



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Turkey: Kurdish political parties

Version 2.0

August 2017

Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration,

5th Floor, Globe House, 89 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1PN.

Email: chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

Contents

Policy guidance	4
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Basis of claim.....	4
1.2 Points to note.....	4
2. Consideration of issues.....	4
2.1 Credibility.....	4
2.2 Exclusion.....	4
2.3 Assessment of risk.....	5
2.4 Protection.....	7
2.5 Internal relocation.....	7
2.6 Certification.....	7
3. Policy summary.....	7
Country information	9
4. Legal position.....	9
5. Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).....	9
5.1 History, beliefs and aims.....	9
5.2 Elections of June and November 2015.....	10
6. Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).....	12
7. Democratic Regions Party (DBP).....	12
8. Government treatment of the HDP.....	13
8.1 Association with PKK.....	13
8.2 Restrictions.....	15
8.3 Police searches of HDP offices.....	17
8.4 Lifting of parliamentary immunity.....	17
8.5 Exclusion from cross-party events.....	19
8.6 Referendum of April 2017 (Presidency).....	20
9. Arrest and detention.....	20
9.1 Arrests of HDP members and supporters.....	20
9.2 Criminal indictments and accusations.....	24
9.3 Conditions of detention.....	26
10. Suspensions and dismissals from political office.....	28
11. Societal violence.....	29
12. State protection.....	31
Version control and contacts	33

Policy guidance

Updated: 1 August 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the state due to the person's actual or perceived political opinion as a member or supporter of:

- Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party) (HDP); or
- Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party) (BDP); or
- Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party) (DBP).

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 The BDP merged with the HDP in April 2014 and no longer exists as a separate party (see [Peace and Democracy Party \(BDP\)](#)). On the BDP-HDP merger, the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) was formed to operate on behalf of the HDP at local level (see [Democratic Regions Party \(DBP\)](#)).

1.2.2 For the purposes of the policy guidance in this note, HDP includes former members of the BDP as well as the DBP unless otherwise stated.

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the Asylum Instruction on [Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the Asylum Instruction on [Language Analysis](#)).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 The HDP and the terrorist group Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) (Kurdistan Workers' Party) are separate organisations with different goals. However, some members of the HDP have been accused of links to the PKK. The PKK has been responsible for numerous serious human rights abuses. It has been proscribed in the UK since March 2001 under the Terrorism Act 2000 and is also on the EU list of terrorist organisations (see country policy and information note on [Turkey: PKK](#)).

2.2.2 If there are serious reasons for considering that the person belongs to, or professes to belong to, or invites support for, the PKK - or has done so in the

past - then decision makers must consider whether any of the Exclusion clauses are applicable.

- 2.2.3 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection.
 - 2.2.4 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instructions on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#)
- [Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Assessment of risk

- 2.3.1 The HDP is a legal political party which was formed in 2013 as an alliance of Kurds, other national minorities, women's and green groups, and others on the political left. The HDP has tried to appeal to all Turkish citizens, besides its traditional Kurdish base in the south and south east of Turkey, and fielded several minority ethnic candidates for the national elections of June and November 2015. The BDP was a pro-Kurdish party formed in 2008. The BDP merged with the HDP in April 2014 and no longer exists as a separate party. However, the DBP (Democratic Bolgeler Partisi) exists as a regional offshoot of the HDP which competes only in municipal elections in South-east Turkey (see [Peoples' Democratic Party \(HDP\)](#), [Peace and Democracy Party \(BDP\)](#) and [Democratic Regions Party \(DBP\)](#)).
- 2.3.2 Levels of harassment, detention and arrest of HDP members by the government tend to depend on relations between the Government and the PKK, with an improvement at times of truce or negotiation with the PKK. It was reported that the revival of the armed conflict in July 2015 and the failed coup attempt of July 2016 led to operations targeting HDP members. The Ministry of Justice published a report stating that various Mayors from the DBP had been involved with aiding and abetting PKK terrorists (see [Government treatment of the HDP](#), [Restrictions](#) and [Association with PKK](#)).
- 2.3.3 Parliamentary immunity from prosecution for members of Parliament was lifted on 20 May 2016, causing concern that criticism of the Government could be treated as promoting terrorism. 148 deputies had their immunity lifted, of whom 53 were members of the HDP and who subsequently faced investigation on charges of terrorism. This has led to the jailing of 13 members of the HDP – the party's two co-leaders and eleven of its parliament members – on terrorism charges. It was reported that indictments against HDP members did not always provide evidence to support accusations of terrorism (see [Lifting of parliamentary immunity](#) and [Restrictions](#)). It was further reported that there was a sharp increase in applications by prosecutors to investigate HDP members of Parliament in the period before the vote on the lifting of parliamentary immunity. Although the measure covered all parties, it disproportionately affected the HDP (see [Lifting of parliamentary immunity](#)).
- 2.3.4 The President announced in July 2016 that he would drop a large number of cases brought for insulting him, but none of those belonging to HDP members were dropped (see [Criminal indictments and accusations](#)). It was further noted that when President Erdogan met with the leaders of two

opposition parties after the failed coup attempt of July 2016, the HDP was excluded (see [Exclusion from cross-party events](#)).

- 2.3.5 Following the attempted coup in July 2016, some offices of the HDP in south east Turkey came under attack, with attacks attributed to vigilante groups motivated by hate speech from state officials and the media. A number of NGOs were shut down following the coup attempt, including associations which assisted the HDP (see [Restrictions](#) and [Societal violence](#)).
- 2.3.6 In September 2016 the Government removed 28 HDP Mayors from their posts, accusing them of links either to the PKK or to Gulenism. Between October and December 2016, a further 45 Mayors were dismissed. By March 2017 it was reported that 90 Mayors were in pre-trial detention, awaiting trial on terrorism charges. In November 2016 the two co-leaders of the HDP were arrested, along with ten other HDP MPs. The reason given was that they had refused to co-operate with a counter-terrorism investigation and they had disseminated propaganda for the PKK (see [Arrests of HDP members and supporters](#), [Criminal indictments and accusations](#), [Conditions of detention](#) and [Suspensions and dismissals](#). See also the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Gulenism](#) for further information on this subject.).
- 2.3.7 In December 2016 there was a twin bomb attack in Istanbul, which killed 44 people and injured 166. The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) – an offshoot of the PKK - claimed responsibility. Hundreds of people were arrested, including HDP members, as the Government focussed on Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists (see [Arrests of HDP members and supporters](#)). Following the twin bomb attack, nationalists targeted nineteen HDP offices around the country, and there were similar incidents following a car bomb in December 2016 (see [Association with PKK](#) and [Societal violence](#)).
- 2.3.8 The HDP claimed on 2 January 2017 that 8,711 HDP executives, members and supporters had been arrested since July 2015, with more than half of detentions taking place since the coup attempt of July 2016 (see [Arrest and Detention: Current situation](#)). Opposition politicians were reportedly held at times in solitary confinement and not allowed to receive visits or correspondence (see [Conditions of detention](#)).
- 2.3.9 There have also been reports of torture in detention; however, following a visit to Turkey in November and December 2016, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture noted that, although testimonies suggested that torture was widespread in the days and weeks immediately following the coup attempt, it seemed to have ceased after this initial phase; indeed, he received no allegations of ongoing torture or ill-treatment by inmates arrested in connection with the coup attempt (see [Torture](#) and the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Gulenism](#)).
- 2.3.10 It is legitimate for the authorities to prosecute those who belong to, or profess to belong to, or invite support for, the PKK (or any other terrorist organisation), or who have done so in the past and to use all lawful and proportionate means to do so.
- 2.3.11 The risk faced by a member or supporter of the HDP will depend on the person's profile and activities. Ordinary HDP members have generally not

been specifically targeted by the authorities. When they have encountered adverse attention from the authorities, this has generally been whilst participating in demonstrations and rallies. An ordinary member would not generally be at real risk of persecution or serious harm on account of their political beliefs. Those who are at risk from the authorities are generally more senior members or executives of the HDP who have come to the adverse attention of the authorities because of suspected involvement with the PKK or support for autonomy for Kurdish people.

2.3.12 The onus is on the person to show that on the particular facts of their case, they are at real risk of mistreatment and that this amounts to persecution on the basis of their actual or imputed political beliefs.

2.3.13 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.4 Protection

2.4.1 As the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.

2.4.2 See also the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Background including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

2.4.3 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.5 Internal relocation

2.5.1 As the person's fear is of persecution or serious harm by the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.

2.5.2 See also the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Background including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

2.5.3 For further guidance on considering internal relocation, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.6 Certification

2.6.1 Where a claim based on being a member or supporter of the HDP falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as clearly unfounded under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.6.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Policy summary

3.1.1 The HDP and the PKK are separate organisations with different goals. However, some members of the HDP have been accused by the Turkish government of links to the PKK. The PKK has been responsible for

numerous serious human rights abuses and is proscribed in the UK under the Terrorism Act 2000. If it is accepted that the person belongs to, or professes to belong to, or invites support for the PKK - or has done so in the past - then the exclusion clauses are likely to be applicable.

- 3.1.2 Some HDP members have been arrested by the authorities and charged with involvement with either the PKK or with supporting autonomy for Kurds. It is legitimate for the authorities to prosecute those who belong to, or profess to belong to, or invite support for, the PKK, or who have done so in the past.
- 3.1.3 When ordinary members of the HDP have come to the adverse attention of the authorities, this has generally been whilst participating in demonstrations and rallies; an ordinary member would not generally attract the adverse attention of the authorities on account of their political beliefs. However, if the person is a senior member of the HDP, or has otherwise come to the adverse attention of the authorities because of suspected involvement with the PKK or support for autonomy for Kurdish people, they may be at risk, but each case must be assessed according to its individual facts.
- 3.1.4 State protection and internal relocation would not be available options.
- 3.1.5 When a claim is refused it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

Updated: 27 July 2017

4. Legal position

- 4.1.1 The US Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016 ('the USSD's 2016 report') stated that 'The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to change their government through free and fair elections based on universal and equal suffrage conducted by secret ballot.'¹

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)

5.1 History, beliefs and aims

- 5.1.1 The Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum published a report in 2015 which stated:

'The HDP was formed in 2013 as an alliance of Kurds, other national minorities, leftists, women's and green groups. It is understood that jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan recommended its establishment... Öcalan, having seen a big void on the left flank of the opposition, called for an umbrella party to bring all leftist movements in Turkey together, since the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) appealed only to the Kurds and confined itself to the south-east of the country. BDP and HDP combined different leftist and socialist, progressive and western orientated groups, since the BDP had serious problems to reach out for electoral segments beyond the Kurds in south- and southeastern regions of Anatolia...'²

- 5.1.2 The report by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, which cited various sources, also stated the following in their report of 2015:

'Quoting its manifesto, the HDP defines itself as a party favoring democracy, freedom and equality, peace, labor, self-government, gender equality and ecology...

'... the HDP started to present itself as a genuinely Turkish party reaching out to voters beyond its mainly Kurdish support base namely to secular Turks, women and gays. During the election campaign the HDP struggled to portray itself as an option for all Turks wishing to stop Erdoğan and seeking a more left-oriented Turkey... Already upon its foundation it was obvious that activists as well as sympathizers of the Gezi-Park protests would consider the HDP as a political option, since the party was ardently involved in those activities...

¹ US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;' Turkey, 3 March 2017 (Section 3). <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

² Republic of Austria. Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. 'The Kurds. History, Religion, Language, Politics,' published in 2015. http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/KURDS_Monographie_2015_11.pdf. Accessed: 8 January 2016.

'On a quest to become a nationwide party appealing to voters beyond its traditional Kurdish base, the HDP fielded several minority candidates for the election race 2015 - Armenians, Yezidi, Syriacs, Roma and Alevi...

'In line with its goals, the HDP upon its founding in 2013 allocated a 10 percent quota for LGBT individuals beside the 50 percent quota for women. As a result of the 2015 parliamentary elections 40 percent of the HDP's 80 new MPs are women, the highest proportion of any party. HDP candidates included Armenians, Yezidi and Assyrians alongside Kurds. And the HDP had the only openly gay candidate in the country.'³

5.1.3 In 2015, EurasiaNet noted: that Garo Paylan was among three Armenian candidates for the party and the only one to be elected to Parliament in June 2015. EurasiaNet further stated that 'The party's campaign strategy was to reach out beyond its Kurdish base, on a platform of pluralism and democracy. The party also selected a Roma and LGBT candidate, who made unsuccessful runs for parliament, and an incumbent Assyrian Christian, who was reelected.'⁴

5.1.4 The HDP provide information about their aims and beliefs on their [website](#) (see 'Who are we?'). The main headings used to describe aims and beliefs are listed below, but these issues are addressed more fully on the website:

- Freedom and equality - the party is against discrimination on the grounds of a person's ethnicity or beliefs;
- Pro-peace – including the 'righteous demands' of Kurds and Alawites;
- Pro-labour – the website states that it is on the side of the 'oppressed masses';
- Pro-selfgovernment – the party is in favour of democratic and autonomous local government;
- Pro-gender equality – the party expresses concern about discrimination and violence against, and exploitation of, women, and discrimination against the LGBT community;
- Green – the party is in favour of protecting the 'balance and order' of nature and is against pollution of the planet.

5.1.5 In 2014 Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ were elected as co-chairs of the HDP.⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

5.2 Elections of June and November 2015

5.2.1 The United States Congressional Research Service commented as follows on the elections of June 2015:

³ Republic of Austria. Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. 'The Kurds. History, Religion, Language, Politics,' published in 2015. http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/KURDS_Monographie_2015_11.pdf. Accessed: 8 January 2016.

⁴ EurasiaNet. 'Turkey: Parliamentary Elections Give Ethnic Armenians Political Voice,' 11 June 2015. Available via Refworld: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559a4d3d4.html>. Accessed: 7 January 2016.

⁵ Peoples' Democratic Party. 'People's candidate for change,' undated. <https://hdpenglish.wordpress.com/peoples-candidate-for-change/>. Accessed: 24 May 2017.

'The AKP fell short of a parliamentary majority, let alone the supermajority that would have enabled it to hold a popular referendum on a "presidential system" configured to increase the overall power of the office and its current occupant (Erdogan). Some of the seats the AKP had counted on went to the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) - a party rooted in the Kurdish nationalist movement - when the HDP crossed Turkey's 10% minimum electoral threshold in the elections. HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas's ... strategy involved reaching out beyond the HDP's Kurdish base to liberal and secular Turks and other voters wary or weary of Erdogan. Many conservative and religious Kurds who are largely concentrated in southeastern Turkey and had supported the AKP in previous elections apparently turned to the HDP.'⁶

5.2.2 Minority Rights Group International noted that the HDP gained 13% of the vote and 80 seats in the Turkish parliament, preventing the AKP from controlling a majority.⁷

5.2.3 An article by the Middle East Forum of November 2015 stated, 'After refusing to share power with the opposition in a coalition government [following the elections of June 2015], Erdoğan called new elections to replace the hung parliament. Calling the June election results a "mistake" that the Turkish people had to "correct" in a new vote, he set about changing their minds.'⁸ In the resulting elections of 1 November 2015, the HDP only just managed to cross the 10 percent threshold and ended up with 59 seats compared to 13 percent and 80 seats in June.⁹

5.2.4 The USSD's 2016 report stated:

'The country held two parliamentary elections in 2015. Candidates were generally able to campaign freely in advance of the June 2015 parliamentary election, although they experienced an uneven campaign playing field, according to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In its postelection report following the November 2015 parliamentary election, the OSCE expressed concern about restrictions on media reporting and a campaign environment that restricted candidates' ability to campaign freely, among other problems.'¹⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

⁶ United States Congressional Research Service. 'Turkey After June 2015 Elections: Erdogan and the AKP Fall Short,' 16 June 2015. IN10292. Available via the Refworld website: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4ddbc4.html> . Accessed: 7 January 2016.

⁷ Minority Rights Group International. 'Concerned by ongoing violence in Turkey, MRG urges peaceful resolution to crisis,' 15 September 2015. Available via Refworld website: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fbc2c4.html> . Accessed: 7 January 2016.

⁸ Middle East Forum. 'Backgrounder: Turkey's November 2015 election,' 11 November 2015. <http://www.meforum.org/5623/backgrounder-turkey-november-2015-election>. Accessed: 8 January 2016.

⁹ Caucasus Edition; Journal of Conflict Transformation. 'Turkey – November 2015' (Internal politics), 1 December 2015. <http://caucasusedition.net/media-review/turkey-november-2015/>. Accessed: 8 January 2016.

¹⁰ US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016,' Turkey, 3 March 2017 (Section 3). <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

6. Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

- 6.1.1 In a report of November 2016, the European Asylum Support Office, which cited various sources, noted 'The Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP, Kurdish: Partiya Aştî û Demokrasiyê) was a pro-Kurdish party. The party was founded in 2008 as an extension of the DTP, the banned Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi). It was a founding member of HDP and shared most of the same political ideology. The BDP has been merged with HDP... in April 2014, with all BDP's parliamentary deputies joining HDP.'¹¹
- 6.1.2 In June 2016, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, which cited various sources, stated '...in March 2014, the BDP contested the March 2014 municipal elections in parallel with HDP; BDP candidates ran in Kurdish-dominated areas while the HDP ran in other areas of Turkey, and, in April 2014, the BDP joined with the HDP. The Chair [the Jalal Talabani Chair of Kurdish Political Studies at the University of Central Florida, a position dedicated to the study of Kurdish politics] noted that the BDP is no longer a separate party (20 May 2016).'¹²

[Back to Contents](#)

7. Democratic Regions Party (DBP)

- 7.1.1 On the merger of the BDP with the HDP, and as part of an attempt to renew the party's organizational structure along grassroots lines, the Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi (Democratic Regions Party) (DBP) was formed to operate at local level.^{13 & 14}
- 7.1.2 In a May 2017 report, International Crisis Group described the DBP as 'The main legal political sister party of the HDP that operates only at the local level. In the 2014 local elections, it won in eleven provinces, 68 districts and 23 town municipalities in the majority Kurdish south east.'¹⁵
- 7.1.3 The same source continued:
- 'While the HDP is the Kurdish movement's main legal political actor, the DBP operates at the local administration/municipality level on its behalf and is known to be more hardline, arguably with closer PKK links. Various

¹¹ European Asylum Support Office. Country of Origin Information Report; Turkey Country Focus, November 2016 (page 27). Available at: http://www.ecoi.net/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=30Y0SGJDIRahHLoFJFNorHZSvwGLboXHcJqHSMjd_jY.&dl. Accessed: 22 May 2017

¹² Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. 'Turkey: Situation and treatment of members of Kurdish political parties that have succeeded the People's Democracy Party (Halkin Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), including the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), and the Peoples' Democractic Party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi, HDP); whether HADEP and other older acronyms are still in use (2011-2016),' 14 June 2016, TUR105537.E. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/577b74214.html> . Accessed: 22 May 2017.

¹³ The Rojava Report. 'BDP To Become Democratic Regions Party (DBP)'. 26 April 2014. <https://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/04/26/bdp-to-become-democratic-regions-party-dbp/>. Accessed: 8 June 2017.

¹⁴ Evrensel. 'The name of the BDP was the Party of Democratic Regions'. 11 July 2014. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/88097/bdpnin-adi-demokratik-bolgeler-partisi-oldu>. Accessed: 8 June 2017.

¹⁵ International Crisis Group. 'Managing Turkey's PKK Conflict: The Case of Nusaybin'. 2 May 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/243-managing-turkeys-pkk-conflict-case-nusaybin>. Accessed: 8 June 2017.

moderate HDP figures hold that PKK sympathisers in the DBP municipalities across the region acted with the insurgency by declaring autonomy and igniting “self-defence”-oriented violence, using municipal personnel to aid militants with material and logistical support. This in turn, they argue, gave the state the excuse to remove elected representatives.’¹⁶

7.1.4 See also [Suspensions and dismissals from political office](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

8. Government treatment of the HDP

8.1 Association with PKK

8.1.1 In November 2015, Middle East Eye stated:

‘The root of much of the HDP’s problems stems from a common perception that they represent a legal parliamentary outgrowth of the PKK - described by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as an “inorganic” link - due to their support of Kurdish national aspirations and their alleged veneration of PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan.

‘As a result, among the public and the security services, acts of violence by the PKK have been collectively blamed on the HDP, despite calls by the latter for the restoration of the ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities on both sides.’¹⁷

8.1.2 Freedom House reported that ‘After a cease-fire with the militant Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) collapsed in 2015, the government accused the HDP of being a proxy for the PKK. Erdoğan has called for HDP deputies linked to the PKK to be prosecuted.’¹⁸

8.1.3 In August 2016, Al Jazeera noted:

‘Erdoğan has previously called for members of the HDP to face prosecution, accusing them of being the PKK’s political wing. Turkey, the United States and the European Union designate the PKK, an armed group that has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy since 1984, as a “terrorist organisation”.

‘The HDP, parliament’s third-biggest party, denies direct links with the PKK and promotes a negotiated end to the Kurdish conflict, which has claimed hundreds of lives since a peace process, once led by Erdoğan and the AK party, collapsed in 2015.’¹⁹

¹⁶ International Crisis Group. ‘Managing Turkey’s PKK Conflict: The Case of Nusaybin’. 2 May 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/243-managing-turkeys-pkk-conflict-case-nusaybin>. Accessed: 8 June 2017.

¹⁷ Middle East Eye. ‘Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,’ 1 November 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814>. Accessed: 19 May 2017.

¹⁸ Freedom House. ‘Freedom in the World 2017;’ Turkey, 31 January 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/turkey>. Accessed: 24 March 2017

¹⁹ Al Jazeera. ‘How could failed coup affect Kurdish peace process?’ 7 August 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/failed-coup-impact-kurdish-peace-process-160806051709935.html>. Accessed: 31 March 2017

8.1.4 International Crisis Group reported on the aftermath of a twin bomb attack in Istanbul on 10 December 2016, noting that, 'Following attack, nationalist mobs targeted nineteen HDP offices around country and party HQ.'²⁰

8.1.5 On 17 December 2016, the BBC reported that

'A suicide car bomb in central Turkey has killed 13 soldiers aboard a bus and wounded 56 more... The blast destroyed the bus carrying soldiers visiting a local market in the city of Kayseri. An army spokesman said civilians may also have been injured.

'No group has admitted carrying out the attack, but Turkish officials say it bears the hallmarks of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)... Later on Saturday, a crowd stormed the Kayseri offices of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), parliament's second-largest opposition party.

'The HDP condemned the bombing in the city...'²¹

8.1.6 The Daily Sabah published the following in September 2016:

'An official report by the Justice Ministry has revealed at full length the involvement in various crimes of the dismissed mayors from the pro-PKK Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the local wing of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

'Official sources confirmed how the municipalities supported PKK terrorists, including the provision of vehicles used in truck bombings and digging ditches, aiding and abetting, providing transportation for terrorists, hiring sympathizers and members as well as relatives of the detainees of the organization into key positions in municipality posts and providing them with regular salaries.

'During the investigation, it was revealed that hiring sympathizers and members is one of the main strategies that was used in HDP municipalities. They also often employ relatives, generally wives of the detainees of the organization members, into key positions in municipality posts under the name of "protection." In the eastern province of Batman alone more than 500 municipal personnel and its employed relatives had links with the terrorist organization. Also the Hakkari, Derik and Dargeçit municipalities are some of the other municipalities that employed PKK sympathizers and their relatives.

'Dozens of municipal vehicles, earth diggers, earth movers and some other vehicles with official license plates have been seized by authorities, who found tons of bomb-making equipment and explosives. The vehicles were used in truck bombings, as well as digging ditches, aiding, abetting and providing transportation for terrorists in many provinces and districts including Hakkari, Bulanık, Diyarbakır, Dargeçit and İpekyolu.

'The vehicles also transported terrorists who wanted to join the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the People Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian

²⁰ International Crisis Group. 'Crisis Watch,' Turkey, December 2016.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/december-2016#turkey>. Accessed: 3 April 2017.

²¹ BBC. 'Turkish bus attack: 13 off-duty soldiers killed by car bomb,' 17 December 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38350662>. Accessed: 25 January 2017

offshoot of the PKK and its armed wing. Also, funeral vehicles belonging to some municipalities including Diyarbakır and Batman were used in the burying of deceased YPG terrorists. It also revealed that some cars belonging to Suruç Municipality were used in illegal terrorist activities carried out by the PKK and the PYD. On March 27, 2015, a car with the license plate number 63 FB 113 belonging to Feridun Polat, a subcontracted worker of the municipality, was searched by the police and nine people inside the car were detained after it was understood that they tried to pass through the Syrian border illegally, in order to join PYD forces. During the search, 15 Özgür Halk magazines, a PKK paper where the terrorist organization's leaders write articles, were found in the car.

'According to the document, a dismissed mayor also funded PKK-linked media. The dismissed mayor of the Suruç district in the southeastern Şanlıurfa province, Orhan Şansal, paid TL 3,962 (\$1,300) and TL 3,200 respectively to the Jin News Agency and Dicle News Agency, which publish in parallel with PKK ideology, under the name of a "service charge."

'The mayors of 28 municipalities were replaced by state administrators in early September through a governmental decree.

'Of the 28 mayors replaced, 24 are accused of links to the PKK, while the remaining four are accused of links to the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ). Of these, two are mayors of cities (Batman and Hakkari), 24 are mayors of municipalities and two mayors of smaller boroughs. Of the 28, 12 are currently in jail pending their trials of charges of terrorism. All of those dismissed due to PKK links are from the pro-PKK DBP, the local wing of the HDP.'²²

- 8.1.7 See also [Arrest and detention](#) for further information on association of the HDP with the PKK and the aftermath of the twin bomb attack of 10 December 2016.

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 Restrictions

- 8.2.1 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada published the following information in June 2016:

'Regarding the treatment of BDP and HDP members between 2011 and 2016, the Chair [Jalal Talabani Chair of Kurdish Political Studies at the University of Central Florida, a position dedicated to the study of Kurdish politics] provided the following analysis:

'The level of persecution experienced by the BDP and HDP members generally follows the evolution of the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK insurgents. In periods of truce and negotiations, BDP/HDP politicians are less likely to experience harassment, detention, arrest, and mistreatment. A series of operations (called KCK operations), started in spring 2009, targeted many BDP members who were accused of being part of a scheme (KCK) controlled by the PKK leadership. A large

²² Daily Sabah. 'Official report reveals HDP-affiliated mayors' aid to PKK,' 27 September 2016 <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2016/09/28/official-report-reveals-hdp-affiliated-mayors-aid-to-pkk>. Accessed: 27 July 2017.

number of politicians and activists were detained and later arrested. With the initiation of the so-called "peace process" in early 2013, these operations came to an end and many BDP members who had been arrested were released. However, the rekindling of the armed conflict in July 2015 brought a new wave of legal operations targeting HDP/DBP [Democratic Regions Party] members including their arrests. There were also many allegations of mistreatment by security forces. (Chair 20 May 2016)²³

8.2.2 The USSD report noted that 'Antiterror laws were broadly used against Kurds, suspected PKK sympathizers, and alleged members of the Gulen movement. Human rights groups alleged that many detainees had no substantial link to terrorism and were detained to weaken the pro-Kurdish HDP and DBP or to silence critical voices.'²⁴

8.2.3 The US Department of State further reported:

'The government restricted the activities of some opposition political parties and leaders: police detained local party officials and supporters; parliament in May [2016] approved a constitutional amendment lifting the immunity from prosecution for a specific group of 148 parliamentarians, potentially enabling their prosecution for insult and other crimes; and the government replaced democratically elected officials with state trustees when local officials were accused of affiliation with terrorist groups. These tactics were most commonly directed against politicians affiliated with the HDP and its sister party, the DBP [Democratic Regions Party].'²⁵

8.2.4 In March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that 'According to the DBP [Democratic Regions Party], after the government assumed control of the DBP municipalities, in every province many municipality-run community facilities, including women's centers offering support to victims of domestic violence, crèches, and cultural centers were closed down without explanation.'²⁶

8.2.5 In November 2016, the BBC reported: 'Turkish police have used water cannon and tear gas to break up a protest in Istanbul against the arrest of leaders of the pro-Kurdish HDP party. Demonstrators assembled outside a mosque in the Sisli district and shouted slogans denouncing the "fascist" state before scattering as they were sprayed with freezing water.'²⁷

²³ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. 'Turkey: Situation and treatment of members of Kurdish political parties that have succeeded the People's Democracy Party (Halkin Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), including the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), and the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi, HDP); whether HADEP and other older acronyms are still in use (2011-2016),' 14 June 2016, TUR105537.E. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/577b74214.html>. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

²⁴ US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;' Turkey, 3 March 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

²⁵ US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;' Turkey, 3 March 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

²⁷ BBC. 'Pro-Kurdish aftermath: Pro-Kurdish Istanbul protests broken up,' 5 November 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37882883>. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

- 8.2.6 The report of February 2017 by the OHCHR noted the closure of many NGOs following the coup attempt and stated that 'Among the banned organizations were the Association of Libertarian Jurists (ÖHD) and the Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD) whose members represented all of the deputies, executives and members of the pro-Kurdish parliamentary political party, the HDP.'²⁸
- 8.2.7 For further information on harassment, see [Association with PKK](#). For further information about the closure of NGOs, see the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Human rights defenders](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 Police searches of HDP offices

8.3.1 Reuters reported on 4 November 2016 on the search of the HDP head office at the same time as the arrest of the party's co-leaders: 'Police also raided and searched the party's head office in central Ankara. Police cars and armed vehicles had closed the entrances to the street of the HDP headquarters. A group of protesters chanting slogans tried to reach the party offices, but were stopped by police before they could enter the street, a Reuters witness said.'²⁹

8.3.2 In August 2016, Reuters reported:

'Turkish police detained 17 suspected militants in a sweep in Istanbul on Thursday that included a raid on offices of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), state media said, hours after twin bomb attacks hit the mainly Kurdish southeast.

'Security sources blamed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants for the bombings on Wednesday evening, which killed nine civilians and came as Turkey is in the midst of a crackdown after a failed military coup attempt on July 15.

'Backed by a helicopter, counter-terror squads raided HDP offices in Istanbul's central Beyoglu district at 3 a.m. (0000 GMT) as armoured vehicles were deployed nearby, the Dogan news agency reported.

'The HDP, parliament's third-largest party, wrote on its Istanbul Twitter account that police had broken open the door of its building and "illegally" searched the offices when no party official was present.

'The raids, in 10 districts across Turkey's largest city, targeted the "urban structure" of the PKK, Anadolu said. It said the detainees were accused of "terror group membership", recruitment and staging illegal protests.'³⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

²⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 'Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey, July 2015 to December 2016,' February 2017 (paragraph 67). http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf. Accessed: 30 March 2017

²⁹ Reuters.com. 'Turkey draws Western condemnation over arrest of Kurdish lawmakers,' 4 November 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kurds-idUSKBN12Y2XA?il=0> Date accessed : 23 January 2017.

³⁰ Reuters. 'Turkish police raid pro-Kurdish party, detain 17 across Istanbul: state media,' 11 August 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kurds-idUSKCN10M0NZ?il=0>. Accessed: 19 May 2017

8.4 Lifting of parliamentary immunity

8.4.1 Human Rights Watch reported on the lifting of parliamentary immunity from prosecution: 'In May [2016], the government secured the lifting of the parliamentary immunity [from prosecution] of 148 deputies, 53 of them members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) facing investigation on terrorism charges.'³¹

8.4.2 In June 2016, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada stated that, 'According to the Chair [Jalal Talabani Chair of Kurdish Political Studies at the University of Central Florida, a position dedicated to the study of Kurdish politics], 53 of 59 HDP members of parliament have legal cases against them and the revoking of parliamentary immunity means that they can now be subject to arrest and detention (Chair 20 May 2016).'³²

8.4.3 Human Rights Watch further reported on the removal of parliamentary immunity from prosecution in a paper dated March 2017:

'The one-time removal of immunity has been criticized by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which advises on constitutional matters, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

'In the period before the immunity vote, there was a sharp increase in applications by prosecutors to investigate HDP members of parliament, with almost 152 applications in the month before the vote alone...

'While the measure covered members from all parties, who are otherwise immune from criminal investigation while they hold elected office, it disproportionately affected the HDP...

'The potential offenses included spreading terrorist propaganda, membership in an armed organization, insulting the state, insulting the president, and fomenting public enmity. While there had been 182 such applications against MPs from pro-Kurdish parties over the eight-year period from 2007 to December 24, 2015, 328 were filed in the five-month period between December 2015 and May 2016, 152 of them in the month after the government submitted the amendment and before the final vote on May 20 [2016]. A total of 510 applications were filed against HDP members, seeking prosecution for 645 offenses, compared with 294 applications for the three other parties in parliament combined.

'The amendment lifted the immunity of 55 of the 59 HDP members, 59 of 134 members from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), 29 of 316 from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), 10 of 40 from the opposition Nationalist Action Party (MHP), and one independent.

³¹ Human Rights Watch. 'World Report 2017,' Turkey; Escalating conflict in the southeast, 12 January 2017. http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/334752/463199_en.html. Accessed: 25 January 2017

³² Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. 'Turkey: Situation and treatment of members of Kurdish political parties that have succeeded the People's Democracy Party (Halkin Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), including the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), and the Peoples' Democractic Party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi, HDP); whether HADEP and other older acronyms are still in use (2011-2016),' 14 June 2016, TUR105537.E. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/577b74214.html>. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

'The Constitutional Court rejected an appeal against the constitutional amendment by the HDP and some CHP members. The HDP and individual MPs from the party have since taken cases to the European Court of Human Rights.'³³

8.4.4 In March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported:

'The Turkish government has jailed 13 members of the pro-Kurdish democratic opposition in parliament on terrorism charges and taken direct control of 82 municipalities in the Kurdish southeast region, suspending and incarcerating elected mayors...

'Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, the co-leaders of HDP, and 11 of its other parliament members are in jail facing terrorism charges...

'The jailing of the parliament members is possible because of a temporary constitutional change, approved by parliament in May 2016, that lifted the parliamentary immunity of 154 members under investigation at that time for criminal offenses – 55 are HDP members. The change does not apply to members investigated after the May vote was taken, who retain their immunity as long as they stay in office...

'Police detained Demirtaş and Yüksekdağ and the deputy chair of the party's parliamentary group, İdris Baluken, on November 4, 2016, as well as six other parliament members – Nursel Aydoğan, Gülser Yıldırım, Leyla Birlik, Selma Irmak, Ferhat Encü, and Abdullah Zeydan. They were brought before courts and sent to pretrial detention the same day.

'Nihat Akdoğan, another member, was detained and jailed three days later. In the following months four more parliament members were jailed – Ayhan Bilgen, the party spokesman, Meral Daniş Beştaş, a Parliamentary constitution commission member, Besime Konca, and Çağlar Demirel. All have since been indicted on terrorism charges. Other HDP parliament members were detained and released on probation, with Leyla Birlik released from prison on January 4 [2017] at her first trial hearing.'³⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

8.5 Exclusion from cross-party events

8.5.1 In August 2016 Al Jazeera noted:

'A week after the failed coup attempt, a rare meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and two opposition leaders took place at the presidential palace in Ankara. A day after Turkey's failed coup attempt, all major political parties united against the "unparalleled attack on the Turkish democracy", issuing a joint declaration to condemn it...

'President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also put aside acrimony with the leaders of two opposition parties, inviting them to the presidential palace for talks in a gesture of national unity.

³³ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

³⁴ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 24 July 2017.

‘And a week after their historic meeting at the presidential palace on July 25, in an unprecedented move, Erdogan invited Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli to join him in a major "democracy rally" in Istanbul’s Yenikapi Square...

‘But the leader of the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtas, was excluded from both the post-coup talks in the palace and the rally, on the grounds that his party allegedly supports the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). The HDP’s exclusion, however, has given rise to concerns that Turkey is denying a large section of society representation in discussions about the nation’s future.’³⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

8.6 Referendum of April 2017 (Presidency)

8.6.1 Human Rights Watch commented on the detention of members of the HDP and suspension of mayors connected with the HDP as below:

‘The move against the national pro-Kurdish party, Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), and its regional sister party, Democratic Regions Party (DBP), comes in the lead up to an April 16, 2017 constitutional referendum on an amendment that would transform Turkey from its traditional parliamentary political system to a presidential one, leading to a concentration of power in the office of the president. The proposal has been widely criticized for lacking adequate checks and balances to protect human rights and rule of law against misuse of power by the office of the president. Both parties oppose such an expansion of presidential powers.’³⁶

[Back to Contents](#)

9. Arrest and detention

9.1 Arrests of HDP members and supporters

9.1.1 In the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016, the US Department of State noted that ‘The number of political prisoners was not a matter of public record and remained the subject of debate at year’s end.’³⁷ The source further noted that ‘Despite limits placed on the use of the antiterror law during 2013 and 2014 by the Fourth and Fifth Judicial Packages, prosecutors continued to use a broad definition of terrorism and threats to national security to launch criminal charges against a broad range of defendants, including more than 140 journalists and hundreds of mostly pro-Kurdish politicians, party officers, and supporters.’³⁸

³⁵ Al Jazeera. ‘How could failed coup affect Kurdish peace process?’ 7 August 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/failed-coup-impact-kurdish-peace-process-160806051709935.html>. Accessed: 31 March 2017

³⁶ Human Rights Watch. ‘Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,’ 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

³⁷ US Department of State. ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;’ Turkey, 3 March 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

³⁸ US Department of State. ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;’ Turkey, 3 March 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>.

- 9.1.2 The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a document in February 2017, which stated 'According to the HDP official statement issued on 2 January 2017, since July 2015, the number of detained HDP executives, members, and supporters had reached 8,711. Reportedly, as of 29 December 2016, the number of those arrested was 2,705. According to the HDP, 4,457 (more than half) of detentions and 1,275 arrests had taken place after the coup attempt of 15 July 2016.'³⁹
- 9.1.3 Reuters reported as follows on 4 November 2016:
'Turkish authorities arrested the leaders of the country's main pro-Kurdish opposition party in a terrorism investigation on Friday [4 November 2016], drawing strong international condemnation of a widening crackdown on dissent under President Tayyip Erdogan.
'Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog, co-leaders of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), were jailed pending trial after being held in overnight raids, officials said. Ten other HDP lawmakers were also detained, although some were later released...
'...Parliamentarians in Turkey normally enjoy immunity from prosecution, but the immunity of many lawmakers, including HDP deputies, was lifted earlier this year.'⁴⁰
- 9.1.4 The US Department of State's Country Report for 2016 noted that both the HDP's leaders and the HDP parliamentarians who were imprisoned were among those whose parliamentary immunity had been lifted in May 2016.⁴¹
- 9.1.5 Reporting on 4 November 2016 on the arrest of the co-chairs of the HDP, the BBC explained why the HDP party leaders were arrested: 'The government says they were detained for failing to co-operate with a counter-terrorism investigation, which the two leaders vowed to boycott in June. Defending the arrests, Justice Minister Bekir Bozdog said: "They did not respect the law." The MPs are also accused of spreading propaganda for the PKK.'⁴²
- 9.1.6 For further information about the PKK, see the country policy and information note on [Turkey: PKK](#).
- 9.1.7 On 18 January 2017, ARA News, a press agency, published the following:
'Kati Piri, the EU's Turkey rapporteur on Tuesday called the indictment by Turkish prosecutors seeking extended prison terms for leaders of the pro-

Accessed: 24 March 2017.

³⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 'Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey, July 2015 to December 2016,' (para 71) February 2017.

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf. Accessed: 30 March 2017

⁴⁰ Reuters.com. 'Turkey draws Western condemnation over arrest of Kurdish lawmakers,' 4 November 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-kurds-idUSKBN12Y2XA?il=0> Date accessed : 23 January 2017.

⁴¹ US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016;' Turkey, 3 March 2017. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265482>. Accessed: 24 March 2017.

⁴² BBC. 'Turkey pro-Kurd HDP party condemns arrest of leaders,' 4 November 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37875605>. Accessed: 25 January 2017

Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ "outrageous".

'Demirtaş and Yüksekdağ are being prosecuted under anti-terrorism legislation for "disrupting the unity and territorial integrity of the state and spreading terrorist propaganda", according to judicial sources, the Turkish pro-government newspaper Yeni Safak reported...

'Demirtaş and Yüksekdağ have been in jail since 75 days when the crackdown on the pro-Kurdish party began...

'The Co-Rapporteurs of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) request to visit the two Kurdish leaders was rejected by Turkey's Ministry of Justice last week.'⁴³

9.1.8 In the 'Freedom in the World 2017' report, which covered the year 2016, Freedom House stated:

'...in August two HDP deputies, including the party's cochair, were indicted for engaging in "terrorist propaganda." HDP officials in Istanbul were detained after state raids on the party's offices in August. In September, the government removed 28 HDP mayors from their posts, citing links to either the PKK or Gülen's organization. In November, 12 HDP deputies, including the party's coleaders, were arrested for refusing to cooperate in other cases involving alleged terrorist activities. Between October and December, 45 more mayors were dismissed, and by the end of the year 2,700 local HDP politicians had been jailed.'⁴⁴

9.1.9 In a document dated 20 March 2017 Human Rights Watch reported:

'The Turkish government has jailed 13 members of the pro-Kurdish democratic opposition in parliament on terrorism charges and taken direct control of 82 municipalities in the Kurdish southeast region, suspending and incarcerating elected mayors...

'Thousands of other members of both pro-Kurdish parties have been arrested. The HDP informed Human Rights Watch that since the July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, 5,471 of its party officials, including heads of provincial and district branches, had been detained, with 1,482 sent to pretrial detention. The BDP sister party told Human Rights Watch that 3,547 of its party officials had been placed in pretrial detention since July 2015. The arrests have undermined the ability of parties to conduct a campaign over the upcoming referendum, officials from both parties say.'⁴⁵

9.1.10 In March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported on the detention of mayors from the south-east of the country, stating 'The circumstances of the removal and replacement of elected mayors varied. Some were suspended from office, detained and placed in pretrial detention on suspicion of committing

⁴³ ARA News. 'Turkish prosecutor demands 142 years imprisonment for Kurdish leader Demirtas, EU rapporteur outraged,' 18 January 2017. <http://aranews.net/2017/01/turkish-prosecutor-demands-142-years-imprisonment-for-kurdish-leader-demirtas-eu-rapporteur-outraged/>. Accessed: 23 January 2017

⁴⁴ Freedom House. 'Freedom in the World 2017,' Turkey, 31 January 2017.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/turkey>. Accessed: 24 March 2017

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

offenses punishable under terrorism laws, and immediately replaced by government appointees. Others were suspended, replaced, and then later detained. A total of 90 co-mayors are in pretrial detention pending trial on terrorism charges.⁴⁶

9.1.11 On 12 December 2016, the BBC reported that

‘Turkish police have detained 235 people for acting on behalf of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the interior ministry says. Those detained include officials from the main Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP).

‘The arrests come two days after twin bomb attacks near a football stadium in Istanbul which killed 44 people...

‘A statement from the interior ministry says the operation covered 11 provinces across Turkey from the northwest to the southeast, and targeted people suspected of "spreading terror group propaganda".

‘It is not clear whether Monday's arrests were directly related to the bomb attacks.⁴⁷

9.1.12 Al Monitor also reported on the aftermath of the bomb attacks of 10 December 2016, stating:

‘A day later, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) claimed responsibility for the attack. TAK is believed to be an offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the growing public outrage turned against the Kurds. Taking full advantage, the Turkish regime increased its grip on the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). Hundreds of party members and others were arrested in a nationwide crackdown on Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists.

‘At the time of this writing, some 600 people had been detained and more arrests are expected. Two more lawmakers were added to the 10 HDP lawmakers already behind bars.⁴⁸

9.1.13 See also [Association with PKK](#) for further information on this issue.

9.1.14 In June 2016 the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada published the following information, which is based on a number of sources:

‘The HDP indicated to OSCE/ODIHR [Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] that between 24 July and 9 October 2015, 2,308 HDP members were taken into custody and 542 were arrested (OSCE 23 Oct. 2015, 5). OSCE reports that some HDP members were charged with "defamation of public authorities, including insult of the president" (ibid.). According to Freedom House, between the June and November 2015 elections, approximately 500 HDP members and officials, including 20 mayors, were detained on terrorism

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch. ‘Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,’ 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁴⁷ BBC. ‘Istanbul attacks: Turkish police arrest 235 over “militant links,” 12 December 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-38288429>. Accessed: 25 January 2017

⁴⁸ Al Monitor. ‘Outrage over Istanbul bombing turns anti-Kurdish,’ 14 December 2016. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/12/turkey-istanbul-bombing-outrage-takes-anti-kurdish.html>. Accessed: 3 April 2017.

charges (Freedom House 2016). According to Human Rights Watch, the Turkish government has "a track record of using over[ly]-broad terrorism laws to silence dissent, including by detaining and prosecuting peaceful Kurdish activists as though they were members of the outlawed PKK" (Human Rights Watch 30 July 2015).⁴⁹

- 9.1.15 See [Restrictions of the HDP](#) and [Association with PKK](#) for further information about arrests and detentions.

[Back to Contents](#)

9.2 Criminal indictments and accusations

- 9.2.1 In March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that they had

'[...] examined the criminal indictments against 11 HDP members of parliament and decisions to detain them pending trial. The evidence cited in the indictments consists mainly of political speeches rather than any conduct that could reasonably support charges of membership of an armed organization or separatism. The indictments charge them with offenses punishable with prison sentences amounting to hundreds of years...

'Selahattin Demirtaş, the HDP co-leader and member of parliament for Istanbul, was detained on November 4, 2016, and placed in pretrial detention pending a first trial hearing on April 26. The 500-page indictment against him, issued on January 11 [2017], charges him with being a leading member of the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK/KCK), spreading terrorist propaganda, praising crimes and criminals, inciting enmity among the population, inciting the population not to obey laws, organizing, participating in, and provoking unauthorized demonstrations, and inciting the population to commit crimes. If convicted, he could face a 142-year prison sentence...

'Charges similar to those against Demirtaş are also levelled against other jailed HDP members of parliament including charges holding them responsible for the Kobane protests.'⁵⁰

- 9.2.2 The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published preliminary conclusions and observations by the UN Special Rapporteur following his visit to Turkey of November 2016, stating:

'Of immediate concern is the situation for the HDP and other opposition parties facing, or potentially facing, terrorism-related accusations. On 20 May 2016, the parliamentary immunity of members of parliament was lifted, causing serious concern that criticism of Government may be characterized as promotion of terrorism. Several HDP leaders have been imprisoned on the bases of emergency decrees, while they also face Ministry of Interior

⁴⁹ Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. 'Turkey: Situation and treatment of members of Kurdish political parties that have succeeded the People's Democracy Party (Halkin Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP), including the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), and the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi, HDP); whether HADEP and other older acronyms are still in use (2011-2016),' 14 June 2016, TUR105537.E. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/577b74214.html>. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

charges of making false propaganda. 117 investigations have been initiated recently in addition to 683 existing cases. 500 cases belong to HDP and members of parliament of HDP. The co-chairs of the HDP alone face 103 cases.⁵¹

9.2.3 In a report published in November 2016, the European Commission noted that 'in the aftermath of the coup attempt, the President and the Prime Minister have announced that they dropped a large number of cases brought for insulting them, but not those brought against HDP members.'⁵²

9.2.4 Human Rights Watch also reported on the detention of two members of the DBP[Democratic Regions Party] :

'Co-mayors of the greater Diyarbakır municipality, Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, elected with 55 percent of the vote in March 2014, have both been in pretrial detention since October 30, 2016...

'Gültan Kışanak is held in Kandıra F type prison in Kocaeli province in western Turkey. A November 11, 2016 indictment charges Kışanak with 41 counts of spreading terrorist propaganda, joining unauthorized demonstrations, and being a leading member of an armed terrorist organization. If convicted Kışanak faces a possible 230-year prison sentence.

'The indictment, which Human Rights Watch has seen, focuses at length on her alleged links with the Democratic Society Congress encompassing many civic groups, which the court contends is part of the PKK/KCK. The indictment also cites numerous political speeches. Because the municipality provides funeral vehicles for transporting the dead to their place of burial, Kışanak is held responsible for the fact that the coffins of armed militants transported in municipal vehicles bore PKK symbols and flags. There is no evidence in the indictment against Kışanak that could conceivably support the accusation that she is a leading member or member of an armed organization or that she has committed any act that could reasonably be described as terrorism.

'Fırat Anlı, the Diyarbakır co-mayor, is in prison in Elazığ. The indictment, which Human Rights Watch has seen, includes charges similar to those against Kışanak, including the charge of spreading terrorist propaganda for speeches and providing funeral vehicles carrying the bodies of armed militants. He is also charged with the killing of a soldier during an armed clash on the basis of evidence that suggests he visited the village where it happened. Anlı's lawyers, however, told Human Rights Watch that there was no conceivable connection between his visit and the armed clash in

⁵¹ United Nations. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 'Preliminary conclusions and observations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression to his visit to Turkey, 14-18 November 2016' (Attack on opposition and civil society). <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20891>. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

⁵² European Commission. 'Turkey 2016 Report SWD(2016) 366 final, 9 November 2016 (2.4. Human rights and the protection of minorities, Freedom of expression, page 26). http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1480931038_20161109-report-turkey.pdf. Accessed: 31 March 2017.

November 2015, since his visit to the location was in 2014, a year before the clash. He faces a possible 121-year prison sentence if convicted.⁵³

9.2.5 Human Rights Watch reported in March 2016 on the case of Ahmet Türk, a member of the DBP[Democratic Regions Party] :

‘Ahmet Türk, 74, a well-known figure in political life and in the Kurdish political movement and a former parliament member [and member of the DBP], was elected co-mayor of the Mardin greater municipality in March 2014 by 52 percent of the vote. Following his removal on November 16, 2016, the Mardin governor was appointed on November 18 to run the municipality. Türk was detained on November 21 and placed in pretrial detention on November 24. He was released on February 3 and has not yet been indicted for any crime. He spoke to Human Rights Watch on February 15:

“This has not been a legal process. The decision to appoint a trustee to Mardin greater municipality was an entirely political decision connected with the referendum and because of the Kurds being involved in the Middle East situation. The authorities concocted thousands of crimes against us. There is no indictment yet in my case. When they questioned us they claimed we gave money to the PKK, but the only money transfers we made were the salaries of the municipal workers.

“We had anyway been inspected four times by the prime ministry inspectorate. In fact there was some kind of inspection every two months. They never found anything. But look at the allegations we now face – crimes such as abusing our position, insulting the state, aiding terrorism, funding terrorism...

“The takeover of municipalities in our region by trustees is about suppressing their ideas, politics and their identity. We are accused of embracing the PKK, of being the PKK and other invented crimes. This is a typical policy aimed at suppressing us.”⁵⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

9.3 Conditions of detention

9.3.1 On 21 December 2016, the Middle East news source, Alaraby, reported:

‘Opposition politicians in Turkey are being imprisoned in solitary confinement and human rights workers are raising concerns over the legality of their detention.

‘Two senior members of Turkey's Human Rights Association (IHD) conducted prison interviews with politicians from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) to survey their conditions and reported numerous causes for concern.

“It is unconstitutional for members of parliament to be imprisoned pending trial,” the IHD said in a statement. “Detention of MPs should be regarded as

⁵³ Human Rights Watch. ‘Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,’ 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch. ‘Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,’ 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

an interference in the legislative body and the Parliament shouldn't tolerate this."...

'All of the opposition politicians surveyed were allegedly being detained alone in cells that are designed to accommodate three people. All of those asked said they never came into contact with another prisoner at any point in the day...

'HDP prisoners are reportedly not allowed to receive visits from outside, including from family members, or receive any correspondence...

'A spokesperson for Turkey's Ministry of Justice was not available to give comment on the IHD's findings.'⁵⁵

9.3.2 The IHD published the following conclusions following their interviews with imprisoned HDP politicians, referred to above:

'It is unconstitutional for these people to be imprisoned pending for trial who are still members of parliament; thus, they still have immunities because they have legislative immunity and trials should definitely continue without arrest. ... Detention of MPs should be regarded as an interference of legislative actions of the legislative body, and the Parliament shouldn't tolerate this...

'Keeping detained parliamentarians and mayors alone in isolation is incompatible with the human dignity. This situation is against the prohibition of torture, maltreatment and actions incompatible with human dignity. ... de facto punishment was inflicted without even hearings are conducted. The isolation, which is against the current legal statute [sic] and incompatible with the human dignity within the scope of torture, should definitely be ended.'⁵⁶

9.3.3 İdris Baluken, an HDP deputy, described his time in detention, as published by Human Rights Watch in March 2017: 'I was held in solitary confinement for almost three months. In three months on only three occasions was I allowed to meet with other prisoners, once with the co-mayor of Diyarbakır Fırat Anlı, once with the co-mayor of Dersim Mehmet Ali Bul, and once with the two of them together.'⁵⁷

9.3.4 In a report dated December 2016, the Council of Europe stated 'The HDP protested against the detention conditions of the detained parliamentarians, who are in solitary confinement in remote high-security (F-type) prisons with restricted access to their lawyers. A delegation of CHP MPs visited Mr Demirtas in Edirne, while, at the same time, a visit was refused to an HDP delegation. On 4 December [2016], two HDP MPs were finally allowed to visit the detained HDP parliamentarians.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Alaraby. 'Turkey's opposition politicians kept in "illegal" solitary confinement,' 21 December 2016 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/12/21/turkeys-opposition-politicians-kept-in-illegal-solitary-confinement>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁵⁶ IHD (Human Rights Association). 'IHD's report on the prison visits made to arrested MPs and Mayors,' 20 December 2016. <http://ihd.org.tr/en/index.php/2016/12/20/ihs-report-on-the-prison-visits-made-to-arrested-mps-and-mayors/>. Accessed: 29 March 2017.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁵⁸ Council of Europe; Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe. 'Post-monitoring dialogue with Turkey: The failed coup in Turkey of 15 July 2016: some facts and figures,' 12 December 2016 (paragraphs 22-25). <http://website->

- 9.3.5 However, Turkish sources stated that detainees were not necessarily held in isolation now. For example, [Birgun](#) reported that Demirtas now had a cellmate, Abdullah Zeydan.
- 9.3.6 For further information on conditions of detention, see the country policy and information note on [Turkey: Prison conditions](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

10. Suspensions and dismissals from political office

- 10.1.1 In January 2017, Human Rights Watch reported:

'In May [2016], the government secured the lifting of the parliamentary immunity [from prosecution] of 148 deputies, 53 of them members of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) facing investigation on terrorism charges. In August [2016], the government introduced a decree appointing trustees to take over 28 municipalities (24 of them in the southeast), removing elected mayors and council members from office. By mid-November [2016], 53 had been dismissed and 39, including Gültan Kışanak and Fırat Anlı, co-mayors of Diyarbakır, arrested pending investigation.'⁵⁹

- 10.1.2 Freedom House further noted that '...local self-government has been compromised, as the Interior Ministry took over dozens of municipalities in the southeastern part of the country after their elected HDP mayors were dismissed.'⁶⁰

- 10.1.3 In a document published in March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported on the suspension and dismissal of Mayors in the southeast of the country:

'In Turkey's southeast, the government has taken control of 82 municipalities won by the DBP and suspended their democratically elected co-mayors under suspicion of terrorism offenses, with 90 of them jailed pending trial...

'The government has used powers under the state of emergency adopted following the July 2016 attempted coup to take direct control of municipalities and remove elected mayors. A September 1 [2016] decree (no. 674) amended the Law on Municipalities to permit the takeover of municipalities suspected of supporting terrorism. Mayors in 82 of the 103 municipalities controlled by the DBP have been suspended from office on alleged suspicion of terrorist offenses and the municipalities taken over by government-appointed provincial authorities. Mayors from other parties were removed in four other municipalities but in each case the authorities allowed other elected local representatives to take over their duties...

'On September 11 [2016], the Interior Ministry announced the takeover of 28 municipalities, 24 controlled by the DBP and accused of supporting the PKK. Four others were accused of supporting the alleged Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) – three controlled by the ruling AKP and one by the opposition MHP. In all the DBP municipalities, Ankara-appointed district

[pace.net/documents/19887/2221584/AS-MON-INF-2016-14-EN.pdf/dd9e2a06-d8e0-4d75-86aa-e38c14bfe12f](https://www.pace.net/documents/19887/2221584/AS-MON-INF-2016-14-EN.pdf/dd9e2a06-d8e0-4d75-86aa-e38c14bfe12f). Accessed: 31 March 2017

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch. 'World Report 2017;' Turkey; Escalating conflict in the southeast, 12 January 2017. http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/334752/463199_en.html. Accessed: 25 January 2017

⁶⁰ Freedom House. 'Freedom in the World 2017;' Turkey, 31 January 2017.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/turkey>. Accessed: 24 March 2017

governors serving in the provinces took over in place of mayors. In the four others, existing elected members of the municipal council replaced the mayors, preserving local democratic accountability.

'Decree no. 674 signalled the beginning of a process expressly targeting the municipalities of the southeast and eastern regions where the DBP had won 103 in the 2014 local elections. By March 6, the government had ordered the suspension of mayors from 82 of these 103 municipalities, including larger towns and cities such as Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Van, and their takeover by Ankara-appointed provincial governors and district governors.'⁶¹

10.1.4 Human Rights Watch further noted that 'The initial suspension of elected mayors is in theory a temporary measure. Mayors do not have immunity from criminal prosecution, and if they are convicted under terrorism laws, and the Court of Cassation upholds the conviction, under article 53 of the Penal Code they would automatically lose their right to hold elected office as mayors. No mayor elected in the March 2014 local elections has yet received a final sentence.'⁶²

10.1.5 Human Rights Watch also noted the position of other public officials, stating, 'After the takeover of the municipality [Mardin], up to 200 public officials working there have been dismissed, 470 if you count the districts of Mardin as well.'⁶³

10.1.6 In March 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that Figen Yüksekdağ, one of the co-leaders of the HDP, had been stripped of her parliamentary seat:

'On February 21 [2017], parliament stripped Yüksekdağ of her parliamentary seat after it was notified by the government that, on September 22, 2016, the Court of Cassation had upheld her conviction for "spreading terrorist propaganda" on the grounds that in November 2013, she attended a militant's funeral at which some crowd members shouted slogans.

'The government asked the general assembly of the parliament to revoke Yüksekdağ's parliamentary seat based on her conviction for a terrorism offense, grounds for losing the right to be elected to a parliamentary seat under the Constitution (article 76). On March 9 [2017], the chief prosecutor of the Court of Cassation notified the HDP that the conviction dissolved Yüksekdağ's party membership.'⁶⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

11. Societal violence

11.1.1 Stockholm Center for Freedom, a non-profit organization set up by a group of Turkish journalists who live in self-exile in Sweden, published the following in April 2017:

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁶² Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁶³ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish opposition,' 20 March 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/20/turkey-crackdown-kurdish-opposition>. Accessed: 29 March 2017

'A pro-government crowd attacked a building in Denizli belonging to Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), officials said Wednesday.

'Pictures from the scene appeared to show the HDP building in Denizli vandalized and racist, sexist graffiti drawn on walls. The mob also stole TL 300 [300 Turkish lira] and 2 laptops from the building.

'This is not the first time a HDP office was attacked by pro-government and Erdoğanist mobs in Turkey. In the past several months, HDP offices in İstanbul, Ankara, Adana, Manisa, Hakkari, Mersin and Şanlıurfa were targeted with almost all inside being turned upside down.'⁶⁵

11.1.2 The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a report in February 2017 which stated:

'OHCHR has received reports that offices of the political party HDP in South-East Turkey had been attacked immediately after the 15 July 2016 failed coup attempt by groups shouting religious slogans and carrying Turkish flags. Local NGOs attributed such attacks to vigilante groups motivated by the hate speech heard from high-level State officials in mainstream media. Several politicians and high-ranking officials are reported to have engaged in hate speech against minorities and other vulnerable groups during the parliamentary election campaign in June 2015 and following the declaration of the state of emergency...'⁶⁶

11.1.3 On 17 December 2016, Kurdish media network Rudaw published:

'A number of offices of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey were attacked on Saturday. The party's office in İstanbul's Beylikdüzü district was attacked by a group of 30 to 40 people who broke down the door, smashed windows and started a fire. Police and fire trucks were called to the scene.

'In the Darica district of Kocaeli, an unidentified person or persons opened fire on HDP's district office. The police were called to the scene. No injuries have been reported and it is believed the office was empty at the time of the attack, CNN Turk reported.

'Kurdish media has also reported attacks on HDP offices in Ankara, İzmir, Çanakkale, Hatay, and Erzincan.'

'The source noted that the attacks took place on the same day that at least 13 Turkish soldiers were killed and 56 wounded in a car bombing in the central city of Kayseri. No group had yet claimed responsibility for the attack but in the hours after the bombing, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that "Turkey is under the threat of attacks by terrorist groups, especially the

⁶⁵ Stockholmcf.org. 'Pro-Government mob attacks HDP office in Denizli, steals laptops, money,' 12 April 2017. <http://stockholmcf.org/pro-government-mob-attacks-hdp-office-in-denizli-steals-laptops-money/>. Accessed: 16 May 2017.

⁶⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 'Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey, July 2015 to December 2016,' February 2017 (paragraph 68). http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf. Accessed: 30 March 2017

separatist terrorist organization which is trying to do its best to block Turkey's progress," referring to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).⁶⁷

11.1.4 In November 2015, the Middle East Eye reported:

'Both prior to the election [of June 2015] and after the collapse of the ceasefire [with the PKK], HDP offices were subjected to ransacking by far-right street gangs.

'Members of the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves - a paramilitary movement linked to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) - and the Ottoman Hearths, an AKP-linked street movement, are thought to have been among the main instigators of the attacks.

'Over the space of five days in early September [2015] - following the deaths of 14 police officers in a Kurdish militant attack - over 130 HDP buildings were attacked, with many burnt out and Turkish flags hung from the windows.'⁶⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

12. State protection

12.1.1 Rudaw.net noted that when the HDP party's office in Istanbul was attacked in December 2016, 'Police and fire trucks were called to the scene.' The same source reported that 'In the Darica district of Kocaeli, an unidentified person or persons opened fire on HDP's district office. The police were called to the scene.'⁶⁹ However, Ekurd, an online news portal, reported that 'In a statement, the HDP accused the authorities of turning a blind eye to the attacks.'⁷⁰

12.1.2 In November 2015, Middle East Eye reported:

'...HDP members have complained that there has been a lack of police protection during their demonstrations. "How was there no police to protect us?" Yildiz Kilinc, a member of the HDP, told the Independent newspaper, referring to the Ankara bombing [of October 2015].

'Noah Blaser, a journalist focusing on Turkey, said that such a mindset had become pervasive across Kurdish-majority regions. "Throughout the southeast there's a pervasive sense that if there were any attacks by IS designed to complicate the election day, the security measures would in no way prevent them from happening," he told MEE [Middle East Eye].

'He pointed out that many Kurds have been suspicious of the revelations that the IS cell responsible for not only the Ankara bombing, but also bombings in Suruc, Diyarbakir, Adana and Mersin had been known to Turkish authorities and that no arrests had been made.

⁶⁷ Rudaw. 'HDP offices across Turkey attacked,' 17 December 2016. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/171220161>. Accessed: 16 May 2017.

⁶⁸ Middle East Eye. 'Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,' 1 November 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814>. Accessed: 19 May 2017.

⁶⁹ Rudaw.net. 'HDP offices across Turkey attacked,' 17 December 2016. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/171220161>. Accessed: 19 May 2017.

⁷⁰ Ekurd. 'Turkish nationalists storm Kurdish HDP party HQ after Kayseri attack,' 17 December 2016. <http://ekurd.net/turks-fire-kurdish-kayseri-2016-12-17>. Accessed: 19 May 2017.

“There have been four attacks and these attacks stem all the way back to the election last year, so for Kurds the memories of security lapses and the risk of IS definitely overlaps with election day and there’s a sense among HDP supporters that their lives are at risk when they support their party, whether that’s in a political rally or voting,” he said.

“There’s definitely a pervasive sense that there’s no proper security measures.”⁷¹

[Back to Contents](#)

⁷¹ Middle East Eye. ‘Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,’ 1 November 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814>. Accessed: 19 May 2017.

Version control and contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about this note and your line manager, senior caseworker or technical specialist cannot help you, or you think that this note has factual errors then [email the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this note (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability, you can [email the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **2 August 2017**

Changes from last version of this note

Update of country information.

[Back to Contents](#)