

MAPPING STUDY

Civil Society Actors
Working on
Impunity, Accountability,
and Places of Deprivation
in / on Turkey

July 2024

DİCLE ÇAKMAK

Introduction	2
Impunity	4
An overview of impunity in Turkey	4
Key civil society actors in the fight against impunity in Turkey	5
International CSOs working against impunity in Turkey	10
Accountability	14
Overview of accountability in Turkey	14
Key local civil society actors working to promote accountability in Turkey	18
International CSOs working on accountability in Turkey	25
Places of Deprivation	28
The state of prisons in Turkey	28
Key local civil society actors working in the field of prisons	31
International CSOs working on prisons in Turkey	34
Removal Centres in Turkey	36
Key local civil society actors working on refugee rights	37
International CSOs working on refugee rights and removal centres in Turkey	42

Introduction

EuroMed Rights, Human Rights Association (İHD), and Capacity Development Association (KAGED/IHOP), is implementing a new project called “Empowering Civil Society to Fight Impunity with a specific focus on accountability, impunity, and violations of and around the right to personal security. This mapping study, which lists main civil society organizations (CSO) working in the fields of impunity, accountability and conditions of the places of deprivation of liberty in Turkey and in Europe, is produced within the framework of this project. Identifying main stakeholders of the action at local and international level, this study aims to deepen the project’s understanding of main trends and efforts in these three fields, to support the inception phase of the project and to strengthen project partners’ efforts to empower civil society to combat impunity.

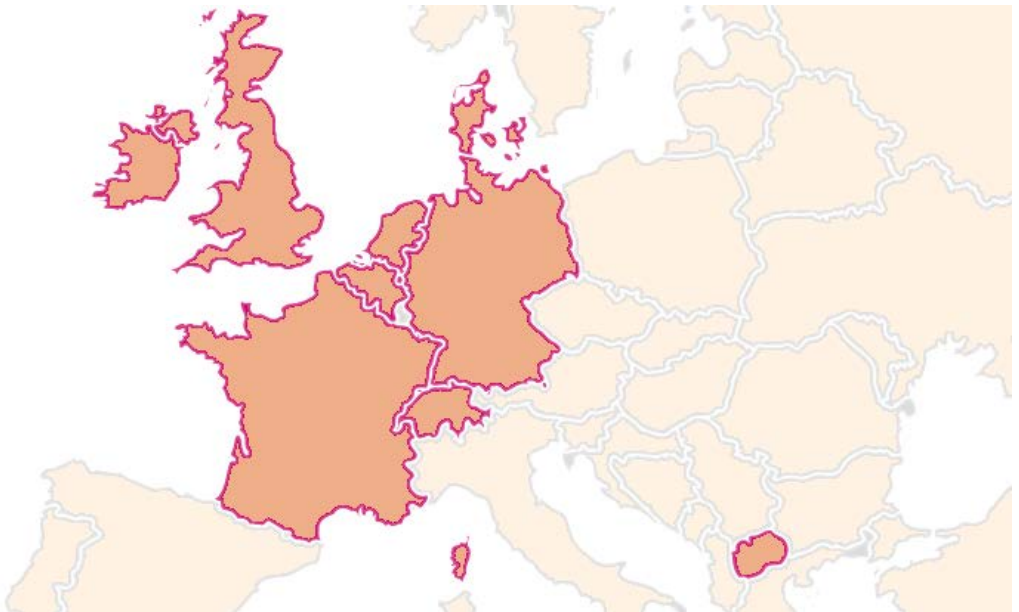
This report consists of three main sections, each of which deals separately with the focus area of the project. Recognising that in order to identify who is working in the field, it is first necessary to have information about the field in question, each section provides a general framework of the situation of the relevant focus area in Turkey. The first section discusses the problem of impunity in respect of grave human rights violations and lists the local and international CSOs that are implementing a specific programme to combat impunity. The second section addresses accountability for human rights violations with its close ties with impunity, by focusing on some of the rights and freedoms that are seen as prerequisites for ensuring accountability, including freedoms of assembly, association and expression, the right to participation and the right to information. The final section provides an overview of the state of places of deprivation in the country - limited to prisons and removal centres - and the response of the CSOs to this situation. It should be noted that, given the geographical breadth of Turkey and the diversity of its civil society structure and human rights issues, the lists in each section do not claim to be exhaustive, but aim to present general trends in terms of areas of work and methods used.

This study is mainly based on internet research. Information about the organizations was extracted from their websites, annual reports and strategic plans, social media accounts and newspaper articles. Although the aim was to include the English website of each CSO, Turkish websites were used for those whose English websites were not functional or up to date. Active social media accounts have been added for those without a website.

Geographical Distribution of CSOs Mapped in Turkey



Geographical Distribution of International CSOs Mapped in Europe



Impunity

An Overview of Impunity in Turkey

According to international human rights law, impunity defines the impossibility and the failure of bringing perpetrators of serious human rights violations¹ to account “since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried, and if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims”.² States are expected to combat impunity to bring justice to the victims of violations, to prevent the recurrence of violations in the future and to ensure the rule of law and the credibility of their justice systems. To this end, both the UN and CoE³ have defined main obligations of their member States and have set out a number of principles to assist the States in the fight against impunity, which can be summarized as follows:

- To investigate violations and to ensure that perpetrators are duly and timely prosecuted, tried and punished;
- To respect, protect and fulfil the victims’ and their families’ rights to know and the truth through independent and effective investigations;
- To provide victims with remedies and reparation;
- To set up independent, impartial and competent commissions of inquiry to establish the truth;
- To ensure that archives regarding the violations are preserved and accessible to victims and their relatives to facilitate claiming rights;

¹ Serious human rights violations encompass grave breaches of Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I thereto as well as crimes under international humanitarian and human rights law. Some examples of serious human rights violations are: extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances and kidnapping, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, forced labour, slavery or human trafficking, rape or sexual abuse, serious physical assault including domestic violence.

² Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Feb, 8, 2005, E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1).

³ Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on eradicating impunity for serious human rights violations (Mar. 30, 2011).

- To undertake legislative and administrative reforms and any other necessary measures to guarantee non-recurrence of violations.

Comparing both past and recent human rights developments with these obligations, it would not be wrong to say that Turkey's record on impunity is problematic. For a long time, no legal action could be taken against serious human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture, ill-treatment, village burnings and village evacuations against Kurds in the state of emergency region in the 1990s. Legislative changes in 2014 that were thought to lift the veil of impunity allowed some of these violations to be prosecuted. However, these cases, which gave rise to expectations of confronting grave human rights violations of the 90s, have been closed one after another with statutes of limitations and acquittals.

In recent violations of right to life, the traces of impunity can be detected in lengthy, narrow-scope and ineffective investigations and prosecutions resulting with sentences far from being satisfactory. The latest example, the case of Kurdish human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi, who was killed during a press statement in 2015 shows all these patterns. The crime scene investigation was carried out four months after the murder; the indictment was completed after five years; the court rejected all crucial requests of the party involved in the investigation to shed light on the murder; and at the end of the four-year trial, all the accused police officers were acquitted.⁴

Many other similar cases show that impunity has become a norm in Turkey as there is no political will to hold public officials accountable and the judiciary sees itself as the protector of the state and therefore of the perpetrators, who are public officials. Nevertheless, human rights organizations and human rights lawyers have been working for years at different scales and levels to address this major challenge.

Key Civil Society Actors in the Fight against Impunity in Turkey

If we look at the work on the fight against impunity in Turkey, it is possible to observe that they are mainly concentrated in Ankara and Istanbul, but they are also spreading to other provinces through bar associations active in this field and NGOs with branches. The main local civil society organizations implementing specific programmes on impunity are listed below:

[Association of Forensic Medicine Specialists \(ATUD\)](#): Based in Istanbul, ATUD works to prevent impunity in investigations and prosecutions by cooperating with human rights organizations and providing expert reports they provide in important cases. ATUD played an active role in the preparation and dissemination of the Manual on the Effective Investigation

⁴ For further details on the Tahir Elçi case, please visit: <https://www.failibelli.org/dava/tahir-elci-davasi/>

and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol).

[Association of Lawyers for Freedom \(ÖHD\)](#): ÖHD, whose members are lawyers, is based in Diyarbakır. It works to prevent impunity by supporting individuals and groups who have been subjected to rights violations, especially violations of the right to life, torture and ill-treatment, in their struggle for justice. ÖHD has branches in Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Van, Şanlıurfa, Hakkari, İzmir, Mersin, Ankara, Mardin, Bursa, Gaziantep and Batman.

[Amnesty International Turkey Branch](#): Formally established in 2002, Amnesty International Turkey closely monitors violations of rights in the context of impunity, advocates for the initiation of judicial proceedings, and monitors the relevant hearings through their Trial Monitoring Programme⁵ to ensure that cases related to violations of rights for which judicial proceedings have been initiated are concluded in accordance with the law.

[Baran Tursun Foundation](#): The Baran Tursun Foundation was established in Izmir in 2010 to protect life and reduce violations of the right to life. The foundation takes its name and field of work from Baran Tursun, who was killed by a police bullet in 2007 and whose case was closed with impunity. Since its establishment, the foundation has been advocating against impunity for deaths caused by the police, tracking cases of extrajudicial killings and preparing reports based on these cases, and supporting the relatives of those whose right to life has been violated.

[Research Association for Democracy, Peace and Alternative Politics \(DEMOS Research Association\)](#): DEMOS was founded in Ankara in 2015 to contribute to the peace studies in the country. It conducts research and analysis, organizes conferences and workshops and collaborates local, regional and international CSOs on conflict transformation, peace and reconciliation, social memory and transitional justice.

[FISA Child Rights Centre \(FISA CHM\)](#): Started its activities in 2019 in Ankara, FISA CHM carries out monitoring and legal advocacy activities to make violations of children's rights visible. The centre follows court cases and initiates strategic litigation with a focus on children's right to life.

[Foundation of Society and Legal Studies \(TOHAV\)](#): TOHAV was founded in 1994 by lawyers to investigate human rights violations and assist individuals in their efforts to claim their rights. Headquartered in Istanbul, TOHAV provides legal assistance, conducts research and investigations, and prepares reports, particularly on violations of the right to life, the prevention and punishment of torture, and prisons.

[Hevi LGBTI+ Association](#): Hevi was founded in 2015 in Istanbul by minority LGBTI+ activists. In addition to focusing on refugee, health and minority issues, it provides legal counselling and implements campaigns on LGBTI+ hate crime killings and uses mechanisms to intervene

⁵ For AI Turkey's Trial Monitoring Programme, please visit: <https://www.amnesty.org.tr/dava-gozlem>

in these cases. One of the campaigns of Hevi is Justice for Ahmet Yıldız, which has been implemented to demand that the murderer of Ahmet Yıldız is found and brought to justice.⁶

[Human Rights Association \(İHD\)](#): Founded in 1986, İHD stands as one of the oldest and largest human rights organizations in Turkey. Headquartered in Ankara, it has 27 branches and 7 representatives in different regions of the country. İHD conducts monitoring and advocacy activities including legal advocacy on right to life, access to justice, impunity, prisons and torture.

[Human Rights Foundation of Turkey \(HRFT\)](#): HRFT was established by the Human Rights Association for the treatment and rehabilitation of victims of torture in 1990. Focusing on treatment, rehabilitation, documentation and eradication of torture and other ill-treatment, HRFT also conducts lobbying and advocacy activities to contribute to the establishment of effective mechanisms for monitoring and prevention of torture. HRFT played a pioneering role in the preparation and dissemination of the Istanbul Protocol. Headquartered in Ankara, HRFT has representatives in Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Izmir and Van and a reference center in Cizre.

[Human Rights Joint Platform \(IHOP\)](#): IHOP is a network of human rights NGOs in Turkey, namely, Association for Monitoring Equal Rights, Citizens' Assembly, Rights Initiative, Human Rights Association and Human Rights Agenda Association. IHOP carries out various capacity building programmes for both its own members and other CSOs working in various rights fields, and follows current developments at the CoE, UN and OSCE levels to ensure that human rights standards are known and adopted by local organizations. As well as being a network in its own right, IHOP supports the work of networks in different thematic areas, one of which is the Alliance Against Impunity.

Alliance Against Impunity was established in 2013 by a group of organizations working to uncover grave human rights violations and crimes against humanity committed in the past. The network has carried out activities such as trial monitoring, campaigning for cases and legal amendments, and preparing third-party reports to the Constitutional Court. Human rights organizations, human rights centres of the bar associations and lawyers are the members of the network.⁷

[Life Memory Freedom Association](#): Established in 2008 in Eskişehir, the association conducts human rights monitoring and reporting, advocacy, trial monitoring and provides legal support. Furthermore, it frequently submits Rule 9.2 Communications to the committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the execution of ECHR judgements.

⁶ The trial for the murder of Ahmet Yıldız by his father, which began on September 8, 2009 and still continues, brought the concept of "honour killing of a gay" into official recognition for the first time in Turkey. For more information, please visit: <https://hevilgbti.org/en/justice-for-ahmet-yildiz/>

⁷ For more information about the Alliance Against Impunity, please visit: <https://ihop.org.tr/cezazisizlikla-mucadelede-gucbirligi-agi/>

Progressive Lawyers Association (ÇHD): ÇHD, whose members are lawyers, was founded in 1974 and its headquarters is in Ankara. It works to prevent impunity by supporting individuals and groups who have been subjected to rights violations, especially violations of the right to life, torture and ill-treatment, in their struggle for justice. ÇHD has branches in İstanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Alanya, Mersin, Adana, Antalya, Hatay and representatives in Bursa and Eskişehir.

Centre of Social Action, Rehabilitation and Readjustment for the Victims of Torture (SOHRAM-CASRA): Based in Diyarbakır since 2000, SOHRAM Casra is dedicated to combating violence in society. SOHRAM Casra supports the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of torture and provides legal support to them.

Tahir Elçi Human Rights Foundation: The Foundation was established in Diyarbakır in 2019 to carry on Tahir Elçi's legacy and continue his work to bring justice to victims of gross human rights violations and to fight against impunity. In addition to being one of the key followers of the Tahir Elçi case, it organizes various trainings for lawyers and CSO representatives in order to contribute to the elimination of the culture of impunity.

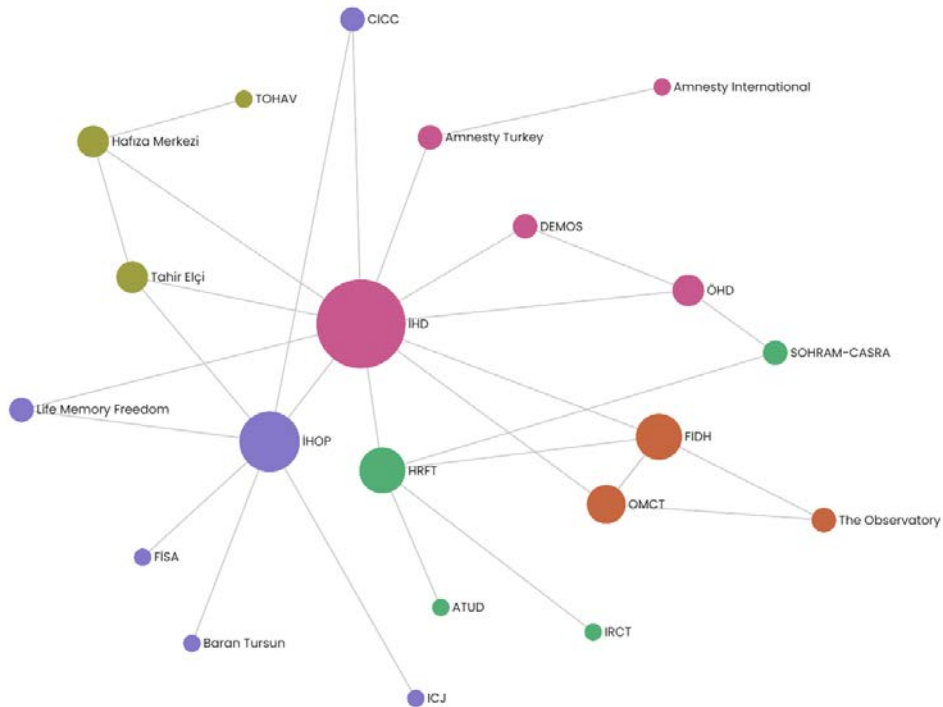
Truth Justice Memory Center (Hafıza Merkezi): Hafıza Merkezi was set up by a group of lawyers, journalists and human rights activists in November 2011 in İstanbul. It aims to uncover the truth concerning past violations of human rights, strengthen the collective memory about those violations, and support survivors in their pursuit of justice. It contributes to the fight against impunity through activities such as legal documentation, litigation monitoring, conducting research and analysis, and engaging in national and international legal interventions. The CSO compiles the outputs of their work to monitor criminal proceedings in their digital archive <https://www.failibelli.org/>.

We Will Stop Femicide Platform (KCDP): The KCDP was founded by women's and LGBTI+ rights organizations as a platform in 2010 after the murder of Munevver Karabulut and then became an association in 2012. Since its establishment, it has been trying to create public opinion on the issue of femicide and fighting for keeping women secure and alive. The Platform provides legal assistance to the relatives of the women and their relatives, takes part in the criminal cases and prepares monthly reports on femicide data. As a result of the involvement of KCDP's lawyers in the femicide cases, the judges are reluctant to apply penalty reductions to the murderers and the cases are concluded with deterrent sentences.

Besides CSOs, as the leverage of access to justice, both individual bar associations and Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB) have played an important role in combat against impunity. While the TBB - through its [Human Rights Centre](#) - intervenes in cases of key importance for the human rights situation of the country (such as the 10 October case and the Tahir Elçi case) and works to improve the capacity of lawyers in the field of human rights through various publications, events and trainings, the bar associations in the South-east Anatolia region have made enormous contributions in bringing the grave human rights violations of the 1990s to the courts.

In the case of recent human rights violations, specialized commissions and centres of local bar associations on human rights, women's rights, children's rights, environmental rights, LGBTI+ rights, refugee rights etc. cooperates with survivors, relatives of the victims and civil society organizations to ensure that the negligence of those responsible is duly punished.

Research Association for Democracy, Peace and Alternative Politics Demokrasi, Barış ve Alternatif Politikalar Araştırma Derneği - DEMOS	Ankara
FISA Child Rights Centre FİSA Çocuk Hakları Merkezi - FISA CHM	
Human Rights Association İnsan Hakları Derneği - İHD	
Human Rights Foundation of Turkey Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı - HRFT	
Human Rights Joint Platform İnsan Hakları Ortak Platformu - İHOP	
Progressive Lawyers Association Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği - ÇHD	
Association of Lawyers for Freedom Özgürlük İçin Hukukçular Derneği - ÖHD	Diyarbakır
Centre of Social Action, Rehabilitation and Readjustment for the Victims of Torture İşkence ve Şiddet Mağdurları için Sosyal Yardımlaşma Rehabilitasyon ve Adaptasyon Merkezi Derneği - SOHRAM-CASRA	
Tahir Elçi Human Rights Foundation Tahir Elçi İnsan Hakları Vakfı	
Life Memory Freedom Association Yaşam Bellek Özgürlük Derneği	Eskişehir
Association of Forensic Medicine Specialists Adli Tıp Uzmanları Derneği - ATUD	Istanbul
Amnesty International Turkey Branch Af Örgütü Türkiye Şubesi	
Foundation of Society and Legal Studies Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı - TOHAV	
Hevi LGBTI+ Association Hevi LGBTI+ Derneği	
Truth Justice Memory Center Hakikat, Adalet, Hafıza Merkezi Derneği - Hafıza Merkezi	
We Will Stop Femicide Platform Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu - KCDDP	
Baran Tursun Foundation Baran Tursun Vakfı	İzmir



Existing Interrelations of Mapped Key Civil Society Actors in the Fight against Impunity

International CSOs Working against Impunity in Turkey⁸

Amnesty International: Founded in London in 1961, Amnesty International undertakes research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of human rights. In addition to a wide range of human rights issues, it documents human rights violations by governments, armed political groups, corporations and other non-state actors in its research and it advocates and campaigns to hold these groups accountable.

Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC): CICC is a global network of civil society organizations from 150 countries⁹ to ensure justice for the victims of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. It advocates for ratification and implementation of Rome Statute universally, monitors the current work of ICC; provides information, communications and capacity building advice to local CSOs and work with media to make international justice visible; and mainstreams accountability into the agendas of international and regional organizations through coordinated civil society advocacy.

⁸ The few CSOs that no longer have specific programmes on Turkey, including Impunity Watch and Trial International, were also mentioned in the expectation that the resources they have produced so far might be useful for local organizations.

⁹ <https://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/coalition-member-websites>

[European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights \(ECCHR\)](#): Based in Berlin, ECCHR has been working to end impunity for those responsible for torture, war crimes, sexual and gender-based violence, corporate exploitation and fortified borders since its establishment in 2007. It holds state and non-state actors responsible for gross human rights abuses through innovative strategic litigation and third party intervention.

[Freedom from Torture \(FFT\)](#): Founded in 1985 in London, FFT advocates for torture survivors and to ensure states responsible for torture are held accountable. Based on the evidence coming from its medico-legal reports completed jointly by medical staff and lawyers, FFT documents torture and make submissions to international human rights mechanisms.

[Front Line Defenders \(FLD\)](#): FLD was founded in Dublin in 2001 with the specific aim of protecting human rights defenders at risk. Human rights defenders working against impunity and lack of accountability are among those supported by the FLD. It also seeks justice for the HRDs killed with impunity through advocacy and campaigning.

[Geneva Call](#): Founded in Geneva in 2000 with the aim of improving the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Geneva Call engages with armed groups and de facto authorities to raise their awareness about international humanitarian norms and principles and encourage them to comply with these standards, in particular those related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

[Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#): Headquartered in New York, HRW investigates and reports on abuses happening in more than hundred countries. Impunity has always been one of the key topics of HRW's Turkey work. It carries out advocacy at local, regional and international level based on its findings in the field, including submissions to international human rights mechanisms.

[Impunity Watch](#): Started out as a project in 2004 and became an independent organization in 2008, Impunity Watch works with victims of violence to dismantle entrenched structures of impunity, seek redress for grave human rights violations and promote justice and peace. It gathers and shares knowledge through research, training and policy work; builds partnerships and coalitions with victims' organizations; and mobilizes joint political action based on knowledge and demands from the field. The headquarters of Impunity Watch are in the Hague and it has offices in Guatemala and Burundi.

[International Commission of Jurists \(ICJ\)](#): Established in 1952 in Geneva, ICJ is composed of 60 lawyers, judges and legal academics and advocates working to hold people and States to account for gross human rights violations amounting to crimes under international law. In this context, ICJ monitors the human rights situation worldwide; contributes to the drafting and adoption of critical regional and international human rights instruments; carries out legal advocacy before national and regional human rights systems, UN treaty bodies and the

Human Rights Council; provides capacity strengthening and develops tools and guidelines for practitioners and CSOs.

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH): FIDH, which brings together 188 organizations from 116 countries, works to end impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, be they States or those in power, such as armed opposition groups and multinational corporations, and to hold them accountable through the international criminal justice system. It conducts advocacy and strategic litigation at the national, regional and international levels and monitors human rights violations. FIDH headquarters are located in Paris, with a regional office in Tunis, Tunisia.

International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT): IRCT is a global network of civil society organizations and independent experts working together to fight against impunity, promote access to justice and prevent the reoccurrence of torture. Specializing in treatment and documentation of torture, IRCT engages in advocacy interventions before UN, regional and national courts to pressure states to end torture and provide justice and reparation. It has 160 members in 76 countries, including three from Turkey.¹⁰ ICRT has offices in Copenhagen and Brussels.

Redress: Redress was founded in 1992 to empower survivors of torture through legal action. Having offices in London and the Hague, it pursues legal claims on behalf of survivors in the UK and around the world to obtain justice and reparation for the violation they have suffered and to challenge impunity for perpetrators. Redress has over 60 cases and projects in 38 countries, including Turkey.

TRIAL International: Founded in 2002, TRIAL International has offices in Switzerland, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Democratic Republic of Congo. In order to fight impunity for international crimes and support victims in their quest for justice, it provides legal assistance to victims, documents, investigates, litigates cases and develops local capacity.

World Organization against Torture (OMCT): Created in Geneva in 1985, OMCT is a network of over 200 civil society organizations fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In order to end the prevalence of torture, OMCT advocates with governments to change or implement their laws and policies, helps victims seek justice and strives to hold perpetrators accountable.

¹⁰ <https://irct.org/europe/>

European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights - ECCHR	Berlin
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims - IRCT	Brussels
Front Line Defenders - FLD	Dublin
Geneva Call	Geneva
International Commission of Jurists - ICJ	
TRIAL International	
World Organization against Torture - OMCT	
Amnesty International	London
Freedom from Torture - FFT	
Redress	
Human Rights Watch - HRW	New York
International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH	Paris
Coalition for the International Criminal Court - CICC	The Hague
Impunity Watch	

Accountability

Overview of Accountability in Turkey

Accountability, which simply means being responsible for actions, decisions and tasks, has three dimensions that helps us better understand its scope and functions in terms of human rights: responsibility, answerability and enforceability. Responsibility requires clearly defined duties and standards to assess the behaviour of those in positions of authority objectively and transparently. Answerability requires providing justifications for their actions and decisions to those affected, to oversight bodies and to the general public. Enforceability requires functional mechanisms to monitor to what extent public officials comply with established standards and to ensure that some form of sanction is in place when these standards are not met.¹¹

With its corrective and preventive functions, accountability makes it possible to sanction wrongdoing by those responsible and helps to determine systemic and structural failures to make policy making and service delivery more effective. Because of these functions, accountability is of key importance in human rights, particularly in preventing impunity. Remembering that the only solution to impunity is to ensure that all perpetrators, regardless of their identity and title, are brought to justice, a lack of accountability results with repetition of serious human rights violations as it encourages those responsible to commit further offenses.¹²

Looking at the above-mentioned components of accountability in the context of Turkey, we see that the preconditions for establishing accountability, especially with regard to human rights, are not met in the country. For example, freedom of expression, right to information,

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Center for Economic and Social Rights (2014), *Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2105 Development Agenda*, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/WhoWillBeAccountable_summary_en.pdf

¹² The Commissioner Thomas Hammerberg's Human Rights Comment on impunity, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/politically-motivated-murders-are-not-effectively-investigated-this-feeds-a-culture-of-impuni-1>

freedom of assembly and association are crucial for accountability, particularly for its answerability dimension, since these freedoms make it possible to challenge the actions of public officials and demand justifications. However, many reports of national and international CSOs reveal the restrictions on these freedoms. Local authorities arbitrarily ban protests and assemblies when citizens want to protest any significant human rights violations; public institutions refuse or incompletely respond to requests for information by interpreting the exceptions in the law broadly; broadcasters are fined for their critical programmes; and many journalists, who play a key role in demanding accountability, are threatened, attacked or prosecuted.¹³

Another barrier to accountability is the requirement to obtain a permission from the relevant ministry to investigate and prosecute public officials who commit crimes in the course of their duties¹⁴, which has been criticized on several occasions by the European Court of Human Rights. By preventing public officials who neglect their duties from being held accountable, this requirement narrows the scope of the proceedings. Examples of this can be seen in many cases. For example, in the Hrant Dink case, the permission for investigating public officials who were under serious and strong suspicion of involvement in the 2007 murder was granted in 2014 after long efforts.¹⁵ Similarly, permission to investigate state inspectors and other civil servants who had failed in their oversight duties before the Soma mine disaster that resulted in the deaths of 301 miners on 13 May 2013 was granted only 10 years later, and the trial of these officials began in May 2024.^{16,17} Human rights organizations concern that a similar situation will take place regarding 6 February 2023 earthquakes, where “not a single public official, elected mayor, or city council member has yet faced trial for their role in approving numerous construction projects that fell far short of safe building standards or for failing to take measures to protect people living in buildings known to have structural problems in a region with a high risk of seismic activity”.¹⁸

Establishing accountability can be effective not only in holding the state accountable for the actions of its public officials, but also in protecting citizens from human rights violations caused by the actions of non-state actors or third parties through creating regulatory and sanctioning mechanisms. It is possible to observe the impact of the absence of these

¹³ International Press Institute (2022), *Turkey: Throttling the Media in Crucial Election Year: Joint International Press Freedom Mission to Turkey*, <https://www.mfrr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Media-Freedom-Mission-Report-3-May-2023-Throttling-the-Media-in-Crucial-Election-Year-MFRR.pdf>

¹⁴ Law no 4483 on Adjudication of Public Servants and Other Public Employees.

¹⁵ <https://ihop.org.tr/hrant-dink/>

¹⁶ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/istanbul-barosundan-soma-tepkisi-sorusturma-izni-icin-10-yil-neden-beklendi-haber-1690158>

¹⁷ There is a similar situation in the Amasra mine disaster. Although the expert report revealed the negligence of public officials in the incident that took place in 2022, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Energy did not give permission for an investigation: <https://bianet.org/haber/bakanliklar-mufettisler-icin-sorusturma-izni-vermedi-275871>

¹⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/02/turkiye-ensure-accountability-deaths-earthquake>

mechanisms, and thus the lack of accountability, in the recurring cases of environmental crime and workplace homicide in Turkey.

The judiciary is key to ensuring accountability, as the use of judicial remedies has the potential to be preventive, corrective and transformative. However, in recent years, as a result of investigations by journalists in this field (e.g. Alican Uludağ, Tolga Şardan, Timur Soykan, Çiğdem Toker), allegations of corruption in the judiciary in Turkey have frequently come to the fore. For example, Timur Soykan from Birgun Newspaper announced a letter sent by the Istanbul Anatolian Chief Public Prosecutor to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (CJP) to report the allegations of bribery and misconduct in the cases heard at the Istanbul Anatolian Courthouse on 13 October 2023.¹⁹ Soon after, Tolga Şardan's article on a judicial report presented by the National Intelligence Organization to the Presidency revealed the financial relationships involved in many controversial decisions by judges and prosecutors particularly in Bakirkoy and Caglayan courthouses of Istanbul.²⁰

Besides, the lack of independence of the judiciary is evident in the rulings in many important political cases. GRECO's fourth interim compliance report of 4th evaluation round on Turkey also points out "the role and influence of the executive on a number of key matters regarding the running of the judiciary" and reiterates its recommendation to change the composition of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors to enhance independence.²¹ According to the CoE standards and GRECO's practice, at least half of the members of such self-governing bodies should be judges elected by their peers. In Turkey, however, the CJP has 13 members consisting of the Minister of Justice, the Deputy Minister of Justice, 4 members elected by the President and 5 members elected by the Parliament. Other key areas where GRECO highlighted the shortcomings and reiterated its recommendations were the establishment of precise and objective criteria for the evaluation of judges and prosecutors concerning their ethical conduct and integrity, and the establishment of code of ethics for judges and prosecutors including guidance on conflicts of interest and other integrity related issues such as gifts, bribery and third party contacts. The main reference document of Turkey on these issues is the Judicial Ethics Declaration²² prepared by the CJP, which lists a series of principal and ethical values such as respect for human rights, independence, impartiality, propriety, confidentiality, etc. However, GRECO considers that this declaration is of a general and abstract nature, without specific criteria, and insufficient to tackle situations of conflict of interest.

¹⁹ Access to Timur Soykan's article was blocked within 24 hours, but a summary of the article can be found at: <https://www.diken.com.tr/timur-soykan-bassavcinin-rusvet-cigligi/>.

²⁰ Tolga Şardan was arrested on 1 November 2023 for this article, and access to his article was blocked on 2 November 2023. A summary of the article can be found at: <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/mitin-yargi-raporunda-neler-var-haber-1644996>.

²¹ GRECO (2023), Fourth interim compliance report: Corruption prevention in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors, <https://rm.coe.int/grecorc4-2023-12-final-eng-4th-interim-compliance-report-turkiye-conf-/1680ada6ef>

²² <https://www.cjp.gov.tr/Eklentiler/050620231600declaration-of-ethics-for-turkish-judiciarypdf.pdf>

A weak judicial system, lack of sanctions and the decline in confidence in the judiciary reduce the accountability of public officials and make corruption widespread in all areas. Indeed, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index shows that Turkey has been experiencing a decline since 2018. In the 2023 Index, Turkey ranks 115th out of 180 countries with a score of 34²³, which comes as no surprise to the organization given the impunity, lack of accountability in terms of budget transparency and use of public resources, and repressive policies towards the media, civil society organizations and social movements.²⁴

World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index also provides some clues about the state of accountability in Turkey. In 2023, Turkey ranked 137th out of 142 countries with a score of 0,28 with respect to the constraints on government power dimension, which measures the extent to which the powers of the government and its officials and agents are limited and held accountable under the law, as well as the availability of non-governmental checks such as a free and independent press.²⁵ Moreover, Turkey's ranking in the absence of corruption dimension, which examines corruption of government officers in the executive branch, the judiciary, the military, police, and the legislature, was 77th with a score of 0,44.²⁶ It is worth noting that Turkey's overall score in the WPJ's Index has deteriorated since 2015.²⁷

In addition to courts, administrative mechanisms with quasi-judicial functions can be effective in ensuring the integrity and accountability of public officials and institutionalizing codes of conduct. Council of Ethics for Public Service, Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey and Ombudsman Institution are specific bodies established to ensure that public institutions fulfil their duties within the framework of ethics and human rights. However, the compliance rate of public administrations with the Ombudsman's recommendations could exceed 50% five years after the institution took office. According to the 2023 Activity Report, this rate was 77.51% in 2023.²⁸ Equality Institution, on the other hand, is often criticized by CSOs for not publishing all of its decisions, being hesitant to conduct ex officio inquiries, and for issuing controversial decisions that ignore violations.

As reforms in the field of rule of law, judiciary, democracy and governance are among strategic priorities for the European Union cooperation with Turkey, the EU has been one of the key international actors in efforts for accountability through the funds it has provided to Turkey. After the negotiations started, the EU allocated €1,667.40 million for the Transition Assistance and Institution Building component of IPA I (2007-2013). The total EU allocation for IPA II (2014-2020) for the Rule of Law & Fundamental Rights and Democracy &

²³ <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023/index/tur>

²⁴ <https://seffaflik.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023-Yolsuzluk-Algi-Endeksi-Basin-Duyurusu-1.pdf>

²⁵ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Turkiye/Constraints%20on%20Government%20Powers/>

²⁶ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Turkiye/Absence%20of%20Corruption/>

²⁷ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Turkiye/>

²⁸ <https://paylasim.ombudsman.gov.tr/dokuman/documentuploads/KDK-Ombudsman-2023-Yillik-Raporu/index.html>

Governance subsectors has been €1,581.40 million.²⁹ The Ministry of Justice, various courts (Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation, Council of State), the Justice Academy, the Ombudsman Institution, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of National Education, Bar associations and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, the National Police and Gendarmerie are the main institutions that have received these funds through direct and indirect management.³⁰ The Council of Europe and United Nations Development Programme are other important international actors, as they implement a large number of EU-funded projects in which public institutions in Turkey are the beneficiaries, in order to establish and improve mechanisms that contribute to accountability.³¹

Key Local Civil Society Actors Working to Promote Accountability in Turkey

This section highlights organizations working on rights that are closely linked to accountability, conducting regular human rights monitoring as a tool for demanding accountability and advocating for the establishment and proper functioning of human rights mechanisms to ensure accountability. It also includes environmental organizations that have recently made a concerted effort to hold the private sector accountable for its violations.

[Association for Monitoring Equal Rights \(AMER/ESHID\)](#): Established in 2010 in İstanbul, ESHID focuses on election monitoring, access to justice, the right to peaceful assembly, discrimination based on race, ethnicity, belief or religion, empowerment of human rights defenders, access to justice and strengthening equality. To contribute to accountability efforts in Turkey, it regularly monitors the state of freedoms of peaceful assembly and association in the country; conducts election monitoring to hold the Supreme Election Council other relevant institutions accountable to disadvantaged citizens; submits complaints to the TIHEK and the Ombudsman Institution in cases of discrimination; and monitor the works of these

²⁹ https://www.ab.gov.tr/ipa-i-ve-ipa-ii-donemi-programlama_45627.html

³⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/t%C3%BCrkiye/eu-support-rule-law-fundamental-rights_en?s=230

³¹ Some of the key projects with potential effects on accountability are:

- [Strengthening the Criminal Justice System and the Capacity of Justice Professionals on prevention of the European Convention on Human Rights Violations in Turkey](#)
- [Supporting the Effective Implementation of Turkish Constitutional Court Judgements in the Field of Fundamental Rights](#)
- [Joint Project on Improving the Effectiveness of the Administrative Judiciary and Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the Council of State](#)
- [Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level](#)
- [Empowerment of the Role of Ombudsman Institution in Protection and Promotion of Human Rights Project](#)
- [Joint Project on Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of Court of Cassation](#)
- [Local Administration Reform Project](#)
- [Strengthening the Effectiveness of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors for an Impartial and Independent Judiciary](#)
- [Improvement of Inspection Standards for Impartial and Independent Judiciary](#)
- [Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the Council of Ethics for Public Officials](#)
- [Strengthening Civic Engagement for Enhancing Democratic Local Governance in Turkey](#)

institutions to ensure that they operate in compliance with international human rights standards. ESHID opened a representative office in Izmir in 2022 and moved its headquarters to Ankara in 2023.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (CEID): Established in 2011 in Ankara, CEID is actively involved in effective, systematic and sustained monitoring of all kinds of activities carried out in relation to gender equality in Turkey. CEID sees monitoring as a tool for strengthening the accountability of duty bearers towards gender equality and carries out various monitoring and capacity building activities and grant programmes to support the monitoring and evaluation of public policies and practices by public institutions themselves or by civil society.

Association for Monitoring Justice System: Founded in 2019 in Izmir, the CSO conducts monitoring activities and makes policy recommendations to ensure that the justice system in Turkey operates in a fair, accountable, transparent and accessible manner.

Association for The Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources: The CSO was founded in 2012 in Balıkesir to protect the natural and cultural assets of Turkey, in particular the area surrounding Kazdağı (Ida Mountain). It investigates, documents and exposes environmental damages caused by practices of the public and private sectors and initiates litigation to stop the interest-based, profit-driven and harmful use of nature.

Center for Spatial Justice (MAD): MAD was founded in Istanbul in 2016. Since establishment, it conducts studies to develop participatory urban planning processes and practices that take into account society, the environment and human rights. Corporate accountability is one of the main focus areas of the association. MAD highlights the responsibility and accountability of companies and raises awareness of these issues through research and advocacy. It also seeks to strengthen the struggle of organizations working in this field by creating innovative tools.

Checks and Balances Network (CBN/DDA): Established in 2011 during the drafting of a new constitution, CBN is a network of 279 CSOs³² from all across Turkey, working at the national and local levels. The network aims to contribute to strengthening the system of checks and balances in the country, which is indispensable to Turkey's democratization, through monitoring, policymaking, public opinion building, and advocacy activities.

Civil Society Development Centre (STGM): STGM was founded in Ankara in 2004 to support CSOs towards being strengthened and capable of realizing more effective actions. Besides its capacity development work, STGM engages in policy advocacy to promote freedom of association and the right to participation, which are two essential rights to ensure accountability by raising the voice of civil society. To this end, STGM carries out lobbying and produces regular monitoring reports.

³² <https://www.dengedenetleme.org/uyelerimiz>

Freedom of Expression Association (IFÖD): IFÖD was established in Istanbul in 2017 to protect and foster the right to freedom of opinion and expression in Turkey. Its overall goal is to advance the right to free expression, promote transparency and strengthen democracy. For this purpose, IFÖD provides legal assistance and engages in strategic litigation; regularly submits third party applications to the ECtHR in relation to ongoing cases involving Turkey; makes Rule 9.2 submissions to the CoE's Committee of Ministers for the execution of key judgements on freedom of expression in Turkey; and systematically monitors and documents internet censorship in Turkey, which poses a major threat to accountability.

Gökova Ecologic Life Association: It was established in Muğla in 2016 to contribute to the creation, implementation and monitoring of management plans for the protection of biodiversity, natural resources and shared habitats around Gökova; to contribute to the realization of the principles of accountability in local governance, public participation in decision-making processes and decentralization. The CSO organizes demonstrations, participates in cases and takes legal and administrative action against harmful and environmentally damaging practices in both the public and private sectors.

*Green Artvin Association:*³³ The CSO was founded in 1995 against the threat of gold and copper mining in Cerattepe. Green Artvin Association organizes demonstrations, participates in cases and takes legal and administrative action against harmful and environmentally damaging practices in both the public and private sectors.

Greenpeace Mediterranean Turkey: As part of a global environmental movement, Greenpeace Turkey conducts campaigns and prepares reports based on scientific data on environmental crimes; supports local movements' struggle to protect their land; and lobbies at national and international levels to call for mechanisms to hold damaging and polluting corporations to account.

Ikizdere Environment Association (IÇDER): IÇDER was founded in Rize in 2022 to fight against hydroelectric plants and quarries that damage habitats and nature. The CSO organizes demonstrations, participates in cases and takes legal and administrative action against harmful and environmentally damaging practices in both the public and private sectors.

International Children's Center (ICC): ICC was set up in 1999 in Ankara to promote the physical, mental and social well-being of children of all ages. Under its Child Rights Program, ICC carries out monitoring and lobbying activities at national and international levels for the fullest implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments.

Kaos GL Association: Kaos GL, short for Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association, was founded in 2005 in Ankara. As the oldest and largest LGBTI+ rights organization in Turkey, it continues their work within 5 main programs: Human Rights,

³³ The CSO's Facebook account is more up-to-date than its website: <https://www.facebook.com/yesilartvindernegi>

Academic and Cultural Studies, Media and Communication, and Refugee Rights. Under its human rights programme, Kaos GL produces human rights monitoring reports and lobbies at national and international levels. Their annual reports on the status of LGBTI+ employees in private and public sectors are key to revealing systematic discrimination and lack of mechanisms to protect LGBTI+ employees.

Law, Nature and Society Foundation (HUDOTO): HUDOTO was founded in 2022 in Izmir. The CSO combines the concepts of human rights, gender equality, conservation and climate change to promote justice in environment cases. Moreover, HUDOTO submits reports to UN mechanisms and engages in strategic litigation to foster accountability for violations of environmental rights.

Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA): MLSA was established in Istanbul in 2017 with the aim of protecting freedom of expression, press freedom, the right to assemble and protest, and access to information in Turkey. MLSA provides legal support to individuals, including journalists, civil society professionals, and activists, who face legal challenges due to their use of freedom of expression and press; monitors trials especially those concerning free speech, to ensure fairness and transparency; and files applications to international human rights mechanisms.

Minerva Business and Human Rights Association: Minerva was founded in Istanbul in 2021 with the aim of improving human rights and environmental compliance and contributing to the creation of the necessary legal framework to ensure corporate accountability for human rights violations. To this end, Minerva organizes capacity development activities and human rights training, carries out research and monitoring on corporate accountability and tries to establish dialogue amongst public, private and civil society actors.

Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation: Mor Çatı was established in 1990 by feminists in order to combat violence against women. In addition to operating a women's shelter in Istanbul, the CSO monitors and reports on the implementation of national and international conventions, laws, and regulations as well as making policy recommendations to decision-makers in order to eradicate violence and achieve gender equality.

Muğla Environment Platform (MUÇEP): MUÇEP was established in 2017 by 28 organizations against the threat of opening natural protection areas for construction. MUÇEP now has 32 member organizations.³⁴ MUÇEP organizes demonstrations, participates in cases and takes legal and administrative action against harmful and environmentally damaging practices in both the public and private sectors.

Partnership Network for Preventing Violence Against Children (PNPVAC): PNPVAC is a coalition of civil society organizations founded in 2012 to strengthen the monitoring and advocacy role of civil society in preventing violence against children. The network prepares

³⁴ <https://mucep.org/bilesen-destek/>

monitoring reports; makes submissions to international human rights mechanisms and advocates at national and international level to hold policy makers accountable to children. The network has 96 members from different cities, including bar associations and universities.³⁵

Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association (SPoD): SPoD is an Istanbul-based LGBTI+ rights organization founded in 2011. It provides legal support to LGBTI+ individuals, pursues strategic litigation, undertakes research, monitoring and reporting on various aspects of human rights. As well, reflecting its efforts for accountability with respect to fulfilment of LGBTI+ rights, political participation and access of LGBTI+ individuals to local and national decision-making mechanisms is one of SPoD's main areas of advocacy.

Teacher Saadet's Fight Against Child Abuse Association (UCIM): UCIM was founded in Mersin to promote creation of child protection mechanisms in public institutions and the judiciary in cases of child abuse and neglect. Through its local prevention offices in 12 provinces,³⁶ UCIM provides legal support to children and their relatives; participates in cases to pressure the courts to handle cases in a manner that respects rights of the children; prepares monitoring reports and makes policy recommendations to public authorities; and organizes training for public institutions to contribute to help establish protection mechanisms in schools.

Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TUSEV): TUSEV was founded in 1993 in Istanbul to promote a legally and fiscally enabling environment for non profit organizations in Turkey. It regularly monitors freedom of association; provides policy recommendations to public authorities in this regard; and researches and develops methods for dialogue and cooperation between the public and private sectors and civil society.

Transparency International Turkey (TI-Turkey): TI-Turkey was founded in 2008 in Istanbul with the aim of setting the rule of transparency, integrity and accountability principles in all segments of the society for the democratic, social and economic development of the country. Acting as the national representative of the Transparency International, the CSO takes part in international works such as Corruption Perception Index, Bribery Payers Index and Global Corruption Report and disseminates these reports in the country. Through its monitoring activities, TI-Turkey develops policy recommendations calling for the establishment of necessary accountability and rule of law mechanisms and institutions and the implementation of reforms.

Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV): Established in Istanbul in 1994, TESEV works for democratization, raising awareness on principles of good governance,

³⁵ <http://www.cocugasiddetionluyoruz.net/uye-kuruluslar>

³⁶ UCIM has child abuse and neglect prevention office in Ankara, Antalya, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Giresun, İstanbul, İzmir, Konya, Niğde, Trabzon and Van.

developing inclusive policies for eradicating inequalities, and supporting sustainable development. While advocating for civil society participation in decision-making mechanisms, TESEV also conducts research and makes data-based policy recommendations to promote transparency and accountability in the management of public issues and resources. It contributes to reports of global and regional organizations on accountability by providing local information.

[Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats \(TEMA\)](#): TEMA Foundation was established in 1992 in Istanbul after the Rio Conference to draw attention of the public to increasing erosion and desertification in Turkey. In addition to its intensive work on reforestation, TEMA initiates or is involved in lawsuits against the misuse and destruction of natural resources to hold duty-bearers accountable.

[Women for Women's Human Rights \(WWHR\)](#): WWHR was founded in Istanbul in 1993. It operates on the national, regional and international levels to ensure the full implementation of women's human rights and support the participation of women in all spheres of life as free individuals and equal citizens. In order to ensure that mechanisms are in place to protect women's rights, WWHR prepares monitoring reports and carries advocacy activities targeting both the national and international community.

[Women's Coalition](#): Founded in 2002, Women's Coalition brings together more than one hundred women's rights organizations to increase women's participation in politics and to promote the establishment of equality mechanisms. To this end, the coalition carries out joint advocacy and monitoring activities at local, national and international levels.

[World Wildlife Fund for Nature-Turkey \(WWF-Turkey\)](#): Acting as the national representative of WWF since 2001, WWF-Turkey conducts campaigns and research calling for accountability on climate change and environmental issues, and litigates to end environmentally damaging policies and practices.

Partnership Network for Preventing Violence Against Children - PNPVAC Çocuğa Karşı Şiddeti Önlemek için Ortaklık Ağı	Ankara
Association for Monitoring Gender Equality Cinsiyet Eşitliği İzleme Derneği - CEID	
Association for Monitoring Equal Rights Eşit Haklar İçin İzleme Derneği - ESHID	
Checks and Balances Network Denge ve Denetleme Ağı - DDA	
Civil Society Development Center Sivil Toplum Geliştirme Derneği - STGM	
International Children's Center - ICC Uluslararası Çocuk Merkezi	
Kaos GL Association Kaos GL Derneği	

Women's Coalition Kadın Koalisyonu	
Green Artvin Association Yeşil Artvin Derneği	Artvin
Association for The Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources Kazdağı Doğal ve Kültürel Varlıkları Koruma Derneği	Balıkesir
Greenpeace Mediterranean Turkey Greenpeace Akdeniz Türkiye	İstanbul
World Wildlife Fund for Nature-Turkey (WWF-Turkey) WWF-Türkiye Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı	
Center for Spatial Justice Mekanda Adalet Derneği - MAD	
Freedom of Expression Association İfade Özgürlüğü Derneği - İFÖD	
Media and Law Studies Association - MLSA Medya ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Derneği	
Minerva Business and Human Rights Association Minerva BHR	
Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı	
Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association Sosyal Politika Cinsiyet Kimliği ve Cinsel Yönelim Çalışmaları Derneği - SPoD	
Third Sector Foundation of Turkey Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı - TUSEV	
Transparency International Turkey (TI-Turkey) Uluslararası Şeffaflık Derneği Türkiye	
Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı - TESEV	
Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats TEMA, Türkiye Erozyonla Mücadele, Ağaçlandırma ve Doğal Varlıkları Koruma Vakfı	
Women for Women's Human Rights Kadının İnsan Hakları Derneği - KİH	
Association for Monitoring Justice System Adalet Sistemini İzleme Derneği	İzmir
Law, Nature and Society Foundation Hukuk Doğa ve Toplum Vakfı - HUDOTO	
Teacher Saadet's Fight Against Child Abuse Association Saadet Öğretmen Çocuk İstismarı ile Mücadele Derneği - UCIM	Mersin
Gökova Ecologic Life Association Gökova Ekolojik Yaşam Derneği	Muğla
Muğla Environment Platform Muğla Çevre Platformu - MUÇEP	
Ikizdere Environment Association İkizdere Çevre Derneği - İÇDER	Rize

International CSOs Working on Accountability in Turkey

[ARTICLE 19](#): The CSO was founded in London in 1987 to defend and promote freedom of expression and right to information worldwide. Since then, the organization has expanded its work to include accountability related areas such as the right to participation, right to association, right to protest, business and human rights. ARTICLE 19 implements campaigns on these issues; [monitors](#) threats to freedom of expression around the world; provides legal analyses of national laws relating to free expression; submits expert opinions through amicus briefs to national and regional courts; and lobbies governments to adopt laws that comply with international human rights standards.

[Balkan Civil Society Development Network \(BCSDN\)](#): BCSDN is a network of 14 CSOs from ten countries in the Balkans and Turkey with a mission to empower civil society since 2003. It regularly monitors the enabling environment for civil society and advocates for the protection and expansion of civic space.

[CIVICUS](#): Headquartered in Johannesburg, CIVICUS is a global alliance of CSOs and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. To this end, it regularly monitors the freedom of association and advocates for open spaces. Since 2011, CIVICUS has been publishing [State of Civil Society reports](#) on key trends and challenges affecting civil society and citizen movements.

[European Association for Local Democracy \(ALDA\)](#): ALDA is a global alliance of CSOs and local governments dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level in the European Union, its Neighbourhood and beyond. It has 300 members from 45 countries. Headquartered in Strasbourg, it has offices in Belgium, Italy, North Macedonia, Moldova and Tunisia. The CSO conducts research, provides training and implements joint projects with its members and stakeholders in Turkey in order to enhance accountability, governance and civic engagement.

[European Center for Not-for-Profit Law \(ECNL\)](#): Initially established as a branch office of International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, ECNL is now a separate CSO based in the Hague, Netherlands. ECNL aims to create legal and policy environments that enable individuals, movements and organizations to exercise and protect their civic freedoms. Among its many focus areas, ECNL implements capacity development programs, monitoring and policy advocacy on the right to participation and freedom of assembly.

[European Implementation Network \(EIN\)](#): Initially conceived in 2014 as a project, EIN was registered as an independent NGO in January 2017 with its headquarters in Strasbourg. EIN supports, monitors and promotes the implementation of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights. In addition to its advocacy efforts to this end, EIN also builds the capacity of CSOs to engage effectively in the implementation process in the CoE and in their countries.

As of April 2024, EIN has 41 members and 9 partners from 25 countries, including 5 from Turkey.³⁷

[International Budget Partnership \(IBP\)](#): Founded in 1997 in Washington DC, IBP works to create a world in which government budgets are transparent, accountable and inclusive. To this end, it collaborates with civil society; produces analysis on country public finance systems, policies and processes; and engages international institutions and government authorities to promote improved budget systems, policies and practices. It conducts “[Open Budget Survey](#)” to measure governance and accountability in the countries in terms of participation, oversight and transparency.

[International Center for Not-for-Profit Law \(ICNL\)](#): Since its founding in 1992, ICNL works to promote and strengthen civic freedoms, public participation and philanthropy around the world. ICNL’s [Civic Freedom Monitor](#) provides up-to-date information on legal issues affecting civil society and civic freedoms, including the freedoms of association, expression, and peaceful assembly in more than 50 countries around the world.

[Netherlands Helsinki Committee \(NHC\)](#): NHC was founded in 1987 in the Hague. It works to promote human rights, the rule of law and justice in all countries of wider Europe, including Turkey. “Rights-Based Justice” and “Integrity and Accountability” are two main pillars of NHC’s work, where it implements capacity development programs, monitoring, policy advocacy, networking, awareness raising and engagement activities.

[Sherpa](#): Based in Paris, Sherpa initiates legal actions against multinationals for serious human rights and environmental abuses in their international supply chains or for their involvement in international corruption cases. Sherpa carries out advocacy, strategic litigation, legal research and capacity building activities in order to hold corporations accountable and build up a legal framework that better protects the environment, communities and human rights.

[Transparency International \(TI\)](#): Founded in 1993 in Berlin, TI works to stop corruption and promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. Through advocacy, campaigning and research at global level, Transparency International exposes the systems and networks that enable corruption and holds the powerful and corrupt to account. Its flagship initiative, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) scores 180 countries around the world each year and is a key global indicator of public sector corruption.

Transparency International (TI)	Berlin
CIVICUS	Johannesburg
ARTICLE 19	London

³⁷ <https://www.einnetwork.org/members-partners>

Sherpa	Paris
Balkan Civil Society Development Network - BCSDN	Skopje
European Association for Local Democracy - ALDA	Strasbourg
European Implementation Network - EIN	
European Center for Not-for-Profit Law - ECNL	The Hague
Netherlands Helsinki Committee - NHC	
International Budget Partnership - IBP	Washington
International Center for Not-for-Profit Law - ICNL	

Places of Deprivation

As deprivation of liberty means taking someone's freedom away by placing them under continuous supervision and control where they are not free to leave and lack capacity to decide and consent to these arrangements, places of deprivation of liberty might cover a wide range of closed institutions such as detention centres, prisons, hospitals, care homes, shelters, residences for elders, guesthouses, removal centres.³⁸ However, in this mapping study, these places are restricted to prisons and removal centres to increase its contribution to the İHD's component in the project.

This section consists of two subsections. First, main problems and efforts regarding the prisons are addressed and then, the situation of removal centres in the country are explained. Each section contains a list of key actors working in the field.

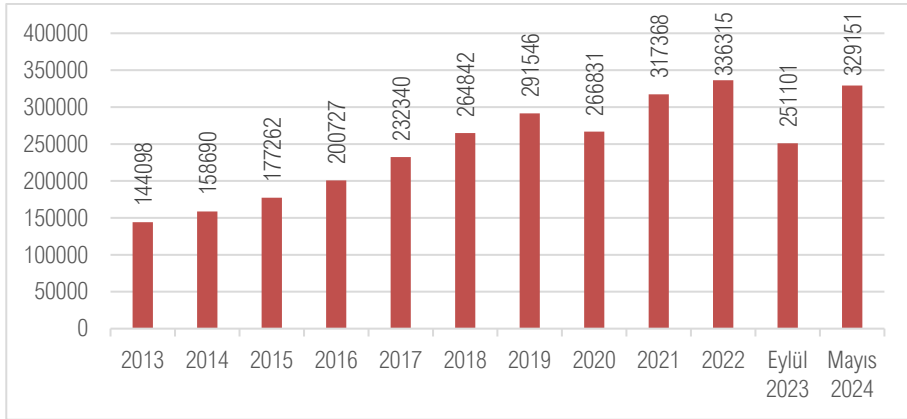
The state of Prisons in Turkey

Prisons have always been the places where human rights violations have been the most severe in Turkey. However, under the AKP government, especially since the state of emergency following the coup attempt in 2016, the increased rate of incarceration resulting from the adoption of pre-trial detention as a rule rather than an exception and increased cases of torture and ill-treatment have made prisons one of the main focuses of human rights organizations.

According to the data provided by the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, there are 403 prisons in Turkey with the capacity of 295.328, of which 272 are closed prisons, 99 are open prisons, 4 are juvenile reformatories, 11 are women's closed prisons,

³⁸ Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Draft General Comment No 1 on Places of Deprivation of Liberty, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/spt-opcat/call-inputs/draft-GC1-on-art1-for-public-consultation-en.pdf>

8 are women's open prisons and 9 are closed juvenile prisons.³⁹ Despite this level of capacity, as of July 2024, there are 342.526 prisoners, of whom 75.295 are in open prisons and 267.231 in closed prisons.⁴⁰ Of these, 295.064 are convicted, while 47.462 are pretrial detainees.⁴¹ These figures make Turkey the country with the highest incarceration rate and the largest prison population among the 48 member states of the Council of Europe, with 408 prison population per 100.000 inhabitants as of 31 January 2024.^{42,43} SPACE-I data show that this rate has increased by 369% between 2005 and 2022, confirming the deterioration of human rights and democracy in the country in recent years.⁴⁴



The government's response to this overcrowding has been to build new prisons. 69 new prisons were built between 2021 and 2023⁴⁵ and according to the Ministry of Justice's 2024 budget proposal, targets for 2024 and 2025 are 12 and 8 new prisons, respectively.⁴⁶ Since 2021, a total of 43 prisons have been launched under the names of S-Type (7), Y-Type (14) and High Security Prisons (22)⁴⁷, which have been criticised by human rights organizations for keeping prisoners mostly in solitary confinement with its unique architectural feature and allowing prisoners only 1,5 hours of ventilation. The growing number of these new types of prisons can be regarded as evidence of the transformation of confinement from an exceptional measure to a means of punishment.

We can understand that prisons are in the focus of the government as much as civil society from the frequently changing legislation and the projects carried out by the relevant institutions. According to a report by The Civil Society in the Penal System Association

³⁹ <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/cik-genel-bilgi>

⁴⁰ <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/3072024094232istatistik-2.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/3072024094245istatistik-1.pdf>

⁴² CoE Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE I-2023), https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/06/SPACE_I_2023_Report.pdf

⁴³ According to the data of the Ministry of Justice, this rate is 342 per 100.000 inhabitants as of 31 December 2023: <https://i24.im/JtW7>

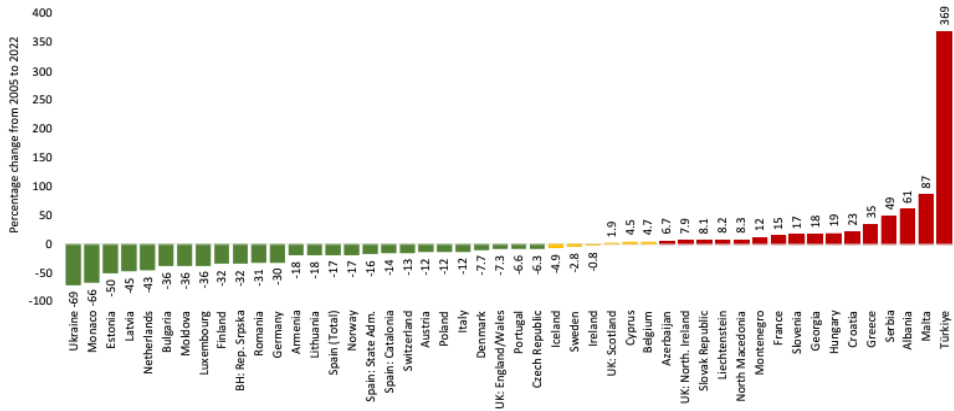
⁴⁴ https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2023/06/230626_Key-Findings-SPACE-I_Prisoners-and-Prisoners-in-Europe-2022.pdf

⁴⁵ <https://bianet.org/yazi/yeni-tip-hapishaneler-ve-toplumsal-muhalefete-gozdagi-267878>

⁴⁶ https://kisadalga.net/haber/detay/akp-20-yeni-cezaevi-acacak_84547

⁴⁷ <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/home/haritaliste>

(CISST), Law no 5275 on Punishment and Security Measures was amended by a total of thirteen laws, one decree law and two Constitutional Court decisions.⁴⁸ Three additional articles were added to the law and the articles were amended seventy-two times in six years. In addition, two new regulations and eight regulations amending regulations were adopted. CISST points to the difficulty of tracking these changes particularly in the areas of lawyer visits, visitors, conditional release, compassionate leave, prisoner obligations, probation, good behaviour assessment, which are of great importance to their lives, for prisoners with limited access to the internet.



As well as legislative interventions, there are many projects implemented by the government to improve the conditions of prisoners, particularly since the EU accession negotiations of Turkey. As the judiciary and fundamental rights has been one of the chapters receiving the most EU funding since the early 2000s, the Ministry of Justice and other relevant institutions have implemented projects addressing areas ranging from the construction of prisons to the improvement of prisoners' conditions and staff training. Some of the projects recently implemented by the Directorate General of Prisons and Detention Houses with EU support are⁴⁹:

- Development of an Institution Model for Children Staying with Their Mothers
- Strengthening Penal Institution Regime and Probation Practices in order to Prevent the Repetition of Offences
- Improving Discipline and Award Practices and Increasing the Efficiency of Monitoring Boards for Convicted Persons
- Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of Personnel Training Centres of the Penal Institutions
- Enhancing the effectiveness of Civil Monitoring Boards in Turkey in line with European Standards

⁴⁸ CISST (2023), İnfaz Mevzuatında Yapılan Değişikliklerin Karşılaştırılması, <https://cisst.org.tr/kitaplar/infaz-mevzuatinin-alti-yillik-karsilastirmali-analizi/>

⁴⁹ Activity reports of the Ministry of Justice, 2019-2023: <https://adalet.gov.tr/faaliyet-raporlari>

- Better Management of Terrorists and Dangerous Offenders in Prisons and Prevention of Radicalization

Despite years of legislative and operational interventions, prisons are reported to be the places where violations are most common due to the lack of respect for prisoners' rights. The systemic and widespread problems documented by monitoring bodies, civil society organizations, international organizations and the media are as follows:

- Cases of torture as well as inhuman and degrading treatment such as handcuffed medical examinations and strip search
- Inadequacy of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey in preventing torture and ill treatment in prisons due to its failure to fulfil its functions as the national prevention mechanism
- Arbitrary disciplinary sanctions such as solitary confinement and prohibition of family visits and lawyer visits
- Lack of access to healthcare services
- Non-release of sick inmates due to lack of independent and qualified medical assessment⁵⁰
- Lack of transparency and independence of Administration and Observation Boards in prisons leading to arbitrary and prolonged detention of political prisoners

Key local civil society actors working in the field of prisons

[Assistance and Solidarity Association of Families of Detainees and Convicts \(TAYAD\)](#): It was founded in 1986 by a group of torture victims, their relatives and friends and other critics of the military regime after the 12 September coup d'état to fight against illegal detentions and systematic human rights violations in prisons. Based in Istanbul, it carries out various activities to draw attention to the prisoners who are on hunger strike and death fast.

[Association for Access to Right to Fair Trial \(AYHED\)](#): Founded in 2019 by a group of lawyers in Adana, AYHED provides legal support, conducts trial monitoring and human rights monitoring and documentation. It provides legal assistance to prisoners through its members, produces materials to inform prisoners of their rights and files applications to the relevant authorities for sick prisoners.

[Association for Assistance to Families of Detainees and Convicts \(TUHAY-DER\)](#)⁵¹: TUHAY-DER carries out awareness-raising activities on the situation of prisoners and cooperates with organizations such as İHD and ÖHD to prepare reports on rights violations in prisons.

⁵⁰ According to HRA's report, there were at least 1,517 sick inmates in Turkish prisons, 651 of whom are seriously ill. For more information, please visit: <https://www.ihd.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2023-Y%C4%B1%C4%B1-Hapishane-Raporu.pdf>

⁵¹ No information could be found on the organizational background, such as where and when it was founded.

It has branches or representative offices in Diyarbakır, Mersin, İzmir, Van, Siirt and İstanbul, according to the internet search carried out for this study.⁵²

Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD): ÖHD, whose members are lawyers, is based in Diyarbakır. Based on the interviews its members conduct with prisoners, ÖHD prepares monitoring reports on human rights violations in prisons. ÖHD has branches in İstanbul, Diyarbakır, Van, Şanlıurfa, Hakkari, İzmir, Mersin, Ankara, Mardin, Bursa, Gaziantep and Batman.

Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CISST): Founded in 2006 in İstanbul. CISST works to protect the rights and liberties of prisoners and to ensure that the rights, conditions, and practices in prisons in Turkey comply with human rights standards. It works to develop a rights-based understanding by opposing stigmatizing or stereotyping perceptions and discourses against prisoners. It implements advocacy work on various groups of prisoners with diverse needs, namely the LGBTI+, disabled, elderly, foreign, women, child, or sick people in prisons, those sentenced to aggravated imprisonment for life, and worker and student prisoners; operates a hotline for the prisoners and their relatives; prepares monitoring reports and handbooks on the rights of the prisoners; and public regular statistics on prisons and prisoners.

Foundation of Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV): TOHAV was founded in 1994 in İstanbul by lawyers to investigate human rights violations and assist individuals in their efforts to claim their rights. It provides legal assistance in cases of torture and produces prison monitoring reports.

Human Rights Association (İHD): Founded in 1986, İHD stands as one of the oldest and largest human rights organizations in Turkey. It has 27 branches and 7 representatives in different regions of the country. Through the prison commissions in its branches, İHD identifies violations of rights in prisons, reports these findings to the relevant public authorities and informs the public by preparing various monitoring reports. In particular, İHD's monitoring and advocacy activities have been instrumental in putting sick prisoners on the public agenda.

Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT): HRFT was established by the Human Rights Association for the treatment and rehabilitation of victims of torture in 1990. The foundation draws attention to cases of torture and ill-treatment against prisoners in its daily human rights reports and participates in campaigns and issues joint statements and reports about the rights violations in prisons. Headquartered in Ankara, HRFT has representative offices in Diyarbakır, İstanbul, İzmir and Van and a reference center in Cizre.

MED Prisoners' Families Law and Solidarity Associations Federation (MED TUHAD-FED): MED TUHAD-FED was founded in 2020 as a continuation of TUHAD-FED, which was closed

⁵² X accounts of some of the branches of TUHAY-DER are: Cukurova TUHAY-DER, Ege TUHAY-DER, Siirt TUHAY-DER, Van TUHAY-DER

down in 2016 by a state of emergency decree law. It carries out awareness-raising activities and prepares reports on prison conditions in order to raise national and international public opinion in favour of the elimination of violations in prisons and the improvement of prisoners' living conditions.

[Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association:](#) Pink Life was founded in Ankara in 2006 as the first transgender rights association in Turkey. As well as its projects on discrimination against transgender persons, hate crimes, violence, and social exclusion and counselling for LGBTI+, Pink Life operates Dilek Ince Clothing Bank to send clothes to LGBTI+ prisoners in need. Through this clothing bank, the CSO is in regular contact with prisoners and it produces reports on the violations of the rights of LGBTI+ prisoners.

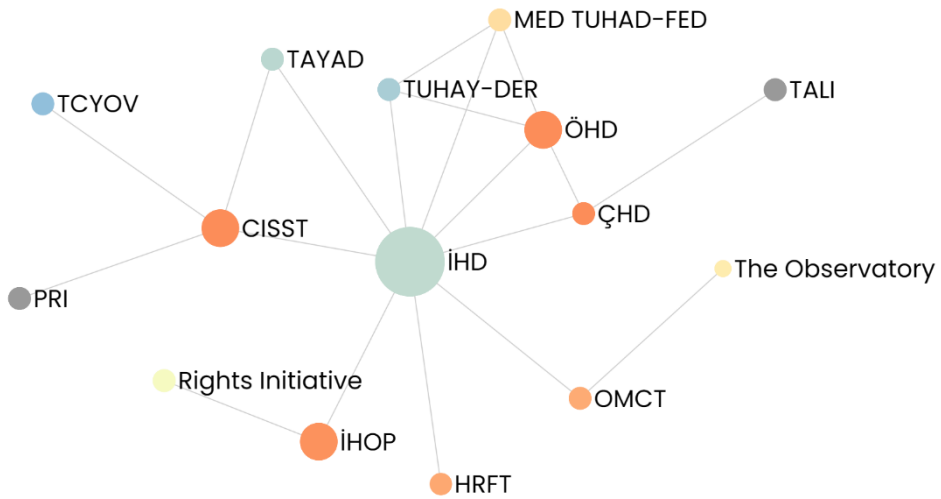
[Progressive Lawyers Association \(ÇHD\):](#) ÇHD, whose members are lawyers, was founded in 1974 and its headquarters is in Ankara. Based on the interviews its members conduct with prisoners, ÇHD prepares monitoring reports on human rights violations in prisons. ÇHD has branches in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Alanya, Mersin, Adana, Antalya, Hatay and representatives in Bursa and Eskişehir.

[Rights Initiative Association:](#) Rights Initiative was founded in 2017 in Ankara. As well as working on a wide range of human rights, the association also prepares reports; issues individual or joint press statements; and participates in campaigns about the rights violations in prisons.

[Youth Re-Autonomy Foundation of Turkey \(TCYOV\):](#) TCYOV was established in 1992. With the aim of achieving a society where no child is deprived of their freedom and where the best interests of children at risk and of children in the judicial system are protected, TCYOV continues its activities at its head office in İstanbul and İzmir branch. TCYOV works to develop models that prevent children at risk from entering the judicial system and to develop protective models for children in the judicial system; to contribute to the strengthening of institutions that provide services to children in the judicial system and children at risk; to influence the rights-based transformation of the perspective on children in the justice system and to contribute to the development of the juvenile justice system in Turkey to reach international child rights standards through advocacy.

Association for Access to Right to Fair Trial Adil Yargılanma Hakkına Erişim Derneği - AYHED	Adana
Association of Lawyers for Freedom Özgürlük İçin Hukukçular Derneği - ÖHD	Ankara
Human Rights Association İnsan Hakları Derneği - İHD	
Progressive Lawyers Association Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği - ÇHD	
Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association Pembe Hayat LGBTI+ Dayanışma Derneği	

Rights Initiative Association Hak İnisiyatifi Derneđi	Ankara
Association for Assistance to Families of Detainees and Convicts Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileler ile Yardımlaşma Derneđi - TUHAY-DER	Diyarbakır
Human Rights Foundation of Turkey Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı - HRFT	
MED Prisoners' Families Law and Solidarity Associations Federation MED Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri Hukuk Dayanışma Dernekleri Federasyonu - MED TUHAD-FED	
Assistance and Solidarity Association of Families of Detainees and Convicts Tutuklu ve Hükümlü Aileleri Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneđi - TAYAD	İstanbul
Civil Society in the Penal System Association Ceza İnfaz Sisteminde Sivil Tolum - CISST	
Foundation of Society and Legal Studies Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı - TOHAV	
Youth Re-Autonomy Foundation of Turkey Türkiye Çocuklara Yeniden Özgürlük Vakfı - TCYOV	



Existing Interrelations of Mapped Key Civil Society Actors in the Field of Places of Deprivation

International CSOs Working on Prisons in Turkey

[International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger \(The Observatory - OIAD\)](#): The Observatory is an initiative of the French National Bars Council (France), the Paris Bar Association (France), the Consejo General de la Abogacía Española (Spain) and the Consiglio Nazionale Forense (Italy), established in 2010 in Paris in the framework of an EU project “Lawyers serving lawyers” and then re-established in May 2015, to defend legal representation and denounce situations that violated the right to counsel. Acting as an umbrella for 47 bar

associations and 16 civil society organizations all over the world, OIAD provides emergency assistance, including legal aid, to lawyers facing criminal proceedings; identifies lawyers at risk through the alerts issued by its members, and disseminates information about imprisoned lawyers and denounces these cases to public authorities and international human rights mechanisms.

Penal Reform International (PRI): PRI is a non-governmental organization based in the Netherlands working globally to promote criminal justice systems that uphold human rights for all and do no harm. PRI identifies developments and challenges in criminal justice and prison policy and practice through its Global Prison Trends annual series. Over the next four years, PRI will be working with CISST on a joint project to improve human rights in the Turkey's Penitentiary System.⁵³

Prison Insider: Established in Lyon in 2015 as an information platform on prisons in the world, Prison Insider works to raise awareness about the conditions of detention and to promote the rights and dignity of people deprived of liberty, everywhere in the world. Working with local CSOs in different countries⁵⁴, it makes available and accessible all data related to imprisonment to all relevant stakeholders, including individuals, journalists, lawyers, civil servants, elected representatives, teachers, researchers, detainees' relatives, NGOs.

The Arrested Lawyers Initiative (TALI): Founded in Brussels in 2016, TALI is a Brussels-based rights group consisting of lawyers making advocacy to ensure lawyers and human rights defenders perform their duty without fear of intimidation, reprisal and judicial harassment. TALI produces monitoring reports and makes submissions to the international/regional human rights mechanisms about the situation of the lawyers in prison.

World Organization against Torture (OMCT): Created in Geneva in 1985, OMCT is a network of over 200 civil society organizations fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Recognizing that torture is most frequent in places of detention, such as police stations, jails, and prisons, OMCT carries out advocacy and monitoring activities to end torture and to improve living conditions in detention.

The Arrested Lawyers Initiative - TALI	Brussels
World Organization against Torture - OMCT	Geneva
Penal Reform International - PRI	London
Prison Insider	Lyon
International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger - The Observatory / OIAD	Paris

⁵³ <https://www.penalreform.org/news/new-horizons-in-turkiye-with-ambitious-project-to/>

⁵⁴ For example, Türkiye country profile was produced in partnership with CISST and with contribution of HRA, ÖHD and TOHAV: <https://www.prison-insider.com/en/countryprofile/turkiye-2024#introduction-5d00f804351ce>

Removal Centres in Turkey

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide, most of whom have fled from the civil war in Syria since 2011. According to the data published by the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), as of July 2024, there are 3,1 million Syrians under temporary protection⁵⁵. There were also 19.000 applications for international protection made by asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran by the end of 2023.⁵⁶

Individuals who do not have any legal ground to stay in Turkey, will be deported and for whom an administrative detention order is issued are detained in removal centres. According to the PMM, there are 28 removal centres in 24 cities of Turkey with a detention capacity of around 16.000.⁵⁷ These removal centres have been constructed and maintained with high amounts of funds from the European Union. According to a compilation of Human Rights Watch, these funds and their uses are as follows:

- Under IPA I and IPA II, more than €89 million for the construction, renovation, or other support of removal centres in Turkey
- In 2017, €6.7 million for renovation and refurbishment of 17 removal centres
- In 2015, about €29 million for the construction of six new removal centres with a capacity for 2,400 people
- €60 million for the construction and refurbishment of the Çankırı removal centre and for staffing 22 other removal centres as part of March 2016 EU-Turkey deal
- €22.3 million for improving services and physical conditions in removal centres, including the safe and organized transfer of irregular migrants and refugees within Turkey
- €3.5 million for capacity-building assistance aimed at strengthening access to rights and services
- €30 million financing decision announced by the European Commission in December 2021 to support the Turkish Interior Ministry's PMM's capacity building and improving the standards and conditions for migrants in Turkey's hosting centres.⁵⁸

The 2023 Activity Report of the Ministry of Interior shows that these funds will continue during the IPA III implementation period.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, this level of investment for years has not been sufficient to ensure that removal centres are places where human rights of refugees are respected. The observations of NGOs and bar associations who have visited refugees in these centres suggest that their conditions can be worse than in other detention

⁵⁵ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27>

⁵⁶ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/international-protection17>

⁵⁷ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/removal-centres2>

⁵⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/24/turkey-hundreds-refugees-deported-syria>

⁵⁹ https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kurumlar/icisleri.gov.tr/lcSite/strateji/raporlar/faaliyet_raporlari/2023_YILI_IDARE_FAALIYET_RAPORU.pdf

centres such as prisons and police stations.⁶⁰ Prevention of access to a lawyer, unsanitary and overcrowded conditions of detention, unmet needs for food, water and ventilation, cases of torture and ill-treatment, lack of civilian and independent oversight, coercion to sign voluntary return forms, denial of requests for interpretation are the most common complaints raised by representatives of CSOs, bar associations and the media.

Since the identification of "voluntary, safe and dignified return" as one of the priority policy areas of the PMM in 2021, cases of deportation of Syrians by forcing them to sign "voluntary" return forms have increased. According to the PMM, 554,107 Syrians voluntarily returned to their country by May 2023.⁶¹ However, reports of many watchdog organizations reveals that Syrians are being forced to sign voluntary return forms through intimidation, torture and ill-treatment.⁶²⁶³ Given the principle of non-refoulement under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the ECHR, the ICCPR and the Convention Against Torture, these returns can hardly be described as voluntary, but rather as a violation of Turkey's human rights obligations under international conventions.

Key local civil society actors working on refugee rights

Since there is no civilian oversight mechanism for removal centres and it is not possible for CSOs to enter these centres, the number of organizations working directly in removal centres in Turkey is unfortunately very small. These organizations either carry out documentation and monitoring activities through lawyer interviews as part of their legal support activities or produce information materials for refugees on their rights in removal centres. In order to broaden the range of organizations that will take part in the working groups to be set up under the project, this section lists not only CSOs carrying out advocacy or taking action on allegations of rights violations in removal centres, but also some of the CSOs providing information and legal support to refugees regarding administrative detention.

[Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association \(ARSA\)](#): ARSA, which began operating as the Coordinator of Afghan Refugees through volunteer Afghan refugees in 2009 and formally established as an association in 2014 in Kayseri, functions as a management centre for the network of Afghan community leaders in different cities of Turkey. ARSA provides legal counselling to Afghan refugees and participates in networks on refugee rights to implement joint advocacy activities.

⁶⁰ İzmir Barosu (2019), Avukatların Gözünden Geri Gönderme Merkezi ve İdari Gözetim Alanları Çalıştayı Sonuç Raporu, https://www.izmirbarosu.org.tr/Upload/files/geri_gonderme_rapor.pdf

⁶¹ <https://x.com/Gocidaresi/status/1661393385834381312>

⁶² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/24/turkey-hundreds-refugees-deported-syria>

⁶³ Submission of the International Refugee Rights Association and Global Detention Project to the Committee Against Torture, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/turkiye-submission-to-the-committee-against-torture>

[Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed \(MAZLUMDER\)](#): Founded in 2017 in Ankara, MAZLUMDER has branches in Adana, Adiyaman, Ankara, Istanbul, Kayseri, Konya and Malatya. As well as working on a wide range of human rights, the association produces reports and issues press statements about the violations faced by refugees in removal centres.

[Association for Migration Research \(GAR\)](#): GAR was founded on September 21, 2017 in Istanbul. As well as its focus on conducting research on migration, GAR also participates in networks on refugee rights to implement joint advocacy activities.

[Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization \(SGDD-ASAM\)](#): SGDD-ASAM was originally founded under the name of “Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants” in 1995 in Ankara to help refugees and asylum seekers living in Turkey. It amended its name in 20223 to expand its working areas beyond migration, including sustainable development and humanitarian aid and disaster response. Through its 43 offices in 28 provinces of Turkey, SGDD-ASAM still provides legal counselling to the refugees and produces informative materials about refugee rights.

[Association for Solidarity with Refugees \(Mülteci-Der\)](#): Established in Izmir in 2008, Mülteci-Der provides individual legal/protection counselling to refugees and migrants for effective and easy access to rights and services, especially to those in immigration detention. Mülteci-Der conducts capacity building trainings to professional groups who are in close and constant contact with refugees, including lawyers and bar associations.

[Coordination for Refugee Rights \(MHK\)](#): The CRR was established in 2010 with the facilitation of Human Rights Joint Platform as a new framework for cooperation and joint advocacy efforts to promote and uphold the legal protection of individuals escaping war and persecution and seeking asylum in Turkey. The five CSOs that make up the CRR⁶⁴ represent a shared commitment to working together to promote public awareness and ownership of asylum issues in Turkey and to intervene in the government’s policy agenda on asylum and migration management from a human rights perspective.

[Hevi LGBTI+ Association](#): Hevi was founded in 2015 in Istanbul by minority LGBTI+ activists. Based in Istanbul, the CSO provides legal support to LGBTI+ refugees and prepares monitoring reports on the rights of LGBTI+ refugees.

[Human Resource Development Foundation \(IKGV\)](#): Founded in 1988 in Istanbul, IKGV develops and implements programs that support asylum seekers, refugees and human trafficking survivors. In addition to providing legal support to the refugees, IKGV is involved in advocacy work at both national and international levels.

⁶⁴ Association for Solidarity with Refugees, Citizens’ Assembly, Human Rights Association, Human Rights Agenda Association, Kaos GL Association.

Human Rights Association (İHD): Founded in 1986, İHD stands as one of the oldest and largest human rights organizations in Turkey. It has 27 branches and 7 representatives in different regions of the country. In addition to its advocacy work on a wide range of human rights issues, İHD monitors violations of refugee rights and participates in networks to carry out joint advocacy activities.

International Migrant Women's Solidarity Association (UGKDD): Founded by feminist women in Istanbul in 2018, UGKDD carries out supportive work to strengthen the capacities of immigrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women. In addition to maintaining economic and social empowerment programmes, the CSO provides legal support to these groups.

International Refugee Rights Association (IRRA): IRRA was established in 2013 by legal practitioners with the aim of defending their legal rights and promoting legal regulations and their implementation in line with international standards. IRRA provides legal assistance to refugees; documents and reports on the condition and challenges faced by refugees; and carries out advocacy to prevent violations of the right to life and promote the prohibition of torture within the scope of international human rights law, especially in immigration detention and deportation cases.

Izmir Platform for Solidarity with Refugees:⁶⁵ It was established in 2022 by 24 NGOs working in Izmir to draw attention to discrimination and racist attacks against refugees.⁶⁶ The Platform issues joint statements on rights violations against refugees, observes trials and organizes training on refugee rights.

Kaos GL Association: Kaos GL, short for Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association, was founded in 2005 in Ankara. As the oldest and largest LGBTI+ rights organization in Turkey, it continues their work within 5 main programs: Human Rights, Academic and Cultural Studies, Media and Communication, and Refugee Rights. Their Refugee Rights Program aims to make it easier for LGBTI+ refugees to access basic rights, government bodies and social networks in the cities where they reside. In this respect, Kaos GL provides legal and social counselling through lawyers and social workers and organizes trainings and social activities on various subjects in the field. The CSO also participates in networks on refugee rights to implement joint advocacy activities.

Migrant Solidarity Association (GDD): GDD is a rights-based non-governmental organization founded in 2016 by human rights defenders from various professional groups (Doctor, Lawyer, Social Worker, Psychologist, etc.) who have been operating in the field of migration and asylum for many years. It supports refugees and immigrants' access to rights regardless of religion, political, ethnic, gender discrimination or gender orientation. GDD established the "Refugee Consultation and Support Centre" in partnership with Şişli Municipality and

⁶⁵ The platform does not have a website but has active [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

⁶⁶ For its declaration of foundation: <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/izmir-multeci-dayanisma-platformu-kurulusunu-deklare-etti-haber-1557537>

Expertise France and has been working to facilitate refugees' access to health, education, access to justice and other social rights, especially public services.

[Refugee Council of Turkey \(TMK\)](#): TMK was founded in 2016 to advocate jointly for better policies and programs for refugees and the communities that host them. Facilitated by IGAM, TMK carries out research about refugees; builds dialogue and shares briefings with key government institutions, multilateral organizations and other stakeholders that work with refugees and host communities; and collaborates with international stakeholders to influence international policymaking processes. TMK brings together more than 20 CSOs from eight cities.

[Refugee Rights Turkey \(RRT\)](#): Established in Istanbul in 2014, RRT provides specialized legal information and assistance services to asylum seekers and persons in immigration detention in Turkey; delivers trainings, reference resources and other expertise support services to lawyers on refugee law, Turkish migration and asylum procedures; and undertakes advocacy for improvements in Turkey's migration and asylum legislation and policies, in line with international standards. RRT provides helpdesk services to refugees in need of general legal assistance and to refugees in administrative detention. The CSO has field offices in Edirne, Izmir and Van.

[Refugee Support Association \(MUDEM\)](#): MUDEM was founded in 2014 in Ankara in order to provide access to rights and services to asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, survivors of human trafficking, stateless persons. It has offices in Yalova, Eskişehir, Kırıkkale, Malatya and Istanbul. MUDEM provides legal counselling to refugees and provides trainings on migration legislation to bar associations and lawyers.

[Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association \(RASAS\)](#): RASAS was established in 2014 in Istanbul in order to seek solutions to the problems of people who have left their country and need international protection. Through its Legal Consultancy Unit, RASAS provides legal consultancy, guidance, and case follow-up services to refugees and asylum seekers, including those in administrative detention.

[Research Centre on Asylum and Migration \(IGAMDER\)](#): IGAM was founded in 2013 by a group of academics, researchers, journalists and humanitarian workers. The main activities of IGAM are to conduct academic studies, support academic research, create database, raise public awareness, organize training and establish networks on asylum and migration. IGAM's Refugee Information and Support Centre provides legal and psychosocial support as well as informing and guiding refugees about access to services.

[Rights Initiative Association](#): Rights Initiative was founded in 2017 in Ankara. As well as working on a wide range of human rights, the association also produces reports; issues individual or joint press statements; and participates in campaigns about the violations faced by refugees in removal centres.

[Support to Life Association](#): Support to Life Association was established in 2005 with the aim of helping disaster affected communities meet their basic needs and rights. The CSO

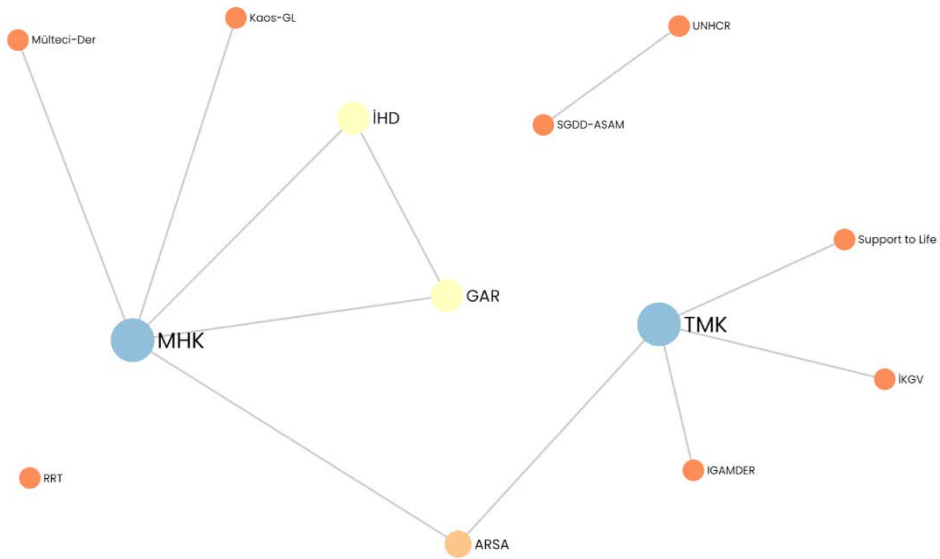
provides legal support, and informs and guides refugees about their rights via its online platform [Hayata Destek Online](#). In addition to the headquarters in Istanbul, it has representative offices in İzmir, Mersin, Adana, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya⁶⁷, Adıyaman, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Batman.

Besides CSOs, both individual bar associations and Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB) have played an important role in exposing human rights abuses in removal centres, where independent CSOs cannot enter. TBB's [Migration and Asylum Commission](#) implements a joint project with UNHCR to provide legal aid to refugees and works to improve the capacity of lawyers in the field of refugee rights law through various publications, events and trainings. Through their refugee rights/migration centres and commissions, bar associations in the cities where the removal centres are located (particularly Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Aydın, Hatay, Istanbul, Izmir, Van, Şanlıurfa) regularly visit these centres and produces reports on the violations against the refugees under administrative detention.

Association for Migration Research Göç Araştırmaları Derneği - GAR	Ankara
Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization - ASAM Sosyal Gelişim ve Dayanışma Derneği - SGDD	
Coordination for Refugee Rights - CRR Mülteci Hakları Koalistonu - MHK	
Human Rights Association İnsan Hakları Derneği - İHD	
Kaos GL Association Kaos GL Derneği	
Refugee Council of Turkey Türkiye Mülteci Konseyi - TMK	
Refugee Support Association Mülteci destek Derneği - MUDEM	
Research Centre on Asylum and Migration İltica ve Göç Araştırmaları Derneği - IGAMDER	
Rights Initiative Association Hak İnisiyatifi Derneği	
Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar İçin Dayanışma Derneği - MAZLUMDER	İstanbul
Hevi LGBTI+ Association Hevi LGBTI+ Derneği	
Human Resource Development Foundation İnsan Kaynağını Geliştirme Vakfı - IKGV	
International Migrant Women's Solidarity Association Uluslararası Göçmen Kadınlar Dayanışma Derneği - UGKDD	
International Refugee Rights Association Uluslararası Mülteci Hakları Derneği - UMHD	

⁶⁷ Malatya office does not provide services to the refugees.

Migrant Solidarity Association Göçmen Dayanışma Derneği - GDD	
Refugee Rights Turkey - RRT Mülteci Hakları Merkezi	
Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association Mülteciler ve Sığınmacılar Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği - Mülteciler Derneği	
Support to Life Association Hayata Destek	
Association for Solidarity with Refugees Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği - Mülteci-Der	İzmir
Izmir Platform for Solidarity with Refugees İzmir Mülteci Dayanışma Platformu	İzmir
Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association - ARSA Afgan Mülteciler Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği	Kayseri



Existing Interrelations of Mapped Key Civil Society Actors in the Field of Refugee Rights

International CSOs Working on Refugee Rights and Removal Centres in Turkey

[Amnesty International \(AI\)](#): Through research and campaigning, AI helps fight abuses of human rights worldwide. With respect to rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, AI campaigns and lobbies to make sure governments honour their shared responsibility to protect; and prepares monitoring and research reports about the situation of the refugees worldwide including Turkey. Apart from AI's global efforts, [Amnesty International Turkey Branch](#) organizes training programmes for lawyers on refugee rights in cooperation with bar associations, seminars for university students and workshops on needed topics.

[European Council of Refugees and Exiles \(ECRE\)](#): ECRE is an alliance of 125 NGOs across 40 European countries, including five from Turkey.⁶⁸ ECRE’s work covers three main activities; namely, legal support and strategic litigation, advocacy to influence government policy and practice affecting refugee rights and communication to deliver the right message about refugees. ECRE manages a database named [Asylum Information Database \(AIDA\)](#) that contains information on asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and content of international protection across 23 countries, including [Turkey](#). There are country reports, comparative reports, statistical updates, fact-finding mission reports and legal briefings in this database.

[Global Detention Project \(GDP\)](#): Headquartered in Geneva, the GDP investigates immigration detention policies and practices worldwide, advocates against arbitrary and harmful migration-related detention, campaigns to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected from detention, and works with local CSOs to develop evidence and to strengthen their advocacy capacity. In partnership with local CSOs, the GDP publishes country profiles including data on the immigration detention system.⁶⁹

[Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#): HRW’s Refugee and Migrant Rights Division defends the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, displaced people, and migrants by investigating and documenting violations worldwide. HRW is working to ensure that governments respect the rights of refugees and use immigration detention as an exceptional measure of last resort. “Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants” has been one of the focus areas of HRW’s Turkey work. HRW frequently raises the issue of violations in removal centres, both in its annual reports and in special investigations.

[International Federation of Human Rights \(FIDH\)](#): The protection of the rights of migrant persons is one of FIDH’s priorities. Through its network of members and partners in countries of departure, transit and arrival, FIDH documents human rights violations against refugees and migrants; calls on national authorities to adopt legal and political reforms and undertakes strategic litigation to fight against impunity of perpetrators of the abuses against refugees and migrants.

European Council of Refugees and Exiles - ECRE	Brussels
Amnesty International	London
Global Detention Project -GDP	Geneva
International Federation of Human Rights - FIDH	Paris
Human Rights Watch - HRW	New York

⁶⁸ SGDD-ASAM, Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV), MUDEM - Refugee Support Center, Mülteci-Der, Refugee Rights Turkey.

⁶⁹ <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/turkey>