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2 December 2021

TUR200822.E

Turkey: The Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), including origin, structure, leadership, objectives, and activities; treatment of party members and supporters by authorities; requirements and procedures to become a member of the party, including membership cards; membership card sample (2019–November 2021)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

Sources indicate that the CHP is the main opposition party (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Netherlands Mar. 2021, 9; Erdemandi 6 Aug. 2020) to the current Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) government, led by President Tayyip Erdoğan (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The CHP has been the main opposition in the Turkish Parliament since 2002 (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1690, 1696; Erdemandi 6 Aug. 2020).

According to sources, the CHP candidate finished second in the 2018 presidential election with 30.6 percent of the vote (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1691; Al Jazeera 18 May 2021). In the parliamentary elections, which were held concurrently, the CHP won 22.6 percent of the vote and 146 seats (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1691, 1697; *Daily Sabah* 4 July 2018). According to sources, in the 2018 elections the CHP led an alliance that included the Good Party (İyi Parti, İyip) and the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, SP) (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1697) or the Good Party, the Felicity Party, and the Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, DP) (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 30).

In the municipal elections held in March 2019, *Political Handbook of the World* indicates that the CHP received 30.1 percent of the vote and won 240 municipalities overall (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1697). During the 2019 municipal elections, the CHP won in Ankara and Istanbul (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1697; Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a; Al Jazeera 22 Apr. 2019). Sources report that the AKP cited "irregularities" at polling stations during the Istanbul mayoral election (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1691; Al Jazeera 22 Apr. 2019). Sources indicate that the AKP forced an annulment of the vote and a new election (Grossman 12 July 2019; *Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1691). Sources report that the rerun of the Istanbul election, held in June 2019, saw the CHP mayoral candidate finish 10 percent ahead of the runner-up (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1691) or by a margin of 800,000 votes (Grossman 12 July 2019). According to a report written by Sinem Adar and Günter Seufert [1], the local administrations in Turkey that are run by the CHP represent 40 percent of the population (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 31).

1.1 Origins of the Party

Sources indicate that the CHP is Turkey's oldest political party and was founded in 1923 (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a; Director 23 Nov. 2021), by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the Turkish Republic (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Director 23 Nov. 2021). According to sources, the CHP ruled the country under a single-party government from 1923 until [1946 (Kılıçdaroğlu 19 Oct. 2020, 600) or 1950 (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1688, 1695; Alaranta Dec. 2019, 5)], and only had two electoral victories, in the 1970s, since the start of multiparty elections in 1950

(Alaranta Dec. 2019, 5; Kılıçdaroğlu 19 Oct. 2020, 600). The *Handbook* states that the CHP was most recently in power from January 1978 to October 1979 (*Political Handbook of the World* 2021, 1695).

1.2 Objectives

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs (SPSIA) at the University of Central Florida, who studies political violence, politics of identity, and democratization with a focus on Iranian, Kurdish, and Turkish human geography, noted that a "core ideological element of the CHP remains its commitment to secular nationalism as articulated by [Atatürk]" (Director 23 Nov. 2021).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor emeritus of politics with a focus on Turkey at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London stated that

the CHP has positioned itself on the centre-left, by adopting social democracy as its leitmotiv. It maintains its strong support from political secularism, but has also reached out to accommodate moderate Muslim opinion. In Turkey's current political situation, it is strongly opposed to the all-powerful executive presidency instituted by Tayyip Erdoğan, by calling for the re-establishment of a democratic parliamentary republic, the return to a largely symbolic presidency with the government in the hands of the prime minister and responsible to parliament, and measures to re-establish the independence of the judiciary and basic human rights. The current party programme also lists the establishment of stronger labour rights, free and independent news media, and the prevention of corruption as important political reforms. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor at the University of Guelph-Humber specializing in political science and history, with a focus on Turkey and the Middle East, indicated that the main objectives of the CHP, as stated in the Party Program, are as follows:

- Establishment of a democratic government with respect to law
- Respect for ethnic differences and identities
- Gender equality in society
- Democratic and free media
- Social justice. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a)

The Professor Emeritus noted that "[o]fficially the CHP ... is still committed to six ideological principles (or 'six arrows') adopted by the party in 1937, emphasizing nationalism, secularism and social solidarity" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The same source further stated that

[i]n economic and social policy, [the] CHP's platform embraces the reform of public administration, balanced economic development with the re-establishment of independence of the Central Bank, aid to poor families, the extension of the social security system, improved health services, and environmental protection. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

According to a report published in 2019 by Toni Alaranta, a senior research fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) [2], the CHP is "roughly composed" of two major factions:

The first [faction] is the neo-nationalist *ulusalci* group. It is EU-sceptic, often anti-Western in its general orientation, strictly secularist, and opposes the Kurdish political movement. The second faction, represented by the current party leadership, is the larger group of social democrats. This faction comes very close to European social democratic parties in its commitment to political liberalism and social market economy, and can be characterized as an advocate of a "social-liberal synthesis." (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 2, 6)

Sources indicate that the CHP's main constituency consists of secular Turks (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 30; Alaranta Dec. 2019, 2). Alaranta also notes "Alevi, the secular nationalists, the Westernized urban middle class, and the social democrats" have "traditionally" supported the CHP (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 8). The same source states that the CHP's "strong secularist and Turkish nationalist core has made it difficult for the CHP to gain support among the Kurds and religious conservatives" (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 2).

On the issue of support among the Kurds, the Professor Emeritus noted the following:

[T]he [CHP] now accepts that 'ethnic differences are the richness of our country', and firmly rejects discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. It fully supports the use of Kurdish, along with other minority languages, in publication and broadcasting, but stops short of proposing that Kurdish should be included in the state school syllabus – instead, it should be taught in private tutorial colleges, the party

suggests. The CHP strongly supports the economic development of south-eastern Anatolia, which is largely Kurdish inhabited, and the improvement of its welfare services. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

The Director indicated that

[i]n more recent years, the CHP has made some attempts to incorporate a more pluralistic and liberal stance into its platform. These attempts include a less security-oriented approach to the Kurdish question as well as greater willingness to recognize sociopolitical diversity in the country. (Director 23 Nov. 2021)

Alaranta notes that "a fear of Sunni dominancy in Turkey has traditionally made Alevis [the largest religious minority in Turkey] strong supporters of republican secularism, which is why Alevis have often preferred the CHP" (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 8).

On the issue of Alevi support, the Professor Emeritus stated the following:

[the CHP] is careful to define its commitment to political secularism as not being hostile to Islam or any other religion, but as requiring the strict separation of religion from politics. Accordingly, it calls for the reform of the Presidency [Directorate] of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, DİB), used by the AKP government as a means of promoting orthodox Sunni Islam as a virtual state religion. Traditionally, the CHP derived much of its support in rural areas from those attached to Alevism Electorally, this is probably less important than it once was, but the party is still careful to demand that Alevis have representation in the DİB, and that Alevi meeting houses (*cemevleri* [*cemevis*]) receive the same state support as Sunni mosques. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

For further information on Alevis, including on the status of *cemevis*, see Response to Information Request TUR200819 of December 2021. For information on the Alevi faith, see Response to Information Request TUR200820 of November 2021.

1.3 Structure and Activities

According to the Professor Emeritus,

[t]he administration of Turkey is highly centralised, on the French pattern, being divided into 81 provinces (*iller*) and subdivided into 973 districts (*ilçeler*). Like other political parties, the CHP maintains local committees, under provincial and district chairs, in each of these. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

The Assistant Professor stated that the "CHP is organized and structured throughout the country," and that it has offices in 80 provinces and in 935 districts, and that each province and district office has a leader (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a). The Director similarly noted that at "the sub-national level, the CHP has branches in [each of the] 81 provinces as well as almost all districts (more than 900) of Turkey" (Director 23 Nov. 2021). The same source noted that "[c]hairs and governing boards of these branches are typically elected," but that "not all" elections for board member and board chairs have multiple candidates (Director 23 Nov. 2021). The Professor Emeritus also indicated that "in practice, in provinces where the party is weak, the district bodies may be not much more than nominal" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

According to the Assistant Professor, referring to the party bylaw, the organization of the CHP and the duties of its organs are as follows:

- Party Council: It consists of the Leader (General President) and 60 members elected in the Caucus. Its main duties are to determine the policy and strategy decisions, to approve the annual budget of the party, to consider the reports and regulations of the party.
- Central Executive Board: It consists of the Leader, Secretary General and 15 Vice Presidents. It executes the decisions of the Caucus and the Party Council. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a)

The Professor Emeritus noted that "the structure and organisation of the CHP is defined by Turkey's Political Parties Law (*Siyasi Partiler Kanunu*) of 1983" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The same source stated the following regarding the structure of the CHP:

Legally, the highest authority in the party is the national party congress (Parti Büyük Kiongresi) which meets at a maximum of once every two years and a minimum of once every three years. Its main functions are to elect the party Chairman, the members of the Party Council, the National Management Committee and the National Disciplinary Committee, to authorise changes in the party's internal regulations and the party programme, and to adopt the final revenue-expenditure accounts of the party. (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

According to the Professor Emeritus, the National Party Congress is composed of "delegates of the party's provincial and district organisations ... to a maximum of 1,200" and "'natural members' – that is, the Party Chairman, members of the party's central decision-making bodies," such as "the Central

Management Committee, the Party Council, and the Central Disciplinary Committee and [Members of Parliament] who are members of the party" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Professor Emeritus noted that the Central Management Committee (Metrkezi Yönetim Kurulu, MYK) is "responsible for the day-to-day management of the party" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The same source stated that it is composed of 15 members who are each responsible for the main policy areas, such as finance and economic policy, energy and the environment, and education, or for managing the party, including legal affairs and elections, party organisation, and public relations (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

According to the Professor Emeritus, the Party Assembly (Parti Meclisi) "acts as the main policy-making body between meetings of the national party congress, has 60 members" and "is the principal forum for debate within the party" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The Director of the SPSIA stated that [t]here is a Party Assembly (PA), which has 60 members (with quot[a]s for women and youth) that has significant power. PA members are elected in party congresses. A major source of income for [the] CHP is public contributions that are specified in the law. Some of these funds are transferred by the party leadership to the local branches. (Director 23 Nov. 2021)

The Professor Emeritus indicated that the Central Disciplinary Committee (Merkezi Disiplin Kurulu) "has 15 members and has the ultimate power to expel members from the party, including [Members of Parliament]" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The Director stated that the "CHP's Central Governing Board has 15 members (vice-chairs) that are chosen by the party leader" (Director 23 Nov. 2021).

According to sources, the CHP also has a youth branch (Director 23 Nov. 2021) or branches (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a; Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The Director noted that the youth branch "aims to promote the party's ideology and cultivate its support among younger generations" (Director 23 Nov. 2021). The Professor Emeritus indicated that youth branches are "not specifically for students" and that they "are not especially prominent at present" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). According to the Assistant Professor, the CHP also has youth branches. In almost each province, there are youth branches and these branches carry out party propaganda at universities. Students who are enrolled in universities are also involved in youth branches. ...

[T]he youth branches also have a central executive board, a secretary general, a president, and province- and district-based representation. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a)

According to sources, the CHP also has a women's branch (Director 23 Nov. 2021) or branches (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Professor Emeritus also indicated that "[a]broad, particularly in areas where Turkish expatriates are settled, [the CHP] has 'overseas units' (*yürtdışı birlikleri*) and representative offices (*temsilcilikler*) in the EU and US" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Professor Emeritus noted that the CHP's primary activity is political (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). In response to a question regarding the main types of activities the CHP engages in, the Assistant Professor stated that the "CHP engages in political and non-political activities" (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a).

The Assistant Professor indicated that in the Turkish Parliament (Turkish Grand National Assembly, TGNA), the CHP is represented by 135 deputies. The deputies from the CHP are actively involved in the parliamentary committees and are representing their constituents in different platforms. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a)

According to the Director, the CHP has a substantial representation in the Turkish parliament (135 out of 582 seats). CHP [Members of Parliament] engage in various oppositional activities including submitting inquiries, holding press conferences, participating in contentious but non-violent protests. CHP municipalities also organize plenty of cultural and social activities that do not often receive state sponsorship. (Director 23 Nov. 2021)

The Professor Emeritus stated that the CHP's political activities include "running candidates in national and local elections, organising election rallies and local public meetings in cafés and elsewhere, and formulating policies at the national and municipal levels" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Assistant Professor also stated that

[a]part from political activities in the Parliament and in municipalities, the CHP is also engaged in workshops, education and social responsibility campaigns. The CHP organizes seminars, panels and conferences about important topics such as education, economy, sociology and culture in the provinces. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a)

The Professor Emeritus noted that "[i]n small towns where the party is active, its offices often act as social clubs for the local members" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

1.4 Leadership

According to sources, the current leader of the CHP is Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a; Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Director 23 Nov. 2021). Sources indicate that Kılıçdaroğlu is the General Chairman (Parti Genel Başkanı) (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021) or Chairman (Director 23 Nov. 2021) of the CHP and has been the leader of the party since 2010 (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Director 23 Nov. 2021). According to the Professor Emeritus, Kılıçdaroğlu ran as the CHP's candidate in the 2009 Istanbul mayoral election and lost (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The same source noted that "[i]nternationally, he was elected Deputy Chairman of Socialist International in 2012" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Director noted that CHP leaders "stay in power for extended periods. For instance, only two individuals have been in charge of the party since September 2000" (Director 23 Nov. 2021).

According to the Professor Emeritus, the Secretary-General (Parti Genel Sekreteri) is "second in the party hierarchy" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The Assistant Professor noted that the "Secretary General is responsible for the organization and functioning of the party's organs in accordance with the party bylaw" (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a). Sources indicate that Selin Sayek Böke is currently the Secretary General (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a; Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021) and has been Secretary General of the CHP since 2014 (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

The Assistant Professor indicated that the CHP has 15 Vice Presidents and that each of them are responsible for specific fields, including energy and infrastructure projects, rights of nature and environment, administrative and

financial affairs, economic policies, youth policies, human rights, education policies, law and elections, party organization, and social policies (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021a).

Sources stated that Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, and Mansur Yavaş the mayor of Ankara, are both members of the CHP (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021; Director 23 Nov. 2021).

The Professor Emeritus indicated that "Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is also Chairman of the CHP's Parliamentary Group, but under him are three Group Deputy Chairmen (Grup Başkanvekilleri), Özgür Özel, Engin Altay, and Engin Özkoç" (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021).

1.5 Relationship with Other Parties

According to sources, the CHP is a member of the "Nation Alliance," a CHP-led alliance that brings together the CHP, the Good Party, the Democrat Party, and the Felicity Party (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 30) or the Good Party and the Felicity Party (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021). The Professor Emeritus added the following:

Two other small parties, which are both breakaways from the AKP, are the Democracy and [Progress] Party (Demokrasi ve Atılım Partisi, DEVA) led by former Finance Minister Ali Babacan and the Future Party (Gelecek Partisi) led by the former Foreign Minister (and briefly Prime Minister) Ahmet Davutoğlu. Both these parties are not formally members of the Nation Alliance, but they have been in regular touch with its leaders ... (Professor Emeritus 23 Nov. 2021)

Alaranta notes that the CHP and the main Kurdish party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP), "have managed to build temporary alliances in elections" (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 5). Adar and Seufert state that "[a]lthough formally excluded from the alliance [in the June 2018 election], the HDP directed its electorate to cast their vote with the opposition alliance, thereby contributing to challenging the AKP and Erdoğan" (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 30).

2. CHP Membership

According to information from the websites of the General Prosecution Office of the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, as reported in an article published by Celep Ödül, a professor of political science at Işık University in Istanbul, the CHP had 1,227,878 registered party members as of 1 November 2018, making the CHP the second-largest party, behind the AKP, which had over 10 million registered members (Celep 10 July 2021, 771, 794).

The CHP party website provides the following information regarding the steps involved in submitting an online application for party membership:

[translation]

1. Log in to the system by entering your Turkish Identification Number [*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kimlik Numarası*] and your mobile phone number without zero at the beginning of your number.
2. A password will be sent to your mobile phone to continue your application process. Log in to the system with this password.
3. Complete any missing information and verify the displayed identification and address information. Upload a photo suitable for printing on a CHP ID card.
4. Finally, pay your membership fee (between 1-30 [Turkish lira] TRY [approximately C\$0.10-\$3] monthly by SMS or between 12-600 TRY [C\$1.20-\$60] annually by credit card).
5. Your membership procedures will not be initiated if you have not paid membership fees, uploaded an appropriate photo, if there is missing information, or if you have entered incorrect information.
6. After your membership application is completed, [your application] will be submitted electronically to your District President.
7. Once your membership is approved by the district office, your CHP member form will be mailed to you. You will be notified by SMS.
8. When you receive your package, please complete and sign your member form and deliver it to the [courier] to be sent to the CHP General Secretariat. ([Please] do not forget to request a tracking code.)
9. Your membership registration process will begin when the membership form, signed by you, is received by the Headquarters.
10. Your application will be transferred to the [central] system and referred to the General Prosecutor's Office, and then your member ID card will be sent to your District President[']s office]. You will be notified by SMS.
11. You can check your application status anytime at:
<https://uyelik.chp.org.tr/>, under the section "Online Membership Application Inquiry."

12. If you are already registered as a member of another party, your membership request will be rejected in accordance with the Law on Political Parties. (CHP n.d.)

The CHP membership regulations provide the following regarding party membership applications from abroad:

[translation]

APPLICATIONS MADE ABROAD, SECTION 9-

1. Citizens living overseas must submit their membership application directly to the Membership Department located at the party's headquarters either in writing or electronically. Signed application forms must be accompanied by the applicants' permanent residence address abroad along with their full address in Turkey and a certified copy of their national ID card. Applications submitted to the Membership Department will be reviewed by the party's Central Executive Committee.
2. For applications submitted electronically, the relevant overseas office of the party, if any, will be informed first.
3. Citizens living overseas may also submit their membership application via overseas offices of the party. Overseas offices will then send three copies of the membership application to the party headquarters.
4. Procedures relating to preliminary membership applications submitted electronically by citizens living overseas will be subject to the provisions of this directive. (CHP 2020)

The English and French translations of a sample of a CHP membership card, both sides of which are red at the top and white at the bottom, is attached to this Response; the original was sent to the Research Directorate by the Assistant Professor.

3. Treatment of CHP Members by the Authorities

3.1 CHP Leader

Information on the treatment of the CHP leader was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to sources, CHP party leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was attacked by a crowd in April 2019 during the funeral ceremony of a soldier killed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK) (US 30 Mar. 2021, 61) or "killed fighting Kurdish fighters" (Al Jazeera 22 Apr. 2019). Sources report that the attack on Kılıçdaroğlu followed statements by President Erdoğan

accusing the CHP of "backing" (AFP 22 Apr. 2019) or "sympathizing and collaborating" with (US 30 Mar. 2021, 61) the PKK (US 30 Mar. 2021, 61; AFP 22 Apr. 2019). Sources indicate that in April 2019 nine people were arrested by the police, including a member of the AKP (AFP 22 Apr. 2019; Al Jazeera 22 Apr. 2019). The same sources note that following the incident an AKP spokesperson released a statement on Twitter condemning any form of violence in democratic politics and the AKP stated that the party member involved would face expulsion (Al Jazeera 22 Apr. 2019; AFP 22 Apr. 2019). Information on whether the party member involved in the attack was disciplined by the party could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to sources, President Erdoğan filed a lawsuit against Kılıçdaroğlu on 11 January 2021 seeking one million TRY [C\$100,000] in compensation for referring to Erdoğan as the "'so-called president'" (*Hürriyet Daily News* 12 Jan. 2021; *Duvar* 11 Jan. 2021). The same sources report that President Erdoğan also filed a criminal complaint with the Ankara Chief [Public] Prosecutor's Office against Kılıçdaroğlu for "'insult[ing]" the president (*Hürriyet Daily News* 12 Jan. 2021; *Duvar* 11 Jan. 2021).

In a resolution dated 8 July 2021 regarding the repression of the opposition in Turkey, the European Parliament emphasized

the gradually increasing pressure on the main opposition party (the CHP) and its leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, including the confiscation of party brochures by court order, the threats made publicly against him and the physical attacks on him; condemns the request to lift the immunity of Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu on the basis of his political statements, including his prosecution for allegedly insulting the President of Turkey, for which he faces a sentence of up to four years. (EU 8 July 2021)

3.2 Other CHP Leaders

The Director stated the following:

[The] CHP and other opposition parties' ability to express their voices in the mass media is ... curtailed. Especially since 2015, the overall political atmosphere has become more repressive and made it more challenging for opposition parties like the CHP to operate. (Director 23 Nov. 2021)

Jane's Country Risk Daily Report reports that on 6 September 2019 an Istanbul court sentenced the CHP's Istanbul chair, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, to more than nine years in prison for spreading "'terrorist' propaganda" (*Jane's Country Risk Daily Report* 9 Sept. 2019). According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020*, a lower court had sentenced Kaftancıoğlu in 2018 for "'insulting the republic', 'insulting the president', and 'spreading terrorist propaganda'" in tweets critical of government policy made between 2012 and 2017 (US 30 Mar. 2021, 33). Sources report that in June 2020 an Istanbul appeal court upheld the conviction and sentencing of Kaftancıoğlu (HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 671; US 30 Mar. 2021, 33). According to US *Country Reports 2020*, as of 2020, Kaftancıoğlu remained out of custody pending her final legal appeal and she also faced charges in a separate indictment by the Istanbul Prosecutor's Office seeking up to ten years' imprisonment for "ordering photographs of alleged illegal construction" on land owned by a senior government official (US 30 Mar. 2021, 33). In the resolution dated 8 July 2021, the European Parliament underscored the "continuous political and judicial harassment of Canan Kaftancıoğlu" (EU 8 July 2021).

Sources report that in March 2020, a CHP legislator, Engin Özkoc, insulted President Erdoğan calling him "'dishonourable, ignoble, low and treacherous'," which sparked a "brawl" on the floor of the parliament (Al Jazeera 5 Mar. 2020; bne IntelliNews 13 Mar. 2020). US *Country Reports 2020* notes that President Erdoğan "sued Özkoc for libel and that the Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation into Özkoc's comments" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 39). The same source further states that "[f]ree speech advocates pointed out that, while leaders and deputies from opposition political parties regularly faced multiple insult charges, the government did not apply the law equally and that AKP members and government officials were rarely prosecuted" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 39).

US *Country Reports 2020* indicates that in 2020, police arrested former CHP Izmir province Vice Chair Banu Özdemir on charges of "'denigrating religious values'" for "her social media posts sharing videos of Izmir mosques playing the song 'Bella Ciao' from their speakers after a hacking incident" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 39). The same source states that Özdemir spent one week in pretrial detention and was later acquitted by an Izmir court (US 30 Mar. 2021, 39). Freedom House's 2021 report on freedom on the internet states that in December 2020 Özdemir "was taken to court for posting four videos of a mosque

loudspeaker chanting an Italian song that ostensibly incited 'people to violence'" and that Özdemir "was acquitted after seven months in prison" (Freedom House 21 Sept. 2021, Sec. C3).

Sources indicate that in June 2020, the CHP Deputy Chair, Özgür Özel, reported that police were investigating 95 CHP parliamentarians (US 30 Mar. 2021, 60; Bianet 22 June 2020). *US Country Reports 2020* state that the "majority" of the investigations were for "insulting the president," and a "summary of investigations was sent to the parliament for a decision on lifting [parliamentary] immunity" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 60). Bianet, a Turkish press agency, reports that the 95 CHP parliamentarians faced 217 summary investigations and that 141 were for "'insulting the President'" (Bianet 22 June 2020). *Hürriyet Daily News*, an English-language newspaper owned by the "[p]ro-Erdogan" Demiroren Holding (Reuters 21 Mar. 2018), reports that, in October 2020, 42 new summary proceedings were filed against 26 parliamentarians, including 9 from the CHP; Özgür Özel was among them (*Hürriyet Daily News* 8 Oct. 2020).

According to sources, in June 2020 the Turkish Parliament revoked the parliamentary seat of a CHP Deputy, Enis Berberoğlu (HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 671; US 30 Mar. 2021, 22), for revealing state secrets by sharing video footage of trucks transporting weapons to Syria (HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 671). *US Country Reports 2020* notes that Berberoğlu was charged with espionage and that the Constitutional Court "ruled that the government had violated Berberoğlu's rights because it did not renew the lifting of his legal immunity following his re-election in 2018"; however, "a criminal court in Istanbul, which reviewed Berberoğlu's case, rejected the Constitutional Court ruling for a retrial" and that, as of 2020, "Berberoğlu remained on release from prison due to COVID-19 precautions" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 22–23). An article published by the *Guardian*, citing CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu, stated that Berberoğlu's detention reflects the "government's continued crackdown on dissent" (*The Guardian* 5 June 2020).

3.3 CHP Members

Information on the treatment of ordinary party members and CHP supporters by the authorities was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In follow-up correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Assistant Professor stated the following:

There is a website in Turkey titled e-devlet and it is the official website of the Turkish state. Each citizen's records are kept in here, including their political party memberships. So, when someone applies for a job, the employers (either state or private) check this website to see whether this person is affiliated with a political party or not. Since CHP is the main opposition party, many people refrain from becoming registered members, because many employers (and especially the government positions) do not employ CHP members. (Assistant Professor 23 Nov. 2021b)

In another correspondence, the Assistant Professor further stated that since the AKP

has been in power for 19 years now, and since nepotism is very common in Turkey, the majority of the government bureaucracy positions are filled with AKP members. ... [B]eing a member of the CHP (or any other opposition party) means more bureaucratic problems for the people. Turkey is not a federal state and all bureaucratic institutions are run by the central government. So, whenever a CHP member has anything to do at a government institution (e.g., public hospital, public school, public university, civil registry office, and even before the Court), they are being discriminated [against]. (Assistant Professor 24 Nov. 2021)

The Assistant Professor also stated that the "Turkish Courts are no longer independent" and noted the following:

Since 2010, the ruling party gradually took the autonomy of the [j]udicia[l] system away ... The level of discrimination [by the courts] towards CHP members differs: sometimes the decisions are delayed, sometimes their treatments are postponed, etc. (Assistant Professor 24 Nov. 2021)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] Sinem Adar is an associate at the Centre for Applied Turkey Studies (CATS) at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), a foreign policy think tank that "advises the

German government and parliament on questions of foreign and security policy" (SWP n.d.), and Günter Seufert is the Head of CATS (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 4). CATS is funded by Stiftung Mercator and the German Federal Foreign Office (Adar and Seufert Apr. 2021, 40).

[2] Toni Alaranta is a senior research fellow with the European Union Research Programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 2). The FIIA is an "independent research institute that produces high-level research to support political decision[]making and public debate both nationally and internationally" (Alaranta Dec. 2019, 2).

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Internet sites, including: *BirGün*; *ecoi.net*; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; EU – European Asylum Support Office; Euronews; Factiva; Fédération internationale pour les droits humains; GlobalSecurity.org; *Milliyet*; News About Turkey; Stockholm Center for Freedom; UN – Refworld, UNHCR; *The Washington Post*.

Attachment

Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP). English and French translations of a membership identification card. Original sent to the Research Directorate by the Assistant Professor, University of Guelph-Humber, 25 November 2021. Translated by the Translation Bureau, Public Services and Procurement Canada.

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