



Genocide Watch  
The Alliance Against Genocide

## Turkey: Genocide Emergency November 2020

After the failed coup d'etat of July 2016, President Erdogan declared a state of emergency that lasted until July 2018. Police incarcerated thousands of people without credible evidence. They were accused of supporting the Fetullah Gülen movement. Severe restrictions on freedom of expression were imposed, including on social media accounts. Disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrests rose drastically. Police brutally dispersed protests and demonstrations.

In March 2019, municipal elections resulted in victory for the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) in Turkey's three largest cities (Istanbul, İzmir, and Ankara). The elections in Istanbul were declared invalid by the Supreme Election Board. In the re-election of June 2019, the CHP candidate, Ekrem İmamoğlu, again won Istanbul's municipal leadership.

The Erdogan regime replaced the elected mayors in dozens of municipalities in Eastern Turkey, who were members of the Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP). The government cited "terrorism-related investigations" as the reason for removing these mayors. Amnesty International says 18 out of 32 replaced mayors remain in pre-trial detention.

In October 2019, Turkey invaded north-east Syria. President Erdoğan explained to the UN that "Operation Peace Spring" was "to establish a 32km-deep border safe zone for Syrian refugees." However, the operation mainly targeted Kurdish forces that had defeated ISIS. "Operation Peace Spring" ended with compelling evidence of Turkish war crimes.

Repression of freedom of expression in Turkey increased after "Operation Peace Spring." According to Amnesty International, the government investigated over 839 social media accounts for sharing "criminal content" related to the operation. Thousands of journalists, editors, authors, and human rights defenders were detained on charges of "membership in a terrorist organization", including the ex-director of Amnesty International Turkey.

In October 2019, the United States Congress passed the "Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution," which recognizes and commemorates the Armenian Genocide, rejects its denial, and promotes public education about the Armenian Genocide carried out by the Ottoman Turks between 1915-1923.

In November 2019, police attacked thousands of women who marched for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women with plastic bullets and tear gas. Turkey in 2020 had a sharp increase in women's murder and torture following the COVID-19 outbreak, and an alarming increase in cases of femicide in Turkey.

**Genocide Watch considers the situation in Turkey to be at stage 9 of the genocidal process, Extermination**, with pro-Erdoğan forces in the Turkish army and police as the perpetrators and opposition leaders, Kurdish civilians, and Kurdish fighters in Northern Syria as the victims.

**Turkey is also at stage 10, Denial** of the Armenian, Assyrian, and Pontic Greek genocides perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 – 1923 and **Denial** of the war crimes Turkey committed against Kurdish fighters in Northern Syria during Operation Peace Spring in 2019.

**Genocide Watch also considers Turkey to be in the stages of Organization (5) and Polarization (6)**, as Kurdish leaders are banned from office and kept in pre-trial detention for "being members of a terrorist organization."

### Genocide Watch recommends:

- UN and NGO human rights investigators should document war crimes and crimes against humanity in south-eastern Turkey and northern Syria. Turkey should be taken to the European Court of Human Rights for these crimes.
- The UN Human Rights Council should demand that Turkey release persons detained without credible evidence, especially journalists and human rights defenders.
- Human rights organizations should recognize Turkish crimes against the Kurdish population as genocide.
- The UN Human Rights Council and NGO's should condemn increasing femicide in Turkey.
- The EU should renegotiate its refugee and borders policies with Turkey to avoid being blackmailed by Turkish expulsions that cause drownings and humanitarian emergencies.