

# Institutionalized Repression

**Human Rights in Turkey**

**2025**



solidarity with  
**OTHERS**

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# 1. Introduction

Human rights conditions in Turkey continued to deteriorate throughout 2025 as authorities further entrenched legal and institutional mechanisms enabling repression. While the government repeatedly asserted that democratic and judicial institutions were functioning normally, developments throughout the year reflected the consolidation of an increasingly restrictive environment affecting political opposition, journalists, civil society, minorities, and ordinary citizens.

A central feature of the year was the continued use of broadly interpreted anti-terrorism legislation, particularly against individuals alleged to have links to the Gülen movement. Despite the landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in *Yalçınkaya v. Turkey*, which ruled that convictions based primarily on the alleged use of the encrypted messaging application ByLock violated the European Convention on Human Rights, Turkish authorities continued to pursue similar prosecutions. Mass operations, arrests, and prosecutions continued throughout the year, often relying on forms of evidence that the Court had already found unreliable or insufficient.

At the same time, pressure on political opposition intensified. Investigations and prosecutions targeting opposition-run municipalities expanded significantly, particularly against members of the Republican People's Party (CHP). Several mayors were detained or removed from office, while legal proceedings against opposition figures—including Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu—remained a defining feature of the political landscape.

Freedom of expression and media freedom also faced serious setbacks. Journalists, academics, artists, and social media users continued to face criminal investigations and imprisonment for speech-related offenses. Authorities increasingly relied on online censorship mechanisms, including access bans, platform restrictions, and broadcast sanctions imposed by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK).

Civil society and minority communities also faced growing pressure. Kurdish political actors, journalists, and cultural figures continued to be prosecuted under anti-terrorism laws. LGBTQ+ organizations faced bans and closures, while women's rights advocates raised alarm over

increasing gender-based violence and the weakening of legal protections following Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.

Meanwhile, prison overcrowding reached unprecedented levels. By the end of 2025, the prison population exceeded 430,000 inmates—far surpassing official capacity. Human rights organizations documented persistent allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and denial of medical care in detention facilities.

The developments observed throughout the year indicate that many of the structural concerns identified in previous reports—including the erosion of judicial independence, the politicization of criminal justice, and the systematic restriction of fundamental freedoms—have not only persisted but deepened.

# 1

## Introduction

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**Note:** The data and cases referenced in this report can be found in the [Turkey Rights Monitor database](#) on the website of **Solidarity With OTHERS**. The incidents and sources cited in the footnotes are **illustrative rather than exhaustive** and do not include every case recorded during the reporting period.

## 2. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life

Concerns regarding the protection of the right to life persisted in Turkey throughout 2025. A number of incidents reported during the year raised serious questions about state responsibility in situations involving prison conditions, law enforcement actions, and systemic negligence.

Deaths in detention and prisons remained a significant concern. Human rights organizations continued to document cases in which detainees and prisoners died after allegedly being denied adequate medical care or timely access to treatment. Several cases involved prisoners suffering from serious illnesses whose requests for release on medical grounds were repeatedly rejected despite deteriorating health conditions<sup>1</sup>.

Among the most notable cases reported during the year was **the death of lawyer and human rights defender Süleyman Yıldırım**<sup>2</sup>, who died in prison after prolonged health complications and repeated calls for his release due to medical concerns. His death prompted renewed criticism of the role of the Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK), which frequently determines whether prisoners are fit to remain incarcerated. Critics have long argued that the institution's decisions often delay or prevent the release of seriously ill prisoners.

Similarly, **the death of Mehmet Çataklı**<sup>3</sup>, who died from a heart attack while detained pending trial in a terrorism-related case, further underscored concerns about the treatment of detainees in Turkey's criminal justice system.

Several additional deaths in custody were reported throughout the year. In one case, **a prisoner died in Alaşehir Prison after suffering a brain haemorrhage**<sup>4</sup> during extreme heat

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<sup>1</sup> 2025 Almanac | Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/html/2025/en.html>

<sup>2</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, December 8). Turkish lawyer jailed over Gülen links dies after delayed release from prison. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/12/08/turkish-lawyer-jailed-over-gulen-links-dies-after-delayed-release-from-prison/>

<sup>3</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 16). Turkish inmate jailed over alleged Gülen links dies of heart attack in prison. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-inmate-jailed-over-alleged-gulen-links-dies-of-heart-attack-in-prison/>

<sup>4</sup> Özarslan, S. (2025, August 16). Cinayet gibi ölüm: Cezaevinde beyin kanaması geçiren Manisalı hayırsever vefat etti. TR724. <https://www.tr724.com/cinayet-gibi-olum-cezaevinde-beyin-kanamasi-geciren-manisali-hayirsever-vefat-etti/>

## 2

### Arbitrary Deprivation of Life

conditions, raising concerns about prison infrastructure and the authorities' ability to protect vulnerable inmates.

Deaths linked to law enforcement actions also raised concerns. In one incident, a Syrian man was reportedly shot during a police raid<sup>5</sup> in Hatay after officers allegedly entered the wrong address. According to family members, the victim was left without timely medical assistance after being shot.

In another case reported late in the year, a 67-year-old man died after being beaten by a neighbourhood watchman<sup>6</sup> during a traffic dispute. The case drew attention to concerns about the powers granted to watchmen and the accountability mechanisms governing their actions.

Beyond custodial settings, several deaths linked to labour exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and migrant vulnerability were reported<sup>7</sup>. Among them was the death of a 14-year-old Syrian child worker<sup>8</sup> who fell from a construction site while working informally in southeastern Turkey. The incident highlighted the intersection of child labour, migration, and economic vulnerability.

Human rights organizations also documented a number of deaths linked to workplace accidents involving individuals who had lost public sector employment following post-coup purges. In several cases, former civil servants were reported to have died while performing hazardous manual labour after being excluded from public employment<sup>9</sup>.

Taken together, these incidents point to broader structural concerns regarding the protection of the right to life in Turkey, particularly in contexts where individuals are under state custody or where authorities have a duty of care. Persistent allegations of medical neglect, inadequate investigations, and institutional barriers to accountability remain significant obstacles to effective protection of this fundamental right.

<sup>5</sup> Çalıköğlü, F. N. (2025, November 25). Hatay'daki 'yanlış ev' baskını Meclis gündeminde: Eşinin örtünmesini istedi, ateş açıldı. KARAR. <https://www.karar.com/guncel-haberler/hataydaki-yanlis-ev-baskini-meclis-gundeminde-esinin-ortunmesini-istedi-2009544>

<sup>6</sup> Uludağ, A. (2025, December 23). Kayseri'de bekçi şiddeti. dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/tr/kayseride-bek%C3%A7i-%C5%9Fiddeti/a-75288905>

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bianet. 14 yaşındaki çocuk çalıştırıldığı inşaatta hayatını kaybetti. (2025, November 3). <https://bianet.org/haber/14-yasındaki-cocuk-calistirildiği-insaatta-hayatini-kaybetti-313155>

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 1.

# 3. Enforced Disappearances

The issue of enforced disappearances continued to attract concern in Turkey during 2025, particularly in relation to unresolved cases from previous years.

Throughout the year, the disappearance of Yusuf Bilge Tunç remained one of the most prominent unresolved cases. Tunç, who went missing in 2019 under circumstances widely believed to involve enforced disappearance, has not been located despite repeated appeals by his family and human rights organizations. His case has continued to be raised regularly by civil society groups seeking accountability and transparency.

Families of the disappeared and human rights defenders continued to call for effective investigations into enforced disappearance allegations<sup>10</sup>. However, critics argue<sup>11</sup> that existing investigations have failed to produce meaningful results or to clarify the circumstances surrounding such cases.

Human rights organizations have repeatedly stressed<sup>12</sup> that unresolved disappearance cases contribute to a climate of impunity and undermine public confidence in the justice system. The continued absence of credible progress in investigating these cases has therefore remained a matter of serious concern.

Additionally, concerns about cross-border renditions and secret detentions have continued to surface. In previous years, individuals suspected of affiliation with the Gülen movement were reportedly abducted abroad and transferred to Turkey without formal extradition procedures<sup>13</sup>. Although no widely documented new cases of this kind were confirmed in

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> 2025 Almanac | Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/html/2025/en.html#enforced-disappearances> ; see also Turkey Rights Monitor, Issue No. 237, 30 December 2024–5 January 2025 <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-237/> , and Issue No. 288, 22–28 December 2025 <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-288/>.

<sup>12</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS, Human Rights in Turkey in 2022: Rock Bottom Normalized, “Enforced Disappearances – The Case of Yusuf Bilge Tunç.” <https://solidaritywithothers.com/rack-bottom-normalized-human-rights-in-turkey-in-2022/>

<sup>13</sup> Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). Enforced Disappearances. <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/en/missing-people>

2025<sup>14</sup>, the legacy of such incidents continues to raise questions about safeguards against enforced disappearance.

International human rights mechanisms have emphasized<sup>15</sup> that enforced disappearance constitutes a continuing violation until the fate or whereabouts of the missing person is clarified. In this regard, the continued uncertainty surrounding several longstanding cases remains a source of concern for human rights observers.

## 3

### Enforced Disappearances

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<sup>14</sup> Amnesty Kenya on X: " URGENT ACTION: FEAR OF REFOULEMENT IN KENYA

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that Mustafa Güngör who was arrested with his wife Zeliha, daughters Seniha Betül and Zeynep, and his in-laws Zümrüt and Salim is at serious risk of refoulement to Türkiye, where he could be <https://t.co/fglE3Ufb9N>" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter).

<https://x.com/AmnestyKenya/status/2002486819556847946?s=20>; see also Universal Rights Association (URA) on X: "UPDATE - EMRE ÇINAR 05.01.2026 We have been informed by EMRE Çinar legal representatives that Emre Çinar has been released to stand trial without detention. Further details will be shared as they become available. We will continue to closely follow this case and monitor all" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter).

<https://x.com/URASAFRICA/status/2008182032975773945>

<sup>15</sup> OHCHR. (n.d.). About enforced disappearance. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-disappearances/about-enforced-disappearance>

## 4. Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment

Arbitrary detention and imprisonment remained among the most persistent and widespread human rights concerns in Turkey throughout 2025. Authorities continued to rely heavily on broadly defined anti-terrorism legislation to detain and prosecute individuals for activities that, in many cases, appeared to fall within the scope of lawful expression, association, or ordinary civilian life<sup>16</sup>.

The most extensive operations continued to target individuals accused of links to the Gülen movement<sup>17</sup>, which the Turkish government designates as a terrorist organization in spite of global disagreement. Despite repeated criticism from international human rights bodies and the landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in *Yalçınkaya v. Turkey*<sup>18</sup>, the authorities maintained the same investigative and prosecutorial practices that had characterized the post-2016 crackdown<sup>19</sup>.

Mass detention operations were reported regularly throughout the year<sup>20</sup>. Prosecutors frequently issued detention warrants for dozens or sometimes hundreds of individuals simultaneously, often across multiple provinces. These operations, under the name of “CLAMP” operations as defined by the Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya, were typically carried out on the basis of allegations such as the use of the encrypted messaging application ByLock, alleged contacts through public payphones, social media activity, or financial transactions interpreted as support for the movement<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> OHCHR. (n.d.). Türkiye: Expert dismayed by continued misuse of counter terrorism law to keep human rights defenders in long-term detention. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/01/turkiye-expert-dismayed-continued-misuse-counter-terrorism-law-keep-human> ; see also Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). The Misuse of Anti-Terror Laws in Turkey. <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/en/terror-crime-statistics>

<sup>17</sup> 2025 Almanac | Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). Mass Detentions.

<https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/html/2025/en.html#mass-detentions>

<sup>18</sup> Echr. (n.d.). Yüksel Yalçınkaya v. Türkiye. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-227636%22%7D>

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Under the administration of Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya, approximately 40 “CLAMP” operations were conducted as of 21 January 2025. In his statements, the Minister lists the charges against the detained/arrested people; most commonly: activities for restructuring of the organization, propaganda of the organization on social media, ByLock app usage, providing humanitarian aid to the families of the imprisoned members of the

# 4

## Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment

Official figures released during the year indicated that anti-Gülen investigations continued on a large scale. According to statements by the interior minister, hundreds of individuals were detained in nationwide operations throughout the year. In one announcement<sup>22</sup>, authorities reported that more than 1,600 people had been arrested during 2025 alone in investigations related to alleged Gülen links.

In several operations, detainees included former civil servants, military personnel, teachers, and university students. Reports also indicated that individuals were sometimes detained based on activities that appeared to have been lawful at the time they occurred<sup>23</sup>, such as participation in educational programs, charitable donations, or the use of communication tools that had not been declared illegal when they were used.

Human rights organizations repeatedly noted<sup>24</sup> that many of these cases relied on evidentiary practices that had already been found problematic by the ECtHR. In *Yalçinkaya v. Turkey*, the Court ruled that the mere alleged use of ByLock, without individualized proof of criminal activity, could not constitute sufficient evidence for a terrorism conviction. Despite this ruling,

organization. The minister regularly boasts about the operations on X where he posts videos of the operations produced with drone footage, thrilling background music.

Find factual data and further details in the report titled "Persecution of the Gülen Movement in Turkey" dated 21 January 2025 by Prof. Dr. Em. Johan Vande Lanotte: [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turkeytribunal\\_turkeys-unending-crackdown-on-the-g%C3%BClen-activity-7289971330920112128-NkDj?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAACUmw7MBdU5arv\\_G4RPopVXlyl4z6XHBuY4](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turkeytribunal_turkeys-unending-crackdown-on-the-g%C3%BClen-activity-7289971330920112128-NkDj?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACUmw7MBdU5arv_G4RPopVXlyl4z6XHBuY4)

[4](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turkeytribunal_turkeys-unending-crackdown-on-the-g%C3%BClen-activity-7289971330920112128-NkDj?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACUmw7MBdU5arv_G4RPopVXlyl4z6XHBuY4)

<sup>22</sup> Ali Yerlikaya on X: "'FETÖ'ye yönelik son 2 haftadır Jandarmamız tarafından düzenlen operasyonlarımızda 76 şüpheli yakalandı.' 2025 yılı içinde yaptığımız FETÖ operasyonlarımızda, toplam 1601 şüpheli tutuklandı, 1524 şüpheliye ise Adli Kontrol Kararları uygulandı.

Son 2 Hafta içerisindeki <https://t.co/EtPHjDNfsT> / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter).

[https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2002675618840735764?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://x.com/AliYerlikaya/status/2002675618840735764?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

<sup>23</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 9). Issue 256. Solidarity With OTHERS.

<https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-256/>; see also (2026, January 9). Issue 270. Solidarity With OTHERS.

<https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-270/>

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights in Context. (2024, July 29). Grand Chamber's judgment in Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Turkey (no. 15669/20) and its implication for Turkish legal o. Human Rights in Context. <https://www.humanrightsincontext.be/post/grand-chamber-s-judgment-in-y%C3%BCksel-yalc-%C4%B1nkaya-v-turkey-no-15669-20-and-its-implication-for-turk>;

Human Rights in Context. (2024, June 28). Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye: Terror convictions must yield to human rights.

Human Rights in Context. <https://www.humanrightsincontext.be/post/yal%C3%A7%C4%B1nkaya-v-t%C3%BCrkiye-terror-convictions-must-yield-to-human-rights>;

Human Rights in Context. (2024, June 28). Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye: Terror convictions must yield to human rights. Human Rights in Context.

<https://www.humanrightsincontext.be/post/yal%C3%A7%C4%B1nkaya-v-t%C3%BCrkiye-terror-convictions-must-yield-to-human-rights>;

Statewatch | ByLock Prosecutions and the Right to Fair Trial in Turkey: The ECtHR Grand Chamber's Ruling in Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye. (n.d.). <https://www.statewatch.org/publications/reports-and-books/bylock-prosecutions-and-the-right-to-fair-trial-in-turkey-the-ecthr-grand-chamber-s-ruling-in-yuksel-yalcinkaya-v-turkiye/>;

Strasbourg Observers. (2025, September 22). The ECtHR's Demirhan Judgment: The issue of systemic judicial problems in Turkey - Strasbourg Observers. Strasbourg Observers.

<https://strasbourgobservers.com/2025/10/21/the-ecthrs-demirhan-judgment-the-issue-of-systemic-judicial-problems-in-turkey/>;

Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 9). *Terror convictions must yield to human rights: Legal Expert opinions on Yalçinkaya Judgment*. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/terror-convictions-must-yield-to-human-rights-legal-expert-opinions-on-yalcinkaya-judgment/>

# 4

## Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment

Turkish courts continued to treat the alleged use of the application as decisive evidence in numerous prosecutions.

In addition to the continued use of disputed digital evidence, investigations frequently relied on indirect indicators such as alleged contacts through payphones or association with individuals previously dismissed from public service. Critics argued<sup>25</sup> that such evidentiary practices blurred the line between legitimate criminal investigation and guilt by association.

The scale of the broader post-coup judicial campaign remained significant. By 2025, official data indicated<sup>26</sup> that more than three million individuals had been investigated for terrorism-related offenses since the failed coup attempt of July 2016, with more than half a million ultimately convicted. Thousands of cases related to these investigations continued to reach the ECtHR, where a large backlog of applications concerning the use of ByLock and similar evidence remained pending<sup>27</sup>.

The impact of these investigations on families and vulnerable individuals was also widely documented. Throughout the year, several detainees were reported to have been imprisoned together with their young children<sup>28</sup>, while others were arrested despite serious health conditions or family responsibilities<sup>29</sup>.

In some cases, both parents were detained simultaneously, leaving children without caregivers<sup>30</sup>. In another case reported during the year, authorities arrested a woman despite medical reports<sup>31</sup> indicating that her child required continuous maternal care due to serious illness. Human rights organizations criticized<sup>32</sup> such practices as disproportionate and incompatible with international standards concerning the rights of children.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. See also Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2020). Opinion No. 51/2020 concerning Arif Komiş, Ülkü Komiş and four minors whose names are known to the Working Group (Malaysia and Turkey). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at Its Eighty-eighth Session, 24–28 August 2020 (pp. 1–3) [Report].

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session88/A\\_HRC\\_WGAD\\_2020\\_51\\_Advance\\_Edited\\_Version.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session88/A_HRC_WGAD_2020_51_Advance_Edited_Version.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Maziligüney L. (2025, November 20). Türkiye’de kaç terörist var? TCK 314 istatistikleri üzerinden değerlendirme. Hukuki Haber. <https://www.hukukihaber.net/turkiyede-kac-terorist-var-tck-314-istatistikleri-uzerinden-degerlendirme>

<sup>27</sup> Statistics - ECHR. (n.d.). ECHR. <https://www.echr.coe.int/statistical-reports>

<sup>28</sup> 2025 Almanac | Turkey Rights Monitor. (n.d.). Arbitrary Detention and Arrests Targeting Vulnerable Groups. <https://www.turkeyrightsmonitor.com/html/2025/en.html#pregnant-women>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Özarslan, S. (2025, March 28). “Kızım iki çocuğuyla tutuklu, Yargıtay cezaı bozdu ama mahkeme savunma hakkı vermiyor, böyle adalet olur mu?” TR724. <https://www.tr724.com/kizim-iki-cocuguyla-tutuklu-yargitay-cezayi-bozdu-ama-mahkeme-savunma-hakki-vermiyor-boyle-adalet-olur-mu/>

<sup>31</sup> Gergerlioğlu, Ö. F. (2025, November 26). Gergerlioğlu: “Hukuk devletiymişiz! Melih üç yıldır veremle mücadele ediyor, anne-babası üç aydır hapiste.” Dr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu Portal. <https://www.omerfarukgergerlioglu.com/basin/gergerlioglu-hukuk-devletiyemisiz-melih-uc-yildir-veremle-mucadele-ediyor-anne-babasi-uc-aydir-hapiste/37801/>

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Council - Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. Summary of stakeholders’ submissions on Türkiye. (28 April–9 May 2025). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/49/TUR/3>

## 4

### Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment

Pregnant women and mothers with infants were also among those detained during the year. In several reported cases, women were imprisoned while pregnant or shortly after childbirth<sup>33</sup>. These incidents raised concerns regarding compliance with domestic legal provisions and international standards that require special protections for pregnant detainees and mothers of young children.

In parallel with investigations targeting alleged Gülen movement members, authorities also expanded criminal proceedings against political opposition figures and officials from opposition-run municipalities. Several mayors and municipal officials affiliated with the Republican People's Party (CHP) were detained or arrested in corruption-related investigations that critics described as politically motivated<sup>34</sup>.

The most prominent cases involved investigations linked to Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and other municipal administrations<sup>35</sup>. Prosecutors issued numerous detention warrants in connection with these investigations, targeting municipal officials, advisers, and individuals associated with opposition political structures. In several instances, individuals were re-arrested shortly after being released by courts, following objections by prosecutors<sup>36</sup>.

Legal proceedings against opposition figures were often accompanied by additional investigations for speech-related offenses, including alleged insults against public officials<sup>37</sup>. Such cases contributed to concerns about the selective use of criminal law against political opponents.

Students and young activists were also among those detained during the year. Numerous detentions were reported in connection with protests, social media posts, or campus

<sup>33</sup> Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu on X: " 🇹🇷 Yasalar çok açık: Hamilelikte ve bebek 18 aylık olana kadar anneler cezaevinde tutulamaz. Buna rağmen 5 aylık bebek anne karnında hapiste! 🇹🇷 Anayasa Mahkemesi bu konularda tazminat cezaları veriyor. Siz hâlâ bu ihlalleri görmezden geliyorsunuz. @adalet\_bakanlik <https://t.co/pUelkrnhCv>" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter). [https://x.com/gergerliogluof/status/1975980762064187840?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://x.com/gergerliogluof/status/1975980762064187840?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw); see also Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu on X: "Edirne Cezaevi'nden bir başka görüntü; Özlem Düzenli ve 9 aylık oğlu Murat Efe'yi geçen hafta ziyaret ettim. Bu yapay zekanın çizdiği bir foto ama gerçekten gerçeği çok yakalayan bir fotoğraf. <https://t.co/S85KZguTWm>" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter). <https://x.com/gergerliogluof/status/1956394201903755330>

<sup>34</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, July 9). Opposition under siege: 16 CHP mayors jailed, one under house arrest in Turkey. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/07/09/opposition-under-siege-16-chp-mayors-jailed-one-under-house-arrest-in-turkey/>.

<sup>35</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). Government Crackdown on the main opposition party CHP. Solidarity With OTHERS. [https://solidaritywithothers.com/template\\_report\\_1-0/](https://solidaritywithothers.com/template_report_1-0/); see also Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). The latest example of seizing opponents' assets in Turkey: EKREM İMAMOĞLU's case and the trusteeship of İMAMOĞLU CONSTRUCTION INC. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/the-latest-example-of-seizing-opponents-assets-in-turkey-ekrem-imamoglus-case-and-the-trusteeship-of-imamoglu-construction-inc/>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 9). Issue 259. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-259/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, July 11). Teenager arrested in Turkey for insulting President Erdoğan. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/07/11/teenager-arrested-in-turkey-for-insulting-president-erdogan/>

# 4

## Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment

activism<sup>38</sup>. In some cases, students were held in pretrial detention for extended periods before trial<sup>39</sup>.

Observers noted<sup>40</sup> that pretrial detention continued to be used extensively in Turkey's criminal justice system, particularly in cases involving terrorism-related charges. International human rights bodies have repeatedly warned that the overuse of pretrial detention risks undermining the presumption of innocence and may constitute a form of punishment prior to conviction<sup>41</sup>.

The cumulative effect of these practices has been the sustained expansion of the prison population. By the end of 2025, Turkey's prison population exceeded 433,000 inmates, making it one of the highest incarceration rates in Europe<sup>42</sup>. Human rights organizations linked this increase partly to the continued use of broad terrorism charges and large-scale detention operations.

Taken together, the developments observed throughout the year suggest that arbitrary detention remains a systemic issue in Turkey. The continued reliance on contested forms of evidence, the extensive use of pretrial detention, and the scale of mass investigations raise serious concerns about the protection of due process and the rule of law.

The persistence of these patterns, despite repeated judgments by international courts and criticism from human rights organizations, indicates that structural reforms may be necessary to address the underlying causes of arbitrary detention and imprisonment in the country.

<sup>38</sup> Euronews. (2025, April 8). Mahmut Tanal öğrenciler için Adalet Bakanlığı önüne çadır kurdu, polis müdahalesi gecikmedi. Euronews. <https://tr.euronews.com/2025/04/08/mahmut-tanal-ogrenciler-icin-adalet-bakanligi-onune-cadir-kurdu>

<sup>39</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, May 15). Turkish police detain 97 people in university protest over preacher's views on child marriage. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-police-detain-97-people-in-university-protest-over-preachers-views-on-child-marriage/>

<sup>40</sup> Echr. (n.d.). Kolay And Others v. Türkiye. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tur#%22itemid%22:%22001-229392%22>; see also Echr. (n.d.). *Mecit And Others v. Türkiye*. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tur#%22itemid%22:%22001-229393%22>

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2023). Opinion No. 66/2023 concerning Cihangir Çenteli (Türkiye). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session98/a-hrc-wgad-66-2023-turkiye-aev.pdf>; Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2021). Opinion No. 84/2020 concerning Osman Karaca (Cambodia and Turkey). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A\\_HRC\\_WGAD\\_2020\\_84.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A_HRC_WGAD_2020_84.pdf); Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2021). Opinion No. 67/2020 concerning Ahmet Dinçer Sakaoğlu (Turkey). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (pp. 1–3) [Report].

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A\\_HRC\\_WGAD\\_2020\\_67.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A_HRC_WGAD_2020_67.pdf); Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2021). Opinion No. 66/2020 concerning Levent Kart (Turkey). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [Report].

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A\\_HRC\\_WGAD\\_2020\\_66.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session89/A_HRC_WGAD_2020_66.pdf); Human Rights Council & Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (2019). Opinion No. 53/2019 concerning Melike Göksan and Mehmet Fatih Göksan (Turkey). In Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [Report]. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WGAD/2019/53>

<sup>42</sup> Ali Yıldız on X: "Turkey Prison Population (December 2025). Total population: 433,543. Overcapacity: 128,257.

Overcapacity rate: 42.0%" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter). <https://x.com/aliyildizlegal/status/1996933602982965347>

## 5. Freedom of Assembly and Association

Freedom of assembly and association continued to face significant restrictions in Turkey throughout 2025. Authorities regularly imposed bans on demonstrations, dispersed protests with police force, and initiated criminal proceedings against participants in peaceful gatherings<sup>43</sup>. These practices affected a wide range of groups, including political activists, students, labour organizations, women's rights advocates, and LGBTQ+ communities.

One of the defining features of the year was the continued use of administrative bans on demonstrations. Provincial governorates and district authorities frequently issued blanket prohibitions<sup>44</sup> on public gatherings, often citing concerns about public order or security. Such bans typically covered a broad range of activities, including marches, press statements, sit-ins, and the distribution of leaflets.

In several instances, authorities imposed sweeping bans on all forms of public assembly in entire districts or provinces. For example, local authorities in Beyoğlu district of Istanbul issued temporary bans on demonstrations and press statements<sup>45</sup>, while similar restrictions were implemented in other provinces during politically sensitive periods. Critics argued<sup>46</sup> that these measures effectively prevented individuals from exercising their right to peaceful assembly.

Police interventions during protests remained common throughout the year. Demonstrations were often dispersed by security forces, and participants were detained on charges such as violating the law on meetings and demonstrations or resisting law enforcement officers<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 12). OTHERS' submission to UN Human Rights Committee in response to its call for input on Freedom of Association. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/others-submission-to-un-human-rights-committee-in-response-to-its-call-for-input-on-freedom-of-association/>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, November 27). <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/26-kasim-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>

<sup>46</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 9). Freedom of Assembly and Association. Issue 243. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-243/>

<sup>47</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, March 31). More than 1,800 detained, 260 arrested in Turkey protests: minister. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/03/27/more-than-1800-detained-260-arrested-in-turkey-protests-minister/>; see also Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, March 28). 27 Mart 2025 günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/27-mart-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>; see also Alinti. (2025, September 5). Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'nde Hilal Özdemir cinayetini protesto eden öğrenciler ev baskınlarıyla gözaltına alındı. T24. [https://t24.com.tr/gundem/bogazici-universitesi-nde-hilal-ozdemir-](https://t24.com.tr/gundem/bogazici-universitesi-nde-hilal-ozdemir-ogrenciler-ev-baskinlariyla-gozaltina-alindi.124)

## 5

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Several protests connected to political developments drew particular attention. Demonstrations following the detention and prosecution of opposition figures—including Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu—were met with police intervention in various cities. Participants in these protests were detained or faced criminal investigations in connection with their participation<sup>48</sup>.

Students were among those most frequently affected by restrictions on assembly during the year. University campuses saw a series of demonstrations addressing issues ranging from political developments to campus governance and student welfare. In some cases, students were detained during campus protests or disciplinary action was taken against them by university administrations<sup>49</sup>.

Student activism was also linked to broader social and economic concerns. Demonstrations took place over issues such as scholarship policies, housing conditions in state dormitories, and labour practices affecting young workers. Authorities responded to several of these protests with detentions or disciplinary measures<sup>50</sup>.

Labor protests also faced restrictions. In one notable case, workers attempting to organize demonstrations related to labour disputes were prevented from marching by police intervention<sup>51</sup>. In other cases, strike actions were postponed or restricted on the grounds of national security or public order<sup>52</sup>.

Restrictions also affected demonstrations organized by civil society organizations. Activists participating in protests on issues such as women's rights, environmental protection, and social justice were detained or prosecuted. One notable case involved the prosecution of a

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[cinayetini-protesto-eden-ogrenciler-ev-baskinlariyla-gozaltina-alindi,1259728](https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/09/04/15-female-students-detained-after-istanbul-protests/); Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, September 4). State-run dorm evicts 15 female students for participating in Istanbul protests. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/state-run-dorm-evicts-15-female-students-for-participating-in-istanbul-protests/>

<sup>48</sup> See footnotes 35, 38, 43.

<sup>49</sup> See footnotes 46, 47; see also Dusun-Think. (2025, October 3). 12 students detained after organizing a protest for Kasım Bulgan. *Düşünce Suçuna Karşı Girişim*. <https://dusun-think.net/en/news/12-students-detained-after-organizing-a-protest-for-kasim-bulgan/>

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 49; see also Dusun-Think. (2025, October 17). Students detained in KYK scholarship protest released. *Düşünce Suçuna Karşı Girişim*. <https://dusun-think.net/en/news/students-detained-in-kyk-scholarship-protest-released/>; Turkish Minute. (2025, December 4). 16 students arrested in Istanbul over protest of child deaths in vocational training program. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/12/04/16-students-arrested-in-istanbul-over-protest-of-child-deaths-in-vocational-training-program/>

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, March 4). 27 Şubat 2025 Günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/27-subat-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, August 22). Police block civil servants' march to presidential palace in Ankara amid wage dispute. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/08/22/police-block-civil-servants-march-to-presidential-palace-in-ankara-amid-wage-dispute/>

<sup>52</sup> Intellinews. (2025, July 31). National security order halts miners' strike in Turkey.

<https://www.intellinews.com/national-security-order-halts-miners-strike-in-turkey-394034/>

# 5

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large group of women's rights activists detained during a demonstration marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women<sup>53</sup>.

LGBTQ+ events and gatherings continued to face particular challenges. Authorities frequently banned Pride-related activities, citing security concerns or public morality considerations. In addition to restrictions on public demonstrations, courts ordered the closure of at least one LGBTQ+ association during the year on allegations related to obscenity<sup>54</sup>.

Human rights organizations criticized<sup>55</sup> these measures as disproportionate restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. They argued that the closure of civil society organizations and the banning of peaceful gatherings undermined the ability of individuals to organize and advocate collectively.

Police responses to demonstrations were also the subject of legal scrutiny. In one case concerning the 2013 May Day demonstrations in Istanbul, the European Court of Human Rights found<sup>56</sup> that Turkey had failed to conduct an effective investigation into the injury of a protester who lost an eye after being struck by a tear-gas canister.

Such rulings reinforced longstanding concerns about accountability for excessive use of force during demonstrations. Critics argued<sup>57</sup> that inadequate investigations into allegations of police misconduct contribute to a climate in which excessive force is rarely sanctioned.

Overall, developments in 2025 indicated that the right to peaceful assembly continued to be constrained by a combination of administrative restrictions, police interventions, and criminal prosecutions. These practices had a chilling effect on public participation in demonstrations and limited the ability of civil society actors to express dissent in public spaces.

<sup>53</sup> T24. (2025, October 29). Polisler şikâyet etti, dava açıldı: 25 Kasım eylemine katılan 168 kişiye hapis istemi! T24. <https://t24.com.tr/gundem/polisler-sikayet-etti-dava-acildi-25-kasim-eylemine-katilan-168-kisiye-hapis-istemi.1271561>

<sup>54</sup> Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, June 4). 4 Haziran 2025 Günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/4-haziran-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>; see also Bianet. (2025, July 1). 23. İstanbul Onur Yürüyüşü'nde gözaltına alınan 3 kişi tutuklandı. (2025, July 1). <https://bianet.org/haber/23-istanbul-onur-yuruyusunde-gozaltina-alinan-3-kisi-tutuklandi-308960>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 16). Turkish court orders closure of LGBTQ+ group despite non-prosecution in obscenity probe. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-court-orders-closure-of-lgbtq-group-despite-non-prosecution-in-obscenity-probe/>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Echr. (n.d.). *Akan v. Türkiye*. [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-247478%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-247478%22]})

<sup>57</sup> Ibid; see also Turkey Rights Monitor. (2026, January 9). Issue 270. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/issue-270/>

# 5

*Freedom of  
Assembly  
and  
Association*

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## 6. Freedom of Expression and Media

Freedom of expression and media freedom remained severely restricted in Turkey throughout 2025. Journalists, academics, artists, and social media users continued to face criminal investigations, prosecutions, and administrative sanctions for speech-related activities<sup>58</sup>. The authorities relied on a range of legal provisions—including anti-terrorism laws, defamation statutes, and laws criminalizing insults against public officials—to restrict public criticism and limit independent reporting<sup>59</sup>.

Journalists remained among the groups most frequently targeted. Several reporters were arrested or prosecuted<sup>60</sup> during the year for their professional activities, including investigative reporting on corruption, environmental issues, and political developments. Others faced criminal charges linked to social media posts or commentary on public affairs.

The offense of “insulting the president,” codified in Article 299 of the Turkish Penal Code, continued to play a prominent role in speech-related prosecutions. Official statistics released<sup>61</sup> during the year indicated that tens of thousands of investigations were opened in recent years

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<sup>58</sup> Freedom of Expression Association. (2025, August 18). Etkin Haber Ajansı'nın x (Twitter) hesabı bir kez daha erişime engellendi. <https://ifade.org.tr/engelliweb/etkin-haber-ajansinin-x-twitter-hesabi-bir-kez-daha-erisime-engellendi/>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, August 27). Jailed Turkish journalist begins hunger strike to protest prosecutor's unlawful practices. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/jailed-turkish-journalist-begins-hunger-strike-to-protest-prosecutors-unlawful-practices/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 23). Pro-government Turkish journalist arrested after social media post criticizing justice minister. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/pro-government-turkish-journalist-arrested-after-social-media-post-criticizing-justice-minister/>

<sup>59</sup> Baloch, K. (2025, November 27). Call for release of detained journalist Furkan Karabay. PEN Norway. <https://norskpen.no/eng/callfor-release-of-detained-journalist-furkan-karabay/>; T24. (2025, December 5). Sokak röportajında mani okuyan kişi ve “Kendine Muhabir” tutuklandı. T24. <https://t24.com.tr/gundem/sokak-roportajinda-mani-okuyan-kisi-ve-kendine-muhabir-tutuklandi.1281371>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 22). Turkish journalist appears in court over report on minister's private hotel project. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-journalist-appears-in-court-over-report-on-ministers-private-hotel-project/>

<sup>60</sup> Anka. (2025, December 11). Journalist Enver Aysever jailed over YouTube remarks. (n.d.). ankahaber.net. <https://ankahaber.net/haber/detay/journalist-enver-aysever-jailed-over-youtube-remarks-278967>; see also Tuncer, A. C. (2025, December 14). Gazeteci Osman Çaklı gözaltına alındı. Euronews. <https://tr.euronews.com/2025/12/14/gazeteci-osman-cakli-gozaltina-alindi>; Wolfe, L. (2025, September 24). 8

Turkish journalists face jail for ‘insult’ and ‘false news’ over talk show comments. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2025/09/8-turkish-journalists-face-jail-for-insult-and-false-news-over-talk-show-comments/>

<sup>61</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 8). More than 100,000 people investigated for insulting public officials in Turkey in one year. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/more-than-100000-people-investigated-for-insulting-public-officials-in-turkey-in-one-year/>

# 6

## Freedom of Expression and Media

under this provision, resulting in thousands of convictions and suspended sentences. Critics have long argued that the widespread use of this offense has created a chilling effect on public debate.

Journalists covering politically sensitive topics were particularly vulnerable to prosecution. Several reporters were charged or detained<sup>62</sup> for reporting on investigations involving opposition figures or allegations of corruption within government-linked institutions. In some cases, journalists were prosecuted for publishing information that authorities claimed damaged the reputation of public officials.

Broadcast media also remained subject to extensive regulatory pressure. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) continued to impose fines<sup>63</sup>, temporary broadcasting suspensions, and other sanctions against television channels critical of the government. Independent channels such as Sözcü TV, Tele1, and Halk TV were among those most frequently penalized.

Authorities also extended regulatory oversight to digital media platforms and streaming services. Several international streaming platforms received fines or warnings<sup>64</sup> related to content that regulators deemed inconsistent with public morality or family values. Observers expressed concern<sup>65</sup> that such measures could lead to self-censorship and limit the diversity of cultural expression.

Online censorship remained widespread. Courts frequently issued<sup>66</sup> access-blocking orders targeting websites, news reports, and social media accounts. According to monitoring

<sup>62</sup> Reuters. (2025, March 21). Turkish journalist placed under house arrest on accusation of trying to overthrow government. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-journalist-placed-under-house-arrest-accusation-trying-overthrow-2025-03-21/>;

<sup>63</sup> Buyuk, H. F. (2026, January 2). Turkish media regulator embraces new role: stifling dissent. Balkan Insight. <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/12/31/turkish-media-regulator-embraces-new-role-stifling-dissent/bi/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, June 26). Turkish media authority hits pro-opposition networks with broadcasting bans, fines. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/06/26/turkish-media-authority-hits-pro-opposition-networks-with-broadcasting-bans-fines/>

<sup>64</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, October 18). Turkey's media watchdog fines streaming platforms over 'immorality' and 'obscenity.' Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkeys-media-watchdog-fines-streaming-platforms-over-immorality-and-obscenity/>

<sup>65</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, May 7). European Parliament urges Turkey to release Swedish journalist. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/07/european-parliament-urges-turkey-to-release-swedish-journalist/>; see also IPI and MFRR partners alarmed by state-backed attacks on Leman magazine – IPI Turkiye Website. (2025, July 7). [https://turkiye.ipi.media/ipi-and-mfrr-partners-alarmed-by-state-backed-attacks-on-leman-magazine/?utm\\_content=bufferecd87&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://turkiye.ipi.media/ipi-and-mfrr-partners-alarmed-by-state-backed-attacks-on-leman-magazine/?utm_content=bufferecd87&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

<sup>66</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, November 25). Famous Turkish YouTuber gets suspended sentence over social media remarks. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/11/25/famous-turkish-youtuber-gets-suspended-sentence-over-social-media-remarks/>; Turkish Minute. (2025, November 28). Turkey's new judicial bill would allow rapid online takedowns without a court order. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/11/28/turkeys-new-judicial-bill-would-allow-rapid-online-takedowns-without-a-court-order/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom.

(2025, January 10). Turkey blocks access to 7 news websites critical of AKP gov't. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkey-blocks-access-to-7-news-websites-critical-of-akp-govt/>

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organizations<sup>67</sup>, hundreds of thousands of websites have been blocked in Turkey since the introduction of internet censorship legislation in 2007, with tens of thousands of additional access bans imposed in recent years.

Throughout 2025, authorities continued to block online content related to political controversies, corruption allegations, and investigations involving government officials. In several cases, courts ordered<sup>68</sup> the removal of news reports before their claims had been fully examined by judicial authorities, raising concerns about prior restraint and the suppression of investigative journalism.

Social media platforms also faced increasing pressure to comply with government requests for content removal. Accounts belonging to journalists, political commentators, and opposition figures were blocked or restricted in Turkey following court orders<sup>69</sup>. Critics argued that such measures undermined the role of social media as a space for political debate and independent reporting.

Several cultural figures were also prosecuted for their artistic expression. Musicians, writers, and actors faced criminal investigations over their work or public statements. In some cases, authorities invoked obscenity or public morality provisions to justify prosecutions or content bans<sup>70</sup>.

In addition to legal pressure, journalists faced intimidation and threats. Some reporters received death threats<sup>71</sup> following their investigations into sensitive political or economic issues. In a particularly serious case reported during the year, a journalist and environmental activist was killed<sup>72</sup> after being assaulted in circumstances that colleagues linked to his reporting activities.

<sup>67</sup> Freedom of Expression Association. (2025, September). Engelliweb.

[https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb\\_2024.pdf](https://ifade.org.tr/reports/EngelliWeb_2024.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Freedom of Expression Association. (2025, December 18). Kültür ve Turizm Bakanı Yardımcısı ve eşi hakkındaki haberler. <https://ifade.org.tr/engelliweb/kultur-ve-turizm-bakani-yardimcisi-ve-esi-hakkindaki-haberler/>

<sup>69</sup> Freedom of Expression Association. (2025, January 10). Erişime engellenen ve görünmez kılınan haber ve medya kuruluşu hesapları. <https://ifade.org.tr/engelliweb/erisime-engellenen-ve-gorunmez-kilinan-haber-ve-medya-kurulusu-hesaplari/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, February 10). X blocks access to at least 42 journalist, activist accounts in Turkey. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/02/07/x-blocked-access-to-at-least-42-journalist-activist-accounts-in-turkey1/>; Freedom of Expression Association. (2025, February 9). Gazeteci Metin Cihan'ın X Hesabı erişime engellendi. <https://ifade.org.tr/engelliweb/gazeteci-metin-ghanin-x-hesabi-erisime-engellendi/>

<sup>70</sup> BBC News Türkçe. (2025, October 3). Mabel Matiz'e "müstehcenlik" suçlamasıyla hapis istemi.

<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/cj4yeke1502o>

<sup>71</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists. (2025, May 19). Turkish journalist, family receive death threats after reporting on bribery allegations. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2025/05/turkish-journalist-family-receive-death-threats-after-reporting-on-bribery-allegations/>

<sup>72</sup> Reporters without Borders. (2026, September 1). Deadly attack in Türkiye: the murder of environmental journalist Hakan Tosun requires a full investigation. RSF. <https://rsf.org/en/deadly-attack-t%C3%BCrkiye-murder-environmental-journalist-hakan-tosun-requires-full-investigation>

## 6

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International organizations continued to rank Turkey among the countries with the most restrictive media environments. Press freedom indexes<sup>73</sup> released during the year placed Turkey near the bottom among European countries in terms of media freedom. Monitoring groups also documented numerous violations affecting journalists, including arrests, trials, and physical attacks.

Internet freedom assessments similarly described Turkey as experiencing a steady decline in digital rights. Reports noted increased censorship of online platforms, expanded legal powers to remove content without judicial review, and growing pressure on technology companies to comply with government requests<sup>74</sup>.

These developments occurred against the backdrop of broader structural concerns about media pluralism. A significant portion of Turkey's mainstream media outlets are owned by conglomerates with close ties to the government, while others have been seized or placed under trusteeship following criminal investigations<sup>75</sup>.

Taken together, the developments observed in 2025 suggest that restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom remain deeply entrenched. The combination of criminal prosecutions, regulatory sanctions, online censorship, and economic pressure has significantly narrowed the space for independent journalism and public debate in Turkey.

Observers have repeatedly emphasized<sup>76</sup> that meaningful improvements in this area would require comprehensive legal reforms, including the revision of laws criminalizing insult and defamation, stronger safeguards for journalists, and greater independence for media regulatory institutions.

<sup>73</sup>Reporters without Borders. (2026, October 3). Press Freedom Index 2025. Türkiye. RSF. <https://rsf.org/en/country-t%C3%BCrkiye>

<sup>74</sup> See footnotes 67, 68, 69.

<sup>75</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, October 25). Turkey appoints trustee to run pro-opposition network TELE1. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/10/25/turkey-appoints-trustee-to-run-pro-opposition-network-tele1/>; See also Turkey Rights Monitor. Closed and Seized Institutions. (n.d.). <https://turkeyrightsmonitor.com/en/closed-institutions>

<sup>76</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2025, May 20). Freedom of Expression and Belief. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/20/prosecutions-insulting-president-continue-turkiye>

# 7. Freedom of Religion and Belief

Freedom of religion and belief remained a matter of concern in Turkey throughout 2025. While the Turkish Constitution formally guarantees freedom of religion, human rights observers continued to document structural inequalities affecting religious minorities<sup>77</sup>, limitations on the autonomy of religious communities<sup>78</sup>, and increasing state control over religious expression<sup>79</sup>.

One of the most persistent structural issues concerned the legal status of religious institutions. Many non-Muslim religious communities continued to face difficulties obtaining legal recognition for their places of worship and institutions<sup>80</sup>. International organizations and foreign governments reiterated longstanding calls for reforms<sup>81</sup> that would allow religious communities to operate with greater legal certainty and autonomy.

International monitoring bodies continued to highlight Turkey's uneven treatment of religious communities. Reports released during the year identified systemic discrimination affecting various groups, including Christians, Alevis, and non-believers<sup>82</sup>. Critics argued that state policies often favoured Sunni Islam while failing to provide equal recognition and protection for other religious traditions.

The role of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) also remained a subject of debate. The institution, which oversees religious affairs and administers mosques across the country, expanded its influence in recent years and continued to receive significant public funding<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Freedom House. (n.d.). Turkey. In Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2025>; see also European Parliament. (2025, May 7). European Parliament resolution on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Türkiye. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0092\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0092_EN.pdf)

<sup>78</sup> USCIRF. (2025, August 14). Freedom of religion or belief in Turkey. USCIRF recommended that the U.S. Department of State designate Turkey for its Special Watch List (SWL) due to its systematic and ongoing violations of religious freedom. <https://www.uscirtf.gov/events/hearings/freedom-religion-or-belief-turkey>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> See footnote 77.

<sup>81</sup> See footnotes 77 and 78.

<sup>82</sup> United States Commission On International Religious Freedom. (2025, March). 2025 Annual Report. (Page 66). <https://www.uscirtf.gov/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025%20USCIRF%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Topcu, E. (2025, June 15). Turkish authority granted power to censor Quran translations. dw.com.

<https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-religious-authority-granted-power-to-censor-quran-translations/a-72910458>

# 7

## Freedom of Religion and Belief

Observers noted that the structure of the institution effectively privileges Sunni Islamic interpretation within the state apparatus.

At the same time, authorities increased regulatory oversight of religious expression in certain contexts. Legislative changes adopted<sup>84</sup> during the year granted new powers to authorities to review and restrict certain religious publications and translations of sacred texts if they were deemed inconsistent with official interpretations. Critics warned that such measures risked introducing greater state control over theological discourse.

Religious minorities continued to report social hostility and administrative obstacles. In several cases, churches and religious institutions experienced vandalism or threats<sup>85</sup>. Religious leaders and community representatives called for stronger protection against hate crimes and more effective investigations into such incidents.

International reports also raised concerns<sup>86</sup> about the treatment of foreign religious workers. In previous years, numerous Christian clergy and missionaries were reportedly denied residence permits or expelled from the country on national security grounds<sup>87</sup>. Human rights advocates argued that such practices contributed to a climate of uncertainty for minority religious communities.

Alevis, one of the largest religious minority groups in Turkey, continued to seek official recognition for their houses of worship, known as cemevis. Despite repeated court rulings and recommendations by international human rights institutions<sup>88</sup>, cemevis have not been granted the same legal status as mosques. Alevi organizations continued to advocate for reforms that would recognize their places of worship and provide equal access to public resources.

Concerns about religious freedom also intersected with broader issues of freedom of expression. Artists, journalists, and academics occasionally faced investigations or public

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<sup>84</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, June 4). Turkey's religious authority granted power to censor, destroy 'improper' Quran translations. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/06/04/turkeys-religious-authority-granted-power-to-censor-destroy-improper-quran-translations/>

<sup>85</sup> Aid to the Church in Need International. (2025, November 11). Religious Freedom Report | ACN International. ACN International. <https://acninternational.org/religiousfreedomreport/reports/country/2025/t%C3%BCrkiye>; see also Badendieck, R., & Guzel, M. (2024, January 29). The Islamic State group claims responsibility for the Istanbul church attack that killed one person | AP News. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/istanbul-church-attack-islamic-state-18ba89071eb86cd455554cd20187d190>; Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, February 28). 28 Şubat 2025 Günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/28-subat-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Motion For A Resolution. Targeted expulsions of foreign journalists and foreign Christians in Türkiye under national security pretexts | B10-0120/2026 | European Parliament. © European Union, 2026 - Source: European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-10-2026-0120\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-10-2026-0120_EN.html)

<sup>88</sup> Freedom House. Freedom in the World 2025. Turkey. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2025>

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backlash for statements perceived as offensive to religious values<sup>89</sup>. Authorities sometimes relied on public morality provisions to justify restrictions on artistic or cultural expression.

The ill-treatment of individuals accused of affiliation with religiously oriented movements also remained controversial. Thousands of individuals alleged to have links with the Gülen movement continued to face criminal investigations or imprisonment under terrorism-related charges<sup>90</sup>. International observers have repeatedly expressed concern<sup>91</sup> that the designation of the movement as a terrorist organization has been used to justify broad restrictions affecting individuals' religious associations.

International organizations continued to monitor the situation closely. Global assessments of religious freedom published during the year placed Turkey among countries where discrimination and structural inequalities affecting religious minorities remain significant<sup>92</sup>.

Taken together, developments in 2025 suggest that while individuals generally retain the ability to practice their religion privately, systemic challenges affecting religious equality, institutional autonomy, and minority rights remain unresolved. Observers have emphasized<sup>93</sup> that meaningful progress would require legal reforms ensuring equal treatment for all religious communities and stronger safeguards against discrimination.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. See also, Sol Haber. (2025, July 1). AKP'liler göz yumdu, saldırıyı meşrulaştırdı: Leman'a saldıran gericiiler yine toplandı. <https://haber.sol.org.tr/haber/akpliler-goz-yumdu-saldiriyi-mesrulasitirdi-leman-a-saldiran-gericiler-yine-toplandi-399466>

<sup>90</sup> See footnote 88. See also: Under the administration of Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya, approximately 40 "CLAMP" operations were conducted as of 21 January 2025. In his statements, the Minister lists the charges against the detained/arrested people; most commonly: activities for restructuring of the organization, propaganda of the organization on social media, ByLock app usage, providing humanitarian aid to the families of the imprisoned members of the organization. The minister regularly boasts about the operations on X where he posts videos of the operations produced with drone footage, thrilling background music.

Find factual data and further details in the report titled "Persecution of the Gülen Movement in Turkey" dated 21

January 2025 by Prof. Dr. Em. Johan Vande Lanotte: [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turkeytribunal\\_turkeys-unending-crackdown-on-the-g%C3%BClen-activity-7289971330920112128-NkDj?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rctm=ACoAACUmw7MBdU5arv\\_G4RPopVXlyl4z6XHBuY4](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/turkeytribunal_turkeys-unending-crackdown-on-the-g%C3%BClen-activity-7289971330920112128-NkDj?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rctm=ACoAACUmw7MBdU5arv_G4RPopVXlyl4z6XHBuY4)

<sup>91</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). The Gülen Movement: Challenging Turkey's "Terrorist organization" narrative through global perspectives. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/the-gulen-movement-challenging-turkeys-terrorist-organization-narrative-through-global-perspectives/>

<sup>92</sup> See footnotes 82 and 85.

<sup>93</sup> See footnotes 87 and 88.

# 8. Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders in Turkey continued to face significant pressure throughout 2025. Lawyers, activists, journalists, and civil society actors involved in documenting human rights violations or advocating for fundamental freedoms were subjected to criminal investigations, prosecutions, and in some cases imprisonment. These developments contributed to an increasingly restrictive environment for civil society organizations and independent advocacy.

Lawyers representing politically sensitive cases were among the most affected groups. Several attorneys were detained or prosecuted in connection with their professional activities<sup>94</sup>, raising concerns about the protection of the right to legal defence. Bar associations and international legal organizations repeatedly warned<sup>95</sup> that the criminalization of lawyers undermines the independence of the legal profession and restricts access to effective representation.

In one case that drew significant international attention, lawyer and human rights defender Süleyman Yıldırım died in prison after prolonged health complications<sup>96</sup>. Rights organizations had repeatedly called for his release on medical grounds prior to his death. His case became

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<sup>94</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, June 20). İstanbul bar slams arrest of jailed mayor's lawyer as attack on legal profession. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/06/20/istanbul-bar-slams-arrest-of-jailed-mayors-lawyer-as-attack-on-legal-profession/>; see also Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, January 27). 22 -24 Ocak 2025 günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TIHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/22-24-ocak-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>; ÇHD İstanbul Şube on X: "Onursal Genel Başkanımız Av. Selçuk Kozağaçlı 9 yıla yaklaşan haksız tutsaklık sürecinin ardından bugün tahliye edildi!

"Kendisine saygısı olan kimsenin hapisten korkmasına gerek yok. Herkes hapiste, korkmayın. "

<https://t.co/CrgIWP63IT> / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter).

[https://x.com/CHDistanbul/status/1912585564844417380?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://x.com/CHDistanbul/status/1912585564844417380?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

<sup>95</sup> OHCHR. (2025, May 30). Criminalisation of İstanbul Bar Association and dismissal of executive board, a chilling attack on the independence of lawyers: UN experts. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/criminalisation-istanbul-bar-association-and-dismissal-executive-board>; see also Stockholm

Center for Freedom. (2025, December 19). Turkish lawyer arrested after opposing clemency for quake-case suspects. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-lawyer-arrested-after-opposing-clemency-for-quake-case-suspects/>; İstanbul Bar Association (2025, September 23). Ortak açıklama: "Tutuklu savunmayı"

reddediyoruz. <https://istanbulbarosu.org.tr/HaberDetay.aspx?ID=19851&Desc=Ortak-A%C3%A7%C4%B1klama:->

<sup>96</sup> The Arrested Lawyers Initiative Post on LinkedIn. (2025, October 3). [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arrested-lawyers-initiative\\_jointletter-activity-7380627185751203841-qr8y/?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop&rcm=ACoAAC2AWFMBT9nADhBd3\\_uLx1uq4wM6eZD9h](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arrested-lawyers-initiative_jointletter-activity-7380627185751203841-qr8y/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAC2AWFMBT9nADhBd3_uLx1uq4wM6eZD9h)

i8; See also Turkish Minute. (2025, December 8). Turkish lawyer jailed over Gülen links dies after delayed release from prison. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/12/08/turkish-lawyer-jailed-over-gulen-links-dies-after-delayed-release-from-prison/>

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emblematic of broader concerns regarding the treatment of imprisoned human rights defenders and the difficulties faced by detainees seeking release for medical reasons.

Other lawyers also faced prosecution during the year<sup>97</sup>. Courts issued prison sentences against several attorneys associated with human rights organizations, often on the basis of allegations linked to their advocacy activities or social media posts<sup>98</sup>. In one instance, a Kurdish lawyer and human rights activist was sentenced to more than six years in prison following proceedings that rights groups described as relying heavily on contested testimony<sup>99</sup>.

The work of bar associations and legal advocacy groups also came under pressure. Authorities initiated investigations against members of bar association leaderships and other prominent lawyers involved in public commentary on politically sensitive legal matters<sup>100</sup>. In some cases, these investigations were linked to statements criticizing government policies or judicial proceedings.

Civil society organizations reported that human rights defenders increasingly faced legal harassment<sup>101</sup>, including investigations under anti-terrorism legislation or laws regulating public speech. Such investigations often targeted individuals who publicly documented alleged abuses, including torture allegations or violations in detention facilities.

Women human rights defenders were among those particularly affected by intimidation and harassment. In some cases, activists reported<sup>102</sup> threats and online harassment related to their advocacy work. Observers criticized<sup>103</sup> the authorities for failing to investigate such threats

<sup>97</sup> Bayrak, E. (2025, July 8). Human rights advocate Selahattin Okçuoğlu sentenced to 1 year and 3 months in prison over social media posts. <https://www.mlsaturkey.com/en/human-rights-advocate-selahattin-okcuoglu-sentenced-to-1-year-and-3-months-in-prison-over-social-media-posts>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 19). Kurdish human rights advocate Suna Bilgin sentenced to prison in Turkey on terrorism charges. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/kurdish-human-rights-advocate-sentenced-to-prison-in-turkey-on-terrorism-charges/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 19). Turkish lawyer arrested after opposing clemency for quake-case suspects. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-lawyer-arrested-after-opposing-clemency-for-quake-case-suspects/>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> See footnote 97 for Suna Bilgin.

<sup>100</sup> See footnote 95.

<sup>101</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, February 24). Turkish human rights defender acquitted of charges of insulting the state. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-human-rights-defender-acquitted-of-charges-of-insulting-the-state/>; see also Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, May 7). 7 Mayıs 2025 Günlük İnsan Hakları Raporu - TİHV - Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı. <https://tihv.org.tr/gunluk-ih-raporlari/7-mayis-2025-gunluk-insan-haklari-raporu/>

<sup>102</sup> Nazlier, E. (2025, November 14). Eren Keskin'e yönelik tehdit mesajları meclis gündeminde: 'Kararın gerekçesi nedir?' Evrensel. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/583924/eren-keskin-yonelik-tehdit-mesajlari-meclis-gundeminde-kararin-gerekcesi-nedir>

<sup>103</sup> ProtectDefendersEu, S. (2022, May 11). Turkey: Judicial harassment of human rights defenders. ProtectDefenders. <https://protectdefenders.eu/turkey-judicial-harassment-of-human-rights-defenders/>; see also INTERVIEW: How Turkey's failure to protect women can cost them their lives. (2023, June 20). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/26/interview-how-turkeys-failure-protect-women-can-cost-them-their-lives>

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effectively, warning that impunity for intimidation could discourage public engagement in human rights advocacy.

Human rights defenders advocating for minority rights, including Kurdish and LGBTQ+ rights, also faced particular challenges. Activists involved in documenting discrimination or advocating for minority communities were sometimes investigated or prosecuted under provisions related to terrorism, defamation, or public order<sup>104</sup>.

International human rights mechanisms expressed<sup>105</sup> growing concern about these developments. United Nations special rapporteurs and European institutions raised questions about the compatibility of certain prosecutions with international standards protecting the work of human rights defenders<sup>106</sup>.

Despite these pressures, civil society organizations continued to document human rights violations and advocate for accountability. Human rights groups remained active in monitoring prison conditions, reporting allegations of torture and ill-treatment, and raising awareness of systemic problems within the judicial system.

However, observers warned<sup>107</sup> that the combination of criminal prosecutions, legal harassment, and administrative restrictions has created an increasingly difficult environment for human rights advocacy. The risks associated with human rights work have grown substantially in recent years, leading some activists to reduce their public activities or relocate abroad<sup>108</sup>.

Overall, developments in 2025 reinforced concerns that human rights defenders in Turkey continue to operate in a climate of pressure and legal uncertainty. International observers have

<sup>104</sup> Avukat Suna Bilgin'e 6 yıl 3 ay hapis cezası. (2025, December 17). Mezopotamya Ajansı.

<https://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/GUNCEL/content/view/294822>; see also Medya Günlüğü. (2025, April 16).

Gazeteci Bahadır Özgür'e hapis cezası. Medya Günlüğü. <https://medyagunlugu.com/gazeteci-bahadir-ozgure-hapis-cezasi/>

<sup>105</sup> Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism, & Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. (2024, 13 December). Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In AL TUR 7/2024.

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=29546>, see also footnote 95.

<sup>106</sup> Council of Europe. (2025, December 16). Türkiye: Authorities should ensure the implementation of human rights standards on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Commissioner for Human Rights.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/t%C3%BCrkiye-authorities-should-ensure-the-implementation-of-human-rights-standards-on-freedom-of-expression-peaceful-assembly-and-association>

<sup>107</sup> See footnotes 105 and 106.

<sup>108</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, May 23). European rights advocates say Council of Europe has abandoned its core mission. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/05/23/european-rights-advocates-say-council-of-europe-has-abandoned-its-core-mission/>; also see footnote 102.

emphasized<sup>109</sup> that protecting the work of human rights defenders is essential for safeguarding democratic institutions and ensuring accountability for human rights violations.

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### *Human Rights Defenders*

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<sup>109</sup> Council of Europe. (2025, December 10). Türkiye: Authorities should ensure the implementation of human rights standards on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Portal. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/t%C3%BCrkiye-authorities-should-ensure-the-implementation-of-human-rights-standards-on-freedom-of-expression-peaceful-assembly-and-association>; see also Human Rights Watch. World Report 2025. Türkiye. (2025, January 16). <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/turkiye>; Justice Delayed: Lawyers associations condemn the European Court of Human Rights' Inaction on Lawyers' Cases in Turkey. Avocats européens démocrates. (2025, September 12). <https://www.aeud.org/2025/09/>; Advancing human rights, justice and democracy for Kurds and all other communities in Türkiye. Human Rights Watch. (2025, November 6). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/06/advancing-human-rights-justice-and-democracy-for-kurds-and-all-other-communities-in>

# 9. Judicial Independence and Rule of Law

Concerns regarding judicial independence and the rule of law remained central to the human rights situation in Turkey throughout 2025. Observers continued to report<sup>110</sup> that the judiciary operated under significant political pressure, raising questions about the impartiality of criminal investigations and the fairness of judicial proceedings.

A number of developments during the year reinforced concerns that criminal law was being used as a tool against political opposition<sup>111</sup>. Investigations targeting opposition-run municipalities expanded significantly, particularly those governed by the Republican People's Party (CHP). Prosecutors initiated numerous inquiries involving mayors, municipal officials, and individuals associated with opposition political networks<sup>112</sup>.

Several municipal officials were detained or arrested as part of corruption investigations that critics described as politically motivated<sup>113</sup>. The most prominent cases involved investigations connected to Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and other municipal administrations. These investigations led to numerous detention orders and prosecutions targeting municipal employees, advisers, and individuals linked to opposition political structures<sup>114</sup>.

Legal proceedings against opposition figures were often accompanied by additional investigations for speech-related offenses, including allegations of insulting public officials or

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<sup>110</sup> PACE. (2025, June 23). Statement by the PACE co-rapporteurs for the monitoring of Türkiye following their visit to the country. <https://pace.coe.int/en/news/9934/declaration-des-corapporteurs-de-l-apce-pour-le-suivi-de-la-turkiye-a-l-issue-de-leur-visite-dans-le-pays>; see also footnote 109.

<sup>111</sup> See footnotes 34 and 35.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. See also Turkish Minute. (2025, July 1). Former İzmir mayor among 120 detained in corruption investigation. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/07/01/former-izmir-mayor-among-120-detained-in-corruption-investigation/>; Turkish Minute. (2025, September 13). Istanbul district mayor among 44 detained in operation targeting municipality run by main opposition. Turkish Minute.

<https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/09/13/istanbul-district-mayor-among-44-detained-in-operation-targeting-municipality-run-by-main-opposition/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 24). Turkey detains 22 from Istanbul's Şile Municipality amid crackdown on main opposition. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcfr.org/turkey-detains-22-from-istanbuls-sile-municipality-amid-crackdown-on-main-opposition/>

<sup>113</sup> See footnotes 111 and 112.

<sup>114</sup> Bianet. (2025, March 23). İmamoğlu suspended from office, acting mayor to be elected.

<https://bianet.org/haber/imamoglu-suspended-from-office-acting-mayor-to-be-elected-305760>; see also footnote 95.



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Despite these rulings, the implementation of ECtHR judgments remained a significant concern. International institutions, including the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, repeatedly called<sup>121</sup> on Turkey to take measures to comply with judgments concerning high-profile cases such as those involving Osman Kavala and Selahattin Demirtaş. Observers noted<sup>122</sup> that the continued failure to implement these rulings raised broader concerns about the country's commitment to the European human rights system.

Structural concerns about the independence of the judiciary also persisted. Analysts have frequently linked these concerns to institutional changes introduced following the constitutional amendments adopted in 2017<sup>123</sup>, which significantly altered the composition and appointment procedures of judicial oversight bodies.

Critics argue<sup>124</sup> that the restructuring of institutions such as the Council of Judges and Prosecutors has increased the executive branch's influence over judicial appointments and disciplinary processes. As a result, judges and prosecutors may face pressure in politically sensitive cases.

International indexes and assessments published during the year reflected<sup>125</sup> these concerns. Global rule of law assessments continued to place Turkey among the lower-ranking countries in terms of judicial independence and constraints on government power.

The use of economic measures against perceived political opponents also raised rule-of-law concerns. Authorities continued to seize companies and other assets through trusteeships administered by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF)<sup>126</sup>. By the end of the year, the

<sup>121</sup> Echr. (n.d.). Selahattin Demirtaş Against Turkey (No. 2) And 1 Other Case.

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#!%22respondent%22:%22TUR%22,%22itemid%22:%22001-242465%22>

<sup>122</sup> Amnesty International. (2025, April 28). Turkey (page 368). The State of the World's Human Rights: April 2025 - Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/8515/2025/en/>

<sup>123</sup> European Commission For Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) & Turkey Ministry Of Justice Directorate General For Eu Affairs. (2017). Information Note On The Issues To Be Handled In The Visit Of The Venice Commission Regarding The Constitutional Amendments (20-21 February 2017).

<https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF%282017%29015-e&>

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. See also, Amor, N. S. (2025, April 15). Report on the 2023 and 2024 Commission reports on Türkiye | A10-0067/2025 | European Parliament. © European Union, 2025 - Source: European Parliament.

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0067\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0067_EN.html)

<sup>125</sup> WJP Rule of Law Index. (n.d.). Türkiye Insights. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2025/T%C3%BCrkiye>

<sup>126</sup> For detailed background information, see Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). Appointment of trustees to companies. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/appointment-of-trustees-to-companies/>; see also Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). *The latest example of seizing opponents' assets in Turkey: Ekrem İmamoğlu's Case And The Trusteeship Of İmamoğlu Construction Inc.* Solidarity With OTHERS.

<https://solidaritywithothers.com/the-latest-example-of-seizing-opponents-assets-in-turkey-ekrem-imamoglus-case-and-the-trusteeship-of-imamoglu-construction-inc/>; Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). *The latest example of unlawful asset seizure under the pretext of terrorism charges in Turkey: Maydonoz döner case.* Solidarity With OTHERS.

<https://solidaritywithothers.com/the-latest-example-of-unlawful-asset-seizure-under-the-pretext-of-terrorism-charges-in-turkey-maydonoz-doner-case/>

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fund controlled more than a thousand companies employing tens of thousands of workers and managing assets valued in the hundreds of billions of Turkish lira<sup>127</sup>.

Critics argued<sup>128</sup> that these seizures often occurred through criminal investigations that lacked sufficient judicial safeguards, raising concerns about property rights and due process.

Legislative developments also raised questions about the balance between executive authority and judicial oversight. During the year, lawmakers debated<sup>129</sup> proposals that would grant authorities expanded powers to freeze financial assets based on suspicion without prior judicial approval. Observers warned<sup>130</sup> that such measures could weaken safeguards against arbitrary interference with property rights.

Taken together, developments during 2025 reinforced longstanding concerns about the erosion of judicial independence in Turkey. The combination of politically sensitive prosecutions, inconsistent implementation of international court judgments, and structural reforms affecting the judiciary continued to raise serious questions about the functioning of the rule of law.

International observers have repeatedly emphasized<sup>131</sup> that restoring confidence in the justice system will require significant institutional reforms, including strengthening judicial independence, ensuring compliance with international human rights rulings, and reinforcing safeguards against the politicization of criminal justice.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Rathbone, J. P. (2025, October 15). Crackdown or capital grab? Turkey state fund controls 1,000 businesses. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/5c1382f3-cb3e-4a32-8a95-efac9317e9cd>

<sup>129</sup> Kozok, F. (2025, September 29). Turkey plans to let watchdog freeze bank and crypto accounts. *Bloomberg.com*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-09-29/turkey-plans-to-let-watchdog-freeze-bank-and-crypto-accounts>

<sup>130</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, November 18). Turkey seized \$1.8 billion in assets in the first 10 months of 2025: minister. *Stockholm Center for Freedom*. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkey-seized-1-8-billion-in-assets-in-the-first-10-months-of-2025-minister/>

<sup>131</sup> See footnotes 106 and 110.



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terrorism-related charges<sup>134</sup>. Critics argued<sup>135</sup> that such prosecutions frequently targeted reporting on issues related to Kurdish political movements or human rights violations in Kurdish-majority regions.

Political figures affiliated with pro-Kurdish parties also continued to face legal challenges<sup>136</sup>. Court proceedings targeting Kurdish politicians, including former mayors and members of parliament, remained ongoing throughout the year<sup>137</sup>. In some instances, courts upheld prison sentences or continued pretrial detention linked to earlier political activities<sup>138</sup>.

The use of administrative mechanisms affecting Kurdish political actors also remained a point of controversy. In several cases, imprisoned Kurdish politicians were denied conditional release or parole after refusing to declare disassociation from political movements<sup>139</sup>. Human rights organizations argued<sup>140</sup> that such requirements were incompatible with basic principles of freedom of political belief and expression.

Restrictions affecting Kurdish language and cultural expression were also reported during the year. Cultural associations and organizations promoting Kurdish language activities faced administrative closures or legal investigations in some cases<sup>141</sup>. Observers noted<sup>142</sup> that such

<sup>134</sup> Altıntaş, B. (2025, July 18). MLSA. Gazeteci Delal Akyüz'e 6 yıl 3 ay hapis cezası.

<https://www.mlsaturkey.com/tr/gazeteci-delal-akyuze-6-yil-3-ay-hapis-cezasi>; see also MA. (2025, December 9).

HDK soruşturmasında sanatçı Pınar Aydınlar'a hapis cezası verildi. Mezopotamya Ajansı.

<https://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/tum-haberler/content/view/294077>

<sup>135</sup> Türkiye. (2025, January 16). Human Rights Watch. World Report 2025 Turkey. Freedom of Expression.

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/turkiye>

<sup>136</sup> Jazeera, A. (2025, February 18). Türkiye arrests 282 amid bid to reconcile with PKK. Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/18/turkiye-arrests-282-amid-bid-to-reconcile-with-pkk>; see also Genc, O.

(2025, March 12). Analysis: Call to disband PKK reshapes Türkiye, Syria power dynamics. Al Jazeera.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/12/analysis-call-to-disband-pkk-reshapes-turkiye-syria-power-dynamics>

<sup>137</sup> Gerçek, A. (2025, November 12). Selçuk Mızraklı'nın tahliye talebi 'örgütten ayrılmadığı' gerekçesiyle reddedildi.

Artı Gerçek. <https://artigercek.com/politika/selcuk-mizraklinin-tahliye-talebi-orgutten-ayrilmadi-gerekcesiyile-reddedildi-339895h>

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. See also İlkeTV. (2025, December 18). Savcılık itiraz etti: Selçuk Mızraklı'ya tahliye yolu kapandı. Savcılık İtiraz

Etti: Selçuk Mızraklı'ya Tahliye Yolu Kapandı « İlke TV. <https://ilketv.com.tr/savcilik-itaraz-etti-selcuk-mizraklinin-tahliye-sureci-basa-dondu/>

<sup>140</sup> Advancing human rights, justice and democracy for Kurds and all other communities in Türkiye. (2025, November

6). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/06/advancing-human-rights-justice-and-democracy-for-kurds-and-all-other-communities-in>

<sup>141</sup> Written statement submitted to UN Human Rights Council by Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, a non-governmental organization on the roster. (2025, January 28).

<https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/NGO/213>; see also Kurdish Monitoring. (2025). Report on systematic violations against Kurdish language and culture in Turkey. In Kurdish Language Rights Monitoring and Reporting Platform.

<https://static.bianet.org/2025/04/kurdish-monitoring-january-february-march-2025-1.pdf>; Stockholm Center for

Freedom. (2025, August 6). Kurdish language association shut down in Izmir amid ongoing crackdown. Stockholm

Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/kurdish-language-association-shut-down-in-izmir-amid-ongoing-crackdown/>

<sup>142</sup> Country policy and information note: Kurds, Turkey, July 2025. (2025, August 8). GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turkey-country-policy-and-information-notes/country-policy-and-information-note-kurds-turkey-october-2023-accessible>

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measures contributed to longstanding concerns regarding the protection of linguistic and cultural rights.

Several incidents involving hostility toward Kurdish individuals were also documented. In one case reported during the year, a Kurdish family was assaulted after speaking Kurdish in public<sup>143</sup>. In another incident, seasonal Kurdish workers were attacked by local residents, leaving one individual critically injured<sup>144</sup>.

Observers argued<sup>145</sup> that such incidents reflect broader social tensions and the need for stronger protections against hate crimes and discrimination targeting ethnic minorities.

### Other Minorities

Concerns regarding minority rights also extended to other ethnic and religious groups. International monitoring reports published during the year identified systemic discrimination affecting several minority communities, including Christians, Alevi, and other religious minorities<sup>146</sup>.

Christian communities continued to report administrative challenges affecting clergy, foreign religious workers, and church institutions<sup>147</sup>. In previous years, several clergy members and missionaries had reportedly been denied residence permits or expelled from the country on national security grounds. Human rights advocates argued<sup>148</sup> that such measures contributed to uncertainty and vulnerability among minority religious communities.

Reports also documented<sup>149</sup> cases in which foreign Christian workers were denied entry or expelled from the country. Observers noted<sup>150</sup> that these measures, combined with administrative barriers affecting church institutions, created ongoing difficulties for minority religious communities seeking to maintain their religious activities.

Alevi continued to seek official recognition of their places of worship, known as cemevis. Despite longstanding demands and several court rulings highlighting the issue, cemevis

<sup>143</sup> Bianet. (2025, August 11). Family attacked in Mersin "for speaking Kurdish," one member in intensive care. Bianet. <https://bianet.org/haber/family-attacked-in-mersin-for-speaking-kurdish-one-member-in-intensive-care-310318>

<sup>144</sup> Artı Gerçek. (2025, August 29). Niğde'de Kürt işçilere saldırı: Bir işçi yoğun bakımda. . . DEM Parti ve DBP'den açıklama. Artı Gerçek. <https://arti gercek.com/guncel/nigde-de-kurt-iscilere-saldiri-bir-isci-yogun-bakimda-dem-parti-ve-dbpden-aciklama-337845h>

<sup>145</sup> Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği - İHD). (2025). The Kurdish Question In The Context Of Human Rights In Turkey. In Upr Pre-Session On Turkey. [https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2025-02/UPRINFO\\_IHD\\_STATEMENT.pdf](https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2025-02/UPRINFO_IHD_STATEMENT.pdf)

<sup>146</sup> Freedom House. (2025). Civil Liberties D Freedom of Expression and Belief. Turkey. In Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2025>

<sup>147</sup> See footnote 87.

<sup>148</sup> See footnote 78.

<sup>149</sup> See footnote 87.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

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remained without the same legal status granted to mosques<sup>151</sup>. Alevi organizations continued to call for reforms that would provide equal recognition and support for their religious institutions.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community also faced increasing restrictions and discrimination during the year. Authorities closed at least one LGBTQ+ association through court proceedings citing allegations of obscenity related to social media content<sup>152</sup>. Activists warned<sup>153</sup> that such measures further restricted the already limited space for LGBTQ+ advocacy and community organization.

Legislative proposals introduced during the year also raised concerns among human rights groups. Some proposals sought to criminalize certain forms of public expression relating to gender identity or same-sex relationships<sup>154</sup>. Advocates argued<sup>155</sup> that such measures risked further stigmatizing LGBTQ+ individuals and restricting freedom of expression.

Other minority groups also experienced pressure in specific contexts. Cultural figures and researchers working on sensitive historical issues reported administrative restrictions or deportation in some cases<sup>156</sup>. Critics argued<sup>157</sup> that such actions risk limiting academic freedom and open discussion of historical topics affecting minority communities.

<sup>151</sup> See footnotes 146, 147.

<sup>152</sup> OMCT. (2025, December 19). Turkey: Arbitrary dissolution of the Young LGBTI+ Association. OMCT. <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/turkey-arbitrary-dissolution-of-the-young-lgbti-association>

<sup>153</sup> Gärtner, K., & Gärtner, K. (2025, December 18). Statement: Alarming escalation in repression of LGBTI activists and organisations in Turkey | ILGA-Europe. ILGA-Europe | Safety, equality and freedom for LGBTI people in Europe & Central Asia. <https://www.ilga-europe.org/news/statement-alarming-escalation-in-repression-of-lgbti-activists-and-organisations-in-turkey/>; see also Court rules to dissolve Genç LGBTI+ Association. (2025, December 19). Front Line Defenders. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/court-rules-dissolve-genç-lgbti-association>

<sup>154</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, March 1). Gov't proposes law restricting gender transition, criminalizing expression of LGBTQ+ identity. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/02/28/govt-proposes-law-restricting-gender-transition-criminalize-expression-of-lgbtq-identity3/>; see also Minute, T. (2025, October 15). Turkey moves to criminalize behavior 'contrary to biological sex,' alarming LGBTQ+ community. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/10/15/turkey-moves-to-criminalize-behavior-contrary-to-biological-sex-alarming-lgbtq-community/>

<sup>155</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2025, October 29). Türkiye: Draft Law Threatens LGBT People with Prison. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/29/turkiye-draft-law-threatens-lgbt-people-with-prison>

<sup>156</sup> Deniz Karakaş on X: "Pressemitteilung Dersim Kultur- und Geschichtszentrum e. V. Vorsitzender Ahmet Canpolat an der Einreise in die Türkei gehindert Bochum den, 11. Oktober 2025 Der Vorsitzende des Dersim Kultur- und Geschichtszentrums e. V. und in Deutschland gewerkschaftlich engagierte Ahmet <https://t.co/uH20Ck2kBE>" / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter). [https://x.com/denizkarakas62/status/1977025761870569501?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://x.com/denizkarakas62/status/1977025761870569501?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

<sup>157</sup> The Impact of Authoritarian Regimes on Research: Insights From Research, Researchers, and Participants. (2025, April). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390560034\\_The\\_impact\\_of\\_authoritarian\\_regimes\\_on\\_research\\_Insights\\_from\\_research\\_researchers\\_and\\_participants#:~:text=Although%20the%20limitations%20on%20the,societies%20is%20strictly%20framed%20by](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390560034_The_impact_of_authoritarian_regimes_on_research_Insights_from_research_researchers_and_participants#:~:text=Although%20the%20limitations%20on%20the,societies%20is%20strictly%20framed%20by)

Overall, developments during 2025 indicated that minority communities in Turkey continued to face both structural and societal challenges. Observers emphasized<sup>158</sup> that stronger legal protections against discrimination, improved safeguards for cultural and linguistic rights, and effective responses to hate crimes are necessary to ensure that minority communities can fully exercise their rights.

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<sup>158</sup> Council of Europe. (2025, June 19). Türkiye: Anti-racism experts report progress, but challenges remain. European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/t%C3%BCrkiye-anti-racism-experts-report-progress-but-challenges-remain>; see also Encentrezagros. (2025, June 1). Human rights situation in Türkiye (January – May 2025). <https://www.zagros-centre.org/en/?p=1322>; Bianet. (2025, June 13). Council of Europe: Hate speech and hate crimes are rising in Turkey. Bianet. <https://bianet.org/haber/council-of-europe-hate-speech-and-hate-crimes-are-rising-in-turkey-308391>

# 11. Prison Conditions

Prison conditions in Turkey remained a matter of serious concern throughout 2025. Persistent overcrowding, limited access to healthcare, and restrictions on communication and family contact continued to affect detainees and prisoners across the country's correctional facilities<sup>159</sup>.

By the end of the year, Turkey's prison population had reached unprecedented levels. Official figures indicated that the number of inmates exceeded 430,000, far surpassing the system's official capacity<sup>160</sup>. Human rights organizations reported<sup>161</sup> that prisons were operating at more than 40 percent above their designed capacity, placing significant strain on infrastructure and basic services.

Overcrowding affected a wide range of detention facilities, including high-security prisons and open institutions. In many cases, cells designed for a limited number of inmates were reported to house significantly more prisoners than intended<sup>162</sup>. Rights groups noted<sup>163</sup> that overcrowding contributed to deteriorating hygiene conditions, limited access to recreational activities, and increased tensions among inmates.

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<sup>159</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, April 13). Turkey's prison population exceeds capacity by nearly 100,000 amid recent surge in arrests. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/04/09/turkeys-prison-population-exceeds-capacity-by-nearly-100000-amid-recent-surge-in-arrests/>; see also Evrensel Gazetesi. (2025, May 20). TAYAD'lı Aileler: Kuyu tipi cezaevleri kapatılsın, hasta mahpuslar serbest bırakılsın. Evrensel. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/554421/tayadli-aileler-kuyu-tipi-cezaevleri-kapatilsin-hasta-mahpuslar-serbest-birakilsin>; Echr. (n.d.). Emre v. Türkiye. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#!%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-247552%22%5D>

<sup>160</sup> See footnote 42. See also for official statistics: CİSST. (2026, February 16). Hapishane istatistikleri - CİSST. <https://cisst.org.tr/hapishane-istatistikleri/>

<sup>161</sup> Yeşilada, A. (2025, October 4). Turkey's prisons overcrowded as two facilities break capacity records. P.A. Turkey. <https://www.paturkey.com/news/2025/turkeys-prisons-overcrowded-as-two-facilities-break-capacity-records-23970/>

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Blue News. (2026, January 24). Human rights activists sound the alarm over prison conditions in Turkey. Blue News. <https://www.bluewin.ch/en/news/international/human-rights-activists-sound-the-alarm-over-prison-conditions-in-turkey-3064274.html>

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Concerns regarding prison infrastructure were particularly pronounced in high-security facilities. Several organizations documented<sup>164</sup> conditions in so-called “well-type” or high-security prisons where detainees were reportedly held in prolonged isolation with limited opportunities for social interaction. Prisoners held in such facilities sometimes engaged in hunger strikes to protest their conditions and demand transfers<sup>165</sup>.

The rising prison population also had consequences for family life and child welfare. Hundreds of children under the age of six continued to live in prison with their mothers<sup>166</sup>, as Turkish law<sup>167</sup> allows young children to remain with incarcerated parents. Human rights organizations argued<sup>168</sup> that prison environments are not suitable for the development of young children and called for alternative arrangements to ensure their well-being.

Individual cases reported during the year illustrated the impact of incarceration on families. In some instances, children were reportedly prevented from seeing one of their parents during prison visits due to administrative restrictions<sup>169</sup>. Critics argued<sup>170</sup> that such practices undermine the right to family life and can have long-term psychological consequences for children.

Food safety and sanitation issues also emerged as concerns in some facilities. In one incident reported during the year, hundreds of inmates at an open prison experienced symptoms of

<sup>164</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, April 2). Human rights advocates slam ‘inhumane conditions’ in Turkey’s Y-type prisons. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/human-rights-advocates-slam-inhumane-conditions-in-turkeys-y-type-prisons/>

<sup>165</sup> Bianet. (2025, March 12). Açlık grevleri 145 günü aşır: Kuyu Tipi Hapishaneler kapatılsın. <https://bianet.org/haber/aclik-grevleri-145-gunu-asti-kuyu-tipi-hapishaneler-kapatilsin-305347>; see also Vicdan Vakfı. (2025, January 19). Saime Hanım ve Şerif Mesutoğlu’nun Adalet Mücadelesi: Vicdan Vakfı’ndan Özel Yabancı Dilde Podcast. Vicdan Vakfı. <https://www.vicdanvakfi.org/post/saime-han%C4%B1m-ve-%C5%9Ferif-mesuto%C4%9Flu-nun-adalet-m%C3%BCadelesi-vicdan-vakf%C4%B1-ndan-%C3%B6zel-yabanc%C4%B1-dilde-podcast>; Nümedya24. (2025, August 21). “Kuyu tipi” hapishaneler tartışması büyüyor | Serkan Onur Yılmaz ölüm orucunda. Nümedya24. <https://www.numedya24.com/kuyu-tipi-hapishaneler-tartismasi-buyuyor-i-serkan-onur-yilmaz-olum-orucundayeni/>

<sup>166</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, October 24). 822 children under the age of 6 live in Turkey’s overcrowded prisons: report. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/822-children-under-the-age-of-6-live-in-turkeys-overcrowded-prisons-report/>

<sup>167</sup> Echr. (n.d.). Namik Yüksel v. Türkiye. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-235465%22%7D>

<sup>168</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, March 21). DEM Party MP criticizes high number of mothers accompanied by young children in Turkish prisons. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/dem-party-mp-criticizes-high-number-of-mothers-accompanied-by-young-children-in-turkish-prisons/>; see also Justice Uphold. (2024, November 20). World Children’s Rights Day and Children’s Rights in Turkey. <https://justice-uphold.com/en/blog-en/world-childrens-rights-day-and-childrens-rights-in-turkey-current-situation-and-legal-assessment/>

<sup>169</sup> Özarslan, S. (2025, December 01). Sincan Kadın Cezaevi’nde 3 yaşındaki çocuğun babasıyla görüşmesi engellendi. TR724. <https://www.tr724.com/sincan-kadin-cezaevinde-3-yasindaki-cocugun-babasiyla-gorusmesi-engellendi/>

<sup>170</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2026, January 19). The Forgotten Victims: children of Turkey’s Post-Coup purge. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/the-forgotten-victims-children-of-turkeys-post-coup-purge/>

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food poisoning after consuming contaminated meals<sup>171</sup>. Such incidents raised questions about food safety standards and oversight within prison institutions.

Human rights organizations also documented<sup>172</sup> restrictions on prisoners' access to books, letters, and other forms of communication. In some facilities, inmates reported limitations on receiving publications or sending correspondence<sup>173</sup>. Observers noted<sup>174</sup> that such restrictions could impede prisoners' ability to maintain contact with the outside world and participate in educational activities.

Access to healthcare remained one of the most frequently cited concerns. Prisoners suffering from chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions often faced delays in receiving treatment or obtaining transfers to specialized medical facilities<sup>175</sup>. In some cases, detainees were transported to hospitals in handcuffs or subjected to invasive security procedures that discouraged them from seeking medical care<sup>176</sup>.

<sup>171</sup> Bianet. (2025, November 23). Sakarya'da cezaevinde zehirlenen mahpus sayısı 266'ya yükseldi.

<https://bianet.org/haber/sakarya-da-cezaevinde-zehirlenen-mahpus-sayisi-266-ya-yukseldi-313796>

<sup>172</sup> Jinnews. (2025, August 07). Erzincan Kadın Kapalı Cezaevinde neler oluyor?

<https://jinnews.net/GUNCEL/content/view/261437>

<sup>173</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, January 12). Widespread human rights violations reported in Turkish prisons in 2024.

Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/01/04/widespread-human-rights-violations-reported-in-turkish-prisons-in-2024/>; see also Echr. (n.d.). Aktaş And Others v. Türkiye.

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#!%22itemid%22:%22001-244847%22>

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Özarslan, S. (2025, June 2). Ölüm döşeginde tahliye edilen KHK'lı öğretmen hayatını kaybetti. TR724.

<https://www.tr724.com/olum-doseginde-tahliye-edilen-khkli-ogretmen-hayatini-kaybetti/>; see also Özarslan, S.

(2025, July 9). Duruşmada fenalaşan eski AKP milletvekili İlhan İşbilen hastaneye kaldırıldı. TR724.

<https://www.tr724.com/durusmada-fenalasan-eski-akp-milletvekili-ilhan-ismilen-hastaneye-kaldirildi/>; Stockholm

Center for Freedom. (2025, July 8). Turkish celebrity manager remains jailed despite health risks. Stockholm Center

for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-celebrity-manager-remains-jailed-despite-health-risks/>; Stockholm

Center for Freedom. (2025, July 22). Disabled former Turkish teacher arrested for allegedly receiving donations

from Gülen movement. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/disabled-former-turkish-teacher-arrested-for-allegedly-receiving-donations-from-gulen-movement/>

<sup>176</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, August 7). Turkish Alzheimer's patient jailed over Gülen ties hospitalized after health deteriorates. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-alzheimers-patient-jailed-over-gulen-ties-hospitalized-after-health-deteriorates/>; see also Çağla Biçer on X: "Mehmet Murat Çalık -

Bilgilendirme Belediye Başkanımız Mehmet Murat Çalık'ın 45 gün süren sağlık süreci bugün itibarıyla yeni bir aşamaya geçmiştir. Son olarak İzmir Şehir Hastanesi'nde tedavi altında bulunan Başkanımızın, İzmir Buca Cezaevi'ne

sevki bugün gerçekleştirilecektir." / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter).

[https://x.com/cagla\\_bicer/status/1953045719733993888?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://x.com/cagla_bicer/status/1953045719733993888?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw); Bold Medya. (2025, September 15).

Kanserli ev hanımı hapiste: Adli Tıp yeni ölüm fermanı vermesin. BoldMedya.

<https://www.boldmedya.com/2025/09/15/kanserli-ev-hanimi-hapiste-adli-tip-yeni-olum-fermani-vermesin/>;

Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, November 21). Gülen-linked educator paralyzed in prison amid medical

neglect. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/gulen-linked-educator-paralyzed-in-prison-amid-medical-neglect/>;

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Several human rights organizations reported<sup>177</sup> that prison administrations occasionally delayed or denied medical transfers recommended by doctors. Critics argued<sup>178</sup> that such practices risk violating detainees' right to adequate healthcare and may endanger the lives of seriously ill prisoners.

Administrative practices related to parole and conditional release also drew criticism. In numerous cases, prisoners who had completed the required portion of their sentences were denied release on the basis of negative evaluations by prison observation boards<sup>179</sup>. These decisions often cited a prisoner's refusal to express remorse or disassociate from certain political views<sup>180</sup>.

Observers warned<sup>181</sup> that such practices could undermine the principle that conditional release decisions should be based on objective criteria rather than political or ideological considerations.

The European Court of Human Rights continued to address cases involving prison conditions in Turkey. In one judgment issued during the year, the Court ruled that authorities had violated a prisoner's right to family life by refusing to transfer him to a prison closer to his relatives<sup>182</sup>.

Taken together, the developments observed in 2025 suggest that the rapid growth of the prison population has created significant challenges for Turkey's correctional system. Overcrowding, limited access to healthcare, and administrative practices affecting communication and release decisions remain among the key issues requiring attention.

<sup>177</sup> See footnote 96. See also Birgün. (2025, June 23). İdari ve gözlem mahkemeleri! birgun.net. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/idari-ve-gozlem-mahkemeleri-632923>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, June 25). Jailed mother and baby struggle with unbearable prison conditions, says husband. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/jailed-mother-and-baby-struggle-with-unbearable-prison-conditions-says-husband/>

<sup>178</sup> Özarlan, S. (2025, December 18). Edirne L Tipi Cezaevinde hamile kadınlara eziyet. TR724. <https://www.tr724.com/edirne-l-tipi-cezaevinde-hamile-kadinlara-eziyet/>

<sup>179</sup> Plataforma Pro Derechos Libertades. (n.d.). Submission to UN-UPR 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle Country Review: Türkiye. <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=14237&file=EnglishTranslation#:~:text=The%20media%20has%20been%20describing,clear%20violation%20of%20human%20rights>; see also Turkish Minute. (2024, November 2). Turkey denied parole for over 8,521 inmates since 2021, targeting political prisoners. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2024/10/31/turkey-denied-parole-for-over-8521-inmate-since-2021-targeting-political-pr/>

<sup>180</sup> MEDEL. (n.d.). Conditional Release and De Facto Criminal Courts in Türkiye. <https://medelnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/conditional-release-report.pdf>; see also The Problems Experienced In The Supervised Release System Turkey. (n.d.). <https://justicesquare.org/the-problems-experienced-in-the-supervised-release-system-turkey/>

<sup>181</sup> The Arrested Lawyers Initiative. (2025, May 23). TALI leads joint call urging Turkey to end discriminatory parole policies. <https://arrestedlawyers.org/2025/05/23/tali-leads-joint-call-urging-turkey-to-end-discriminatory-parole-policies/>

<sup>182</sup> Echr. (n.d.). Emre v. Türkiye. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#!%22itemid%22:%22001-247552%221>

Human rights organizations have repeatedly emphasized<sup>183</sup> that addressing these concerns will require comprehensive reforms, including reducing the reliance on pretrial detention, improving prison infrastructure, and strengthening oversight mechanisms to ensure that detention conditions meet international standards.

# 11

## Prison Conditions

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<sup>183</sup> Human Rights Association (IHD). (2025; August 05). Türkiye hapisanelerinde hak izleme raporu. <https://www.ihd.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2024-Y%C4%B1%C4%B1-Hapishane-Raporu.pdf>; see also Bianet. (2025, August 6). Rights group documents over 26,000 violations in Turkey's prisons in 2024. Bianet. <https://bianet.org/haber/rights-group-documents-over-26-000-violations-in-turkeys-prisons-in-2024-310178>; OMCT. (2025). Global Torture Index 2025: Türkiye Factsheet. <https://www.omct.org/site-resources/files/factsheets/Factsheet-Turkiye-EN.pdf>; Topcu, E. (2025, April 2). Silivri prison: Inhumane conditions in Turkey's largest jail. dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/en/silivri-prison-inhumane-conditions-in-turkeys-largest-jail/a-72120019>

## 12. Torture and ill-treatment

Allegations of torture and ill-treatment continued to be reported in Turkey throughout 2025. Human rights organizations documented <sup>184</sup> cases involving police custody, prison conditions, and the treatment of detainees during transfers and hospital visits. Although Turkish law prohibits torture and ill-treatment <sup>185</sup>, observers noted <sup>186</sup> that accountability for such violations remained limited and that investigations into allegations of abuse were often ineffective.

Reports of police violence during arrests and demonstrations persisted during the year. Protesters and detainees in several cases alleged that they were subjected to excessive force during arrest, including beatings, reverse handcuffing, and other forms of physical coercion <sup>187</sup>. In some instances, victims reported being charged with resisting law enforcement after filing complaints against officers <sup>188</sup>.

Cases involving alleged abuse by members of law enforcement or security-related personnel were also reported outside the context of demonstrations. In one incident, a young boy was allegedly assaulted by a security officer, resulting in a serious injury <sup>189</sup>. In another case, an

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<sup>184</sup> OMCT. (2025). Global Torture Index 2025: Türkiye Factsheet. <https://www.omct.org/site-resources/files/factsheets/Factsheet-Turkiye-EN.pdf>; see also United States Department of State. (2021-2025). Custom Report Excerpts: Turkey. <https://2021-2025.state.gov/report/custom/6fbfac8aed/>

<sup>185</sup> Ministry of Justice. (n.d.). Press Statement. The Turkish Legislation And Practice As Regards Torture And Ill-Treatment.

<https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/1/dosya/basinaciklamasi13aralik.pdf#:~:text=TORTURE%20AND%20ILL%20TREATMENT.%20It%20should%20be%20mentioned,allegations%20is%20established%2C%20necessary%20actions%20are%20taken>

<sup>186</sup> Human Rights Watch. World Report 2025. Türkiye. (2025, January 16). <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/turkiye>

<sup>187</sup> Amnesty International. (2025, June 19). Türkiye: Unlawful use of force by police against protesters in March "may amount to torture." <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/06/turkiye-unlawful-use-of-force-by-police-against-protesters-in-march-may-amount-to-torture/>; see also Redress. Turkey: End brutal crackdown on peaceful protest and human rights defenders. (2025, April 04). Redress. <https://redress.org/news/turkey-end-brutal-crackdown-on-peaceful-protest-and-human-rights-defenders/>

<sup>188</sup> Turkey (Türkiye) - United States Department of State. (2025, August 12). United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>

<sup>189</sup> T24. (2025, August 15). 9 yaşındaki çocuğun kolunu kirdiği iddia edilen uzman çavuş, çocuktan şikayetçi oldu! <https://t24.com.tr/gundem/9-yasindaki-cocugun-kolunu-kirdigi-iddia-edilen-uzman-cavus-cocuktan-sikayetci-oldu.1255664>

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elderly man was reportedly beaten by neighbourhood watchmen during a dispute<sup>190</sup>, raising concerns about the accountability mechanisms governing auxiliary security forces.

Ill-treatment in detention facilities remained a recurring concern. Prisoners reported harsh treatment during searches, transfers, and medical visits<sup>191</sup>. In particular, detainees frequently complained about being required to undergo medical examinations while handcuffed<sup>192</sup>, which human rights groups argued violates international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Women prisoners reported specific forms of ill-treatment related to their gender and health needs. In some cases, pregnant detainees were reportedly transported to hospitals in restrictive conditions or were left without adequate access to food during lengthy hospital procedures<sup>193</sup>. Rights organizations warned<sup>194</sup> that such practices could endanger the health of both mothers and their unborn children.

Serious concerns were also raised regarding the treatment of prisoners with severe health conditions. Several elderly or chronically ill detainees were reported to have collapsed repeatedly in prison without being granted release on medical grounds<sup>195</sup>. Human rights advocates argued<sup>196</sup> that the continued detention of individuals with serious illnesses may

<sup>190</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 26). Neighborhood watchman kills 67-year-old in Turkey, reviving concerns over past abuses. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/neighborhood-watchman-kills-67-year-old-in-turkey-reviving-concerns-over-past-abuses/>

<sup>191</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2026, March 20). Torture, ill-treatment and prison Conditions in Turkey: 2025 in review. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/torture-ill-treatment-and-prison-conditions-in-turkey-2025-in-review/>; see also The Arrested Lawyers Initiative. (2024, July 14). ÖHD Report reveals grave human rights violations in Turkey's prisons. <https://arrestedlawyers.org/2024/07/14/ohd-report-reveals-grave-human-rights-violations-in-turkeys-prisons/>; Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT). (2025, November 25). <https://en.tihv.org.tr/documentation/21-november-2025-hrft-documentation-center-daily-human-rights-report/>

<sup>192</sup> Yeni Özgür Politika. (2025, January 26). Tedavi edilmedi, ceza verildi. <https://www.ozgurpolitika.com/haber-tedavi-edilmedi-ceza-verildi-197079/>; see also Mezopotamya Ajansı. Erzincan Kadın Kapalı Cezaevi'nde 'suça göre' muamele! (2025, November 14). <https://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/GUNCEL/content/view/291908>

<sup>193</sup> Turkish Minute. (2026, March 19). UN panel raises concerns over violation of women's rights in post-coup Turkey. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2026/03/19/un-panel-raises-concerns-over-violation-of-womens-rights-in-post-coup-turkey/>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, November 28). Lawyers raise alarm over conditions for women in Turkish prisons. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/lawyers-raise-alarm-over-conditions-for-women-in-turkish-prisons/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2022, May 13). HDP lawmakers submit parliamentary question about pregnant women in Turkish prisons. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/hdp-lawmakers-submit-parliamentary-question-about-pregnant-women-in-turkish-prisons/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 19). 2 pregnant women accused of Gülen ties face harsh prison treatment in Turkey, families say. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/2-pregnant-women-accused-of-gulen-ties-face-harsh-prison-treatment-in-turkey-families-say/>

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, November 13). Elderly Turkish inmate collapses amid worsening health, family fears he could die in prison. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/elderly-turkish-inmate-collapses-amid-worsening-health-family-fears-he-could-die-in-prison/>

<sup>196</sup> Akyol, M. (2025, May 21). Sick prisoners: How Turkey's peace process might impact human rights behind bars. Turkey recap. <https://www.turkeyrecap.com/p/sick-prisoners-how-turkeys-peace/>; see also Human Rights Association. (2025, July 03). İHD İstanbul Şube Başkanı: Hasta tutsaklar Eylül-Ekim'i bekleyemez! (n.d.). Mezopotamya Ajansı. <https://mezopotamyaajansi35.com/tum-haberler/content/view/280615>

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amount to inhuman or degrading treatment when adequate medical care cannot be provided within prison facilities.

In some cases, prison authorities reportedly delayed or denied medical treatment recommended by doctors<sup>197</sup>. These delays sometimes occurred even when detainees suffered from life-threatening conditions. Human rights groups emphasized<sup>198</sup> that such practices could violate both domestic legal standards and international human rights obligations.

The treatment of prisoners during disciplinary procedures also attracted criticism. Prison observation boards sometimes conditioned parole or conditional release on a prisoner's willingness to express remorse or disassociate from certain political beliefs<sup>199</sup>. Critics argued<sup>200</sup> that such requirements effectively punished individuals for their political views and contributed to degrading treatment within detention facilities.

Human rights organizations continued to collect data on allegations of torture and ill-treatment. One report released during the year documented several thousand cases of alleged torture or ill-treatment recorded during the previous year alone<sup>201</sup>. These figures included incidents occurring in police custody, prisons, and other detention settings.

Despite the existence of legal safeguards, observers continued to express concern<sup>202</sup> about the effectiveness of investigations into such allegations. In many cases, complaints filed by victims were reportedly dismissed or resulted in limited disciplinary measures rather than criminal accountability<sup>203</sup>.

International monitoring bodies have repeatedly called<sup>204</sup> on Turkey to strengthen safeguards against torture and ensure that allegations of abuse are investigated promptly, independently,

<sup>197</sup> Özarslan, S. (2025, February 10). Cezaevinde kanser olan KHK'lı katip: Hayati tehlikem var, acil çözüm istiyorum. TR724. <https://www.tr724.com/cezaevinde-kanser-olan-khkli-katip-hayati-tehlikem-var-acil-cozum-istiyorum/>; see also footnote 96.

<sup>198</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, January 12). Widespread human rights violations reported in Turkish prisons in 2024.

Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/01/04/widespread-human-rights-violations-reported-in-turkish-prisons-in-2024/>; Human Rights Association. (n.d.). İHD's new survey on Sick Prisoners – İHD. <https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihds-new-survey-on-sick-prisoners/>

<sup>199</sup> See footnotes 179 and 181

<sup>200</sup> See footnote 180; see also Topcu, E. (2025, April 2). Silivri prison: Inhumane conditions in Turkey's largest jail. dw.com. <https://www.dw.com/en/silivri-prison-inhumane-conditions-in-turkeys-largest-jail/a-72120019>

<sup>201</sup> Human Rights Association (HRA/İHD). (n.d.). İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD) Dokümantasyon Merkezi. 2024 Yılı İnsan Hakları İhlalleri Raporu. <https://static.bianet.org/2025/11/ihd-2024-hak-ihlalleri-raporu.pdf>

<sup>202</sup> See footnote 184.

<sup>203</sup> Human Rights Association (HRA/İHD). (n.d.). Torture in Its Various Dimensions in Turkey. [https://ihd.org.tr/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/sr2023June\\_IHD-HRFT-TMA.pdf](https://ihd.org.tr/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/sr2023June_IHD-HRFT-TMA.pdf)

<sup>204</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, March 5). No investigation of police for alleged mistreatment of pro-Palestinian activists. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/03/05/no-investigation-of-police-for-alleged-mistreatment-of-pro-palestinian-activists5/>; see also Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu. (2025, July 17). DEM Party deputy reveals police torture of former academic during post-coup crackdown. Cezaevi Hak İhlalleri ve Gündemi Değerlendirme Basın Toplantısı (16.07.2025) [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxVjqdlF2A>

and transparently. They have also emphasized<sup>205</sup> the importance of protecting detainees' access to legal counsel and medical examination following arrest.

Overall, developments during 2025 indicated that allegations of torture and ill-treatment remain a persistent concern within Turkey's detention system. Human rights organizations and observers stressed<sup>206</sup> that stronger accountability mechanisms and improved oversight of detention facilities are necessary to prevent abuse and ensure compliance with international human rights standards.

## 12

### *Torture and ill-treatment*

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Human Rights Council. Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. (2025, April 28-May 09). Summary of stakeholders' submissions on Türkiye. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/49/TUR/3>; see also HRFT - Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. (2025, October 13). Open Letter to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe: Revise your decision which serves to conceal the reality of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in Turkey! <https://en.tihv.org.tr/press-releases/open-letter-to-the-committee-of-ministers-of-the-council-of-europe-revise-your-decision-which-serves-to-conceal-the-reality-of-torture-and-other-forms-of-ill-treatment-in-turkey/>; European Commission. (2025, November 04). Türkiye 2025 Report. Prevention of torture and ill-treatment (page 32). [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4bb4ddd1-4f20-4ee0-92db-926996ec8dd1\\_en?filename=t%C3%BCrkiye-report-2025.pdf](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4bb4ddd1-4f20-4ee0-92db-926996ec8dd1_en?filename=t%C3%BCrkiye-report-2025.pdf)

# 13. Refugees and Migrants

The situation of refugees and migrants in Turkey remained a significant human rights concern throughout 2025. While Turkey continued to host one of the largest refugee populations in the world, human rights organizations documented<sup>207</sup> a range of issues affecting migrants, including deportation risks, abusive treatment in detention facilities, and exploitation in informal labour markets.

Turkey remained a key transit and destination country for migrants and asylum seekers, particularly from Syria, Afghanistan, Africa, and parts of Central Asia. The country also continued to host millions of Syrians under temporary protection status. Despite the scale of this population, human rights observers noted<sup>208</sup> persistent challenges regarding access to protection mechanisms and the treatment of migrants by law enforcement and administrative authorities.

One of the most serious concerns reported during the year involved the risk of refoulement, the forced return of individuals to countries where they may face persecution, torture, or other serious harm<sup>209</sup>. Human rights organizations documented<sup>210</sup> cases in which migrants and asylum seekers faced deportation despite credible claims of danger in their countries of origin.

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<sup>207</sup> Katastrophenhilfe, D. (2025, 26 March). Türkiye Protection Analysis Report 2025. In ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/turkiye-protection-analysis-report-2025-entr>; see also Grigoryan, G. (2025, March 31). Human Rights in Turkey: 2025 in Review – The California Courier. <https://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/human-rights-in-turkey-2025-in-review/>; Guner, Ç. E. (2025, July 30). Urban citizenship during a protracted crisis: Syrian refugees' access to rights and services in Izmir, Turkey. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 23(3), 469–483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2025.2475326>

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. See also AIDA Country report on Türkiye | European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). (2025, August 4). <https://ecre.org/aida-country-report-on-turkiye-update-on-2024/>; see also IJ Council of the European Union. (2025, September 03). Status on the EU cooperation with Turkey in the area of migration. In IJ Council of the European Union [Report]. <https://www.statewatch.org/media/5148/11680-2025-status-of-eu-tu-rkiye-migration-cooperation.pdf>;

<sup>209</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2026, February 16). Minority and Refugee Rights in Turkey: 2025 in review. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/minority-and-refugee-rights-2025-in-review/>

<sup>210</sup> Protected no more. (2025). In Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/11/12/protected-no-more/uyghurs-in-turkiye>; see also Pinar, F. (2025, October 28). Deportation as Punishment and the Everyday War on Migrants from Turkey to the United States - MERIP. Middle East Research and Information Project. <https://www.merip.org/2025/06/deportation-as-punishment-2/>

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Particular concern was expressed regarding the treatment of Uyghur refugees. International organizations warned<sup>211</sup> that Turkish authorities had increasingly used administrative security codes to detain Uyghur residents and deport some individuals to third countries where they could ultimately be returned to China. Advocates argued<sup>212</sup> that such practices risk violating the principle of non-refoulement, a cornerstone of international refugee law.

Other migrants also faced deportation proceedings on security grounds that were not always transparent. In one case reported during the year, a foreign physician married to a Turkish citizen faced deportation following the issuance of a security-related administrative order<sup>213</sup>. Critics argued<sup>214</sup> that such measures often lack sufficient judicial oversight and can leave migrants vulnerable to arbitrary removal.

Several incidents raised concerns regarding the treatment of migrants in detention and deportation centres. In one widely reported case, a foreign national died after allegedly being denied adequate medical care while in detention<sup>215</sup>. Reports indicated<sup>216</sup> that the individual had been transported to court in critical condition, prompting calls for an independent investigation into the circumstances of his death.

Human rights groups also documented allegations of abuse and mistreatment in deportation centres. Detainees reported physical violence, poor detention conditions, and pressure to sign “voluntary return” documents even when they feared persecution in their home countries<sup>217</sup>.

<sup>211</sup> See footnote 210. See also Many Uyghurs found asylum in Turkey, but are now seeing that safety threatened. (2025, December 15). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/15/many-uyghurs-found-asylum-in-turkey-but-are-now-seeing-that-safety-threatened>

<sup>212</sup> Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2025, August 14). Protection from refoulement - Asylum Information Database | European Council on Refugees and Exiles. <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkiye/content-temporary-protection/status-and-residence/protection-from-refoulement/>; see also European Union Agency for Asylum. (2025, June). Asylum Report 2025. In Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union [Report]. Publications Office of the European Union. [https://www.euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://www.euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2025-06/2025%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf);

Türkiye: ‘Restriction codes’ harm Uyghurs seeking safety. (2025, November 18). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/12/turkiye-restriction-codes-harm-uyghurs-seeking-safety>

<sup>213</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, October 29). Guinean doctor in Turkey faces deportation over undisclosed security claims. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/guinean-doctor-in-turkey-faces-deportation-over-undisclosed-security-claims/>

<sup>214</sup> See footnote 212.

<sup>215</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, June 11). Turkey detains 1,022 migrants, 273 people accused of smuggling in 2 weeks of raids. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/06/11/turkey-detains-1022-migrants-273-people-accused-of-smuggling-in-2-weeks-of-raids/>; see also Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği. (2025). Report on İzmir Removal Center visits (March 2025). In Monitoring Reports. <https://multeci.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/JAN-MAR-2025-Report-on-Removal-Center-Visits-ENG.pdf>

<sup>216</sup> Nazlier, E. (2025, November 4). İzmir Barosu: Micheal Adufu'nun ölümü bir ihmal değil, cinayettir. Evrensel. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/582098/izmir-barosu-micheal-adufunun-olumu-bir-ihmal-degil-cinayettir>.

<sup>217</sup> Alahmad, B. (2025, April 24). Syria\Türkiye: “Go Back to Your Country; We Do Not Want You Here”: Torture and mistreatment in deportation centers in Türkiye. Syrians for Truth and Justice. <https://stj-sy.org/en/syriaturkiye-go-back-to-your-country-we-do-not-want-you-here-torture-and-mistreatment-in-deportation-centers-in-turkiye/>; see

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Deaths of migrants attempting to cross maritime routes also continued to be reported during the year. Several migrants drowned<sup>218</sup> in incidents off Turkey's western coast while attempting to reach European destinations. These tragedies highlighted the ongoing risks faced by migrants traveling through irregular routes in search of safety or economic opportunity.

Migrant workers also remained vulnerable to exploitation. Many migrants continued to work in informal sectors such as construction, agriculture, and manufacturing, often without legal protections or adequate safety standards<sup>219</sup>. In one case reported during the year, a young migrant worker died after falling from a construction site where he had been working under hazardous conditions<sup>220</sup>.

Another incident involved the death of a migrant worker who was reportedly beaten by individuals connected to his employer<sup>221</sup>. Observers noted<sup>222</sup> that migrant labourers frequently lack effective mechanisms to seek justice in cases involving workplace abuse or violence.

Foreign students and political activists were also affected by migration-related measures. In some cases, foreign nationals who participated in protests or political activities faced detention or deportation proceedings<sup>223</sup>. Human rights organizations warned<sup>224</sup> that such practices risked blurring the line between migration enforcement and political repression.

International organizations continued to urge<sup>225</sup> Turkey to strengthen protections for refugees and migrants, particularly in relation to detention practices and deportation procedures.

also BVMN. (2025, May). Illegal Pushbacks And Border Violence Reports.

[https://www.borderviolence.eu/uploads/document/file/483/BVMN\\_Monthly\\_Report\\_May\\_2025\\_.pdf](https://www.borderviolence.eu/uploads/document/file/483/BVMN_Monthly_Report_May_2025_.pdf)

<sup>218</sup> Reuters. (2025, October 24). At least 14 dead after migrant boat sinks off western Turkey. Reuters.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/least-14-dead-after-migrant-boat-sinks-off-western-turkey-2025-10-24/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, August 18). 4 migrants found dead off west coast of Turkey. Turkish Minute.

<https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/08/18/4-migrants-found-dead-off-west-coast-of-turkey/>; Turkish Minute.

(2025, April 6). 9 migrants found dead off Turkish coast after boat sinks: coast guard. Turkish Minute.

<https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/04/03/9-migrants-found-dead-off-turkish-coast-after-boat-sinks-coast-guard/>; Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, October 27). Death toll rises to 17 as migrant boat sinks off Turkey's Bodrum resort. Stockholm Center for Freedom.

<https://stockholmcf.org/death-toll-rises-to-17-as-migrant-boat-sinks-off-turkeys-bodrum-resort/>

<sup>219</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2025, May 20). Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/20/prosecutions-insulting-president-continue-turkiye>

<sup>220</sup> Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, November 4). Death of 14-year-old Syrian boy in Turkey highlights child labor crisis. Stockholm Center for Freedom.

<https://stockholmcf.org/death-of-14-year-old-syrian-boy-in-turkey-highlights-child-labor-crisis/>

<sup>221</sup> Bianet. (2025, September 24). Migrant worker dies after alleged assault by employer's relatives in İstanbul. Bianet.

<https://bianet.org/haber/migrant-worker-dies-after-alleged-assault-by-employers-relatives-in-istanbul-311837>

<sup>222</sup> Turkey (Türkiye) - United States Department of State. (2025, August 12). United States Department of State.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>;

<sup>223</sup> Türkiye: Don't deport Turkmen activists. (2025, May 6). Human Rights Watch.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/30/turkiye-dont-deport-turkmen-activists>; see also Yemek zamını protesto eden öğrenciye sınır dışı tehdidi. (n.d.). Jinnews.

<https://jinnews.net/TUM-HABERLER/content/view/262318>

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> See footnotes 219, 222, 223.

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## *Refugees and Migrants*

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Advocates emphasized<sup>226</sup> the importance of ensuring access to asylum procedures, legal representation, and effective judicial review of deportation decisions.

Despite Turkey's significant role in hosting refugees, the developments observed in 2025 suggested that migrants and asylum seekers remain vulnerable to a range of human rights risks. Observers stressed<sup>227</sup> that addressing these concerns will require stronger safeguards against refoulement, improved oversight of detention facilities, and greater protection of migrant workers' rights.

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> See footnote 207.

# 14. Transnational Repression

Concerns regarding transnational repression continued to emerge throughout 2025, as Turkish authorities pursued efforts to investigate, monitor, or detain individuals abroad who were perceived as political opponents or affiliated with banned organizations. Human rights organizations documented<sup>228</sup> cases in which Turkish citizens or former residents were detained in foreign countries, faced extradition requests, or were subjected to surveillance and pressure beyond Turkey's borders.

Many of these cases involved individuals accused by the Turkish government of affiliation with the Gülen movement. Since the failed coup attempt of 2016, Turkish authorities have pursued an extensive international campaign aimed at locating and returning individuals suspected of ties to the movement<sup>229</sup>. While earlier years saw several reported cases of forced renditions, developments in 2025 primarily involved extradition requests, diplomatic pressure on foreign governments, and efforts to monitor diaspora communities<sup>230</sup>.

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<sup>228</sup> Kenez, L. (2025, October 30). Turkey, top abuser of INTERPOL, now seeks to govern it - Nordic Monitor. Nordic Monitor. <https://nordicmonitor.com/2025/10/turkey-the-top-abuser-of-interpol-now-seeks-to-govern-it/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, August 5). Turkey among top abusers of INTERPOL's notice system, UK parliament report says. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/08/05/turkey-among-top-abusers-of-interpols-notice-system-uk-parliament-report-says/>

<sup>229</sup> Freedom House. (n.d.). Turkey: Transnational Repression Origin Country case study. In Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression/turkey>; see also Solidarity With OTHERS. (2026). Turkey's use of enforced disappearances as a tool of transnational repression. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/cfi-subm/disap-tn-repression/subm-enforced-disappearances-context-cso-14-solidarity-others.pdf>; JWF. (n.d.). Written Submission. Enforced Disappearances In The Context Of Transnational Repression By The Government Of Türkiye. <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fdocuments%2Fcfi-subm%2Fdisap-tn-repression%2Fsubm-enforced-disappearances-context-cso-27-journa-jwf-jwf.doc%23%3A~%3Atext%3DAccording%2520to%2520the%25202018%2520U.S.%2Cillegally%2520transfer%2520them%2520to%2520T%25C3%25BCrkiye.&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

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One case reported during the year involved a Turkish refugee detained in Kenya following a request from Turkish authorities<sup>231</sup>. Human rights organizations warned<sup>232</sup> that the individual faced a significant risk of persecution if returned to Turkey and called on Kenyan authorities to respect international refugee protection standards.

In another case, Swedish authorities rejected<sup>233</sup> Turkey's request to extradite exiled journalist Abdullah Bozkurt, citing legal obstacles and concerns regarding the political nature of the charges. The decision reflected growing scrutiny among European courts regarding extradition requests linked to politically sensitive prosecutions in Turkey.

Reports also indicated<sup>234</sup> that Turkish authorities continued to seek international arrest warrants for exiled journalists and activists. In some instances, foreign courts or law enforcement agencies declined to act on such requests after determining that the underlying charges were politically motivated<sup>235</sup>.

International monitoring bodies also expressed concern<sup>236</sup> regarding Turkey's alleged misuse of international law enforcement mechanisms, including INTERPOL notices. Critics argued<sup>237</sup> that such tools have occasionally been used to pursue individuals abroad for activities that fall within the scope of freedom of expression or political dissent.

Beyond formal extradition efforts, concerns were also raised about the monitoring of diaspora communities. Security services in several countries reported that Turkish intelligence agencies

<sup>231</sup> Waweru, A. (2025, December 21). Turkish refugee, family arrested in Kenya over alleged links to Gülen movement faces deportation. Kenyans.co.ke. <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/119257-turkish-refugee-arrested-kenya-over-alleged-links-gulen-movement-faces-deportation>

<sup>232</sup> Amnesty Kenya. (2026, January 5). Turkish Refugee Arrests Place Kenya And Mozambique Under Microscope Again. <https://www.amnestykenya.org/turkish-refugee-arrests-place-kenya-and-mozambique-under-microscope-again/>

<sup>233</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, November 21). Sweden rejects Turkey's extradition request for journalist Abdullah Bozkurt. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/11/20/sweden-rejects-turkeys-extradition-request-for-journalist-abdullah-bozkurt/>

<sup>234</sup> Written Evidence Submitted By Lawyers Against Transnational Repression. (n.d.). [https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138132/html/#:~:text=The%20TRAP%20Act%20explicitly%20recognizes,track%20record%20of%20misusing%20extradition.](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138132/html/#:~:text=The%20TRAP%20Act%20explicitly%20recognizes,track%20record%20of%20misusing%20extradition.;); see also Bozkurt, A. (2025, July 25). Turkey secretly plots to bypass INTERPOL rules to target exiled journalist in Sweden. Middle East Forum. <https://www.meforum.org/mef-online/turkey-secretly-plots-to-bypass-interpol-rules-to-target-exiled-journalist-in-sweden>; Bozkurt, A. (2025, July 16). Turkey secretly plots to bypass INTERPOL rules to target exiled journalist in Sweden - Nordic Monitor. <https://nordicmonitor.com/2025/07/turkey-secretly-plots-to-bypass-interpol-rules-to-target-exiled-journalist-in-sweden/>

<sup>235</sup> See footnote 233. See also the comprehensive report's relevant sections: Solidarity with OTHERS. (2025, January). The Gülen Movement: Challenging Turkey's "Terrorist organization" narrative through global perspectives. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/the-gulen-movement-challenging-turkeys-terrorist-organization-narrative-through-global-perspectives/>

<sup>236</sup> See footnote 234.

<sup>237</sup> Joint Committee on Human Rights. (2025, July 30). Transnational repression in the UK. Seventh Report of Session 2024–25 HC 681 / HL Paper 160. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49059/documents/257980/default/>

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## Transnational Repression

continued to conduct surveillance activities targeting individuals associated with opposition groups or movements banned in Turkey<sup>238</sup>.

Analysts noted<sup>239</sup> that such monitoring efforts could create pressure on diaspora communities and contribute to a climate of fear among exiled journalists, academics, and activists. In some cases, individuals reported receiving threats or intimidation linked to their political or journalistic activities abroad<sup>240</sup>.

Another dimension of transnational repression involved economic and legal pressure directed at individuals and institutions outside Turkey. Authorities continued to pursue financial investigations and legal proceedings targeting assets or organizations alleged to have connections with banned movements<sup>241</sup>.

Despite these concerns, a number of foreign courts and governments demonstrated increasing caution in responding to Turkish extradition requests<sup>242</sup>. Judicial decisions rejecting such requests frequently cited<sup>243</sup> the risk that individuals could face unfair trials or politically motivated prosecutions if returned to Turkey.

Human rights organizations emphasized<sup>244</sup> that safeguarding against transnational repression requires strong adherence to international legal standards governing extradition and asylum. They also stressed<sup>245</sup> the importance of protecting the rights of refugees and political dissidents living abroad.

<sup>238</sup> Turkey Tribunal. (2022, May 25). Former Mit Officer, Intelligence Specialist Burak Daricili Explains How Mit Bribes African “Failed States” And Abducts People. <https://2021session.turkeytribunal.com/actuality/former-mit-officer-intelligence-specialist-burak-daricili-explains-how-mit-bribes-african-failed-states-and-abducts-people/>; see also Turkish Minute. (2025, September 16). German, Austrian court rulings draw warnings over spying by Ankara-linked institutions. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/09/16/german-austrian-court-rulings-draw-warnings-over-spying-by-ankara-linked-institutions/>

<sup>239</sup> Yilmaz, Ihsan & Kenes, Bulent. (2025). Direct Transnational Repression by the Turkish State. 10.1007/978-981-95-0669-9\_4.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395901827\\_Direct\\_Transnational\\_Repression\\_by\\_the\\_Turkish\\_State](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395901827_Direct_Transnational_Repression_by_the_Turkish_State)

<sup>240</sup> Human Rights Solidarity on X: “What’s Going On in Turkey? In March 2025, Turkish journalists living in exile spoke at a United Nations panel in Geneva about a growing crisis: digital censorship aided by Big Tech platforms like X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Google. Authoritarian regimes — especially <https://t.co/kb4mGbUvSz>” / X. (n.d.). X (Formerly Twitter). <https://x.com/SolidarityHR/status/1903510080307314935>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, July 25). Turkish spy agency steps up recruitment of informants among diaspora during holiday season. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkish-spy-agency-steps-up-recruitment-of-informants-among-diaspora-during-holiday-season/>

<sup>241</sup> Solidarity with OTHERS. (2026, January 29). Misuse of FATF (Financial Action Task Force) standards as a tool of transnational repression. Solidarity With OTHERS. <https://solidaritywithothers.com/misuse-of-fatf-financial-action-task-force-standards-as-a-tool-of-transnational-repression/>, see also Scf. (2025, January 8). Turkey freezes assets of 9 US-based organizations over alleged Gülen links. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkey-freezes-assets-of-9-us-based-organizations-over-alleged-gulen-links/>

<sup>242</sup> See footnote 235.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> See footnote 241. See also Freedom House. (2025). Turkey. In Freedom House.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2025>

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.



Overall, developments during 2025 indicated that the reach of Turkey's domestic political conflicts continued to extend beyond its borders. While the scale of cross-border renditions appeared lower than in earlier years, the use of legal and diplomatic mechanisms to pursue critics abroad remained a notable feature of the government's approach to perceived political opponents.

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## *Transnational Repression*

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# 15. Women's Rights

Women's rights remained a major area of concern in Turkey throughout 2025. Civil society organizations continued to report<sup>246</sup> high levels of gender-based violence, while women's rights advocates warned<sup>247</sup> that existing legal protections remained insufficient and that institutional responses to violence against women were often inadequate.

Violence against women, including femicide, continued to be widely documented. Women's rights organizations reported<sup>248</sup> numerous killings of women by current or former partners, family members, or acquaintances. In addition to confirmed femicide cases, activists also documented<sup>249</sup> a significant number of suspicious deaths of women whose circumstances remained unclear or disputed.

Advocacy groups emphasized<sup>250</sup> that many women had previously sought protection from authorities before being killed. Critics argued<sup>251</sup> that failures in risk assessment, protective measures, and law enforcement response contributed to the persistence of such crimes. Civil society organizations continued to call<sup>252</sup> for stronger preventive mechanisms and more effective implementation of existing laws designed to protect victims of domestic violence.

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<sup>246</sup> Country policy and information note: women fearing gender-based violence, Turkey, July 2025 (accessible). (2025, August 8). GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turkey-country-policy-and-information-notes/country-policy-and-information-note-women-fearing-gender-based-violence-turkey-july-2025-accessible>; see also Laroche, L. (2025, December 15). November 25, 2025: Why the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Resonates So Strongly in Turkey. eismena.com. <https://eismena.com/en/article/november-25-2025-why-the-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-resonates-so-strongly-in-turkey-2025-12-15>

<sup>247</sup> Encentrezagros. (2025, June 1). *Human rights situation in Türkiye (January – May 2025)*. <https://www.zagros-centre.org/en/?p=1322>; see also The Advocates for Human Rights, & Ege, E. Stakeholder Report for the 49th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review 28 April – 9 May 2025: Gender Based Violence against Women. In United Nations Universal Periodic Review. [https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/UPR%20Turkey%20AHR%20EE%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/UPR%20Turkey%20AHR%20EE%20(1).pdf)

<sup>248</sup> Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu Ekim 2025 Raporu. (n.d.). Kadın. <https://kadincinayetleriniurduracagiz.net/veriler/3155/kadin-cinayetlerini-durduracagiz-platformu-ekim-2025-raporu>

<sup>249</sup> Kaya, İ. (2025, October 1). Ölümle ilgili soruşturulması şart. [birgun.net](https://www.birgun.net). <https://www.birgun.net/haber/olumlerin-kapsamli-sorusturulmasi-sart-657895>

<sup>250</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, July 7). 136 women killed in Turkey by men in first half of 2025: rights group. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/07/07/136-women-killed-in-turkey-by-men-in-first-half-of-2025-rights-group/>

<sup>251</sup> See footnotes 248, 249, 250.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

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Concerns about the institutional framework for combating gender-based violence persisted following Turkey's withdrawal<sup>253</sup> from the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention in 2021. Women's rights organizations argued<sup>254</sup> that the withdrawal weakened the legal and political framework for addressing violence against women and undermined international commitments to gender equality.

Activists also expressed concern<sup>255</sup> about legislative proposals that could further restrict gender-related rights. Some proposals introduced during the year sought to criminalize certain forms of public expression relating to gender identity or same-sex relationships<sup>256</sup>. Critics warned<sup>257</sup> that such measures risked reinforcing discrimination and limiting public advocacy on gender issues.

Women's rights defenders and activists also faced legal pressure during the year. In several cases, women participating in demonstrations or advocacy campaigns were detained or prosecuted for their involvement in protests addressing gender-based violence and equality issues<sup>258</sup>. Investigations were also opened against activists accused of making statements deemed offensive to public morality or national identity<sup>259</sup>.

Cases involving sexual abuse and harassment also drew public attention. In one widely discussed incident<sup>260</sup>, a teenage intern working at Turkish parliament reported becoming pregnant after alleged sexual abuse by a coworker. The case sparked debate regarding workplace safety and the protection of young women in employment environments.

Women also continued to face challenges in accessing justice and protection mechanisms. Rights organizations reported<sup>261</sup> that victims of domestic violence sometimes encountered

<sup>253</sup> Uno. (2021, May 3). Turkey's withdrawal from women's protection treaty, 'worrying step backwards.' United Nations Western Europe. <https://unric.org/en/turkeys-withdrawal-from-womens-protection-treaty-worrying-step-backwards/>

<sup>254</sup> See footnote 251.

<sup>255</sup> Türkiye: Draft Law Threatens LGBT People with Prison. (2025, October 29). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/29/turkiye-draft-law-threatens-lgbt-people-with-prison>

<sup>256</sup> Minute, T. (2025, October 15). Turkey moves to criminalize behavior 'contrary to biological sex,' alarming LGBTQ+ community. Turkish Minute. <https://www.turkishminute.com/2025/10/15/turkey-moves-to-criminalize-behavior-contrary-to-biological-sex-alarming-lgbtq-community/>

<sup>257</sup> Amnesty International USA. (2025, October 17). Türkiye: Leaked proposals that would criminalize LGBTI people "Must never see the light of day" | Amnesty International USA. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/turkiye-leaked-proposals-that-would-criminalize-lgbti-people-must-never-see-the-light-of-day/>; see also European Federation of Journalists. (2025, October 22). Turkey: Journalists reporting LGBTQ+ issues risk criminalisation. <https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2025/10/22/turkey-journalists-reporting-lgbtq-issues-risk-criminalisation/>

<sup>258</sup> Fedøy, D. (2026, February 20). Drop charges against human rights defenders in Türkiye - NHC. Norwegian Helsinki Committee. <https://nhc.no/en/drop-charges-against-human-rights-defenders-in-turkiye/>

<sup>259</sup> Joint Letter by UN Special Mandates. (2025, August 07). AL TUR 8/2025. <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=30227>

<sup>260</sup> Turkish Minute. (2025, December 12). 17-year-old had abortion after alleged abuse at Turkish parliament: report. Turkish Minute. <https://turkishminute.com/2025/12/12/17-year-old-had-abortion-after-alleged-abuse-at-turkish-parliament-report/>

<sup>261</sup> See footnote 246.

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difficulties obtaining restraining orders or other protective measures. In some cases, authorities allegedly failed to enforce existing court orders designed to protect victims from abusive partners<sup>262</sup>.

Structural inequalities affecting women's participation in political and public life also remained evident. International reports<sup>263</sup> released during the year ranked Turkey relatively low in global comparisons of women's representation in political institutions. Women remained underrepresented in parliament and ministerial positions, reflecting broader patterns of gender inequality in political participation.

Women's economic participation also remained uneven. Many women continued to face barriers in accessing employment opportunities, particularly in sectors characterized by informal labour<sup>264</sup>. Economic vulnerability, combined with social norms and limited institutional support, contributed to disparities in workforce participation.

Despite these challenges, women's rights organizations remained active throughout the year in documenting violence, advocating for policy reforms, and supporting victims of abuse. Civil society groups continued to play a central role in raising awareness about gender-based violence and providing assistance to women seeking protection.

Public demonstrations<sup>265</sup> organized by women's rights activists also remained a visible feature of the advocacy landscape. Protests marking International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women drew attention to ongoing concerns<sup>266</sup> about gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Türkiye | Equal Future. (n.d.). <https://www.equalfuture-eurasia.org/womens-representation-in-politics-and-public-administration/turkiye>; see also Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2025, December 8). Turkey's democratic gains for women under threat as country ranks 125th globally for females in politics, lawmaker warns. Stockholm Center for Freedom. <https://stockholmcf.org/turkeys-democratic-gains-for-women-under-threat-as-country-ranks-125th-globally-for-females-in-politics-lawmaker-warns/>

<sup>264</sup> Removing the barriers to female labour market participation: OECD Economic Surveys: Türkiye 2025. (2025, April 10). OECD. [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-turkiye-2025\\_d01c660f-en/full-report/removing-the-barriers-to-female-labour-market-participation\\_e6095292.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-turkiye-2025_d01c660f-en/full-report/removing-the-barriers-to-female-labour-market-participation_e6095292.html); see also Durmaz, M. G., Arda, B., & Monus, Y. (2025). Obstacles Faced by Female Employees in Male-Dominated Sectors: Evidence from Turkey. Acta Academica Karviniensia, 25(2), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.25142/aak.2025.008>; Women in Statistics - 2024 - Data Portal - TURKSTAT. (n.d.). Data Portal. <https://veriportali.tuik.gov.tr/en/press/54076>

<sup>265</sup> Reuters. (2025, November 23). Protest against femicide, sexual violence and all gender-based violence, in Istanbul. Reuters Connect. <https://www.reutersconnect.com/item/protest-against-femicide-sexual-violence-and-all-gender-based-violence-in-istanbul/dGFnOnJldXRlcnMuY29tLDlwMjU6bmV3c21sX1JDMkUySUWwODITQw>; see also English, A. A. (2025, March 8). Protests on International Women's Day in Turkey demand protection from domestic violence. Al Arabiya English. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2025/03/08/protests-on-international-women-s-day-in-turkey-demand-protection-from-domestic-violence>; Euronews. (2025, November 25). Istanbul rally calls for Turkey to rejoin treaty on women's violence [Video]. Euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/video/2025/11/25/istanbul-rally-urges-turkey-to-rejoin-treaty-against-violence-on-women>

<sup>266</sup> Civicus. (2025, March 30). International Women's Day 2025: global fightback against rights rollbacks. Civicus Lens. <https://lens.civicus.org/international-womens-day-2025-global-fightback-against-rights-rollbacks/>

Overall, developments in 2025 indicated<sup>267</sup> that violence against women and gender inequality remain persistent challenges in Turkey. While legal frameworks addressing domestic violence formally remain in place, human rights observers stressed<sup>268</sup> that effective implementation and stronger institutional commitment are essential to ensure the protection of women and the promotion of gender equality.

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<sup>267</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. (2026, February 11). Türkiye - Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/country/turkey/>

<sup>268</sup> Turkey: A dangerous declaration for human rights, women's rights, and LGBTQI+ rights - Euromed Rights. (2025, May 02). Euromed Rights. <https://backlashmap.euromedrights.org/en/articles/turkey-a-dangerous-declaration-for-human-rights-womens-rights-and-lgbtqi-rights/>; see also Laroche, L. (2025, December 15). Why the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Resonates So Strongly in Turkey. eismena.com. <https://eismena.com/en/article/november-25-2025-why-the-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women-resonates-so-strongly-in-turkey-2025-12-15>

# 16. Conclusion

The developments documented throughout 2025 indicate that the deterioration of human rights protections in Turkey has become increasingly institutionalized. Rather than isolated incidents or temporary political responses, many of the patterns observed during the year reflect structural practices embedded within legal, administrative, and judicial systems.

A central feature of the year was the continued large-scale use of anti-terrorism legislation to investigate, detain, and prosecute individuals accused of links to the Gülen movement. Mass detention operations were reported regularly throughout the year, often involving coordinated raids across multiple provinces. Prosecutors frequently issued detention warrants for dozens or even hundreds of individuals at a time, targeting former civil servants, teachers, military personnel, students, and private citizens. Official statements indicated that thousands of individuals continued to be detained or arrested in such operations during 2025 alone. These operations were commonly based on forms of evidence such as alleged use of the encrypted messaging application ByLock, contact through public payphones, or social media activity—forms of evidence that the European Court of Human Rights has already found insufficient to justify terrorism convictions in its landmark *Yalçınkaya v. Turkey* judgment.

Despite that ruling and the thousands of similar applications pending before the Court, Turkish courts continued to pursue prosecutions based on the same evidentiary framework. The persistence of these investigations underscores the enduring scale of the post-2016 judicial crackdown. Official data indicate that more than three million people have been investigated for terrorism-related offenses since the failed coup attempt of July 2016, with more than half a million convictions recorded. The continued intensity of mass detention operations in 2025 demonstrates that this process remains an ongoing feature of the country's legal and political landscape.

At the same time, the year saw continued pressure on political opposition figures and institutions. Investigations targeting opposition-run municipalities, prosecutions of political leaders, and the use of criminal proceedings against critics contributed to an increasingly polarized political environment. Observers warned that the selective application of criminal law risks undermining confidence in the impartiality of judicial institutions.

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Restrictions on fundamental freedoms also remained extensive. Peaceful assemblies were frequently banned or dispersed, journalists and media organizations faced regulatory sanctions and criminal investigations, and civil society actors continued to encounter legal and administrative pressure. These developments significantly narrowed the space for public debate and civic participation.

The situation within detention facilities also reflected broader systemic challenges. Prison overcrowding reached record levels, and human rights organizations documented continued allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and denial of adequate medical care. The treatment of pregnant women, elderly prisoners, and detainees with serious health conditions raised particular concerns regarding compliance with international human rights standards.

Minority communities continued to face discrimination and legal challenges affecting their political, cultural, and religious rights. Kurdish political actors, journalists, and activists remained frequent targets of criminal investigations, while religious minorities and LGBTQ+ communities encountered administrative restrictions and social hostility.

Meanwhile, developments affecting refugees and migrants highlighted ongoing concerns about deportation practices, detention conditions, and exploitation in informal labour markets. Cases involving the risk of refoulement and the treatment of migrants in detention centres drew criticism from international organizations.

The reach of Turkey's domestic political conflicts also continued to extend beyond its borders. Efforts to pursue critics and dissidents abroad through extradition requests and other mechanisms remained a feature of the government's approach to perceived political opponents.

Taken together, the developments observed during 2025 suggest that many of the concerns identified in previous years—particularly regarding judicial independence, due process, and the protection of fundamental freedoms—remain unresolved. In several areas, the institutional structures enabling such practices appear to have become more deeply entrenched.

International institutions and human rights organizations have repeatedly emphasized that meaningful improvements will require comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law, ensuring judicial independence, and safeguarding fundamental rights. Such reforms would include compliance with judgments of international courts, revision of legislation that restricts freedom of expression and association, and stronger oversight of law enforcement and detention practices.

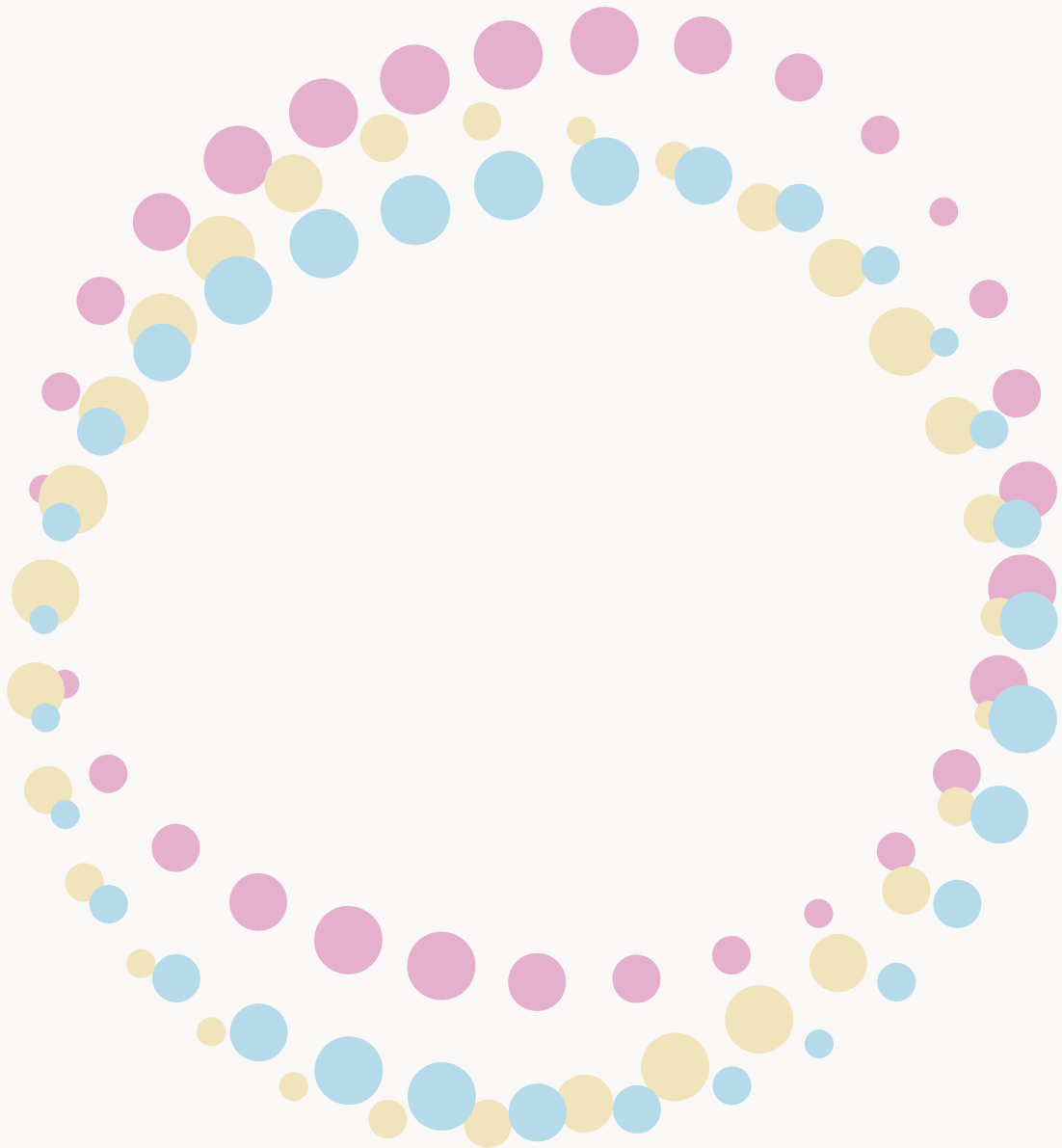
As Turkey continues to play an important role in regional and international political affairs, the protection of human rights and democratic institutions remains a matter of both domestic and international concern. Addressing the challenges documented in this report will be essential for restoring confidence in the rule of law and ensuring the protection of fundamental freedoms for all individuals in the country.

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## *Conclusion*

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