

**10 December 2025**

## **2025 Report on Human Rights Violations in Turkey**

### **RIGHT TO LIFE**

Despite the new process starting on 1 October 2024 regarding the resolution of the Kurdish issue, and despite the insistence of various social groups on peace, human rights, and democracy, the political power, which has completely abandoned the concept of human rights in recent years, continues to implement policies that spread discrimination and racism, polarize society, turn all issues – from the economy to public health – into security problems, and rely on violence to solve both domestic and international problems. As a result, alarming violations of the right to life occurred throughout the country in 2025.

Violations of the right to life are not limited to war and armed conflict or violations committed by state security forces. They also include violations that are a product of structural violence and/or committed by third parties but caused directly or indirectly by the state's failure to fulfill its "duty to prevent and protect."

According to data from the Human Rights Association (İHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT) Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- Three people lost their lives and five were injured as a result of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement, either because they failed to comply with a stop warning or due to random gunfire.
- One person in custody, and two people detained in Removal Centers (GGM) for refugees/asylum seekers lost their lives under suspicious circumstances.
- Armed clashes and operations within the country, in Syria, and in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq resulted in at least 73 people losing their lives, including 24 security personnel (21 soldiers, 3 police officers), 48 militants, and 1 civilian. At least 11 people were injured, including 10 security personnel (8 soldiers, 2 police officers) and 1 civilian.
- At least 3 people were injured when vehicles belonging to security forces and/or official institutions collided with civilians.
- At least 16 people lost their lives and 1 person was injured in prisons due to illness, suicide, violence, neglect, armed attacks by outsiders, etc.
- At least 1 person lost their life and 20 were injured as a result of racist, phobic, and hateful attacks targeting refugees/asylum seekers, Kurds, LGBTQ+ individuals, Alevis, and non-Muslims.
- At least one person was injured as a result of an armed attack targeting life and environmental defenders.

- At least 26 people lost their lives in accidents, explosions, suicides, and/or due to suspicious circumstances while performing compulsory or professional military service, and 5 people were injured.
- According to data from the Health and Safety Labor Watch/Turkey (İSİG), at least 1,956 workers lost their lives in workplace accidents/homicides in Turkey in the first 11 months of 2025.
- According to data from Bianet, at least 271 women and 60 children were killed by men in the first 11 months of 2025.

## **TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT**

Despite being absolutely prohibited by the Constitution and international law, and constituting a crime against humanity, torture has become Turkey's most prominent human rights issue in recent years as a result of the political regime's style of governance based on oppression and control. Unfortunately, this reality persisted in 2025.

In proportion to the political power becoming increasingly authoritarian, procedural safeguards have been violated due to reasons such as evasion of law, rule, and norm control, arbitrariness, and deliberate neglect. Other reasons include the length of detention periods, the rendering of monitoring and prevention mechanisms ineffective, or the complete absence of independent monitoring and prevention, etc. The trend in recent years of increasing torture and other ill-treatment in official detention centers has also persisted in 2025. Particularly in the case of individuals detained in response to protests against the appointment of a trustee to the Van Metropolitan Municipality on 15 February 2025, and against the arrest and detention of the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of İstanbul on 19 March 2025, Numerous allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in official detention centers during the year were reflected in the press, court records, and reports by bar associations and national and international human rights institutions/mechanisms.

In the first 11 months of 2025;

- A total of 485 individuals and their relatives applied to the HRFT claiming to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

According to the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 41 people were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in official detention centers and GGMs.

During interventions by law enforcement agencies at peaceful gatherings and demonstrations, torture and other ill-treatment relentlessly persisted in 2025, occurring in streets and open spaces, as well as in locations such as homes and workplaces—that is, in unofficial detention

sites and environments outside formal detention. This violence, which goes far beyond the legal use of force defined in international law and national legislations, has been normalized and became a part of everyday life, as it is unregulated, unpunished, ignored by the political authorities, and even encouraged.

Law enforcement agencies targeted and used intense violence against those participating in peaceful assemblies and protests LGBTQ+ people during Pride Month, women during March 8<sup>th</sup> events, those who wanted to march to Taksim on 1 May 2025, those protesting the appointment of trustees to municipalities on different dates contrary to the will of the voters after the 31 March 2024 Local Administration Elections and the arrest of Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on 19 March 2025, animal rights activists working to protect the lives of street animals, those protesting the genocide in Gaza, life defenders who want to protect their land, air, water, and olive trees, and those participating in peaceful meetings and demonstrations related to human rights violations in prisons and ongoing hunger strikes. These are some concrete examples of the normalization mentioned above.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- As a result of law enforcement intervention in peaceful actions and events held within the scope of freedom of assembly and demonstration, 2,345 people were detained and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, and at least 131 people were injured.
- At least 83 people were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in streets and open areas or in places such as homes and workplaces.

It is extremely alarming that, since the declaration of the state of emergency in 2016, there has been a renewed increase in cases of enforced disappearance/disappearance, a crime against humanity and one of the most shameful human rights violations in our recent history. Enforced disappearance in custody is not a momentary act; it involves a specific period of detention, most often accompanied by torture, and usually results in death. It therefore leads to multiple and successive violations. Despite this, Turkey has not yet ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and does not explicitly define enforced disappearance as a crime in its legislation. Of the total 240 cases communicated by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, only 94 have been clarified by the government.

- Despite all appeals made regarding Yusuf Bilge Tunç, who disappeared in Ankara on 6 August 2019, there are still no news of him.

Recently, numerous individuals, primarily university students, journalists, politicians, trade unionists, and human rights defenders, have been abducted by law enforcement agencies and forced to give statements off the record, and attempts have been made to recruit them as agents

through pressure and threats. Those who refuse are subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and face threats of arrest.

According to data from the İHD Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- 37 people filed complaints with the İHD regarding abduction and coercion into becoming agents. This number totals 124 people for the period between January 2022 and November 2025.
- According to findings from open sources, at least 2 people claimed that they were abducted and forcibly detained by law enforcement agencies and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

Prisons in Turkey have always been places where torture and other forms of ill-treatment are prevalent. There has been an extraordinary increase in the use of torture and other ill-treatment against detainees and prisoners, particularly since peaceful solutions to the Kurdish issue were abandoned and Turkey returned to a state of conflict in July 2015, followed by the suppression of the military coup attempt and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency. Prisons have retained this character in 2025.

Between 1 January 2016, and 31 December 2024, a total of 6,249 people applied to the HRFT because they were directly subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in Turkey. 3,149 were detained in prison, and 2,849 of these individuals (90.5%) stated that they were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during the prison process. In this context, it was stated that during the period in question, physical interventions such as verbal abuse (68.1%), severe beatings (49.3%), and strip searches (40.7%) were the most common in prisons, along with restrictions on fundamental rights (78.4%) and social rights (72%).

According to data from the İHD Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- At least 321 prisoners complained of torture and ill-treatment in prisons.

Procedural safeguards, which play an important role in preventing torture but have been largely neglected in practice for years, were significantly undermined as a result of the legal regulations introduced by emergency decrees during the state of emergency. Based on these legal regulations, procedural safeguards can be grouped under the following headings: informing the person about their detention, providing information to third parties, access to a lawyer, access to a doctor, conducting examinations in appropriate environments in accordance with the procedure and preparing reports, and the ability to quickly apply to a judicial authority for a legality review, proper maintenance of detention records, and enabling independent monitoring. It is possible to state that procedural safeguards have been largely eliminated in recent times, creating a completely arbitrary and ad hoc environment in this regard. The most extreme examples of this arbitrariness were seen during the detentions that took place in 2025,

particularly during the mass detentions carried out in response to the protests against the appointment of a trustee to the Van Metropolitan Municipality on 15 February 2025, the detention and arrest of the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of İstanbul on 19 March 2025 and the march to Taksim on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

There has been no change in 2025 regarding the issues that form the basis for criticism of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (HREIT), which is authorized to carry out the functions of the 'National Preventive Mechanism', an effective and important tool for preventing torture. Despite all the recommendations included in the reports of multiple international human rights mechanisms, including the report of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture published on 12 December 2019, the UN Universal Periodic Review held on 28-30 January 2020, the Concluding Observations on Turkey's Fifth Periodic Report published by the UN Human Rights Committee on 28 November 2024, and the Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Turkey to the UN Committee Against Torture, no concrete steps have been taken to bring TİHEK into line with the principles of OPCAT and the Paris Principles and to guarantee its structural, functional, and financial independence.

Impunity remains the most significant obstacle in the fight against torture. Despite all warnings and recommendations from international mechanisms, the current regulation criminalizing torture (TCK art. 94) is not in line with the definition of torture in the UN Convention Against Torture, creating actual and potential loopholes that encourage impunity. Impunity remains one of the fundamental factors that enables torture due to reasons such as the fact that no investigations are opened against perpetrators, the failure of investigations to lead to prosecutions, the drafting of indictments for crimes carrying lesser penalties than torture in cases where charges are brought, the failure to impose any penalties on defendants or the imposition of penalties by classifying the acts as mistreatment and the postponement of penalties.

The legal ambiguity regarding the prosecution of torture persists. Complaints filed for torture are either dismissed for various reasons or investigated under crimes that carry lighter penalties and are subject to statutes of limitations, such as "simple assault," "excessive use of force," or "abuse of authority."

On the other hand, when a complaint is filed against law enforcement officers who commit torture, or when an investigation or lawsuit is initiated, counter-lawsuits are immediately filed against the victims of torture on grounds such as "insulting an officer, resisting arrest, causing injury during the incident, or damaging public property." While cases brought against torturers go unpunished, cases brought against torture victims can result in severe penalties in a short period of time. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, in 2024, public prosecutors brought 26,491 public cases under Article 265 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK), which

constitutes the crime of "resisting to prevent duty."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, in the same year, public prosecutions were brought against a total of 838 people under Articles 94-96 of the Turkish Penal Code, which regulate the crimes of "torture and ill-treatment."<sup>2</sup> This significant disparity between the number of cases filed for "torture and ill-treatment" and "resisting a public official" clearly demonstrates the extent of impunity, which is being pursued as a systematic policy.

The reality of torture in Turkey is laid bare in reports prepared by international mechanisms and bodies. For example, one such report, the UN Committee Against Torture's Concluding Observations on Turkey's Fifth Periodic Report dated 14 August 2024, states explicitly in paragraph 20: *"The Committee is concerned by allegations that torture and ill-treatment continue to be widely practiced in the State party, particularly in places of detention, including allegations of severe beatings, sexual assault and harassment, and in some cases the use of electric shocks and waterboarding by law enforcement and intelligence officials."* However, the political power, which does not wish to limit itself by any law, rule, or norm, including the Constitution, does not take into account the criticism and warnings made by international prevention and monitoring mechanisms.

## PRISONS

As a result of the political power using the law as a tool of oppression and intimidation, there has been a significant increase in the prison population over the years, and there are far more detainees and convicts than the capacity allows. Furthermore, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of new types of isolation-based prisons, particularly in terms of their architectural structure and daily practice regime.

According to data from the Ministry of Justice, the number of detainees and convicts in 2005 was 55,870. As of 2 December 2025, there were a total of 433,543 detainees and convicts in penal institutions.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen, the number of detainees and convicts has increased approximately by seven and a half in 20 years.

Again, according to data from the Ministry of Justice, as of 21 November 2025, the total capacity of the 403 correctional institutions under the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses is 305,286. Therefore, there are currently 128,257 detainees and convicts

<sup>1</sup> See [https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet\\_%C4%B0statistikleri\\_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e\\_Ingilizce.pdf](https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet_%C4%B0statistikleri_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e_Ingilizce.pdf), p.75

<sup>2</sup>

See [https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet\\_%C4%B0statistikleri\\_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e\\_Ingilizce.pdf](https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet_%C4%B0statistikleri_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e_Ingilizce.pdf), p.72

<sup>3</sup>See <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/202512051001587511-Ceza%20%C4%B0faz%20Kurumunda%20Bulunan%20Tutuklu%20H%C3%BCk%C3%BCml%C3%BC%20Mevcutlar%C4%B1.pdf>.



exceeding the capacity of prisons.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, looking at the records of admissions and releases during the year, it is evident that there is a much higher population turnover in prisons. According to data from the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics dated 5 May 2025, between 1 January and 31 December 2024, 306,545 individuals were registered as convicted persons entering prisons, while 262,476 individuals were registered as convicted persons leaving prisons.<sup>5</sup>

Again, according to data from the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, the number of prisoners per 100,000 people in Turkey in 2024 is 448. When age is taken into account, this rate increases further: as of 31 December 2024, 536 out of every 100,000 people of age 12 and above are in prison. The European Council average for 2024 is 122 per 100,000 people.<sup>6</sup> According to data obtained from responses to questionnaires sent to governments as part of the European Council's SPACE I Project, Turkey has the highest ratio of prisoners to population among European Council member countries.

Furthermore, according to data from the Ministry of Justice, as of 30 November 2025, there are 460,921 people under supervision and monitoring (including those subject to judicial control measures) by Probation Offices throughout Turkey.<sup>7</sup> When this is added to the number of detainees and convicts in prisons, the number of citizens deprived of their liberty or under supervision reaches approximately 894,464. This means that, leaving aside other indirect surveillance/control tools, approximately one in every 98 citizens is under direct/naked surveillance.

Judicial control measures, including house arrest, which has been arbitrarily applied in recent times, have also become common and routine practices. In fact, such measures were established as an alternative to detention in order to apply less severe measures to the suspect/defendant when conditions warranting detention exist. However, since its entry into force on 1 June 2005, and particularly as a result of various amendments made to the Criminal Procedure Code (CMK) No. 5271 in recent times, it has become a measure that complements and even maintains detention. Again, according to data from the Ministry of Justice, as of 30 November 2025, judicial control measures under Article 109 of the CMK are being applied to 130,494 individuals.

In short, all these findings and data clearly show that imprisonment has become a fundamental

<sup>4</sup> See <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/cik-genel-bilgi>.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/5052025093023Haber%20B%C3%BClteni%20-%20CTE%20%2005%20May%202025%20Combined.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See [https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2025/07/250715\\_key-findings-space-i\\_prisons-europe-2024\\_full.pdf](https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2025/07/250715_key-findings-space-i_prisons-europe-2024_full.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/20251205100028204Denetimli%20Serbestlik%20C4%B0statistikleri.pdf>

ruling technique for political power.

According to international norms, including the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), protecting the right to life of prisoners is a positive obligation of states. However,

According to data from the İHD Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 16 people lost their lives and 1 person was injured in prisons due to various reasons such as illness, suicide, violence, and neglect.

According to data from the HRFT Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 14 people lost their lives in prisons due to various reasons such as illness, suicide, violence, and neglect. In addition, 266 people were exposed to food poisoning.

Furthermore, in its response to a parliamentary question on 13 March 2025, the Ministry of Justice stated that a total of 1,026 prisoners lost their lives in prisons across Turkey between 24 July 2023, and 20 December 2024.

Despite serious allegations that a significant portion of these deaths were suspicious, there have been no effective investigation processes involving the prisoners' families, lawyers, and rights defenders. Since no effective investigation is conducted, even if the prisoner did commit suicide, it remains unclear whether their bio-psycho-social well-being was regularly monitored, whether there was a risk of suicide, what measures were taken, the reasons for the suicide, their mental state prior to the incident, or whether they were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. Therefore, the procedural obligations regarding the protection of the right to life are also not being fulfilled.

In recent times, the brutal beatings, arbitrary treatments and arbitrary disciplinary punishments, solitary confinements, deportations, and transfers that occur from the moment of entry into prisons and for various reasons (such as strip searches, handcuffed examinations, and roll calls while standing at attention) have reached unprecedented levels.

Information obtained from prisons – albeit relatively limited – and complaints indicate that prisoners experience serious violations in their access to healthcare, food and water, and hygiene supplies.

Even when prisoners are able to access healthcare services, ill-treatment practices are employed, including the restrictions on access to healthcare, the denial of their right to visit the prison infirmary, transportation in “cell-type ring vehicles” to the Forensic Medicine Institute, courthouse, and hospital, and the use of handcuffs during transport. These practices open-up



another long-standing problem area, namely the fact that the failure to respect prisoners' privacy and the failure to resolve their health problems in a timely and effective manner are being justified on the grounds of the "Trilateral Protocol." In particular, the forced transfer to other prisons of the vast majority of prisoners, for have barely been able to continue their treatments, has significantly undermined their right to access healthcare especially in recent years. Restrictions in access to healthcare in particular further aggravate the situation of ill prisoners, which is a major problem in prisons. In addition to the problems these individuals face in terms of inadequate access to healthcare and the inability to obtain independent and qualified medical evaluation reports, including the lack of independence of the Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK), the term "public safety" found in the amendment dated 28 June 2014 to Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures which states that "[prisoners] assessed do not pose a serious and concrete threat to public safety" has rendered their release entirely arbitrary, even if they are given medical reports pointing to a "positive life threatening condition." The circular issued by the Ministry of Justice on 2 January 2023 claiming to resolve this issue does not suffice to address such a systematic problem which derives from existing legislation and becomes increasingly severe with each passing day.

Indeed, due to the serious issues in accessing healthcare that prisoners face, paragraph 15/d. of the UN Committee Against Torture's Concluding Observations on Turkey's Fifth Periodic Report, in accordance with Rules 24 to 35 and 47 to 49 of the Nelson Mandela Rules, recommends that the necessary human and material resources be allocated to provide prisoners with appropriate medical and health care, that restraint [techniques] should be avoided in examination settings, that the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship should be respected, and that health professionals should have the final say in all decisions concerning prisoners' health.

- As far as the İHD could ascertain, as of 28 April 2025, there were at least 1,412 ill prisoners in prisons, 230 of whom were unable to live independently, 105 of whom needed support, and a total of 335 of whom were seriously ill.

The law stipulates that corridors, visiting areas, infirmaries, and other areas used by people other than prisoners in prisons may be monitored by cameras. However, since 2016, prisoners have reported that cameras have been installed in the ventilation systems of cells and dormitories, allowing 24/7 monitoring of prisoners' living spaces. Violation of the right to respect for private life is one of the serious problems experienced in prisons.

Apart from family visits, letters and faxes are important tools to exercise the right to communication with the outside world. Information obtained from prisons – albeit relatively limited – complaints, and reports from human rights organizations indicate that the recent increase in letter blocking and loss of letters violates prisoners' rights to respect for family and private life and to communication, and increases their isolation. Contrary to regulations on the

prohibition of discrimination, letters written in Kurdish are not being delivered to the relevant parties on the grounds that there is no interpreter available or due to the exorbitant translation fees demanded from prisoners.

On 14 April 2020, amendments were made to the "Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures No. 5275." Based on these amendments and on the decisions of the subsequent 'Prison Administration and Observation Boards' (CİGK), established within the context of the 'Regulation on Observation and Classification Centres and Evaluation of Convicts' issued on 29 December 2020, many prisoners' releases – the majority of whom were sentenced for political reasons – have been postponed for abstract and subjective reasons, despite the fact that they have completed the necessary period for the enforcement of their final sentences. This has been one of the major problems in prisons in 2025. This year, in particular, the release of a large number of prisoners known to the public as the "30-yearers," who had completed the necessary period for the enforcement of their life sentences, was arbitrarily postponed by CİGK decisions.

In paragraph 14/g of the above-mentioned Concluding Observations, the UN Committee Against Torture points out that the administration and observation boards lack institutional independence because they are largely composed of prison staff, while paragraph 15/g recommends that the existing legislation be reviewed to ensure the independence of these boards.

Unfortunately, because the authorities do not share reliable data on this issue, the exact number of prisoners' whose releases have been postponed, how long they have been postponed for and how many times they have been postponed are unknown.

According to the findings of the İHD Documentation Center;

- From the year 2021, when the regulation in question came into effect, until 11 October 2024, the release of at least 501 prisoners has been postponed for varying periods of time by CİGK decisions.

Despite the recommendations made by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2003, the recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in every report published since 2009, the case law of the ECtHR since 2013, in particular its four separate violation judgments concerning Turkey on this matter, and finally the recommendations on this issue in the 2024 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee Against Torture, aggravated life sentence – which is contrary to the general principle of "enabling parole for all prisoners who have been sentenced, including those sentenced to life imprisonment" – and the relevant articles of the Turkish Criminal Code and Law No. 5275 on the Enforcement of Criminal Sentences and Security Measures that regulate the enforcement of this sentence, remain in force despite the full weight of the problems they cause.

The absence of any possibility of release, i.e., the "right to hope," for prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment is contrary to human dignity. Unfortunately, comprehensive and disaggregated statistical data on prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment in Turkey are not shared with the public. However, the UN Committee Against Torture has stated in paragraph 16 of its Concluding Observations that there are currently more than 4,000 prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in Turkey.

The practice of isolating individuals or small groups, which has been in place since 2000 and causes serious damage to the physical and psychological integrity of detainees and prisoners, has become an unresolved chronic problem. Recently, this practice has been made widespread and permanent by opening new prisons such as Type S, Type Y, and High Security prisons, which further aggravate the conditions of isolation due to their architectural structure and daily practice regime, with the majority of prisoners being held in single cells and only a very small number in rooms for three people.

As emphasized by the CPT since the 1990s, prisoners should spend at least eight hours a day or more outside their cells, engaging in specific and varied activities. Despite this principle, the Ministry of Justice's circular dated 22 January 2007, which allows detainees and convicts to socialize in groups of no more than 10 people for a maximum of 10 hours per week, is not being implemented in any way.

Similarly, paragraphs 14/b and 15/b of the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee Against Torture expresses concern that some prisoners in S-type, Y-type, and other high-security prisons are held in single cells without adequate ventilation for more than 22 hours a day, which effectively amounts to solitary confinement. The Committee recalls that all prisoners should be provided with sufficient time outside their cells and the opportunity for regular meaningful social interaction, and recommends that solitary confinement should not be used for reasons related to a prisoner's sentence, but only as a measure of last resort in exceptional circumstances, for as short a period as possible, subject to independent review, and only with the authorization of a competent authority.

A specific form of isolation is being practiced at İmralı Prison, where a new process was initiated on 1 October 2024, despite visits by some delegations. After continuous bans on visits from family and lawyers between 2011 and 2019, and despite the fact that there were three family visits/meetings in 2019, one in 2020, one in 2024 (23 October), and one in 2025 (8 June), and five lawyer visits/meetings in 2019 and three in 2025 (27 February; 21 April, 18 May), the bans on family and lawyer visits/meetings continue systematically. As can be seen, the recommendations made by the CPT in its reports following its visits to Turkish prisons in 2016 and 2019 have not been complied with.

## **FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION**

The protection and effective use of freedom of expression is one of the lifelines of a democratic society. The free circulation of different ideas and opinions in the public sphere; the existence of an environment of free debate, independent media, and a vibrant civil society, which are the basis of political pluralism; the ability to shape public opinion around social demands; the ability to voice criticism of political decision-makers and to enable citizens to monitor the authorities that wield public power; in short, all of these are only possible under conditions where freedom of expression is protected and effectively exercised.

Unfortunately, the restrictions on freedom of thought and expression imposed by the political authorities, which escalated with the declaration of a state of emergency in 2016, and in particular the alarming increase in pressure and control over the press, continued in 2025.

In Turkey, the exercise of freedom of expression is problematic in almost every form of expression—political, artistic, commercial, academic, religious, and moral—but restrictions and violations are primarily directed at political criticism. In short, by 2025, the effective exercise of freedom of expression in the press, social media, and more broadly in the public sphere has been obstructed through intense and systematic violations, and critical discourse and symbols have been prosecuted and criminalized in ways unacceptable to a democratic society. This situation has recently become a significant obstacle to advocacy and civil society activities.

- As of 30 November 2025, at least 29 journalists/employees of the press are in prison in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

According to data from the Documentation Centers of the İHD and the HRFT, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- At least 101 journalists/employees of the press were detained, and 52 were arrested. At least 1 person was prevented from entering the country. At least 25 people were placed under judicial control measures, including 2 under house arrest.
- Investigations were launched against 60 journalists/ employees of the press. At least 28 people faced 32 lawsuits. At least 58 people faced 62 ongoing lawsuits.
- At least 38 journalists/ employees of the press were attacked, resulting in at least 1 death and at least 7 injuries. At least 11 incidents were identified in which journalists/media workers were threatened.

The first "precautionary measure" taken by the government in response to many issues affecting the entire society, such as earthquakes, accidents, forest fires, floods, economic crises, cross-border military operations, political and economic corruption, and epidemics, is to restrict social media applications and investigate posts related to these issues on social media. Within this framework, court orders have been issued to ban access to and publication of numerous news

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.mlsaturkey.com/tr/cezaevindeki-gazeteciler-ve-medya-calisanlari-listesi>

articles, websites, social media accounts, and applications.

According to data from the Documentation Centers of the İHD and the HRFT, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- Access was blocked to at least 28,900 pieces of content and 71 websites/applications (including 27 domains of 18 different news organizations). Access to the social media accounts of at least 19 journalists/press workers on various platforms was blocked.
- Access was blocked to at least 6 social media accounts belonging to the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of İstanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu.
- At least 329 people were detained, at least 48 people were arrested, at least 33 people were released under judicial supervision, and at least 2 people were placed under house arrest for exercising their right to freedom of thought and expression, primarily through social media posts.
- The Minister of the Interior announced at a meeting on 7 May 2025, that access to 6,765 URL accounts and 27,304 social media accounts had been blocked in the first four months of 2025.

During the same period,

- At least 20 media outlets (11 TV channels, 6 digital platforms, 2 radio stations, and 1 YouTube channel) were fined 85 times and had their programs suspended 22 times. In addition, 3 radio/TV channels were suspended for a total of 25 days. At least 6 pieces of content on digital platforms were removed from the catalog.
- Two television channels had a trustee appointed to them, and three television channels were transferred to the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF).
- Law enforcement raided one television station's office.
- Attacks were carried out against one newspaper building and two buildings belonging to a magazine.
- At least 6 books and 2 magazine issues were ordered to be confiscated. The screening of 1 film was banned by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in accordance with Article 4 of Law No. 5224 on the Evaluation, Classification, and Support of Motion Pictures. 8 newspapers had their rights to publish official announcements suspended.
- At least 60 artists and writers, 2 social media content creators, 1 artist manager, and 1 fashion designer were tried in lawsuits filed against them.

The biggest obstacle to the effective use of freedom of expression in a way that enables political criticism and citizen oversight is the large number of regulations that are vague in terms of content and open to arbitrary interpretation. There are provisions limiting and punishing freedom of expression in at least 15 articles of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK), particularly in the Anti-Terrorism Law (TMK) No. 3713, and in some special laws. The most prominent of these provisions are TCK Article 301 (insulting the Turkish nation, state, and institutions),

Article 299 (insulting the President), Article 216 (inciting the public to hatred and hostility), 220/8, and Articles 7/2 (making organization propaganda) and 6 (targeting persons involved in the fight against terrorism) of the TMK.

A striking example of this in 2025 was the initiation of an investigation into the crime of "publicly insulting religious values" under Article 216 of the Turkish Penal Code due to a cartoon published in *Leman Magazine*. This involved raiding the homes of four individuals (the cartoonist who drew the cartoon, the magazine's editor-in-chief, the managing director, and the graphic designer), arresting them using physical violence and handcuffs, and issuing a seizure order for the relevant issue of the magazine.

Recently, another law has been added to these. Known to the public as the "Disinformation Law," Law No. 7418, which amended the Press Law and entered into force upon its publication in the Official Gazette No. 31987 dated 18 October 2022, has further increased the pressure and restrictions on everyone, especially journalists, who wish to exercise their freedom of expression.

A striking example of this in 2025 is the case of Enes Hocaogulları, a young delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, human rights defender, and LGBTQ+ activist, who was prosecuted and arrested on the grounds of "spreading misleading information to the public." Enes Hocaogulları criticized the violence used by law enforcement against those protesting on 19 March 2025 the arrest of the Mayor of İstanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu, in a speech he made at the 48th session of the Council of Europe Congress, which he attended as a delegate on 27 March 2025, and which was the basis for the lawsuit against him. He mentioned allegations of torture and ill-treatment — including tear gas, plastic bullets, reverse handcuffing, and searches involving sexual violence — which were widely reported by bar associations, civil society organizations, and the media.

However, these regulations restricting and hindering freedom of expression were not enough, and on 18 October 2024, a new bill was submitted to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in this regard. The bill, titled "Law on Amendments to the Notary Law and Certain Other Laws," which is actually a "omnibus bill" and envisages amendments or regulations to 12 different laws, also included a new regulation known to the public as the "influence agent law." This regulation, which was removed from the omnibus bill at the last minute, is significant in that it lays bare the mindset of the political establishment. Judging by the political establishment's rhetoric, this regulation is likely to be brought back to the agenda. When considered alongside other regulations that create serious obstacles to the effective exercise of freedom of expression, it would eliminate the essence of the right, rendering freedom of expression entirely unusable.

Investigations and lawsuits initiated for insulting the President have increased rapidly since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assumed the presidency in August 2014, reaching unprecedented



numbers in the history of the Republic. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, during the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, a total of 2,804 investigations were launched on the grounds of insulting the President, resulting in 690 public prosecutions. In contrast, during the five-year period between 2015 and 2019, when Erdoğan was in office, a total of 128,190 investigations were launched and a total of 27,607 public prosecutions were initiated. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, in 2024, investigations were launched against 21,813 people and public prosecutions were initiated against 7,264 people under the heading of "crimes against the symbols of state sovereignty and the dignity of its organs" (TCK m. 299-301), which also includes the crime of "insulting the President."<sup>9</sup>

According to the findings of the İHD Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 26 people were tried in cases brought against them for allegedly insulting the President. At least 14 people, including one child and one Swedish citizen, were detained and 11 people were arrested on the same grounds.

Investigations and lawsuits filed on the grounds of opposition to the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713 have also shown an alarming increase over the years. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, in 2024, 23,685 people were investigated by the Chief Public Prosecutor's Offices on the grounds of violating the Anti-Terrorism Law (although the Ministry's data does not distinguish between "propaganda crimes") and 6,436 people were prosecuted.

As the Ministry of Justice has not yet shared the data for 2025 with the public, we unfortunately cannot provide the number of investigations and lawsuits filed this year under the aforementioned articles of the law that restrict/impede the freedom of expression.

The demands of Alevis for equal citizenship rights have not been met in 2025 either. The "Alevi Bektashi Culture and Cemevi Presidency," established under the Ministry of Culture as a result of the ECtHR's previous decisions regarding the abolition of compulsory religious education and the recognition of cemevis as places of worship, has failed to respond to the demands of Alevis. However, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, which monitors the outcome of ECtHR rulings, held a meeting on 1-13 June 2024, and decided to close the case file it was monitoring, "İzzettin Doğan and Others," finding Turkey's statements and defenses regarding the "Alevi Bektashi Culture and Cemevi Presidency" sufficient. Meanwhile, at the same meeting, the Committee of Ministers also assessed the ECtHR's "Mansur Yalçın and Others" ruling, known as the compulsory religious education case. It called on Turkey to take the necessary measures to ensure that the state fulfills its duty of neutrality and justice towards various religions, sects, and beliefs; respect the principles of pluralism and objectivity, and offer parents with religious or philosophical beliefs other than Sunni Islam the option of exempting

9

See [https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet\\_%C4%B0statistikleri\\_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e\\_Ingilizce.pdf](https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet_%C4%B0statistikleri_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e_Ingilizce.pdf), p. 72

their children from compulsory religious education; and take the necessary measures to ensure that students are not obliged to disclose their parents' religious or philosophical beliefs. The Committee also gave Turkey until the end of December 2024 to provide information on the measures it planned to take. However, as of 30 November 2025, no information has been provided, nor has any concrete step been taken regarding the measures.

There has been no improvement in the situation of individuals who refuse compulsory military service on conscientious grounds as of 2025. The failure to recognize the right to conscientious objection has led to conscientious objectors being repeatedly prosecuted (including imprisonment) and to the restriction of rights defined by the ECtHR as "civil death" and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Statements related to compulsory military service and conscientious objection are considered a crime under the category of "discouraging people from military service." Conscientious objectors are unable to exercise their civil, economic, social, and cultural rights; they are subject to serious restrictions that amount to discrimination on the basis of their thoughts, religion, or beliefs. No concrete steps have been taken in response to a series of ECtHR rulings finding violations of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; the prohibition of cruel or degrading treatment; and the right to a fair trial (in cases where applicants were tried and convicted by military courts).

## **FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND DEMONSTRATION**

Freedom of assembly and demonstration is directly related to both freedom of expression and freedom of association. The fundamental value of this freedom in democratic societies is that citizens can participate in the public sphere through peaceful action, influence the processes of forming common opinion and will, and thus influence the other freedoms mentioned above.

In 2025, as in the previous year, restrictions and violations were the rule, while the exercise of freedom was the exception.

Individuals and groups from almost every social segment have been unable to exercise their freedoms of assembly and demonstration throughout the year due to bans and/or the actual interventions and obstructions of law enforcement agencies. These individuals and groups include the people of Van who wanted to protest on 15 February 2025 the appointment of a trustee – which disregarded the will of the voters – to the metropolitan municipality, those who protested nationwide on 19 March 2025 against the arrest of İstanbul Metropolitan Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, women who took to the streets on March 8<sup>th</sup> to demand liberation, those who wanted to celebrate May 1<sup>st</sup> in Taksim Square, LGBTQ+ individuals fighting for equal citizenship and dignity, animal rights activists striving to protect the lives of street animals, those who wanted to protest the genocide in Gaza and show solidarity with the Palestinian people, defenders of life who wanted to protect their land, air, water, and olive trees, human rights defenders who wanted to raise social awareness about human rights violations in prisons and the ongoing hunger strikes, workers fighting for bread, secure jobs, and union rights, young people, students.

In recent times, the decisions taken by provincial administrators (governors, district governors) to ban actions and events based on the authority granted to them by Article 11/C of the Provincial Administration Law No. 5442 and Article 17 of the Meetings and Demonstrations Law No. 2911 constitute one of the most significant obstacles to the freedom of peaceful assembly and demonstration. These bans may target a single action or event, whether individual or collective, or they may cover all actions and events within a certain period. However, in recent times, in many parts of the country, especially in provinces and districts with large Kurdish populations, the frequent and arbitrary use of this authority by local administrative officials has effectively perpetuated the state of emergency regime, which officially ended on 19 July 2018.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- Local administrative officials banned all actions and events 29 times in 13 provinces and 8 districts, with the shortest ban lasting 1 day and the longest 15 days.

Another significant obstacle to the effective exercise of the freedom of assembly and demonstration is the interventions carried out by law enforcement agencies through arbitrary, excessive, and disproportionate use of force. It can even be said that these interventions by law enforcement agencies often amount to torture and other ill-treatment.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 245 peaceful meetings and demonstrations were intervened by law enforcement agencies. As a result of these interventions, at least 2,345 people were detained, 104 people were arrested, and at least 131 people were injured. Judicial control measures were applied to at least 431 people, 42 of whom were placed under house arrest. At least 24 people were fined.
- Following peaceful meetings and demonstrations, at least 1,165 people were detained and 188 people were arrested during house raids. Judicial control measures were imposed on at least 445 people, 33 of whom were placed under house arrest.
- Accordingly, a total of at least 3,511 people who exercised/wanted to exercise their freedom of assembly and demonstration were detained, 292 people were arrested, and judicial control measures were imposed on at least 876 people, 75 of whom were placed under house arrest.

In addition to these general figures, law enforcement interventions and obstructions of peaceful meetings and demonstrations by various social groups in 2025 were as follows:

- Interventions were made against 25 peaceful meetings and demonstrations

planned for women's and LGBTQ+ rights, at least 377 people were detained, 3 people were arrested, and 74 people were placed under judicial control.

- At least 18 interventions were made against peaceful meetings and demonstrations organized by workers and laborers, at least 50 people were detained, and 1 person was injured.

- There were 11 interventions against peaceful meetings and demonstrations related to environmental and urban rights, at least 26 people were detained, and 1 person was injured.

- Peaceful meetings and demonstrations held by animal rights activists for the right to life of street animals were intervened at least 5 times, 1 meeting and demonstration was prevented, and at least 3 people were detained.

- As a result of interventions against peaceful meetings and demonstrations held on May 1<sup>st</sup>, Labor Day, at least 452 people were detained, 20 people were arrested, and 49 people were placed under judicial control. In addition, 5 people distributing May 1<sup>st</sup> statements were fined.

- Following Newroz, at least 19 people were detained, 1 person was arrested, and 12 people were placed under judicial control in house raids carried out in various provinces.

- At least 20 peaceful meetings and demonstrations organized by students for various reasons were intervened upon, at least 222 people were detained, 3 people were injured, 6 people were arrested, and judicial control measures were imposed on 31 people, 4 of whom were placed under house arrest.

- On 19 March 2025, at least 66 peaceful meetings and demonstrations protesting the arrest of the Mayor of İstanbul were intervened upon, at least 1,375 people were detained, 187 people were arrested, and judicial control measures were imposed on 503 people, 63 of whom were placed under house arrest.

- At least 26 peaceful meetings and demonstrations against the appointment of a trustee to Van Metropolitan Municipality were intervened, 464 people were detained, at least 107 people were injured, 61 people were arrested, judicial control measures were applied to 13 people, and 10 people were fined.

- At least 6 peaceful meetings and demonstrations related to human rights violations in prisons and ongoing hunger strikes in prisons were intervened upon, and at least 17 people were detained.

- At least 12 peaceful meetings and demonstrations protesting the genocide in Gaza and in support of Palestine were intervened upon, at least 50 people were detained, 2 people were arrested, and judicial control measures were imposed on 8 people, including 1 under house arrest.

Another significant obstacle to the exercise of the freedom of assembly and demonstration is the investigations and lawsuits filed against individuals who wish to exercise this freedom. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, in 2024, public prosecutors initiated investigations against 4,847 individuals and brought public cases against 2,167 individuals on

the grounds of violating Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations.<sup>10</sup> The high number of investigations opened demonstrates the intensity of the pressure environment and, on the other hand, has a deterrent effect on citizens in terms of exercising their freedoms of assembly and demonstration.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 9 events, such as concerts, festivals, tournaments, and theater plays, were banned by local government officials.
- At least 30 events were canceled by municipalities, public institutions, or event companies, sometimes due to reactions and sometimes without justification.
- 2 strikes were postponed.

## **FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

Freedom of association is one of the fundamental human rights essential for the functioning of democracies. In Turkey, citizens are unable to exercise their freedom of association because they cannot come together collectively and express their opinions, and they cannot participate in the civil and political sphere in an organized manner to shape their common future.

In 2025, numerous members and leaders of human rights organizations, associations, foundations, labor unions, and professional organizations were detained, arrested, and subjected to pressure through lawsuits filed against them.

According to the findings of the İHD and the HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 131 people who were members and executives of various associations, foundations, unions, professional organizations, initiatives, and platforms were detained, 60 people were arrested, and 42 people were released on judicial control conditions, 24 of whom were under house arrest.
- At least 1 association and 3 cultural centers were raided by law enforcement, and printed and digital materials were confiscated.

Pressure and threat policies, primarily administrative and judicial harassment against human rights defenders and organizations, continued in 2025. In this context;

- The trials of Eren Keskin, Co-Chair of the İHD, Şebnem Korur Fincancı,

<sup>10</sup>

[https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet\\_%C4%B0statistikleri\\_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e\\_Ingilizce.pdf](https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/7042025092455Adalet_%C4%B0statistikleri_2024%20T%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e_Ingilizce.pdf), pp. 76-77

See

Member of the Board of Directors of the HRFT, Saturday Mothers/People, and Nimet Tanrıku continued.

- Enes Hocaogulları, a young delegate to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and International Advocacy and Resource Development Coordinator of the ÜniKuir association, was arrested on the grounds of a speech he made at the 48th session of the Council of Europe Congress on 27 March 2025, criticizing the democratic regression and violence of law enforcement agencies in Turkey. He was charged with "spreading misleading information to the public" (Turkish Penal Code Article 217/A, 2022 "disinformation law") and "inciting hatred and hostility."

- Two separate trials were held during the year against human rights defender and environmental activist Haluk Özsoy, who exposed the destructive ecological and social consequences of mining activities carried out by companies with political connections in Muğla Akbelen and Deştin, on the grounds that his speeches and statements "insulted the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey, and the institutions and organs of the state" (TCK m. 301). The hearings for these two separate cases were held during the year. Haluk Özsoy was acquitted in one of the cases but was sentenced to 5 months in prison in the other, and the pronouncement of the sentence was postponed.

- Human rights defender and union (BİRTEK-SEN) president Mehmet Türkmen, was arrested after criticizing the Gaziantep Governorate's decision on 13 February 13 2025 to ban all demonstrations, meetings, marches, and protests throughout the province for 15 days on the grounds of "public safety." He was charged with "insulting the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey, and the organs and institutions of the state" and "incitement to crime." At the end of the trials, Mehmet Türkmen was acquitted of the charge of "insulting the Turkish nation, the Republic of Turkey, and the organs and institutions of the state" but was sentenced to 6 months and 7 days in prison for "incitement to crime."

The Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713 is at the forefront of regulations that render the freedom of association unusable. As a result of investigations launched against them and court rulings handed down in accordance with various articles of the said law, elected local administrators, members and administrators of political parties, unions, associations or foundations, and human rights defenders have been rendered unable to exercise these rights and freedoms.

According to the findings of the İHD Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025:



- At least 2,100 people were detained and 400 people were arrested on grounds such as "aiding and abetting the organization," "spreading propaganda for the organization," "being a member of the organization," or "committing crimes on behalf of the organization."

According to the findings of the HRFT Documentation Center, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- At least 707 people were detained, 284 people were arrested, and 271 people were released under judicial control measures, including 8 under house arrest, on grounds such as "aiding and abetting the organization," "spreading propaganda for the organization," "being a member of the organization," or "committing crimes on behalf of the organization without being a member of the organization."

In 2025, numerous members and leaders of political parties, mayors, and municipal council members were detained and arrested, and attempts were made to exert pressure on them through lawsuits filed against them. Trustees were appointed to municipalities, indictments were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) against members of parliament, and attacks were carried out against members and buildings of political parties.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- 38 people elected to local government, including 22 mayors or co-mayors and 16 municipal council members, were detained; 31 people, including 21 mayors, were arrested; and 1 person was released on the condition of house arrest as a judicial control measure.

- At least 290 members and administrators of various political parties were detained, 68 were arrested, and 44 were released on judicial control measures, including 6 under house arrest.

- Administrators were appointed to 2 provinces (Van, Siirt) and 3 districts (Akdeniz, Kağızman, Şişli). The mayors of 4 provinces (Adana, Adıyaman, Antalya, İstanbul) and 13 districts (Beşiktaş, Beykoz, Gelendost, Büyük Çekmece, Gaziosmanpaşa, Ceyhan, Seyhan, Manavgat, Şile, Beyoğlu, Bayrampaşa, Yahşihan) were removed from office.

- A total of 134 indictments were sent to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey: 1 against AKP deputies, 6 against independent deputies, 72 against CHP deputies, 41 against DEM Party deputies, 5 against İYİ Party deputies, and 9 against TİP deputies.

## **THE KURDISH ISSUE**

A process began on 1 October 2024, that could enable a negotiation-based, peaceful, and democratic solution to the Kurdish issue, which is one of the biggest obstacles to Turkey's democratization.

Following calls from MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli and PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, the

congress announced its decision to end the PKK's existence, organizational structure, and armed struggle methods. This was followed by a symbolic event in which a group of PKK members destroyed their weapons, the removal of the PKK's armed units from the country, and the formation of a commission in the Turkish Grand National Assembly to begin discussing the issue publicly among political actors. Each stage of this process is of vital importance in its own right. This is because every step taken towards ending the conflict and violence that has persisted for over 40 years due to the Kurdish issue and caused heavy social costs, is invaluable, not only because it will prevent further loss of life, but also because it will put an end to the deep anxiety and fear people feel for the lives of their loved ones. Therefore, it is very clear that silencing the guns and ending the environment of conflict and violence will enable the Kurdish issue to be resolved through non-violent methods and establish a just peace, as it will broaden the scope of discourse and increase its effectiveness.

As we have consistently emphasized for years, the Kurdish issue is a political and social issue with economic, social, cultural, political, and legal dimensions. In short, it refers to the guarantee of the fundamental rights and freedoms of Kurds, primarily their identity and cultural rights, on the basis of equality. Therefore, the solution to this issue is possible through a "democratization program" created with an approach that is free from any instrumentalism and that values democracy above all else. Such a program must be built, first and foremost, on the idea that guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms is not subject to anyone's approval. Because rights constitute the principles and norms that enable every citizen, without distinction, to live equally in a manner befitting human dignity. They are holistic and inalienable.

However, no concrete steps have yet been taken towards the construction of such a program. On the contrary, as detailed under all the headings of this report, serious and grave human rights violations and anti-democratic practices continue, primarily concerning the right to life.

According to data from the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- Within the country, armed clashes and operations in Syria and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq resulted in the deaths of at least 73 people, including 24 security personnel (21 soldiers, 3 police officers), 48 militants, and 1 civilian. At least 11 people, including 10 security personnel (8 soldiers, 2 police officers) and 1 civilian, were injured.

These unacceptable violations and human losses show that the political power, which has so far considered every issue as a security problem, sanctified violence, and made conflict and war the only method, especially in solving the Kurdish issue, has not yet been able to break its habits. In addition to these habits, the ruling political power's ongoing discriminatory and hateful rhetoric and policies also play a significant role in making structural violence increasingly decisive in the regulation of social relations. In particular, the spread of violence

within society and the continuation of discriminatory, racist, and hateful attacks against Kurds are causing serious fractures and concerns in the will to live together in peace.

According to data from the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- 12 people were injured as a result of discriminatory, racist, and hateful verbal or physical attacks against Kurds.

Political actors wielding power from both the ruling and opposition parties play a "regulatory" role in social relations through their daily rhetoric and actions, and the local administrative officials and law enforcement officers (government members, party leaders, members of parliament, mayors, etc.) associated with them implement these actions that play a regulatory role in social relations and in the continuation of discriminatory, racist, and hateful attacks against Kurds. The rhetoric and actions developed daily by these actors, the practices and interventions of the relevant administrative officials and law enforcement agencies, and especially the language used by the media play an encouraging role.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 11 discriminatory, racist, and hateful policies, administrative practices, or prohibitions targeting Kurds were implemented.

Among these policies, practices, and prohibitions, those related to the use of the Kurdish language stand out. In this context, Kurdish banners and billboard posters were prevented from being displayed, speeches made in Kurdish in the Turkish Grand National Assembly were removed from the minutes, a coffeehouse where Kurdish was spoken was sealed, Amedspor was fined because of a Kurdish advertisement on its uniform, and an investigation was launched against an academic working in the Kurdish Language and Literature department for reciting Kurdish poetry.

In 2025, investigations and prosecutions continued to be carried out against those who danced the halay to Kurdish songs at weddings and other gatherings, in the street, in open spaces, or at peaceful meetings and demonstrations, on the grounds of "making terrorism propaganda."

According to data from the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- At least 20 people, including 6 children, dancing the halay to Kurdish songs were detained on the grounds of "making terrorist propaganda." Two of these individuals were arrested.

The appointment of trustees, which disregarded the results of the 31 March 2024 Local Elections — a strong rejection by society of the ruling bloc's policies of annihilation and denial regarding the Kurdish issue —not only trampled on the will of the voters and democratic values but also increased society's concerns and caution about the "process."

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- Trustees were appointed to 2 provincial (Van, Siirt) and 2 district (Kağızman, Akdeniz) municipalities elected from the DEM Party.

During the year, Kurds who sought to participate in the public sphere and influence the processes of forming common opinion and will by exercising their freedoms of assembly and demonstration, which form the basis of a democratic society and are guaranteed by the Constitution, were unable to exercise these freedoms as a result of bans and/or the actual interventions or obstructions of law enforcement agencies, and were subjected to serious violations, primarily torture and other ill-treatment.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- At least 26 peaceful meetings and demonstrations against the appointment of a trustee to the Van Metropolitan Municipality were intervened in, 464 people were detained, at least 107 people were injured, 61 people were arrested, 13 people were subject to judicial control measures, and 10 people were fined.
- Following Newroz, at least 19 people were detained in house raids carried out in various provinces, 1 person was arrested, and 12 people were placed under judicial control measures.

The detention or imprisonment of numerous elected Kurdish politicians, notably former Co-Chairs of the HDP Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, and their punishment with prison sentences and exile to distant prisons, violates many fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right to a fair trial, the right to vote and be elected, the right to organize, and freedom of thought and expression. It is clear that it is impossible to talk about peace under conditions where freedoms, especially of expression and association, are restricted.

We have always advocated for a democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. We insist on this. At a time when humanitarian crises and wars are being experienced in many regions of the world, particularly in the Middle East, we desire that Turkey make the best possible use of this opportunity to "discuss/negotiate peace" in historical and social terms. However, we would also like to remind you that the prerequisite for a democratic discussion and negotiation process is not so much the declaration of one's position at the outset of the talks,

but rather the principled acceptance in advance that one is prepared to move beyond one's position in order to enable common ground to be found at another level. If the aim is not merely a quantitative vote count but a qualitative agreement, the framework for the discussion/negotiation must be shared. Humanity's greatest accumulation itself, namely **human rights values and principles**, is the ready-made framework for any public negotiation aimed at agreement.

## **WOMEN'S AND LGBTQ+ RIGHTS**

According to Bianet's data, in the first 11 months of 2025;

- Men killed at least 271 women, harassed 187 women, abused 206 children, committed violence against 673 women, and raped 13 women. Men forced at least 1,015 women into sex work. While the deaths of 219 women were reported in the press as "suspicious," men killed at least 60 children.

An analysis of Bianet data clearly shows that women were killed by men within their families, such as husbands, boyfriends, fathers, sons, and sons-in-law, and that the state not only failed to fulfill its "prevention and protection" obligations, but on the contrary protected the perpetrators with impunity.

In 2025, there was no legal or practical improvement in the discrimination women faced in all areas of social life.

- According to a field study conducted by KONDA on 3-4 October 2025 in 28 provinces with 2,452 people representing the population aged 18 and over to measure perceptions and practices regarding gender and violence in Turkey, 28% of respondents stated that they had experienced discrimination based on their gender. 39% of women and 16% of men believe they have experienced discrimination based on their gender.

Discriminatory, phobic, and hateful attacks against LGBTQ+ individuals unfortunately persisted in 2025. Among the main factors enabling such attacks are the discriminatory and polarizing rhetoric and policies of the political establishment, as well as the statements of politicians and opinion leaders who have the power and ability to influence public opinion.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- At least 1 person lost their life and at least 3 people were injured as a result of discriminatory, phobic, and hateful attacks against LGBTQ+ individuals.
- At least 29 discriminatory, phobic, and hateful speeches/statements targeting LGBTQ+ individuals were made by political actors, association and union leaders, and

representatives of official institutions.

- At least 20 discriminatory, racist, phobic, and hateful policies, administrative practices, or prohibitions targeting LGBTQ+ individuals have been implemented nationwide.

These policies, administrative practices, or prohibitions include bans on actions and events imposed by local government officials, interference with LGBTQ+ flags and banners, home raids, the Ministry of Health's decision on hormone treatment, home sealing, and an investigation opened against a school.

In 2025, women and LGBTQ+ individuals were unable to exercise their constitutionally guaranteed right to peaceful assembly and demonstration – which they wished to use to protect and advance their rights and freedoms and to make their demands heard – due to intervention and obstruction by law enforcement or prohibition decisions taken by local government officials.

According to the findings of the İHD and HRFT Documentation Centers, in the first 11 months of 2025:

- Law enforcement intervened in 25 peaceful assemblies and demonstrations planned for women's and LGBTQ+ rights, at least 377 people were detained, 3 people were arrested, and 74 people were released on judicial control measures.

A worrying development regarding LGBTQ+ rights in 2025 was the introduction of the omnibus bill known to the public as the 11th Judicial Package. The bill, which directly targets LGBTQ+ individuals, proposes discriminatory regulations that interfere with freedom of expression and the right to health. It also contained alarming provisions raising the age for gender confirmation surgery for transgender individuals to 25, making it more difficult to obtain reports, and imposing prison sentences and heavy fines on physicians who perform "illegal" interventions. As a result of swift and intense reactions from civil society, these provisions were withdrawn from the bill. The Bill on Amendments to the Turkish Penal Code and Certain Other Laws was approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly Justice Commission on 5 December 2025. However, the possibility of this bill being reintroduced is highly likely, and this legislative initiative is significant in that it demonstrates how far the political power has strayed from referencing human rights values and principles.

## **CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Although the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' is the human rights document accepted by the most countries worldwide, children's rights are being violated intensely everywhere in the world.

Children are most affected by the severe economic crisis, deep poverty, and conflict



environment in Turkey. Child labor, which negatively impacts children's education and their physical, emotional, mental, and social development, is a significant problem. According to data shared in the report titled "Statistics on Child, 2024" published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) on 18 April 2025, as of 2024, 21,817,61 people are aged 0-17 and children make up 25.5% of the country's total population. The proportion of children aged 15-17 participating in economic activity is 24.9%. This means that 5,432,584 children are working in Turkey. According to the report "Children in Turkey: A Look at the 2024 Statistics" published by TÜİK in July 2025, as of 2024, 7,039,000 children are considered poor.

As can be seen, millions of children are forced to live and work in insecure and unhealthy conditions and in poverty. There are currently approximately 1.2 million refugee/asylum-seeking children struggling to survive under these conditions in Turkey.

According to findings by the Health and Safety Labor Watch/Turkey (İSİG), at least 28 children lost their lives while working in the first five months of 2025. Between 2013 and the first five months of 2025, a total of 770 children lost their lives.<sup>11</sup> Of the child workers who died, 261 (34%) were between the ages of 5 and 14, and 509 (66%) were between the ages of 15 and 17. These figures show that there is no oversight of child labor in age groups where work is prohibited in Turkey and in hazardous industries. Twenty percent of child workers who died in the 5-14 age group were girls, and 12% were migrant/refugee children. In the 15-17 age group, 11% of child workers who died were young women and 11% were migrant/refugee children. According to İSİG's findings, the death rate among child workers is much higher for girls, young women, and migrant/refugee children.

MESEM, which takes students who have completed middle school out of formal education and offers them as free labor to employers four days a week (officially), is a project that, in a sense, exploits children through the state. On the one hand, it creates a pool of cheap labor for capital, and on the other hand, it is a means of transferring resources. In 2024, while employers were paid 1 billion 698 million TL for student-workers who worked for free, the public funds transferred to MESEM programs in the last three years approached 15 billion TL.<sup>12</sup> The Ministry of National Education's "craft workshops project," a pilot program offered under the name of a "skills development program" to be implemented during the summer vacation, will lower the age of vocational education to 12-13 years old.

According to data from the Ministry of Justice, as of 1 December 2025:

- There is a total of 5,094 children in Turkish prisons, 1,259 of whom are convicted and 3,407 of whom are detained.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.isigmeclisi.org/21015-mesem-de-tarlada-sokakta-sanayide-insaatta-son-on-bir-yilda-en-az-695>.

## **REFUGEES / ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The number of people forced to flee their homes, migrate, seek asylum and refuge due to economic crises, climate crises, and natural disasters; political, ethnic, religious, or cultural oppression and discrimination; war, conflict, violence, and persecution has reached record levels globally, and Turkey is one of the countries hosting the largest number of refugees/asylum seekers in the world.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of June 2025, a total of 122.6 million people, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless persons, are seeking protection and assistance. According to UNHCR, Turkey hosts 3.2 million registered Syrian refugees, as well as approximately 222,000 persons of other nationalities who fall within UNHCR's mandate.

According to data from the Presidency of Migration Management, the only source sharing data on refugees/asylum seekers in Turkey, as of 27 November 2025, 2,371,412 are under temporary protection, 1,092,279 have residence permits, and 142,820 are irregular migrants, totaling 3,606,511 refugees/asylum seekers.

Refugees/asylum seekers, who have now become an integral part of Turkish society, are still unable to obtain legal status and are intensely exposed to all kinds of discrimination and abuse, hate speech, and economic exploitation.

Refugees/asylum seekers were subjected to violence and hate attacks in 2025, resulting in loss of life and injury. Refugees/asylum seekers, for whom the physical, mental, and social consequences of the economic crisis are the heaviest, have become lives that society ignores or even discards, facing job and income loss, precarious and poor working conditions, and problems accessing housing, healthcare, and education.

- According to data from the Health and Safety Labor Watch/Turkey (İSİG) for 2024, at least 94 refugees/asylum seekers lost their lives as a result of work accidents/homicides.
  - At least 1 child lost their life and 2 children were injured as a result of discriminatory, racist, and hateful attacks targeting refugees/asylum seekers.

## **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS**

For several years, Turkey has been experiencing one of the most severe economic crises in the history of the Republic. The economic crisis and deepening poverty caused by years of debt-based neoliberal economic policies and enormous war and conflict expenditures constitute a grave human rights violation that makes it completely impossible for citizens to sustain both their biological and social lives.

Armed conflict and war expenditures are one of the main causes of this economic crisis. In a research report prepared for the Democratic Progress Institute, researcher İzzet Akyol states that between 1985 and 2021, \$230 billion was spent directly due to conflict. According to the dollar index updated as of 2022, the Turkish economy lost 4.5 trillion dollars and without this loss, Turkey's national income could have grown by 36% more.

The pandemic and the severe destruction caused by the February 6<sup>th</sup> earthquake have further deepened the ongoing economic crisis. Although it is not possible to see employment losses and the increase in unemployment through TÜİK data, poverty, unemployment, and the high cost of living are the most vital problems facing Turkish society.

Approximately 135,000 people dismissed from the public sector and approximately 200,000 people dismissed from the private sector under the state of emergency decrees, together with their families, amount to approximately one million citizens condemned to poverty and hunger. The decree dismissals, which can be described as civil death, constitute a very serious violation of economic and social rights as their impact spreads over years.

Employment health and safety remains the most fundamental problem of the workplace environment for workers and laborers.

According to data from the Health and Safety Labor Watch/Turkey (İSİG), in the first 11 months of 2025;

- Nationwide, at least 1,956 workers lost their lives as a result of workplace accidents/homicides.

High cost of living, unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and disorganization hit women, children, and refugees/asylum seekers the hardest. Although no exact figures are available, there are currently 1-1.5 million refugees working while being unregistered and deprived of social rights.

In Turkey, where poverty is on the rise, workers' and laborers' acquired rights, particularly their right to severance pay, must not be infringed upon, inflation figures must not be manipulated, and workplace deaths must be prevented. Workers' and laborers' rights advocacy actions must not be prohibited, and the rights to unionize, strike, and engage in collective action must be guaranteed in every respect.