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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Turkey

Overview: Turkey continued its efforts to defeat terrorist organizations both inside and outside its borders, including the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and ISIS. Turkey remained an active contributor in international counterterrorism fora, including the GCTF.

Turkey is a source and transit country for FTFs seeking to join ISIS and other terrorist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq. Turkey is an active member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, co-chairs the Defeat-ISIS Coalition FTF Working Group, and continued to provide access to its airspace and facilities for operations in Iraq and Syria. According to public data, as of October 23, Turkey’s “Banned from Entry List” included approximately 70,000 individuals. Turkey deported approximately 6,000 individuals for suspected terrorism ties.

The PKK continued to conduct terrorist attacks in Turkey and against Turkish interests outside of Turkey. Turkey’s security forces conducted operations domestically, along with airstrikes in northern Iraq and operations in Syria. The Ministry of National Defense claimed that, as of November 15, the government had killed, wounded, or captured more than 1,289 PKK terrorists to date in 2018. Detentions and arrests of individuals suspected of aiding the PKK continued in 2018.

According to interior ministry data, law enforcement forces detained more than 11,421 suspects for allegedly aiding and abetting the PKK for the year up to December 10. Two Turkish National Intelligence Organization (Milli Istihbarat Teskilatı, or MIT) officers who were kidnapped in 2017 by the PKK in northern Iraq remained missing at year’s end. As a counterterrorism partner of the United States, Turkey continued to receive U.S. assistance to address the terrorist threat posed by the PKK in 2018. The United States listed three senior PKK leaders under the Rewards for Justice program in November, offering up to US \$12 million in exchange for information leading to the three leaders.

In the aftermath of the July 2016 coup attempt, the government labeled the movement of self-exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen as the “Fethullah Terrorist Organization” (FETO). FETO is not a designated terrorist organization in the United States. This resulted in continued detentions and arrests of Turkish citizens as well as foreign citizens resident in Turkey – including U.S. citizens and locally employed staff at the U.S. Mission to Turkey – for alleged FETO or terrorism-related links, often on the basis of scant evidence and minimal due process. According to the Presidency, the government had detained

47,778 individuals by December 11. In addition, the government continued to dismiss military, security, and civil servants from public office in 2018. By year’s end, the government had dismissed or suspended more than 130,000 civil servants from public office, arrested or imprisoned more than 80,000 citizens, and closed more than 1,500 NGOs for alleged FETO links since the 2016 coup attempt.

2018 Terrorist Incidents: Several terrorist incidents occurred in 2018:

- On February 1, three Turkish soldiers were killed and seven wounded by the PKK in cross-border rocket attacks from Iraq into the Turkish province of Hakkari.
- On March 30, six Turkish village guards and one Turkish soldier were killed, and six guards and soldiers injured, in a PKK shooting in Siirt province.
- On July 31, a PKK roadside bomb killed two civilians, including an infant, in Hakkari province.
- On October 4, a PKK bomb killed eight soldiers and wounded two more in Batman province.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Turkey has a broad definition of terrorism that includes crimes against constitutional order and internal and external security of the state, which the government regularly used to criminalize the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression and assembly. According to the Ministry of Interior, authorities referred more than 7,000 social media accounts to judicial authorities for alleged terrorist-related propaganda. Turkey has advanced law enforcement capacity to combat terrorism, and efforts continue to streamline interagency information sharing. According to the Presidency, until December 11 the government carried out 1,206 operations against ISIS and arrested 854 suspected ISIS members. Turkey will sometimes deport suspected foreign terrorist fighters without providing advance notice to the destination countries.

Turkey continued construction of security walls along its land borders with Syria and Iran. By October, 91 out of 144 kilometers of walls on the Iranian border and 805 of 828 kilometers of planned walls along the Syrian border had been completed. According to government data, from January to July, Turkish security forces apprehended more than 127,776 irregular migrants attempting to illegally cross Turkey’s borders.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Turkey is a member of the FATF, and its FIU, the Financial Crimes Investigation Board, is a member of the Egmont Group. There have been no significant changes to the country’s counterterrorism financing regime since 2016. FATF will complete a new full assessment of Turkey’s counter terrorist financing regime in 2019.

For additional information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes* (<https://www.state.gov/2019-international-narcotics-control-strategy-report/>).

Countering Violent Extremism: The Turkish National Police (TNP) undertakes social projects, activities with parents, and in-service training for officers and teachers. Programs prepare medical, community, and religious officials to intervene to undermine terrorist messaging and to prevent recruitment. The Ministry of Justice implements some rehabilitation and reintegration programs for convicts and former criminals.

Turkey’s Religious Affairs Presidency (Diyanet), which reports to the Presidency following a governmental reorganization, reports that it works to undermine terrorist messaging by promoting its inclusive version of Islam. All Sunni imams in Turkey officially must be employees of the Diyanet.

Turkey hosted the third Regional Coordination Conference for Counter-Terrorism and Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism in South East Europe in December.

The city of Antalya is a member of the Strong Cities Network.

International and Regional Cooperation: Turkey is a member of the UN, NATO, the Committee of Experts on Terrorism of the Council of Europe, and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and co-chairs, with Kuwait and the Netherlands, the Defeat-ISIS Coalition FTF Working Group. Turkey regularly participates in GCTF meetings and initiatives. Turkey also contributes to the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, a GCTF-inspired institution, and provides expert support to assist training for judges and prosecutors handling terrorism cases. Turkey participates in the OSCE expert meetings on the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism organized by the OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Secretariat.

Turkey has bilateral security cooperation agreements with more than 70 countries. The TNP contributes to counterterrorism capacity-building programs of partner countries and offers specialized international law enforcement training in a variety of sectors, including counterterrorism.

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