

# GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: TÜRKİYE FACTSHEET

## OVERALL GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX SCORE:

**HIGH RISK**

The Global Torture Index 2025 is the first analysis designed to assess the risk of torture and ill-treatment across 26 countries worldwide. This 2025 factsheet for Türkiye includes an analysis of the country's overall performance, a breakdown by thematic pillars and associated risk category and key recommendations for driving meaningful change in the fight against torture and the promotion of human rights.

## COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS IN TÜRKİYE:

TOHAV Foundation for  
Society and Legal Studies

Özgürlük için  
Hukukçular Derneği (ÖHD)

İnsan Hakları Derneği  
(IHD)

## AT A GLANCE

Türkiye's human rights record remains under international scrutiny. For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a **high risk** of torture and ill-treatment, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024. **There is a worryingly high number of cases of torture and ill-treatment, particularly in the context of counterterrorism operations and political dissent**, that have been widely documented by monitoring bodies, civil society, media as well as international bodies.

In the aftermath of the coup attempt of 15 July 2016, the Turkish government declared a three-month State of Emergency, which was extended seven times before being revoked in July 2018. However, many emergency regulations became permanent, targeting civil society and suppressing dissent. The government's abusive use of Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713, with its vague definition of terrorism, led to a surge in allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

Türkiye has the highest incarceration rate and the largest prison population of all Council of Europe member states. Its prison population has grown significantly over the past two decades. The country now holds more than 300,000 prisoners. The situation of the 4,000 prisoners serving life imprisonment sentences is of particular concern, as expressed by the UN Committee Against Torture, which reviewed the country in 2024.

While Türkiye has established mechanisms for monitoring and preventing torture, such as the National Human Rights and Equality Institution, their effectiveness is often questioned due to concerns about transparency, accountability and political interference. **This situation reflects broader challenges within Türkiye's human rights framework, where legal safeguards often fail to translate into effective protection on the ground**, leaving victims of torture and ill-treatment with limited recourse to justice.

Türkiye has faced significant criticism for failing to implement European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) rulings. On July 11, 2022, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered a landmark judgment against Türkiye for its failure to comply with its order to release human rights defender Osman Kavala.

# GENERAL INFORMATION



**Type of government:**  
Republican  
Parliamentary  
Democracy



**United Nations Convention Against Torture:**  
Ratified



**OPCAT ratification:**  
Ratified



**Population:**  
87,533,076



**People deprived of liberty:**  
416,927



**Prison population (per 100,000 of national population):**  
424



**Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population):**  
14.8%



**Documented Detained Human Rights Defenders:**  
Lack of data



**Alerts Issued by the Observatory for Human Rights Defenders in 2024:**  
7



**Prison Occupancy level:**  
109.2%



**Homicide rate (per 100,000 people):**  
2.67

## THEMATIC PILLAR OVERVIEW



### I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

**INDEX SCORE: CONSIDERABLE RISK**

Türkiye raises concern over its government's refusal to make public the reports of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, along with the last three reports from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. **Excessive use of force by law enforcement officials is another issue, exacerbated by amendments to Law No. 2559 under the 'Domestic Security Package,'** which permits lethal force in situations beyond protecting life, such as preventing property damage. This has contributed to disproportionate force in policing protests, including arbitrary arrests and the use of impermissible restraint methods.

The country has yet to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance despite having **approximately 1388 documented cases of forced disappearances, with 233 of them related to the burial of victims.** The real number of disappearances is believed to be much higher. Additionally, Türkiye maintains its declaration regarding the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 protocol, which denies refugee status to individuals seeking asylum from outside Europe.

Further issues include Article 94 of the Turkish Penal Code, which does not fully align with the international definition of torture under the Convention Against Torture. Moreover, the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye lacks diversity as its board members, including the chairperson, are appointed by the President. The institution has been reluctant to report on instances of torture and ill-treatment, weakening its effectiveness as a national preventive mechanism.



## II. ENDING POLICE BRUTALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

In Türkiye, measures initially introduced during the state of emergency have been made permanent, creating a system where rights are systematically suppressed. **Arrests frequently lead to violations of individual rights, with instances of torture and physical attacks by officers routinely covered up.** Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and journalists are prevented from documenting these abuses, either through intimidation or outright bans, concealing the true extent of the violence. **Public demonstrations face excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, including the use of tear gas, handcuffing of protesters and high-pressure water cannons,** which have been noted by the [ECtHR](#). Constitutional rights, such as the right to assembly, are undermined by security-driven policies, leading to mass arrests and curfews. Protesters are often transported to remote medical facilities as a punitive measure, while police accountability is hindered by non-functional car cameras and restricted legal oversight.

Life imprisonment is legal under the criminal code, providing some legal safeguards such as the possibility of early release, parole and exemptions for minors (when the offence was committed by persons under 18). However, in practice, **prisoners serving life sentences frequently face violations of their rights during detention,** which can amount to ill-treatment, and often continue to serve their sentences until they die. The ECtHR has ruled that this structural regulation violates the prohibition of torture (*ÖCALAN v. TURKEY* (No. 2), Application No. 24069/03, 197/04, 6201/06, and 10464/07, dated 18/03/2014). According to the Court's rulings, everyone should have the right to hope and believe that they may one day be free.

For prisoners serving fixed-term sentences, the right to parole is not applied but postponed. The power to defer this right has been entrusted to a committee composed of civil servants who do not meet the conditions required to be judges, in violation of the principle of the right to a fair trial and the principles of impartiality and independence. The fundamental legal guarantees of prisoners are being arbitrarily violated.



## III. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WHILE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

The conditions in Türkiye's prisons raise significant human rights concerns, particularly regarding overcrowding, inadequate healthcare and the treatment of vulnerable populations. **The incarceration rate has significantly increased, leading to an overcrowding rate of over 110% across the prison system.** Many inmates in high-security prisons are confined to individual cells without adequate ventilation for over 22 hours per day, resembling solitary confinement (Rule 44, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules)). The penitentiary system lacks an adequate number of healthcare professionals, resulting in inadequate medical treatment and transfers dictated by prison administrators rather than medical staff. Prisoners with life-threatening illnesses are denied provisional release on the basis that they allegedly pose a threat to public security. Women who have recently given birth face inadequate conditions and insufficient healthcare, while children in detention lack the necessary educational and rehabilitative support. The Administrative and Observation Boards responsible for granting conditional releases lack independence and often operate arbitrarily, particularly affecting human rights defenders, journalists and prisoners convicted on politically motivated charges.

Similarly, **detainees in deportation centres experience severe violations of their rights, including overcrowding, poor living conditions, inadequate access to food, interpreters and communication with family members.** Reports indicate that lawyers assisting refugees face challenges such as harassment and politically motivated investigations (Izmir Harmandalı GGM Deportation Centre). In addition, the treatment of refugees includes excessive use of force by law enforcement officials at border crossings, raising concerns about their safety and well-being.



## IV. ENDING IMPUNITY

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

In Türkiye, allegations of torture against public officials require authorisation from the administrative and local authorities before an investigation can begin, often leading to inaction. **Even when complaints are filed, investigations are unlikely to follow.** [Reports indicate](#) that over the past decade, there have been 7548 applications for torture cases, and 781 in the last year. However, Türkiye does not provide comprehensive and disaggregated statistics regarding torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

Allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention centres, including severe abuses like sexual assault and the use of electric shocks have reportedly surged since the 2016 coup attempt and during counter-terrorism operations. **Counter-terrorism legislation, such as Law No. 3713 are often misused to undermine legal safeguards such as access to a lawyer and the right to review the legality of detention.**



## V. VICTIM'S RIGHTS

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**INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK**

In Türkiye, there is a lack of training for judges, lawyers, law enforcement officers and other relevant personnel working with individuals deprived of their liberty in the use of the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol). This lack of training impedes the identification, documentation and investigation of torture cases, leaving victims without adequate recourse for justice.

In terms of redress, **Türkiye currently lacks legislation or subsidiary regulations that specifically address the rights and rehabilitation of torture victims.** Notably, a sub-section in the 'Guide on Approach Towards Victims' from 2016 that referred to victims of torture was reportedly removed from later editions.



## VI. PROTECTION FOR ALL

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

Türkiye's withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as 'the Istanbul Convention,' marks a significant regression in the protection of individuals from gender-based and domestic violence. **Complaints of such violence are often dismissed, especially in rural areas and in cases involving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.** Preventive and protective cautionary orders are not granted for sufficient durations, and the provision of shelter accommodation exhibits discriminatory practices, particularly affecting older women and those with teenage sons or disabled children.

LGBTQIA+ individuals face significant discrimination, exacerbating their vulnerabilities while in custody. **Immigrant prisoners often struggle due to language barriers and limited access to legal representation, compounding their challenges.** Additionally, children in detention encounter significant difficulties, with civil society organisations and human rights defenders having restricted access to them.



## VII. RIGHT TO DEFEND AND CIVIC SPACE

### INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

In Türkiye, the right to freedom of expression has faced significant challenges over the past decade, particularly due to the escalation of court cases targeting individuals who express dissent or advocate for rights. **The judiciary is often perceived as a tool for suppressing dissent, as evidenced by disproportionately harsh sentences meted out to those protesting the state, including prison terms of up to 18 years.**

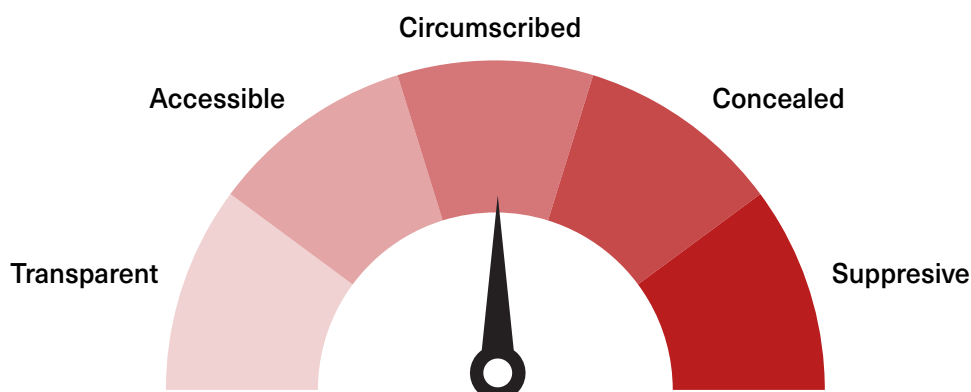
Human rights defenders and civil society organisations operate in a restrictive environment. Despite constitutional guarantees and protections under the European Convention on Human Rights, laws and practices often limit their activities, such as demonstrations and press statements. **Since 31 December 2020, intensified scrutiny has been placed on civil society organisations under foreign funding regulations, further criminalising activities and impeding their operation.**

The legal environment for human rights defenders in Türkiye is characterised by inconsistent application of laws, often discriminatorily treating Kurdish defenders under anti-terror regulations. This disparity also manifests as harassment and violence against those advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights or other marginalised groups. Many human rights defenders and journalists endure threats, physical harassment, arrest, prosecution, torture and ill-treatment as they exercise their rights to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly.

## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Global Torture Index rates the access to information and transparency available in each country when measuring and assessing the risks of torture and ill-treatment. It takes into account the availability of information, as well as the obstacles faced by civil society organisations in collecting data and their assessments in accessing information. Access to information must be guaranteed in every society, both in law and in practice, to ensure state transparency and accountability. It enables organisations, journalists, and individuals to request data on public bodies, protocols, and statistics on human rights violations. This indicator reflects the challenges in accessing information within a country, with each country and territory assigned a rating as **Suppressive, Concealed, Circumscribed, Accessible, or Transparent**.

Türkiye's score is **circumscribed** based on our evaluation of its current level of transparency and access to information.



# ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN TÜRKİYE: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Index includes 5 recommendations for Türkiye, taken from the [Index webpage](#), which will serve as references in upcoming editions to monitor achievements within the anti-torture movement.

1. Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, ensuring independent investigations into all cases. Align the Penal Code with the international definition of torture, guaranteeing that there are no exceptional circumstances in which torture may be permitted.
2. Ensure that prison conditions meet established standards by implementing measures to reduce overcrowding and guaranteeing access to adequate healthcare. This includes hiring additional personnel and ensuring that decisions regarding medical care are made by qualified professionals, not by prison administration.
3. Conduct prompt and impartial investigations into all claims of torture, ill-treatment and excessive force by law enforcement, guaranteeing independence, proper prosecution and redress for victims.
4. Implement mandatory training programmes for law enforcement officials, social workers, medical personnel, lawyers and judges, focusing on the effective handling of sexual and gender-based violence, with special attention to the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.
5. Repeal or amend Anti-Terror Law No. 3713 and Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations to ensure full compliance with international standards. Implement necessary safeguards to allow human rights defenders to carry out their legitimate work in an environment free from threats, reprisals, violence and harassment.



## FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: <https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index>. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at [tortureindex@omct.org](mailto:tortureindex@omct.org).

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