

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2021

Turkey

NOT FREE

32
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	16 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	16 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

32 /100 **Not Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. [See the methodology.](#)



Overview

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has ruled Turkey since 2002. After initially passing some liberalizing reforms, the AKP government showed growing contempt for political rights and civil liberties, and it has pursued a dramatic and wide-ranging crackdown on perceived opponents since an attempted coup in 2016. Constitutional changes adopted in 2017 concentrated power in the hands of the president. While Erdoğan continues to exert tremendous power in Turkish politics, opposition victories in 2019 municipal elections and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the already shaky economy have given the government new incentives to suppress dissent and limit public discourse.

Key Developments in 2020

- As the COVID-19 crisis threatened the economy and the government's political standing during the year, authorities apparently sought to manipulate official health statistics and launched criminal investigations against medical professionals who released independent information about the outbreak or criticized the official response. Hundreds of ordinary people were also arrested for their social media posts related to the coronavirus.
- Prosecutions and campaigns of harassment against opposition politicians, prominent members of civil society, independent journalists, and critics of Turkey's increasingly aggressive foreign policy continued throughout the year. In December, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called for the immediate release of Selahattin Demirtaş, leader of the Kurdish-oriented People's Democratic Party (HDP), who had been imprisoned since 2016 on politically motivated charges; the court's ruling was ignored. New arrests of HDP members and leaders were carried out during the year, adding to the thousands who have been detained since 2015. The government also continued to replace HDP municipal officials with centrally appointed "trustees."
- Despite a 2019 ECHR ruling that called for the release of philanthropist Osman Kavala, he remained behind bars at year's end facing trumped-up charges.

Detained in 2017, he was acquitted in the original case in February 2020, but a new indictment issued in October accused Kavala and a US academic, without evidence, of involvement in the 2016 coup attempt.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	2/4
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The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms, but is eligible to run for a third term if the parliament calls for early elections during the president's initial terms. If no candidate wins an absolute majority of votes, a second round of voting between the top two candidates takes place. President Erdoğan has retained a dominant role in government since moving from the post of prime minister to the presidency in 2014. A 2017 constitutional referendum instituted a new presidential system of government, expanding presidential powers and eliminating the role of prime minister.

The snap June 2018 presidential election, which was originally scheduled for November 2019, was moved up at Erdoğan's behest, as he claimed an early election was necessary to implement the new presidential system. The election was held while Turkey was still under a state of emergency put in place after the 2016 coup attempt.

Erdoğan, who leads the AKP, won a second term, earning 52.6 percent of the vote in the first round. Muharrem İnce of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) won 30.6 percent. Selahattin Demirtaş of the HDP won 8.4 percent, while Meral Aksener of the nationalist İyi (Good) Party won 7.3 percent; other candidates won the remaining 1.1 percent. Since Erdoğan's first term ended ahead of schedule, he is eligible for a third term, and could hold office through 2028 if he is reelected again.

Election observers with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticized the 2018 poll, reporting that electoral regulators often deferred to the ruling AKP and that state-run media favored the party in its coverage. The OSCE also noted that Erdoğan repeatedly accused his opponents of supporting terrorism during the campaign. İnce, the CHP candidate, also criticized the vote, calling it fundamentally unfair. Demirtaş campaigned from prison, having been charged with terrorism offenses in 2016.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	2/4
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The 2017 constitutional referendum enlarged the unicameral parliament, the Grand National Assembly, from 550 seats to 600, and increased term lengths for its members from four to five years; these changes took effect with the June 2018 elections. Members are elected by proportional representation, and political parties must earn at least 10 percent of the national vote to hold seats in the parliament.

According to the OSCE, the 2018 legislative elections were marred by a number of flaws, including misuse of state resources by the ruling party to gain an electoral advantage and an intimidation campaign against the HDP and other opposition parties. Reports of irregularities such as proxy voting were more prevalent in the south and southeast.

The People's Alliance, which had formed in February 2018 and included the AKP and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), won a total of 344 seats with 53 percent of the vote, while the CHP won 146 seats with 22 percent. The HDP won 11 percent and 67 seats, and the İyi Party entered parliament for the first time with 10 percent of the vote and 43 seats.

In June 2020, two HDP members and one lawmaker from the CHP were expelled from the parliament and detained on espionage and terrorism charges.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

1/4

The judges of the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) oversee voting procedures. A 2016 law allowed AKP-dominated judicial bodies to replace most YSK judges. Since then, the YSK has increasingly deferred to the AKP in its rulings, most notably in May 2019, when it ordered a rerun of the Istanbul mayoral election; CHP candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu had narrowly won the race in March, but the YSK scrapped the result based on selective technicalities, claiming that some polling documentation went unsigned and that a number of ballot officials were not civil servants as required by law. Despite the annulment of the first election's results, İmamoğlu won the second vote that June, increasing his margin of victory over the AKP candidate.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

2/4

Turkey maintains a multiparty system, with five major parties holding seats in the parliament. However, the rise of new parties is inhibited by the 10 percent vote threshold for parliamentary representation—an unusually high bar by global standards. The 2018 electoral law permits the formation of alliances to contest elections, allowing parties that would not meet the threshold alone to secure seats through an alliance. Parties can be disbanded for endorsing policies that are not in agreement with constitutional parameters, and this rule has been applied in the past to Islamist and Kurdish-oriented parties.

After a cease-fire with the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapsed in 2015, the government accused the HDP of serving as a proxy for the group, which is designated as a terrorist organization. A 2016 constitutional amendment facilitated the removal of parliamentary immunity, and many of the HDP's leaders have since been jailed on terrorism charges. In September 2018, Demirtaş, the HDP's presidential candidate, was sentenced to four years and eight months in prison for a 2013 speech praising the PKK in the context of peace negotiations. In November 2018, the ECHR ordered his immediate release, finding that his arrest was politically motivated and his nearly two-year-long pretrial detention was unreasonable. The European court's grand chamber again ordered the HDP leader's release in December 2020, but he remained in prison facing a succession of new charges, along with thousands of other HDP members.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	2/4
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Since coming to power in 2002, the ruling AKP has asserted partisan control over the YSK, the judiciary, the police, and the media. The party has aggressively used these institutional tools to weaken or co-opt political rivals in recent years, severely limiting the capacity of the opposition to build support among voters and gain power through elections.

The government has also resorted to arresting and charging opposition leaders, accusing of them of offenses ranging from terrorism to insulting the president. The HDP has regularly been subjected to this tactic, but Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the chair of the CHP in Istanbul, was also given a prison sentence of almost 10 years in September 2019, after she was charged with insulting the president and spreading terrorist propaganda. In June 2020, Kaftancıoğlu's conviction was upheld by an appeals court; she remained free pending further appeal.

The 2019 municipal elections, in which opposition forces won control of most major urban centers, including Ankara and Istanbul, suggested that there was still space for the opposition to make progress despite the AKP's institutional advantages. However,

the central government's continued replacement of dozens of HDP mayors with appointed "trustees" underscored the obstacles opposition leaders can face even after winning election. In most cases these officials have been removed pending trial on dubious terrorism charges.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	3/4
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The civilian leadership has asserted its control over the military, which has a history of intervening in political affairs. This greater control was a factor behind the failure of the 2016 coup attempt, and the government has since purged thousands of military personnel suspected of disloyalty. However, the AKP's institutional dominance threatens to make the state itself an extension of the party that can be used to change political outcomes.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	1/4
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Critics charge that the AKP favors Sunni Muslims, pointing to an overhaul of the education system that favored Islamic education in secular schools and promoted the rise of religious schools in the 2010s. The AKP also expanded the Directorate of Religious Affairs, using this institution as a channel for political patronage. Among other functions, the party uses the directorate to deliver government-friendly sermons in mosques in Turkey, as well as in countries where the Turkish diaspora is present.

The non-Sunni Alevi community, as well as non-Muslim religious groups, have long faced political discrimination. While members of religious and ethnic minorities hold some seats in the parliament, particularly within the CHP and HDP, the government's

crackdown on opposition parties has seriously harmed political rights and electoral opportunities for Kurds and other minority groups.

Women remain underrepresented in politics and in leadership positions in government, though they won a slightly larger share of seats—104, or about 17 percent—in the 2018 parliamentary elections. While the AKP’s policies and rhetoric often do not serve women’s interests, opposition parties, notably the HDP, espouse the expansion of rights for women and minority groups.

A small number of openly LGBT+ candidates have run for office. Sedef Cakmak of the CHP was the first such candidate to take part in a city council race; she won her seat in Beşiktaş, a district of Istanbul, in 2014. The first openly gay parliamentary candidate was backed by the HDP in the 2015 general elections, but did not win a seat. Despite these efforts, LGBT+ people remain politically marginalized, and the government has used public morality laws to restrict the formation of organizations that would advocate for their interests.

Refugees residing in Turkey, including an estimated four million Syrians, generally do not have political rights in the country, and much of the Turkish public has resisted the idea of granting them access to citizenship en masse. However, tens of thousands of refugees with special skills or professional qualifications have been naturalized in recent years.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

2/4

The new presidential system instituted in 2018 vastly expanded the executive’s already substantial authority. With the elimination of the prime minister’s post, President Erdoğan now controls all executive functions; he can rule by decree, appoint judges and other officials who are supposed to provide oversight, and order investigations

into any civil servant, among other powers. Erdoğan and his inner circle make all meaningful policy decisions, and the capacity of the parliament to provide a check on his rule is, in practice, seriously limited.

The 2016 state of emergency, which gave the president the authority to suspend civil liberties and issue decrees without oversight from the Constitutional Court, was formally lifted in July 2018 after two years in effect. However, the change has done little to curb the continued consolidation and abuse of executive power.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	1/4
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Corruption—including money laundering, bribery, and collusion in the allocation of government contracts—remains a major problem, even at the highest levels of government. Enforcement of anticorruption laws is inconsistent, and Turkey’s anticorruption agencies are generally ineffective, contributing to a culture of impunity. The crackdown carried out since the 2016 coup attempt has greatly increased opportunities for corruption, given the mass expropriation of targeted businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Billions of dollars in seized assets are managed by government-appointed trustees, further augmenting the intimate ties between the government and friendly businesses.

In January 2018, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, a key official at Turkey’s state-owned financial institution Halkbank, was found guilty in a US court of helping the Iranian authorities evade sanctions, and he was given a 32-month prison sentence that May. During the trial, Turkish-Iranian businessman Reza Zarrab testified that senior Turkish officials had accepted bribes as part of the scheme, and that Erdoğan personally approved some of the bribes during his tenure as prime minister. Erdoğan has lobbied the US government not to continue with its investigations, but Halkbank itself was indicted by US prosecutors in October 2019, and the case was ongoing in 2020.

C3 0-4 pts

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Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

0/4

The political and legal environment created by the government's crackdown since the 2016 coup attempt has made ordinary democratic oversight efforts all but impossible. Although Turkey has an access to information law on the books, in practice the government lacks transparency and arbitrarily withholds information on the activities of state officials and institutions. External monitors like civil society groups and independent journalists are subject to arrest and prosecution if they attempt to expose government wrongdoing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, authorities allegedly sought to manipulate official health statistics, and medical professionals who released independent information or criticized the state's response faced police questioning and criminal investigations.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

1/4

The mainstream media, especially television broadcasters, reflect government positions and have often carried identical headlines. Although some independent newspapers and websites continue to operate, they face tremendous political pressure and are routinely targeted for prosecution. More than 150 media outlets were closed in the months after the attempted coup in 2016.

In 2019, the parliament further limited media freedom by placing online video services under the purview of the High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK), the country's broadcast regulator. As a result, online video producers must obtain licenses to broadcast in Turkey, even if they operate abroad. The RTÜK's members are appointed by the parliament, and are almost exclusively members of the AKP or its political ally, the MHP.

New outlet closures and arrests of journalists occur regularly. Journalists were arrested or prosecuted during 2020 for their reporting on Turkey's military and intelligence operations in Libya and on the government's response to COVID-19, among other topics. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported that 37 journalists were imprisoned in the country as of December. Kurdish journalists have been disproportionately targeted by the authorities.

The government has continued to expand its attempts to control online sources of news and information. In July 2020, the parliament approved a new law that requires international content providers with more than a million daily users, such as Facebook and Twitter, to have local representation in Turkey and to remove content within 48 hours if so ordered. Companies that fail to comply are subject to heavy fines and eventual restrictions on their bandwidth.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	2/4
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While the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the public sphere is increasingly dominated by Sunni Islam. Alevi places of worship are not recognized as such by the government, meaning they cannot access the subsidies available to Sunni mosques. The number of religious schools that promote Sunni Islam has increased under the AKP, and the Turkish public education curriculum includes compulsory religious education courses; while adherents of non-Muslim faiths are generally exempted from these courses, Alevites and nonbelievers have difficulty opting out of them.

Three non-Muslim religious groups—Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Christians—are officially recognized. However, disputes over property and prohibitions on training of clergy remain problems for these communities, and the rights of unrecognized religious minorities are more limited. Non-Muslims were increasingly targeted with hate speech during 2020, with Armenians in particular subjected to public vilification as the Turkish government supported the Azerbaijani military in its offensive against ethnic Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	1/4
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Academic freedom, never well respected in Turkey, was weakened further by the AKP's purge of government and civil society after the 2016 coup attempt. Schools tied to Fethullah Gülen—the Islamic scholar whose movement was blamed for the coup attempt and deemed a terrorist organization in Turkey—have been closed. Thousands of academics have been summarily dismissed for perceived leftist, Gülenist, or PKK sympathies.

In 2018, President Erdoğan issued a decree giving him the power to appoint rectors at both public and private universities. The government and university administrations now routinely intervene to prevent academics from researching sensitive topics, and political pressure has encouraged self-censorship among many scholars.

In January 2020, a group of 20 students from Boğaziçi University were sentenced to 10 months in prison for a campus protest against Turkey's military actions in Syria. Another seven students were fined. In June, the president issued a decree to close İstanbul Şehir University; the institution had been cofounded by former prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former ally and current political rival of President Erdoğan. In July, it was reported that Uludağ University had opened an investigation into professor Kayıhan Parla over his reports on the COVID-19 pandemic, which had cast doubt on official statistics regarding case counts and fatalities.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	1/4
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While many Turkish citizens continue to voice their opinions openly with friends and relations, more exercise caution about what they post online or say in public. The arbitrariness of prosecutions for alleged dissent, which often result in pretrial detention and carry the risk of lengthy prison terms, is increasingly creating an atmosphere of self-censorship. During 2020, hundreds of social media users were arrested for “provocative” posts about the COVID-19 pandemic, and others continued to be detained and prosecuted for speech on topics such as the economy, “terrorism,” or military operations.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	1/4
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Although freedom of assembly is theoretically guaranteed in Turkish law, authorities have routinely disallowed gatherings by government critics on security grounds in recent years, while progovernment rallies are allowed to proceed. Restrictions have been imposed on May Day celebrations by leftist and labor groups, protests by purge victims, and opposition party meetings. Police use force to break up unsanctioned protests. Pandemic-related rules on social distancing were often cited selectively to justify the dispersal of unauthorized demonstrations during 2020.

Commemorations by Saturday Mothers, a group that protests forced disappearances associated with a 1980 coup d'état, have been routinely broken up by police; many participants, including elderly people, have been arrested. In July 2020, riot police prevented the group from gathering publicly to mark the 25th anniversary of their first protests.

The government has also targeted LGBT+ events in recent years. Istanbul's pride parade, which once drew tens of thousands of participants, was banned for the fifth consecutive year in 2019. Participants who tried to march faced tear gas and rubber bullets when police dispersed their gathering. Rallies were also banned in Ankara and the coastal city of Izmir. In 2020, pride events were organized entirely online.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

1 / 4

The government has cracked down on NGOs since the 2016 coup attempt, summarily shutting down at least 1,500 foundations and associations and seizing their assets. The targeted groups worked on issues including torture, domestic violence, and aid to refugees and internally displaced persons. NGO leaders also face routine harassment, arrests, and prosecutions for carrying out their activities.

In July 2020, a court convicted four human rights defenders, including former Amnesty International Turkey chair Taner Kılıç, on groundless charges of aiding a terrorist organization; they were among several activists arrested in July 2017, most of whom were acquitted.

Osman Kavala, a prominent civil society leader and philanthropist, was arrested in November 2017 and charged in early 2019 with attempting to overthrow the government by supporting a protest in Istanbul's Gezi Park in 2013. The indictment was heavily criticized by human rights organizations for lacking credible evidence. Kavala and 15 other defendants from Turkish civil society were finally put on trial in June 2019. In December of that year, the ECHR ruled that Kavala's detention was unjustified and called for his release. He was acquitted in February 2020, but prosecutors immediately brought new charges against him and US academic Henri Barkey, accusing them, without evidence, of involvement in the 2016 coup attempt. The two were formally indicted in October; Kavala remained in custody at year's end, while Barkey was facing trial in absentia.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

1/4

Union activity, including the right to strike, is limited by law and in practice; antiunion activities by employers are common, and legal protections are poorly enforced. A system of representation threshold requirements make it difficult for unions to secure collective-bargaining rights. Trade unions and professional organizations have suffered from mass arrests and dismissals associated with the 2016–18 state of emergency and the general breakdown in freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. Union leaders were among those arrested while attempting to hold May Day demonstrations in 2020.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

1/4

The appointment of thousands of loyalist judges, the potential professional costs of ruling against the executive in a major case, and the effects of the postcoup purge have all severely weakened judicial independence in Turkey. More than 4,200 judges and prosecutors were removed in the 2016 coup attempt's aftermath. The establishment of the new presidential system in 2018 also increased executive control over the judiciary; members of the Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), a powerful body that oversees judicial appointments and disciplinary measures, are now appointed by the parliament and the president, rather than by members of the judiciary itself.

Though the judiciary's autonomy is restricted, judges sometimes ruled against the government in significant cases in 2020, for example in the acquittals of Kavala and several other civil society figures.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

0 / 4

Due process guarantees were largely eroded during the state of emergency between 2016 and 2018, and these rights have not been restored in practice since the emergency was lifted. Due process and evidentiary standards are particularly weak in cases involving terrorism charges, with defendants held in lengthy pretrial detention for periods lasting up to seven years. According to the Justice Ministry, more than 130,000 people were under investigation for terrorism offenses related to the Gülen movement as of mid-2020, and nearly 60,000 were on trial. In many cases, lawyers defending those accused of terrorism have faced arrest themselves. A new law adopted in July 2020 allowed the formation of multiple bar associations in each province; human rights groups criticized the measure, arguing that the creation of progovernment rivals would effectively undercut the existing bar associations, which have remained largely apolitical.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

1 / 4

Torture at the hands of authorities remains common in the wake of the 2016 coup attempt and subsequent state of emergency. Human Rights Watch has reported that security officers specifically target Kurds, Gülenists, and leftists with torture and degrading treatment, and operate in an environment of impunity. In September 2020, two Kurdish farmers were allegedly thrown from a military helicopter after soldiers detained them in their village, and one later died of his injuries. Prosecutors do not consistently investigate allegations of torture or abuse in custody, and the government has resisted the publication of a European Committee for the Prevention of Torture report on its detention practices.

The threat of terrorism decreased in 2018 with the weakening of the Islamic State (IS) militant group in neighboring Syria and Iraq; no large-scale terrorist attacks were reported during 2019 or 2020. However, civilians in the Kurdish southeast endured

another year of conflict between security forces and the PKK, and residents have been subject to curfews as part of a new strategy to limit PKK activity. The conflict has killed more than 5,000 people within Turkey and in northern Iraq since July 2015, most of them soldiers or Kurdish militants.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	1/4
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Although Turkish law guarantees equal treatment, women as well as ethnic and religious minority groups suffer varying degrees of discrimination. For example, Alevis and non-Muslims reportedly face discrimination in schools and in employment, particularly when seeking senior public-sector positions. Gender inequality in the workplace is common, though women have become a larger part of the workforce since the beginning of the century.

The conflict with the PKK has been used to justify discriminatory measures against Kurds, including the prohibition of Kurdish festivals for security reasons and the reversal of Kurdish municipal officials' efforts to promote their language and culture. Many Kurdish-language schools and cultural organizations have been shut down by the government since 2015.

Turkey hosts 3.6 million refugees from Syria, in addition to 400,000 refugees and asylum seekers from other parts of the world. While the government has worked to provide them with basic services, a large minority of refugee children lack access to education, and few adults are able to obtain formal employment. Popular resentment against this population has been rising for years and is felt across the political spectrum. In response to public pressure, the Turkish government in October 2019 announced a plan to resettle as many as one million Syrian refugees in a new buffer zone in northern Syria. That month, the Turkish military launched an offensive to capture the territory in question from the Syrian Democratic Forces, a US-backed and Kurdish-led militia group that had waged a successful multiyear campaign against IS in Syria, but that Ankara opposed due to its alleged ties to the PKK. Also in October 2019, Turkish authorities forced Syrian refugees to secure new residency permits or risk

deportation. In February 2020, the government announced that it would not block asylum seekers who sought to cross into the European Union, encouraging large-scale attempts that were met with violence and pushbacks by Greek security forces. Turkish authorities restored border controls in March, though crossing attempts and pushbacks continued during the year.

Same-sex relations are not legally prohibited, but LGBT+ people are subject to widespread discrimination, police harassment, and occasional violence. There is no legislation to protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT+ people are banned from openly serving in the military.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?	1/4
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An upsurge in fighting between the government and the PKK in 2015 and 2016 resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in southeastern Turkey, and freedom of movement remains limited in the region as low-level clashes continue.

More than 125,000 public-sector workers have been fired in the purges that followed the 2016 coup attempt, and those who were suspended or dismissed have no effective avenue for appeal. Many purge victims were unable to find new employment in the private sector, due to an atmosphere of guilt by association.

The authorities also targeted purged workers and their spouses with the revocation of their passports. The government stated in 2019 that it was working to reinstate passports after the Constitutional Court overturned the regulation that allowed their original revocation. However, the matter remained unresolved in 2020.

Refugees in Turkey continue to face legal and practical obstacles to free movement within the country.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	1/4
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Private property rights are legally enshrined, but since 2013 many critics of the government have been subjected to intrusive tax and regulatory inspections. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the assets of companies, NGOs, foundations, individuals, media outlets, and other entities deemed to be associated with terrorist groups have been confiscated. According to a survey published in 2018, at least \$11 billion in private business assets, ranging from corner stores to large conglomerates, had been seized.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	2/4
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The government has shown increasing disinterest in protecting vulnerable individuals from forced marriage and domestic violence. Child marriages, often performed at unofficial religious ceremonies, are widespread, and Syrian refugees appear to be particularly vulnerable. The Directorate of Religious Affairs briefly endorsed the practice, suggesting that girls as young as nine years old could marry when it published a glossary of Islamic terms in early 2018. The same document, which was retracted after public outcry, also defined marriage as an institution that saved its participants from adultery.

Despite legal safeguards, rates of domestic violence remain high; police are often reluctant to intervene in domestic disputes, and shelter space is both extremely limited and often geographically inaccessible. The AKP considered weakening

domestic violence protections as part of a larger effort to dissuade women from seeking divorce; a parliamentary report published in 2016 recommended that women should be required to prove their partner’s violence in order to receive extended police protection. The recommendation was retracted after sparking public criticism.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	1/4
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The weakness of labor unions and the government’s increasing willingness to take action against organized labor have undermined equality of opportunity, protection from economic exploitation, and workplace safety. Workplace accidents have become more frequent in recent years, and laborers have little recourse if injured. According to the Workers’ Health and Work Safety Assembly (İSiGM), more than 2,400 workers died in workplace incidents in 2020, including at least 741 who died of COVID-19. The large refugee population is especially vulnerable to exploitative employment conditions.



On Turkey

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

32/100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

35/100 Not Free

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