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Freedom in the World 2022 - Turkey

Not Free

32

/ 100

[Political Rights](#) 16 / 40[Civil Liberties](#) 16 / 60

Last Year's Score & Status

32 / 100 Not Free

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)

Overview

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has ruled Turkey since 2002. After initially passing some liberalizing reforms, the AKP government showed growing contempt for political rights and civil liberties and has pursued a wide-ranging crackdown on critics and opponents since 2016. Constitutional changes in 2017 concentrated power in the hands of the president, removing key checks and balances. While Erdoğan continues to dominate Turkish politics, a deepening economic crisis and opportunities to further consolidate political power have given the government new incentives to suppress dissent and limit public discourse.

Key Developments in 2021

- In January, President Erdoğan appointed a political ally as the rector of Turkey's top-ranking Boğaziçi University, prompting months-long protests by students and faculty that the police violently dispersed on multiple occasions. Erdoğan ultimately removed the rector in July, only to replace him the next month with a different political ally.
- In June, the Constitutional Court accepted a case to shut down the country's second-largest opposition party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The charges accuse the HDP of having links to terrorism and threatening Turkey's territorial unity. Meanwhile, arrests of HDP officials carried out during the year added to the thousands of party members who have been detained since 2016.
- In March, President Erdoğan unilaterally withdrew Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty to combat gender-based violence, sparking outrage from domestic and international advocacy groups and foreign governments. Turkey's opposition parties and most of the population remain opposed to the move, and civil society groups have attempted to appeal it as unconstitutional.
- Osman Kavala, Turkey's most prominent political prisoner, continued to have his due process rights denied throughout the year. In January, an appeals court revoked his 2020 acquittal, ostensibly because some evidence had been excluded from court. Authorities rearrested him in February under newfound charges of allegedly aiding a coup attempt and supporting terrorism. As of the end of 2021, Kavala remained in detention, despite a 2019 order by the ECHR for his immediate release.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through 2 / free and fair elections? 4

A 2017 constitutional referendum instituted a new presidential system of government in Turkey, eliminating the role of prime minister and making the president the chief national authority. The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms but is eligible to run for a third term if the parliament calls for early elections. President Erdoğan has retained a dominant role in government since moving from the post of prime minister to the presidency in 2014. The 2017 constitutional changes granted the presidency newly expanded executive powers and eliminated the role of prime minister.

The snap June 2018 elections, originally scheduled for November 2019, were held under a state of emergency, in place after the 2016 coup attempt. Erdoğan, who leads the AKP, won a second term, earning 52.6 percent of the vote in the first round. Muharrem İnce of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) won 30.6 percent. Selahattin Demirtaş of the HDP won 8.4 percent, while Meral Akşener of the nationalist İyi Party won 7.3 percent; other candidates won the remaining 1.1 percent. Because Erdoğan's first term ended early, he is eligible for a third term in 2023, which would last until 2028.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) strongly criticized the election, reporting that electoral regulators often deferred to the ruling AKP, and that state-run media favored the party in its coverage. The OSCE also noted that Erdoğan repeatedly accused his opponents of supporting terrorism during the campaign.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair 2 / elections? 4

The Grand National Assembly, the unicameral parliament that was expanded by the 2017 referendum, has 600 seats. Lawmakers are elected to five-year terms by proportional representation. Parties must earn at least 10 percent of the national vote to join the parliament, an unusually high threshold by global standards.

In the 2018 elections, the AKP joined with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) to form the People's Alliance, which won 53 percent of the vote, resulting in 344 seats. The main opposition CHP allied with İyi Party and two smaller parties to form the Nation's Alliance, which took 34 percent of the vote and 189 seats. The HDP entered the race alone and won 11 percent of the vote, which equaled 67 seats.

The OSCE found that the 2018 elections were marred by the AKP's misuse of state resources to gain an electoral advantage as well as an intimidation campaign against opposition parties. Reports of irregularities such as proxy voting were prevalent in the south and southeast, the HDP's stronghold.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the 1 / relevant election management bodies? 4

The judges of the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK), who oversee all voting procedures, are appointed by AKP-dominated judicial bodies and often defer to the AKP in its decisions; in May 2019, it ordered a rerun of the Istanbul mayoral election. The CHP candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu had narrowly won the race in the March election, but the YSK scrapped the result based on selective technicalities. İmamoğlu won the second vote that June, increasing his margin of victory over the AKP candidate.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive 2 political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise / and fall of these competing parties or groupings? 4

Turkey maintains a multiparty system, with five major parties in the parliament. However, the rise of new parties is inhibited by the 10 percent vote threshold for parliamentary representation—an unusually high bar by global standards. Parties can bypass this threshold by forming electoral alliances. Parties can be disbanded for endorsing policies that are not in agreement with constitutional parameters, and Turkey's Constitutional Court has a history of banning Kurdish and Islamist political parties for violating the constitution.

Members of the HDP have faced regular politically motivated prosecutions since 2015, after a peace process with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapsed and the government accused the HDP of serving as a proxy for the PKK, which is designated as a terrorist organization. The HDP's offices have since then been regularly attacked by far-right, anti-Kurdish mobs. In 2016, the government removed parliamentary immunity, and many HDP lawmakers—including former co-chair Demirtaş—have since been jailed on terrorism charges. In March 2021, HDP lawmaker and

prominent human rights activist Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu was expelled from Parliament after he was convicted on terrorism charges. The Constitutional Court eventually revoked his conviction, and he reentered Parliament in July.

In June 2021, the Constitutional Court accepted a case to shut down the country's second-largest opposition party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The charges accuse the HDP of having links to terrorism and threatening Turkey's territorial unity.

While HDP members face the most significant obstacles, other opposition leaders have also experienced politically motivated prosecutions and violent attacks. CHP lawmakers have also been arrested and expelled from parliament, and the party's chair has faced physical attacks during rallies. In August 2021, the İyî Party Chair Meral Akşener was attacked during a political rally in Sivas.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? **2 / 4**

President Erdoğan and the ruling AKP assert partisan control over the YSK, judiciary, police, and media. They aggressively used these institutional tools to weaken or co-opt political rivals in recent years, severely limiting the opposition's ability to build voter support and gain power through elections.

The 2019 municipal elections, in which the opposition won control of most major urban centers, including Ankara and Istanbul, suggested there remains space for the opposition to make progress despite the AKP's institutional advantages. Yet opposition leaders continue to face obstacles even after winning elections. The government has replaced dozens of HDP mayors with "trustees" since the 2019 election and obstructed several newly elected CHP mayors—including Istanbul Mayor İmamoğlu—from carrying out their duties.

The government has arrested and charged opposition leaders, accusing of them of offenses ranging from terrorism to insulting the president. In December 2021, Turkey's ministry of interior launched a "special investigation" into hundreds of staff at the Istanbul municipal government for alleged links to militant groups, which Mayor İmamoğlu strongly criticized as a politically motivated form of harassment.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means? **3 / 4**

While Turkey's military has a history of intervening in political affairs, the civilian leadership has asserted its control over the military in the last decade. However, the AKP's institutional dominance threatens to make the state itself an extension of the party that can be used to change political outcomes. The government's influence over the media also tilts the playing field heavily in favor of the ruling party; media networks allocate only a fraction of their campaign coverage of Erdoğan and the AKP to opposition leaders.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? **1 / 4**

Critics charge that the AKP favors Sunni Muslims, pointing to an overhaul of the education system that favored Islamic education in secular schools and promoted the rise of religious schools in the 2010s. The AKP also expanded the Directorate of Religious Affairs, using this institution as a channel for political patronage. Among other functions, the party uses the directorate to deliver government-friendly sermons in mosques in Turkey, as well as in countries where the Turkish diaspora is present.

While the Kurds, Turkey's largest ethnic minority, officially have political representation, pro-Kurdish parties face regular harassment by the government through hate speech, politically motivated prosecutions, and disinformation in progovernment media.

While members of Turkey's non-Sunni Alevi community and non-Muslim religious minorities hold seats in the parliament, the government's crackdown on opposition parties, where they are concentrated, has seriously harmed their political rights and electoral opportunities.

Women remain underrepresented in politics and in leadership positions in government. They occupy 104 parliamentary seats, or 17 percent of the assembly. A handful of openly LGBT+ candidates have run for office. Sedef Çakmak of the CHP was elected to Istanbul's city council as the first openly gay elected official, and the HDP supported Turkey's first openly gay parliamentary candidate in 2015. Still, LGBT+ people remain politically marginalized, and the government uses public morality laws to restrict advocacy for LGBT+ rights.

Refugees in Turkey, including an estimated 4 million Syrians, do not have political rights and although some refugees have gained citizenship in recent years, public opinion remains strongly against a path for citizenship.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government? 2 / 4

Erdoğan controls all executive functions, rules by decree, and makes all meaningful policy decisions. Since 2016, he has used presidential decrees to overhaul Turkey's key ministries and agencies, purging tens of thousands of civil servants in law enforcement and the ministries of justice, education, and foreign affairs, among others, replacing them with political loyalists. With his leadership of the AKP, which dominates the parliament, he has effective control over the legislature, whose capacity to provide policy contributions has greatly eroded under the new system. Erdoğan's close allies dominate Turkey's most important ministries and until November 2020, the finance minister was his son-in-law.

Erdoğan abuses his decree powers to frequently intervene against ministries and independent bodies that defy his wishes. Between 2019 and 2021, Erdoğan abruptly fired and replaced the head of the central bank three times due to policy disagreements; his most recent appointee, in March 2021, is a former AKP lawmaker. Less than seven months later, Erdoğan fired three top bank executives, including two deputy governors, by decree in the middle of the night. The moves prompted a rare and strong backlash from Turkey's top business association, which called on the president to respect the independence of the central bank.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 1 / 4

Corruption remains a major problem in Turkey, including at the highest levels of government. Enforcement of anticorruption laws is inconsistent, and anticorruption agencies are ineffective, contributing to a culture of impunity. A handful of holding companies obtain a vast portion of public tenders, including for Erdoğan's mega-projects, and these same companies also control most of Turkey's media networks. Moreover, the government has seized hundreds of businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since 2016, appointing trustees to manage billions of dollars in assets.

In May 2021, notorious mafia boss Sedat Peker published a series of videos in which he levied an array of accusations—including murder, rape, corruption, and drug trafficking—against prominent government figures. Peker, who became a part of AKP circles after his 2014 release from prison, spoke of over 20 years' worth of improper governance and illegal behavior among AKP politicians, including Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soyulu.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0 / 4

Turkey's political and legal environment has made democratic oversight nearly impossible. Although there is an access to information law, in practice the government lacks transparency and arbitrarily withholds information on the activities of state officials and institutions. External monitors like civil society groups and independent journalists are subject to arrest and prosecution if they attempt to expose government wrongdoing. Government officials often refuse to respond to opposition lawmakers' questions, denying the legislative branch one of its few remaining tools to check the executive.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

More than 90 percent of Turkish media networks depend on public tenders and are owned by large businesses with close personal ties to President Erdoğan. Mainstream media reflect government positions and often carry identical headlines as government-run media. Although independent outlets exist, they face tremendous political pressure and are routinely targeted for prosecution.

Media outlets are often censored, fined, or shut down, and journalists are detained regularly. In 2021, journalists were prosecuted for covering protests and corruption allegations against the government, among other topics. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Turkey was the world's sixth-largest jailer of journalists in 2021, with 18 in prison at the end of the year. Journalists in Turkey also increasingly face violent attacks by mobs or security forces.

The High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK), Turkey's broadcast regulator whose members are appointed by the AKP-controlled parliament, frequently fines independent networks that critique the government. Throughout 2021, RTÜK issued a total of 71 fines, all of which were against five television channels, while government-friendly media received no penalties. In August, amidst an outbreak of more than 200 forest fires across the country, RTÜK warned broadcasters to ensure coverage of the fires was sympathetic to the government or else face heavy fines. As of 2019, online video producers are also required to obtain licenses from RTÜK to broadcast in Turkey, even if they operate abroad.

The government continued to censor and block access to online media that are critical of the government's policies. In August 2021, authorities blocked the webpages of 141 news reports published by the independent news network Bianet, including stories documenting official government corruption, the trials of journalists, and the rise of gender-based violence in the country.

Following the passage of a restrictive new law in 2020, major social media companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were forced to open offices in Turkey that would comply with government content takedown demands. Most companies refused to comply in late 2020, receiving hefty fines and advertising bans. By March 2021, all the major social media companies had yielded and opened offices in Turkey.

In May 2021, the government introduced new restrictions on press passes. A growing number of reports in recent years point to arbitrary press pass denials or cancellations targeting journalists critical of the government or its policies.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public 2 / and private? 4

While the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Turkey's public sphere is dominated by Sunni Islam. Alevi places of worship are not recognized by the government and cannot access state subsidies provided to Sunni mosques. Religious schools that promote Sunni Islamic education have proliferated under the AKP, and the public curriculum mandates compulsory religious education; non-Muslim students are officially exempted from these courses, although they and Alevis have difficulty opting out of them in practice.

Three non-Muslim groups—Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Catholics—are officially recognized. However, disputes over property and prohibitions on training of clergy remain problems for these communities, and the rights of unrecognized religious minorities are limited. Alevis and non-Muslims continued to be targeted with hate speech and mob attacks in 2021.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political 1 / indoctrination? 4

Academic freedom, never well respected in Turkey, has significantly weakened since 2016 as the government has summarily dismissed thousands of academics and educators for their perceived leftist, Gülenist, or PKK sympathies. More than a thousand scholars known as Academics for Peace have been investigated, with hundreds prosecuted, for declaring their support for peace between the government and the PKK. University students, are routinely detained for holding peaceful demonstrations against government policies.

The government and university administrations routinely intervene to prevent academics from researching sensitive topics, encouraging self-censorship among scholars. President Erdoğan obtained the power to appoint rectors at public and private universities in 2018 and has used it to intervene in academic institutions' affairs. In January 2021, the president appointed a political ally as the rector of Turkey's top-ranking Boğaziçi University, prompting a months-long protest movement by students and faculty that police violently dispersed on several occasions. Erdoğan ultimately removed the rector in July, only to replace him the next month with a different political ally.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics 1 / without fear of surveillance or retribution? 4

While citizens continue to voice their opinions openly in private, more exercise caution about what they say publicly. The government boasts that it monitors more than 45 million social media accounts in the country. The arbitrariness of prosecutions for alleged dissent, which often result in pretrial detention and carry the risk of lengthy prison terms, has created an atmosphere of self-censorship. In 2021, dozens of social media users were detained for sharing opinions on the Boğaziçi University protests or faced prosecution for complaining about the economy. Notably, in December, Turkey's banking watchdog filed a criminal complaint against 26 people—including a former central bank governor and several economists and journalists—for criticizing the central bank's policies on social media amidst a major currency crisis.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Authorities routinely ban gatherings organized by government critics, while progovernment rallies are allowed to proceed. The city of Ankara has imposed restrictions on May Day celebrations, LGBT+ pride parades, protests by student and women's rights groups, and even political rallies. Police frequently use force to break up peaceful protests; throughout 2021, security forces used tear gas and other violent tactics to disperse student protesters at Boğaziçi University; demonstrators at the Istanbul pride parade; and women protesting the alarming rate of gender-based violence in the country.

Weekly vigils and commemorations by the Saturday Mothers, a group that protests forced disappearances associated with a 1980 coup d'état, have been routinely broken up by police; many participants, including elderly people, have been arrested. In March 2021, a trial began against 46 demonstrators who attended the 700th Saturday Mothers vigil in August 2018.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights- and governance-related work? 1 / 4

The government frequently targets NGOs focused on human rights. Since 2016, it has shut down more than 1,500 foundations and associations. In December 2021, the government froze the assets of 770 NGOs on the spurious grounds of terrorism financing.

Leaders of NGOs—particularly those focused on human rights—face harassment, arrests, and prosecutions simply for carrying out their activities. A law passed by Parliament in December 2020 subjects NGOs to yearly audits and gives the ministry of the interior the power to appoint trustees to the boards of NGOs facing a criminal investigation. Civil society groups have denounced the law as pretext to take over human rights organizations that criticize the government.

Turkey's highly politicized judiciary has conducted trials against prominent human rights activists to intimidate civil society and stifle human rights advocacy. In 2020, a court convicted four human rights defenders, including former Amnesty International Turkey chair Taner Kılıç, on groundless charges of aiding a terrorist organization. Meanwhile, a group of 16 civil society leaders, including prominent philanthropist Osman Kavala, have been facing spurious charges and prosecution since 2017 for allegedly masterminding the 2013 mass "Gezi" protests and allegedly supporting a 2016 coup attempt. After a year-long show trial, all 16 were acquitted in 2020. However, an appeals court revoked the decision in January 2021. In February, prosecutors merged that case with another case involving Gezi protesters accused of perpetuating violence, expanding the prosecution's scope. The trial began in October. In December, the Council of Europe launched an infringement process against Turkey due to its failure to release Kavala per a 2019 European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4

Union activity, including the right to strike, is limited by law and in practice; antiunion activities by employers are common, and legal protections are poorly enforced. A system of threshold requirements makes it difficult for unions to secure collective-bargaining rights. Trade unions and professional organizations have suffered from mass arrests and dismissals associated with the 2016–18 state of emergency and the general breakdown in freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Union leaders were among those arrested while attempting to hold May Day demonstrations in 2020.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? 1 / 4

The post-coup purges of 2016 and structural changes introduced in the constitution in 2018 have severely compromised judicial independence. More than 4,200 judges and prosecutors have been removed since 2016 and replaced with government loyalists. Meanwhile, the new presidential system of 2018 has increased executive control over the judiciary; members of the Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), which oversees judicial appointments and disciplinary measures, are now appointed by the parliament and the president, rather than by members of the judiciary. As a result, prosecutors and judges often toe the government's line; judges who rule against the government's wishes are removed and replaced.

The executive has vast powers over the higher courts, as the president and the ruling party make most appointments. Notably, the Constitutional Court has maintained some independence and overturned select political convictions in recent years. In July 2021, it ordered the release of HDP lawmaker Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, finding that his rights had been violated.

The government's control over the judiciary, meanwhile, results in politically motivated prosecutions targeting members and supporters of opposition parties.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? 0 / 4

There are severe violations of due process rights in the judicial system. Defendants are often held in lengthy pretrial detention for periods lasting up to seven years. Prosecutors wait months before unveiling their charges and produce lengthy accounts that often lack concrete evidence. In many cases, lawyers defending people accused of terrorism face arrest themselves. More broadly, lower courts often defy rulings by higher courts that they are legally bound to implement.

In 2021, Osman Kavala, Turkey's most prominent political prisoner, continued to have his due process rights denied. Accused of organizing mass protests in 2013, Kavala was held in pretrial detention starting in 2017 for over a year before the prosecutor revealed the charges against him. During his trial, a judge who ordered Kavala's release was replaced without explanation, amidst other procedural anomalies. After a yearlong trial that began in 2019, in 2020 the court exonerated Kavala, ordering his release. However, in January 2021, an appeals court revoked his 2020 acquittal, ostensibly because some evidence had been excluded from court. Authorities then rearrested him in February under newfound charges of allegedly aiding a coup attempt and supporting terrorism. As of the end of 2021, Kavala remained in detention, despite a 2019 order by the ECHR for his immediate release.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war 1 / 4 and insurgencies?

Turkish authorities are regularly accused of using torture on prisoners—particularly targeting Kurds, Gülenists, and leftists—with impunity. In 2020, two Kurdish farmers were allegedly thrown from a military helicopter after being detained by soldiers; one later died of his injuries. Prosecutors do not consistently investigate allegations of torture or abuse in custody, and the government has resisted the publication of a European Committee for the Prevention of Torture report on its detention practices.

The threat of terrorism decreased in 2018 with the weakening of the Islamic State (IS) militant group in neighboring Syria; no large-scale terrorist attacks have occurred since. However, civilians in the Kurdish southeast endured another year of conflict between security forces and the PKK. The conflict has killed more than 5,000 people within Turkey and in northern Iraq since July 2015, most of them soldiers or Kurdish militants.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the 1 / 4 population?

Although Turkish law guarantees equal treatment of all citizens, religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities suffer varying degrees of discrimination. Alevis and non-Muslims continue to face systemic discrimination in schools and in public sector employment. The Turkish government's war with the PKK, meanwhile, has long been used to justify discriminatory measures against Kurdish citizens, including the prohibition of Kurdish festivals and the reversal of Kurdish municipal officials' efforts to promote their language and culture. Many Kurdish-language schools and cultural organizations have been shut down since 2015.

Although women make up a growing part of the workforce, gender inequality in the workplace is a pressing issue. Erdoğan's unilateral decision in March 2021 to withdraw Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, the most important international treaty regarding gender-based violence, removed legal protections for women from assault and harassment, including sexual harassment in the workplace.

Same-sex relations are not legally prohibited, but LGBT+ people face widespread discrimination, police harassment, and violence. Laws do not protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBT+ people are banned from openly serving in the military.

In recent years, public officials have increasingly used homophobic language and hate speech targeting the LGBT+ community. In 2020, the head of Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate delivered a sermon with anti-LGBT+ hate speech, while the head of Turkey's Red Crescent Society published posts on Twitter with discriminatory language toward LGBT+ people—both actions were publicly defended by President Erdoğan and his communications director. In September 2021, a public

prosecutor reportedly launched a lawsuit against top members of the Ankara Bar Association who had critiqued the head of the Religious Affairs Directorate for his 2020 sermon. In February 2021, Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soylu called student activists at Boğaziçi University “LGBT deviants” on Twitter, prompting the social media platform to issue a warning that the post violated its rules on hateful conduct. Government officials and progovernment media used similarly anti-LGBT+ language to justify Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021. The Turkish government also censors media that depict LGBT+ characters: In 2020, it forced Netflix to cancel a drama over a gay character in the series.

Turkey hosts some 4 million refugees, most from Syria. While the government has worked to provide them with basic services, many refugee children lack access to education, and few adults find formal employment. Popular resentment against refugees has been rising for years and is felt across the political spectrum.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

An upsurge in fighting between the government and the PKK since 2015 resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in southeastern Turkey, and freedom of movement remains limited in the region as low-level clashes continue.

More than 125,000 public sector workers were fired or suspended in the purges that followed the 2016 coup attempt and have no effective avenue for appeal. Many victims are unable to find employment in the private sector due to an atmosphere of guilt by association and cannot travel abroad as their passports have been cancelled.

Refugees in Turkey continue to face legal and practical obstacles to free movement within the country.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1 / 4

Private property rights are legally enshrined, but since 2013 many critics of the government have been subjected to intrusive tax and regulatory inspections. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the assets of companies, NGOs, foundations, individuals, media outlets, and other entities deemed to be associated with terrorist groups have been confiscated. According to a survey published in 2018, at least \$11 billion in private business assets, ranging from corner stores to large conglomerates, had been seized.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 2 / 4

Child marriages, often performed at unofficial religious ceremonies, are widespread, and Syrian refugees appear to be particularly vulnerable. The Directorate of Religious Affairs briefly endorsed the practice in 2018, suggesting that girls as young as nine years old could marry, before retracting the statement after public outcry.

Turkey has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world. Although there are some legal safeguards, activists complain that they are not properly enforced. In March 2021, Erdoğan withdrew Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, further removing much-needed legal protections against violence against women from Turkish law. Key problems include police reluctance to intervene in domestic disputes and a limited number of shelter spaces, which are often geographically inaccessible. The AKP has considered weakening domestic violence protections as part of a larger effort to dissuade women from seeking divorce; a parliamentary report published in 2016 recommended that women should be required to prove their partner’s violence in order to receive extended police protection. The recommendation was retracted after public pressure.

Gender-based violence and femicides reached alarming levels in 2021, which women’s rights activists largely blame on a culture of impunity for perpetrators enabled by the government and judiciary.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? 1 / 4

The weakness of labor unions and the government’s increasing willingness to act against organized labor have undermined equality of opportunity, protection from economic exploitation, and workplace safety. Workplace accidents have become more frequent in recent years, and laborers

have little recourse if injured. According to the Workers' Health and Work Safety Assembly (ISiGM), 2,170 workers died in work-related incidents in 2021. The large refugee population is especially vulnerable to exploitative employment conditions.

ecoi.net summary:



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