that Mehmet Yeter's death was not related to Covid-19, a social media user called Ferhat Yeter, who declared himself as Mehmet Yeter's son, shared some documents, that allegedly belonged to the public prosecutor, about the funeral proceedings of his father Mehmet Yeter.*

April 20, 2020: *Izmir Public Prosecutor's Office announced that an inmate in Buca prison has tested positive for the novel coronavirus.*

April 22, 2020: *After the first coronavirus case in Buca prison, Izmir Public Prosecutor's Office announced that 64 more inmates have also tested positive.*

April 28, 2020: *Konya Public Prosecutor's Office announced that 55 inmates in Konya E type prison have tested positive for the coronavirus.*

May 2, 2020: *After receiving complaint letters from inmates and their relatives, Sezgin Tanrikulu, CHP Istanbul Deputy and Vice President of the Parliamentary Human Rights Investigation Committee, stated that they are receiving an unprecedented number of complaints, and most of them are about “inadequate access to nutrition, hygiene, and health care service”.*

May 8, 2020: *Bakırköy Public Prosecutor's Office announced that 44 prisoners in Silivri prison have tested positive for Covid-19.*

May 22, 2020: *Bakırköy Public Prosecutor's Office announced the death of an inmate in Silivri prison, who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19. The prosecutor's office said in a statement that the inmate, who had a chronic lung disease (reportedly tuberculosis), died at 5.45 pm on May 21, 2020. As of May 22, the prosecutor's office said there were a total of 82 cases of Covid-19 in Silivri prison, including 47 in the L-type prison no. 7 and 35 in L-type prison no. 8.*

FINDINGS

The significant differences between the official statements and the information received from the inmates' relatives and their attorneys indicate that the extent of the coronavirus risk in Turkey's prisons is far deeper than what has been announced. **The Government of Turkey and officials, who are not taking the necessary precautions to protect the rights to life of those who are under their responsibility, in slightest terms, act with "severe neglect of duty and culpable negligence".**

Based on the facts presented above, our findings of the prison conditions during the coronavirus pandemic are as below:

- The information provided by the officials on the coronavirus cases in prison and the inmates' health conditions is not adequate; both the relatives of inmates and the public are not informed accurately and frequently.
- Although some have been released after the recent execution law, the prison cells are still overcrowded. In the pandemic, some might primarily expect the measures to be undertaken against the outbreak are to reduce the number of people in prison cells; however, the opposite was experienced in some cells to which their sizes have expanded from the pre-pandemic rates.
- Sick people are not being tested or delayed until their conditions worsen, let alone undertaking routine testing efforts.
- The inmates' access to both internal and external health care providers have been severely restricted and thus become problematic; in cases where they have accessed the health care, it has been de-facto abruptly due to the post-quarantine practices.
- Sick people are not treated effectively. Both the duration of treatments and the usage of drugs are very limited.
- In-prison hygiene conditions are inadequate. Adequate cleaning materials and proper access to water are not provided; even in cases where they are charged for a fee.
- After the recently passed execution bill, shortage of workforce in open prisons where meals are prepared for prisons has resulted in very problematic food service. This seemingly undermines the efforts to tackle the pandemic issue as inmates experience malnutrition. Besides food service that is inadequate, unhealthy, and of poor quality, inmates experience difficulties in accessing paid food due to the closure of canteens as part of the fight against the pandemic. This weakens the immune system of prisoners and makes them more vulnerable during the pandemic.
- Due to inadequate provision of the protective materials, both inmates and prison personnel are exposed to risky contact transmission of the disease from the infected.
- As many officials (serving prisons) have limited their physical presence during the pandemic, the inmates' demands are not evaluated properly; rapid and effective measures are not taken in the fight against the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As Advocates of Silenced Turkey, we call on all national and international institutions and the general public, especially the Turkish Government, to act immediately and effectively to stop the aggravated coronavirus threats in Turkey's prisons and prevent possible mass deaths from happening.

Given this context:

- *The officials are urged to provide adequate information about the coronavirus cases in prison and the inmates' health conditions. They should accurately and frequently inform both the inmates' relatives and the public.*
- *To ease overcrowding in prisons, we urge the government to use all available alternatives to detention whenever possible. Among the inmate groups that are at higher risk for the coronavirus, persons on remand awaiting trial should immediately be released. The legal practice to suspend the execution of sentences should also immediately be adapted for the convicted prisoners.*
- *Inmates should be tested routinely and those infected should be detected, provided with effective health care, and treated under appropriate conditions. As current quarantine efforts resemble medieval practices evoked from physical contact between the infected and uninfected, they should immediately be halted. Appropriate and scientific measures should be undertaken.*
- *In-prison hygiene conditions should adequately be provided, the access to cleaning materials should be improved, and the overpricing in the prison canteens should be prevented.*
- *To strengthen the immune systems of inmates, adequate and balanced nutrition should be provided - calling for improvements in the quality and amount of the food service, provision of adequate and proper food products in the canteens, and halting of the overpricing regime in the canteens.*
- *Both inmates and prison personnel that they are in contact with should be provided with adequate and proper protective materials.*
- *To protect the right to life, the demands of inmates should be evaluated urgently; rapid and effective measures should be undertaken in the fight against the pandemic. In this context, the protocols in the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2 INFECTION) GUIDE, prepared and updated by the General Directorate of Public Health of the Ministry of Health of The Ministry of Health, should be followed strictly in prisons.*

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