

TURKEY 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Turkey is a constitutional republic with an executive presidential system and a unicameral 600-seat parliament (the Grand National Assembly). In presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observers expressed concern regarding restrictions on media reporting and the campaign environment, including the jailing of a presidential candidate, that restricted the ability of opposition candidates to compete on an equal basis and campaign freely.

The National Police and Jandarma, under the control of the Ministry of Interior, are responsible for security in urban areas and rural and border areas, respectively. The military has overall responsibility for border control. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over law enforcement officials, but mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption remained inadequate. Members of the security forces committed some abuses.

Under broad antiterror legislation passed in 2018, the government continued to restrict fundamental freedoms and compromised the rule of law. Since the 2016 coup attempt, authorities have dismissed or suspended tens of thousands of civil servants and government workers, including more than 60,000 police and military personnel and more than 4,000 judges and prosecutors, arrested or imprisoned more than 95,000 citizens, and closed more than 1,500 nongovernmental organizations on terrorism-related grounds, primarily for alleged ties to the movement of cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom the government accused of masterminding the coup attempt and designated as the leader of the “Fethullahist Terrorist Organization.”

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary killings; suspicious deaths of persons in custody; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and continued detention of tens of thousands of persons, including opposition politicians and former members of parliament, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and employees of the U.S. Mission, for purported ties to

The Ministry of Labor and Social Security's Labor Inspectorate is responsible for enforcing wage and hour laws. The government effectively enforced wage and hour provisions in the unionized industrial, service, and government sectors but not in other sectors. Workers in nonunionized sectors had difficulty receiving overtime pay to which they were entitled by law. The law prohibits excessive compulsory overtime. Labor inspectors conducted scheduled and unannounced inspections and had the authority to initiate sanctions. In 2020, the latest year for which data was available, inspectors conducted 9,170 inspections, the majority of which were unannounced. The number of labor inspectors, however, was insufficient to enforce full compliance. Penalties for wage and hour violations were not commensurate with those for similar crimes.

Occupational Safety and Health: Government-set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards were not always up to date or appropriate for specific industries. OSH violations were particularly common in the construction and mining industries, where accidents were frequent, and regulations inconsistently enforced. The Assembly for Worker Health and Safety reported at least 1,494 workplace deaths during the first eight months of the year. These figures included COVID-19-related deaths. In many sectors, including mining, workers could not remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardizing their employment, and authorities did not effectively protect vulnerable employees. The same labor inspectors that cover wage and hour are also responsible for enforcing occupational safety and health laws. The number of labor inspectors remained insufficient to enforce compliance with labor laws across the country. The government did not effectively enforce occupational safety and health in all sectors, and penalties for violations were not commensurate with those of similar crimes.

Informal Sector: Wage and hour laws did not cover workers in the informal economy, which accounted for an estimated 25 percent of GDP and more than one-quarter of the workforce. OSH laws and regulations covered both contract and unregistered workers but did not sufficiently protect them. Migrants and refugees working in the informal sector remained particularly vulnerable to substandard work conditions in a variety of sectors, including seasonal agriculture, industry, and construction. A majority of international protection status holders and

