



**STICHTING
DE FACTO JUSTICE**

TO THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

on

Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Introduction

Since the attempted coup in July 2016, thousands of individuals associated with the Gülen movement, as well as members of the broader political opposition in Türkiye, have been subjected to a systematic campaign of repression. What began as a wave of emergency measures quickly transformed into a permanent state policy marked by mass arrests, widespread dismissals from public service, enforced disappearances, torture, and prolonged imprisonment.

These violations are not isolated incidents, but rather form part of a deliberate and organized effort by the government to silence dissent, eliminate perceived opponents, and consolidate political control. Victims are frequently accused on the basis of tenuous or fabricated evidence, such as the use of certain mobile applications, attendance at legally recognized schools or associations, or even family ties. Once detained, many reports experiencing cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including severe beatings, threats against loved ones, and denial of medical care.

The voices of these victims are too often suppressed through intimidation, stigmatization, and strict state control of the media. Survivors live under constant fear of reprisals against themselves and their families, even long after release. In many cases, the trauma is compounded by the loss of livelihoods, social exclusion, and the destruction of community networks.

This submission, therefore, seeks to amplify the perspectives of those who have endured torture and other forms of ill-treatment in Türkiye. It aims to shed light on their lived experiences, underscore their urgent needs for recognition, rehabilitation, and justice, and call upon the international community to ensure that their suffering is neither ignored nor repeated.

Experiences of Victims and Survivors

Victims targeted as “Gülenists” or opposition supporters describe a climate of fear and persecution:

§ Arbitrary arrests: Thousands were detained solely for alleged connections to the Gülen movement, often based on vague criteria such as using a specific banking app, attending a school, or having relatives accused of affiliation.

§ Torture and ill-treatment: Survivors report severe beatings, stress positions, electric shocks, sexual violence, threats against family members, and psychological abuse during detention and interrogation.

§ Prolonged solitary confinement: Many are held in isolation for extended periods, causing lasting psychological harm.

§ Impact on families: Children, spouses, and relatives are stigmatized, face travel bans, and often lose access to education, employment, and healthcare.

Individual Testimonies of Torture and Ill-Treatment

Hayati Uysal — Permanent vision loss due to police beatings¹

A detainee reported severe blows to the head while in police custody, which caused irreversible vision loss in one eye and necessitated an eye transplant. This case underscores the use of blunt-force trauma in detention and the permanent injuries inflicted on victims of police abuse.

Eyüp Birinci — Former teacher tortured, brought to court unconscious²

Witness testimony in court described Eyüp Birinci as unconscious, with his clothing soaked in blood, after days in custody. His condition was consistent with severe beatings and untreated injuries sustained under police interrogation. The lack of proper medical attention and accountability illustrates the impunity surrounding such abuse.

Fifteen girls detained in Üsküdar — Psychological coercion and degrading treatment³

In May 2024, 15 girls detained at the Üsküdar Child Branch were held for 16 hours without access to legal counsel. Officers subjected them to intimidation, psychological abuse, and threats, including coercion to testify against their families. A regional court later determined that these acts could constitute torture and authorized an investigation into the officers involved.

Mesut Kaçmaz — Abduction and torture, including threats against family⁴

Mesut Kaçmaz testified that he and his family were abducted, transferred to Türkiye, and subjected to sustained torture. He was blindfolded, confined in a dark, undisclosed location, and repeatedly beaten. Authorities threatened to rape his wife and daughters to coerce compliance. His account highlights both the physical and psychological dimensions of torture in cases of cross-border abduction.

¹ <https://stockholmcf.org/torture-victim-says-he-lost-his-vision-due-to-blows-to-head-in-police-custody-requiring-an-eye-transplant/>

² <https://stockholmcf.org/witness-details-torture-of-former-teacher-in-turkish-custody-says-clothes-were-soaked-in-blood/>

³ <https://www.omerfarukgergerlioglu.com/basin/kiz-cocuklari-davasinda-yeni-gelisme-iskence-yapan-polisler-hakkinda-sorusturma-yolu-acildi/36146/>

⁴ <https://turkeytribunal.org/tr/taniklar/mesut-kacmaz-2/>

Erhan Doğan — Testimony of systematic torture and enforced disappearance⁵

Erhan Doğan's testimony before international bodies detailed an organized system of abuse: secret detention, blindfolding, enforced disappearance, repeated beatings, and psychological pressure. His account emphasizes that torture was not random but systematically employed to extract statements and instill fear.

Mehmet Parlak — kidney transplant patient denied adequate care in prison⁶

Mehmet Parlak, a dismissed court clerk, was arrested in May 2022 following the confirmation of his prison sentence. After entering prison, he was denied proper medical care essential to his post-kidney transplant condition. Reports describe the absence of a suitable diet, poor hygiene, and prison meals harmful to his kidney and digestive health. His weight dropped from 62 kg to 45 kg, leaving him "skin and bones." Family members and advocates have appealed for a suspension of his sentence on the grounds of life-threatening health deterioration.

This case illustrates a form of torture and ill-treatment carried out through deliberate neglect of urgent medical needs, leaving the prisoner in a condition that endangers his right to life.

Birgül Bulut — teacher with severe health decline and denied medical treatment⁷

Birgül Bulut, a 47-year-old chemistry teacher imprisoned for over two years, developed multiple serious health conditions in detention. She reportedly suffered asthma attacks triggered by police mistreatment during her initial custody and later experienced kidney bleeding while in prison. Additional ailments include hypertension, heart rhythm disorders, anemia, and hemorrhoids, none of which have been adequately addressed under prison conditions. Despite urgent risks identified by a prison doctor, she was denied ambulance transfer and timely medical intervention.

The case demonstrates ill-treatment through systemic denial of medical care, exposing the detainee to prolonged suffering and serious risk of organ damage.

Asaleddin Çelik — teacher with terminal cancer denied timely release⁸

Asaleddin Çelik, a 52-year-old English teacher dismissed by decree and sentenced to six years and three months in prison for alleged links to a closed private school, was held for approximately two and a half years in Düzce T-Type Prison despite suffering from advanced lung cancer. His condition rapidly deteriorated in custody: he underwent lung surgery,

⁵ <https://turkeytribunal.org/tr/taniklar/erhan-dogan-2/>

⁶ <https://www.patreon.com/posts/tutuklu-bobrek-81094838>

⁷ <https://www.patreon.com/posts/saglik-durumu-37635722>

⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DOjaGq4jCc7/>

experienced epileptic seizures, and grew so weak that he could not stand or attend visits. Although he was transferred to intensive care unconscious on 24 July 2024, a suspension of his sentence was only granted on 15 August—by which point his condition was irreversible. He died shortly afterwards, on 14 September. Fellow inmates and his family described his detention conditions as extremely harsh, alleging that he was only released “when it was too late,” underscoring how denial and delay of medical release amounted to cruel and inhuman treatment.

Obstacles and Challenges

Victims face immense barriers to seeking justice:

- Fear of reprisals: Reporting torture can lead to harsher treatment, renewed detention, or threats against family members.
- Lack of judicial independence: Courts are widely perceived as extensions of the executive, leaving victims without remedies.
- Suppression of civil society: NGOs and human rights defenders working on torture cases face harassment, closure, or imprisonment.
- Social stigma: Being labeled a “Gülenist” or “traitor” results in deep social exclusion, economic deprivation, and lifelong discrimination.

Needs of Victims

- Recognition: Survivors seek acknowledgment that they were unlawfully persecuted, and that torture is not justified by political motives.
- Rehabilitation: Access to independent medical, psychological, and social support remains almost nonexistent.
- Justice: Victims demand impartial investigations, accountability of perpetrators, and the reversal of arbitrary convictions.
- Safety: Many victims who flee Türkiye require international protection to avoid refoulement and renewed persecution.

Recommendations

§ End torture and guarantee accountability: The international community must exert sustained pressure on Türkiye to end the practice of torture and ill-treatment in all detention facilities, prisons, and informal holding centers. This includes

establishing genuinely independent monitoring mechanisms, ensuring access for international observers, and guaranteeing that all allegations of abuse are promptly, thoroughly, and impartially investigated. Accountability for perpetrators, regardless of their official rank or position, is essential to restoring the rule of law and deterring future violations.

§ Provide international protection and asylum: States should expand safe avenues for asylum and protection for victims fleeing persecution in Türkiye. Many survivors of torture face the threat of refoulement when seeking refuge abroad, exposing them to renewed persecution. It is vital that governments adopt policies that respect the principle of non-refoulement, expedite asylum procedures for those at risk, and ensure access to legal aid, housing, and integration support for survivors and their families.

§ Expand rehabilitation and reparation programs: Rehabilitation must go beyond immediate medical treatment and include comprehensive, long-term support tailored to the specific needs of torture survivors. This includes specialized psychological counseling, social reintegration services, educational opportunities for children of persecuted families, and financial compensation where possible. International donors and humanitarian organizations should allocate resources to support survivor-focused rehabilitation initiatives, particularly those run by independent NGOs.

§ Center survivor voices in policymaking: Victims and survivors must not be passive subjects of international reporting but active participants in shaping responses to torture and persecution. Their testimonies and perspectives should guide policymaking at both national and international levels. This means creating safe and confidential channels for victims to share their experiences, protecting them from reprisals, and ensuring that their lived realities are reflected in reforms, prevention strategies, and accountability mechanisms. By amplifying survivor voices, the international community affirms their dignity and helps transform their suffering into a force for systemic change.

§ Strengthen the role of international human rights bodies: International human rights organizations and monitoring mechanisms — including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and regional human rights institutions — should take a more proactive role in addressing ongoing abuses in Türkiye. They should consistently monitor the situation, raise urgent appeals, conduct fact-finding missions, and hold the Turkish authorities accountable through resolutions, sanctions, and legal mechanisms where appropriate. Their active involvement is crucial to ensure that torture and persecution do not remain hidden or tolerated.

Conclusion

The stories of Gülenists and opposition figures in Türkiye reflect not only isolated instances of abuse, but lives shattered, and entire communities stigmatized and deprived of their basic rights.

The international community must recognize that these are not merely domestic matters, but grave breaches of international law and fundamental human rights. Survivors of torture and persecution carry wounds that are not only physical but also deeply psychological and social. Their voices must therefore be placed at the center of truth-seeking and justice efforts. Their suffering must be acknowledged, and their rights must be fully vindicated through accountability, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

Ending impunity in Türkiye is not only a moral imperative but also a legal obligation under international human rights treaties to which the State is bound. Restoring dignity to victims requires coordinated efforts — from States, international organizations, and civil society — to ensure that perpetrators are held responsible, survivors are supported, and structures of repression are dismantled.

Ultimately, the responsibility to act does not lie with victims alone, but with the international community as a whole. By amplifying their stories, pressing for accountability, and ensuring effective remedies, the world can help transform the suffering of victims into a pathway toward justice, healing, and the prevention of future abuses.