



HUMAN RIGHTS IN TURKEY:

2025 in Review



About the Stockholm Center for Freedom

The Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF) is a non-profit advocacy organization that promotes the rule of law, democracy and human rights with a special focus on Turkey.

SCF was set up by a group of journalists who were forced to live in self-exile in Sweden against the backdrop of a massive crackdown on press freedom in Turkey.

SCF is committed to serving as a reference source by providing a broader picture of rights violations in Turkey, monitoring daily developments, documenting individual cases of the infringement of fundamental rights and publishing comprehensive reports on human rights issues.

SCF is a member of the Alliance Against Genocide, an international coalition dedicated to creating the international institutions and the political will to prevent genocide

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** Subject matters are listed in alphabetical order*

1. Introduction

This report highlights the most important developments in the area of human rights in Turkey in 2025, a year marked by continued democratic decline and the erosion of fundamental freedoms under the increasingly centralized rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

With extensive control over the media, judiciary and key state institutions, the government intensified pressure on opposition figures, independent journalists, civil society organizations and marginalized communities.

The pressure on the political opposition escalated significantly. The arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, widely viewed as President Erdoğan's strongest political rival and a potential presidential candidate, sparked the largest wave of anti-government protests in more than a decade. Turkish authorities detained nearly 2,000 people during demonstrations that followed his arrest, while journalists covering the protests were also taken into custody, and several opposition-aligned broadcasters were temporarily taken off the air.

Throughout the year the Erdoğan government continued its repression of perceived adversaries, with the faith-based Gülen movement remaining a primary target. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced that 1,601 people were [arrested](#) in 2025 alone over alleged links to the movement. Official figures show that since a coup attempt in 2016 a total of 390,354 people have been detained and more than 113,000 arrested in investigations related to the movement. According to justice ministry statistics, more than 126,000 people have been [convicted](#) in Gülen-related trials since 2016, with thousands still imprisoned and tens of thousands remaining under investigation nearly a decade later.

Judicial statistics and international rankings underscored the depth of the country's rule of law crisis. Turkey remained the country with the highest number of pending applications before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), with more than 21,000 cases awaiting judgment in 2025, accounting for over one-third of the court's total caseload. The judicial crisis, further exacerbated by courts' failure to comply with Constitutional Court rulings, [continued](#) with new cases.

Press freedom deteriorated further as authorities expanded the use of prosecutions, regulatory penalties and online censorship against journalists and media organizations. Turkey ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. Authorities also dramatically increased digital censorship, blocking more than 27,000 social media accounts in the first four months of the year alone.

Conditions in detention facilities worsened as Turkey's prison population [reached](#) a record level of more than 433,000 inmates in 2025, exceeding official capacity by approximately 42 percent. Human rights organizations continued to document widespread allegations of torture, ill-treatment and medical neglect in detention, while overcrowding further strained already limited access to healthcare and basic services.

Turkey continued its transnational repression campaign targeting critics abroad, including a case of forced deportation in [Rwanda](#) and attempted actions in [Kenya](#), [Mozambique](#), and [Brazil](#). These activities have also been reflected in official reports from [Germany](#) and [the UK](#).

Labor rights also remained a serious concern. According to data compiled by the Health and Safety Labor Watch (İSİG), at least 2,105 workers [died](#) in occupational accidents in 2025, reflecting persistent safety failures and weak enforcement of labor protections. Child labor remained widespread, with dozens of underage workers dying in job-related incidents during the year.

Minority groups, refugees and migrants continued to face discrimination, violence and forced deportations. Syrian refugees reported abuse in deportation centers and pressure to sign so-called "voluntary" return documents, while rights organizations warned that Iranian refugees and Uyghur asylum seekers faced increasing risks of deportation.

Women's rights groups also continued to raise alarm over persistent femicide and institutional failures to protect victims of gender-based violence. According to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, at least 294 women were [murdered](#) by men in Turkey in 2025, while nearly 300 additional deaths involving women were recorded under suspicious circumstances.

Taken together, developments in 2025 highlighted the widening gap between Turkey's constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and the reality on the ground. Despite repeated warnings from international institutions and human rights organizations, the government took few meaningful steps to address systemic violations or restore the rule of law.

2. Crackdown on the Gülen movement



During the year Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan continued to relentlessly pursue anyone with alleged links with the faith-based Gülen movement, which he [described](#) as a “virus” that Turkey had not yet removed. Individuals accused of ties to the movement have been targets of hate speech, hate crimes, unlawful prosecution, torture and transnational repression, among other serious human rights violations.

The Gülen movement is a worldwide civic initiative rooted in the spiritual and humanistic tradition of Islam and inspired by the ideas and activism of the late Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim cleric who lived in exile in the US until his death in October 2024. It is known for its network of educational institutions and interfaith dialogue initiatives across the globe.

Self-designated as the “[Hizmet movement](#)” (“service” in Turkish), the group proclaims itself as a proponent of the ideals of human rights, equal opportunity, democracy, non-violence and the emphatic acceptance of religious and cultural diversity.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said that as of December 2025 Turkish authorities had [arrested](#) 1,601 people during the year over alleged links to the Gülen movement. The total number of people [detained](#) due to movement ties since a coup attempt in 2016 has reached 390,354.

According to the latest figures from the Justice Ministry, as of July 14 2025, more than 126,000 people have been [convicted](#) for alleged links to the movement since 2016, with 11,085 still in prison. Legal proceedings are ongoing for over 24,000

individuals, while another 58,000 remain under active investigation nearly a decade later.

President Erdoğan has been targeting followers of the movement since corruption investigations in December 2013 implicated him as well as members of his family and inner circle. Dismissing the investigations as a conspiracy, he designated the movement as a terrorist organization in May 2016 and began to target its members. He locked up thousands, including many prosecutors, judges and police officers involved in the probes.

The crackdown intensified following a coup attempt on July 15, 2016, that he accused Gülen of masterminding, an allegation the movement has consistently denied.

Following the coup attempt, the Turkish government carried out a massive purge of state institutions under the pretext of an anti-coup fight. More than 130,000 public servants, including in excess of 4,000 judges and prosecutors, as well as 24,706 members of the armed forces were summarily removed from their jobs for alleged membership in or relationships with “terrorist organizations” by emergency decree-laws subject to neither judicial nor parliamentary scrutiny.

Such daily activities as having an account at or depositing money in a Gülen movement-affiliated bank, working at any institution linked to the movement or subscribing to certain newspapers and magazines were accepted as benchmarks for identifying and arresting alleged members of the movement.

Throughout the year, reports by foreign governments, international organizations and human rights bodies reaffirmed that Turkey’s crackdown on the Gülen movement remains widespread and systematic. Official reports by the governments of [Australia](#), [the Netherlands](#), [the United Kingdom](#) and [the United States](#) documented ongoing arbitrary detention, prosecutions lacking due process, torture, social exclusion and blacklisting of individuals accused of ties to the movement. United Nations bodies also [warned](#) that Turkey’s designation of the Gülen movement as a terrorist organization lacks a legal basis under international law.

Judicial scrutiny at the European level also intensified in 2025. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) continued to rule against Turkey in Gülen-linked cases, finding violations related to unlawful pretrial detention and terrorism convictions imposed without a clear legal basis. Taken together, the court’s judgments and follow-up communications during the year reflected violations affecting more than 8,500 Gülen-linked cases, highlighting the systemic nature of the abuses and Turkey’s continued failure to bring its practices into compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. Here is some of the most important news from 2025 concerning Erdoğan’s crackdown on the Gülen movement:

Decisions and reports by international organizations and foreign governments

Turkey's designation of Gülen movement as terrorist group lacked legal basis, UN rapporteurs said

UN special rapporteurs said in an October letter that Turkey's designation of the faith-based Gülen movement as a terrorist organization fails to meet due process standards and does not meet the legal definition of terrorism, warning that Ankara's broader pattern of unjustifiable criminalization of the movement may amount to crimes against humanity. [More...](#)

Australian government said Turkey's Gülen crackdown persists 9 years after coup

Turkish authorities continue to detain, arrest, torture and blacklist people accused of ties to the Gülen movement, often without credible evidence, due process or transparency, according to a report published by Australia's foreign ministry in May. [More...](#)

Alleged Gülen movement followers in Turkey face ongoing detentions, social exclusion: Dutch gov't report

A February report by the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security briefing the relevant authorities on asylum applications noted that Turkish authorities continue to detain, prosecute and socially exclude individuals accused of ties to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)



Home Office confirmed ongoing crackdown on Gülen movement in Turkey and beyond

The United Kingdom Home Office released an updated Country Policy and Information Note in September on the faith-based Gülen movement in Turkey, detailing widespread and systematic human rights violations targeting its members since a coup attempt on July 15, 2016. [More...](#)

UN panel called for immediate release of former general serving life sentence over alleged role in 2016 coup attempt

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined in February that the imprisonment of Akin Öztürk, the former commander of the Turkish Air Force who is serving a life sentence for his alleged role in a 2016 coup attempt, is arbitrary and violates international law, calling for his immediate release. [More...](#)

New report detailed UN findings on systemic rights violations in Turkey after 2016 coup attempt

An October report compiled by the Netherlands-based human rights group Stichting Justice Square detailed a pattern of human rights violations in Turkey following a coup attempt on July 15, 2016, as recognized by multiple United Nations bodies between 2017 and 2024. [More...](#)

Turkey's unrelenting rights violations against Gülen movement continued in 2024: HRW

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2025 documented extensive human rights abuses in Turkey, including continued crackdowns on alleged members of the Gülen movement in 2024. [More...](#)

US report said Turkey committed widespread human rights abuses in 2024

The US Department of State's 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices highlighted a wide range of significant human rights issues in Turkey, including arbitrary killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and significant restrictions on freedom of expression and the media. [More...](#)

German court deemed Turkey's Gülen trials disproportionate, granted asylum, citing risk of renewed prosecution

A German administrative court ruled in December that criminal proceedings in Turkey against individuals accused of links to the faith-based Gülen movement are disproportionate and discriminatory, concluding even after serving prison sentences they remain at risk of renewed prosecution, arbitrary punishment and politically motivated targeting, grounds warranting international protection under asylum law. [More...](#)

Turkey's crackdown on Gülen movement continues, returning asylum seekers puts them at risk, report warned

A report by the Turkey Tribunal warned that Turkey's crackdown on alleged members of the Gülen movement is continuing despite claims by some Western governments that the persecution of the group is easing. [More...](#)

Decisions by the European Court of Human Rights

European rights court notified Turkey of a record 4,800 additional applications over Gülen-linked convictions

In a notification in June, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) notified Turkey of an additional 4,800 applications concerning individuals convicted of membership in the Gülen movement over the use of the ByLock messaging app, following a 2023 landmark judgment that found such convictions based on certain criteria to be unlawful. [More...](#)

ECtHR faulted Turkey for convictions of 2,420 applicants over Gülen links in follow-up to 2023 judgment

In a December ruling, the ECtHR ruled that Turkey violated the rights of 2,420 people convicted of terrorism due to their alleged ties to the faith-based Gülen movement, finding that the judiciary failed to ensure fair trials and imposed criminal penalties without a legal basis. [More...](#)

ECtHR notified Turkey of 1,000 more applications over Gülen-linked convictions

In an announcement in February, the ECtHR notified Turkey of 1,000 more applications in its docket related to convictions for Gülen movement membership over the use of the ByLock messaging app. [More...](#)



ECtHR faulted Turkey for terrorism convictions of 239 applicants in follow-up to 2023 judgment

The ECtHR ruled in January that Turkey had violated the rights of 239 applicants in two separate cases concerning their convictions for membership in the Gülen movement, finding that the Turkish judiciary had failed to ensure fair trials and imposed criminal penalties without a clear legal basis. [More...](#)

ECtHR faulted Turkey for pretrial detention of 51 judges, prosecutors after failed 2016 coup

The ECtHR found in May that Turkey had violated the rights of 51 judges and prosecutors who were detained following a 2016 coup attempt over alleged links to the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

ECtHR faulted Turkey for post-coup detention of 137 people over Gülen links

The ECtHR ruled in July that Turkey had violated the rights of 137 individuals who were detained in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt for their alleged links to the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

ECtHR ruled Turkey violated rights of dozens detained over alleged Gülen links

The ECtHR ruled in January that Turkey had violated the rights of 117 individuals who were held in pretrial detention as part of a crackdown on the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Ongoing purge

Turkey detained 390,354, arrested over 113,000 since 2016 coup attempt as crackdown on Gülen movement continued

Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced in July that a total of 390,354 people had been detained and 113,302 arrested over alleged links to the Gülen movement since the coup attempt in 2016. [More...](#)

1,601 were arrested in 2025 over alleged Gülen links, interior minister said

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced in December that Turkish authorities had arrested 1,601 people in 2025 as part of an ongoing crackdown on the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Over 3 million were investigated, half a million convicted of terrorism in Turkey's post-coup crackdown

A total of 3,093,084 people in Turkey have been investigated for terrorism-related offenses since a coup attempt in 2016, with 527,100 convicted, according to justice ministry statistics released in August. [More...](#)

Turkey dismissed more than 34,000 teachers over Gülen links after 2016 coup attempt

Turkey dismissed 34,795 teachers over alleged links to the Gülen movement during a state of emergency declared after a 2016 coup attempt, according to figures released by the education ministry in November. [More...](#)

Turkey dismissed and blacklisted more than 22,000 private school teachers over alleged Gülen links

Turkey revoked the teaching licenses of 22,474 teachers and shut down 1,424 private educational institutions over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement in the aftermath of a coup attempt in 2016. [More...](#)



Istanbul court convicted 19 in 'terrorism' trial of girls over religious, social activities

A court in Istanbul convicted 19 defendants and acquitted 19 others in September in a case known as the "girls' trial," which was based on terrorism charges over routine religious and educational activities allegedly linked to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Senior diplomats were among dozens of Turkish MFA staff targeted over alleged Gülen links

Turkish authorities in October detained or issued arrest warrants for 64 current and former employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including several senior diplomats, on accusations of ties to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Asylum seeker repatriated by Germany was imprisoned in Turkey over Gülen links

A Turkish asylum seeker who was deported by Germany was arrested upon his arrival in Turkey and subsequently put in pretrial detention over his alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Turkish lawyer revealed illegal police surveillance of former prisoner

A Turkish lawyer in October revealed that a former inmate who had previously been imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement was subjected to illegal police surveillance and harassment. [More...](#)

Turkish teacher dismissed in post-coup purge lost job again under government order

A former teacher dismissed under a government decree following a failed coup in Turkey in 2016 was barred from continuing his job as a school bus driver, in a move that attracted sharp criticism from human rights advocates and opposition lawmakers. [More...](#)

Turkish homemaker jailed over ordinary activities linked to Gülen movement

A Turkish homemaker was jailed in central Turkey in August to serve more than seven years over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement based on ordinary activities such as donating to charities and attending fundraisers for students. [More...](#)

Disabled former Turkish teacher was arrested for allegedly receiving donations from Gülen movement

A disabled former teacher who was dismissed from his job in a post-coup purge was arrested in July on allegations of receiving financial assistance from the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

NASA scientist jailed in Turkey over a dollar bill recounted 3 years in prison

Turkish-American NASA scientist Serkan Gölge in December recounted the nearly three years he spent in prison in Turkey following a coup attempt in 2016 on accusations of ties to the faith-based Gülen movement, with prosecutors citing a one-dollar bill found in a relative's home as evidence. [More...](#)

Hate speech and discrimination

Erdogan called Gülen movement a ‘virus’ Turkey has not yet removed

President Erdoğan described the Gülen movement as a “virus” that Turkey has not removed, speaking at a memorial service in July for victims of the 2016 coup attempt. [More...](#)

Report detailed how Erdogan’s Turkey institutionalized hate speech against Gülen movement

A report published by the Netherlands-based human rights group Stichting Justice Square in November revealed how the Turkish government under President Erdoğan institutionalized hate speech against the Gülen movement, detailing its mechanisms, scope and the resulting human rights violations. [More...](#)

Children of political prisoners in Turkey cast as potential criminals, new report found

Children of political prisoners in Turkey are being treated as “potential criminals” and face widespread rights abuses, according to a report published in November by Germany-based human rights group Crossborder Jurists (CBJ). [More...](#)



Teacher abducted by Turkish intelligence denied surgery for 16 months after arm broken during torture

A Turkish educator abducted from Kyrgyzstan by Turkish intelligence in 2021 told an opposition lawmaker that he was denied surgery for 16 months after his arm was broken in three places during torture while in custody. [More...](#)

Torture and inhuman treatment

Torture and intimidation in a Turkish detention center: Former detainee shared details of harrowing interrogation

Hayati Uysal, a 29-year-old Turkish man who was imprisoned for alleged links to the Gülen movement, shared his harrowing account of torture in detention that ultimately left him blind. [More...](#)

Beaten, abused and threatened with harm to his family: Turkish teacher recounted harrowing police interrogation amid post-coup purge

“I was beaten, sexually abused and threatened with harm to my wife and child while in police custody,” said Ahmet, a former teacher detained and later arrested following a July 15, 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. [More...](#)

20 young women strip-searched at Şakran Prison, lawmaker said

Twenty young women accused of ties to the Gülen movement were subjected to strip-searches at Şakran Women’s Prison in western Turkey during the summer, according to human rights defender and pro-Kurdish lawmaker Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu. [More...](#)

5 years later, Turkish woman still haunted by strip-search in police custody

A young woman detained over alleged links to the Gülen movement in a case that made nationwide headlines five years ago said she is still haunted by the trauma of a strip-search in police custody. [More...](#)

Inmates in central Turkey developed skin lesions from contaminated water

Inmates at the Kırşehir S-Type Prison in central Turkey suffered from skin lesions and various health issues allegedly caused by contaminated water. [More...](#)

Children of the purge: death, disease and separation

SCF released report on child victims of Turkey’s post-coup purge

SCF published a report in August that examines how children from families targeted in Turkey’s post-coup purge have endured the devastating

consequences of persecution, social exclusion and psychological trauma, revealing the human cost of the crackdown. [More...](#)



Death of teenage daughter of imprisoned Turkish teacher illustrated ongoing fallout from post-coup purges

A 15-year-old girl whose mother is serving a prison sentence on conviction of alleged ties to the Gülen movement was found dead in her bed in April in Sakarya province, in an apparent epilepsy-related death. [More...](#)

Documentary exposed plight of children caught in Turkey's post-coup crackdown

“The Other Children” (Öteki Çocuklar), a new documentary shining a light on the suffering of Turkish children whose parents were impacted by a government crackdown on the Gülen movement, premiered on YouTube in November. [More...](#)

Father jailed, mother left to care for disabled child on her own: Gökkaya family's story shows the human impact of Turkey's purge

For nearly five years Güldane Gökkaya fed her blind, severely disabled son by syringe, lifted him in and out of bed by herself and raised her two children alone — while her husband was in a Turkish prison on charges the family describes as politically motivated. [More...](#)

Turkey jailed both parents of seriously ill child over alleged Gülen links

Turkish authorities arrested both parents of a 4-year-old child receiving treatment for tuberculosis in November, despite a hospital report stating that he needs maternal care. [More...](#)

Former teacher arrested over alleged Gülen links while taking disabled son to hospital

Mervane Albayrak, a former teacher previously sentenced to more than six years in prison for alleged ties to the Gülen movement, was arrested in January while taking her severely disabled son to a hospital and sent to prison. [More...](#)

Arrest of pregnant women and mothers with infants

Teacher held in pretrial detention in Turkey sent back to prison 2 days after giving birth together with her baby

Merve Zayım, a 37-year-old religious education teacher, was [sent back](#) to prison in August just two days after she gave birth to a baby boy. She was later released pending trial following public backlash. [More...](#)

Turkey jailed pregnant woman over alleged Gülen links despite law suspending sentences for expectant mothers

A pregnant woman was jailed in northwestern Turkey in October despite a law allowing the suspension of prison sentences for expectant mothers, after being convicted of alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Turkey jailed another pregnant woman over alleged Gülen links despite law suspending sentences for expectant mothers

A Turkish woman previously convicted of alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement was arrested by a court in October and sent to prison despite being six-and-a-half-months pregnant. [More...](#)

Turkish woman jailed with toddler over links to Gülen movement

Türkan Alemdar, a 32-year-old Turkish mother of two, was jailed in April along with her 19-month-old son to serve a seven-and-a-half-year sentence for alleged links to the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities jailed woman with 6-month-old son amid escalating crackdown on Gülen movement

A Turkish woman previously sentenced to almost seven years in prison over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement was jailed along with her 6-month-old son after attempting to flee to Greece. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities jailed new mother for attempting to flee amid retrial over Gülen ties

A Turkish woman previously sentenced to over six years for her alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement was arrested by a court in July and sent to prison accompanied by her 16-month-old daughter. [More...](#)

Pregnant woman's health rapidly declined in Turkish prison after Gülen-linked arrest

The health of a pregnant woman jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement quickly worsened in custody, her husband said, raising concerns about her access to medical care as she awaits trial in southeastern Turkey. [More...](#)

Opposition MP revealed struggles of woman serving sentence for Gülen links with 2 young children

Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, a lawmaker from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) and a prominent human rights defender, brought to light the plight of a woman currently serving a prison sentence with her two young children, ages 1 and 3. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities jailed new mother for attempting to flee amid appeal over Gülen ties

A former teacher previously sentenced to six years, 10 months for her alleged links to the Gülen movement was arrested and sent by a court to prison accompanied by her 9-month-old son. [More...](#)

2 pregnant women accused of Gülen ties faced harsh prison treatment in Turkey, families said

Two pregnant women imprisoned in Turkey over alleged links to the Gülen movement were subjected to harsh treatment during hospital visits, including being denied food for hours, their families said after visiting them at a prison in the country's northwest. [More...](#)

Turkish teacher jailed with 20-month-old after top court upholds Gülen-linked sentence

A Turkish teacher was sent to prison in December along with her 20-month-old child after the Supreme Court of Appeals upheld her conviction for membership in the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Plight of ailing inmates

Elderly inmate died of cancer in Turkish prison after release denied

A retired imam diagnosed with advanced lymphoma died in Kırşehir Prison in January after Turkish authorities repeatedly denied his requests for postponement of his sentence on grounds of health. [More...](#)

Elderly Alzheimer's patient jailed over Gülen links died in prison after repeated pleas for release



İbrahim Güngör, a 73-year-old Alzheimer's patient imprisoned over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, died in a Turkish prison in September after months of repeated pleas from his family for his release on health grounds were ignored. [More...](#)

Authorities [refused to allow](#) his daughter, who was jailed after repeated pleas for her father's release, to attend the funeral.

Gülen-linked educator paralyzed in prison amid medical neglect

Uğur Öztaş, an 88-year-old educator imprisoned over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, became paralyzed in prison in November, allegedly due to the neglect of his medical needs. [More...](#)

Dismissed teacher, denied release from prison until too late, succumbed to cancer

Ramazan Aktaş, a former history teacher dismissed under an emergency decree in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and imprisoned over alleged ties to the Gülen movement, died of late-stage pancreatic cancer in June, shortly after a delayed release from prison despite his doctor's earlier warnings. [More...](#)

Ailing 85-year-old inmate freed following years of appeals by rights advocates

Halil Karakoç, an 85-year-old retired imam imprisoned over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, was released from Menemen Prison in May after spending more than four years behind bars, despite being eligible for parole a year ago. [More...](#)

Doctor warned of risk of stroke for 75-year-old former media owner jailed over Gülen links

Alaeddin Kaya, a 75-year-old former media owner jailed over Gülen movement links, faces a risk of stroke and should be taken by ambulance to a hospital whenever he requires medical care, according to a prison memo released in October. [More...](#)

Former police chief jailed in post-coup crackdown died of cancer shortly after release from prison

A former police chief who was dismissed by a government decree following the failed coup and subsequently convicted on terrorism charges died of brain cancer in May, just six months after his release from prison. [More...](#)

Turkish lawyer jailed over Gülen links died after delayed release from prison

Süleyman Yıldırım, a 59-year-old lawyer who [lost his leg](#) after what his relatives described as months of delayed medical care in prison and was later diagnosed with stage 3 lung cancer, died in December. [More...](#)

Opposition lawmaker urged release of advanced-stage cancer patient jailed over Gülen links

Human rights defender and opposition lawmaker Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu urged authorities to release Ayşe Solak, 49, a Turkish woman with stage-three breast cancer, from prison, where she is serving a sentence for conviction of alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Family pleaded with Turkish authorities to release ailing inmate

The family of Dilek Dağlı, an inmate whose health was quickly deteriorating in prison, issued a plea for her release, citing her rapidly deteriorating health and the lack of adequate medical facilities within the prison system, the Bold Medya news website reported. [More...](#)

Seriously ill Turkish lawyer was ordered to travel despite doctor's warnings

A Turkish lawyer in intensive care was ordered to travel to Istanbul for a forensic medical review, despite doctors warning that he is too ill to withstand the trip. [More...](#)

Doctor warned of risk of stroke for 75-year-old former media owner jailed over Gülen links

Alaeddin Kaya, a 75-year-old former media owner jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement, faces a risk of stroke and should be taken by ambulance to a hospital whenever he requires medical care, a prison memo shared by a journalist revealed. [More...](#)

Turkey jailed elderly man with dementia as deaths mount among Gülen-linked inmates

Turkish authorities sent a 76-year-old man suffering from paralysis and dementia to prison, a move that rights advocates said highlights a growing trend of jailing vulnerable and terminally ill individuals over political allegations. [More...](#)

Turkish prison authorities refused to take inmate suffering from cancer to state institute that could approve her release

Turkish prison authorities refused to take a seriously ill inmate for an evaluation by the Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK), which could authorize her release on health grounds, despite a diagnosis of advanced cancer and warnings from hospital doctors. [More...](#)

Prisoners not released by parole boards for political reasons

Turkish authorities delayed parole of former teacher despite eligibility

Turkish prison authorities delayed the parole of Figen Çapkur, a social studies teacher convicted of alleged links to the Gülen movement, despite her eligibility for release. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities denied parole of couple imprisoned over Gülen links

Turkish prison authorities denied parole to Saadet Bulun and Emre Bulun, a couple imprisoned since 2018 over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, despite their eligibility for release. [More...](#)

Rights group alleged systematic abuse in Turkish prisons

A Turkish legal advocacy group said in November that prisoners in several of the country's high-security facilities were facing systematic rights violations, including prolonged solitary confinement, denial of medical care and arbitrary obstruction of parole. [More...](#)

Property Rights

Turkey seized billions in assets, shut down hundreds of Gülen-linked institutions after 2016 coup attempt

Turkish authorities seized or froze billions in assets and closed hundreds of institutions linked to the faith-based Gülen movement, according to official figures reported by the state-run Anadolu news agency on the ninth anniversary of a coup attempt on July 15, 2016. [More...](#)

Turkey announced plan to auction off popular döner chain seized over Gülen links



Turkey's state-run Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) announced in September the sale of Maydonoz Döner, one of the country's largest fast-food chains, continuing a controversial policy of liquidating companies seized over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Prosecutors [filed an indictment](#) in November seeking prison sentences of up to 25 years for nine shareholders of the company over Gülen movement links. A total of 350 people were [detained](#) in February as part of an investigation into the popular döner restaurant chain.

Turkey targeted dessert chain, 33 detained

Turkish police detained 33 people in May in raids targeting a popular dessert chain over alleged fundraising for the Gülen movement. [More...](#)

Turkey froze assets of 9 US-based organizations over alleged Gülen links

Turkey froze the assets of nine US-based organizations over alleged links to the Gülen movement, as part of a broader measure targeting 43 individuals and entities on the pretext of “combating terrorism financing.” [More...](#)

Lawmaker slammed conviction of prominent business family, asset seizures as ‘blatant violation of law’

The conviction of 18 members of the Boydak family, prominent industrialists from the Central Anatolian city of Kayseri, and the seizure of their assets amount to a blatant violation of the right to a fair trial and the basic principles of criminal law, independent lawmaker Mustafa Yeneroğlu said in October, after visiting jailed businessman Memduh Boydak. [More...](#)

Deaths of purge victims

[Hüseyin Korkmaz](#), a 38-year-old former Turkish deputy police commissioner who played a key role in exposing corruption within the inner circle of then-prime minister and current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, died of cancer in the United States on January 6.

[Hüsamettin Karadeniz](#), a retired imam imprisoned over alleged ties to the Gülen movement, died in Kırşehir Prison on January 16 after authorities repeatedly denied his requests for postponement of his sentence on grounds of health.

[Erdal Mehmet Uzun](#), a 54-year-old former police officer who attempted suicide in 2019 after being fired under a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died on March 13 following a prolonged battle for survival.

[Musa Üçgül](#), a former district governor who was forced to work in construction after being fired under a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died on March 13 after falling from the seventh floor of a construction scaffold at the building.

[Bülent Adıgüzel](#), a 48-year-old former academic dismissed from his job at a public university under a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died of a fast-spreading infection in March.

[Mustafa Said Türk](#), a severely disabled Turkish man who was briefly jailed in 2023 over alleged ties to the Gülen movement, died on March 30 at the age of 88.

[Sümeyra Gelir](#), a 15-year-old girl whose mother is serving a prison sentence on Gülen movement links, was found dead in her bed on April 3 in an apparent epilepsy-related death.

[Derya Çelik](#), a 45-year-old former teacher who was diagnosed with cancer shortly after being dismissed from her job by a government decree, died on April 16.

[Cengiz Çakıltepe](#), a 54-year-old former police chief dismissed by a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died on May 12 of brain cancer six months after his release from prison.

[Yusuf Çetin](#), a 38-year-old former Turkish military officer dismissed by a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died on May 23 of injuries sustained in a workplace explosion.

[Erkan Şirin](#), a 43-year-old former naval officer serving a life sentence for his alleged involvement in the coup attempt, died in prison on May 30 after suffering a heart attack.

[Ramazan Aktas](#), a former history teacher dismissed by a government decree as part of the post-coup purge, died on June 2 of late-stage pancreatic cancer.

[İbrahim Güngör](#), a 73-year-old inmate jailed over alleged Gülen links while suffering from Alzheimer's, died on August 28 after repeated pleas for his release.

[Asaleddin Çelik](#), a 52-year-old former English teacher imprisoned over alleged ties to the Gülen movement, died of cancer on September 14.

[Cafer Ongun](#), a 51-year-old former teacher serving a sentence over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died at Kütahya Prison of a heart attack on September 21.

[Yusuf Özkan](#), a former teacher imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of a heart attack at Konya Ereğli Prison on September 25.

[İzzet Odabaşoğlu](#), a former police officer imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of a heart attack on October 5 at Sakarya Ferizli Prison

[Yaşar Elibol](#), a former civil servant fired from his job and jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of bone cancer on October 10 in Tokat province.

[Ender Gökmen](#), a 39-year-old former teacher imprisoned over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of a heart attack on October 14 in Erzurum province.

[Timur Özgen](#), a 52-year-old former noncommissioned officer who was dismissed from the military under a government decree as part of the post-coup purge and later imprisoned, died of pancreatic cancer on October 26.

[Bekir Bayram](#), a 76-year-old former inmate jailed over alleged links to the Gülen movement, died of a heart attack on December 5.

[Hüseyin Açıkyörük](#), a 45-year-old former teacher fired from his job as part of the post-coup purge, died following a workplace incident on December 5.

[Süleyman Yıldırım](#), a 59-year-old lawyer sentenced to jail time over Gülen movement links who lost his leg after what his relatives described as months of delayed medical care in prison, died on December 8.

[Hakan Ceniklioğlu](#), a former police officer dismissed as part of the post-coup purge, died on December 26 after four months in intensive care following a workplace accident.

Suicides

[Gazi Bahargülü](#), a former teacher fired from his job as part of the post-coup purge, died by suicide in Osmaniye province on March 9.

[Ali Ülker](#), a 51-year-old former teacher fired from his job as part of the post-coup purge, died by suicide on September 28.

3. Crackdown on the Main Opposition and the Kurdish Political Movement



Turkey's political opposition faced intensifying pressure in 2025, with the judiciary emerging as the primary instrument for targeting dissenting voices. The most far-reaching measures were directed at the Republican People's Party (CHP), the country's main opposition and winner of the 2024 local elections.

From the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu to investigations targeting other mayors and senior party officials, politically motivated prosecutions of the CHP escalated throughout the year. Public protests and media criticism were met with forceful police response and mounting pressure on critical outlets.

The most significant judicial action targeting the CHP came with İmamoğlu's [arrest](#) on March 23. The CHP's 2028 presidential candidate and President Erdoğan's strongest political rival, İmamoğlu was charged with "founding and leading a criminal organization" and [faced](#) cumulative prison sentences of up to 2,430 years. His university degree was [annulled](#), effectively barring him from the presidential race. Authorities [blocked](#) his outside communication, [seized](#) businesses linked to his family and [arrested](#) his lawyer.

The crackdown extended beyond İstanbul to CHP-run municipalities including [Ankara](#), [İzmir](#) and [Antalya](#), with hundreds detained or arrested.

The party's leadership also faced legal challenges, including a court case seeking to [annul](#) its national congress and the [appointment](#) of a government trustee to the party's İstanbul branch. Several mayors defected to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), a move [attributed](#) to sustained political pressure.

Protests against the crackdown were violently dispersed. Human rights groups described some instances as “amounting to torture.” Journalists covering the demonstrations were [detained](#), while opposition media faced [threats](#), [access restrictions](#) and administrative fines. [International organizations](#) and [human rights groups](#) expressed concerns about politically motivated prosecutions and broader human rights violations.

In February imprisoned leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan [called on](#) the group to lay down its arms and in May the group [announced](#) its dissolution. The decision reduced immediate security tensions and eased political pressure on the broader Kurdish political movement. However, it did not bring an end to prosecutions and restrictions targeting Kurdish politicians, activists and journalists. Terrorism-related investigations continued, indicating that the state's approach to Kurdish political mobilization remained largely unchanged despite the PKK's formal disbandment.

In August the Turkish government set up a parliamentary commission to advance peace efforts and propose legal measures, with backing from President Erdoğan and at the initiative of Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

While the move [raised](#) hopes for reforms addressing the Kurdish population's political, cultural and social grievances, Kurdish civil society groups said structural safeguards for fundamental rights remained absent, raising doubts about the credibility and depth of the process. Key demands included the introduction of the “right to hope,” a conditional release mechanism that could apply to Öcalan himself and a legal framework enabling the [return](#) of PKK members to Turkey.

Kurdish politicians and journalists continued to face detention and prosecution on terrorism-related charges, often linked to the PKK or the Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK), an umbrella body for left-wing and pro-Kurdish groups. A February investigation into the HDK led to the [arrest of 30 people](#), with ongoing trials that have already resulted in some prison sentences.

Prominent Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş remained imprisoned despite an ECtHR ruling that Turkey had [violated](#) his rights through prolonged pretrial detention.

Here are some of the headlines from 2025 that concern the crackdown on the CHP and the Kurdish political movement:

Turkish court arrested İstanbul mayor in graft probe amid protests

A Turkish court placed İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu under arrest as part of a corruption investigation on March 23, after a fourth night of mass protests sparked violent clashes with riot police. [More...](#)

Turkish court accepted indictment seeking up to 2,430 years for İstanbul Mayor İmamoğlu

A Turkish court accepted an indictment seeking up to 2,430 years in prison for İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on charges that he led an alleged criminal organization embedded in the city government. [More...](#)



Protesters filled the streets in Turkey, defying crackdown

Thousands of protesters returned to the streets of İstanbul on March 25, after a week of the biggest protests to hit Turkey in over a decade, defying a crackdown that has seen almost 1,500 arrested. [More...](#)

7 journalists indicted for covering protests over İstanbul mayor's arrest

Turkish prosecutors indicted seven journalists who were held in pretrial detention for several days in March for covering mass protests following the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)

Jailed İstanbul mayor convicted over remarks criticizing controversial prosecutor

İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu was convicted in July of insulting and threatening a public prosecutor involved in a crackdown on his party. [More...](#)

EU urged Turkey to 'uphold democratic values' after mayor's arrest

The European Commission on March 24 urged Turkey to “uphold democratic values” as both a member of the Council of Europe and an EU candidate state, following the jailing of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)

UN rapporteurs warned Turkey over disproportionate use of force and torture during İmamoğlu protests

United Nations special rapporteurs expressed serious concerns regarding allegations of disproportionate use of force and torture by Turkish police during demonstrations in March protesting the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, mayor of İstanbul. [More...](#)

European rights watchdog said it was worried about Turkey after mayor’s arrest

The head of the Council of Europe, the continent’s leading human rights watchdog, said it was worried about any violation of rights in Turkey after the jailing of President Tayyip Erdoğan’s chief political rival and the hundreds of arrests that followed mass protests. [More...](#)

Police violence during protests over İstanbul mayor’s arrest ‘may amount to torture,’ Amnesty said

Amnesty International [urged](#) Turkish authorities to investigate alleged human rights violations by police during mass protests in March, some of which “may amount to torture.” [More...](#)

Turkey blocked access to İmamoğlu’s campaign account on X over ‘national security’ concerns

Turkey blocked access to an X account opened to promote the presidential campaign of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the jailed mayor of İstanbul and the main opposition CHP presidential candidate, citing “national security” and the need to protect “public order.” [More...](#)

Pro-opposition networks went dark for 10 days due to coverage of protests over arrest of İmamoğlu

Turkey’s broadcasting watchdog imposed simultaneous 10-day broadcast blackouts on the opposition-aligned Halk TV and Sözcü TV in July, following separate rulings that penalized both outlets over their coverage of mass protests after the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)



Jailed İstanbul mayor hit with fresh charges of ‘political espionage’

Prosecutors filed charges of “political espionage” against jailed İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, deepening a monthslong legal saga that had kept the prominent opposition figure behind bars since March.

[More...](#)

Turkish university cancelled undergraduate degree of Erdoğan’s strongest rival

A Turkish university said on March 18 that İstanbul’s opposition mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu — already the target of a number of court cases — falsely obtained his university degree. [More...](#)

Later, İstanbul University [revoked](#) his master’s degree, citing procedural violations.

Main opposition leader was among 12 MPs who faced removal of parliamentary immunity

Turkey’s parliament in November received 18 summaries of proceedings seeking to lift the immunity of 12 lawmakers, including CHP leader Özgür Özel. [More...](#)

7 opposition mayors switched to Erdoğan’s ruling party amid pressure campaign

Seven mayors from four different opposition parties joined President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s ruling AKP in October, the latest in a wave of defections that critics say are driven by government intimidation. [More...](#)

Members of Turkey’s main opposition party faced up to 15 years in prison, political bans over courthouse protest

A Turkish court accepted an indictment seeking prison terms up to 15 years and political bans for 26 members of the main opposition CHP, including the party’s İstanbul provincial chair Özgür Çelik, over their alleged involvement in a courthouse protest earlier in the year. [More...](#)

İstanbul district mayor, 25 others arrested in expanding crackdown targeting CHP

Hasan Mutlu, mayor of the Bayrampaşa district of İstanbul from the CHP, was arrested on September 15 along with 25 others in what critics called an expanding crackdown on Turkey's main opposition party. [More...](#)

A Turkish court later [ordered](#) the arrest of Beyoğlu Mayor İnan Güney and 16 others on charges of fraud and membership in a criminal organization.

25 opposition city officials in İstanbul indicted on terrorism financing charges

İstanbul prosecutors indicted 25 former and current city officials from four opposition-run municipalities on charges of financing terrorism. The 25 indicted individuals are accused of providing financial support between 2014 and 2016 to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C). [More...](#)

13 detained in probe targeting opposition-held Ankara Municipality

Thirteen people, including current and former officials of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, were detained on September 23 in a corruption investigation into spending on concerts organized by the municipality, run by the main opposition CHP. [More...](#)



Turkey authorized second investigation into Ankara mayor amid crackdown on main opposition

Turkey's Interior Ministry authorized a second investigation into Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş of the main opposition CHP over allegations linked to municipal zoning decisions, amid a broader crackdown on the party since October 2024. [More...](#)

Former İzmir mayor, provincial CHP chair among 65 ordered to stand trial in fraud case

A Turkish court accepted an indictment seeking prison sentences ranging from three to 45 years for 65 defendants, including former İzmir Metropolitan Mayor Tunç Soyer and main opposition CHP İzmir provincial chair Şenol Aslanoğlu, in what critics described as part of a politically driven crackdown on the CHP. [More...](#)

15 arrested in bribery, organized crime probe targeting former CHP mayor in Bursa

Fifteen people, including a former district mayor from the main opposition CHP, were arrested in a bribery and organized crime investigation in the northwestern Turkish province of Bursa. [More...](#)

30 detained in Antalya and Istanbul as Turkey's crackdown on main opposition-run cities deepened

Turkish authorities on August 12 detained 30 people in raids on the opposition-led municipalities of Antalya and Istanbul, part of a series of corruption investigations targeting the main opposition CHP. [More...](#)

Turkey removed 5 more mayors from office amid widening crackdown on opposition

Turkey's interior ministry announced in June that five district mayors from the main opposition CHP were removed from office, following their arrests as part of an expanding crackdown on the opposition. [More...](#)

Ex-MP, 5 mayors were among 22 arrested in corruption probe targeting Turkish opposition

A Turkish court ordered the arrest of 22 people, including five district mayors from the main opposition CHP and a former lawmaker, part of an expanding corruption investigation targeting Turkey's opposition. [More...](#)

Court removed opposition party's İstanbul leaders, appointed caretaker board in blow to Erdoğan rivals

A Turkish court on September 3 dismissed the leadership of the İstanbul branch of the country's main opposition party and installed a court-appointed caretaker board, a move seen as shaking the balance of power within the opposition as President Erdoğan continued to exert pressure on his critics. [More...](#)

Turkish prosecutors sought prison terms for 12 defendants over CHP congress allegations

Turkish prosecutors filed charges against 12 people, including İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, over alleged irregularities during the main opposition CHP's congress held in 2023. [More...](#)

Turkish prosecutor sought prison sentences for CHP officials over alleged election fraud

The İstanbul chief public prosecutor issued an indictment seeking prison sentences for 10 officials from the main opposition CHP over alleged election irregularities during the party's İstanbul provincial congress. [More...](#)



Turkey's main opposition leader ordered to pay damages to notorious İstanbul prosecutor

Özgür Özel, the leader of Turkey's main opposition CHP, was ordered by a court to pay damages to Akın Gürlek, İstanbul's top prosecutor, for violating his personal rights in remarks describing the prosecutor as a "mobile guillotine." [More...](#)

Özel was [ordered](#) in November to pay non-pecuniary damages to Gürlek again in a separate case.

RTÜK fined opposition TV stations over coverage of assault on main opposition leader

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), Turkey's broadcasting and streaming regulator, imposed administrative fines on two television stations over their coverage of a recent physical attack on Özgür Özel, Turkey's main opposition leader. [More...](#)

Turkish forensic authority said jailed opposition mayor could remain in prison despite cancer risk

The Turkish Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) said Murat Çalık, the jailed opposition mayor of İstanbul's Beylikdüzü district who faced a risk of lymphoma recurrence, could remain in prison. [More...](#)

Turkey's Constitutional Court in September [rejected](#) a request to release Çalık, while ruling that authorities must take measures to safeguard his health.

Rights groups urged Turkish parliamentary commission to push reforms protecting Kurds

Three international rights groups urged a cross-party parliamentary commission in Turkey to recommend sweeping legal and institutional reforms aimed at protecting Kurds and other communities and strengthening the rule of law as the country moved to end a four-decade conflict with Kurdish militants. [More...](#)

Turkey planned individualized legal steps for PKK militants under proposed 'opportunity law'

The Turkish government launched preparations for individualized legal measures for members of the outlawed PKK, including those in prison and those based in PKK camps outside Turkey, as part of peace talks. [More...](#)



Öcalan urged Turkey to implement 'right to hope,' calling it vital for thousands of inmates

Abdullah Öcalan, jailed leader of the outlawed PKK, called on the Turkish government to adopt the "right to hope," a legal principle allowing prisoners serving life sentences to be considered for conditional release, saying that it's a necessary step that affects thousands of prisoners. [More...](#)

PKK called on Turkey to release Öcalan to move peace process forward

A senior executive of the outlawed PKK said the group would take no further steps in its peace process with Turkey and urged Ankara to advance negotiations by releasing PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan. [More...](#)

Mayor from pro-Kurdish party sentenced to prison on terrorism charges

A Turkish court sentenced Siirt Mayor Sofya Alağaç to more than six years in prison on terrorism charges for alleged membership in the outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). [More...](#)

Pro-Kurdish and socialist politicians, journalists among 52 detained on accusations of terrorism

Turkish authorities detained 52 people, including politicians, journalists and artists, in early morning raids across 10 provinces in February as part of an investigation into the Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK), an umbrella organization for left-wing and pro-Kurdish groups. [More...](#)

Pro-Kurdish politicians, journalists among 30 arrested on accusations of terrorism

Turkish authorities arrested 30 people, including pro-Kurdish and socialist politicians, journalists and activists, following their detention in a series of police raids across 10 provinces as part of an investigation into the HDK. [More...](#)

Turkish court denied Demirtaş release despite ECtHR ruling as Erdoğan stalled on Kurdish peace reforms

A Turkish court denied the release of jailed Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtaş, days after a new ruling by the ECtHR found that Turkey had again violated his rights through prolonged pretrial detention. [More...](#)

Pro-Kurdish party urged Turkish gov't to free former leaders Demirtaş, Yüksekdağ after CoE ruling

Turkey's pro-Kurdish DEM Party called on the government to immediately release prominent Kurdish politicians Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ among others jailed in the high-profile Kobani case, citing binding rulings by the ECtHR and the Council of Europe's (CoE) Committee of Ministers. [More...](#)

European rights court said Turkey violated rights of Kurdish politician

The ECtHR ruled that Turkey had violated multiple provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of Aysel Tuğluk, a prominent Kurdish politician. [More...](#)

Turkish prison board denied probation to ousted Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakır

A Turkish prison administration rejected an application for probation filed by Selçuk Mızraklı, the ousted co-mayor of Diyarbakır. [More...](#)



Turkish prosecutor sought up to 7 years in prison for Kurdish leader Demirtaş on charges of insulting Erdoğan

A Turkish prosecutor requested up to seven years in prison for jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş, the former co-chair of the pro-Kurdish HDP, accusing him of insulting President Erdoğan in public speeches. [More...](#)

Turkey kept state appointee in Kurdish-majority city after elected mayor cleared

Turkey extended the mandate of a state-appointed trustee running the southeastern city of Mardin, keeping the municipality under central government control despite a court acquittal of the elected mayor, whose removal had been justified by terrorism-related charges. [More...](#)

4. Labour rights

Turkey saw another troubling year for labor rights in 2025, characterized by a high number of workplace deaths and renewed scrutiny of child labor. Unions and rights groups pointed to persistent safety failures, state-sanctioned pressure on the right to strike and a widening gap between stagnant wages and the soaring cost of living.

Work-related fatalities were reported across sectors, with several high-profile incidents drawing attention to safety conditions at both [private companies](#) and government-linked construction [projects](#). A monitoring group [reported](#) that at least 2,105 workers died in occupational accidents in 2025. Labor experts, however, point to discrepancies between fatality counts and survivor benefit records, suggesting that Turkey's real workplace death toll may be nearly [double](#) official figures.

Child labor remained a critical human rights concern throughout the year. Between September 2024 and August 2025, at least 72 child workers died in job-related incidents, while a study [put](#) the number of underage workers who died in work-related accidents over the past 12 years at 2,664.

The year was also marked by a significant lack of accountability for corporate negligence. In a noteworthy case involving a 2024 factory explosion, the families of four deceased workers were [pressured](#) into withdrawing their complaints against the owners, despite an official investigation that cited "gross negligence" in basic safety measures.

Labor rights disputes persisted alongside the safety concerns throughout 2025. Agricultural workers, primarily women, in İzmir [protested](#) what they described as pressure to relinquish union membership, while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [halted](#) a planned miners' strike in four provinces for 60 days, citing national security. These tensions unfolded against a backdrop of severe economic strain. By October 2025 the [monthly hunger threshold had climbed to](#) TL 28,412, leaving the TL 22,104 minimum wage more than TL 6,300 short of covering even basic nutritional needs for a family of four.

Below is a curated list of articles that provides an overview of workplace safety, child labor and labor rights in Turkey in 2025:

Over 2,000 workers died in occupational accidents in Turkey in 2025: İSiG

Turkey recorded at least 2,105 deaths in work-related accidents in 2025, according to a report by the Health and Safety Labor Watch (İSiG). [More...](#)

More than 2,600 young workers died in occupation-related accidents in Turkey in last 12 years

At least 2,664 young workers died in workplace accidents in Turkey over the past 12 years, according to a report by İSiG. [More...](#)

Turkey's real workplace death toll nearly doubled official figures

Turkey's actual workplace death toll was likely nearly double the official figures, according to labor experts who noted discrepancies between the number of fatalities and survivor benefits in Social Security Institution (SGK) records. [More...](#)

Turkey saw record number of young worker deaths despite gov't pledge to combat child labor

The number of underage deaths from occupational accidents reached a record high, despite the Turkish government's pledge to effectively prevent such fatalities, according to a report by İSiG). [More...](#)

At least 770 child workers died in occupational accidents in Turkey since 2013

At least 770 children died in work-related accidents in Turkey over the past 12 years, according to data released on the World Day Against Child Labor, celebrated on June 12. [More...](#)

At least 72 child workers died in Turkey during past school year

At least 72 children died while working in Turkey between September 2024 and August 2025, according to a new report by İSiG. [More...](#)

At least 1,566 workers in Turkey died in occupational accidents in first 3 quarters: report

Turkey recorded at least 1,566 deaths in work-related accidents in the first three quarters of 2025. [More...](#)

3 workers died on government construction site in southeastern Turkey

Three workers lost their lives in an accident on a government construction site in southeastern Urfa province in April, while a fourth worker was rescued. [More...](#)

Warehouse fire in Turkey exposed persistent workplace safety and child labor concerns

A fire at a perfume warehouse in Turkey's Kocaeli province on November 8 reignited outrage over chronic workplace safety failures in the country, after it emerged that children and unregistered workers were employed despite prior complaints to authorities and a lack of basic precautions. [More...](#)

Factory owners avoided legal pressure as families of blast victims withdraw complaints

The families of four workers who had died in a 2024 explosion at the Oba Makarna pasta factory in Sakarya province withdrew their complaints against the factory owners, despite an official investigation indicating gross negligence in the implementation of basic safety measures. [More...](#)

Miners' strike temporarily halted by President Erdoğan, citing national security

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in July halted a planned miners' strike in four provinces for 60 days, citing national security concerns. [More...](#)

Agricultural workers in Turkey's İzmir province protested company pressure to cut ties with union

More than 350 agricultural workers, most of them women, employed at Queen Flowers in İzmir province, protested the company over pressure to relinquish their union membership in May. [More...](#)

Civil servant unions, opposition accused Erdoğan gov't of forcing millions into poverty with new wage deal

Public sector unions and the main opposition party in Turkey accused the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of condemning millions to poverty with the pay raises set for civil servants and retirees for 2026–2027. [More...](#)



Turkish union demanded reinstatement of civil servants dismissed during post-coup purge

The Confederation of Public Employee Trade Unions (KESK) on October 13 began a five-day march calling for the reinstatement of civil servants fired by emergency decrees following a 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. [More...](#)

Death of 14-year-old Syrian boy in Turkey highlighted child labor crisis

A 14-year-old Syrian boy died on October 31 after falling from the fifth floor of a construction site in southeastern Turkey, drawing attention to the country's persistent child labor problem. [More...](#)

Turkey's hunger threshold kept extending its lead over the minimum wage

Turkey's hunger threshold for the month of October was calculated at TL 28,412 (\$675), extending its lead over the minimum wage of TL 22,104 (\$525), according to a report released by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (TÜRK-İŞ). [More...](#)



16 students arrested in İstanbul over protest of child deaths in vocational training program

Sixteen student members of the Workers Party of Turkey (TİP) were arrested on December 3 in İstanbul after protesting the death of minors in workplace accidents at sites where they had been sent under a controversial vocational training program known as MESEM. [More...](#)

Turkish prosecutors sought prison sentences for 17 for protesting death of minors in state-run vocational program

Turkish prosecutors sought multi-year prison sentences for 17 opposition party members accused of protesting the death of minors in a state-run vocational training program. [More...](#)

5. Minority and refugee rights



Minority groups, refugees and migrants in Turkey continued to face discrimination, violence and forced returns in 2025.

Syrians were among the most vulnerable groups. According to Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya, as of December 2025 some 550,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey had [returned](#) home following the fall of Bashar al-Assad. Almost 2.4 million Syrian refugees remain in Turkey, from a high of more than 3.5 million who had sheltered there at one point.

Refugees held in deportation centers were allegedly beaten, deprived of basic needs and pressured into signing “voluntary” return documents. In one case Turkish authorities deported a Syrian mother, leaving her five children behind in Turkey.

Rights groups also raised alarm over refugees losing their protected status and access to medical treatment, including a Syrian man with HIV and a severely disabled Afghan refugee.

Human rights advocates warned that Iranian refugees could be returned to Iran after changes in asylum procedures transferred responsibility from the United Nations to Turkish authorities.

Human Rights Watch said Turkey was increasingly restricting the legal stay of Uyghurs and deporting some to third countries despite the risk of eventual return to China. A Guinean doctor who has lived in Turkey for years and is married to a Turkish citizen was also reported to be facing deportation based on undisclosed security claims.

Several incidents pointed to continued pressure on minority identity and cultural expression. Kurdish communities reported police violence linked to Kurdish music, while a football club was fined for a Kurdish-language slogan on its jerseys, even as enrollment in Kurdish elective courses hit a record high. Authorities also banned an Armenian folk group from performing at a local festival. A Jewish business leader [reported](#) death threats and an attempted break-in, while a global [report](#) said discrimination against Christian, Jewish, Alevi and Yazidi communities continued in Turkey.

Here are some of the most important headlines concerning minority and refugee rights from 2025:



Turkish authorities illegally deported Syrian mother, leaving behind 5 children

Turkish authorities on January 2 deported Fatim el Musa, a Syrian mother of five, leaving her children behind in Turkey. [More...](#)

Turkish Jewish business leader faced assassination threats decades after father's murder

Turkish Jewish business leader İzzet Garih filed a criminal complaint after receiving death threats and facing an attempted break-in at his company's headquarters, saying he could suffer the same fate as his father, Üzeyir Garih, who was murdered in 2001. [More...](#)



Human rights advocates warned Turkey may return Iranian refugees to Iran

Iranian human rights advocates expressed concern that Iranian refugees in Turkey were at risk of being returned to Iran following a shift in asylum policies that transferred refugee oversight from the United Nations to Turkish authorities. [More...](#)

Disabled Afghan refugee in Turkey faced life-threatening health crisis after losing protected status

A severely disabled Afghan refugee lost access to critical medical treatment after authorities revoked his protected status. [More...](#)

Syrian refugees in Turkey beaten, deprived of basic needs, coerced to sign 'voluntary' return papers

Syrian refugees detained in Turkey were allegedly beaten, denied food and medical care and coerced into signing "voluntary" return documents, according to a report published in April that detailed allegations of systemic abuse in Turkish deportation centers. [More...](#)

Turkish police reportedly beat and detained a family for listening to Kurdish music

Turkish police reportedly beat and detained a group of family members in Istanbul on July 12 after they were found listening to Kurdish songs, leading to the hospitalization of a pregnant woman. [More...](#)

Turkey banned Armenian folk group from performing at festival

Authorities in Turkey's Tunceli province banned the Armenian folk music ensemble Veradardz from performing at the 23rd Munzur Culture and Nature Festival, citing accusations that the group had previously deviated from the festival's intended purpose by displaying the Armenian flag. [More...](#)

Christian, Jewish, Alevi and Yazidi communities faced ongoing discrimination in Turkey

A November report by the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) said religious minorities in Turkey face growing hostility, citing hate speech, attacks on houses of worship and policies favoring the Sunni Muslim majority at the expense of Christians, Jews, Alevis and Yazidis. [More...](#)

Amnesty launched urgent action campaign to restore refugee status, healthcare access for Syrian man with HIV in Turkey

Amnesty International launched an urgent action campaign urging Turkish authorities to reinstate the temporary protection status of a Syrian refugee who was stripped of his legal rights after he was diagnosed with HIV, leaving him unable to access vital medical care. [More...](#)

Football club fined for Kurdish-language jersey ad

A football club based in the predominantly Kurdish province of Diyarbakır was fined for a Kurdish-language advertising slogan on its jerseys. [More...](#)



Guinean doctor in Turkey faced deportation over undisclosed security claims

A Guinean physician who has lived in Turkey for 14 years and is married to a Turkish citizen faced deportation under a national security order, despite having no criminal charges against him and being denied access to the evidence used to justify the decision.

[More...](#)

Turkey no longer a safe haven for Uyghurs amid residency cancellations and deportation risks, HRW reported

Turkey started restricting the legal stay of Uyghurs and deporting some to third countries despite the risk of eventual return to China, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, according to a report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW). [More...](#)

Turkish police allegedly killed Syrian man in raid on wrong address in southern Turkey

A Syrian man identified as Anas Laila was allegedly shot and killed by Turkish police during a raid on the wrong address in the early hours of November 21. [More...](#)



New abuse case involving Ukrainian orphan surfaced in Turkey

A Turkish prosecutor opened a new case over the alleged abuse of a Ukrainian orphan, indicating that abuse allegations involving Ukrainian orphans sheltered in Turkey could extend beyond previously known cases. [More...](#)

Turkey accused of targeting Uyghur refugees as ties with China improved

Turkish authorities arbitrarily labeled Uyghur refugees as security threats, detained them and deported some to third countries where they face the risk of return to China, a pattern HRW said intensified as Turkey's ties with Beijing improved. [More...](#)

Controversial Turkish mayor admitted imposing illegal measures targeting Syrian refugees

Bolu Mayor Tanju Özcan admitted to illegally revoking business licenses and drastically increasing water fees for Syrian refugees living in his city, sparking criticism and prompting an investigation by authorities. [More...](#)

Gunman fired on Christian association in İstanbul

A gunman opened fire on an association linked to the Kurtuluş Church in İstanbul's Çekmeköy district on New Year's Eve, apparently while shouting remarks reflecting religious intolerance. [More...](#)

6. Press freedom



Press freedom in Turkey deteriorated further in 2025 as authorities tightened control over the media through prosecutions, regulatory penalties and online censorship. Pressure escalated during the political crisis triggered by the removal from office and arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, when restrictions increased across broadcast media and social media platforms and journalists faced new legal cases tied to their reporting.

Pro-opposition broadcasters were among the main targets. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), Turkey's media regulator, imposed fines and other penalties on several stations over their coverage of İmamoğlu's case and the protests that followed, including 10-day blackouts that took channels off the air. RTÜK imposed 99 sanctions in 2025, fining broadcasters and digital platforms approximately \$5.3 million, with most penalties targeting news and political commentary critical of the government.

Online censorship expanded throughout the year. According to Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya, Turkey blocked 27,304 social media accounts in the first four months of 2025 alone. Courts blocked access to 3,330 URLs linked to 1,306 pieces of online content in the first seven months of the year. Authorities also restricted protest-related content by blocking accounts and posts, while platforms including X and YouTube limited access in Turkey to accounts belonging to journalists, activists and media organizations, including those operating from exile. X blocked access to at least 42 journalist and activist accounts, while Bluesky restricted access to 72 accounts and one post following government pressure.

Journalists also remained under heavy legal pressure, with 24 detentions recorded in 2025, including YouTube hosts, television anchors and staff members of a satirical magazine. Reporters were prosecuted over news reports, interviews and social media posts, with charges ranging from “insulting the president” to terrorism-related accusations. Kurdish journalists and Kurdish media organizations faced repeated arrests and indictments, while courts pursued cases against satire and commentary deemed offensive to religious values.

Journalists were also prosecuted in cases linked to the faith-based Gülen movement, including for expressing condolences after the death of Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen.

The broader legal climate around free speech also tightened. Over a 12-month period, 1,696 people were put on trial, and pretrial detentions rose by 560 percent, reinforcing concerns about use of the courts to deter dissent.

Journalists also faced physical threats and violence. Some were assaulted after publishing stories on corruption or local misconduct, while others reported death threats. Pressure also reached beyond Turkey, with journalists living in exile describing continued threats to their safety.

Foreign journalists were also affected. A Swedish journalist was detained upon arrival in Turkey, planning to cover protests, and a BBC correspondent was deported after being accused of posing a threat to public order.

New legislation added to concerns about future restrictions. A cybersecurity law that entered into force in March expanded the powers of the Cybersecurity Directorate, allowing for the search and seize of digital materials without judicial approval. The law also introduced prison sentences for disseminating “false information” about data breaches.

Turkey’s international standing reflected the year’s developments. The country ranked 159th out of 180 in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, and separate research found trust in news in Turkey had fallen to its lowest level in a decade.

Below is a roundup of key developments from 2025 about press freedom in Turkey:

Journalist detained in Turkey over social media post for the 14th time

Journalist Ahmet Erkan Yiğitsözlü was briefly detained on January 6 over a post on X, marking the 14th time he has been taken into custody. [More...](#)

Turkey arrested 6 Kurdish journalists on terrorism charges

A Turkish court on January 17 ruled for the arrest of six Kurdish journalists who were detained in a police operation across several provinces in January. [More...](#)



Turkish court handed down prison sentences to journalists in retrial due to Gülen links

A Turkish court sentenced six journalists to prison on terrorism-related charges due to their alleged links to the Gülen movement in a retrial following a Supreme Court of Appeals ruling that overturned their previous convictions. [More...](#)

Turkish court's arrest of Halk TV editor-in-chief 'a political move' to silence media: CPJ

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned a Turkish court's order to arrest Halk TV Editor-in-Chief Suat Toktaş after the opposition-aligned network aired an interview with a court-appointed expert witness, saying it is a political move to silence critical voices. [More...](#)

X blocked access to at least 42 journalist, activist accounts in Turkey

Social media platform X blocked access to at least 42 accounts belonging to Turkish journalists, activists and media organizations operated by journalists living in exile, marking yet another act of censorship. [More...](#)

Kurdish journalist arrested over social media posts about colleagues killed in drone strike

Turkish authorities on February 11 arrested Öznur Değer, a reporter for JINNEWS, over social media posts about two Kurdish journalists killed in a drone strike in northern Syria. [More...](#)

Vice News reporters acquitted in Turkey after 9-year terrorism trial

On March 17, a Turkish court acquitted two Vice News journalists of terrorism-related charges after a nine-year trial stemming from their reporting in Turkey's restive southeast in 2015. [More...](#)

Turkey blocked hundreds of social media accounts after protests over Istanbul mayor's detention and subsequent arrest

Turkish authorities on March 23 blocked access to dozens of social media accounts that has posted about protests following the detention and subsequent arrest and removal from office of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)

Swedish journalist detained on arrival in Turkey: FM

Swedish journalist Joakim Medin was detained upon arrival in Turkey, where he was intending to cover anti-government demonstrations. [More...](#)



Turkey deported BBC reporter for 'posing threat to public order'

BBC correspondent Mark Lowen was deported from Turkey on March 27 after being detained in Istanbul on March 26 on accusations that he posed a "threat to public order." [More...](#)

Turkey fined Meta for refusing to suspend protest-linked accounts

Facebook parent Meta on April 1 said it was fined a "substantial amount" in Turkey for failing to comply with government orders to suspend accounts linked to widespread protests following the detention of the opposition mayor of Istanbul. [More...](#)

Bluesky restricted access to 72 accounts in Turkey amid government pressure

On April 17, Bluesky restricted access to 72 accounts and one post in Turkey, marking a shift for the decentralized social media platform that had previously resisted government censorship. [More...](#)

Journalist received suspended sentence on conviction of insulting, slandering Erdoğan

A Turkish court on April 18 handed down a two-year suspended sentence to journalist Furkan Karabay due to comments he made about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his children during an interview on a YouTube program last year. [More...](#)



Swedish reporter got 11-month suspended sentence for insulting Erdoğan

A Turkish court on Wednesday gave a Swedish journalist a suspended sentence of just over 11 months for insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. [More...](#)

Turkey ranked 159th in new press freedom index: RSF

Turkey dropped to 159th out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, published on May 2 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). [More...](#)

Turkish journalist arrested due to reports on investigations into opposition mayors

Turkish journalist Furkan Karabay was arrested on May 15 on charges of insulting the president and targeting public officials involved in counterterrorism efforts in his reports and social media posts concerning investigations into opposition mayors, his lawyer said. [More...](#)

Turkey blocked 27,304 social media accounts in first four months of 2025: minister

Turkey's interior minister said on May 7 that 27,304 social media accounts had been blocked in the first four months of 2025 as part of the country's expanding digital crackdown. [More...](#)

CPJ urged Turkey to safeguard journalist after death threats tied to court bribery story

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on May 19 called on Turkish authorities to protect a reporter and his family after they received death threats in response to his report alleging a \$2.5 million bribe to avoid detention in a court case tied to organized crime. [More...](#)



Covert deal hinted Sweden traded release of Swedish reporter for crackdown on exiled Turkish journalists

Sweden may have quietly agreed to disrupt the activities of Turkish journalists living in exile within its borders in exchange for the release of detained Swedish journalist Joakim Medin. [More...](#)

Turkish regulator ordered 10-day blackout of pro-opposition TV station

Turkey's media watchdog on May 28 ordered a 10-day broadcast blackout of the pro-opposition Sözcü TV, starting June 1, penalizing the station for its coverage of nationwide protests following the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a prominent opposition figure. [More...](#)

Trust in news in Turkey plunged to lowest level in a decade

Trust in news in Turkey has plunged to its lowest level since 2015, while a pro-government outlet has become the least trusted media organization in the country, according to the 2025 Digital News Report from the University of Oxford's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. [More...](#)

Turkish court jailed 4 LeMan staff members over cartoon allegedly insulting religious values

Four staff members of the Turkish satirical magazine LeMan were jailed pending trial on July 2 on charges of “publicly insulting religious values” after being taken into police custody on June 30 over a controversial cartoon. [More...](#)

Pro-opposition networks went dark for 10 days due to coverage of protests over arrest of İmamoğlu

Turkey's broadcasting watchdog imposed simultaneous 10-day broadcast blackouts on opposition-aligned Halk TV and Sözcü TV starting July 8, following separate rulings that penalize both outlets over their coverage of mass protests after the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)

Turkey opened Spotify probe after 'provocative playlist' complaint

Turkey's competition authority on July 4 opened an investigation into Spotify over alleged anti-competitive practices, while a deputy culture minister called for legal action against the music streaming platform for hosting playlists deemed offensive to religious values and the president's wife. [More...](#)



Turkish journalist jailed after reporting on extortion scheme involving local officials using Erdoğan's name

A Turkish journalist was arrested after publishing articles alleging that officials in the central province of Nevşehir invoked the names of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya when pressuring local businesspeople for money, sparking criticism from press freedom advocates. [More...](#)

Turkey's media regulator threatened pro-opposition BirGün TV with ban, critics cited weaponization of licensing

Turkey's media regulator on September 4 gave pro-opposition outlet BirGün TV 72 hours to apply for a license or face an access ban, a move opposition members said shows how licensing rules are being used to pressure critical media. [More...](#)

Turkish journalist faced up to 15 years on charges of insulting Erdoğan, officials

The İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office sought six to 15 years in prison for journalist Furkan Karabay on charges of "insulting the president," "repeatedly targeting public officials involved in counterterrorism efforts" and "insulting a public official." [More...](#)



Turkey blocked exiled journalist Dündar's YouTube channel over protest call

An İstanbul court ordered a block on the YouTube channel of journalist Can Dündar, who lives in exile, citing national security and public order after he urged opposition supporters to protest government-appointed trustees. [More...](#)

Turkey blocked access to Grok's X account, citing national security

Turkish authorities on September 11 blocked access to the X account of Grok, the artificial intelligence chatbot developed by Elon Musk's xAI, under a law that allows content restrictions on national security grounds. [More...](#)

Turkish journalist received suspended sentence for reporting on pro-government university official

A Turkish court on September 9 handed down a one-year, eight-month suspended sentence to journalist Mehmet Baran Kılıç on charges of "unlawful acquisition and dissemination of personal data" for his reports about the secretary-general of Boğaziçi University. [More...](#)

Turkish broadcast regulator fined three pro-opposition TV stations

Turkey's broadcast regulator fined three pro-opposition TV stations on October 3, citing critical on-air commentary and a subtitle error, sparking criticism over the continued use of financial penalties against opposition media. [More...](#)

CPJ urged probe after Turkish journalist beaten in suspected retaliation over corruption reporting

A Turkish journalist was assaulted in suspected retaliation for his reporting on alleged local corruption, the Committee to Protect Journalists said on October 6, urging authorities to bring both the attackers and those who ordered the assault to justice. [More...](#)



Photojournalist who had captured police killing of Kurdish student faced fourth terrorism indictment

A Turkish prosecutor on October 10 issued a fourth indictment against photojournalist Abdurrahman Gök, who took pictures of a Kurdish university student being shot to death by police in 2017. [More...](#)

Journalist covering environmental issues fought for his life after attack in Istanbul

Turkish journalist and environmental activist Hakan Tosun was in intensive care after being brutally assaulted in İstanbul, in what his family and colleagues suspect was a targeted attack related to his reporting on environmental issues. [More...](#)

CPJ urged Turkey to protect 3 journalists facing death threats

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on October 21 called on Turkish authorities to ensure the security of three reporters who received death threats in connection with their work. [More...](#)



Kurdish journalist sentenced over posts on colleagues killed in Turkish drone strike in Syria

A Turkish court sentenced journalist and news editor Öznur Değer to more than three years in prison over social media posts about two Kurdish journalists who were killed in a Turkish drone attack in Syria. [More...](#)

Turkey's Erdoğan again named among RSF's 'Press Freedom Predators'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was again listed among the world's worst violators of press freedom in the 2025 edition of Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) "Press Freedom Predators" list. [More...](#)

Turkey blocked journalist's X account after posts targeting foundation led by Erdoğan's son

Turkish authorities on November 4 blocked access to journalist Serdar Akinan's account on X after he shared posts alleging misconduct by a youth foundation led by Bilal Erdoğan, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's son. [More...](#)

Turkish prosecutor indicted 2 Kurdish journalists over reporting on military torture allegations

A Turkish prosecutor on November 25 indicted two Kurdish journalists for reporting on torture allegations against a gendarmerie commander, accusing them of “targeting a public official.” [More...](#)

EU rapporteur slammed ‘absurd’ sentence for prominent Turkish journalist as press groups urged release

European Parliament Turkey rapporteur Nacho Sanchez Amor on November 26 condemned Turkey for sentencing journalist Fatih Altaylı to over four years in prison, with press groups calling the case another severe blow to media freedom and urging his release. [More...](#)

Turkey arrested another YouTube journalist for allegedly insulting Erdoğan

Arif Kocabıyık, a journalist known for his street interviews, was arrested by a court on December 6 on charges of insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. [More...](#)

Pro-government Turkish journalist arrested after social media post criticizing justice minister

Zihni Çakır, a journalist known for his pro-government stance, was arrested on December 20 following a social media post in which he criticized Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç, the T24 news website reported. [More...](#)

7. Torture, ill-treatment and prison conditions



Turkey's record on torture and ill-treatment continued to deteriorate in 2025, despite its commitments under international human rights conventions.

Throughout the year human rights organizations documented credible allegations of widespread and systematic abuses by security forces and authorities. A deepening culture of impunity appeared to embolden law enforcement and prison officials, leading to arbitrary practices. Investigations into allegations of torture remained largely ineffective, reinforcing concerns about institutional tolerance for abuse. Reflecting the severity of the situation, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) ranked Turkey as the second highest-risk country worldwide for torture in its 2025 Global Torture Index, published in June.

Ill-treatment by security forces became particularly visible during interventions in peaceful protests of the government and its policies. In March the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of İstanbul and the main opposition Republican People's Party's presidential candidate, sparked mass demonstrations across the country. Excessive use of force by the police attracted strong criticism from international human rights bodies including those of the UN and the Council of Europe.

Inside Turkey's prisons, degrading and inhuman treatment persisted despite rulings by domestic courts and the Constitutional Court. Strip-searches continued to be reported, even as the government maintained that such practices do not occur. Prison administrations frequently denied inmates their right to probation on questionable grounds. Conditions in high-security "pit-type" facilities remained especially controversial, with reports of serious rights violations prompting hunger strikes by inmates. The government took no meaningful steps to address these concerns.

Turkey's prison population reached a record high of 433,000 inmates, pushing facilities to 42 percent over capacity. Chronic overcrowding further strained access to healthcare, hygiene and basic living standards, exacerbating already poor detention conditions. Human rights groups and legal experts have called for comprehensive legislative and judicial reforms to address the crisis. The government's sole response has been to construct additional prisons.

Throughout 2025 numerous cases were reported involving severe torture in police custody, detainees developing chronic illnesses due to poor prison conditions and preventable deaths linked to inadequate access to healthcare. Victims frequently reported being denied timely medical examinations or pressured to refrain from filing complaints. These abuses disproportionately affected members of the Gülen movement, Kurdish detainees and government critics.

Here are some of the most important developments from 2025 regarding torture, inhuman treatment and prison conditions in Turkey:

Turkey labeled high risk in global torture index

Turkey was classified as a high-risk country for torture and ill-treatment in the first edition of a new international index. The Global Torture Index 2025, released by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) in June, put Turkey in the second-highest risk tier among 26 countries assessed, citing widespread allegations of torture, unchecked police violence and legal and institutional barriers that block accountability. [More...](#)

Turkish human rights watchdogs warned of widespread mistreatment and torture in detention centers

Marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) and the Human Rights Association (İHD) issued a joint statement in Istanbul, warning that mistreatment and torture remain alarmingly widespread in detention centers. [More...](#)



More than 1,400 sick prisoners were held in Turkish penal institutions: report

At least 1,412 sick inmates, including hundreds who were critically ill, were being held in Turkish prisons under conditions that exacerbated their health problems, according to a new report released by the İHD. [More...](#)

Rights group alleged systematic abuse in Turkish prisons

The Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD) said prisoners in several of the country's high-security facilities were facing systematic rights violations, including prolonged solitary confinement, denial of medical care and arbitrary obstruction of parole. [More...](#)

Turkey's prison population continued to surge, operating at 42 percent over capacity

Turkey's prison population climbed to 433,543, exceeding official capacity by 42 percent, according to a report by the Civil Society in the Penal System (CISST), a prisoners' rights group. [More...](#)

822 children under the age of 6 lived in Turkey's overcrowded prisons: report

A report by CISST revealed a growing number of children living behind bars with their mothers, while the inmate numbers continued to rise in Turkey's overcrowded prisons. According to CISST, in October 822 children under the age of 6 were living with their mothers in prison, up from 759 a year ago. [More...](#)

Turkey's 'pit-type' prisons under fire amid hunger strikes, rights concerns

Rights groups and inmates stepped up criticism of Turkey's high-security "pit-type" prisons, saying detainees face overcrowding, lack of sunlight and medical neglect. [More...](#)

Istanbul Bar called for closure of 'pit-type' prisons, citing human dignity violations

The İstanbul Bar Association called for the closure of so-called “pit-type” prisons and urged the authorities to address the demands of inmates on a hunger strike, citing serious rights violations documented in a new report. [More...](#)



UN rapporteurs warned Turkey over disproportionate use of force and torture during İmamoğlu protests

United Nations special rapporteurs expressed serious concerns regarding allegations of disproportionate use of force and torture by Turkish police during demonstrations in March protesting the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of İstanbul. [More...](#)

Turkish top court struck down suspended sentence mechanism, citing torture ban

Turkey’s Constitutional Court ruled that a court mechanism that allowed some convictions to be effectively suspended can no longer be used, striking down parts of Article 231 of the Code of Criminal Procedure that let judges defer verdicts in cases where prison sentences did not exceed two years. [More...](#)

Turkey’s top court again ruled against prison surveillance practices

Turkey’s Constitutional Court ruled that the recording of prison visits and the uploading of inmate letters to the judiciary’s digital system violated inmates’ rights to privacy and freedom of communication. Despite similar rulings in recent years from both the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights, the practice of recording prison communications and uploading private correspondence continued in some Turkish prisons. [More...](#)

Witness detailed torture of former teacher in Turkish custody, said ‘clothes were soaked in blood’

A witness testified in court in April, describing signs of apparent torture inflicted on a former teacher while he was in detention following a coup attempt in Turkey in 2016.

The witness claimed the teacher was sexually assaulted, beaten and insulted while in custody at the Antalya Police Station. [More...](#)



Turkish prosecutor rejected general's complaint of torture despite evidence aired publicly

A Turkish prosecutor rejected a complaint alleging torture filed by a former lieutenant general who was serving an aggravated life sentence over a 2016 coup attempt, despite images published by the state-run Anadolu news agency showing him with visible injuries hours after his detention. [More...](#)

Turkish prison board denied probation to ousted Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakır

A Turkish prison administration rejected an application for probation filed by Selçuk Mızraklı, the ousted co-mayor of Diyarbakır. The board rejected his application in September and although he recently reapplied, it once again denied his request on the grounds that he had not declared that he had “disassociated himself from a terrorist organization.” [More...](#)

Lawyers raised alarm over conditions for women in Turkish prisons

The İstanbul Bar Association's Young Lawyers Assembly and Women's Rights Center expressed concern over conditions for women in Turkish prisons, citing overcrowding, poor hygiene and a lack of support for pregnant inmates. [More...](#)

Women visitors strip-searched, headscarves removed at Turkish prison: report

The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) accused prison authorities in southeastern Turkey of systematically subjecting visitors to the facility, particularly women and children, to degrading and unlawful searches, including forced removal of clothing and invasive physical contact. [More...](#)

Turkish woman jailed over Gülen links described repeated sexual abuse in custody

A woman who was jailed in Turkey over alleged ties to the faith-based Gülen movement claimed she was subjected to repeated strip-searches and sexual abuse while in custody. [More...](#)

Young Turkish protesters endured harsh treatment in police custody

After rising up to rally against the arrest of İstanbul's powerful opposition mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, young Turkish protesters were forced to wake up to the reality of police custody. Lawyers and politicians supportive of İmamoğlu, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's top political challenger, slammed the "police brutality" suffered by students detained for taking part in the country's worst unrest for more than a decade. [More...](#)

UN special rapporteurs urged Turkey to end mistreatment of human rights lawyers

United Nations human rights special rapporteurs raised serious concerns over the imprisonment and mistreatment of human rights lawyers in Turkey and expressed concern that the charges against them were politically motivated and that they had been subjected to unfair trials and mistreatment in prison. [More...](#)



Gülen-linked educator paralyzed in prison amid medical neglect

Uğur Öztaş, an 88-year-old educator imprisoned over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, became paralyzed in prison allegedly due to the neglect of his medical needs. [More...](#)

Family blamed prison conditions for death of former Turkish inmate after serving Gülen-related sentence

The family of Akif Şimşek, who died of leukemia in 2024 after serving more than seven years in prison for alleged ties to the faith-based Gülen movement, came forward publicly, saying poor conditions during his incarceration severely damaged his health and contributed to his death. [More...](#)

DEM Party deputy revealed police torture of former academic during post-coup crackdown

A former assistant professor at Harran University in southeastern Urfa province was subjected to torture during a 2017 police interrogation, Peoples' Equality and

Democracy Party (DEM Party) MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu revealed on his YouTube channel. [More...](#)

Elderly Alzheimer's patient jailed over Gülen links died in Turkish prison after repeated pleas for release

İbrahim Güngör, a 73-year-old Alzheimer's patient imprisoned over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, [died](#) in a Turkish prison on September 7, after months of repeated pleas from his family for his release on health grounds were ignored. Turkish authorities refused to allow his jailed daughter to attend the funeral. [More...](#)

Dismissed teacher, denied release from prison until too late, succumbed to cancer

Ramazan Aktaş, a former history teacher dismissed under an emergency decree in the aftermath of a 2016 coup attempt in Turkey and imprisoned over alleged ties to the faith-based Gülen movement, died of late-stage pancreatic cancer in June shortly after a delayed release from prison despite his doctor's earlier warnings. [More...](#)

LGBTQ detainees held in one-person cells in Turkish prison, denied medical care

Six LGBTQ inmates in pretrial detention at Turkey's Aksaray Prison were held in single-person cells and denied access to medical care, under conditions their lawyers said violated Turkish law and amounted to systemic discrimination. [More...](#)

Elderly inmate in Turkish prison lost eyesight after being denied medical treatment

Ömer Yaman, a 70-year-old inmate in Turkey's Tokat province, went blind in his left eye after being denied treatment for cataracts. He told his lawyers that he had not received any medical treatment for the past six months, which ultimately led to the loss of vision in his left eye. [More...](#)

Chronically ill inmate in Izmir died due to alleged negligence

A chronically ill inmate in a prison in Turkey's İzmir province died due to alleged negligence. Kadir Coşkun, 65, was arrested and sent to a minimum-security prison in March after being sentenced to five months for a traffic accident. His family revealed that Coşkun suffered from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a condition caused by lung damage. [More...](#)



Torture and intimidation in a Turkish detention center: Former detainee shared details of harrowing interrogation

Hayati Uysal, a 29-year-old Turkish man who was imprisoned for alleged links to the Gülen movement, shared his harrowing account of torture in detention that ultimately left him blind. Uysal said during detention he endured severe beating, threats to his life and psychological abuse.

[More...](#)

Teacher abducted by Turkish intelligence denied surgery for 16 months after arm broken during torture

A Turkish educator abducted from Kyrgyzstan by Turkish intelligence in 2021 told an opposition lawmaker that he was denied surgery for 16 months after his arm was broken in three places during torture while in custody. [More...](#)

Elderly inmate died of cancer in Turkish prison after release denied

A retired imam diagnosed with advanced lymphoma died in Kırşehir Prison in January after Turkish authorities repeatedly denied his requests for the postponement of his sentence on grounds of health. [More...](#)

8. Transnational repression



Turkey's campaign of transnational repression against critics abroad continued throughout 2025. Since a coup attempt in July 2016, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's long arm has targeted tens of thousands of Turkish citizens abroad who are perceived as threats to the government or as critical of its policies.

Nearly a decade after the failed coup, the Turkish government continues targeting Gülen movement supporters. A sustained campaign of persecution inside Turkey has relied on legally questionable charges and evidence, an approach mirrored by Ankara abroad, targeting dissidents and Gülen movement members across the globe through an expanding range of methods and channels.

The campaign has mostly relied on renditions, in which Turkey and its National Intelligence Organization (MIT) persuade other states to hand over individuals without due process. Victims of such operations have reported several human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, [torture](#) and ill-treatment.

Throughout the year, these efforts included the forced deportation of a UN-protected refugee by [Rwanda](#) and attempts to secure deportations from [Kenya](#), [Mozambique](#) and [Brazil](#). Surveillance and profiling of Turkish citizens

through [diplomatic missions](#) and pro-government diaspora organizations, denial of consular services and outright intimidation continued unabated as well.

German intelligence authorities confirmed in a June [report](#) Turkey's spying on dissidents, highlighting the active role played by Turkish diplomatic missions in Germany in the collection, analysis and transmission of intelligence. A UK parliamentary report also [listed](#) Turkey as one of the states that had conducted transnational repression activities on UK soil.

Despite being among the countries most frequently criticized for [abusing](#) INTERPOL mechanisms, Turkey pressed ahead with efforts to secure the organization's presidency for its own candidate in the November election, disregarding criticism from member states. This bid, widely seen as reflecting Ankara's determination to continue with its transnational repression, ultimately failed when the Turkish candidate lost the election.

The Turkish government also enabled the transnational repression of [Chinese](#), [Azerbaijani](#), [Iranian](#), [Turkmen](#) and [Syrian](#) dissidents on Turkish soil by forcibly deporting them to their home countries in violation of the international legal principle of non-refoulement.

Here is some of the most important news from 2025 concerning Turkey's efforts at transnational repression.

UN-protected refugee deported to Turkey by Rwanda with his children

A Turkish refugee under United Nations protection was deported from Rwanda to Turkey in June with his three children, following apparent pressure from the Turkish government. [More...](#)

Teacher abducted by Turkish intelligence denied surgery for 16 months after arm broken during torture

A Turkish educator abducted from Kyrgyzstan by Turkish intelligence in 2021 told an opposition lawmaker that he was denied surgery for 16 months after his arm was broken in three places during torture while in custody. [More...](#)

Top court ruled Turkey violated rights of Gülen-linked teacher abducted from Kazakhstan

Turkey's Constitutional Court ruled that authorities had violated their obligation to investigate credible allegations of torture made by Zabit Kişi, a

former teacher convicted of links to the Gülen movement, following his reported abduction from Kazakhstan and incommunicado detention. [More...](#)



Turkish refugee arrested in Kenya faced forced return to Turkey: Amnesty

Mustafa Güngör, a Turkish refugee residing in Kenya, was [detained](#) on December 21 with his family and was at serious risk of refoulement to Turkey. He was later released on a personal bond pending a hearing scheduled for February 3. [More...](#)

Turkish lawyer detained in Mozambique over extradition request denied access to legal counsel

Emre Çınar, a Turkish lawyer [detained](#) in Mozambique on December 30 following an extradition request from Turkish authorities over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement, was not granted access to his attorneys or family during his detention.

He was released pending trial by a Mozambican court on January 5, 2026. [More...](#)

Turkish journalist living in exile said he continues to face threats to his life

Turkish investigative journalist Cevheri Güven said he continues to face constant threats to his life, even after seeking asylum in Germany. [More...](#)

Turkish businessman arrested in Brazil faced extradition to Turkey over Gülen links

Turkish-Brazilian dual national Mustafa Göktepe was [arrested](#) in São Paulo in May following an extradition request from the Turkish government over his links to the Gülen movement.

Brazil's Supreme Federal Court (STF) later ordered his release, citing a lack of clear evidence in the Turkish extradition request. [More...](#)

Kyrgyz teacher at school taken over by Ankara-backed foundation detained in Turkey

Azamat Numat Uulu, a Kyrgyz math teacher who traveled to Turkey in April for a student competition, has not been heard from since Turkish border authorities reportedly detained him at İstanbul Airport. [More...](#)



Sweden rejected Turkey's extradition request for journalist Abdullah Bozkurt

Sweden rejected Turkey's request to extradite journalist living in exile Abdullah Bozkurt, ruling that the accusations against him are not punishable under Swedish law and therefore cannot form the basis for extradition. [More...](#)

Germany investigated Turkish consulate employee, police officer over suspected espionage

German federal prosecutors launched an investigation into a Turkish consulate employee and a police officer of Turkish descent on suspicion of spying for Turkey. [More...](#)

Turkey continued spying on Gülen followers, PKK supporters in Germany

Turkey's intelligence services continued to operate in Germany, focusing primarily on spying on followers of the faith-based Gülen movement and supporters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), according to a report from Germany's domestic intelligence agency. [More...](#)

Turkish spy agency stepped up recruitment of informants among diaspora during holiday season

As millions of Turks flocked to Turkey's resort towns and cities for the summer holidays, the country's intelligence agency MIT ramped up covert operations aimed at recruiting informants from among the diaspora. [More...](#)

US judge rejected Turkey's request for data on Gülen movement members, citing political motives

A US federal judge rejected a request by the Turkish government seeking the financial records of five individuals linked to the faith-based Gülen movement,

citing concerns that the case was politically motivated and part of a broader campaign of transnational repression. [More...](#)

Turkey secretly plotted to bypass INTERPOL rules to target exiled journalist in Sweden

A classified memo issued by Turkey's Security Directorate General reveals covert efforts to circumvent INTERPOL rules in order to secure an international arrest warrant, also known as a Red Notice, against a Turkish journalist living in exile who has been granted asylum in Sweden. [More...](#)

Turkey among top abusers of INTERPOL's notice system: UK parliament report

Turkey is among the most prolific abusers of INTERPOL's notice system, a UK parliamentary report found, warning that authoritarian regimes are increasingly exploiting international policing tools to target exiles and critics abroad. The report, published on July 30 by the Joint Committee on Human Rights, said it received evidence alleging that many states had conducted transnational repression (TNR) activities on UK soil, listing Turkey along with China, Russia, Iran and others. [More...](#)

Turkey accused of targeting Uyghur refugees as ties with China improve: HRW

Turkish authorities arbitrarily labeled Uyghur refugees as security threats, detained them and deported some to third countries where they face the risk of return to China, a pattern Human Rights Watch (HRW) said has intensified as Turkey's ties with Beijing have improved. [More...](#)

HRW urged Turkey to halt deportation of Turkmen activists at risk of torture, unfair trial

HRW urged Turkish authorities to immediately halt the deportation of two Turkmen activists detained in northern Turkey, warning that they face a serious risk of torture, enforced disappearance and arbitrary imprisonment if returned to Turkmenistan. Alisher Sakhatov and Abdulla Orusov were detained by migration authorities in the city of Sinop on April 28. [More...](#)

Azeri student deported from Turkey after joining campus protest alleges mistreatment

Nanaxaanım Babazade, an Azerbaijani graduate student, was [transferred](#) in August to a repatriation center in Çatalca, İstanbul, after taking part in a student protest against rising meal prices at İstanbul University.

Turkish authorities have [designated](#) her as a “foreign terrorist fighter” for participating in the protest.

After deportation from Turkey, Babazade claimed she had been physically restrained, denied prescribed medication and forced to wear something resembling a dog muzzle that left her struggling to breathe. [More...](#)



Turkey moved to deport Azerbaijani opposition figure accused of backing coup attempt

Turkey moved to deport Azerbaijani opposition figure and former lawmaker Gültekin Hacıbeyli after detaining her in İstanbul on November 29. [More...](#)

Iranian activist in Turkish custody faced risk of deportation after 45 days of detention

Mohammad Abbaspour, a political activist from southwestern Iran who sought asylum in Turkey, was detained on October 10 by Turkish security forces for 45 days and faced the risk of deportation or extradition to Iran. [More...](#)

Iranian Kurdish dissident in İstanbul died from gunshot wounds

An Iranian Kurdish dissident died on October 12 after being shot while walking home in İstanbul, in what rights groups described as a political assassination. [More...](#)

Kurdish activist sentenced to death in Iran faced deportation from Turkey

A Kurdish human rights activist sentenced to death in Iran was detained in Turkey and faced deportation. Soran Aram was sent to a repatriation center despite having United Nations refugee status and approval for resettlement in Canada. [More...](#)

Turkey deported Syrian rights activist, wife in violation of international law

Turkey deported a prominent Syrian human rights activist and his wife to Syria on May 19 in violation of international law. Taha Elgazi, a long-time refugee rights defender, was detained by plainclothes police May 16 on the pretext of an “address verification” and was held incommunicado for three days. [More...](#)

Top Iranian court upheld death sentence of pop singer extradited from Turkey

Iran’s Supreme Court upheld a death sentence on blasphemy charges handed down to a pop singer whom Turkey had extradited at Tehran’s request, a judiciary spokesman said on May 17. [More...](#)

Human rights advocate worried Turkey may return Iranian refugees to Iran

Iranian human rights advocates expressed concern that Iranian refugees in Turkey are at risk of being returned to Iran following a shift in asylum policies that transferred refugee oversight from the United Nations to Turkish authorities. [More...](#)

9. Women's rights



The state of women's rights in Turkey showed no meaningful improvement in 2025, as longstanding problems persisted and new challenges emerged. Femicides, institutional failures to protect women and increasing inequalities in social and political representation remained defining features of the year, with women's rights defenders continuing to face legal and administrative measures aimed at curbing their activities.

Femicides in 2025 were marked not only by extreme violence but also by judicial processes that renewed concerns over impunity. The case of Rojin Kabaiş, a 21-year-old university student whose body was found three weeks after she went missing, became a striking example of this pattern. Despite authorities' repeated assertions that her death was a suicide, details brought to light through the persistence of her family and public scrutiny pointed to the possibility of homicide and further intensified concerns over accountability.

Women's rights organizations continued to warn that failures in the effective implementation of existing laws, coupled with entrenched impunity, remained the most serious obstacles to protecting women. Despite these repeated warnings, the authorities made no meaningful progress in addressing longstanding structural deficiencies, including a chronic shortage of women's shelters and inadequate support mechanisms.

Data from the We Will Stop Femicide Platform (KCDP) showed that at least 294 women were murdered in 2025, while other sources reported figures as high as 420. The year also saw a record rise in suspicious deaths involving women. Despite these figures and repeated calls from human rights groups, the government showed no indication of returning to the [Istanbul Convention](#), a Council of Europe treaty that sets binding standards for preventing violence against women, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators, which Turkey withdrew from by presidential decree in 2021.

Efforts to draw attention to these issues were met with continued pressure on activists throughout the year. Women's rights defenders were detained on charges such as participating in "unauthorized demonstrations," while women's rights organizations faced attempts at closure through politically motivated allegations including terrorism-related accusations.

Annual data also pointed to persistent economic inequality affecting women. This inequality was reinforced by entrenched traditional gender roles and compounded by Turkey's deepening economic crisis, further limiting women's access to employment, social security and economic independence.

Here is some of the most important news from 2025 in the field of women's rights:

294 women killed by men, 297 more died under suspicious circumstances in Turkey in 2025

At least 294 women were murdered by men in Turkey in 2025, while 297 more died under suspicious circumstances, according to an annual report released by leading women's rights group the We Will Stop Femicide Platform. The report found that 85 percent of the women were killed by a close male relative. [More...](#)

Women leaving workforce for family reasons up 81.5 percent in 5 years: TurkStat

The number of women in Turkey who left the workforce for family and personal reasons rose to 21.19 million, an 81.5 percent increase between 2021 and 2025, revealing the growing impact of unpaid care work on women's economic participation. A total of 44.7 percent were not working because of domestic duties or family-related constraints, while 39.5 percent cited education, retirement or health conditions. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities again banned Women's Day march in central Istanbul

The Beyoğlu district governor's office in İstanbul again declared the central Taksim neighborhood and surrounding area off limits for demonstrations or marches to mark International Women's Day, March 8, citing concern for public order and national security. [More...](#)

Some 200 detained after İstanbul Women's Day march

Police detained some 200 demonstrators in İstanbul after more than 3,000 women marched peacefully through the city center under tight security to mark International Women's Day. Although the march ended without incident, organizers said police then began rounding up protesters, posting footage showing officers roughly dragging several demonstrators out of the crowd. [More...](#)

Turkey's democratic gains for women under threat as country ranks 125th globally for females in politics, lawmaker warned

Women's hard-won democratic gains in Turkey are at risk, Aylin Nazlıaka, deputy chair of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), warned, as the country's ranks 125th out of 185 nations for women's political representation, according to the UN's "Women in Politics 2025" report. Nazlıaka said the CHP plans to implement gender and age quotas to help boost women's representation. [More...](#)

Report revealed alarming shortage of women's shelters across Turkey

A report released in May revealed a critical shortage in the number and capacity of women's shelters in Turkey, with only 150 shelters across the country, each providing just eight beds per 100,000 women. Comparing the numbers to other European countries, the report found that Turkey is behind in providing adequate shelter for women. [More...](#)

One in 8 women in Turkey has faced physical violence in their lifetime: report

One in eight women in Turkey has experienced physical violence at some point in their lives, according to a nationwide, government-backed study on violence against women released in October. According to the results 12.8 percent of women reported experiencing physical violence during their lifetime, while 28.2 percent said they had been subjected to psychological violence and 18.3 percent to economic violence. [More...](#)

UN rapporteurs raised alarm over suppression of women's rights defenders in Turkey

United Nations special rapporteurs expressed concern in October regarding allegations of the suppression of women's rights defenders in Turkey, accusing the authorities of misusing the penal code and counterterrorism laws to silence critical voices. Three UN special rapporteurs stated that criminalization and harassment of women's human rights defenders severely restrict their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. [More...](#)

5 years later, Turkish woman still haunted by strip-search in police custody

A young woman detained over alleged links to the faith-based Gülen movement said she was still haunted by the trauma of a strip-search in police custody. The woman was among 30 university students arrested in Uşak on August 31, 2020, on charges later overturned in court. Police raided her family home in Eskişehir before dawn, and she was later transported to a police station in Uşak, where she said she experienced the most humiliating moment of her life. [More...](#)

Turkey's top court overturned aggravated life sentence in brutal femicide case

Turkey's Supreme Court of Appeals in February overturned the aggravated life sentence of a man who brutally murdered Pınar Gültekin, a 27-year-old university student, in 2020, sparking outrage among women's rights advocates. Gültekin's burned body was found in a barrel buried on a farm owned by Cemal Metin Avcı, who later confessed that he had burned the body in an attempt to get rid of it. [More...](#)

Turkish court handed down reduced sentence to femicide perpetrator

A man who fatally shot his daughter-in-law received a reduced sentence on the grounds that he had been "provoked," once again sparking criticism that femicide perpetrators are protected by a culture of impunity. Mother-of-three Derya Demir was murdered by her father-in-law, Satılmış Demir, in Ankara on December 28, 2023. She was shot seven times early in the morning hours while sleeping. [More...](#)

Turkish women's rights activists rallied to protest sexual abuse in police detention

Women's rights activists rallied in April to protest alleged sexual abuse of female detainees held for participating in demonstrations that erupted following the detention and arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. [More...](#)

Women's rights advocates raised their voices against Turkish gov't policies addressing women's health

Women's rights advocates raised their voices in April in protest of poorly coordinated Turkish government policies that they argue are undermining women's health and well-being. The advocates and healthcare professionals said sensitive issues related to women's health should be addressed with greater care and nuance, after a football team in a Turkish Super League match took to the field carrying a banner that read, "Normal birth is the natural way." The banner was part of an action plan developed by the Ministry of Health that aims to lower the rate of cesarean sections in the country. [More...](#)

9-months-pregnant woman jailed over Gülen links remained behind bars despite repeated appeals and imminent birth

A Turkish court rebuffed three attempts to free a nine-months-pregnant former teacher who could have gone into labor at any moment. The Eskişehir 2nd High Criminal Court turned down motions filed on July 9, 11 and 14 that sought the release of Merve Zayım on medical grounds, citing an alleged violation of earlier judicial supervision orders. A fourth petition was lodged on July 31. [More...](#)

New wave of #MeToo allegations rocked Turkey's arts, media and schools

A fresh wave of MeToo-style allegations reverberated across Turkey in August, with women and LGBTQ+ people accusing prominent men in the arts, media and education of harassment and sexual assault. [More...](#)

Delayed forensic report in student's death fueled claims of negligence

Turkey's Council of Forensic Medicine (ATK) in October released updated findings in the death of university student Rojin Kabaiş, reigniting public outrage over alleged negligence and irregularities in the investigation. [More...](#)

Turkish authorities opened investigations into journalists reporting on the Kabaiş case and blocked access to coverage of related protests. [More...](#)

Amnesty pressed Turkey to protect women's right to protest, urged return to Istanbul Convention

Amnesty International in November called on Turkish authorities to protect women's right to peaceful assembly ahead of nationwide demonstrations planned for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and to rejoin the Istanbul Convention. [More...](#)

While women across Turkey attempted to take to the streets for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the İstanbul Governor's Office once again moved to block women's access to the city's symbolic protest sites.
[More...](#)