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Freedom on the Net 2025 - Turkey



Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

While fewer internet users received long-term prison sentences for their online content during the coverage period, numerous restrictions on internet freedom persisted in Turkey. Access to social media platforms was throttled during protests, and authorities issued scores of orders to block websites and remove content. Online troll networks continued to amplify progovernment disinformation, and journalists, activists, and social media users faced criminal charges for the content they posted.

- The government throttled internet access for one week amid violent demonstrations against the presence of Syrian refugees in Kayseri Province in July 2024.¹ Authorities also throttled social media access for 42 hours during protests against the arrest of opposition presidential candidate and Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu in March 2025 (A3 and B8).²
- In August 2024, Turkey’s Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) blocked the social media platform Instagram for nine days. While the BTK did not provide an initial reason for the blocking, its decision came after reports that Instagram had removed posts from Turkish users who were mourning the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, political leader of the Palestinian militant group Hamas (B1).³
- Scores of social media accounts were blocked or suspended at the request of Turkish authorities during the coverage period. In March 2025, the social media platform X blocked the account of the independent media outlet Bianet, reportedly due to its coverage of the protests against İmamoğlu’s arrest. İmamoğlu’s X account was also blocked by the platform (B2).⁴
- In March 2025, Turkish legislators passed the Cyber Security Law (Law No. 7545), which included provisions that could stifle free expression and privacy online. The law would give authorities broad access to any data stored in Turkey, provided they obtain a court order, and included criminal penalties for individuals who refuse to hand over personal information when it is requested by officials. The law also criminalized the spreading of false information about online data leaks, prescribing penalties of up to five years in prison (C2).⁵
- Eight Kurdish journalists from the news agency Mezopotamya were each sentenced to six years in prison in July 2024 on baseless charges of participation in a terrorist organization (C3).⁶

Political Overview

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose Justice and Development Party (AKP) has ruled Turkey since 2002, has become increasingly authoritarian over the past decade, consolidating power through constitutional changes and the imprisonment of political opponents, independent journalists, and members of civil society. The AKP has responded to recent economic challenges and municipal election defeats by intensifying its efforts to suppress dissent and limit public discourse.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?	5 / 6
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A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons?	1 / 3
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A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?	3 / 6
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Score Change: The score declined from 4 to 3 because authorities throttled internet access in Kayseri Province during violent demonstrations against Syrian refugees in July 2024,⁷ and because major social media platforms were rendered inaccessible for nearly two days in March 2025 amid opposition protests in Istanbul.⁸

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?	3 / 6
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A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner?	1 / 4
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B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? | 1 / 6

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? | 0 / 4

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process? | 1 / 4

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship? | 1 / 4

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest? | 1 / 4

B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online? | 1 / 3

B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability? | 2 / 4

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues? | 3 / 6

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence? | 1 / 6

C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards? | 1 / 4

C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards? | 1 / 6

Score Change: The score improved from 0 to 1 because fewer internet users received decades-long prison sentences for their online content than during the previous coverage period.

C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption? | 1 / 4

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy? | 1 / 6

C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy? | 0 / 6

C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities? | 2 / 5

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack? | 1 / 3

Footnotes

- 1 Armani Syed, "What to Know About Anti-Syrian Unrest in Turkey," Time, July 3, 2024, <https://time.com/6994932/anti-syrian-unrest-turkey/>; "Protests and arrests as anti-Syrian riots rock Turkey," Al Jazeera, July 2, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/2/protests-and-arrests-as-anti-sy...>; IODA, "Internet Connectivity for Kayseri," Accessed October 2025, <https://ioda.inetintel.cc.gatech.edu/region/4135?from=1719792000&until=...>; Chiara Castro, "Turkey rocked by second day of internet blackouts," Tech Radar, July 2, 2024, <https://www.techradar.com/pro/vpn/turkey-rocked-by-second-day-of-intern...>
- 2 Civil Rights Defenders, "Turkey: Ensure peaceful assembly, free speech during protests," March 8, 2025, <https://crd.org/2025/03/28/turkey-ensure-peaceful-assembly-free-speech-...>; Human Rights Watch, "Joint Open Letter to Social Media Companies on Censorship in Türkiye," May 8, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/08/joint-open-letter-social-media-comp...>; "Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu imprisoned, pending trial in Türkiye," Al Jazeera, March 23, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/23/turkish-court-orders-istanbul-...>; Ben Hubbard and Safak Timur, "Turkey Ousts and Jails Istanbul Mayor, Who Was Expected to Run for President," The New York Times, March 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/23/world/middleeast/turkey-ekrem-imamog...>
- 3 Metehan Durmaz, "Why did Türkiye ban Instagram for nine days?," SMEX, August 23, 2024, <https://smex.org/why-did-turkiye-ban-instagram-for-nine-days/>; Suzan Fraser, "Turkey blocks access to Instagram. It's in response to removal of posts on Hamas chief, reports say," Associated Press, August 2, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/turkey->

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- 4 “X blocks access to more than 100 journalist, activist accounts in Turkey,” Turkish Minute, October 24, 2024, <https://www.turkishminute.com/2024/10/24/x-block-access-to-more-than-10...>; “X blocks access to popular independent news website in Turkey over protest coverage,” Turkish Minute, March 24, 2025, <https://turkishminute.com/2025/03/24/x-blocks-access-to-popular-indepen...>; “Jailed Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu's X account blocked in Turkey,” Reuters, May 8, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/jailed-istanbul-mayor-imamogl...>
- 5 Committee to Protect Journalists, “New Turkish law criminalizes ‘false’ reporting on cybersecurity-related data leaks,” March 13, 2025, <https://cpj.org/2025/03/new-turkish-law-criminalizes-false-reporting-on...>; IFEX, “Turkey: New cybersecurity law threatens free expression,” March 13, 2025, <https://ifex.org/turkey-new-cyber-security-law-threatens-free-expressio...>
- 6 Committee to Protect Journalists, “Turkish court sentences 8 Kurdish journalists to 6 years,” July 3, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/07/turkish-court-sentences-8-kurdish-journalists-t...>
- 7 Jonathan Greig, “Millions cut off from internet due to government throttling, Hurricane Beryl,” July 9, 2024, <https://therecord.media/internet-outages-protests-turkey-hurricane-beryl>; Armani Syed, “What to Know About Anti-Syrian Unrest in Turkey,” Time, July 3, 2024, <https://time.com/6994932/anti-syrian-unrest-turkey/>; “Protests and arrests as anti-Syrian riots rock Turkey,” Al Jazeera, July 2, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/2/protests-and-arrests-as-anti-sy...>; IODA, “Internet Connectivity for Kayseri,” Accessed October 2025, <https://ioda.inetintel.cc.gatech.edu/region/4135?from=1719792000&until=...>; Chiara Castro, “Turkey rocked by second day of internet blackouts,” Tech Radar, July 2, 2024, <https://www.techradar.com/pro/vpn/turkey-rocked-by-second-day-of-intern...>
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