

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	420
Land:	Tyrkiet
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	World Report 2017 – Turkey
Udgivet:	12. januar 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	31. januar 2017



World Report 2017 - Turkey

Publisher [Human Rights Watch](#)

Publication Date 12 January 2017

Cite as Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2017 - Turkey*, 12 January 2017, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/587b581421.html> [accessed 31 January 2017]

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On July 15, 2016, elements of the military attempted to carry out a coup d'état against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. The attempted coup left at least 241 citizens and government law enforcement dead. During the attempted coup fighter jets bombed Turkey's parliament. In the aftermath, the government declared a state of emergency, jailed thousands of soldiers and embarked on a wholesale purge of public officials, police, teachers, judges, and prosecutors. Most of those jailed, dismissed, or suspended were accused of being followers of the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen. The government, with the support of main opposition parties, accuses the Gülen movement of masterminding the coup and labels it a terrorist organization. However, the crackdown also extended to the pro-Kurdish opposition party, with two leaders and other MPs arrested and placed in pretrial detention, along with many of its elected mayors, denying millions of voters their elected representatives.

The war in Syria continues to impact Turkey, which hosts an estimated 2.7 million Syrian refugees. There have been regular bomb attacks in Turkey by individuals allegedly linked to the Islamic State (also known as ISIS). Authorities blamed ISIS for a June attack in which three suicide bombers targeted Istanbul airport killing 45, and an August attack on a Kurdish wedding party in Gaziantep that killed 57.

In August, Turkish military forces entered the ISIS-occupied Syrian border town of Jarablus and attacked Syrian Kurdish forces in the area, apparently because of their links to the Turkey-based armed group the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK and a related armed group, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), stepped up attacks in 2016, including a March suicide attack killing 37 in central Ankara, and a June attack in Istanbul killing 11, as well as regular attacks on military and police targets.

Crackdown after the Attempted Coup

The crackdown that followed the coup attempt was symptomatic of the government's increasing authoritarianism. Under the state of emergency, the president presides over the cabinet, which can pass decrees without parliamentary scrutiny or possibility of appeal to the constitutional court.

Many decrees passed contain measures that conflict with basic human rights safeguards and Turkey's obligations under international and domestic law.

These include provisions allowing for dismissal from public service without an investigation, confiscation of property without judicial review, police custody of up to 30 days, and the reintroduction of incommunicado detention in which detainees can be denied access to a lawyer in the first five days of custody, giving rise to heightened risks of ill-treatment.

Turkey temporarily derogated from (asserted the right to place extraordinary restrictions on) many of the protections in the European Convention on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, although it is prohibited from derogating from core obligations, including the absolute prohibition on torture or ill-treatment of detainees.

The weakening of safeguards against abuse in detention under the state of emergency was accompanied by increased reports of torture and ill-treatment in police detention, such as beating and stripping detainees, use of prolonged stress positions, and threats of rape, as well as threats to lawyers and interference with medical examinations. While many allegations arose in relation to members of the military and police detained in connection with the coup, they were not the only groups who reported ill-treatment post-coup, and Kurdish detainees in the southeast had reported similar abuses over the past year.

The scale of dismissals and prosecutions in connection with the coup and weakened safeguards gave rise to serious concerns that the legitimate prosecution of those suspected of involvement in the coup attempt is being conducted without due process.

Over 100,000 public officials and civil servants have been dismissed or suspended. These include around 28,000 teachers alleged to be Gülen supporters and labelled by the government to be part of a terrorist organization.

Many detainees – including teachers, police, public officials – are placed in pretrial detention despite a lack of evidence of criminal wrong-doing or compelling grounds for custody. At least 2,200 judges and prosecutors were jailed pending investigation, reportedly because their names appeared on a list of alleged Gülen supporters. With 3,400 permanently dismissed for the same reason, their assets frozen, over one-fifth of Turkey's judiciary has been removed. Around 11,000 teachers in the southeast who were mainly members of the left-leaning Eğitim Sen trade union were also suspended.

Freedoms of Expression, Association, and Assembly

Government-led efforts to silence media criticism and scrutiny of government policy in Turkey involved five main trends: the prosecution and jailing of journalists; takeover of media companies – including the daily *Zaman* newspaper – by appointing government-approved trustees and seizing assets and the closing down of media; removal of critical television stations from the main state-owned satellite distribution platform and their closure; physical attacks and threats against journalists; and government pressure on media to fire critical journalists and cancel their press accreditation. Blocking of news websites critical to the government also increased. Turkey made the highest number of requests to Twitter of any country to censor individual accounts.

In January 2016, over 1,000 university lecturers who signed a petition criticizing government policy in the southeast and calling for a return to political negotiations with the PKK, were harshly targeted by Erdoğan in speeches and then subjected to a criminal investigation for "insulting" the Turkish state. The investigation had not been concluded at time of writing. Some universities dismissed signatories of the petition, and 68 were fired by decree in September and October.

International pressure, including from the UN Secretary General, helped to secure the release of some journalists from unjustified detention, including Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) representative Erol Onderoğlu in June. However, following the coup attempt such pressure appeared to have less effect.

Following the coup attempt, the government closed down by decree over 160 media outlets, most linked to the Gülen movement or Kurdish media. The number of journalists in pretrial detention on the basis of their writing and journalistic activities surged to 144 by mid-November, making Turkey once again a world leader in jailing journalists. Presenting no evidence of criminal wrongdoing, authorities detained many reporters and columnists employed by media outlets allegedly linked to Gülen. Among those jailed pending investigation were veteran journalists and commentators who have been prominent government critics such as Nazlı Ilıcak, Şahin Alpay, Ahmet Altan, and Mehmet Altan.

Authorities detained journalists and writers on charges of links with the PKK but again presented no evidence to support the charges. Among this group were novelists Necmiye Alpay and Aslı Erdoğan. Authorities closed down the pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Gündem* in August and placed dozens of journalists who had participated in a solidarity campaign with the newspaper under investigation for "spreading terrorist propaganda."

Cumhuriyet daily newspaper editor Can Dündar and the Ankara bureau chief Erdem Gül were convicted in May and sentenced to over five years' imprisonment for revealing state secrets by publishing evidence of arms being sent to Syria. Dündar and Gül have appealed the verdict. Dündar is outside Turkey. In November, authorities arrested Murat Sabuncu who became *Cumhuriyet* editor after Dündar, as well as nine writers and board members from the newspaper.

Using state of emergency powers, in November the government suspended by decree the activities of 370 nongovernmental associations, among them a children's rights group, three lawyers' associations with a human rights focus, and women's rights and humanitarian organizations in the southeast.

Authorities frequently impose arbitrary bans on public assemblies and violently disperse peaceful demonstrations. For the second year running, the Istanbul governor's office banned the annual Istanbul Gay and Trans Pride marches in June 2016, citing concerns about security threats and public order.

Escalating Conflict in the Southeast

The breakdown in 2015 of a two-and-a-half-year ceasefire with the PKK and the Turkish government's peace process with the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan triggered a rapid escalation of violence in 2016.

Intense security operations in the period January to May in towns in the southeast where the city militias linked to the PKK had become entrenched resulted in displacement of up to 400,000 residents. Amidst heavy clashes, hundreds of residents, police, soldiers and PKK-linked militants died.

In Cizre security forces' attacks killed and injured unarmed residents including children and destroyed civilian homes. Around 130 wounded militants and unarmed activists sheltering in three basements surrounded by the security forces were killed in circumstances which the state has neither explained nor effectively investigated.

Blanket curfews continued for many months during security operations in Cizre and other towns and neighborhoods, impeding access for journalists and human rights investigators. Authorities

demolished large areas of the majority Kurdish cities of Diyarbakır, Şırnak, Nusaybin, and Yüksekova.

In June, the government introduced a law making any prosecution of the military and public officials, including the police, engaged in counterterrorism operations dependent on administrative permission. The law effectively grants immunity from prosecution to the security forces for abuses committed in the recent operations in the southeast in violation of Turkey's duty to investigate such abuses.

In May, the government secured the lifting of the parliamentary immunity of 148 deputies, 53 of them members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) facing investigation on terrorism charges. In August, the government introduced a decree appointing trustees to take over 28 municipalities (24 of them in the southeast), removing elected mayors and council members from office. By mid-November, 53 had been dismissed and 39, including Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, co-mayors of Diyarbakır, arrested pending investigation. In November, nine HDP members of parliament including party leaders Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ were arrested and placed in pretrial detention.

Refugees and Migrants

Turkey continued to host large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, primarily from Syria, but also from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. The number of asylum seekers transiting to Greece fell after the March EU-Turkey migration deal (see European Union chapter). Despite increased aid and some efforts by authorities, most refugees and asylum seekers lack effective protection, education, or formal employment, with high rates of child labor and a particularly precarious situation for non-Syrians. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian children are still not attending school. A January decree allowing some Syrians to apply for work permits has had little effect to date.

Turkey's border gates and entire land border with Syria remain closed although people seriously injured in fighting are admitted to Turkey for medical treatment. Syrian refugees attempting to cross into Turkey at unofficial crossing points are summarily pushed back into Syria and some asylum seekers and smugglers attempting the crossing have been shot dead or beaten by Turkish border guards.

Women's Rights

Following its July review of Turkey, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) made many recommendations to the government to address gender inequality and remove obstacles for women and girls to access education, employment, justice, and reproductive health. It noted particular obstacles for Kurdish women and women and girl refugees and asylum seekers. The committee called on authorities to ensure full access in state hospitals to legal abortion services that many currently do not offer. It also noted concerns about changes to the ministry responsible for women, and the increasing emphasis on women's role in the family rather than women's rights and gender equality.

Despite the Turkish government's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), violence against women remains a serious concern, including deaths due to domestic violence and so-called "honor" killings.

Key International Actors

There was international support for the Turkish government in the face of the coup attempt, although the Turkish government criticized what it saw as late and weak responses by the European Union and United States.

The EU-Turkey migration deal and desire for Turkey to host asylum seekers who would otherwise travel to the EU, reinforced the EU's reluctance to use its declining leverage with Turkey. In their relationship with Turkey, the EU and its member states largely appeared to prioritize strategic interests over the promotion of human rights, while issuing repeated statements expressing concern over the growing crackdown. The European Commission progress report described negative developments over the year yet failed to capture the severity and extent of the human rights crisis in Turkey.

With the Obama administration primarily focused on seeking Ankara's cooperation in the fight against ISIS and other armed militant groups, human rights were also not a primary focus of relations in 2016.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, spoke out against curbs on media freedom and human rights abuses committed in the context of security operations in the southeast, pressing for a UN fact-finding team to investigate the latter. The Turkish government extended an invitation to Zeid himself, while repeatedly blocking a fact-finding mission. Zeid strongly condemned the coup attempt in Turkey while urging Turkey "to refrain from turning the clock back on human rights protections."

After the coup attempt, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Turkish authorities to do their utmost to ensure that the constitutional order and international human rights law are fully respected in line with Turkey's international obligations, including freedom of expression, freedom of movement and peaceful assembly, independence of the judiciary and of the legal profession, right to fair trial, and strict adherence to due process.

The UN Committee against Torture, in its April review of Turkey, expressed serious concern about "numerous credible reports of law enforcement officials engaging in torture and ill-treatment of detainees while responding to perceived and alleged security threats in the southeastern part of the country."

After the Turkish government postponed his planned October visit, outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez issued a statement expressing deep disappointment about a decision saying it "sends the wrong message" in light of the thousands of arrests after the coup attempt. The visit was scheduled again for late November under the mandate of the incoming rapporteur. In August, a group of 19 UN experts and three UN working groups issued a joint call to emphasize to Turkey that "one cannot avoid, even in times of emergency, obligations to protect the right to life, prohibit torture, adhere to fundamental elements of due process and non-discrimination, and protect everyone's right to belief and opinion."

In October, the Council of Europe's commissioner of human rights issued a *memorandum* on the serious human rights implications of the measures taken under *Turkey's state of emergency*.

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