

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	683
Land:	Tyrkiet
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom in the World 2024 – Turkey
Udgivet:	Februar 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	4. april 2024



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2024

Turkey

NOT FREE

33
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	17 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	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 and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), which have ruled Turkey since 2002, have become increasingly authoritarian in recent years, consolidating significant power through constitutional changes and by imprisoning opponents and critics. A deepening economic crisis, devastating earthquake, and elections held in May gave the government new incentives to suppress dissent and limit public discourse in 2023.

Key Developments in 2023

- President Erdoğan was reelected in a two-round contest in May, defeating Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu of the Republican People's Party (CHP) amid high turnout. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observers criticized the election, reporting that state-run media heavily favored the AKP and that Erdoğan repeatedly accused legitimate political opponents of supporting terrorism during the campaign.
- Also in May, an AKP-led alliance won majority of parliamentary seats on 49.5 percent of the vote, while a CHP-led alliance won 35 percent. The pro-Kurdish Green Left Party (YSP) won 10.6 percent. Observers said the elections were marred by assembly restrictions, political interference in the electoral process, and other factors.
- The government restricted free speech and throttled access to media both in the wake of a devastating earthquake in February and during the campaign period. Authorities restricted access to X—the social media platform previously known as Twitter—following the earthquake and threatened to do so again during the elections; arrested dozens of people for their social media posts; and imposed fines on broadcasters for airing commentary that criticized the government's disaster response or electoral prospects.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

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

2 / 4

In 2018, Turkey instituted a presidential system of government that makes the president the chief national authority and grants the office sweeping executive powers. The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms but is eligible to run for a third term in the event of early elections. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan served as prime minister from 2003 to 2014, and as president since then.

Erdoğan, who leads the AKP, won the May 2023 presidential race in the second round with 52.18 percent of the vote, defeating Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu of the CHP. The OSCE criticized the election, reporting that state-run media heavily favored the AKP in its coverage and that Erdoğan repeatedly accused legitimate political opponents of supporting terrorism during the campaign.

A2 0-4 pts

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

2 / 4

The unicameral Grand National Assembly has 600 seats. Lawmakers are elected to five-year terms by proportional representation. Parties need at least 7 percent of the national vote to join the parliament as of 2022.

In the May 2023 elections, the AKP joined the far-right MHP and two smaller parties to form the People's Alliance, which won 49.5 percent of the vote, amounting to 323 seats. The opposition Nation's Alliance, led by the CHP and including the İyi Party (IP) and four smaller parties, won 35 percent of the vote and took 212 seats. The pro-Kurdish YSP won 10.6 percent of the vote, gaining 65 seats.

The OSCE described the 2023 elections as marred by the AKP's continued restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association and expression, political interference in the electoral process, and a lack of transparency.

A3 0-4 pts

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

1 / 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 their decisions.

An electoral law passed in March 2022 lowered the parliamentary entry threshold from 10 percent to 7 percent and changed the way parliamentary seats are distributed among party alliances. The new law also modified procedures for the selection of judges who oversee elections and control the vote-counting process in a way that makes it more likely that AKP-aligned judges appointed in recent years would oversee the processes. Controversy around this new rule intensified during the first round of the May 2023 elections, as reports emerged alleging procedural inconsistencies in the vote count.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

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

2 / 4

Turkey maintains a multiparty system. Parties are required to organize chapters and hold congresses in at least half of Turkey's provinces no later than six months before an election in order to participate.

Opposition leaders face politically motivated prosecutions, violent attacks, and other harassment that affects their parties' ability to function. Throughout the 2023 election period, opposition leaders from the CHP and IP faced assassination threats while their offices, buses, and campaign rallies suffered violent attacks. The

parties complained that state security forces, including the police, failed to provide them with adequate protection.

Opposition party leaders also battled judicial decisions aimed at undermining their political activity. The CHP's most popular leader, Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, was convicted of insulting state institutions in December 2022, six months ahead of the election. This verdict effectively prevented the CHP from naming İmamoğlu its presidential candidate. In May 2022, another court upheld the prison sentence of the CHP's Istanbul chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who was convicted in 2019 for insulting the president.

Turkey's opposition parties also face threats of closure. For years, prosecutors have launched criminal investigations into members of the pro-Kurdish opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) for having alleged links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey as well as the United States and European Union (EU), and put several HDP leaders—including its former cochair Selahattin Demirtas—in prison. In 2021, Turkey's Constitutional Court took up a case to ban the HDP altogether, which remained underway in 2023. The potential ban significantly impaired the HDP's ability to campaign and enter elections, forcing the party to regroup under the YSP in order to compete in the May 2023 elections.

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

Despite these significant challenges, the opposition has been able to increase its support and occasionally win elections: In the 2019 municipal elections, the opposition won control of most major urban centers. Although the opposition lost both the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2023, it garnered a larger percentage of the vote than it did in the 2018 elections.

However, opposition leaders face obstacles even after winning elections. The government has replaced dozens of HDP mayors with trustees since the 2019 elections and has obstructed newly elected CHP mayors—including Istanbul mayor İmamoğlu—from carrying out their duties. Opposition leaders have been arrested and charged in politically motivated cases with offenses ranging from terrorism to insulting the president. Following the elections in May 2023, Mayor İmamoğlu faced new charges of rigging a public tender, which carries a potential seven-year prison sentence and a political ban.

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

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 AKP's use of state resources and public benefits programs to increase its votes around elections, as well as its use of public tenders to influence and control the private sector, are especially problematic. Moreover, violent attacks and threats of violence against opposition parties around elections contribute to the intimidation of opposition leaders throughout the campaign period and of voters on election day.

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

Political rights are upheld unevenly. Critics charge that the AKP favors Sunni Muslims. While members of Turkey's non-Sunni Alevi community and non-Muslim citizens 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. Opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu became the country's first Alevi presidential candidate, and Erdoğan and his allies in the government and media explicitly attacked his Alevi identity throughout the campaign period.

While the ethnic Kurdish minority, Turkey's largest ethnic minority, are represented in politics, pro-Kurdish parties face regular harassment by the government via hate speech, politically motivated prosecutions, and disinformation in progovernment media.

Women and LGBT+ individuals remain underrepresented in politics and in leadership positions in government. Women occupy 121 parliamentary seats, or 20 percent of the assembly, a slight increase from the 2018 elections. A handful of LGBT+ candidates have run for office, but LGBT+ people remain politically marginalized, in part because the government uses public morality laws to restrict advocacy for LGBT+ rights. Conversely, the 2023 elections saw the election of several far-right politicians who ran on explicitly homophobic platforms.

While some refugees in Turkey, including nearly 4 million Syrians, have gained citizenship in recent years, there is no clear path for gaining citizenship status.

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 policy decisions. Since 2016, he has overhauled Turkey's ministries and agencies, purging tens of thousands of civil servants and replacing them with political loyalists. He exerts effective control over the legislature through his leadership of the AKP; lawmakers' capacity to provide policy contributions has greatly eroded under the new presidential system in effect since 2018. Erdoğan frequently intervenes against ministries and independent public bodies that defy his wishes.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1/4

Corruption remains a major problem, including at the highest levels of government. Enforcement of anticorruption laws is inconsistent, and

anticorruption agencies are ineffective, creating a culture of impunity.

In 2021 and 2022, 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, including former interior minister Süleyman Soylu. Although opposition parties have made multiple requests for parliamentary and judicial inquiries into the allegations, the ruling AKP-led coalition has quashed the motions and no authority has opened an investigation into Peker’s claims.

A devastating earthquake in February 2023 exposed that numerous buildings had received construction permits despite their failure to comply with Turkey’s disaster safety requirements, reflecting ongoing issues with state corruption.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	1/4
--	------------

Turkey’s political and legal environment has made democratic oversight of the government nearly impossible. Despite laws guaranteeing access to information, the government withholds information on the activities of state officials and institutions. Civil society leaders and journalists are routinely denied access to government officials, meetings, and events. Public officials are widely accused of publishing distorted data to downplay Turkey’s problems, including COVID-19 infection rates, as well as inflation and unemployment rates.

Key appointments made following the May 2023 elections signaled a shift toward more transparency in certain areas. The appointment of Hafize Gaye Erkan as central bank chief and the return of Mehmet Simsek as finance minister helped to restore some investor confidence in Turkey’s economy. Both appointees emphasized transparency as one of their key principles, which also helped restore public confidence in the government more broadly. Since her appointment to the position, Erkan has periodically held press conferences where she reported on the state of inflation and the bank’s policies, and has routinely met with industry groups in an effort to restore the bank’s commitment to transparency.

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because the newly appointed finance minister and central bank governor began to act on their pledges to restore transparency to Turkey's fiscal and monetary policies.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

1/4

Most Turkish media networks are owned by businesses that depend on public tenders or have close ties to President Erdoğan. Mainstream media reflect government positions and often carry identical headlines. 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. Business elites with close ties to Erdoğan have been accused of bribing journalists and orchestrating negative press against the opposition. Reporters have also faced physical attacks, notably those who cover politics, corruption, or crime.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Turkey was the world's fourth most prolific jailer of journalists in 2022, with 40 journalists in prison. Turkish authorities detained and arrested scores of journalists in 2023. At least four journalists were detained or faced criminal charges in February due to their critical coverage of the government's earthquake rescue efforts. Authorities detained Kurdish journalists in late April over alleged links to the PKK, and the CPJ describing the detentions as an effort to silence dissent ahead of elections. Journalists were also detained at various protests throughout the year.

Journalists who critically reported on individuals close to Erdoğan were targeted by authorities or saw access to their work restricted in 2023. In June, a Turkish court blocked access to 93 online news articles that were based on a Reuters

story on the alleged role of Erdoğan's son in an international bribery scheme. That same month, another court gave prison sentences to two journalists who reported on bribery allegations against Erdoğan's former lawyer. Investigative reporter Baris Pehlivan, who wrote a book about former interior minister Soylu's alleged relationship with organized crime in 2020, has been jailed five times since the book's publication, most recently in August 2023.

The members of Turkey's state broadcast regulator, the High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK), are appointed by the AKP-controlled parliament. The RTÜK continued to fine independent networks that critiqued the government in 2023, issuing 76 fines to 10 television networks, a majority of which are independent or opposition-aligned. Notably, the RTÜK fined three opposition-aligned television channels in March for covering earthquake rescue efforts or opposition criticisms of the government's disaster response. In June, just two days after the presidential election runoff, the RTÜK launched investigations into the same three channels as well as three others for "insulting the public" through their election coverage. Since 2019, the RTÜK has required international online video producers to obtain licenses in order to operate in Turkey, and in 2022 it blocked access to Voice of America and Deutsche Welle for refusing to comply with the regulation.

Authorities block and censor content on Turkish social media. A law approved in 2022 introduced a prison sentence of up to three years for individuals deemed to promote false information on social media. Press freedom advocates and the opposition heavily criticized the law's vague language and warned that it could be used as a tool to further silence independent journalists. In February 2023, a court sentenced Kurdish journalist Sinan Aygül to 10 months in prison for publishing a post on X about the alleged sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl by police officers and soldiers. In July, journalist Firat Can Arslan was arrested for posts he made on social media, and four other journalists were arrested for sharing his posts.

Since 2020, the government has forced major social media companies, including Facebook and YouTube, to maintain offices in the country and comply with government demands to take down content. Companies that refused to comply have received hefty fines and advertising bans. Ahead of the 2023 elections, Turkish courts ordered X to take down dozens of accounts and hundreds of posts by those accounts. Although X said that it filed objections to those requests, the

company banned access to four accounts and 409 posts after Turkish authorities threatened to throttle access to X during the elections.

Turkey's pro-opposition media also suffer from indirect censorship efforts like cyberattacks. On election day in May, three popular pro-opposition outlets in Turkey were targeted by cyberattacks that made their websites inaccessible to the public.

D2 0-4 pts

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

2 / 4

Sunni Islam is the majority religion in Turkey. While the constitution defines a secular state and guarantees freedom of religion, there are limitations on the rights of both recognized and unrecognized religious minorities. Turkey's Sunni mosques and schools are entitled to government funding through Turkey's state-controlled Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet)—which covers the salaries of imams as well as the mosques' costs like electricity, water, and gas—but Alevi institutions and those of other religious communities are not.

The national curriculum mandates compulsory religious education, and while non-Muslim students and Alevis are officially exempted from these courses, they have difficulty opting out of them in practice. Although Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Orthodox Christians are officially recognized as religious minorities in Turkey, disputes over property and prohibitions on training of clergy remain a problem.

Alevis and non-Muslims also continue to be targeted with hate speech and mob attacks.

D3 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

Academic freedom, never well respected in Turkey, was weakened further by the AKP's purge of government and civil society workers after the 2016 coup attempt.

The government has since dismissed thousands of academics and educators for their perceived leftist, Gülenist, or PKK sympathies. More than a thousand scholars have been investigated and 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.

D4 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

While citizens continue to voice their opinions openly in private, many exercise caution about what they say publicly. Ordinary people have faced criminal prosecution for incitement or insulting the president, as have public figures.

The government heavily monitors and censors the Turkish internet, contributing to self-censorship. The vaguely written disinformation law that took effect in October 2022 significantly expanded the scope of activities on social media deemed criminal and introduced a three-year maximum prison sentence.

In February 2023, authorities used this disinformation law to detain 78 people for their social media posts about the earthquake, accusing them of creating “fear and panic” among the public with their “provocative” posts criticizing the government’s disaster response. Authorities noted that they had identified 613 social media users who made provocative posts and launched legal proceedings against 293 of them. The government also restricted access to X and other social platforms for eight hours following the earthquake, which significantly compromised citizens’ aid and recovery efforts. The Turkish government has pursued similar restrictions during other moments of national significance, including by pressuring Turkey’s internet service providers to restrict access to Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X, and some Telegram servers in the aftermath of a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul in 2022.

The Turkish government's efforts to target individuals for their social media posts extends to foreign citizens and even foreign officials. In August 2023, Turkish authorities detained a German lawmaker for several hours over social media posts she made in 2019, which a Turkish prosecutor characterized as spreading terrorism propaganda.

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 and enjoy police protection. Police frequently use force to break up peaceful protests. In recent years, security forces have used tear gas, pepper spray, and other violent tactics to disperse demonstrators at May Day protests; Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir LGBT+ pride parades; Women's Day celebrations; marches against gender-based violence; protests against price hikes and soaring inflation; and other major gatherings. In June 2023, police arrested at least 93 people at the Istanbul pride parade, which activists held despite an official government ban. In Izmir, police banned a pride picnic organized by students at Ege University and violently intervened when students attempted to protest in front of the Izmir Bar Association, spraying tear gas indiscriminately. In Ankara, police detained students who were planning to hold pride demonstrations on campus at the Middle East Technical University (ODTU).

Participating in pride parades or LGBT+ events is particularly dangerous for people in Turkey who are not citizens. Five foreigners, including an Iranian refugee, were detained at the Istanbul pride parade in June 2023 and faced deportation. If deported, the Iranian refugee would potentially face a death sentence in Iran.

The police routinely break up the weekly vigils and commemorations organized by the Saturday Mothers and arrest its members. The group protests forced disappearances associated with a 1980 coup d'état, and most of its members are

elderly women. In February 2023, the Constitutional Court ruled that a district governor's decision to ban the 700th Saturday Mothers vigil in Istanbul in 2018 violated the activists' constitutional right to protest. Despite this ruling, police detained 50 people during the group's weekly vigil in July.

Since 2022, authorities have cracked down on art and music festivals, a staple of cultural life for Turkish youth. The trend appeared to continue into 2023, with music festivals being canceled, including because of arbitrary bans on alcohol and camping. In October, Turkey's most prestigious film festival was also canceled following government efforts to censor a political documentary.

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 independent civil society groups. Since 2016, it has shut down more than 1,500 foundations and associations. Leaders of remaining NGOs face harassment, arrests, and prosecutions. A 2020 law subjects NGOs to yearly audits and gives the Interior Ministry the power to appoint trustees to the boards of NGOs facing criminal investigation. In 2021, the government froze the assets of 770 NGOs on the spurious grounds of terrorism financing.

Turkey's politicized judiciary has convicted several prominent human rights activists, including the former head of Amnesty International Turkey, on bogus terrorism charges in an apparent effort to intimidate civil society actors and stifle human rights advocacy.

In April 2022, an Istanbul court convicted prominent philanthropist Osman Kavala and other celebrated civil society leaders of conspiring to overthrow the government. Kavala was sentenced to life in prison, while seven other defendants received 18-year sentences. In September 2023, an appeals court overturned three defendants' sentences but upheld Kavala's. The convictions, following a case that was widely seen as baseless, conspiratorial, and politically motivated, drew sharp criticism from international and domestic rights groups. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has repeatedly ordered Turkey to release Kavala.

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. Only 14.4 percent of workers in Turkey are unionized, and that figure does not include Turkey's massive informal labor market. Antiunion activities by employers are common and legal protections are poorly enforced. A system of threshold requirements limits unions' ability to secure collective-bargaining rights. Trade unions and professional organizations face government interference and retaliation for activities disruptive to authorities' wishes.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

1/4

Judicial independence has been severely compromised, as thousands of judges and prosecutors have been replaced with government loyalists since 2016. Under the presidential system that took effect in 2018, members of Turkey's Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), which oversees judicial appointments and disciplinary measures, are appointed by the parliament and the president rather than by members of the judiciary. As a result, prosecutors and judges often toe the government line. Judges who rule against the government's wishes have been removed and replaced, while those who convict Erdoğan's critics have been promoted.

Politically motivated prosecutions target politicians, journalists, academics, and students. Although the Constitutional Court has shown some independence since 2019, including in its decision to acquit the activists involved in the Saturday Mothers vigil, is not free from political influence and often delivers rulings in line with AKP interests.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

0 / 4

Severe violations of due process in the judicial system persist. Defendants are often held in lengthy pretrial detention that can last up to seven years. Prosecutors often wait months before unveiling charges and produce lengthy accounts that often lack evidence. In many cases, lawyers defending people accused of terrorism face arrest themselves. Lower courts often defy rulings by higher courts that they are legally bound to implement.

The case against Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala has been riddled with due process violations. Turkey continues to defy an ECtHR order to release him, in spite of warnings that it could be expelled from the ECtHR for refusing to comply.

F3 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

Turkish authorities are regularly accused of torturing prisoners. 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.

While the threat of terrorism has decreased significantly since 2018, attacks have taken place every year. A bombing in October 2023 targeted a government building in Ankara. The PKK claimed responsibility for the attack, which killed two people. Turkey maintains an armed campaign against the PKK and civilians in the country's Kurdish-majority southeast continue to grapple with the effects of the conflict.

F4 0-4 pts

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

1 / 4

Although Turkey's laws guarantee equal treatment of all citizens, religious, ethnic, and sexual and gender minorities suffer varying degrees of discrimination. Alevis and non-Muslims face systemic discrimination in schools and the public sector. The government's war with the PKK is used to justify discriminatory measures against Kurdish citizens, including the prohibition of Kurdish festivals. Kurdish schools and cultural organizations, many of which had opened while peace talks were taking place, have been investigated or shut down since 2015. Authorities periodically make mass arrests in Kurdish-dominated provinces, accusing those arrested of supporting the PKK. In late April 2023 the police detained over 100 people, including politicians, lawyers, and journalists, in Diyarbakır and other provinces.

Although women make up a growing part of the workforce, gender inequality is a pressing issue.

While same-sex relations are not legally prohibited, LGBT+ people face widespread discrimination, police harassment, and violence. Laws do not protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBT+ people are banned from serving in the military. Top state officials frequently engage in homophobic hate speech, and anti-LGBT+ rhetoric played a central role in the AKP's 2023 election campaign. Erdoğan and the AKP also forged an electoral alliance with two openly homophobic far-right Islamist parties, which now have parliamentary representation. The government continues to censor LGBT+ content in the media, including on Turkish streaming platforms and foreign ones like Netflix.

Turkey hosts more than 4 million refugees and migrants, most of them from Syria, according to the government. Refugees have no clear path to citizenship and their movement is restricted to their provinces of registration, outside of which they are not allowed to live or work. Most refugee children lack access to education, and most adults lack employment permits. Popular resentment against refugees and discriminatory rhetoric among politicians has been increasing. Amid this political atmosphere, residency permits for refugees and migrants have become increasingly difficult to obtain and to renew. Antimigrant rhetoric played an outsized role in the 2023 elections, with almost every political candidate attributing the country's problems to migrants and vowing to send refugees back to their countries of origin. Reports also point to a growing number of

deportations, some of which rights groups have characterized as forced deportations.

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

Freedom of movement is limited in some regions and for groups treated with suspicion by the government. In southeastern Turkey, movement is limited due to the conflict between the government and the PKK. More than 125,000 public-sector workers who were fired or suspended following the coup attempt in 2016 have since been unable to find employment due to an atmosphere of guilt by association and cannot travel abroad as their passports have been canceled. Refugees continue to face legal and practical obstacles to free employment and 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 for the last decade, critics or opponents of the government have been subjected to intrusive tax and regulatory inspections. Since 2016, the assets of hundreds of companies, NGOs, and media outlets deemed to be associated with terrorist groups have been confiscated, severely harming public confidence in the rule of law and free enterprise.

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

Turkey's gender-based violence and femicide rates are among the world's highest, and women's rights activists largely blame this environment on a culture of impunity enabled by the government and judiciary. Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty to prevent gender-based violence, in 2021 removed key legal protections for women facing domestic abuse. Police are reluctant to intervene in domestic disputes and few women's shelters exist. Erdoğan and the AKP consistently campaign to dissuade women from seeking divorce and to bear at least three children. Contraception, while legal, is increasingly difficult to access. Child marriages, although illegal, often take place, mainly performed through unofficial religious ceremonies or by fraudulently obtaining marriage licenses using false identification. A far-right Islamist party that allied with the AKP in the 2023 elections and has parliamentary representation has openly questioned Turkey's laws against child marriage and longstanding practice of coeducation.

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 frequent in recent years and laborers have little recourse if injured. According to the Health and Safety Labor Watch (İSiG), at least 1,843 workers died in work-related incidents in 2022. Only a tiny portion of refugees have work permits. Turkey's informal economy is as big as about a third of its overall economy, and migrant and refugee workers are especially vulnerable to economic exploitation in unregulated industry.



On Turkey

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

See More >

Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

33/100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

30/100 Not Free

Other Years

2023

**Be the first to know
what's happening.**

Join the Freedom House weekly
newsletter

Subscribe

ADDRESS

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA

press@freedomhouse.org

@2024 FreedomHouse