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World Report 2025 - Türkiye

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP)-led parliamentary coalition government exert strong control over the media, courts, and most state institutions, regularly sidelining or punishing perceived government critics. Political divisions and power struggles within Türkiye's top courts and increasing reports of corruption within the state and judiciary have further undermined human rights and the rule of law. Authorities including courts continued to ignore or reject binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), finding Türkiye in violation, leading to perpetuation of serious violations. A cost-of-living crisis continued in 2024, with the Turkish Statistical Institute reporting an annual inflation rate of 47 percent in November.

Local elections in March saw the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) make the largest gains against Erdoğan's AKP in over two decades, securing 37.8 percent of the vote nationally against the AKP's 35 percent and holding on to the Istanbul and Ankara municipalities.

Freedom of Expression

Government control of the media extends to the public broadcaster TRT and public news wire service Anadolu Ajansı (Anatolian Agency), and the majority of television news channels and print media are government-aligned. Independent media in Türkiye operate mainly via online platforms.

Authorities regularly order the blocking of websites and platforms or removal of critical online content or negative news coverage relating to public officials, companies, the president and his family, and members of the judiciary. They typically cite as grounds unspecific threats to national security or public order or violations of personal rights. Constitutional Court decisions published in [November 2023](#) and [January 2024](#) found that two articles of [internet law no. 5651](#) permitting blocking or removal of content on these grounds violate the right to freedom of expression; the [January decision](#) repealed the article concerning violations of personal rights.

Courts frequently issue blocking orders for multiple accounts in one judgment. The Freedom of Expression Association's EngelliWeb project [announced](#) that as of the end of March Türkiye had blocked over one million websites since the 2007 introduction of the internet law.

On August 2, Turkish officials, without issuing specific grounds, [blocked the entire Instagram platform](#) for eight days after the presidency's communications director criticized Meta's removal of condolence messages concerning the former head of Hamas' political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, killed on July 31.

Deutsche Welle and Voice of America online news platforms have been indefinitely blocked in Türkiye since June 2022 over their refusal to obtain licenses. They refuse on grounds that licensing would expose them to arbitrary fines and sanctions Türkiye's broadcasting watchdog regularly issues to online broadcasters not aligned with the government.

Journalists regularly face prosecution under Türkiye's Anti-Terror Law, as well as under criminal defamation and other laws. Kurdish journalists are disproportionately targeted. In July, the Ankara trial of 11 Kurdish journalists resulted in the conviction of eight on charges of "membership of a terrorist organization," each sentenced to six years and three months in prison. They have appealed the verdicts. The Diyarbakır trial of 20 Kurdish journalists and media workers on the same charges continued. At time of writing, [at least 21 journalists and media workers](#) were in pretrial detention or serving prison sentences for terrorism offenses for journalistic work or association with media.

Freedoms of Association and Assembly

Thousands of people face detention, investigations, and unfair trials on terrorism charges for alleged links with the movement led by deceased US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, which the government deems a terrorist organization responsible for the July 15, 2016 attempted military coup. Many have faced prolonged and arbitrary imprisonment with no effective remedy after mass removal from civil service jobs and the judiciary. The justice minister [announced in July](#) that 13,251 remanded and convicted persons alleged to be members of the movement remained in prison.

To date the Turkish authorities have failed to implement a key ruling of the ECtHR finding that the conviction on charges of “membership of a terrorist organization” of former teacher Yüksel Yalçınkaya, mainly for having a mobile phone application called ByLock allegedly used by Gülen followers, was an arbitrary application of the law that violated the principle of legality. The judgment also found violations of fair trial and freedom of association rights and ruled that Türkiye needed to implement general measures to address the violations. There were around 8,000 similar cases before the Strasbourg court at time of writing. In Yalçınkaya’s September retrial, a local court disregarded the ECtHR and convicted him again on the same charges.

Provincial authorities regularly ban protests and assemblies of constituencies critical of the government, often flouting domestic court rulings that such bans are disproportionate. Police violently detain demonstrators associated with leftist or Kurdish groups.

Attacks on Human Rights Defenders

Osman Kavala, Çiğdem Mater, Can Atalay, Mine Özerden, and Tayfun Kahraman, known for their civil society engagement, remain in prison after their convictions on baseless charges of organizing the 2013 Gezi Park protests and attempting to overthrow the government. Kavala has been arbitrarily detained since October 2017 and the others since their conviction in April 2022. Türkiye has flagrantly disregarded the ECtHR decision ordering Kavala’s release, prompting his lawyers to file a new ECtHR challenge in January 2024 concerning continuing violation of his rights.

In January, human rights lawyer Can Atalay was stripped of the parliamentary seat he won as a member of the Workers’ Party of Türkiye in May 2023 parliamentary elections, despite final rulings by the Constitutional Court ordering his release to assume elected office. The case sparked a major crisis in the judiciary, with the Court of Cassation taking the unprecedented step of rejecting two Constitutional Court decisions and even requesting criminal investigation of the court’s members.

In November, the government withdrew an [espionage bill](#) and pledged to amend it. Human rights groups and journalists had raised concerns that the draft law sought to expand the definition of espionage in such a vague manner that it could be used to criminalize legitimate work by civil society groups and the media.

Torture and Ill-Treatment in Custody

In July, the UN Committee against Torture reviewed Türkiye for the first time since the marked rise in torture and ill-treatment that followed the 2016 attempted military coup. The [committee’s concluding observations](#) raised concerns that allegations of torture and ill-treatment occur “in a generalized manner, notably in detention centres,” and that where prosecutions take place acts of torture are “frequently classified as other crimes.” Recommendations included ending the practice of reverse handcuffing widely used by the police, and ending “all extrajudicial extraditions and renditions, including of individuals with perceived or real affiliations” to the Gülen movement. The committee further recommended the abolition of the penalty of aggravated life imprisonment, entailing “de facto solitary confinement” and no prospect of release.

Kurdish Conflict and Crackdown on Opposition

Türkiye concentrates its military campaign against the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with air and drone strikes in northern Iraq where PKK bases are located and in northeast Syria against the Kurdish-led, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). [Turkish air strikes](#) targeted civilian facilities, putting livelihoods at risk and depriving communities of electricity and other essential services.

During 2024, and at time of writing, after the collapse of the rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Türkiye continued to occupy territories in northern Syria with the stated objective of protecting itself against the Syrian Kurdish de facto administration and armed groups aligned with the PKK. The Turkish authorities have [failed to curb abuses](#) by their Syrian National Army (SNA) and Military Police proxies in the occupied territories. Kurds and Arabs in those areas have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence, and unfair military trials. Thousands have been forcibly displaced, their property, land, and businesses seized.

Hundreds of Kurdish activists and former parliamentarians, mayors, and party officials in Türkiye are in prison or are serving sentences after being convicted of terrorism offenses for legitimate non-violent political activities, speeches, and social media postings. They include jailed former Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, in prison since November 4, 2016; in May they were [convicted to long prison terms](#) despite ECtHR judgments ordering their immediate release.

In October the leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), in coalition with Erdoğan's AKP, advocated review of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's sentence of life imprisonment without parole, of which he has served 25 years, and even his possible release, if Öcalan called on the PKK to disband. The proposal did not address the rights deficit for Kurds, which lies at the heart of the decades-long conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK. The evolving situation in Syria will also be an important factor in any future resolution of the Kurdish conflict.

By November, the [government had removed two CHP and five Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party \(DEM\) mayors](#) elected in March elections, citing terrorism trials or investigations against them. This was the third time the AKP-MHP coalition had taken over Kurdish municipalities in the southeast, but the first time Kurdish CHP mayors were removed and, in the case of the Istanbul Esenyurt mayor, detained.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

Türkiye continues to host the world's largest number of refugees. As of December, 2,9 million Syrians had temporary protection status. The Turkish government mostly deems people from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other non-European countries irregular migrants and strictly limits avenues for them to apply for international protection, routinely deporting large groups, publishing statistics that show it, and conducting mass summary pushbacks at the borders. Unlawful deportations of men and some boys to northern Syria, often after being coerced into signing voluntary return forms, continued.

Xenophobic violence against Syrians amidst rising hostility to refugees, stoked by political parties regularly weaponizing the issue in their political discourse, also continued. In July, crowds in the city of Kayseri [attacked](#) shops and cars of Syrians and a [mob in Antalya killed a 17-year-old Syrian boy](#).

Women's Rights

The impact of Türkiye's March 20, 2021 withdrawal by presidential decree from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) was reflected in continuing government failure to take adequate measures to curb Türkiye's high incidence of gender-based violence and femicides. While the interior minister [announced in July](#) that 166 women victims of violence had been killed by men in the first six months of 2024, research by independent media organization Bianet [put the number at 193](#).

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Erdoğan government and religious conservative opposition parties regularly use discriminatory [political speech amounting to hate speech](#) against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities on the pretext of promoting family values, attempting to appeal to conservative voter bases and fomenting societal polarization. This has put LGBT people at great risk. Istanbul Pride was banned for the tenth consecutive year and many cities across the country impose similar bans.

Climate Change Policy and Impacts

Despite ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2021 and preparing to update its [weak](#) greenhouse gas emission mitigation targets, gaps in climate policy and lack of plans for just transition make it unclear whether Türkiye will be able to meet its [own 2053 net zero goal](#) or the European Union's 2026 deadline for enforcement of its [carbon border adjustment mechanism](#).

Türkiye has not yet committed to a [coal phase-out](#) and has plans to [expand](#) one of the country's oldest and most polluting coal power plants in the southeastern Kahramanmaraş province. Air pollution control regulations do not meet World Health Organization standards and are not fully compliant with European Union standards.