



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note Turkey: Gülenists

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# Executive summary

Updated on 9 August 2023

The Gülen movement (also known as Hizmet) is a group of religious, educational and social organisations in Turkey and abroad, founded and inspired by Fethullah Gülen. In May 2016, Turkey designated the movement a terrorist organisation, referring to it as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO). An attempted coup on 15 July 2016 was attributed by the Turkish government to the Gülen movement and on 20 July 2016 a state of emergency was declared (effective from 21 July 2016), which lasted until 18 July 2018.

Since the attempted coup, the government has carried out a crackdown on individuals and groups believed to have links with the Gülen movement, resulting in hundreds of thousands of arrests and detentions, over 117,000 convictions under anti-terrorism laws, the dismissal of over 130,000 public servants, the cancellation of over 230,000 passports, the closure of businesses and institutions and subsequent seizure of assets, and the pursuit of Turkish nationals residing outside of Turkey.

Most arrests and detentions took place during the 2-year state of emergency – by July 2022 over 101,000 people had been arrested and 332,484 detained. However, hundreds of arrests and detentions of people with alleged links to the Gülen movement, including former teachers, former military and police officers/cadets, individuals helping families of people jailed for alleged Gülen links, and people accused of receiving or distributing financial assistance sent by Gülen followers abroad, have continued beyond July 2022 and into 2023. As of July 2023, 122,632 people had been sentenced and 97,139 acquitted. Of those convicted, 12,108 were in prison, and investigations were still underway for 67,893 people.

However, all of these figures may also include others who are believed to be linked to other terrorist groups, too, such as the PKK.

The European Commission's report, covering the period between June 2021 and June 2022, noted an increase in credible allegations of torture and ill treatment in detention centres and prisons and, according to the US Department of State, people with alleged links to the Gülen movement are more likely to be subject to mistreatment and possibly torture whilst in detention. However, the Turkish government strongly denies such claims.

Whether a person who is, or who is perceived to be, affiliated to the Gülen movement is at risk of persecution or serious harm depends on a range of factors. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities or internally relocate.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

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# Assessment

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because they are affiliated, or perceived to be affiliated, with the Gülen movement (also known as Hizmet)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a grant of asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave is likely, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their actual or imputed convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

- 3.1.1 Whether a person who is, or is perceived to be, affiliated to the Gülen movement is at risk of persecution or serious harm depends on a range of factors, including:
  - their actual or perceived level (tier or layer) of involvement in the movement (see [Structure and membership](#) and [Prosecutions and convictions](#) for information on the tier structure and the level deemed criminally responsible), together with how plausible it would be that the authorities knew of or might suspect such involvement
  - whether the person has ever been arrested or detained. If so,
    - in what circumstances
    - whether the person was charged, convicted, sentenced or subject to any other conditions or sanctions **or** now faces charges
  - any other interaction with the state, particularly subsequent to any accusations about their involvement have come to light – noting

- the need to carry the national identity card (new version: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kimlik Kartı or 'Kimlik Kartı'; old version (still valid): Nüfus Cüzdanı)
- how this is required in order to work, access health and social services, register to vote, access Turkish courts, obtain a passport or driver's license, register for school and university, own property and/or a vehicle, and to obtain phone, internet, and home utilities (see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Turkey: Kurds](#)); together with
- the checks which could be carried out on various Turkish IT systems and databases

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- any credible interaction with the Turkish state since leaving Turkey
- their profession – in particular
  - journalists and media outlets who engage in anti-government reporting or are perceived to have ties to the movement
  - teachers at Gülen schools and education facilities
  - judges and lawyers: the judiciary has been significantly affected, with many judges and lawyers being suspended, detained, or dismissed for alleged involvement with the Gülen movement, or for defending those with links to the movement
  - military personnel (including intelligence officers) and police officers (see [Arrests and detentions](#) for information on professions likely to attract more negative attention from the authorities)
- the content, tone, reach, and such like, of their social media accounts
- frequent travel to Pennsylvania, where Fetullah Gülen resides

3.1.2 Other factors which **may** increase the risk of persecution include:

- using the ByLock app, which is seen as having been used by Gülenists
- using Asya Bank or holding a subscription to Zaman newspaper, both associated with the Gülen movement
- owning Gülenist literature
- having attended or sent children to Gülenist schools
- being members of Gülenist-affiliated organisations (e.g. think tanks, NGOs, academic circles) or donating money to such
- rapid promotion in the public service or military

- being dismissed from employment on grounds of alleged involvement with the Gülen movement
  - having family members who are suspected Gülenists
  - **These should not be treated as a checklist. Each case must be considered holistically, on its individual facts and merits.**
- 3.1.3 Decision makers should also note that some potential action taken against Gülenists – such as loss of employment – is not, by itself, sufficiently serious by their nature or repetition, or by an accumulation of measures, to amount persecution or serious harm, or otherwise meet the very high threshold to constitute a breach of Article 3 ECHR.
- 3.1.4 The Gülen movement (known as Hizmet by its supporters) is a group of religious, educational and social organisations in Turkey and abroad, which was founded and inspired by Fethullah Gülen, who has been in self-imposed exile in the US since 1999. According to some sources, there is no clear official membership status, although different sources describe tiers, layers or levels of involvement. The Supreme Court of Turkey consider there is a 7-tier hierarchy. The number of followers range from 500,000 to ‘possibly millions’ (see [Background](#) and [Structure and membership](#)).
- 3.1.5 In May 2016, Turkey designated the movement a terrorist organisation, referring to it as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO). The Supreme Court of Turkey upheld this definition in September 2017. An attempted coup on 15 July 2016 is attributed by the Turkish government to the Gülen movement, although they deny any involvement. On 20 July 2016 a state of emergency was declared, lasting from 21 July 2016 until 18 July 2018 (see [Relationship with the state](#), [Attempted coup in July 2016](#) and [State of emergency](#)).
- 3.1.6 Since the attempted coup, the government has responded to individuals and groups believed to have links with the Gülen movement. Those associated with the movement continue to face the possibility of criminal scrutiny, investigation and prosecution. However, the majority of arrests and detentions took place between July 2016 and July 2018. According to the US Department of State’s (USSD) human rights report for 2016, in the 3 months following the coup 75,000 individuals were detained and over 41,000 formally arrested, most of whom were accused of ties to the Gülen movement rather than direct participation in the coup. It also included broader opposition unaffiliated with Gülen(ism). A May 2019 report by the European Commission stated that during the 2-year state of emergency, more than 150,000 people were taken into custody and over 78,000 were arrested on terrorism-related charges (see [Arrests and detentions](#)).
- 3.1.7 According to Turkey’s Ministry of Interior, by July 2022, over 101,000 people had been arrested and 332,484 detained. Arrests and detentions of people with alleged links to the Gülen movement continued beyond July 2022 and into 2023, including 543 on a single day in October 2022, 89 in a week in March 2023 and 748 during June 2023. Former teachers, former military and police officers/cadets, individuals helping families of people jailed for alleged Gülen links, and people accused of receiving or distributing financial assistance sent by Gülen followers abroad, were among those detained.

Follow-up reports on the outcome of those arrested or detained are limited (see [Arrests and detentions](#)).

- 3.1.8 According to a report by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), virtually anyone with a Gülen background/links could face criminal charges, but some professions were more likely to attract negative attention from the authorities including military personnel and police, those who held leadership positions in Gülenist institutions, such as Gülen schools, Fatih University in Istanbul and the daily newspaper Zaman (see [Arrests and detentions](#)).
- 3.1.9 In 2022 the European Commission noted an increase in credible allegations of torture and ill treatment in detention centres, prisons, in informal places of detention, transportation vehicles and on the streets, mostly during demonstrations. According to the USSD, people with alleged links to the Gülen movement are more likely to be subject to mistreatment and possibly torture whilst in detention (see [Treatment in detention](#), [Police](#), [Rule of law](#) and [Prison conditions](#)).
- 3.1.10 Turkey has designated the Gülen movement an armed terrorist organisation. It is legitimate for the Turkish state to take action against those involved in, and those who actively supported, a coup attempt against a democratically-elected government and to use all lawful and proportionate means to do so. For information on whether prosecution amounts to persecution, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 3.1.11 According to the Netherlands MFA, involvement in the Gülen movement does not necessarily lead to criminal prosecution, but past involvement may do in the present. In other words, it was not considered a criminal activity to be involved in the group in the past, but since Turkey changed its policy vis-à-vis the group, it can now accuse people of criminal activity due to their past involvement. There is also a degree of arbitrariness in the criminal prosecution of alleged Gülenists. Defence lawyers and opposition groups believe that some of the evidence used against alleged affiliates to the Gülen movement, and others deemed critical of the government, is legally questionable, whilst the European Commission expressed general concern at selective and arbitrary application of legislation and infringements on the right to fair trial (see [Prosecutions and convictions](#)).
- 3.1.12 Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç stated that as of July 2023, 122,632 people had been sentenced and 97,139 acquitted. Of those convicted, 12,108 were in prison, 1,366 sentenced to life in prison and 1,634 to aggravated life with no chance of parole. Investigations were still underway for 67,893 people (see [Prosecutions and convictions](#)).
- 3.1.13 According to the Turkish government's Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures, during the state of emergency, 125,678 civil servants were dismissed, 270 scholarships were cancelled, 2,761 institutions closed and the ranks of 3,213 security personnel were annulled. Freedom House claim those civil servants cannot find employment as they may be deemed guilty by association. Details of dismissed individuals are recorded on a social security system database, which can be accessed by potential employers (see [Dismissal and reinstatement](#)).

- 3.1.14 As of 31 December 2022, the Commission had received a total of 127,292 applications to reverse the actions taken under the emergency decree laws, of which it accepted 17,960 and rejected 109,332 (see [Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures](#)).
- 3.1.15 In June 2023 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed concern at Turkey's pursuit of Turkish nationals residing outside of Turkey who are allegedly related to the Gülen movement. In May 2023, Nordic Monitor cited a confidential document by Turkey's intelligence agency, which indicated intelligence operations abroad and identified over 100 individuals believed to hold senior positions in the Gülen movement. Turkey has asked 112 countries to extradite 1,271 Gülen movement members and, as of 13 July 2023, 126 people had been handed over to Turkish authorities (see [Transnational repression](#)).
- 3.1.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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#### **4. Protection**

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection from the authorities.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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#### **5. Internal relocation**

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they are unlikely to be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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#### **6. Certification**

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content of this section follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

Decision makers must use relevant country information as the evidential basis for decisions.

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section updated: 9 August 2023

## 7. Overview of the Gülen movement

### 7.1 Background

7.1.1 Reports have described the Gülen movement (also known as Hizmet) as a group of religious, educational and social organisations in Turkey and abroad, which was founded and inspired by Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic Scholar (Imam/cleric), author and speaker<sup>1 2 3</sup>. Gülen promotes an ostensibly inclusive, moderate form of Sunni Islam, preaching tolerance and emphasising altruism, hard work and education<sup>4 5</sup>. He has been in self-imposed exile in the US since 1999<sup>6</sup>, after recordings of his speeches were released where he called on his supporters to infiltrate state institutions<sup>7 8</sup>. Gülen faces multiple arrest warrants and an extradition request from Turkey, which the US has denied due to lack of evidence of any crime<sup>9</sup>.

7.1.2 For more background information, see the country of origin information (COI) in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.

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### 7.2 Structure and membership

7.2.1 Sources dated 2013, 2016 and 2019, cited by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), indicated that the Gülen movement does not have a formal structure, central hierarchy or official membership<sup>10 11</sup>. Dr Caroline Tee Associate Professor of Modern Islam at Chester University and

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News, [‘Turkey coup: What is Gulen movement and what does it want?’](#), 21 July 2016

<sup>2</sup> The Guardian, [‘Fethullah Gülen: who is the man Turkey’s president blames for...’](#), 16 July 2016

<sup>3</sup> Vox, [‘Turkey’s coup: the Gülen Movement, explained’](#), 13 September 2016

<sup>4</sup> BBC News, [‘Profile: Fethullah Gulen’s Hizmet movement’](#), 18 December 2013

<sup>5</sup> Vox, [‘Turkey’s coup: the Gülen Movement, explained’](#), 13 September 2016

<sup>6</sup> Wilson Center, [‘Profile: Fethullah Gulen’](#), 18 July 2018

<sup>7</sup> BBC News, [‘Profile: Fethullah Gulen’s Hizmet movement’](#), 18 December 2013

<sup>8</sup> RFERL, [‘The Gulen Movement’s Collision Course With The Turkish State’](#), 24 July 2016

<sup>9</sup> Nordic Monitor, [‘Turkey’s aggressive spying campaign in foreign countries persists...’](#), 20 July 2023

<sup>10</sup> IRB, [‘Turkey: The Hizmet movement, also known as the Gülen movement...’](#), 6 January 2020

<sup>11</sup> IRB, [‘Turkey: The Fethullah Gulen Movement, including structure, areas of...’](#), 29 September 2016

specialist on religion, society and the state in modern Turkey<sup>12</sup>, said in a 2021 publication that ‘there are no official criteria for belonging; there are no initiation rites and no clear membership status.’<sup>13</sup> Membership cards are not issued<sup>14</sup>.

7.2.2 Gülenists describe the movement as Hizmet (‘service’)<sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup>. People involved in the group state they simply work together in a loosely affiliated alliance inspired by Gülen’s teachings<sup>17</sup>. According to the Alliance for Shared Values (ASFV), a US-based non-profit organisation associated with the Gülen movement, one main way of identifying ‘members’ of the Gülen movement is by ascertaining their formal membership of an organisation that publicly identifies with the Gülen movement<sup>18</sup>. However, the Turkish government used much broader criteria to identify those for dismissal from state institutions on the basis of affiliation with the movement<sup>19</sup>. (see [Criteria used to identify suspected Gülenists](#) and [Dismissals and reinstatement](#)).

7.2.3 It was difficult to estimate the size of the Gülen movement<sup>20</sup>. Dr Caroline Tee gave an ‘extremely approximate estimation’ of between 500,000 and 2 million ‘close affiliates of Gülen in Turkey’ in the pre-2016 era<sup>21</sup>. A BBC News article that described the Gülen movement, noted that there were possibly millions of followers in Turkey, many of whom held influential positions in the police, secret services, judiciary and in the ruling AKP<sup>22</sup>.

7.2.4 Dr Caroline Tee provided a more detailed explanation of a person’s affiliation and commitment to the movement, stating that it was ‘characterised by a multi-tiered nexus of engagement with three degrees of involvement.’<sup>23</sup> Tee explained the first degree:

‘At the heart of the movement is a group who are dedicated and loyal followers of Gülen, some of whom may reside with him and receive religious instruction on his ranch in Pennsylvania, but the majority of whom live elsewhere. These individuals are committed disciples and keen consumers of Gülen’s teachings either through personal contact or from a distance through print and digital media. They usually work or study in a Gülenist institution of some kind and are fully dedicated in every aspect of their lives to the furtherance of the movement’s vision. These individuals display Muslim piety through their lifestyle, personal conduct and dress.’<sup>24</sup>

7.2.5 Tee described the second degree, sympathisers (yandaşlar), as:

‘... active yet more casual supporters of the Gülenist vision and the movement’s activities. This group includes, significantly, businessmen of a

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<sup>12</sup> University of Chester, ‘[Dr Caroline Tee](#)’, no date

<sup>13</sup> Tee, C, ‘[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)’ (4.4), 2021

<sup>14</sup> Netherlands MFA, ‘[General COI Report Turkey](#)’ (page 38), 2 March 2022

<sup>15</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Turkey](#)’ (paragraph 3.34), 10 September 2020

<sup>16</sup> Tee, C, ‘[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)’ (4.1), 2021

<sup>17</sup> IRB, ‘[Turkey: The Fethullah Gulen Movement, including structure, areas of...](#)’, 29 September 2016

<sup>18</sup> IRB, ‘[Turkey: The Hizmet movement, also known as the Gülen movement...](#)’, 6 January 2020

<sup>19</sup> IRB, ‘[Turkey: The Hizmet movement, also known as the Gülen movement...](#)’, 6 January 2020

<sup>20</sup> RFERL, ‘[The Gulen Movement’s Collision Course With The Turkish State](#)’, 24 July 2016

<sup>21</sup> Tee, C, ‘[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)’ (4.4), 2021

<sup>22</sup> BBC News, ‘[Turkey coup: What is Gulen movement and what does it want?](#)’, 21 July 2016

<sup>23</sup> Tee, C, ‘[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)’ (4.4), 2021

<sup>24</sup> Tee, C, ‘[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)’ (4.4), 2021

pious disposition who lend critical financial support to the movement's projects. It also includes individuals who might attend, either regularly or sporadically, the events known as sohbet (lit: 'conversation') at which the books and sermons of Fethullah Gülen are studied and expounded by followers in conjunction with the Risale of Said Nursi and the Qur'ân.<sup>25</sup>

7.2.6 Explaining the third degree of involvement, Tee noted that:

'The largest and most peripheral stratum of participation in the broad Gülenist project is occupied by those who consume the products and services offered by Gülenist institutions, and who may or may not be cognisant of the connection of those products and services to the movement. These might include readers and viewers of the various print, digital and visual media channels run by the movement, clients in the banking and insurance sector, patients in Gülen-run medical facilities, and parents of children studying at Gülen schools.'<sup>26</sup>

7.2.7 State-run Anadolu news agency stated in 2018 that, according to a Supreme Court indictment in a major case pertaining to the failed coup, the Gülen movement, which by then had been designated a terrorist group named Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO) [see [Relationship with the state](#)], was comprised of a 7-layer hierarchical structure:

- '1st layer of common people: It contains people, who have a bond of affection with the Gulen community and provides financial assistance. Outside the hierarchical structure, they serve the organization with or without intention.
- '2nd layer of loyal people: It comprises of officials in schools, private teaching institutions, dormitories, banks, newspapers, foundations, and governmental institutions. People in this layer attend the organizational meetings, makes systematic payment and has a glimpse of ideology. They are required to have a membership of the organization.
- '3rd layer of ideological members: Members of this layer take part in unofficial activities. Adopting the organizational ideology, they are on mission to persuade other people to join the group.
- '4th layer of supervisors: They supervise all the activities – legal or illegal. Those who stand out for their loyalty and obedience to the group could jump into this layer. Members of this layer are chosen from those who joined FETO as early as childhood.
- '5th layer of organizers and executers: It requires high-level secrecy. Members hardly know each other. Appointed by Gulen, they organize the structure in the government and execute tasks. People who marry to someone from the organization can qualify for this layer.
- '6th layer of special members: They build contacts between Gulen and people in the lower layers, and assign duties to the people within the organization.

<sup>25</sup> Tee, C, '[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)' (4.4), 2021

<sup>26</sup> Tee, C, '[Chapter 4 The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile](#)' (4.4), 2021

- '7th layer of elites: Directly bound to Gulen, the layer comprises of 17 members, who are appointed by the terror group's leader.'<sup>27</sup>
- 7.2.8 For information on which level of 'membership' denoted criminal responsibility, see [Prosecutions and convictions](#).
- 7.2.9 The same report noted that 'Apart from these layers, there is also a layer of sympathizers. They are not instructed by FETO, but at times they provide financial support and attend activities in support of the organization.'<sup>28</sup>
- 7.2.10 See also [Criteria used to identify suspected Gülenists](#), and [Arrests and detentions](#) for information on those targeted by the state.
- 7.2.11 The movement has a large international presence, with millions of followers<sup>29</sup> and supporters in 140 countries worldwide<sup>30</sup> (see also [Transnational repression](#)).

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### 7.3 Relationship with the state

- 7.3.1 Gülen and President Erdoğan were close allies for decades and Gülen publicly supported the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP)<sup>31</sup>. The Gülen movement is not a political party and although the movement has been critical of the ruling AKP and President Erdoğan, it does not participate directly in elections<sup>32</sup>. Gülenists used their networks to occupy influential positions in the civil service, police, intelligence services and judiciary, as well as creating extensive networks abroad through charity and educational initiatives, civil society organisations, media, and within academia<sup>33,34</sup>.
- 7.3.2 The relationship between Gülen and Erdoğan ended in December 2013, when Erdoğan claimed that Gülen and his supporters were using a corruption probe, implicating senior officials and business leaders with ties to the AKP, to bring down the government<sup>35 36</sup>.
- 7.3.3 Since then, President Erdoğan has claimed that the Gülen movement is running a 'parallel state' in Turkey and has accused the group of forming an alliance with the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan – PKK)<sup>37 38</sup>. The crackdown on the Gülen movement commenced prior to the [attempted coup in July 2016](#)<sup>39 40</sup>. During this period, the Erdoğan government led a crackdown on institutions it believed were affiliated with

<sup>27</sup> Anadolu Agency, '[FETO's 7-layered hierarchical structure](#)', 10 February 2018

<sup>28</sup> Anadolu Agency, '[FETO's 7-layered hierarchical structure](#)', 10 February 2018

<sup>29</sup> Politico, '["Sleepless nights" for Gülen's supporters in Europe](#)', 22 August 2016

<sup>30</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Turkey](#)' (paragraph 3.35), 10 September 2020

<sup>31</sup> Middle East Eye, '[ANALYSIS: Dissecting Turkey's Gulen-Erdogan relationship](#)', 25 July 2016

<sup>32</sup> Wilson Center, '[Profile: Fethullah Gulen](#)', 18 July 2018

<sup>33</sup> BBC News, '[Profile: Fethullah Gulen's Hizmet movement](#)', 18 December 2013

<sup>34</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Turkey](#)' (paragraph 3.36), 10 September 2020

<sup>35</sup> Middle East Eye, '[ANALYSIS: Dissecting Turkey's Gulen-Erdogan relationship](#)', 25 July 2016

<sup>36</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Turkey](#)' (paragraph 3.37), 10 September 2020

<sup>37</sup> Middle East Eye, '[ANALYSIS: Dissecting Turkey's Gulen-Erdogan relationship](#)', 25 July 2016

<sup>38</sup> Al Monitor, '[What's behind AKP's allegations of Gulen-PKK ties?](#)', 15 August 2016

<sup>39</sup> SCF, '[Turkey's Crackdown on the Gülen Movement: 2022 in Review](#)', 12 January 2023

<sup>40</sup> Vox, '[Turkey's coup: the Gülen Movement, explained](#)', 13 September 2016

the Gülen movement, shutting media outlets and firing thousands of police officers suspected of being Gülenists<sup>41</sup>.

- 7.3.4 In May 2016, Turkey designated the movement a terrorist organisation, referring to it as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO)<sup>42</sup>. On 26 September 2017, the Supreme Court of Turkey upheld a ruling by the 16th Criminal Chamber (dated 24 April 2017), which had determined that the Gülen movement was an armed terrorist organisation<sup>43</sup>. Other than Turkey, no State party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (all Member States of the Council of Europe<sup>44</sup> are signatories to the ECHR<sup>45</sup>) has designated the Gülen movement as a terrorist organisation<sup>46</sup>. Other states that have designated FETO a terrorist organisation include Northern Cyprus (July 2016)<sup>47</sup> and Pakistan (December 2018)<sup>48</sup>. The Gulf Cooperation Council and Organization of Islamic Cooperation designated FETO in October 2016<sup>49</sup>.
- 7.3.5 For information on anti-terror legislation, see the country information in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.
- 7.3.6 On the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary (15 July 2023) of the failed coup, Dr M. Mustafa Göksu, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the State of Qatar, stated ‘... the fight against the terrorist FETÖ network inside and outside of Türkiye remains one of the country’s main priorities. Türkiye is determined to not only eradicate FETÖ but all extremist organisations and their collaborators. Türkiye will hunt them down, wherever they may be, and bring all those involved to justice.’<sup>50</sup> (see also [Transnational repression](#) and [State treatment](#)).

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## 7.4 Attempted coup in July 2016

- 7.4.1 On 15 July 2016, elements of the Turkish military attempted a coup d’état against the Turkish government<sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup>. Those involved in the coup deployed tanks in the streets of Istanbul and Ankara, bombed parliament and opened fire on protestors<sup>53</sup>. At least 260 citizens and security personnel were reported killed in the fighting, and around 2,000 people were injured<sup>54</sup> <sup>55</sup>. The coup failed within hours as it was poorly organised and executed<sup>56</sup>, due to

<sup>41</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Turkey](#)’ (paragraph 3.37), 10 September 2020

<sup>42</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Reports on Terrorism 2016](#)’ (Chapter 2, Turkey), 19 July 2017

<sup>43</sup> SCF, ‘[Rule of Law\(lessness\) in Erdoğan’s Turkey](#)’ (pages 14, 15 and 33), 22 March 2022

<sup>44</sup> CoE, ‘[46 Member States](#)’, no date

<sup>45</sup> CoE, ‘[European Convention on Human Rights](#)’, no date

<sup>46</sup> FIDU, ‘[Perils of Unconstrained Prosecutorial Discretion: Prosecuting...](#)’ (page 9), July 2023

<sup>47</sup> Anadolu Agency, ‘[Northern Cyprus designates FETO as terror group](#)’, 21 July 2016

<sup>48</sup> Daily Sabah, ‘[Pakistan’s top court instructs Interior Ministry to designate...](#)’, 28 December 2018

<sup>49</sup> USSD, ‘[Country Reports on Terrorism 2016](#)’, 19 July 2017

<sup>50</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘[Remembering those who stood against the attempted coup in Türkiye](#)’, 15 July 2023

<sup>51</sup> HRW, ‘[A Blank Check: Turkey’s Post-Coup Suspension of Safeguards Against...](#)’, 25 October 2016

<sup>52</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Turkey](#)’ (paragraph 2.5), 10 September 2020

<sup>53</sup> HRW, ‘[A Blank Check: Turkey’s Post-Coup Suspension of Safeguards Against...](#)’, 25 October 2016

<sup>54</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Turkey](#)’ (paragraph 2.5), 10 September 2020

<sup>55</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2017 – Turkey](#)’ (Executive summary), January 2017

<sup>56</sup> Deutsche Welle, ‘[From ally to scapegoat: Fethullah Gulen, the man behind the myth](#)’, 6 April 2018

popular resistance, rallied by Erdoğan<sup>57</sup>, and because most of the military remained loyal to the Turkish government<sup>58</sup>. The government claimed that that Fetullah Gülen and the Gülen movement was behind the coup<sup>59</sup>.

- 7.4.2 For a summary of events, see [As it happened: Turkey coup - BBC News](#) and the country of origin information (COI) in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.
- 7.4.3 Gülen publicly condemned the attempted coup and denied any involvement<sup>60 61</sup>. According to official statements, 8,651 soldiers took part in the coup attempt, equivalent to only 1.5% of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) total personnel<sup>62</sup>.
- 7.4.4 Speaking on Sözcü TV in July 2023, retired admiral Türker Ertürk stated that the coup attempt could have been prevented, but was necessary to purge dissidents from public service because “It was impossible to take such a step under normal legal and democratic circumstances...”.<sup>63</sup>

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## 7.5 State of emergency

- 7.5.1 On 20 July 2016 the Turkish Government declared a state of emergency, which was extended 7 times over 24 months until it was officially lifted at midnight on 18 July 2018<sup>64 65</sup>.
- 7.5.2 For further information on the state of emergency see the country information in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.
- 7.5.3 In a report published in May 2022, the Human Rights Association (HRA), a Turkish non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in 1986 to promote and defend human rights<sup>66</sup>, summarised the main consequences of the emergency decree laws:
- ‘More than 130,000 public employees were dismissed from their posts through decree laws. These employees did not only consist of such officials as military officers, non-commissioned officers, police officers and intelligence officers who were actively involved in the coup attempt. They were public servants holding office almost at every level within the state organization.
  - ‘Along with the dismissal of public employees from their posts, in other words their [removal] from the state apparatus, not only their passports but those of their spouses and children were also cancelled.

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<sup>57</sup> Statewatch, [‘Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...’](#) (page 10), 25 November 2021

<sup>58</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Turkey’](#) (paragraph 2.5), 10 September 2020

<sup>59</sup> Deutsche Welle, [‘From ally to scapegoat: Fethullah Gulen, the man behind the myth’](#), 6 April 2018

<sup>60</sup> BBC News, [‘Turkey coup: What is Gulen movement and what does it want?’](#), 21 July 2016

<sup>61</sup> HRW, [‘A Blank Check: Turkey’s Post-Coup Suspension of Safeguards Against...’](#), 25 October 2016

<sup>62</sup> Statewatch, [‘Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...’](#) (page 10), 25 November 2021

<sup>63</sup> Turkish Minute, [‘Retired admiral says 2016 coup attempt was necessary to purge...’](#), 20 July 2023

<sup>64</sup> DFAT, [‘Country Information Report Turkey’](#) (paragraph 2.61), 10 September 2020

<sup>65</sup> HRA, [‘Emergency Decree Laws and Their Impact on Human Rights...’](#) (page 3), 13 May 2022

<sup>66</sup> HRA, [‘History of Human Rights Association \(IHD\) – HRA’](#), 8 December 2008

- ‘Arms permits, ship’s crew documents or piloting licenses held by these individuals were also cancelled.
- ‘Those dismissed were evacuated from public-owned residences, lodgments [sic] within 15 days.
- ‘Those dismissed were dismissed for good; they will not be able to hold offices in public services anymore.
- ‘Thousands of those dismissed were subjected to arrests and detentions.
- ‘Private institutions and organizations, educational institutions, press, newspapers, journals, TV channels, universities, foundations and associations, etc. were permanently shut down on the grounds of their alleged “affiliation, contact or junction” [mensubiyet, irtibat or iltisak] with the attempted coup or terrorism. Their movable and immovable property were seized, confiscated.’<sup>67</sup>

See also [State treatment](#).

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section updated: 9 August 2023

## 8. State treatment

### 8.1 Criteria used to identify suspected Gülenists

8.1.1 A November 2021 report by Statewatch, a non-profit voluntary group founded in 1991 comprised of lawyers, academics, journalists, researchers and community activists across 18 countries<sup>68</sup>, outlined the following criteria for grounds of dismissal based on the state of emergency decree laws:

‘(I) having “membership, affiliation or connection to”, or “membership, relation or connection with” the ‘FETÖ/PDY’ [Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organisation/Parallel State Structure];

‘(II) having “membership of, affiliation, link or connection with terrorist organizations or structures, formations or groups, which have been determined by the National Security Council (NSC) to perform activities against the national security of the State”;

‘(III) having been considered “to be a member of, or having a relation, connection or contact with terrorist organizations or structure/entities, organisations or groups, established by the NSC to be engaging in activities against the national security of the State.”’<sup>69</sup>

8.1.2 The Statewatch report noted that ‘The “dismissals lists”, which were annexed to the emergency decrees, were produced on the basis of a combination of various criteria, namely,

‘(I) making monetary contributions to the Bank Asya, and to other companies which were closed down with emergency decrees;

‘(II) using the messenger application ByLock;

<sup>67</sup> HRA, ‘[Emergency Decree Laws and Their Impact on Human Rights...](#)’ (page 4), 13 May 2022

<sup>68</sup> Statewatch, ‘[Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...](#)’, 25 November 2021

<sup>69</sup> Statewatch, ‘[Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...](#)’ (pages 10 to 11), 25 November 2021

- ‘(III) police or secret service reports;
- ‘(IV) analysis of social media contacts;
- ‘(V) donations made to certain legal persons which were closed down by emergency decrees;
- ‘(VI) websites visited;
- ‘(VII) being resident in student dormitories belonging to legal persons that were closed down by emergency decrees;
- ‘(VIII) sending children to schools which were closed down by emergency decrees;
- ‘(IX) subscription to Gülenist periodicals, or to others which were closed down by emergency decrees;
- ‘(X) information received from work colleagues or from neighbors;
- ‘(XI) being a manager or member of a trade union, association, foundations which were closed down by emergency decrees.’<sup>70</sup>

8.1.3 Statewatch added that the ‘dismissals lists’ criteria was used mainly against civil servants who worked in public institutions<sup>71</sup>.

8.1.4 According to confidential sources cited in a March 2022 COI report on Turkey by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA):

‘In the past, the Gülen movement in Turkey included various institutions, such as schools, student houses, hospitals, and cultural and charitable institutions. As well as convinced Gülenists, non-Gülenists were also attracted to it, because these institutions had a strong reputation for quality. It is therefore perfectly possible for someone to have studied at a Gülenist institution, stayed in a Gülenist student house, worked for the Gülenist newspaper Zaman or had a bank account at Asya Bank without being a Gülenist in an ideological sense. Such a person could nonetheless be associated with the Gülen movement and, as a result, encounter personal problems with the Turkish authorities.’<sup>72</sup>

8.1.5 For background information on government action taken against specific groups suspected to be affiliated with the Gülen movement, see the country of origin information (COI) in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.

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## 8.2 Arrests and detentions

8.2.1 Since the attempted coup, the government has conducted a crackdown on individuals and groups believed to have links with the Gülen movement<sup>73</sup>. In July 2023, Emre Turkut, author and postdoctoral researcher at Hertie School Centre for Fundamental Rights, Berlin, told Balkan Insight that following the coup and subsequent crackdown:

<sup>70</sup> Statewatch, ‘[Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...](#)’ (page 11), 25 November 2021

<sup>71</sup> Statewatch, ‘[Algorithmic persecution in Turkey’s post-coup...](#)’ (page 12), 25 November 2021

<sup>72</sup> Netherlands MFA, ‘[General COI Report Turkey](#)’ (page 38), 2 March 2022

<sup>73</sup> SCF, ‘[Turkey’s Crackdown on the Gülen Movement: 2022 in Review](#)’, 12 January 2023

‘... the Gulen Network became the primary target of these purges and has since faced, and continues to face, the looming threat of being subjected to criminal scrutiny, investigation, and prosecution on charges of terrorism.

“It is also evident that the crackdown has progressively expanded and intensified over time, to all those political opponents and dissenting voices in the country including members of the Kurdish political movement and members of other religious groups”.<sup>74</sup>

#### 8.2.2 The March 2022 report by the Netherlands MFA noted that:

‘While virtually anyone with a Gülen background could face criminal charges, there were some professions within the Gülen movement that received more negative attention from the Turkish authorities than others... such as military personnel and gendarmes... Individuals who had held leadership positions in Gülenist institutions, such as Gülen schools, Fatih University in Istanbul and the daily newspaper Zaman, were also more likely to attract negative attention from the Turkish authorities. This was also true to a lesser extent of student leaders in former Gülenist student houses.’<sup>75</sup>

#### 8.2.3 Most arrests and detentions took place in the immediate aftermath of the coup and up till the end of the state of emergency in July 2018. The USSD’s human rights report for 2016 stated that in the 3 months following the coup, ‘... police detained more than 75,000 individuals and formally arrested more than 41,000. The vast majority were accused of ties to the Gulen movement, as opposed to direct participation in the coup attempt itself.’<sup>76</sup> According to Freedom House, 37,000 people had been formerly arrested by November 2016<sup>77</sup>, and by the end of 2017, over 60,000 people had been arrested<sup>78</sup>. By the end of 2018, more than 80,000 people had been arrested or detained under the state of emergency (which ended on 18 July 2018) and beyond, noted the USSD in its 2018 human rights report<sup>79</sup>. According to a May 2019 report by the European Commission, ‘More than 150 000 people were taken into custody during the state of emergency [20 July 2016 to 18 July 2018] and more than 78 000 were arrested on terrorism-related charges...’<sup>80</sup>

#### 8.2.4 By the sixth anniversary of the 2016 coup attempt (15 July 2022) the Ministry of Interior (Moi) announced that authorities had arrested over 101,000 people and detained up to 332,484 on the grounds of alleged affiliation with the Gülen movement<sup>81</sup> <sup>82</sup>. According to the Moi statement, 19,252 people linked to the Gulen movement were detained in prisons and around 24,000 ‘fugitives’ were still wanted<sup>83</sup>. Only a very small minority of those arrested are accused of actually taking part in the events surrounding the attempted

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<sup>74</sup> Balkan Insight, ‘[“Arbitrary Persecution”: How Turkey Uses Vague Terror Law to...](#)’, 13 July 2023

<sup>75</sup> Netherlands MFA, ‘[General COI Report Turkey](#)’ (page 38), 2 March 2022

<sup>76</sup> USSD, ‘[2016 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 3 March 2017

<sup>77</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2017 – Turkey](#)’ (section C), January 2017

<sup>78</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2018 – Turkey](#)’, (Executive summary), January 2018

<sup>79</sup> USSD, ‘[2018 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 13 March 2019

<sup>80</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey Report 2019](#)’ (page 9), 29 May 2019

<sup>81</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 20 March 2023

<sup>82</sup> Turkish Minute, ‘[Six years on, Turkey’s July 15 coup still shrouded in mystery](#)’, 15 July 2022

<sup>83</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 20 March 2023

coup, according to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) 2020 report<sup>84</sup>.

8.2.5 Arrests and detentions continued beyond July 2022 and into 2023 due to alleged links to the Gülen movement (examples below are not exhaustive):

- on 18 October 2022, 543 people were detained across 59 provinces for receiving financial assistance or distributing financial assistance sent by Gülen followers abroad<sup>85</sup>
- on 8 December 2022, 17 people, including 3 former civil servants, were detained in 3 separate operations<sup>86</sup>
- over the course of a week in March 2023, 89 people were detained, including former teachers, former military and police officers/cadets, and individuals helping families of people jailed for alleged Gülen links<sup>87</sup>
- during the first week in April 2023, 61 people were detained, including students, doctors, teachers, former military cadets, and others accused of using the ByLock messenger app<sup>88</sup>
- according to a 6 July 2023 Tweet by the Interior Minister, 748 people were detained in June 2023<sup>89</sup>
- on 25 June 2023 it was reported that the niece of Fethullah Gülen, Asiye Gulen, was arrested in Istanbul along with her husband<sup>90</sup>
- Gülen's nephew, Selman Gülen, his wife and his parent's in-law were arrested on 14 July 2023<sup>91</sup>
- on 20 July 2023, 19 people were detained for providing financial support to families of jailed Gülenist suspects<sup>92</sup>

8.2.6 According to a confidential source cited in the March 2022 report by the Netherlands MFA, 'Although there were many media reports about arrests of Gülen suspects, there were few follow-up reports in the publicly available literature about what happened to those who had been arrested. It was therefore unclear how many detainees remained in pre-trial detention or were conditionally released and in how many cases legal proceedings had been initiated.'<sup>93</sup>

8.2.7 The Stockholm Center for Freedom (SCF), a human rights group with a special focus on Turkey<sup>94</sup>, reported that according to Justice Ministry figures released on 16 July 2023, 122,632 people had been imprisoned for alleged links with the Gülen movement since the July 2016 failed coup, and another

<sup>84</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Turkey](#)' (paragraph 3.38), 10 September 2020

<sup>85</sup> SCF, '[Turkey detains 543 people in massive operation targeting Gülen followers](#)', 18 October 2022

<sup>86</sup> SCF, '[17 detained in Turkey over alleged Gülen links](#)', 8 December 2022

<sup>87</sup> Turkish Minute, '[89 detained over alleged Gülen links in a week](#)', 24 March 2023

<sup>88</sup> SCF, '[61 detained over alleged Gülen links in a week](#)', 7 April 2023

<sup>89</sup> SCF, '[748 people detained in June over Gülen links, says new interior minister](#)', 6 July 2023

<sup>90</sup> MEM, '[Turkiye police arrest Gulen's niece](#)', 25 June 2023

<sup>91</sup> Turkish Minute, '[Turkey detains yet another family member of Islamic scholar Gülen](#)', 14 July 2023

<sup>92</sup> SCF, '[19 detained in Turkey for helping families of people jailed over alleged...](#)', 20 July 2023

<sup>93</sup> Netherlands MFA, '[General COI Report Turkey](#)' (page 36), 2 March 2022

<sup>94</sup> SCF, '[About us](#)', no date

67,893 were under investigation. According to the official figures, 15,539 people were still detained<sup>95</sup>.

- 8.2.8 Human rights observers have expressed concern that those arrested have little due process or access to evidence underpinning the accusations made against them and the judiciary lacked impartiality<sup>96 97</sup>. In November 2021, the European Court on Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that the pre-trial detention of 426 people on suspicion of membership in the Gülen had been unlawful<sup>98</sup>.

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### 8.3 Treatment in detention

- 8.3.1 The USSD human rights report for 2022 noted that:

‘The constitution and law prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, but domestic and international rights groups reported that some police officers, prison authorities, and military and intelligence units employed these practices. Domestic human rights organizations, bar associations, political opposition figures, international human rights groups, and others reported that government agents engaged in threats, mistreatment, and possible torture of some persons while in custody. Individuals with alleged affiliation with the PKK or the Gulen movement were more likely to be subjected to mistreatment, abuse, or possible torture.’<sup>99</sup>

- 8.3.2 The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 noted that:

‘Credible and grave allegations of torture and ill-treatment increased. According to available reports, torture and ill-treatment occurred in detention centres, prisons, in informal places of detention, transportation vehicles and on the streets, mostly during demonstrations. The Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (HREI), whose role is to act as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), does not meet the key requirements under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) and is not yet effectively processing cases referred to it.’<sup>100</sup>

- 8.3.3 The USSD HR Report 2022 noted that ‘Prolonged pretrial detentions continued, particularly in politically motivated cases.’<sup>101</sup>

- 8.3.4 For more information on treatment in detention, see the section on Ill-treatment in detention in the [Country Policy and Information Note on Turkey: Kurdistan Workers’ Party \(PKK\)](#), and in the country of origin information (COI) in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.

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<sup>95</sup> SCF, ‘[122,632 jailed over alleged Gülen links since coup attempt in 2016: justice...](#)’, 17 July 2023

<sup>96</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 20 March 2023

<sup>97</sup> DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report Turkey](#)’ (paragraph 3.38), 10 September 2020

<sup>98</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 26), 12 October 2022

<sup>99</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1C), 20 March 2023

<sup>100</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 33), 12 October 2022

<sup>101</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1D), 20 March 2023

## 8.4 Prosecutions and convictions

8.4.1 In March 2020, Anadolu Agency cited the 7-layered hierarchical structure accorded to the Gülen movement by the Supreme Court of Turkey (see [Structure and membership](#)) and noted that members of the organisation in the highest 5 layers would be held criminally responsible: 'It is clear that the members of the organization who know the aims and methods of the organization will be punished by taking into account their position in the organization. According to the pyramid of organization, it must be accepted that the members of the organization in the three, four, five, six and seventh layers are in this situation.'<sup>102</sup>

8.4.2 The USSD human rights report for 2022 noted that 'According to defense lawyers and opposition groups, there was a trend of prosecutors using what appeared to be legally questionable evidence to file criminal charges against and prosecute a broad range of individuals, including... alleged Gulen movement members or affiliates, and others critical of the government.'<sup>103</sup> The same source added that 'Some lawyers stated they were hesitant to take cases, particularly those of suspects accused of PKK or Gulen movement ties, for fear of government reprisal, including prosecution.'<sup>104</sup>

8.4.3 Citing mostly confidential sources, the March 2022 COI report by the Netherlands MFA noted:

'Involvement in the Gülen movement does not lead to criminal prosecution in all cases, but involvement in the past may lead to criminal prosecution in the present. First, according to two sources, there is a certain degree of arbitrariness in the criminal prosecution of alleged Gülenists. One source points out in this connection that the Turkish authorities neither use objective criteria nor apply them consistently. Second, a practical obstacle hinders the authorities in prosecuting Gülenists. In 2010, it was estimated that between eight and ten million people in Turkey were linked to the Gülen movement in some way. Given the size of the movement, according to a source, it is simply impossible to criminally prosecute every current or former Gülenist... the Turkish authorities may have the will to criminally prosecute all Gülenists, but not the means. Third... some current or former Gülenists are able to evade prosecution through political connections with the AKP/MHP [ruling coalition known as the People's Alliance<sup>105</sup>] leadership and bribery.'<sup>106</sup>

8.4.4 According to figures provided by Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ in July 2022, 117,208 people had been convicted over links with the Gülen movement, with 1,366 sentenced to life in prison and 1,634 to aggravated life with no chance of parole<sup>107</sup>. Turkish Minute, citing the figures provided by the Justice Minister to state-run Anadolu news agency, added:

'While 87,519 people have been acquitted of charges specifically related to the Gülen movement since the coup attempt, according to Bozdağ, there are

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<sup>102</sup> Anadolu Agency, '[Court of Cassation 16. Criteria for FETÖ membership from...](#)', 9 March 2020

<sup>103</sup> USSD, '[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)' (section 1E), 20 March 2023

<sup>104</sup> USSD, '[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)' (section 1D), 20 March 2023

<sup>105</sup> Anadolu Agency, '[People's Alliance garners majority of seats in Turkish parliament](#)', 15 May 2023

<sup>106</sup> Netherlands MFA, '[General COI Report Turkey](#)' (page 39), 2 March 2022

<sup>107</sup> Turkish Minute, '[117,208 people in Turkey have been convicted of alleged Gülen...](#)', 13 July 2022

doubts about the number of people who have been acquitted of all charges by a court of law.

‘Judicial experts voice skepticism about the figures announced by Bozdağ, saying that 117,208 convictions are only those that have been upheld by an appeals court, since Justice Ministry data show that more than 265,000 people were sentenced on charges of terrorist organization membership between 2016 and 2020 due to their alleged Gülen links.’<sup>108</sup>

- 8.4.5 In July 2023, 7 years after the coup attempt, Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç stated that since 15 July 2016 legal proceedings were opened against 693,162 people associated with the Gülen movement and investigations were still underway for 67,893 people. According to Tunç, 122,632 people were sentenced and 97,139 were acquitted. Of those convicted, 12,108 were in prison<sup>109</sup>.
- 8.4.6 The USSD human rights report for 2022 stated that ‘Observers considered a significant number of the individuals detained on terrorism or other charges to be political prisoners, particularly when charges stemmed from affiliation with the Gulen movement...’<sup>110</sup> However, according to the same report, the government did not consider detained Gülenists to be political prisoners and did not allow them access to human rights organisations<sup>111</sup>.

See also [Rule of law and criminal justice system](#).

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## 8.5 Dismissals and reinstatement

- 8.5.1 According to the Turkish government’s Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures (‘the Commission’), during the 2 year state of emergency (July 2016 to July 2018), there were 125,678 dismissals from public service, 270 scholarships cancelled, 2,761 institutions closed and 3,213 security personnel whose ranks were annulled<sup>112</sup>. (see [Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures](#) for more information on the Commission).
- 8.5.2 The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 stated that 3,985 judges and public prosecutors had been dismissed since the coup, and only 515 reinstated<sup>113</sup>. It also noted that, during the reporting period (June 2021 to June 2022), 17 more judges and prosecutors were dismissed<sup>114</sup>.
- 8.5.3 In November 2022, Turkey’s defence minister announced that 24,706 members of the armed forces, mainly ranked officers, had been dismissed for purported links to the Gülen movement<sup>115</sup>. Between April 2021 and April

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<sup>108</sup> Turkish Minute, [‘117,208 people in Turkey have been convicted of alleged Gülen...’](#), 13 July 2022

<sup>109</sup> Daily Sabah, [‘Fight against FETÖ prevails 7 years after coup attempt in Türkiye’](#), 13 July 2023

<sup>110</sup> USSD, [‘2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey’](#) (section 1E), 20 March 2023

<sup>111</sup> USSD, [‘2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey’](#) (section 1E), 20 March 2023

<sup>112</sup> SOE, [‘Activity Report 2017-2022’](#) (pages 1, 8 and 9), 2023

<sup>113</sup> European Commission, [‘Turkey 2022 Report’](#) (page 26), 12 October 2022

<sup>114</sup> European Commission, [‘Turkey 2022 Report’](#) (page 26), 12 October 2022

<sup>115</sup> Turkish Minute, [‘24,706 expelled from Turkish military since coup attempt...’](#), 22 November 2022

2022, 3,055 police personnel were dismissed, which included people with alleged links to the Gülen movement<sup>116</sup>.

- 8.5.4 Citing various sources, the Netherlands MFA March 2022 report stated that:
- ‘If an individual has been dismissed because of alleged ties to organisations designated as terrorist organisations by the Turkish authorities, such as the Gülen movement, this is recorded in a database of the Sosyal Güvenlik Kurumu (Social Security Institution, SGK). This makes it difficult for dismissed employees to find a new job. If they apply for a new job, the potential employer can consult the applicant’s employment history via a portal of the SGK. If it turns out that the applicant has been dismissed in the past due to (alleged) terrorist ties, the employer will usually be unwilling to hire this person.’<sup>117</sup>

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- 8.5.5 According to the Freedom House Freedom in the World 2023 report, covering 2022 events, ‘More than 125,000 public sector workers who were fired or suspended following the coup attempt in 2016 have since been unable to find employment due to an atmosphere of guilt by association...’<sup>118</sup>

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## 8.6 Business closures

- 8.6.1 Sources told the IRB that since the coup, the institutions affiliated with the Gülen movement in Turkey had been closed or taken over by the authorities<sup>119</sup>.
- 8.6.2 For more information on the closure of businesses and asset seizures, see the country of origin information (COI) in [previous versions](#) of the Turkey Country Policy and Information Notes on the Gülen movement.

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## 8.7 Transnational repression

- 8.7.1 In a resolution adopted on 23 June 2023, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) explained the 4 main methods of transnational repression:
- ‘direct attacks by which an origin State carries out a targeted physical attack against an individual abroad, such as assassinations, assaults, disappearances, physical intimidation, and violent forced renditions
  - ‘co-opting other countries to act against a target through detention, unlawful deportation, and other types of forced renditions, which are

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<sup>116</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 46), 12 October 2022

<sup>117</sup> Netherlands MFA, ‘[General COI Report Turkey](#)’ (page 42), 2 March 2022

<sup>118</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Turkey](#)’ (section G1), January 2023

<sup>119</sup> IRB, ‘[Turkey: The Hizmet movement, also known as the Gülen movement...](#)’, 6 January 2020

authorised through pro forma but meaningless legal procedures. This method includes misuse of Interpol Red Notices, extradition proceedings, and other forms of interstate legal assistance such as anti-money laundering and anti-terror financing measures

- ‘mobility impediments such as passport cancellation and denial of consular services, preventing the target from travelling or causing them to be detained
- ‘threats from a distance, including online intimidation or surveillance and coercion by proxy, in which a person’s family, loved one, or business partner is threatened, imprisoned, or otherwise targeted.’<sup>120</sup>

8.7.2 PACE expressed concern at Turkey’s consistent pursuit of Turkish nationals residing outside of Turkey who are allegedly related to the Gülen movement, particularly since the July 2016 coup attempt. PACE stated:

‘The Turkish campaign has been found to rely on renditions, abuse of extradition proceedings, Interpol Red Notices and anti-terror financing measures, and co-opting other States to deport or transfer persons unlawfully. In this respect, the European Court of Human Rights found that in 2018 the Republic of Moldova had illegally transferred seven teachers of Turkish nationality to Türkiye, circumventing all guarantees offered by domestic and international law and therefore breaching their right to liberty guaranteed by Article 5, paragraph 1, of the Convention. Similar findings have been made by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention regarding transfers from other territories, including outside Europe. Turkish Government critics and journalists living in other member States have reportedly faced threats and intimidation, sometimes requiring police protection by the authorities of the host State.’<sup>121</sup>

8.7.3 In August 2020, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances noted that ‘To date, at least 100 individuals suspected of involvement with the Gulen/Hizmet movement are reported to have been subjected to arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearance and torture, as part of covert operations reportedly organized or abetted by the Government of Turkey in coordination with authorities of several States.’<sup>122</sup>

8.7.4 Freedom House cited an Anadolu Agency (state-run Turkish news agency) article from July 2020, which stated that Turkey’s government had returned 116 people (in connection with the coup) from 27 countries back to Turkey<sup>123</sup>. Sources mentioning Turkey’s National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) annual report for 2022 stated that more than 100 people with alleged links to the Gülen movement had been forcibly returned to Turkey from abroad by MIT<sup>124</sup> <sup>125</sup>. The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 stated that Turkey ‘... continued to ask for action against the presence of alleged members of the Gülen movement in the [Western Balkan] region and

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<sup>120</sup> PACE, [‘Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and...’](#), 23 June 2023

<sup>121</sup> PACE, [‘Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and...’](#), 23 June 2023

<sup>122</sup> UNHRC, [‘Follow-up to the recommendations made by the...’](#) (paragraph 8), 28 August 2020

<sup>123</sup> Freedom House, [‘Turkey: Transnational Repression Origin Country Case Study’](#), 2021

<sup>124</sup> Turkish Minute, [‘PACE expresses concern over Turkey’s pursuit of anyone...’](#), 23 June 2023

<sup>125</sup> SCF, [‘Turkey’s intelligence agency confirms abduction of more than 100 people...’](#), 6 March 2023

asked their extradition and the closure of all schools linked to this movement. This has caused tensions with some countries.<sup>126</sup>

- 8.7.5 The Guardian reported on 1 March 2023 on a dossier presented to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by a panel of European legal experts, which identified ‘... 17 cases of enforced disappearance in which victims were abducted from Kenya, Cambodia, Gabon, Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Mongolia and Switzerland and taken back to Turkey...’, due to alleged links to the Gülen movement<sup>127</sup>.
- 8.7.6 Justice Minister Yılmaz Tunç told Anadolu news agency that Turkey had asked 112 countries to extradite 1,271 Gülen movement members, including 256 people from the United States and 483 from European Union member states, and that 126 suspects had been handed over to Turkish authorities as of 13 July 2023<sup>128</sup>.

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## 9. Rule of law and criminal justice system

### 9.1 Police

- 9.1.1 The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 stated, with regard to the east and south-east of the country, that ‘Human rights organisations and opposition parties continued to report serious violations of human rights by security forces, including alleged instances of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and procedural rights violations in prisons and in police and gendarmerie establishments.’<sup>129</sup> The report did not provide information on the scale or extent of such violations.
- 9.1.2 The report further noted, ‘The legal framework allows the government to retain undue political influence over the judicial police, which had an impact on independent and effective investigations.’<sup>130</sup>
- 9.1.3 In the ‘Freedom in the World 2023’ report, Freedom House reported that ‘Police frequently use force to break up peaceful protests.’<sup>131</sup> The Human Rights Watch (HRW) World Report 2023, covering 2022, noted that, ‘Allegations of torture and ill-treatment in police custody and prison over the past six years have rarely been subject to effective investigations or the prosecution of perpetrators.’<sup>132</sup>

See also [Treatment in detention](#) and [Prison conditions](#).

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### 9.2 Judiciary

- 9.2.1 The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 stated that the EU’s serious concerns on the continued deterioration of the independence of the

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<sup>126</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 80), 12 October 2022

<sup>127</sup> The Guardian, ‘[ICC asked to investigate Turkish government over persecution...](#)’, 1 March 2023

<sup>128</sup> Daily Sabah, ‘[Fight against FETÖ prevails 7 years after coup attempt in Türkiye](#)’, 13 July 2023

<sup>129</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 18), 12 October 2022

<sup>130</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 29), 12 October 2022

<sup>131</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Turkey](#)’ (section E1), January 2023

<sup>132</sup> HRW, ‘[World Report 2023 – Turkey](#)’, 12 January 2023

judiciary had not been addressed<sup>133</sup>. It added that the judiciary continued to systematically target members of the opposition parties in Parliament, in relation to alleged terrorism-related offences<sup>134</sup>.

#### 9.2.2 The same report noted that:

‘The serious backsliding observed since 2016 continued during the reporting period. Concerns remained, in particular over the systemic lack of independence of the judiciary and undue pressure on judges and prosecutors. Particular concerns relating to the judiciary’s adherence to international and European standards increased, in particular in relation to the refusal to implement rulings by the European Court of Human Rights. Implementation of the 2021 human rights action plan and the 2019 judicial reform strategy continued. However, both documents failed to address major shortcomings in the Turkish judiciary, lacking a plan for significant improvements to the overall functioning of the country’s judicial system. Only 515 judges or prosecutors dismissed following the coup attempt were reinstated, despite several being acquitted. The lack of objective, merit-based, standardised and pre-established criteria for recruiting and promoting judges and prosecutors remains a source of concern.’<sup>135</sup>

#### 9.2.3 In the ‘Freedom in the World 2023’ report, Freedom House stated:

‘Judicial independence has been severely compromised, as thousands of judges and prosecutors have been replaced with government loyalists since 2016. Under the presidential system that took effect in 2018, members of Turkey’s Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), which oversees judicial appointments and disciplinary measures, are appointed by the parliament and the president rather than by members of the judiciary. As a result, prosecutors and judges often toe the government line. Judges who rule against the government’s wishes have been removed and replaced, while those who convict Erdoğan’s critics have been promoted.

‘Politically motivated prosecutions target politicians, journalists, academics, and students... The Constitutional Court has shown some independence since 2019 but is not free from political influence and often delivers rulings in line with AKP interests.’<sup>136</sup>

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### 9.3 Rule of law

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<sup>133</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 3), 12 October 2022

<sup>134</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 5), 12 October 2022

<sup>135</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (pages 5 to 6, 23 to 24), 12 October 2022

<sup>136</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Turkey](#)’ (section F1), January 2023

### 9.3.1 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated in its Executive summary:

‘The National Police and Jandarma, under the control of the Ministry of Interior, are responsible for security in urban areas and rural and border areas, respectively. The military has overall responsibility for border control. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces. Members of the security forces committed abuses, and impunity was a significant problem.

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

‘Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary killings; suspicious deaths of persons in custody; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and continued detention of tens of thousands of persons, including opposition politicians and former members of parliament, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and an employee of the U.S. Mission, for purported ties to “terrorist” groups or peaceful legitimate speech; political prisoners, including elected officials; transnational reprisal against individuals located outside the country, including kidnappings and transfers of alleged members of the Gulen movement without adequate fair trial guarantees or other legal protections; significant problems with judicial independence... [see [Arrests and detentions](#), [Transnational repression](#) and [Fair trial](#)]

‘The government took limited steps to investigate, prosecute, and punish officials and members of the security forces accused of human rights abuses or engaged in corruption and impunity remained a problem. The government took limited steps to investigate allegations of high-level corruption...<sup>137</sup>

### 9.3.2 The European Commission’s Turkey Report 2022 report:

‘Corruption remained widespread and continued to be an issue of concern. There was no progress in addressing the many gaps in the Turkish anti-corruption framework, which is a sign of a lack of will to decisively fight corruption...<sup>138</sup>

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## 9.4 Fair trial

### 9.4.1 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated:

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<sup>137</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (Exec summary), 20 March 2023

<sup>138</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 24), 12 October 2022

‘Observers raised concerns that the outcome of some trials appeared predetermined or pointed to judicial interference. Human rights groups and trial monitoring organizations reported that in politically sensitive cases, judges frequently barred journalists and observers from the courtroom, interrupted defendants’ statements, did not allow them to speak, rejected defense requests without explanation, handed down a decision without listening to the defendant’s statement, among other procedural irregularities...

‘The law provides defendants a presumption of innocence and the right to be present at their trials. In several high-profile cases, defendants appeared via video link from prison, rather than in person. Judges may restrict defense lawyers’ access to their clients’ court files for a specific catalogue of crimes (including crimes against state security, organized crime, and sexual assault against children) until the client is indicted...

‘Observers noted prosecutors and courts often failed to establish sufficient evidence to sustain indictments and convictions in cases related to supporting terrorism, highlighting concerns regarding respect for due process and adherence to credible evidentiary thresholds. In numerous cases, authorities used secret evidence or witnesses to which defense attorneys and the accused had no access or ability to cross-examine and challenge in court, particularly in cases related to national security.’<sup>139</sup>

- 9.4.2 In the Turkey 2022 Report, the European Commission noted, ‘Defamatory rhetoric during court proceedings by high-level public officials, including the President and ministers, casts serious doubt on the respect of the principle of the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial.’<sup>140</sup> The same report noted, ‘Selective and arbitrary application of legislation continued to raise concerns as it infringes the basic principles of the rule of law and right to a fair trial.’<sup>141</sup> The report added, ‘On procedural rights, the legislation is not in line with the EU acquis or European standards. ECtHR judgments condemning Türkiye for violating the right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence due to its failure to respect procedural rules continued to be handed down.’<sup>142</sup>

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## 9.5 Prison conditions

### 9.5.1 The USSD HR Report 2022 stated:

‘Prisons generally met standards for physical conditions (i.e., infrastructure and basic equipment), but significant problems with overcrowding resulted in conditions in many prisons that the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) found could be considered inhuman and degrading in its 2017 and 2019 visits... While detention facilities were generally in a good state of repair and well ventilated, many facilities had structural deficiencies that made them unsuitable for detention lasting more

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<sup>139</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1E), 20 March 2023

<sup>140</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 16), 12 October 2022

<sup>141</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 36), 12 October 2022

<sup>142</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 43), 12 October 2022

than a few days.

‘...Prison overcrowding remained a significant problem. According to the Ministry of Justice, as of December the country had 396 prisons with a capacity for 286,797 inmates and was over capacity by 49,518 prisoners (an estimated total inmate population of 336,315)...’<sup>143</sup>

9.5.2 The report also noted the conditions inside prisons and access to healthcare:

‘Human rights organizations and CPT reports asserted prisoners frequently lacked adequate access to potable water, proper heating, ventilation, lighting, food, and health services. Human rights organizations also noted that prison overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions exacerbated health risks...

‘Human rights associations expressed serious concern regarding the inadequate provision of health care to prisoners, particularly the insufficient number of prison doctors... Reports by human rights organizations suggested some doctors refused to issue medical reports alleging torture due to fear of reprisal. As a result, victims were often unable to get medical documentation of their abuse...’<sup>144</sup>

9.5.3 The same report noted allegations of poor treatment and monitoring of prisons:

‘Authorities at times investigated credible allegations of abuse and inhuman or degrading conditions but generally did not document the results of such investigations in a publicly accessible manner or disclose publicly whether actions were taken to hold perpetrators accountable. Some human rights activists and lawyers reported that prisoners and detainees were sometimes arbitrarily denied access to family members and lawyers.

‘... The government allowed prison visits by some observers, including parliamentarians. The Ministry of Interior reported that under the law, prisons were to be monitored by domestic government entities including the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey and the Parliamentary Commission for Investigating Human Rights. The CPT, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention were also granted access to monitor prisons.

‘The government did not allow independent NGOs to monitor prisons.’<sup>145</sup>

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## 10. Avenues of redress

### 10.1 Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures

#### 10.1.1 The [Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures](#) (the Commission) began operating in May 2017 to assess and conclude the applications concerning:

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<sup>143</sup> USSD, [‘2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey’](#) (section 1C), 20 March 2023

<sup>144</sup> USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

<sup>145</sup> USSD, [HR Report 2022](#), 20 March 2023

- Dismissal or discharge from the public service, profession or organization in which the persons took office
- Cancellation of scholarship
- Closure of associations, foundations, trade unions, federations, confederations, private medical institutions, private schools, foundation higher education institutions, private radio and television institutions, newspaper and periodical publications, news agencies, publishing houses and distribution channels
- Annulment of ranks of retired personnel dismissal from public service, cancellation of scholarship, annulment of the ranks of retired personnel and closure of institutions and organizations' under the Decree Laws within the scope of the state of emergency<sup>146</sup>.

10.1.2 The September 2020 DFAT report provided a brief background of the reasons for the Commission's establishment, noting that:

'In the wake of the July 2016 attempted coup, the ECHR [European Court of Human Rights] received a large number of applications from Turkish citizens who had been detained for perceived links to the Gulen movement. Turkish applications accounted for 31,054 of the ECHR's total 2017 caseload of 85,951 (36 per cent). The ECHR's requirement that applicants exhaust domestic remedies before bringing their application resulted in 30,063 (96.8 per cent) of the Turkish applications being declared inadmissible or struck out.

'In order to stop the [ECHR] court being overwhelmed, Turkey and European authorities agreed in January 2017 that Turkey would establish an Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency in order to provide a level of judicial review to those dismissed by decree during the state of emergency period.'<sup>147</sup>

10.1.3 As of 31 December 2022, the Commission had received a total of 127,292 applications to reverse the actions taken under the emergency decree laws, of which it accepted 17,960 and rejected 109,332<sup>148</sup>. Of the 17,960 applications that were accepted, the Commission noted that 'The procedure of appointment for those reinstated to their duties is carried out by the relevant institution where they lastly took office.'<sup>149</sup> (see also [Dismissal and reinstatement](#))

10.1.4 In its Turkey Report 2022, the European Commission expressed strong concerns at the Inquiry Commission's quality of work:

'... as to whether cases are examined individually, whether the rights of defence of those dismissed are respected and whether the assessment procedure is in line with international standards. Since there were no hearings, there was a general lack of procedural rights for applicants and decisions were taken on the basis of the written files relating to the original

<sup>146</sup> SOE, '[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)' (page 24), 2023

<sup>147</sup> DFAT, '[Country Information Report Turkey](#)' (paragraphs 2.47 and 2.48), 10 September 2020

<sup>148</sup> SOE, '[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)' (page I), 2023

<sup>149</sup> SOE, '[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)' (page I), 2023

dismissal, all of which call into question the extent to which the Inquiry Commission is an effective judicial remedy.<sup>150</sup>

10.1.5 However, the Commission stated that it ‘delivered individualized and reasoned decision[s]’ on all applications<sup>151</sup>, and that all rejected applications were ‘made available for judicial review,’<sup>152</sup> The terms of the Commission ended on 22 January 2023<sup>153</sup>.

10.1.6 In regard to appeals, the HRA reported that:

‘Ankara Administrative Courts were authorized to hear annulment cases to be brought against decisions rendered by the Inquiry Commission on the State of Emergency Measures. According to an announcement by the Board of Judges and Prosecutors, these courts would hear cases brought by those dismissed from their posts and by closed-down organizations against rejection decisions rendered by the commission.

‘Public employees, who were directly dismissed by the institutions they had worked for, on the other hand, need to bring a case to an administrative court in due time while judges and prosecutors who had been dismissed through decisions rendered by the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors need to apply to the Council of State. The deadline for appeals vary between 30 to 45 days depending on the institution. If the deadline is missed, reinstatement becomes legally out of the question. If administrative courts deliver “rejection” rulings for reinstatement, applicants can appeal to the Council of State. And if a similar ruling is delivered by the Council of State too, then the applicant has the right to “individual application” before the Constitutional Court. Applicants, whose individual applications are also rejected by the Constitutional Court, can subsequently bring their cases before the ECtHR.’<sup>154</sup>

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## 11. Freedom of movement

### 11.1 In-country movement

11.1.1 The USSD human rights report for 2022 noted that ‘The constitution provides that only a judge may limit citizens’ freedom to travel and only in connection with a criminal investigation or prosecution. Antiterror laws allow severe restrictions to be imposed on freedom of movement, such as granting governors the power to limit individuals’ movement, including entering or leaving provinces, for up to 15 days.’<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> European Commission, ‘[Turkey 2022 Report](#)’ (page 23), 12 October 2022

<sup>151</sup> SOE, ‘[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)’ (page 21), 2023

<sup>152</sup> SOE, ‘[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)’ (pages 26), 2023

<sup>153</sup> SOE, ‘[Activity Report 2017-2022](#)’ (page 1), 2023

<sup>154</sup> HRA, ‘[Emergency Decree Laws and Their Impact on Human Rights...](#)’ (page 14), 13 May 2022

<sup>155</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 2D), 20 March 2023

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## 11.2 Passports and foreign travel

- 11.2.1 Over 230,000 passports were cancelled following the attempted coup to limit the mobility of suspected Gülenists<sup>156</sup>, though in August 2018 it was reported that restrictions were lifted on over 155,000 passports, mostly belonging to people linked to the Gulen movement or their close relatives<sup>157</sup>. According to Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2023 report, over 125,000 public sector workers who lost their jobs following the failed coup ‘... cannot travel abroad as their passports have been canceled.’<sup>158</sup>
- 11.2.2 The USSD human rights report for 2022 noted that people linked to the Gülen movement were restricted from leaving Turkey:
- ‘The government placed restrictions on foreign travel for tens of thousands of citizens accused of terrorism due to links to the Gulen movement or the failed coup attempt, as well as on their extended family members. Authorities also restricted some foreign citizens with dual Turkish citizenship from leaving the country, with the government maintaining the travel restrictions were due to terrorism concerns or necessary to preserve security. Some persons whom the government barred from travel chose to leave the country illegally.’<sup>159</sup>
- 11.2.3 The same report stated that ‘The government continued to refuse to renew the passports of some citizens with temporary residency permits in other countries on political grounds, claiming they were members of “Gülenist” organizations; these individuals were unable to travel outside their countries of residence.’<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Turkish Minute, ‘[Report reveals Turkey’s passport cancellation against...](#)’, 12 March 2018

<sup>157</sup> SCF, ‘[Turkey’s dismissed academics want their passports back after state...](#)’, 7 August 2018

<sup>158</sup> Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2023 – Turkey](#)’ (section G1), January 2023

<sup>159</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1E), 20 March 2023

<sup>160</sup> USSD, ‘[2022 Country Reports on Human Rights: Turkey](#)’ (section 1E), 20 March 2023

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

All the COI included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s). Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The Home Office uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Gulen movement
  - Overview and relationship with the state
  - Membership and structure
  - Coup attempt of 2016
- State treatment
  - Identifying criteria of suspected Gulenists
  - Arrests and detentions
  - Prosecutions and convictions
  - Dismissals
  - Transnational repression (targeting Gulenists abroad)
- Avenues of redress
- Judiciary
- Freedom of movement
  - In country, address registration
  - Foreign travel and passports

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **4.0**
- valid from **17 October 2023**

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

[List key changes to this guidance from last version here]

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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