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KURDISH MONITORING



KURDISH LANGUAGE RIGHTS MONITORING AND REPORTING PLATFORM

# Report on Systematic Violations Against **Kurdish Language and Culture** in Turkey

2025

KURDISH MONITORING

*Mesopotamia Observatory of Justice*

QXW

# About Kurdish Monitoring

Kurdish Monitoring is an independent initiative established to document and monitor systematic violations against the Kurdish language and culture in Turkey and to present this data to the public through regular reports.

Acting on the principle that linguistic pluralism is a fundamental human right, the Platform aims to make the obstacles to the use of Kurdish in the public sphere visible and to conduct data-based advocacy against these violations.

## Operation and Objectives of the Platform

### 1. Data Collection

- Records of violations will be kept via open sources (official documents, court decisions, local and national media).
- Field data will be compiled in cooperation with civil society organizations, lawyers, and victims.

### 2. Reporting

- **Regular Reports:** Comprehensive analyses will be published in six-month and annual periods.
- **Information Notes:** Rapid assessment texts will be prepared in cases of urgent violations or significant developments.

# Current Status of Kurdish Language Rights in Turkey

*In Turkey, Kurdish faces both legal and de facto obstacles.*

## Right to Education

The right to education in the mother tongue is not recognized. It is limited to elective courses and the opening of private educational institutions, and the appointment of Kurdish teachers remains at a symbolic level.

## Culture and Art

Theatrical plays, concerts, and literary works face arbitrary bans; artists are targeted.

## Media and Communication

Newspapers, magazines, and social media accounts broadcasting in Kurdish are subject to censorship and face access bans.

## Public Sphere

Kurdish signs or warning texts of municipalities are erased; Kurdish music and halay at weddings are evaluated within the scope of "crime". Speeches in Kurdish by MPs in Parliament are cut off, and expressions such as "unknown language" are written in the minutes. In the health sector, business life, and similar public areas, the use of Kurdish is prevented.

## Prisons

Prisoners are prevented from communicating in Kurdish, and their letters and books are confiscated. Prisoners who insist on using Kurdish face pressure from prison administrations, are punished (visitation bans, communication bans, etc.), and their executions (release on probation) are revoked.

# 2025: A Year in the Shadow of Systematic Violations

The Kurdish Monitoring 2025 Report reveals **once again** that the oppression against the Kurdish language and culture in Turkey has ceased to be isolated incidents and has become a systematic policy permeating every cell of the public sphere.

This year's data shows **once again** that the use of Kurdish is criminalized in every area of life, not only on the streets but from the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) to high-security prisons, from wedding halls to university campuses. We are faced with a wide range of violations, extending from the detention of young people singing on the streets in Hakkâri to the shutting off of microphones of MPs representing the will of the people at the parliamentary podium; from the imprisonment of 86-year-old religious scholar Mela Silêman Sebrî for reading a sermon in Kurdish to the banning of the phrase "Hebûn" (Existence) on the Amedspor jersey.

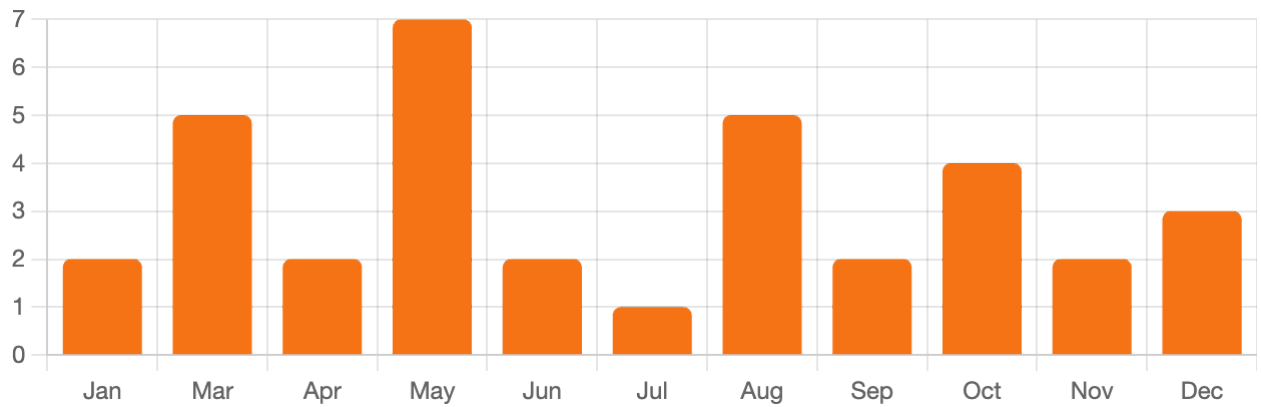
### DATA SUMMARY

During the 2025 reporting period; a total of over 70 concrete rights violations were recorded, including 25 in the **Public Sphere** category, 15 in the field of **Media**, 18 in the field of **Culture-Art**, and 12 in the **Prisons** category.



Public Sphere Prisons Culture-Art Media

## Public Sphere



### JANUARY

\* DEM Party MP Meral Daniş Beştas stated that the elective course forms in a secondary school in the Karaçoban district of Erzurum were arranged incompletely, and the right to choose courses in Kurdish (Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects) and other languages was effectively prevented.

\* In Hakkâri, 11 people were detained on accusations of accompanying a Kurdish song on the street.

## MARCH

\* At Gebze Technical University, a march that a group of 20 female students wanted to hold for March 8 International Women's Day was prevented by the school administration on the grounds that "Kurdish slogans would be chanted and Kurdish banners would be carried."

\* DEM Party MP Gülderen Varlı's microphone was turned off during her speech at the General Assembly of the Parliament the moment she mentioned the name of Jina Emînî, who was murdered in Iran, thinking she would speak Kurdish. The phrase "Jin Jiyan Azadî" (Woman, Life, Freedom) was not entered into the Parliamentary minutes.

\* The banner written in Kurdish and Turkish "Seni Yok Sayacaklar" (They Will Ignore You), prepared by Amedspor fans to hang in the stadium during the Sakaryaspor match, was banned due to its Kurdish content. Permission was granted later.

\* In Konya, a Kurdish banner opened during a protest protesting the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu was taken down upon the reaction of some demonstrators.

\* The poster written "Hûn bi xêr hatin fitara me / Welcome to our iftar" hung on the Avcılar Teachers' House by the Kurdish Language Movement Association (HezKurd) to draw attention to the right to Kurdish lessons was attacked by a person with a knife.

## APRIL

\* In line with the decision taken by the Antalya Governor's Office, street weddings were banned. The practice led to the prevention of Kurdish weddings in neighborhoods with a dense Kurdish population.

\* An investigation was launched against HezKurd President Lawyer Suphi Özgen on the charge of "publicly disseminating misleading information," citing the Kurdish lesson promotion activities in Esenyurt.

## MAY

\* At the May meeting of the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality Council, a DEM Party council member was subjected to the intervention of Mayor Tahir Büyükkakın when he wanted to celebrate the Kurdish Language Day.

\* The Kurdish sign hung on the Iğdır Municipality was targeted on social media.

\* "Azadî İmamoğlu" banners hung on the Diyarbakır Walls were collected by the police.

\* At an event at Yalova TOBB Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School where Kurdish halay music was played, the music was cut off by the acting school principal and the event was terminated.

\* The banner of students who wanted to attend the graduation ceremony of Dicle University with a Kurdish banner reading "Şagirtên Apê Musa Hatîn" (Uncle Musa's Students Have Arrived) was blocked for security reasons.

\* The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) Istanbul Branch held a press statement in front of the Istanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan on the occasion of May 15 Kurdish Language Day. A banner reading "Divê zimanê Kurdî bibe zimanê fermî û perwerdeyê" (Kurdish language must become an official and educational language) was opened in the statement. Police blockaded the lawyers and tried to prevent them from making a statement.

\* Soldiers came to the Mesopotamians Language Culture Research and Development Association opened in Çerkezköy, Tekirdağ, reacted to the Kurdish letters on the sign, and conducted an interrogation. Cevdet Zilanlı, one of the association executives, said, "One day after the opening of the association, some soldiers from the district gendarmerie and some civilians from the desk of associations came to our association and interrogated us. Most importantly, they reacted to the writing of Kurdish in capital letters on the association sign, evaluating this situation as Kurdish being superior to Turkish, and made unlawful comments about these words."

## JUNE

\* A musician singing Kurdish music in Mannheim, Germany, was attacked by a group saying "I am Turkish".

\* Before the Istanbul-Diyarbakır flight, Pegasus ground services personnel scolded Kurdish passengers who did not know Turkish, saying "You have to know Turkish." Psychologist Duygu Berekatoğlu, who witnessed the incident, shared what happened on her X account. Berekatoğlu reported that a group of Kurdish citizens who did not know Turkish were scolded during an argument caused by excess cabin baggage, saying "This is Turkey, they have to know Turkish, the common language."

## JULY

### **Violence on Return from Picnic**

A family of 10 listening to Kurdish music in their vehicle in Bayrampaşa, Istanbul, was stopped by the police, beaten, subjected to tear gas, and detained. In the statement made by the Governor's Office, it was stated that the police officers gave a verbal warning to the individuals in the vehicle detected listening to loud music in Bayrampaşa District and that they physically attacked the police teams after the warning.

### Language Association Sealed

Avesta Association, which provides Kurdish language courses in Konak, İzmir, was sealed by municipal police officers.

### 'Light' Warning to Municipality Sign

An official warning letter was sent to the Diyarbakır Kocaköy Municipality by the district governor's office, claiming that the Turkish section on the sign was left in the dark and the Kurdish section was illuminated. Kocaköy Municipality stated that the sign did not work due to a technical malfunction. The municipality stated that they did not have the opportunity to examine the situation despite the letter sent to them by the district governor's office outside working hours.

### Kurdish Sermon Penalty

In the Şemdinli district of Hakkari, 86-year-old renowned religious scholar Mela Silêman Sebrî (Süleyman Sabri Mavi) had been held in Elazığ Prison for 1 year on the grounds that he "read a sermon in Kurdish and led a civil Friday prayer." Mavi, for whom release had been requested for a long time due to his advanced age and severe health problems, was sentenced to house arrest as a result of doctor reports and public pressure.

### Attack on Kurdish Speakers

In Kisecik Village of Çamlıyayla district of Mersin, a family of 8 was attacked on the grounds that they spoke Kurdish. Adnan Nazlı, who was seriously injured in the attack, was taken under treatment in intensive care.

### Censorship of Kurdish in Parliamentary Commission

The Kurdish speech of the Peace Mothers, who were heard in the "National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy Commission" established in the Parliament, was prevented by Commission Chairman Numan Kurtulmuş citing the internal regulations of the Parliament. Kurdish words and sentences of Peace Mothers Nezehat Teke, Sultan Bozkurt, and Rebia Kiran were recorded as "..." in the minutes. Instead of stating that the speakers spoke Kurdish, a note was added to the bottom of the relevant page of the minutes saying "In this section, a non-Turkish word was expressed by the orator."



## SEPTEMBER

### **Penalty for Amedspor Jersey**

The TFF Legal Consultancy referred Amedspor to the PFDK (Professional Football Discipline Board) on the grounds that they went out to the İstanbulspor match with a chest advertisement reading "Koma me bona we" (Our group is for you). The board fined the club 110 thousand TL.

### **Obstruction of March Demanding Kurdish Education**

A march and press statement demanding Kurdish education, intended to be held by the Education and Science Workers' Union (Eğitim Sen) representation in the Kızıltepe district of Mardin, were prevented by the police on the grounds that they were unauthorized.

### **Detention of Students**

6 high school students who shared a video of themselves dancing halay accompanied by Kurdish music in the classroom in Menemen, İzmir, were detained. The student who made the share was arrested on charges of "propaganda for a terrorist organization."

### **Second Penalty for Amedspor for Kurdish Jersey**

Amedspor was fined 110 thousand TL for the second time by the TFF on the grounds of "violation of sports equipment instructions" due to the Kurdish phrase "Koma me bona we" (Our group is for you) of the sponsor company on its jersey.

### **Parliament's Kurdish Post Attacked**

"National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy Commission" and Parliament Speaker Numan Kurtulmuş read a Kurdish poem at an event organized by Dicle University in Diyarbakır, where he went with the commission members. The moments when Kurtulmuş read the poem were shared on the official X account of the TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey). This post was attacked on social media.

### **Obstruction of Kurdish at TÜRMOB Assembly**

At the 25th Ordinary General Assembly of the Union of Chambers of Certified Public Accountants and Sworn-in Certified Public Accountants of Turkey (TÜRMOB), a request to speak in Kurdish was blocked. At the general assembly won by the Contemporary Democrats Group, Hüseyin Bayrak, who entered the Board of Directors as an independent candidate, starting his election speech with a greeting in Kurdish was booed by a group of accountants and advisors.

### Pine Cafe Case

The trial of Ramazan Şimşek, the operator of Pine Cafe, who was tried on charges of "propaganda for a terrorist organization" because he announced that he would only provide service in Kurdish in Diyarbakır, was held; the hearing was postponed to 2026.

### Kurdish Expressions Entered into Parliament Minutes, Then Removed

Kurdish words used in the ongoing Ministry of Interior 2026 budget discussions at the TBMM Plan and Budget Commission were included in the minutes. After the budget presentation of Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya, MPs took the floor. Kurdish words used by DEM Party MPs Dilan Kunt Ayan and Mehmet Rüştü Tiryaki in their speeches were reflected in the TBMM minutes for the first time. Tiryaki used the expressions "Jinkart" and "Şaredariya Xelfetî" (Halfeti Municipality) in Kurdish. The slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" mentioned in Dilan Kunt Ayan's speech was recorded as "..." in the minutes. The Kurdish expressions in the minutes were removed from the minutes approximately 2 hours later. While 3 dots in quotation marks were used instead of Kurdish expressions, a note stating "In this section, non-Turkish words were expressed by the orator" was included at the end of the page.

## DECEMBER

### Cancellation of Amedspor Penalty

The TFF Arbitration Board unanimously canceled the fine given to Amedspor in September due to the "Koma me bona we" advertisement, finding it unlawful.

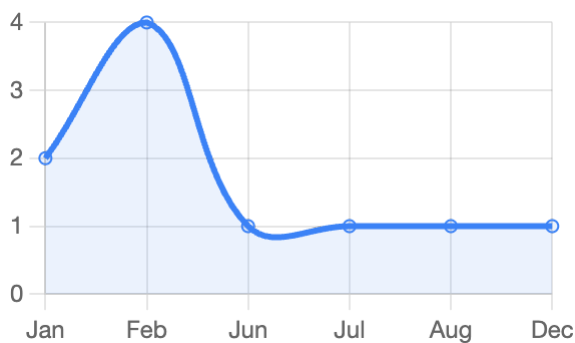
### Course Raid in Eskişehir

A Kurdish language course organized in a cafe in Eskişehir was prevented by a raid by the District National Education and the police on the grounds of "unauthorized education."

### Obstruction of Kurdish in House Raid in Şırnak

It was claimed that Hanife Kabul, the mother of İrfan Kabul, who does not know Turkish, was forced to speak Turkish and battered during the house raids carried out for the detention of Abdullah Temelkuran, Serhat Temelkuran, and İrfan Kabul in Vakıf Kent and Bahçelievler neighborhoods in Şırnak. It was stated that the police told her daughter, who said her mother did not know Turkish, "Speaking Kurdish is forbidden."

## Media



Violations in the field of media mainly occurred as access bans to websites, closure of social media accounts, and censorship of live broadcasts on TV channels.

## JANUARY

\* Mesopotamia Agency's X (formerly Twitter) account with 263 thousand followers, along with the accounts of JINNEWS and Yeni Yaşam, were blocked. MA's new account was also suspended shortly after.

## FEBRUARY

\* Adıyaman 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace imposed an access ban on the Mesopotamia Agency's website on the grounds of "protection of national security and public order."

\* The website of Voice of America's (America's Voice) Kurdish service was blocked on the same grounds.

\* Journalist Abdurrahman Gök's YouTube, X, and Instagram accounts were blocked by the decision of Ankara 6th Criminal Judgeship of Peace.

\* Mesopotamia Agency's website, JINNEWS's Turkish and Kurdish X accounts were blocked.

\* JINNEWS and Xwebûn's X accounts were blocked from access in Turkey.

\* Sözcü TV presenter Serap Belovacıklı did not broadcast the moments when Ahmet Türk read the letter of PKK Leader Abdullah Öcalan, shared with the public on February 27, in Kurdish. Belovacıklı said, "We will bring it to the screen when they make Turkish the official language within the borders of the Republic of Turkey." Belovacıklı used the expression "Nobody understands Kurdish." Habertürk TV and NTV also censored the Kurdish parts.

## JUNE

\* A user's suggestion on Ekşi Sözlük "Let there be Kurdish content" was met with intense racist reactions.

## JULY

### **Social Media Closure**

The Instagram account of 'Ajansa Welat', broadcasting in Kurdish, was closed.

## AUGUST

### **Ongoing Barriers**

The Instagram accounts of Ajansa Welat and the Kurdish newspaper Xwebûn were blocked again.

## DECEMBER

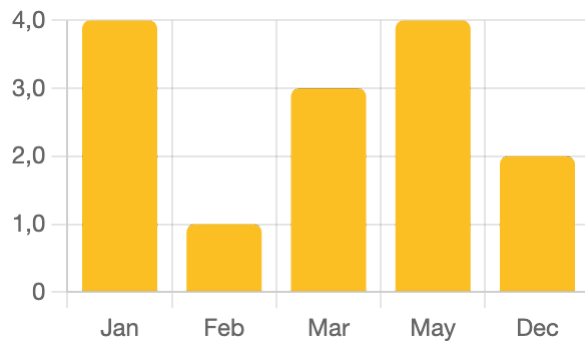
### **Attack on Publishing House Sign**

The Kurdish and Turkish writings on the sign of Pêrî Publishing's office in Izmir were attacked by being painted with black spray.

## Culture – Art

### Target: Books and Songs

In 2025, concert bans, book confiscation decisions, and lawsuits against artists formed the main axis of oppression in the field of culture and arts.



## JANUARY

\* Police raided the Kurdish Writers Association (Komeleya Wêjekarên Kurd) in Diyarbakır; 150 books and 1500 newspaper copies were confiscated.

\* An investigation was launched against an academician from the Kurdish Language and Literature Department of Muş Alparslan University for having students read Kurdish poetry in his classes. The reason for the investigation initiated by the department head was explained as the "political content of the books not being found appropriate." The books used as a reason for the opening of the investigation are poetry books by Fatma Savcı published by Avesta Publishing, Arjen Arî published by Sor Publishing, and Cegerxwîn published by Lis Publishing, which are approved by the Ministry of Culture and are in the university's library list. There is no ban or investigation decision regarding the books in question.

\* Artist Kasım Taşdoğan was sentenced to 30 months in prison on charges of "propaganda for a terrorist organization" due to three Kurdish songs he sang in Kars and Çanakkale.

\* Director Kazım Öz was detained due to the movie "Zer."

## FEBRUARY

\* Kurdish artist Seyda Perinçek, who wanted to give a concert in Japan, was detained and deported. It was claimed that the concert was canceled with the initiative of the Turkish consulate.

\* A police raid was organized on Jîn Art Art House in Konak, İzmir; security cameras were disabled, books and computers were confiscated. A Turkish flag was drawn on the writing board.

\* Kurdish artist Mazlum Akpolat was arrested as a result of the 22 months and 15 days prison sentence he received due to a Kurdish song he performed in 2016.



## MARCH

\* Kurdish writers Mevlüt Aykoç, Sami Tan, Ronahî Önen, and Sadık Varlı were detained due to the Kurdish educational material book "Hîinker." İzzet Çınar and Şükriye Çınar were also detained on the grounds that their photos were in the book. Aykoç, Tan, Öner, and İzzet Çınar and Şükriye Çınar were released under judicial control. Varlı was released.

## MAY

\* Writer Şerif Yılmaz's Kurdish novel "Lawikê Gundî" was confiscated by the prosecutor's decision on the grounds of "publication supporting the organization."

\* Requests to stage Nupelda Theater's Kurdish play "Ma Diz Yek E!" on the Van State Theater stage were rejected despite all applications.

\* 5 Kurdish writers who wanted to participate in the Youth Festival and Book Fair organized by the AKP Municipality in Bitlis were not allowed into the book fair by the decision of the Governor's Office.

\* The couplets of 40 Classic Kurdish poets such as Melayê Cizîrî, Feqiyê Teyran, Hacı Qadirê Koyî, Melayê Xasî, and Siyapûş, which were engraved on the pavement in Gazi Street in Sur District by the Metropolitan Municipality in Diyarbakır, were attacked. The municipality removed the couplets and hung them on poles.

## DECEMBER

\* The concert that Koma Amed would give in Küçükçekmece, Istanbul, was banned by the district governor's office on the day the concert would take place, being deemed "not appropriate."

\* The album "Dara Jiyanê" by the music group Awazê Çiya was blocked from access on Spotify in Turkey with a decision issued by the Ankara 4th Criminal Judgeship of Peace. With the decision numbered 2025/8842, the court banned listening to the album on Spotify pursuant to Article 8/A of Law No. 5651 (Internet Law). Upon the notification of this decision by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) to Spotify, access to the album was blocked in Turkey.

## Prisons

### SEVERE VIOLATIONS

### Types of Violations

- Communication Ban (Phone/Letter)
- Book/Publication Ban
- Disciplinary Penalties / Burning of Execution
- Obstruction of Defense in Mother Tongue



## JANUARY

\* In Erzurum Dumlu No. 1 High Security Prison, detainee Salim Güran was prevented from making a phone call in Kurdish with his family.

## FEBRUARY

\* In Kırşehir High Security Prison, some Kurdish books were not given to prisoners solely because of their language.

\* In Erzincan Women's Prison, Kurdish letters are kept waiting for 4-5 months.

\* In Elazığ No. 1 Prison, access to Kurdish books is prevented, translation fee is demanded.

## APRIL

\* In Elazığ Prison, the disciplinary penalty received by Cengaver Aykul for keeping a Kurdish dictionary was considered a violation of freedom of expression by the Constitutional Court (AYM). Compensation was ruled.

\* In Bolu Prison, İhsan Balkaş's Kurdish letters were not sent on the grounds that they were "not understood"; translation fee was demanded.

\* In Bolu Prison, the release of 33 prisoners was prevented on the grounds that they read Kurdish books and publications.

## JUNE

\* In Bolu Prison, Kurdish letters are not sent, access to publications is restricted.

\* A systematic access ban is applied to Kurdish and opposition publications in 17 prisons in the Marmara region.

\* In Erzurum Prison, an Amedspor jersey with "Hebûn" written on it was not given to the prisoner on the grounds of Kurdish content.

## JULY

### **Solitary Confinement for Song Notebook**

In Erzincan High Security Prison, Agit Kortak was given an 11-day solitary confinement penalty due to Kurdish song lyrics in his notebook.

### **Insistence on Amedspor Jersey**

The Erzurum Prison administration rejected for the second time the Amedspor jersey with "Hebûn" (Existence) written on it in Kurdish, which was not given to a prisoner in June.

## AUGUST

### **Book Quota**

It was reported that no Kurdish books other than Mem û Zîn were given to prisoners in Şırnak T-Type Prison.

## OCTOBER

### Imposition of Turkish on the Phone

In Erzincan Women's Prison, speaking Turkish was imposed on prisoners speaking Kurdish during phone calls.

## NOVEMBER

### General Violations

According to the ÖHD report, Kurdish letters are lost in Antalya regional prisons under the pretext of "translation." Speaking Kurdish during phone rights is banned in Erzincan, and strip searches are imposed.

## DECEMBER

### Obstruction of Right to Defense in Kurdish

Ümit Tamur, Cesim Yıldırım, İbrahim Ertaş, and Özkan Bayhan, held in Antalya Manavgat S-Type Prison, wanted to make a defense in Kurdish at the hearing held at Manavgat 2nd Criminal Court of First Instance. The judge rejected the request for defense in Kurdish, saying to the prisoners who wanted to make a defense in Kurdish, "Are you mocking me? These are the courts of the Republic of Turkey, you will speak Turkish in my court, I will not let you speak Kurdish, who do you think you are?"

### Kurdish Fax Obstruction

The fax that Dilaver Karasu, who was taken from Erzurum No. 1 High Security Prison to Bitlis Ahlat T-Type Prison to attend the hearing of the case he was tried for, wanted to send in Kurdish was blocked.

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