



REPORT ON TURKISH PRISONS FEBRUARY 2019

A- GENERAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION

According to data from the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, the number of detainees and convicts has doubled in the last 10 years and the number of prisons has increased by almost half.

According to the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, as of the date 01.08.2019 in Turkey, there are;

- 288 closed prisons,
- 74 private open prisons,
- 5 education houses for children,
- 9 closed prisons for women,
- 6 open prisons for women,
- 7 closed prisons for children

In total, there are 389 prisons and the capacity of these institutions is 213,862 according to the officials.

As of the end of 2018, the number of detainees and convicts reached 258,660. 199,861 prisoners were convicted and 58,799 were in pre-trial detention. The number of female prisoners is 20,208, the number of male prisoners is 245,433 and the number of children is 3,019.

Number of Convicts and Detainees by Crime Rates

As of 2018, there are convicts and detainees in prisons mostly due to drug-related charges, political charges, theft and murder.

50,386 prisoners with the drug-related crimes rank the first in prisons. The second line is held by 44,986 prisoners with political charges, 33,032 for robbery, 28,274 for murder, 24,919 prisoners for assault causing bodily harm offences, 22,008 prisoners for plunder and usurpation offences, 16,566 prisoners for sexual offences, 6,680 prisoners for forgery, 3,770 prisoners for establishing a criminal organization, 3,119 prisoners with fraud offences.

Contact: international@hdp.org.tr **Web:** www.hdp.org.tr

Address: Barbaros Mah. Tahran Cad. Büklüm Sok. No: 117 06680 Çankaya, Ankara - Turkey

Phone: +90 312 427 17 80 **Fax:** +90 312 4288957



B- THE HUNGER STRIKES IN PRISONS

To support the hunger strike initiated by Leyla Guven, 301 prisoners, 54 females and 247 of males, 19 politicians and activists in Wales, Erbil and Strasbourg, are currently on hunger strike, demanding the end of isolation on Mr. Abdullah Öcalan, who is being held in İmralı Island for 20 years now. The first group of political prisoners joined Leyla Güven's protest (Ms Guven started her hunger strike on 8 November 2018) on 16 December 2018. Sebahat Tuncel, Democratic Regions Party's (DBP) Co-Chair and Selma Irmak, the former HDP Deputy for Hakkari joined the hunger strike on 15 January 2019 in prison.

Violations during the hunger strikes are documented by lawyer visits;

- Prison administrations have started disciplinary investigations against all prisoners on hunger strike. Disciplinary punishments were given to hunger-striking prisoners in the Bandırma T Type Prison No 2.
- Adem ARSLAN, a hunger-striking prisoner in Edirne F Type Prison, was forcibly removed from his ward, subjected to verbal abuse and physical violence by the soldiers. In Edirne F Type Closed Prison, hunger-striking prisoners aren't provided with vitamin B which is essential during hunger strike.
- In January, the director of the Gebze Women's Closed Prison threatened the hunger strikers with forced intervention if the protest went further.
- In Maltepe No. 1 Closed Prison, the Prison Administration has banned 27 people, including Cesim Yıldırım and Eran Nazlıer, who have been on hunger strike, from all activities for one month due to their hunger strike. Disciplinary investigations have been launched against Yıldırım and Nazlıer. Faxes and letters about the hunger strikes by the hunger striking prisoners have been exposed to disciplinary investigations as well.
- In Kandıra No 1 Closed Prison, İbrahim Kaya, who had been on long-term hunger strikes before as well, lost 10 kilos and he has begun to have serious health problems.
- Vitamin B (including pure B1 and vitamin B Complex) and carbonate are not provided by many prison administrations. The vitamins that are currently used are the vitamins that prisoners have previously received from the infirmary. Carbonate which is an essential product for hunger strikes, are not provided in some prisons and in some other prisons prisoners have to buy it from the canteens. Reports by lawyers also indicate that prisoners are not given lemon, another essential product during hunger strikes.
- Süleyman Benzer, a hunger striker since 26 December 2018 in Düzce T Type Closed Prison, was put into a single cell after he went on hunger strike on the excuse that he is a prisoner sentenced to aggravated life sentence and therefore must be kept in a single cell. It is not possible for Benzer to meet his needs by himself.
- Five prisoners on indefinite-irreversible hunger strike in Bandırma No 1 T Type Prison do not accept to go to infirmary and thus their health checks are not done in any way.

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- Zerdeşt Oduncu, who is also on hunger strike in Edirne T Type Prison since 23 December 2018, hasn't been examined by a medical doctor since 18 January 2019.

- The medical personnel are insufficient in terms of necessary medical examinations in Silivri No 5 L Type Prison. The health checks are not done regularly, and when they are done, they are done improperly, and some medical personnel verbally harasses prisoners with cynical statements.

- **At the Elazığ No 1 High Security Penal Institution;**

Three prisoners have been on hunger strike since 16 December 2018, and 3 prisoners since 5 January 2019.

The hunger striking prisoners are held in rooms for three by themselves. As of 5 February 2019, it is specifically important that there is no attendant for those prisoners who are on hunger strike since 16 December 2019. The fact that vitamin B/complex pills were given to the prisoners only after their 33rd day on the hunger strike increased the severity of the current situation. The crucial needs (juice, ayran, vital liquids etc.) of six hunger striking prisoners are not sold at the prison canteen. The carbonate they need to take every day is not given to them.

Medical examination is not provided for prisoners on the 53rd day of the hunger strike. Their blood pressure and weight control has not been checked for a long time.

In the High Security Penitentiary, No 2, which is also in the same campus of Elazığ Prison, prisoner Ahmet Tekin has been put into a cell. Necessary medical examinations, weight, and blood pressure checks are not done. (The same applies to the other three prisoners in the same prison). After being held with another prisoner Yasin Güngör, the prisoner Serkan Eren has been moved to another single cell.

The most basic problems for hunger striking prisoners in Elazığ Prison are as follows:

- 1- Not providing any essential needs except salt and sugar for a long time.
- 2- Barring access to fruit juice, tea or coffee from the canteen
- 3- Absence of medical examinations such as checking blood pressure and weight loss.

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C- GENERAL PROBLEMS IN THE PRISONS

1. Lack of access to medical services,
2. Installation of cameras in cells,
3. Failure to provide hot water on a regular basis,
4. Arbitrary implementation of more severe sanctions than disciplinary sanctions, which are regulated in legislation,
5. Forced strip searches amid transfers, hospital visits and courthouse departures,
6. Medical examinations while wearing handcuffs in hospitals,
7. Extensive prohibitions of communication rights and visits,
8. While using the right to phone calls, prisoners are forced to read out their personal information before starting the conversations.
9. Bans of books, magazines and newspapers
10. Prison administrations try forcing a military order on prisoners
11. Forcing prisoners to march in a single line in a military order
12. Searches in the wards done in raid-like manner
13. Male guards entering women's wards.

Elazığ Prison;

- Reports indicate that prisoners in Elazığ are counted in a military-like manner. The prisoners, opposing to this practice, are dragged into the open-air area (an area surrounded by four walls) and subjected to physical torture as well as verbal insults. Female and male prisoners are often thrown into the sponge room (A room with walls covered with foam and surveillance cameras). Prisoners' attempts to communicate with the prison administration about problems or needs result in either no response or more insults.
- Prisoners also face difficulty in accessing cleaning materials. They are not given hot water, while cold water is given irregularly and in quotas.
- The private belongings of prisoners are confiscated in an arbitrary manner.
- The products sold in the canteen are unaffordable.
- Some prisoners are kept alone for more than a year and the rooms on both sides of their cells are kept empty to prevent them from communicating with others.
- Some of the prisoners mention their food is inadequate in terms of nutritional value and amount. Their basic needs are not met, and proper meals are not provided for sick prisoners with special needs. Children in prison do not have access to the necessary nutrients.

- Prisoners, reacting against the arbitrary attitude and torture, are threatened with disciplinary punishments. Many prisoners receive 3-months long disciplinary punishments which ban them from receiving visits, use their communication rights and see other prisoners in the same ward.

- Letters and official complaints sent to the institutions are confiscated and disciplinary investigations are launched.

Tarsus T Type Closed Prison for Women

- Strip searches while being admitted to the prison,
- Failure to provide treatment of ill prisoners or delayed treatment,
- Examination of ill prisoners by handcuffs and under the supervision of a male soldier,
- 19 or more people stay in wards for 16. Some prisoners sleep on the floor or two prisoners sleep in the same bunk.
- Lighting is inadequate in wards, the open air area is small and the physical structure of the prison is not suitable for humid climate conditions.
- Drinking water is not healthy and hygienic.
- Disciplinary punishments are often given without any reasons. Appeals against disciplinary punishments are rejected by the execution judge in violation of the right of defense.
- Rights to weekly social and cultural activities by legislation are restricted.

Ağrı Patnos Prison

- Patnos L-Type prison, made for 1,500 people, accommodates prisoners more than its capacity as Ağrı central prison was evacuated and the detainees were transferred to the surrounding provinces and districts.
- In Patnos L type prison, especially in the last two years, drinking water is absolutely unclean, causing poisoning and health problems for prisoners due to high iron and sulfur in it.
- During medical check-ups, signs of tuberculosis was found in 50 political prisoners.
- Inhumane approaches such as the absence of a doctor on a regular basis, failure to meet the medications for seriously ill prisoners with cancer, heart disease and hypertension as well as the failure in dispatching ill prisoners to hospitals, including severely ill prisoners, who require regular medical examination, show that the prisoners' right to life is often violated.
- Strip searches continue in the prison and those who react, are subjected to battery and isolation.
- There are severe violations of rights such as confiscating the radios of prisoners and placing 32 prisoners in wards made for 16.



- Soldiers and prison staff show provocative approaches to political detainees. Especially those who are newly jailed are subjected to strip searches, swearing, insults and physical assault. Psychological and physical pressures are made to ensure that these prisoners choose to stay in the ward for intelligence cooperators.
- Almost no social rights are granted to prisoners. Although activities such as sports, workshops and conversations with other prisoners are legal, they are prevented by forged reasons and solitary confinement is given for arbitrary reasons. The prisoner's requests for a ward change are denied, and they are arbitrarily isolated.
- The right to receive information is blocked by confiscating the radios, and many newspapers, especially the Yeni Yaşam newspaper (a dissident newspaper), is not allowed in prison.
- Some guards are insulting the Kurdish-speaking prisoners, and their mails are often not given. Letters of prisoners to Human Rights Association, embassies, non-governmental organizations and media outlets are confiscated or not sent.
- Prisoners' criminal complaints are not being received and their official complaints are not registered.

Tekirdağ No 2 F Type Prison

- Radios and televisions are not provided.
- Books are not allowed.
- The prisoners' rights to have conversations with other detainees and sport activities are prevented by the prison administration.
- Official complaints or requests from the prison are not registered by the administration with excuses such as “your complaint/request has disappeared, etc.”

Bayburt Closed Women's Prison

- Prisoners are forced to roll call in another room by standing in military order. Those reacting against the roll call are given solitary confinement, communication and visiting punishments. Many families are forced to return without seeing their relatives because of these punishments.
- The director of the prison threatens prisoners by issuing a notice to do the roll call in a military order.
- Most mails and books are not allowed. Clothes such as scarves and baggy trousers (shalwar) are also banned.

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Bolu F Type Closed Prison

- The doors to the open-air area are closed early and opened late.
- A full self-introduction is imposed while making phone calls. Both families and prisoners are requested to give a full self-introduction and when they do not do so, their phone calls are interrupted. There are prisoners who has not talked to their families for months.
- Handcuffed medical examination is still being forced in hospitals; prisoners who do not accept handcuffed examination are brought back to prison without receiving any treatment.
- During dispatches to hospitals, “Attention! He/she may escape” are written on prisoners’ files and their criminal background or their affiliations with organization are also written on their personal medical files. This practice has a negative effect on doctors and hospital staff, it damages the patient-doctor relationship and causes a negative attitude in the treatment process. Despite demands by the prisoners, their medical reports are not given to them.

Karabük T Type Closed Prison

- Letters sent and received are continuously censored, and the letters where the prisoner mentions any of his/her own political opinions are not sent. A lawsuit was filed against 35 prisoners for “Defaming the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu” in their letter to Human Rights Association.
- Prisoners can go to infirmary only every 3 weeks and as a result their treatment is disrupted.

Kayseri/Bünyan 2 No T Type Closed Prison

- On January 10, 2018, Mehdi Boz had sudden rash and bruises on his back and chest. He requested an ambulance to go to the hospital. However, the Director of the prison refused his request saying “We don't call an ambulance for rashes. We call an ambulance when your hand or arm is dislocated, or you go into a coma.” He has protein deficiency in his kidneys and must eat dietary foods, but as these are not given to him, most food causes edema in his body. Despite all the applications he wrote, his problem has not been solved.
- Cameras, placed inside the cells of prisoners, records their actions for 24-hour a day. In addition to recording the common areas, the toilet and bathroom entrances are also monitored.
- There is no health staff in the institution and thus, while the distance between the prison and the hospital is about 50 km, the situation of severe patients becomes risky.

Kırıkkale F Type Closed Prison

- Hospital visits for serious health problems are completely removed. When asked, security reasons are given as a justification. Dental treatment of prisoners (although they



cover the costs) is not allowed for more than a year. Prisoners are forced to cover some of the medical costs.

- Products in the canteen are unaffordable and the requested products are not sold in the canteen.
- Recently, 75 prisoners were prosecuted and sentenced to various punishments for writing official complaints to the Ministry of Justice to protest possible implementation of prison uniforms.

Rize Kalkandere L Type Closed Prison

- Prisoners are repeatedly battered for arbitrary reasons, they are forced to do roll-calls by standing up and their rights to communications are violated with disciplinary punishments.

Urfa No 2 T Type Closed Prison

- A 14-month-old baby named Arin, staying in prison with her mother Esma Yılmaz, has asthma and bronchitis. Arin's condition is deteriorating day by day.

D- SICK PRISONERS

- Mehmet Selim Atlı, treated in the hospital after having a cerebral hemorrhage and then taken back to Siverek Prison, had a second cerebral hemorrhage. Atlı, with two brain vessels and 50 percent of the carotid artery clogged, frequently experiences memory loss. Atlı is not allowed to meet with his family, and he is now at risk of a new cerebral hemorrhage at the Siverek T-Type Closed Prison. All attempts by his lawyer are at a dead end, so the family members held a meeting with the prison prosecutor. During the meeting the prosecutor said, "Your father is convicted of political offences and therefore you will not be allowed to meet him."
- Abdullah Kalay- Kandıra No 2 F Type Prison: He suffers from Wernicke-Korsakoff. His hearing is impaired by %25. He also has disorders in his stomach and bowels. He had angiography twice and had a heart attack in Kandıra Prison. Because of the late intervention, his heart functions decreased to %35.
- Afyon Korkmaz - Kocaeli Gebze Prison for Women: She uses prosthesis in her leg and her prosthesis has not been adjusted or changed for 10 years. Therefore, she suffers from the foot bone growing. The prosthesis is unusable.
- Dilek Öz- Bakırköy L Type Closed Prison: Fiber glands in some joints of her body have detached because of torture she was previously exposed to. She has waist and neck hernia, heart rhythm disorder, asthma. She also has cancer.
- Engin Aktaş - Erzurum H Type Closed Prison: He doesn't have hands and needs prosthesis. He has difficulties in maintaining his life alone as he is always kept in solitary confinement.

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- Güneş Tekin - Gebze M Type Prison: Since she was arrested just after a clash in where she was seriously injured, there are pieces of shrapnel in her lungs, her back and ribs. Surgery has not been pursued due to high risk of death. She holds a risk of stroke. Since she has tissue loss in her leg because of her previous injuries, she cannot walk well.
- Lokman Akbaba -Tekirdağ No 1 F Type Closed Prison: Akbaba has a terminal illness caused by his deglutition and respiratory muscles. Average expected life span is defined as five years by doctors.
- Mehmet Emin Özkan - Diyarbakır D Type Closed Prison: 75 years old Özkan has dementia, thyroid and heart failure.

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