WOMEN'S RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK



IN TURKEY

17,000 Women and 560 Children in Jail





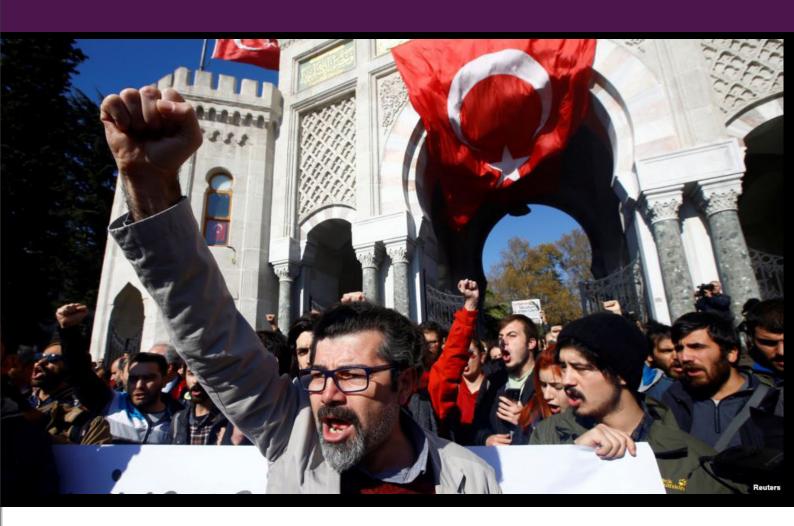
Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) is an international civil society organization dedicated to culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development. The JWF promotes diversity and inclusion by creating forums for intellectual and social engagement; generates and shares knowledge with stakeholders, builds partnerships worldwide and develops policy recommendations for positive social change.

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SUMMARY

In recent years, under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule Turkey has experienced a **sharp** declining trend in almost all democratic indicators, including the rights of women, civil, economic and social rights, freedom of expression and media, free and fair elections, government accountability and corruption.

Since the breakdown of the Kurdish peace process in July 2015 and the July 2016 attempted coup, **Kurdish and other minority women**, **as well as women allegedly linked to the Hizmet movement¹ suffer disproportionate multi-faceted discrimination**, in particular as regards eq ual access to political participation, health, education, employment and justice, both in law and practice.

Women belonging to the above marginalized groups face economic hardship, exclusion and violence, humiliating and degrading treatment in places where persons are deprived of their liberty, including in health-care facilities, especially during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period². Women perceived to be liberal, nationalists, leftists, or belong to the Alevi community have been viciously and mercilessly targeted as well.

Provisions of the Decree-Laws adopted in the aftermath of the attempted coup are at the very least discriminatory, arbitrary, and unjustified as a response to the violent coup attempt or other public order concerns.

Gülen movement is also referred to as Hizmet (the Service) Movement

A postpartum period or postnatal period is the period beginning immediately after the birth of a child and extending for about six weeks.



Tens of thousands of women, including housewives, journalists, teachers, academics, physicians, health care professionals and businesswomen have been detained in the aftermath of the attempted coup, for allegedly having links to the Hizmet movement. Credible evidence indicates that many of the detained women in the aftermath of the coup attempt have been routinely subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Sexual attacks and rape of men and women in prisons have been among the highly prevalent forms of torture documented in several reports by human rights organizations.

Following the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, the government swiftly moved to severely limit the right to a fair trial and that access to a lawyer, both in law, through decree laws and in practice through detentions, arrests, threats and intimidation.

Discrimination of women belonging to minorities and those allegedly members of the Hizmet movement are particularly evident regarding women's right to reproductive health, leading to the violation of the right to health and safety and the denial of the right to human dignity. Numerous reports of ill-treatment during childbirth in health facilities across Turkey provide a deeply distressing picture of the extent of the exposure of discriminated women to degrading treatment, verbal and physical violence.

Most alarming, hundreds of women, children and older persons are among approximately **1,200 local residents summarily killed between July 2015 and December 2016,** in the context of security operations in South-East Turkey. Women, children and elderly also constitute the majority of those **reported internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South-East Turkey, estimated between 355,000 to half a million people,** mainly citizens of Kurdish origin³.

³ OHCHR, Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey. July 2015 to December 2016, para 14.



Many lawmakers from the Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the third largest party in Turkey's Parliament, including its co-chairs are arrested and prosecuted on a range of "terrorism"-related charges. Investigations are underway against 54 out of 59 MPs from the same party. Parliamentary immunity of 55 out of 59 HDP MPs has been lifted, in a step clearly seen as enabling criminal prosecution. Between July 22, 2015, and March, 27, 2017, 8,930 members of Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were detained and 2,782 party members have been imprisoned, including three (3) women governors. 494 HDP offices have been attacked; burned or vandalized, including the party headquarters. HDP rallies were attacked and law enforcement's support for these attacks have been widely documented, even on social media. ⁴

Women dismissed of their jobs face discrimination in access to the labour market or to means and entitlements for obtaining employment on the grounds of political or other opinion and national or social origin. Due to the stigma of being branded "terrorists" under the Decree-Laws many of the dismissed women have not been able to find any work at all and lost housing health-care and other benefits. Dismissed public sector employees have been prevented from seeking employment abroad, as the decrees also require the cancelation of their passports. The ongoing purge, taking place in an atmosphere of fear and paranoia under the conditions described above and further, combined with a situation of total absence of the rule of law in the country have contributed to a mounting psychological pressure on women – resulting sometimes in suicide attempts.

Mehmet Yuksel, Testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearing: "Turkey's Democracy Under Challenge," Washington D.C., April 5, 2017.













Teachers and other administrative personnel have been unlawfully dismissed from their positions, based solely on political and administrative decisions. Along with their careers and their right to work, increasingly contributing to unnecessary precarious economic circumstances for hundreds of thousands of families – until now the future of approximately 1.5 million students and more importantly; the future of education in Turkey has been impacted irreversibly and in the most negative manner. Teaching licenses and passports of thousands of teachers were revoked with the stroke of a pen and no justification.

Women speaking out on abuses face threats, intimidation, persecution and imprisonment. Women human rights defenders, journalists and other women activists continue to face unique challenges, driven by government-promoted discrimination against women and stereotypes about their so-called "appropriate role", including frequent demeaning statements about women who do not adhere to traditional roles.

Hundreds of Turkey's leading women's and children's human rights NGOs and foundations are among 1,125 (one thousand one hundred twenty-five) registered associations/NGOs and 560 (five hundred sixty) foundations permanently closed through a series of government decrees since the July 15, 2016 attempted coup. In the post-coup crackdown 19 trade unions have also been closed, while human rights defenders have been detained or jailed.

Finally, the Human Rights and Equality Board of Turkey legally established in April 2016, cannot provide for effectively and adequately carrying out its mandate regarding gender equality and non-discrimination of women.

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